

Levels of anxiety and postcoital depression in early childhood care in a Colombian municipality. A case study

Niveles de ansiedad y depresión postcovid en cargo asistencial de primera infancia en un municipio de Colombia. Estudio de caso

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ABSTRACT

The crisis caused by COVID - 19, brought with it serious mental health problems, which represented in many countries a public health problem, it is emphasized that mental health is of great importance in different contexts, both family and work, taking into account that it is essential to generate social and productive links. The objective of this article is to describe the levels of anxiety and depression of an early childhood worker in a municipality of Colombia, due to the return to the workplace and contact with children, through a descriptive quantitative approach methodology where the DASS- 21 Scale (Depression, Anxiety, Stress -21) was applied, Anxiety Stress -21) established with seven items in each level, extremely high scores of anxiety and depression were evidenced, for which reason, proposals for action were designed individually and organizationally in order to help reduce those levels currently presented in the worker.

Keywords: Depression, Anxiety, Covid-19, mental health, early childhood, psychosocial risk.

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RESUMEN

La crisis provocada por el COVID – 19, trajo consigo serios problemas de salud mental, que representó en muchos países un problema de salud pública, se destaca que la salud mental es de gran importancia en los diferentes contextos tanto familiares como laborales, teniendo en cuenta que es fundamental para generar vínculos sociales y productivos. El presente artículo tiene como objetivo describir los niveles de ansiedad y depresión de una trabajadora de la primera infancia en un municipio de Colombia, debido al regreso presencial al lugar de trabajo y al contacto con niños y niñas, a través de una metodología con enfoque cuantitativo de tipo descriptivo en donde se aplicó la Escala DASS- 21 (Depresión, Ansiedad Estrés -21) establecida con siete ítems en cada nivel, se evidenciaron puntajes extremadamente altos de ansiedad y depresión, razón por la cual, se diseñaron propuestas de acción de manera individual y organizacional con el fin de ayudar a reducir aquellos niveles presentados actualmente en la trabajadora.

Palabras clave: Depresión, Ansiedad, Covid-19, salud mental, primera infancia, riesgo psicosocial.

INTRODUCTION

The SARS-COVID19 coronavirus disease outbreak was a worldwide emergency, due to its rapid spread and high mortality rate, because it is transmitted from person to person through various means such as coughing, respiratory secretions, and close contacts; that is, it can be transmitted at a distance of two meters, in addition to this, the contagion also occurs by contact with hands contaminated with secretions followed by contact with mucous membranes, mouth, nose or eyes. (Palacios et al., 2021).

Sars-Covid19 , due to its rapid spread, triggered alarms throughout the Colombian territory with social isolation and absence of social relations in different spaces such as parks, shopping malls, education centers and companies. Pappa et al. (2020) indicated that the isolation represented a public health problem, starting with the great magnitude of contagions, which collapsed the health system of the country, likewise, Banerjee & Rai (2020) indicated that the pandemic generated a wave of concern, fear, stress and even frustration, because there was no knowledge of how to combat this new virus worldwide.

Such is the concern for the mental health of the world's population, that there are different authors who have investigated the consequences of isolation, confinement and work dynamics during and after the pandemic. Thus, Ozamiz, Dosil, Picaza & Idoiaga

(2020) conducted a study to identify the levels of stress, anxiety and depression in the first phase of COVID 19 in northern Spain. They implemented an exploratory - descriptive cross-sectional study through the DASS-21 Questionnaire (Depression, Anxiety, Stress scale) composed of 21 items, which results in severe and extremely severe levels of stress, anxiety and depression in the sample collected.

Likewise, Prieto, et. al, (2020) conducted a descriptive, non-experimental, cross-sectional study on characteristics related to anxiety and depression symptomatology in a population of adult residents of Metropolitan Lima, because this region had the highest number of confirmed cases with a diagnosis of COVID-19 at the national level, the Anxiety Scale (EAL-20) and the Depressive Psychopathology Scale (EPD-6) were applied to 565 adults (382 women and 183 men), The most prevalent anxiety indicators were found to be representative characteristics of agoraphobia, for example, discomfort when being in a crowded place or even fear of leaving home. In another instance, the most prevalent depression results were found to be related to problems falling asleep, feelings of tiredness and sadness.

On the other hand, Chacón, et. al (2020) conducted a cross-sectional exploratory study on anxiety in response to the Covid-19 virus, evaluating 328 Salvadorans by means of the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD7), finding that the most prevalent symptoms were nervousness, altered state, worry about different things and difficulty in relaxing.

It is necessary to understand the concept of depression, understood as a mental illness characterized by low mood and feelings of sadness, associated with behavioral alterations, appearing more frequently in women under 45 years of age. It is a frequent disease worldwide since it is estimated in 3.8% of the population including 5% in older adults and 5.7% of adults under 60 years of age. Approximately 280 million people worldwide suffer from depression due to various problems of daily life. People who present a depressive episode experience considerable difficulties in their personal, family, social, educational and other important areas (Vidal 2020).

On the other hand, anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, anxious thoughts and physical changes reflected in increased blood pressure. This generalized state of mind can occur in the face of external stimuli perceived as threatening, but often occurs without a stimulus to provoke it, in which case anxiety is more likely to occur in women. The most common mental symptoms are usually constant worries, tiredness, irritability, concentration and sleep problems, as well as physical symptoms such as elevated pulse, excessive sweating, muscle tension, tremors, dizziness, etc. (Soto, 2021). In general, there are different factors that can increase or decrease the risk of developing symptoms of mental illness as a result of prolonged exposure to stressful stimuli. In confinement, there was evidence of an increase in depression, which is described as feeling bad, melancholic or simply frustrated because of not being able to enjoy daily social life.

On the other hand, anxiety produces a reaction of rapid activations in the body making it act with an intense effort and its primary symptom is fear, accompanied by negative

thoughts that in the course of this isolation are not worked immediately, causing present illnesses derived from these symptoms of anxiety and depression caused by confinement. Therefore, Castillo, López, Velásquez, Dimate & Barbosa (2019) consider important the creation of prevention strategies to reduce the symptomatology related to mental health, both institutional and individual, giving relevance to the role played by organizations in the prevention of psychosocial risk in companies, likewise, Cedeño, Cuenca, Mojica, & Portillo, (2020) indicate the importance of learning to manage stress, fear, anxiety and depression in a positive way to minimize the effects on mental health, strengthen individuals, family and the community in general. Portillo, (2020) indicate the importance of learning to manage stress, fear, anxiety and depression in a positive way to minimize the effects on mental health, strengthen individuals, the family and the community in general.

This case study focuses on knowing and understanding the problems derived from COVID - 19 associated with depression and anxiety presented by a worker who performs the position of assistance as health and nutrition support (early childhood) in the social kindergarten of one of the municipalities of Cundinamarca Colombia, due to the return to her work.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

It is carried out from a quantitative approach, because it seeks to measure the level of anxiety and depression in a given situation, in this case the return to the presentality of the health and nutrition support worker to the social kindergarten (early childhood), likewise, the analysis of the numerical measurements was obtained by statistical methods, in this way a case study on the Psychosocial Risk in the worker with anxiety and depression symptomatology is carried out.

The variables selected for this case study are depression and anxiety evaluated by means of the (DASS 21) scale (Depression, Anxiety Stress -21). It is a dimensional self-report scale designed for the measurement of emotional states. Each of these 3 scales has seven items, but the following will be selected for the case study: Depression (items 3, 5, 10, 13, 16, 17 and 21), Anxiety (items: 2, 4, 7, 9, 15, 19 and 20). It has a Likert-type response format with four alternatives, which are ordered on a scale of 0 to 3 points (0: it has not happened to me; 1: it has happened to me a little, or for part of the time; 2: it has happened to me quite a lot, or for a good part of the time; and 3: it has happened to me a lot, or most of the time). Roman (2014).

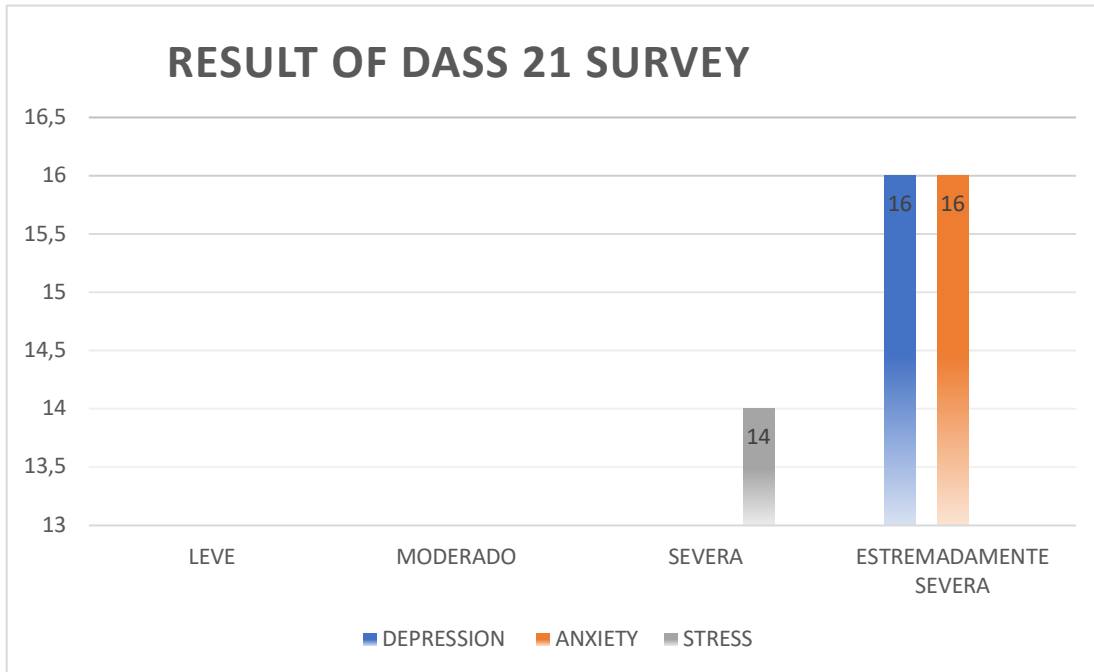
RESULTS

Taking into account the analysis of the results of the DASS 21 survey (Depression, Anxiety, Stress -21), it gives information on the percentage of the sample studied, which presents a degree of emotional affectation after isolation and infection with the COVID-19 virus.

When observing the graph, it can be seen that the results for depression were 16 points and for anxiety 16 points, which indicates that the health and nutrition support worker

(early childhood) of the social kindergarten of one of the municipalities of Cundinamarca, Colombia is in a scale of extremely severe.

Figure 1. Degree of emotional involvement



Extremely severe depression

According to the definition of Perez, (2016) major depression is a serious illness whose symptoms include depressed mood, decreased energy level and interest in life, physical discomfort, changes in eating and sleeping patterns, thoughts, movements whether slow or agitated, in necessary to note that there are are psychological, biological and environmental factors that trigger this disease.

Extremely severe anxiety

It is an uncontrollable, chronic and continuous excessive anxiety and worry (associated with physical symptoms) people with this anxiety find it difficult to control this state of constant worry and may persist even more after 6 months (Soto, 2021).

Mainly the level of depression and anxiety presented by the health and nutrition support worker (early childhood) was detected, where the importance of designing action plans is evident.

According to the results, there is a need to propose improvement actions from the individual and from the organizational part, in order to mitigate the levels of Anxiety and Depression of the early childhood assistant, described in table 1 and 2.

Table 1 . Strategy implementation - Individual

Strategies	Activities
Healthy lifestyles	<p>Get active early: Start the day with 15 minutes of stretching and muscle strengthening exercises such as squats, push-ups, etc.</p> <p>Be sure to be friends with an active person, as it is more enjoyable to be physically active with a good companion.</p> <p>Give importance to sleep by establishing a schedule and leaving technological devices away from the body.</p>
Improved coping skills	<p>Do not make dramatic in the current situation you are in.</p> <p>To trust in oneself and in one's capabilities.</p> <p>Focus on the positive and try to see the good in every moment.</p>
Strengthening resilience capacity	<p>Seek to learn in every situation you live in, no matter how difficult it may seem, make every situation a daily learning experience.</p> <p>Spend time building and cultivating good personal relationships.</p>

Table 2 . Strategy Implementation - Organization

Strategies	Activities
Strengthening of social support networks.	<p>Conduct workshops on the different representative emotions in each employee of the organization.</p> <p>Elaboration of brochures for the organization, evidencing the initial symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress.</p> <p>Implement a space with bulletin boards where each worker can express his or her feelings or how he or she feels.</p>
Development of activities to intervene work stress	<p>Create a space of distraction to implement relaxation activities.</p>

	Inhale and exhale 10 times whenever you feel tension in your work.
Implement changes in the work environment	Organizing the workstation Dedicate yourself to one thing at a time Decorate the workstation either with family photos, friends or pets. Plan the day and the things to be done. Motivate the rest of your colleagues with a detail. Make celebrations of important dates that make people feel good.

Taking into account the results obtained in the research, it is evident the impact that the pandemic has had on people in general, the need to go out to work and have contact with other people after more than 18 months of confinement shows high levels of anxiety and depression that coincide with Ozamiz, Dosil, Picaza & Idoiaga (2020) who found severe levels of stress, anxiety and depression at the beginning of the pandemic, also with Prieto, et. al, (2020) who found anxiety levels when leaving home and having contact with other people.

Likewise, the study participant suffered from Covid 19 during the pandemic, it is very likely that for this reason his anxiety and depression levels showed a high level when he returned to work, an aspect corroborated by the studies of Krüger-Malpartida, et al. (2022) who found that people prone to develop symptoms of anxiety and severe depression were those who had a medical condition during the pandemic.

Likewise, it is evident the need for companies to initiate preventive and corrective actions for mental health problems, however, due to the lack of mental health professionals in organizations, it is necessary that government agencies and health entities have programs that mitigate the consequences of these pathologies in order to improve productivity worldwide, likewise, social support is a useful strategy to improve the mental health of people who survived the virus. (Xiao, et al. 2022).

DISCUSSION

It is relevant to highlight that the mental health of each person is of great importance in the different contexts they face every day, since it is fundamental to generate both social and productive links. Such is the case that emerged worldwide by the covid-19 pandemic, evidencing the psychological and emotional deterioration during preventive social isolation (Broche 2021). Throughout this study on depression and anxiety, it became evident that, worldwide, there are shortcomings in terms of mental health, despite the broad regulations that promote this state of balance, the truth is that during the pandemic of covid-19 those people who suffered health affectations by infected or lost a family member, did not have a relevant psychological support, which caused multiple challenges that are still faced today.

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