

ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION IN ADOLESCENTS AS CONDITIONS RELATED TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to describe anxiety disorders and depression in adolescents as conditions related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The research modality is qualitative, since it focuses on data and methods; it is also descriptive, because it describes statistical data, demonstrating the impact of the study on the population. The sample is of the census type, since it compiles important scientific information for the development of the study; that is, all the research units are taken as samples. Types of scientific studies from universities, scientific journals, and health organizations in Spanish and English were included. From the exclusion criteria, journals, newspapers or surveys without scientific basis were not taken into account. The article has investigative validity and reliability, as well as statistical data, since the studies, being of a scientific type, comply with the basic requirements of reliability of the instruments used for their development. At the end of the review, the average result for anxiety is 29.7; for depression, 26.3; for stress, 25.6; highlighting suicidal ideas with 8 to 10% of the population, of which the figures with respect to the severe extreme level for anxiety are 12.7; for depression, 9.1; for stress, between 3.8 to 6.09%. The results obtained coincide with the figures provided by the WHO, the level of anxiety experienced by adolescents as extreme, representing almost half of the percentage of anxiety cases, followed by depression and stress with significant figures, which indicates the problem that this pathology represents for adolescents.

Key words: Anxiety, Depression, COVID-19, Pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

Psychological well-being results from the predominance of positive emotions such as pleasure, joy and happiness (positive affectivity) over negative or discomfort-producing emotions such as hopelessness and destructive hostility. Pleasurable emotions increase our vitality and promote individual development and the establishment of social and loving bonds. Interest and joy

stimulate exploratory behavior, both in the external and internal worlds, while pathological anxiety and depression inhibit creative behavior and personal development. The positive person maintains a stable sense of hope and optimism that allows him to engage in the tasks he takes on according to his moral values. (Mingote, 2013)

As the author points out, thinking about psychological well-being is indispensable for the development of any human being; it is the stimulant for enjoying life and showing the necessary interest to carry out daily activities. To think of an adolescent without such well-being is to open the window to discover the reasons that trigger his or her behavior, including the creativity that is so necessary for his or her development. As a result of social distancing, many activities are directly affected, many of which are related to loneliness and frustration, since the social network provides the adolescent with a social and emotional support system that helps him/her to achieve greater independence in relation to adults and his/her own identity. Thus, such isolation can lead to poor interpersonal relationships, deficits in the school environment, among other situations that many authors have referred to. The question then arises: how does an adolescent manage to maintain a positive mind after more than a year of confinement? As a result of this question, the current situation of adolescents in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic is analyzed.

Although it may surprise us, it is evident that children experience stress since they are very young and can suffer, just like adults, anxiety disorders and depression, which in their case will also have more serious consequences later on (Mingote, 2013).

Ignoring the signs of these pathologies can bring very important repercussions for any country, since society would be facing a new pandemic, this time, it would involve mental wellbeing and with it multiple families around the country.

Recent research draws attention to the fact that almost half of the adolescent population shows symptoms of depression and anxiety to some degree. But also a high percentage of them show severe symptoms and coexistence of both pathologies (O. Velasco, 2010). The author was already making a call to pay attention to these pathologies, without even imagining what the coming years would bring, by putting in the balance the situation that was experienced 11 years ago and what is happening, if at that time we were talking about almost half, just... imagine what is happening with this pandemic!

Millet (2019) notes: in some ways anxiety as the dinosaur has always been here. What has happened in recent years is that it has come to the fore, especially among minors. Let's not forget

that, until relatively recently, it was generally considered that mental disorders in children and adolescents were something transient, that they disappeared with age. He also exposes: Young people who from a very early age have experienced hyperactive existences, under constant parental supervision (feeling constantly observed provokes anxiety!) and in which precocity was the order of the day. Hyperparenting and anxiety go hand in hand. But in parallel with the 21st century children and adolescents are becoming more accountable to adults than ever before. They perform in a myriad of end-of-year festivals, in games and in various competitions, as children today have practically no time for a basic activity in childhood: playing, which is also a very good escape route for anxiety.

It highlights the need for children to be children and adolescents to be adolescents, the impetus of parents to turn them into the best produces that these experience situations of anxiety and depression, placing them on the edge of life, where they are between being robots that respond to competitive demands or survival demands, children who when they become adolescents do not know how to express their emotions, and in the face of confinement do not find alternative outlets for feelings beyond their comprehension, situations they begin to experience due to lack of social interaction, loss of their parents' jobs, changes of schools due to the economic situation, social abandonment and many other circumstances they are forced to experience without being able to escape them and much less without being able to express them with their peers. If before the pandemic many of them felt watched, with the pandemic many feel suffocated by having their parents as full time guardians. It is interesting to think about what feelings these young people are experiencing now and how they are channeling those feelings.

Mental health services are being disrupted by COVID-19 in most countries, according to a WHO study (October 2020), of which more than 60% of countries noted disruptions in mental health services for vulnerable people, including children and adolescents (72%), older people (70%), and women requiring prenatal or postnatal services (61%).

Guiding research question: What is the relationship between anxiety and depression in a sample of adolescents, as conditions related to the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the existing scientific literature records to date?

The above question supports the situational analysis of the adolescent population in the face of pathologies such as anxiety and depression, as a result of the confinement brought about by the pandemic caused by COVID-19.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is of a qualitative documentary type, during the month of June 2021, since it interprets the current situation of adolescents facing the COVID-19 pandemic and provides an overview of the same; it is of an interpretative and inductive type, which allows for a critical and reflective analysis of the published scientific content.

The sample is of the census type, since all the scientific information is important for the development of the study; that is, all the research units are taken into account. A total of 20 articles were reviewed.

To delimit key words, the thesaurus of Descriptors in Health Sciences (DeCS) in Spanish and MeSh (Medical Subject Headings) in English were used. The search strategy used in each database considered for research purposes was gathered through the acceptance of the descriptors, using the present flow chart.

Figure No. 1: Database summary according to descriptors and search strategies.

Database	Descriptors	Search strategies
Sage Journal	COVID-19, depression, anxiety.	Depression in adolescents, Anxiety by COVID.
Oxford university	COVID-19, depression, anxiety, social isolation.	COVID and depression, COVID-19 anxiety, social isolation and depression.
Elsevier	COVID-19, anxiety, mental well-being, adolescents.	COVID and anxiety, Covid and mental well-being, adolescents and COVID-19
Dialnet	COVID-19, anxiety, depression, confinement.	COVID and anxiety, depression and COVID, confinement and anxiety, confinement and adolescents.

Source: Data collection and studies for the article.

At the same time, Pub Med, Scielo and Google Scholar resources and official pages (O.M.S, MINSA) were consulted, with the descriptors indicated (Table 1):

In addition, an extended search was conducted in non-scientific literature such as reports of organizations, press releases and gray literature.

Inclusion criteria for these papers were:

Research articles, reviews.

- Official websites with pertinent information for the collection of appropriate information.
- For the topic related to Covid-19, documents published during 2020 were selected.
- For the topic of anxiety and depression, documents published in the last 20 years were taken into account.

Exclusion criteria for these documents were:

- Papers written in languages other than English or Spanish.
- Documents that did not expose the situation of the population in relation to mental well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic, or that related the quality of life of people in this period of confinement.

For the processing of the information, a matrix was prepared in order to gather the following information: author, title, date, country of publication and type of publication, database where emphasis was placed on topics such as: anxiety and depression in adolescents, mental wellbeing and the effects of the pandemic. Based on the matrix designed, the results obtained are described, attending to the categories of the review, all based on the objective of the study.

RESULTS:

A table has been made with some studies in order to highlight the relationship between COVID-19 pandemic confinement and diseases such as anxiety and depression.

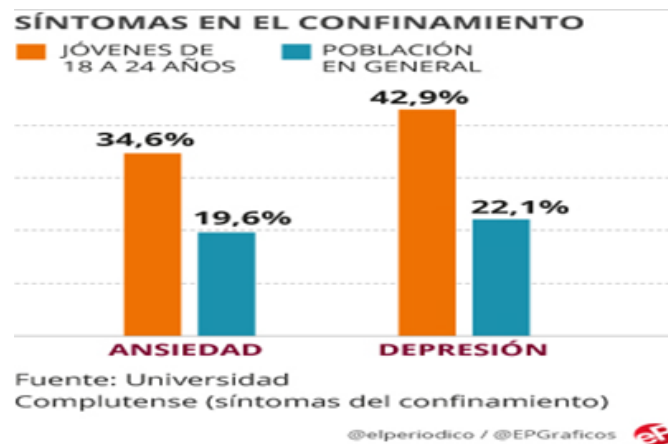
Figure No. 2: Schematization of the search performed for the article.

Author	Country/ University	Year	Results	No.ofinterviewees
Pineda Díaz, D, A, et al.	Santander Colombia	(2020)	2. I feel unhappy with a percentage of 80.5%. 16. I feel down with a percentage of 60.9%. 18. I am depressed with a percentage of 85.9%). Indicators of depression	130
Orellana, C. I.,	University of Almeria	(2020)	The results indicate that the greatest psychological difficulties are centered on emotional problems, behavioral problems and the total difficulties score. In addition, a positive relationship was found between fears associated with COVID-19 and the presence of these problems in the child and adolescent population. It is highlighted that, as confinement progresses, the presence of psychological difficulties increases and that these affect childhood and adolescence in a differential manner.	972 families with children between 3 and 18 years old.

Author	Country/ University	Year	Results	No. of interviewees
Molina, A.	Havana	2020	Anxiety predominated as a state with high (30.96 %) and medium (26.90 %) levels; depression manifested as a state in medium (36.54 %) and high (13.70 %) levels and medium (12.20 %) as a trait; 66.49 % of the persons presented altered stress levels; 98.47 % did not show suicidal ideation. No association was revealed between stress, anxiety ($p= 0.90$) and depression as a trait and state ($p= 0.97$).	1125 people
Sierra, P.D. M	National Autonomous University of Mexico/ Mexico	2021	The findings revealed similarities in Latin American realities and a generalized feeling of concern about the absence of State strategies to address the needs of vulnerable sectors, such as low-income families and those who will not be able to return to school.	Six adolescents participated, three of each sex between 15 and 18 years of age from Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Guatemala and Bolivia.
Catagua-Meza	Technical University of Manabi, Portoviejo, Colombia.	2020	They reveal that there is a clear relationship between confinement due to the health pandemic and anxiety in adolescents, with most of them showing a moderate level of anxiety.	25 adolescents

Source: Fimia Rodriguez 2021.

Figure No. 3: Young people between 18 and 39 years of age reflect lower emotional self-care and present more anxiety, depression and feelings of loneliness than people over 60.



Source: Manuel Muñoz, Abril 2020.

The graph indicates anxiety and depression with elevated levels in young people with respect

to the rest of the population, in Madrid, UCM psychologist.

Figure No. 4: The impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of adolescents and youth.



Source: Reporte de UNICEF 2020.

UNICEF highlights the percentage of anxiety and depression in young people, which is a matter of concern, as mental well-being is one of the determining factors in the future of functional adults for society.

Figure No. 5: Youth Mental Health in the midst of the Pandemic



Source: University of the Sabana/Ministry of Education/Ministry of Health 2020.

The mere presence of anxiety and depression in its severe form is an alert for the health

system, since it is a population at risk, which can trigger life-threatening consequences, i.e., death.

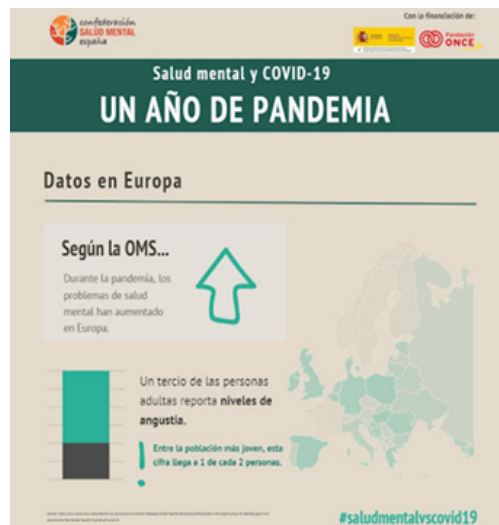
Figure No. 6: Mental health and COVID-19, a year of pandemic.



Source: Mental Health Confederation of Spain, 2020.

The increase in suicidal ideas in young people are red flags of alert that cannot go unnoticed, it is the cry of this age population to be heard, the pandemic by COVID-19, aggravates the action of health personnel in the intervention in these needs of the population.

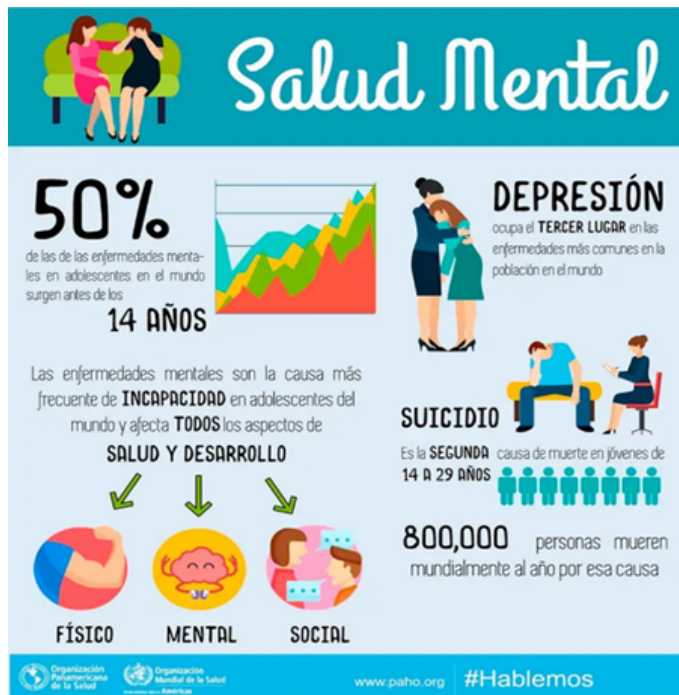
Figure No. 7: Mental health and COVID-19, a year of pandemic.



Source: Mental Health Confederation of Spain, 2021.

It is alarming to know that the situation in Europe is reflected, that in the younger population the figure of distress is 1 to 2 people, as it indicates that the problem may become more severe than we can imagine, and that probably a new pandemic is coming, which threatens the mental well-being of the world population, in this case it would no longer be 1 virus, on the contrary it would be the effect that it has been leaving in its wake.

Figure No. 8: W.H.O. Bulletin “Young people and mental health in a changing world”.



Source: O.M.S., October 2018.

If by 2018 these figures were alarming, it is not difficult to imagine the current scenario in the face of the pandemic, where the social interaction that is so important in adolescents. It was curtailed by the isolation measures in order to mitigate the spread of the virus, it is essential to determine the current situation, analyze it and act.

Figure No. 9: Mental health and COVID-19, a year of pandemic.



Source: Mental Health Confederation of Spain, 2021.

Parents are the first to identify warning signs in their children’s behavior; with quarantine, the percentages of such changes have significant figures, which attract the attention of health professionals in charge of prevention and promotion at the primary level.

Figure No. 10: Predictors of emotional symptoms during home quarantine for COVID-19 pandemic in El Salvador.

Tabla 1

Niveles de los estados emocionales en la muestra participante

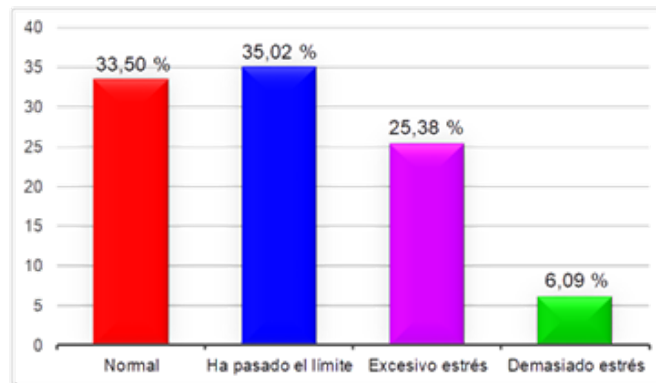
Estados	Leve	Moderado	Severo	Extremadamente severo
Depresión	74.9%	13.3%	2.7%	9.1%
Ansiedad	73.2%	8.6%	5.6%	12.7%
Estrés	77.9%	8.3%	10.0%	3.8%

Nota. Elaboración propia con base en datos recabados y los criterios del Clinik Lab (s.f).

Source: Orellana 2020.

The figures of this study are worrying, because knowing that there are percentages of adults with these pathologies helps to support the need to know the current situation of adolescents as a result of the pandemic and social confinement.

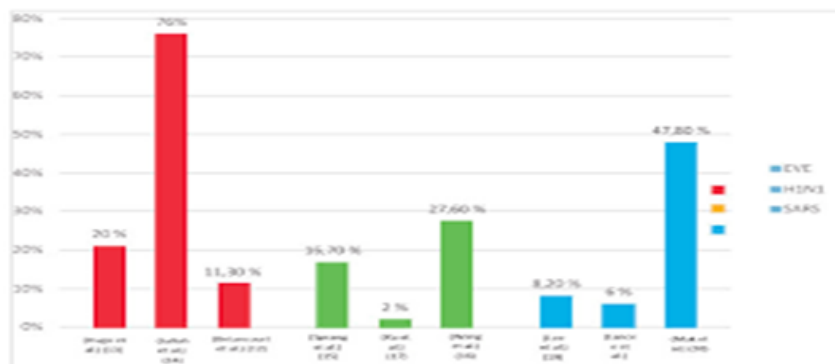
Figura No. 11: Psychological manifestations of the epidemiological situation caused by Covid 19.



Source: Arias; Herrero; Cabrera; Chibás; García; 2020.

In this study, anxiety was observed as one of the conditions with the highest incidence in the epidemiological situation; however, depression and medium-level stress also predominated, without the aforementioned being related to anxiety or suicidal thoughts.

Figure No. 12: Prevalence of symptoms of post-traumatic disorders according to various studies in other pandemics.



Source: (Palomino; Jeff; 2020).

This study was based on several investigations on the prevalence of symptoms of stress disorders in the different epidemics that have emerged during this XXI century, and it was shown that individuals were closely related to the symptoms and the management of the situation with the stress of the evolution of the disease, social isolation and the use of biosecurity elements and an area of intensive care in the face of aggravating situations.

DISCUSSION

The review of the different studies compiled in this document coincides in the average anxiety in adolescents, which averages 29.7%, depression 26.3 and stress 25.6, with suicidal ideation standing out with 8 to 10% of the population, of which the figures with respect to the severe extreme level for anxiety are 12.7, for depression 9.1 and for stress between 3.8 and 6.09%. The figures obtained coincide with the figures published by the WHO, it should be noted the increased risk of suicide in adolescents, related to the high levels of anxiety experienced by them, considered as extreme, which represents half of the percentage of anxiety cases.

As we can observe the findings of this study coincide with the observations of the authors Munoz 2020, who highlights the high percentage in the population of anxiety 34.6% and depression 42.9%, according to the CEO in the United States 2021, with anxiety figures of 28.2% and depression of 24.4%; UNICEF 2020 with anxiety figures of 27% and depression of 15%, with alarming figures of suicidal ideation in adolescents, of which 8% to 10%, 1 in 2 young people with changes in emotional state, representing 85.7%. Orella 2020 classified these 3 conditions in mild, moderate, severe and extremely severe; in mild levels these 3 conditions are presented in values between 73.2% and 77.9%; moderate between 8.6% and 13.3%; severe between 2.7% and 10%; very severe between 3.8% and 12.7%.

The University of Sabana in 2020 classified them similarly in severe very severe for the three conditions, where severe is between 10% and 18%, and very severe between 8% and 16%. Arias in 2020 worked on anxiety dividing it into: excess 25.38%, too much 6.09%, and over the limit 35.02%. These studies agree that there are mental disorders that occur in significant percentages in the population, with alarming figures such as the WHO, who indicate suicide as the second leading cause of death in young people between 14 and 29 years.

The literature is clear, adolescents are prone to develop anxiety and depression. The environment, coexistence with peers and the development of activities outside the home are some of the needs of adolescents for the development of mental wellbeing.

With only a few studies, it can be interpreted that the adolescent population is developing these pathologies, as a result of the confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics show that the new pandemic to be experienced could be the deterioration of mental wellbeing in the population.

Knowledge of the situation in other first world countries provides us with a starting point

for developing strategies to deal with the deficiencies that adolescents are experiencing, which is why it is considered appropriate for the government to design strategies aimed at preventing the consequences of pathologies such as depression, anxiety and stress; among the most delicate we can mention suicidal ideation and suicide itself.

CONCLUSIONS

The need for studies to be carried out in Panama with respect to the subject exposed is demonstrated, since it will allow knowing if the Panamanian adolescent population is also part of the situation experienced by other countries, where pathologies such as anxiety, depression and stress are on the rise; and which causes greater uncertainty and a certain level of concern if there are adolescents with suicidal ideas, where the numbers are on the rise.

The W.H.O. considers these pathologies to be important health issues, therefore, as health sector officials, we stress the importance of rescuing primary care programs aimed at adolescent care. It is indisputable that having adolescents in the school environment (high schools, colleges) is a tool that allows the primary sector to capture a significant population for preventive care.

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