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# Factors Affecting Mental Health among Youth Post COVID-19

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**Abstract:** *On 11th March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak to be a pandemic, prompting considerable concern around the world. The pandemic has had a devastating impact on the post-pandemic world, affecting every aspect of the system, including the financial and labour markets. The post-pandemic COVID-19 has had an impact on many spheres of social and economic life. In fact, it has been highlighted as a source of mental health illnesses among youth. The purpose of this study is to determine what causes mental illness in youth post-COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 300 youths participated in this study. As a research tool, questionnaires were distributed to ascertain how young people perceive the factors that can lead to mental illness. Questions for the survey were taken from the YoungMinds Malaysia initiative. Job and financial concerns are also discussed in detail. Consequently, the study has been able to determine how youth's mental health perceptions may differ from those of other age groups.*

**Keywords:** *Mental Health, Youth, Covid-19, Malaysia, Pandemic.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2019, the world was rocked by the existence of a virus known as Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). The virus was first detected and diagnosed in the Chinese city of Wuhan (Sajed & Amgain, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) has labelled the virus a pandemic as a result of its spread. Malaysia, like the rest of the world, has been dealing with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. For more than two years, the government has taken a number of steps to halt the spread of COVID-19. Beginning 1st April 2022, Malaysia has transitioned to the Endemic Phase following the effectiveness of public health prevention and control measures by implementing the National Recovery Plan, with the MCO Phase Transition enforced only in stages at this moment (MKN, 2022). This implementation necessitates a few steps, such as the ability to not wear facial masks in public open spaces, as well as allowing no limit to the number of ceremonies that can be held. As a result, youths must be astute in their adaptation to the current situation. COVID-19's presence, which appears to have no end, has had a tremendous impact on every young person's physical, emotional, and



social well-being, as well as affecting their everyday norms in life. The Ministry of Health (MOH) shared a set of relaxed standard operating procedures (SOPs) that would take place in the country effective 1st May 2022 (Sunday). This is part of the country's transition to the endemic phase. In this article, HRO will focus on the generic updates applicable to the general public in terms of the wearing of facial masks, maintaining physical distance, and practising good hygiene, as well as a list of prohibited activities.

### **Mental Health**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is defined as an individual's ability to cope with the stresses of everyday life, work efficiently, and contribute to society. According to Mat Wajar and Hamzah (2020), the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has affected young people who are just starting out in their careers, causing them to confront a variety of obstacles and challenges in finding work. Simultaneously, they must prepare themselves to tackle occupational challenges. However, depending on the ability of youth to react to stress, there are variable influences on stress (Johari & Ahmad, 2019). Excessive stress can lead to feelings of isolation, a lack of sleep, increased anxiety, and other physiological symptoms as a result of an event. This has an indirect impact on young people's daily lives (Subramaniam, 2015). Youth is the backbone of a society and are the future leaders who will shape the nation. Their mental health has to be treated more seriously and not dismissed simply because of their age. Accordingly, the goal of this study is to determine the elements that influence mental health among youth following the COVID-19 pandemic. The factors to be explored are those that affect family values and the community environment.

### **Literature**

Factors that cause mental health disorders

Due to the unstable economic situation, young people are having difficulty finding a stable source of income. The gig economy is one of the most flexible fields of work and income for young people. Employers, workers, and customers are all involved in the gig economy on a short-term basis. When gig jobs do not provide predictable hours, wages, fringe benefits, or clear promotion paths, youth will face numerous financial issues, which, when combined with the difficulty of obtaining a secure job and an uncertain income, contribute to mental health concerns among youth. Emotions in children and adolescents are heavily influenced by factors such as family happiness. According to Sham (2005), happy families result in more stable adolescent emotions, whereas an unhappy home environment disrupts teenagers' emotions. As a result of this, they might become lonely. According to Labrague et al. (2020), adolescents are more likely than adults to experience intense isolation. A feeling of loneliness is one of the indicators that a student is stressed (Wright, 1967). In addition, Zhang et al. (2020) discovered that during the COVID-19 epidemic, students did not get enough sleep. As a result of this situation, they may develop post-traumatic stress symptoms (PTSS) (Liu et al., 2020), particularly preventing them from confiding in people who are unaware of their problems. Individuals may also find it difficult to obtain social support as a result of this problem (Son et al., 2020). The study found that a number of factors influenced students' mental health at the start of the COVID-19 epidemic. The goal of this study is to ascertain how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the mental health of Malaysian youth, especially children and teenagers.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

A survey of young people who follow YoungMinds Malaysia's online initiatives was conducted



during the months of March and April 2022. The participants in this study were 300 young people. According to Ismail & Al Bahri (2019), a questionnaire is a data-gathering device used to collect large amounts of data. According to Pranatawijaya et al. (2019), one application for the use of questionnaires over the web exists, which allows evaluators and respondents to conduct questionnaires without having to print and distribute physical questionnaires in data collection. The cost of printing questionnaire forms can be reduced owing to the existence of this application, which saves time when it comes to distributing the forms to respondents. As a result, one of the strategies employed to obtain feedback from the respondents in this study was to create a Google Form questionnaire. Including the demographics section, as well as Parts A, B, and C of the produced questionnaire form, there are four sections to the study's instrument. Part A covers the demographics of the respondents.

### 3. STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the section on the demographics of respondents indicate that females predominate in this study, with 150 (51%) female respondents compared to 149 (49%) male respondents. With approximately 300 respondents between January 2022 and March 2022, the YoungMinds Malaysia programme represents the largest proportion of respondents for the study. Based on the platform used during the study, it was found that the majority of respondents preferred Zoom with 120 (40%), followed by YouTube with 100 (33%), and Facebook Live with 80 (27%).

#### Part A: Factors in the Problem of Obtaining a Permanent Job

*Is there an effect between the problem of obtaining a permanent job and depression?*

Table 1 summarises the findings of the factors influencing the acquisition of a permanent job. Based on this item, the findings for youths with permanent employment (M = 4.27, SP = 0.787) are followed by those who did not secure permanent employment. These findings are in line with the results of a study conducted by Son et al. (2020), in which obtaining a job still interferes with the mental health of students. By demographics, young people, particularly students, females, and people with poor financial conditions, were more vulnerable to mental health symptoms. These findings provide an urgent call for increased attention to detect and provide intervention strategies to combat the increasing rate of mental health problems in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The primary reasons for increased psychological distress among adolescents are economic consequences, changes in academic activities, difficulties adapting to online distance learning methods, and uncertainty about academic and career prospects. Based on the evidence in Section A, there is a link between unemployment and depression.

Table 1: Mean factor scores on Youth Workers

Item	Section	Mean	Standard deviation
1.	Youth with permanent employment	4.235	0.769
2.	Youth No permanent jobs	4.27	0.787
3.	Youth who do not work	2.46	1.41



**Part B: Living Arrangements**

Is there an effect between living arrangements and depression?

Many nations, like Malaysia, continue to pursue policies of exceptional physical isolation. Various businesses have been badly impacted by the implementation of work-from-home regulations and virtual meetings following the COVID-19 post-pandemic. A lot of individuals continue to suffer psychologically as a result of economic implications, limits on social activities, and prolonged seclusion in their homes. While it has been demonstrated that housing conditions have a major impact on numerous elements of juvenile mental health, their social network may obscure this link. The goal of this study is to examine the interaction between living arrangements and social networks and their influence on the mental health condition of Malaysian adolescents. The results of the mean factor scores on living arrangements are presented in Table 4. According to this item, children have complete support from their families (M = 4.005, SD = 0.926), adolescents modify their routines to fit into regular life (M = 3.625, SD = 1.192), students have a solid internet connection (M = 3.475, SP = 1.120), and youth care for a sick family member (M = 2.475, SD = 1.120). Meanwhile, adolescents with no family or those from shattered families had the lowest mean score (M = 2.433, SD = 1.092). The average adolescent agreed that lacking a family or having a fractured family contributed to mental health difficulties. From the results in Section B, it shows that there is an effect between living arrangements and depression.

Table 4: Mean factor scores on Living Arrangement

Item	Section	Mean	Standard deviation
1.	Youth get full support from family	4.005	0.926
2.	Youth take care of sick family members	2.475	1.120
3.	Youth adjusting their routines back to normal life	3.625	1.192
4.	Youth from no family or broken Family	2.433	1.092

**Part C: Income Range**

Is there an effect between income and depression?

Although the studies included in the meta-analysis had significant heterogeneity in terms of how they measured socioeconomic status and depression, the investigators discovered that individuals with a low income had a significantly increased risk of depression (1.81) compared to those with a higher income. Low household income is associated with a variety of lifetime mental disorders and suicide attempts, and a decrease in household income increases the risk of incident mental disorders. Table 5 summarises the findings of the time management factor. According to this item, and based on the 2019 survey by the Department of Statistics, youths whose upper-class household income exceeds RM10,971 per month (T20) have a higher assessment of mental wellbeing (M = 3.805, SD = 1.965). Meanwhile, youths whose middle-class household income is between RM4,851 and RM10,970 per month (M40) have a slightly lower assessment (M = 3.445, SD = 1.068). Students reported having enough free time to engage in favourite activities such as physical activity or appropriate hobbies (M = 3.48, SD = 0.926). Finally, youths from the low-income group with a monthly household income of less than RM4,850 (B40) have the lowest mental assessment (M = 2.975, SD = 0.859). The questionnaire results revealed that youths from lower income families (B40) were extremely



depressed in the post-pandemic phase due to their loyalty to a country that has continued to experience higher inflation and lower currency values in comparison to other countries (Ahad et al., 2020). From the results in Section C, there is an effect between income and depression.

Table 5: Mean score against income range

Item	Section	Mean	Standard deviation
1.	Lower-income household income is below RM4,850 per month (B40)	2.975	0.859
2.	Middle-class household income is between RM4,851 and RM10,970 per month (M40)	3.445	1.068
3.	Upper-class household income exceeds RM10,971 a month (T20)	3.805	1.965

**Part D: Social Media Factors**

Is there an effect between social media and depression?

Table 5 summarises the findings regarding the factors affecting social media time management. Based on this item, the findings for youth who use 1–5 hours of daily social media are (M = 3.975, SD = 0.965) and (M = 1.445, SD = 0.068) for youth who use 1–5 hours of daily social media. Youth spend between 5 and 10 hours per week on social media (M = 1.4445, SD = 0.045). The results of the survey revealed that even the youths who used social media for the most hours per day were the most susceptible to mental health issues. These findings are consistent with the findings of a study by Ahad et al. (2020). Findings in Section D revealed a correlation between social media and depression.

Table 5: Mean factor scores on Social media Use

Item	Section	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	Youth using 1–5 hours of daily social media	2.975	1.859
2.	Youth using 5–10 hours or more of daily social media	1.445	0.068
3.	Youth with no social media	3.975	0.965

**4. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, at the beginning of the post-pandemic period, four primary causes of mental health issues among adolescents have been identified. Among them are the inability to obtain a permanent position, living conditions, income range, and social media usage management. The findings of this study indicate that three factors, namely financial resources, employment opportunities, and living arrangements, influence the mental health of youth. The majority of respondents were male and female youths who had participated in YoungMinds Malaysia's Mental Health programme, which provided support for the items on each studied aspect. Among the recommendations for reducing stress during the post-COVID-19 pandemic, period is for the government to actively host job fairs for young people and assist in making room for the gig economy to grow. In addition, additional relevant factors can be investigated for future research



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