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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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ESTRATEGIAS DE AFRONTAMIENTO DURANTE EL CONFINAMIENTO POR COVID-19 EN PACIENTES CON PRIMER EPISODIO PSICÓTICO: EL IMPACTO EN SU VIDA DIARIA

COPING STRATEGIES DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN IN PATIENTS WITH FIRST-EPISODE PSYCHOSIS: THE IMPACT ON THEIR DAILY LIFE

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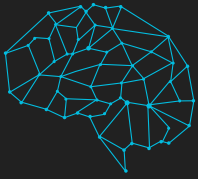
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Contribución: Las autoras SO, JU, CSA, RVA y MC diseñaron el estudio y escribieron el protocolo. Las/los autoras/es CSA, RVB, MES, MA, CR, BMK, y JFR realizaron el reclutamiento de los participantes y su evaluación. Las autoras CSA, MES, y SO realizaron los análisis estadísticos. Las autoras CSA, RVB, JU, y SO redactaron el manuscrito. Todas las personas de la autoría colaboraron en la edición y revisión de la versión final.

Conflictos de intereses. Las/los autoras/es declaran la ausencia de potenciales conflictos de intereses.



ABSTRACT

Introducción: El confinamiento por la enfermedad del coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) interrumpió la vida de todo el mundo en marzo de 2020. El confinamiento obligatorio duró dos meses, lo que tuvo un impacto en la salud mental de las personas. Sin embargo, se desconoce en gran medida cómo afectó a quienes ya luchaban con problemas de salud mental.

Métodos: Se recopiló información de 18 pacientes con primer episodio psicótico (PEP) mediante una encuesta en línea. La encuesta tenía preguntas sobre COVID-19, el impacto del confinamiento en la vida diaria y las estrategias de afrontamiento utilizadas durante el confinamiento entre marzo y abril de 2020 en España.

Resultados: Algunas estrategias de afrontamiento se asociaron con diferentes actividades de la vida diaria: normalizar la situación, buscar ayuda de amigos o familiares y buscar ayuda de profesionales en situaciones estresantes, leer fuentes de información y autoayuda para enfrentar el estrés, enfocarse en las emociones que generan estrés, intentar centrarse en problemas concretos y buscar soluciones, y aceptar la situación con resignación.

Conclusiones: Como conclusión, los resultados sugieren que no todas las estrategias de afrontamiento impactaron de la misma manera en la vida diaria de los/las pacientes con PEP durante el confinamiento por COVID-19.

Keywords: actividades diarias; confinamiento por COVID-19; estrategias de afrontamiento; psicosis.

RESUMEN

Introduction: Lockdown for 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) disrupted life worldwide from March 2020. Mandatory lockdown lasted two months, which had an impact on people's mental health. However, how it affected those who already struggled with mental health problems is largely unknown.

Methods: We collected information from 18 patients with first-episode psychosis (FEP) through an online survey. The survey contained questions regarding COVID-19, impact of confinement on daily life, and coping strategies during lockdown between March and April 2020 in Spain.

Results: Some coping strategies were associated with different daily life activities: normalizing the situation, seeking help from friends or family, and seeking help from professionals in stressful situations, reading information sources and self-help to cope with stress, focusing on the emotions that generate stress, trying to focus on specific problems and seek solutions, and accepting the situation with resignation.

Discussion: As a conclusion, results suggest that not all coping strategies impacted in the same way in daily life of patients with FEP during COVID-19 lockdown.

Palabras clave: coping strategies; COVID-19 confinement; daily activities; psychosis.

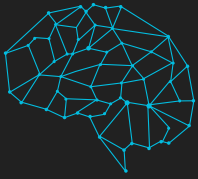
INTRODUCTION

The SARS-CoV-2 disrupted the lives of everyone around the world during the first quarter of 2020, becoming a global health risk and forcing governments to take drastic measures to stop its spreading. In some countries, a nationwide total lockdown was imposed on the population, forcing them to remain in their homes for practically a month and a half, from March to April, which was followed by a period of restrictions to limit and control social interactions and activities.

While all citizens forcibly tried to adapt to the new provisional situation, it triggered psychological consequences such as stress, anxiety or insomnia, thus compromising their psychological health (Chen, Pusica, Sohaei, Prassas, & Diamandis, 2021; Domènech-Abella et al., 2021; Gao et al., 2020).

Although the psychological impact of the pandemic is present in most of the population, it has taken a more severe toll in people with mental health problems (Ciria Villar & Día Sahún, 2021). Previous literature has already pointed out the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown as stressors for triggering or worsening mental disorders, especially in FEP and psychosis (Brahmi et al., 2021; Ciria Villar & Día Sahún, 2021; Oloniniyi, Ibigbami, Amiola, Esan, & Esan, 2021). Moreover, they influenced the content of psychotic experiences and symptomatology exacerbation in FEP (Brahmi et al., 2021; Oloniniyi et al., 2021).

Concretely, people with psychotic spectrum disorders are more vulnerable to stressful life events and lack active problem-solving strategies to deal with them (Phillips, Fran-



cey, Edwards, & McMurray, 2009). People with first-episode psychosis (FEP) are at particular risk because they use emotion-focused coping strategies, but mostly usually utilize avoidance coping strategies. This lack of resources affect their functioning in daily life and makes them more sensitive to stress (Riera-López de Aguilera, Vila-Badia, Usall, Butjosa, & Ochoa, 2019).

There is a dearth in data exploring how home quarantine affected people with FEP, and how they coped with it. However, this knowledge would provide clinical insights into how to help patients cope with stressful life events that are beyond control, and buffer their consequences in future outcomes.

We aimed to explore the coping strategies used by patients with FEP and the relationship on their daily life activities during total COVID-19 confinement between March and April 2020.

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS

The sample consisted of 18 patients with FEP (13 males and 5 females). 17 participants (94.4%) were recruited from the Parc Sanitari Sant Joan de Déu (Barcelona, Catalunya) and 1 participant (5.6%) was from the Regional Hospital of Málaga (Málaga, Andalucía). A diagnosis of FEP was considered if patients had suffered at least an episode of psychosis over the last 5 years.

INSTRUMENTS

Four questionnaires were created *ad hoc* to collect socio-demographic data, COVID-19 information, impact of confinement on the daily life, and coping strategies used to decrease anxiety during lockdown. These included changes in frequency, according to whether they had decreased, remained the same, or increased, of different aspects of daily life (social contact, leisure activities, food intake, hours of sleep), work or studies (remained with an occupation, changed the ways in which they conducted their occupation) and in their mental health treatment (need for more follow-up visits, modification of their pharmacological treatment).

The coping strategies questionnaire, created *ad hoc*, included those that previous literature (Riera-López de Aguilera et al., 2019) had identified as the most frequently used by people with FEP. The 8 items were: a) I avoided thinking about the situation of COVID-19; b) I normalized the situation; c)

I sought help from friends or family to face stressful situations; d) I sought help from professionals to face stressful situations; e) I read sources of information and self-help for cope with stress; f) I tried to focus on the emotions that stress generates in me; g) I tried to focus on specific issues and find solutions; and, h) I accepted the situation with resignation. Participants were asked to respond whether they had used each coping strategy with a yes/no response format.

PROCEDURE

We performed an online survey through the REDcap platform (Harris et al., 2019) between July and October 2020. Patients attending the Early Intervention Program were contacted to explain the study. Those who agreed to participate were sent the online survey. The survey was answered retrospectively.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

This study was approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the Parc Sanitari Sant Joan de Déu. It was carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (1975) in its recent review, Taipei (2016). All participants signed the informant consent before their collaboration.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Sociodemographic and clinical data of FEP sample was described. The numerical variables were summarized by mean as the measure of central tendency and standard deviation (SD) for dispersion, and also the range values. Categorical variables were reported by frequencies and percentages (%).

We used Chi-square test to analyze the relationships between the different coping strategies and the daily life activities COVID-19 lockdown. Statistical significance was established at p -value < 0.05 . Cramér's V was estimated to measure effect sizes.

RESULTS

Characteristics of the sample are displayed in Table 1.

The significant associations between coping strategies and daily life activities during COVID-19 lockdown in patients with FEP are summarized in Table 2.

Normalizing the situation was significantly related with food intake ($\chi^2=11.250$, $p=.004$, $V=.791$), meaning that patients that did not use this coping strategy decreased their

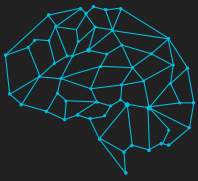


TABLE 1. Sample Characteristics.

Characteristics	FEP sample (N=18) Mean (SD) / Frequency (%)
Age (years old)	29.72 (6.37) [range 19 – 42]
Sex	
Females	5 (27.78)
Males	13 (72.22)
Educational level	
Basic education	2 (11.11)
Secondary education	6 (33.33)
Baccalaureate / Professional Training	5 (27.78)
University studies	5 (27.78)
Coexistence prior to lockdown	
Alone	3 (16.67)
Family of origin (parents/sisters/brothers)	10 (66.67)
Own family (partner/children)	2 (11.11)
Friends	1 (5.56)
Institutions	2 (11.11)
Coexistence during lockdown	
Family of origin (parents/sisters/brothers)	13 (72.22)
Own family (partner/children)	2 (11.11)
Friends	2 (11.11)
Institutions	1 (5.56)
Employment situation prior to lockdown	
Work on-site	11 (61.11)
Occupational sick leave	1 (5.56)
Unemployed	3 (16.67)
Student	3 (16.67)
Employment situation during lockdown	
Work on-site	4 (22.22)
Work at home	2 (11.11)
Stop working	4 (22.22)
Job loss	1 (5.56)
Occupational sick leave	1 (5.56)
Unemployed	3 (16.67)
Student	3 (16.67)
COVID-19 infection	
No	18 (100.0)
Isolation for COVID-19	
No	18 (100.0)
Some relative suffered COVID-19	
No	15 (83.33)
Yes	3 (16.67)
Some relative needed hospitalization for COVID-19	
No	16 (88.89)
Yes	2 (11.11)
Some relative died from COVID-19	
No	18 (100.0)
Some relative was severely ill or died during lockdown from another cause	
No	17 (94.44)
Yes	1 (5.56)

Note: FEP, first-episode psychosis; SD, standard deviation; %, percentage.

food intake. We found associations between needing more follow up-visits in mental health services and the seeking help from friends or family ($\chi^2=5.657, p=.017, V=.561$), reading information sources and self-help to cope with stress ($\chi^2=5.294, p=.021, V=.542$), and focusing on the emotions that stress generates ($\chi^2=5.657, p=.017, V=.561$) coping strategies. Patients who needed to change their pharmacological treatment were more likely to seek help from friends or family ($\chi^2=5.657, p=.017, V=.561$), read information sources and self-help to cope with stress ($\chi^2=5.294, p=.021, V=.542$), and focus on the emotions that stress generates ($\chi^2=5.657, p=.017, V=.561$) as coping strategies. Seeking help from professionals in stressful situations was related with having to stop working or studying ($\chi^2=4.018, p=.045, V=.572$). The strategies of focusing on specific problems and seek solutions, and also accepting the situation with resignation were associated with working at home in those people who changed their way of working ($\chi^2=4.000, p=.046, V=1.000$ and $\chi^2=4.000, p=.046, V=1.000$, respectively). Finally, avoiding thinking about the situation was not related to any impact in their daily life.

DISCUSSION

We found that people who cope with stress by seeking help from friends or family, focusing on the emotions that stress generates, and reading information sources and self-help to cope with stress could be related with an increased need for professional support. People who sought help from mental-health professionals in stressful situations could have tended to present worse daily life functioning, such as stopping to work or study.

However, strategies such as focusing on specific problems and seek solutions and accepting the situation with resignation could be related with better functioning in daily life, specifically with maintaining an occupation.

Prior research suggests that emotion-orientation coping strategies have a worse effect on symptom management and adapting to the stressful situations (Allott et al., 2015; Riera-López de Aguilera et al., 2019). Patients with FEP that experienced higher levels of stress might have needed to seek help from friends, family, or professionals. The consequences of social distancing on social connectedness, social isolation and even loneliness caused stress in general population. This highlights the human need for relationships, contacts, and social bonds, as well as the negative consequences that

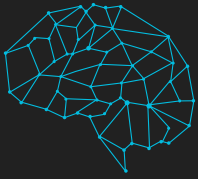
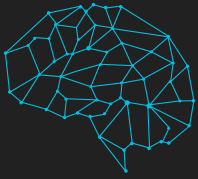


TABLE 2. Significant relationships between coping strategies and daily life activities during COVID-19 lockdown in patients with FEP.					
Daily life activities	Use of coping strategies		χ^2	p-value	Cramér's V
	No	Yes			
	N (%)	N (%)			
Normalizing the situation					
Food intake			11.250	0.004	0.791
Decreased	2 (100.0)	1 (6.3)			
Remained the same	0 (0.0)	11 (68.8)			
Increased	0 (0.0)	4 (25.0)			
Seeking help from friends of family					
More follow up-visits in mental health services			5.657	0.017	0.561
No	11 (100.0)	4 (57.1)			
Yes	0 (0.0)	3 (42.9)			
Need of changes in pharmacological treatment			5.657	0.017	0.561
No	11 (100.0)	4 (57.1)			
Yes	0 (0.0)	3 (42.9)			
Seeking help from professionals					
Stop working or studying			4.018	0.045	0.572
No	11 (78.6)	1 (25.0)			
Yes	3 (21.4)	3 (75.0)			
Reading sources of information and self-help					
More follow up-visits in mental health services			5.294	0.021	0.542
No	15 (88.2)	0 (0.0)			
Yes	2 (11.8)	1 (100.0)			
Need of changes in pharmacological treatment			5.294	0.021	0.542
No	15 (88.2)	0 (0.0)			
Yes	2 (11.8)	1 (100.0)			
Focusing on the emotions					
More follow up-visits in mental health services			5.657	0.017	0.561
No	11 (100.0)	4 (57.1)			
Yes	0 (0.0)	3 (42.9)			
Need of changes in pharmacological treatment			5.657	0.017	0.561
No	11 (100.0)	4 (57.1)			
Yes	0 (0.0)	3 (42.9)			
Focusing on specific issues and find solutions					
Working at home*			4.000	0.046	1.000
No	2 (100.0)	0 (0.0)			
Yes	0 (0.0)	2 (100.0)			
Accepting the situation with resignation					
Working at home*			4.000	0.046	1.000
No	0 (0.0)	2 (100.0)			
Yes	2 (100.0)	0 (0.0)			

Note: N, number of participants; %, percentage; χ^2 , Chi-square test; p, probability.
*Working at home only in those people who changed their way of working (N=4).



a lack of thereof has in mental health (Williams, Armitage, Tampe, & Dienes, 2020).

Previous research has highlighted that normalizing the situation is a good coping strategy for patients with FEP (Riera-López de Aguilera et al., 2019). However, we found that patients who used this strategy could have reduced food intake, while general population increased consumption of fresh produce and limited consumption of fast food (Navarro-Pérez, Fernández-Aparicio, González-Jiménez, Montero-Alonso, & Schmidt-RioValle, 2021).

Recent data examining coping strategies during lockdown in general population have suggested that both focusing on specific problems and accepting the situation have been useful for maintaining daily life activity (Fluharty & Fancourt, 2021; Gurvich et al., 2021). As our results have shown, these strategies might seem to be beneficial for patients with FEP as well.

In summary, not all coping strategies could have impacted in the same way in daily life of patients with FEP during COVID-19 lockdown.

The main limitations were: (a) the reduced number of cases included in the sample, so the statistical analysis performed are compromised, and the results obtained and their interpretations must be read with caution; (b) the lack of a control group to compare the patients with FEP regarding the coping strategies used and the relationship on their daily life activities during total COVID-19 confinement; and (c) the non-standardization of the measurement instruments, the questionnaires used were created *ad hoc*. Future research should study whether associations persist and their long-term consequences. Furthermore, it would be important to consider coping strategies in relation to clinical and sociodemographic variables.

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DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA, BUENAS PRÁCTICAS Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

FINANCIACIÓN

La financiación para la realización de este estudio fue otorgada por el Instituto de Salud Carlos III (número de beca de investigación sanitaria PI17/00111). También por la Agèn-

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CONTRIBUCIÓN

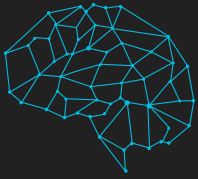
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CONFLICTOS DE INTERESES

Las/los autoras/es declaran la ausencia de potenciales conflictos de intereses.

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