COVID-19 Pandemic: Examining Issues with the Survivors and the Ways to Support their Psychological Well Being

Sani A. Oshishepo[1]
Veronica Y. Genda[2]
Hadiza I. Dahiru[3]
Abdullahi Bashir Idris, Ph.D[4]
[1&3]Department of Psychology,
Nasarawa State University Keffi
[2]Department of psychology,
Federal University Gashua, Yobe State
[4]Department of Sociology,
Nasarawa State University, Keffi
Email: sanioshishepo@gmail.com; Phone: 08038282720

Abstract
The current corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic has drastically affected the lives of millions around the globe. A significant number of patients who survived the COVID-19 outbreak have presented with at least one mental health issue, such as anxiety, insomnia, mood disorders or post –traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at one month follow up after hospitalization treatment. As reported by current studies from Milan, Italy. In the current review, this study examines the survivors of the COVID 19 disease, issues that accompany the survivors and ways to support this survivor's victim. Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Rapid-PFA Models were used as theoretical framework. Despite the criticisms of these models, they support through decisive early intervention during outbreaks like covid-19 with a coping tools designed to alleviate acute distress and also evaluate the necessity for sustained mental healthcare via empathy and reassurance, and promote functional capacity using cognitive and behavioral interventions such as positive self-talk, relaxation and imagery.

Keywords: Corona virus, infectious disease, Psychosocial Support, Survivors and Victims

Introduction

The emergence of corona virus pandemic first reported in Wuhan, china toward the end of 2019, when a group of patients with pneumonia of obscure reason was connected to a nearby Huanan South China seafood market in Wuham, Hubei province, China. While China put forth a valiant effort to contain the spread of the infection with uncommon lockdowns, the infection wriggles its way to the world.

The corona virus has place with a group of viruses that may cause different manifestations, for example, pneumonia, fever, breathing problem, and lung disease. Corona viruses are known to infect different animals around the world, yet not very many have been known to infect humans. There are four genera of CoVs: (i) corona virus (alphaCoV), (ii) corona virus (betaCoV), (iii) corona virus (deltaCoV), and (iv) corona virus (gammaCoV) likely infect the avian species. It is the first occasion when the corona virus is causing an epidemic that caused worldwide health threat: In November 2019, an episode of corona viruses (CoVs) with serious intense respiratory conditions severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) (Ashefo &Oboh, 20202). This virus rapidly spread globally with approximately 3 million confirmed infections and 200 000 deaths within the first month of the pandemic (Ademola, & Balogu, 2020).

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared corona virus diseases 2019 (COVID-19) a pandemic as of July 29, 2020, 17 million cases have been reported worldwide, with more than half a million deaths across 215 countries. In the United States, the cumulative COVID 19 hospitalization rate from March 1 to July 18, 2020, was 120.p per 100 000 people, representing nearly 400 000 hospitalized patients with respiratory – confirmed COVID-19 during this period.

For most patients with severe illness requiring hospitalization, COVID-19 has been frightening and life- changing experience. At the peak of the pandemic, the attention of health care teams was focused on saving lives and protecting health services from being overwhelmed. Those who survived were often discharged without a robust process of follow up. The prevalence of post –COVID-19

complications is not yet fully known and may only became apparent in the months and years to come.

Data from previous corona virus (severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus (SARS-COV) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome corona virus (MERS- COV) outbreaks indicate that between 20% and 40% of survivors experience long- term complications.

In a recent report, 145 patients with COVID -19 who were evaluated have a mean of 2 months after hospital discharge at a follow-up clinic in Rome, Italy, many patients reported persisted fatigue (53.1%), dyspnea (43.4%) join pain (27.3%), and chest pain (21.7%). Drawing on these experiences, respiratory, cardiovascular, neurology, metabolic and psychosocial complications may be important long term effects for COVID-19. It is therefore, essential that systems are put in place for timely and thorough identification for appropriate interventions (WHO, 2020).

This has mad government at different level to take measures such as International and inter-state lockdown, curfews, wearing facemasks, utilizing hand sanitizers and regular hand washing to lessen the spread of these infections.

Theoretical Framework

Rehabilitation or Recovery for COVID-19 Survivors

Redesigning the mental health pathway that mirrors the covid-19 patient's journey from home to hospital and back again is critical towards supportive assistance for affected people reintegration. A framework that is adopted to offer valuable mental healthcare for affected covid-19 survivors is the Psychological First Aid (PFA) protocol

Psychological First Aid (PFA)

The PFA is a tool kit that provides psychosocial support through decisive early intervention during outbreaks like covid-19. It is a coping tool designed to alleviate acute distress and also evaluate the necessity for sustained mental healthcare via empathy and reassurance. PFA creates a conduit for concerted services and managing information among covid-19 affected persons. PFA

emergency management can be offered through (e.g PFA for field workers, PFA for first responders, PFA for listen, protect, and connect). One of the PFA models that could broadly be used to extend behavioral health surge capacity is the "SAPID" tool kit developed by the Johns Hopkin's Center for Public Health Preparedness.

RAPID-PFA MODEL- this model offers a five- step approach that evaluates the effectiveness of trained providers (i.e non mental health trained public personnel) in real crisis situations like covid-19.

The five-step procedures includes **step one**; rapport and reflective listening: this step is used during the interaction with person in crisis, and the objective is to create initial contact and establish rapport through active and reflective listening techniques like paraphrasing with empathy; **step two** involves assessment that hinges on the evaluation of psychological and basic physical needs; **step three** focuses on prioritization by emphasizing the importance of triage principles by targeting on the severity of cases that needs emergent care; **Step four** introduces and intervention that aims to alleviate distress and promote functional capacity using cognitive and behavioral interventions (e.g positive self-talk, relaxation, imagery), and also offered some basic needs; and **step- five** as the final protocol targets disposition and follow- up that provides continues process until stabilization of the situation through constant support, meeting client needs, and regular monitoring. Especially, all the protocols aim to calm and orient emotionally overwhelmed survivors, offer practical help, contact, and engage, provide safety and comfort, and gather information on the present concerns and needs.

According to Birhead and Vermeulen, PFA is a useful tool for clinicians, other analogous personnel and survivors to effectively manage stress- related reactions after traumatic events like the covid-19 pandemic.

Methods

This reviewed evaluated outbreaks of covid-19 pandemic to understand the extent of adverse effects on the psychological

health as experienced by the survivors' of covid-19, mental health management and the ways to support this victims that survive from this devastating pandemic that affect the people globally. The study adopted secondary data i.e published previous and current articles on Google and Elsevier about how issues accompany the survivor victims of covid-19 pandemic has been considered and reviewed.

Issues with Covid-19 Survivors

When a contagious diseases turns to a pandemic, such as covid-19, people are understandably frightened and concerned. For clear reasons, the corona virus pandemic has thrown up fears, distress, worry and pessimism. According to a non – profit academic medical centre in the United States, Mayo Clinic, when an outbreak is caused by new virus, rumors and misinformation usually run rampart. Stereotypes quickly arise about people who have the diseases. This occurs even among survivors.

In a report, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) said patients admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and put on ventilators often suffered depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The virus has recorded thousands of deaths, affected millions with over two millions recoveries. But the MIT report stated that for those who had recovered, their stay in intensive care was likely to be one of the most traumatic things they would ever experience.

Being able to breathe is something we take for granted. But patients who have such difficult breathing that they need to be intubated (which involves having a tube inserted in to their mouth and down their airway) often belief they are going to die at some point during their stay in intensive care.

Anecdotally, ICU doctors say patients with COVID-19 tend to need a particularly large amount of sedation, which damages muscles and nerves, especially in the lungs. That damage can be permanent, which can, in turn, undermine the patient's mental health". Another report by Webmd stated that the ordeal faced by critically ill COVID-19 patients would not likely end even when they pulled through to survived their life – threatening infection. Expert

said some of these survivors would be emotionally scarred by the time spent in the ICU, even as they were at the increased risk of psychological problems, such as anxiety, depression and PTSD.

A former President and CEO of Beth Israel Medical Centre in New York City, David Shulkin, observed that, unfortunately, such was one of the expected unintended consequences of the pandemic. "In almost every other pandemic that is been studies, these have been associated with behavioral health issues that have not only short-term but long-term in standing and this one is not an exception.

The psychological effects on patients such as fatigue, fear of contact, poor sleep, loneliness, and depressed mood also evolve and last for a prolonged period after discharged from the hospital.
Shulkin noted that one study from Wuhan, China, in which more than 700 COVID-19 survivors were given a scandalized test for symptoms of PTSD "over 96 per cent of those respondents indicated they were suffering from post traumatic stress".

In another report, researchers at the University London, United Kingdom, indicated that one in four COVID-19 survivors could suffer from long-lasting mental health problems. The researcher found that a third of people who survived previous disease outbreaks such as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory syndrome (MERS) went on to develop PTSD after an average of almost three years.

According to the corona virus situation report published by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) as at Friday 27 September, 2020.The latest NCDC data, indicated that recovering have improved significantly, of the over 58,000 total COVID-19 infections so far, 49,722 persons have been discharged from hospitals after treatment while a little over 7000 active cases remain in the country. Currently, Nigeria has tested just nearly 500, 000 of its 200 million population.

However, the continuing shortness of breath, muscles weakness, flashbacks, mental fogginess and other symptoms may plague patients for a long time particularly those who recover or survives from this pandemic. Hundreds of thousands of seriously ill corona virus patients who survive (recover) and leave the hospital

are facing a new and difficult challenge. Many are struggling to residual symptoms, and some problems may persist for months, years or even a rest of their lives.

Patients who are returning home after being hospitalized and isolated for severe respiratory failure from the virus are confronting physical, neurological, cognitive and emotional issues. Emotional issues may be heightened for COVID-19. It is really common for survivors to have PTSD after going through this – nightmares, depression and anxiety because they are having flashback and remembering what happened.

In lieu of these, all the various studies highlighted the importance of mental health support for COVID-19 survivors across the world in the current health crisis eases.

Ways to Support the Survivors (Victims)

The following are ways through which COVID-19 survivors can be supported

i. Avoiding stigmatization of Victims

Stigmatization has resulted in a form of social death. Chen & Courtwright (2016) implicitly affirm this by arguing that stigmatization involves identifying and making undesirable characteristics in a way that narrows a person's social identify to those characteristics.

According to a report by the Bangkok post, in some countries, especially in Sub- Saharan Africa, some COVID-19 survivors have been subjected to ostracisation in their communities. In some cases, some patients continue to be shamed even after they recovered from the corona virus, with many believing they are still endangering public health. Some of the survivors are nicknamed "corona," a development that has psychologically disturbed them.

An Assistant Professor of Human Development and family Sciences at the University of Delaware, US Valeric Earnshaw, observed that decades of stigma could harm the mental and physical health of COVID-19 survivors. Stigma can take the forms of social rejection, gossip, physical violence and denial in the society. Experiencing stigma from others can lead to elevated depressive symptoms, stress, and substances use.

A Psychiatrist, Bola Omolodu, advised people to desist from stigmatization of Covid-19 survivors. It is inhuman, pathetic and saddening to stigmatize anyone who bravely fought the Corona virus. These people need our support, not stigmatization. I think when some people think they are not immune against the Corona virus, they would treat survivors, and even patients better.

ii. Reach Out to them

The Chairman Association Committee on the Psychiatric Dimensions of Disaster, Joshua Morganstein, in which year? observed that Covid-19 patients could find comfort when their family, friends and neighbors checked on them. So listening to people could help them feel calm. Things that could help people during a disaster and adverse events that help them feel safer and calmer includes, enhancing feelings of social connection, improving sense of community reliance, and improving our sense of hope and optimism.

Morganstein (year) argued that, people who believed they lived in stronger communities usually had lower rates of PTSD after disasters. Therefore, building strong communities can really have a significant mental health impact in a positive way for all of the society.

iii. Use right Words when talking to them

Melinda Smith, Lawrence Robinson, and Jeanne Segal opined that, sometimes it might be hard to know what to say when speaking to someone with depression. Someone might fear that if they brought up their worries, the person might get angry, feel insulted or ignore the concerns. Someone may unsure what questions to ask or how to be supportive. So someone did not have to try to "fix" a friend or family member who was depressed, but also someone just needed to be good listener.

Often, the simple act of talking face to face can be enormous help to someone suffering from depression. Encourage the depressed persons to talk about their feelings, and be willing to listen without judgment. Don't expect a single conversation to be the end of it. Depressed persons tend to withdraw from others and

isolate self and this can pose danger. Rather, you may need to express your concerns and willingness to listen over and over again. Be gentle, yet persistent and use right words for them. These words could be 'I have been feeling concerned about you lately,' 'Recently, I have noticed some differences in you and wondered how you are doing', or 'I wanted to check in with you because you have seemed pretty down lately'.

Questions you can ask a depressed person include 'when did you begin feeling like this? How can I best support you right now? 'Have you thought about getting help?. You can also tell any COVID-19 survivor passing through depression words such as you are not alone, I'm here for you during this tough time, 'it may be hard to believe right now, but the way you're feeling will change'," people tell me what I can do now to help you, Even if I'm not able to understand exactly how you feel, I care about you and want to help, and you're important to me. Your life is important to me.

iv. Take them Out

A Psychologist in Ibadan, Femi Johnson in which year? said helping COVID-19 survivors could be in form of activities that could improve their mental health. According to him "If you know someone who recently survived the COVID-19, you can take them out on a date. Thankfully, restaurants are allowed to open within a specified time period. So, taking them out could improve their mind rest".

Johnson also suggested that people could help survivors practice self-care activities like mediation, yoga, mindfulness, taking walks, listening to music, cooking a beautiful meal, or reading a book. All these were healthy coping strategies that could help survivors avoid mental illness.

v. Engage them in exercise, others

An Abuja- based wellness coach and Psychologist, Kike Alawe, which year? said helping COVID-19 survivors to stay active could be therapeutic for them and make them avoid depression. He argued that survivors should not be made to sit down all day long, it could worsen their mental health. Of course, they could watch

movies, listen to music and others. These are better alternatives to drinking, drugs, etc.

However, we can encourage them to exercise. This will not only help them stay physical strong, it will go a long way in boosting their mental health.

vi. Let them do a project that brings joy

Maisha Johnson (2020) said being stuck at home did not have to be all bad for survivors, saying it could be an opportunity to make them dive in to home projects- new or long-forgotten hobbies and other activities with potential to light them up, like Gardening, crafting and art can all have potential mental health benefits like soothing stress.

vii. Introducing them to a therapist

Depression is a serious mental health condition but it is treatable. The two key components of treatment for depression are medication and psychotherapy. Although people can opt for one without the other, experts said combining the two provided the best results.

According to expert, stall the expert a survivors should be encouraged to seek professional help if the following signs are noticed over a prolonged period.

i Constant feelings of sadness or emptiness
ii Sleeping significantly more or less than usual
iii Eating significantly more or less than usual
iv Agitation
v A deep lack of energy
vi Irritability and pessimism
vii Loss of interest in thing that formerly brought pleasure
viii Inability to concentrate
ix Suicidal thoughts

Physical therapy can help restore muscle strength, movement and flexibility. Occupational therapy can help people regain the ability to do everyday tasks like grocery shopping and cooking. Speech therapy can help swallowing and vocal cord issues. So post –COVID care you are dealing with some cognitive issues,

physical issues, lung issues, heat issues, kidney issues, trauma- and all of these things have to be managed just right.

Conclusion

This study has reviewed covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria by considering issues and ways to support survivors of the infection. The study findings show that covid-19 is real and infected cases are on the rise globally. The virus infects anyone regardless of social status. It is therefore necessary, for individuals, community, healthcare stakeholders to collaborate with psychotherapists in the management of this pandemic to regulate residents emotions and promote people's psychological wellbeing in the society particular those who survived this COVID -19. The study also highlight the need to observed preventive measures proffered by W.H.O, NCDC and regulations by government at all levels such as use of face marks, regular hand washing and the use of hand sanitizers to cope the spread.

Recommendations

The paper recommended the following;

1. Governments should adopt multifaceted strategies to manage covid-19 issues related to mental health care and psychosocial support must be given a priority and integrated as part of the overall framework for managing the pandemic, including survivors of the virus.
2. Broader mental health training for facility and community-based health workers are urgently required and should be coordinated within communities by government in collaboration with community shareholders with specific guidelines for psychosocial support during outbreaks such as the current pandemic.
3. Policies makers should use reintegrated approaches for covid-19 survivors, to be delivered on the basis of context-specific needs through individualized protocol like the RAPID-PFA that would mastermind optimal well-being of the people devoid of any psychological challenges created by the pandemic might be useful.

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