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Unit 2 Annotated Bibliography

Mental health and causes for depression are often topics that are left out of the wider societal discourse for varying reasons such as prejudices, misinformation, and outright disregard. This societal discourse has seen itself go through a rapid and dramatic shift as we have gone through the Covid-19 Pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, with them creating lifestyle changes in society that affect everyone. Schools around the country have been closed and classes instead conducted over the internet, millions of workers had to take extended periods of time away from their jobs, or have had their jobs outright closed, and the general health trends among the population have hit a staggering downward plunge. These varying factors have led to an unprecedented surge in depression among the population and a heightened awareness for mental health due in part because now it is affecting such a large percentage of the populace that it has become unavoidable to discuss. My experience in these times has been as a student living in New York City, where the lockdowns and regulations have been enforced more strictly than most places in the country. School has been entirely online for almost two years, and many people have been struggling in terms of their mental health due to the life changes. Due to these factors my research will explore the varying major causes for depression and suffering mental health common among the populace post Covid-19, and what we could potentially do to combat these factors? Resources can be pre covid-19 or post covid-19 as they will discuss fundamental needs that would have been present before covid, but also heightened in severity post covid. The resources chosen will be credible with providing thorough information on the topic that is well based upon statistics and medical consensus.

Citation 1

Ettman CK, Abdalla SM, Cohen GH, Sampson L, Vivier PM, Galea S. "Prevalence of Depression Symptoms in US Adults Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic". *JAMA Network Open*. 2020;3(9):e2019686. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.19686.

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2770146>

- Summary

In the study the researchers investigate the comparison between the prevalence of depression symptoms in US adults before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. The sample of selected participants during Covid-19 were tasked with completing a survey and a follow up telephone interview. The sample that was taken before Covid-19 was conducted via household interviews and interviews in mobile examination centers where participants had physical and mental health measured. They factor in varying characteristics of the participants such as gender, race, wealth, and relationship status to compare and contrast the results between the demographics. The researchers also established thirteen main stressors that could be affecting participants based on previous studies conducted after traumatic events, stressors include financial problems, death of a loved one, and loss of employment among them.

- Reflection

The results showed that all demographics experienced higher levels of depression symptoms post Covid, and the prevalence of depression symptoms increased by more than three fold in general. Researchers observed that the most important factor of whether someone was experiencing depression was their financial resources, with "47% of lower income participants having depression symptoms, compared to 17% of the highest income participants having

depression symptoms”. I agree with the findings as the dramatic overall increase in depression among the populace is supported by the studies findings of a general increase of three fold. The factor of financial state being the most important indicator of someone's likeliness to report depression symptoms is also unsurprising as the Covid-19 lockdowns saw many workers either completely losing their jobs or having jobs be put on hold, making those with lower financial stability experience more stress due to the new risks that they do not have savings to fall back on. I feel as if the inclusion of participants under eighteen could help draw some insight into what minors would display as their most likely factor into if they experience depression, considering most minors do not work or have financial liability so their factor of whether they experience depression would be different from the adults. This study supports my research question's goal of finding the main primary causes of depression in the Covid-19 timeline and if those problems can help be alleviated thus improving mental health. This certain factor of finances being a primary cause could help be alleviated by governments creating increased financial safety nets that would alleviate the stress among those most affected, the lower income demographics. The author acknowledges that to help decrease the general increase in depression that the problem of financial vulnerability must be addressed by the government. “In particular, this burden is being borne by economically and socially marginalized groups, suggesting that individuals with low income and with fewer resources may benefit from particular policy attention in coming months.”

- Quotation

“These findings suggest that prevalence of depression symptoms in the US was more than 3-fold higher during COVID-19 compared with before the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals with lower social resources, lower economic resources, and greater exposure to stressors (eg, job loss) reported a greater burden of depression symptoms. Post–COVID-19 plans should account

for the probable increase in mental illness to come, particularly among at-risk populations.”

(Abstract- Conclusions and Relevance)

Citation 2

Chatterjee, Rhitu. “As Schools Reopen, Child Psychiatrists Expect To See A Surge Of Kids Who Need Help” NPR , 30 Aug. 2021

<https://www.npr.org/sections/back-to-school-live-updates/2021/08/30/1032461532/as-schools-reopen-child-psychiatrists-expect-to-see-a-surge-of-kids-who-need-hel>

- Summary

Mental health professionals see signs of a surge in minor students experiencing mental health challenges, “According to the CDC, between March and May, 2020, hospitals across the country saw a 24% increase in the proportion of mental health emergency visits by kids aged 5 to 11 years old, and a 31% increase for kids 12 to 17”. The main cause for the increase is due to social isolation brought upon the students by their schools turning to online classes due to the pandemic. The teenagers responded that their main struggles are social and academic anxiety, the anxiety developing from worries about socializing again after so long, and returning to normal in person classes. The author interviews mental health experts and gets insight into how the demand for support of kids with declining mental health has been significantly increased. With schools asking for mental health training and education of teachers in hopes that they can support kids that need assistance. The professionals document how they have needed to catch up to the increasing pressure put upon childrens and psychiatric hospitals due to the increasing number of kids seeking help.

- Reflection

The article showed a documented increase in the mental health struggles of those under eighteen, and that mental health professionals are having to adapt to increased demand. The main causes of the increase was discussed as being linked to the isolation students have faced due to Covid-19 lockdowns and how they suffer anxiety due to worries of having to adapt “most teenagers are struggling with social and academic anxiety, he adds. They are worried about socializing with their peers again and adapting to full-time in-person learning”. This piece addresses my research question by documenting one of the major causes of increased major causes of depression and suffering mental health common among the populace. This time in particular the article helps give insight into what minors are facing and being affected the most by post Covid, as opposed to other studies and articles that just focus on adults. The isolation creating problems for the kids is understandable as other research has cemented the fact that their need for social interactions are stronger due to young people relying more on social validation as part of their mental health. The article addresses possible solutions that can be put into effect to alleviate the struggles in this category, such as schools providing training to teachers so they can identify struggling students and help them, or hospitals that specialize in youth mental health expanding into school based programs. "I am getting a significant number of calls from schools requesting education and professional development for teachers around how to support kids with trauma," she says. "They're looking for tools to help support students". Although these are good moves in the right direction, I feel as if they are not enough. If young people are facing increasing anxiety and isolation there should be an active initiative to reincorporate them into socialization to counter it. Programs such as increased extracurriculars that can have the students interacting with each other, or even school scheduled events to provide the students with time to interact with one another.

- Quotation

“The younger school-age kids are more anxious about separation from their parents and caregivers,” he says. “They’re worried about getting sick,” or their parents getting sick.

On the other hand, most teenagers are struggling with social and academic anxiety, he adds. They are worried about socializing with their peers again and adapting to full-time in-person learning.” (Dr. Ujjwal Ramtekkar)

Citation 3

Susan Spencer. “Diet and brain health: You are what you eat?”. CBS Sunday Morning, 24 Nov 2019

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2I-YOFEffOs>

- Summary

Reporter Susan Spencer interviews three individuals concerning the topic of Nutritional psychiatry, a field that focuses on how what you eat can have a major effect on your mental health. The first person interviewed is Photographer Dave Crudeman, a person who has had issues with depression in the past and could not improve even with the use of therapy or antidepressants. Eventually he came upon psychiatrist Drew Ramsey, who took a different route in treating his depression by focusing mainly on what he ate. Drew Ramsey explains that the number one factor you have control over concerning mental health is what you consume and how they affect your body. The foods he prescribes his patients to eat consist of the mediterranean diet, having vegetables, seafood, olive oil, and greens. In a study the patients were prescribed a brain healthy diet, and it was noted that a third of the patients had all of their symptoms relieved. The final person interviewed is neuroscientist Lisa Masconi of Cornell medical college who shows a brain scan comparing someone on the mediterranean diet, and a

brain scan of someone on the typical carb, fat heavy western diet. The western diet brain scan shows signs of shrinkage and possible cognitive decline

- Reflection

I agree with the video and the psychiatrist Dave Crudemans view that what you consume should be taken into heavy consideration if someone is suffering from mental health issues. Most of the time diet is not taken into account when trying to treat depression, but many of the foods that are widely consumed in the country are unhealthy and some even to the point where they are banned in other countries because of the proven negative effects they have on consumers. One of the most common ingredients that is legal in America but banned in the European Union, India, and Japan is Brominated vegetable oil, a core ingredient in mountain dew, that has been proven to potentially lead to memory loss if built up in the body. Another prominent ingredient that is present in American foods but banned abroad is Ractopamine, a drug used to grow pigs bigger and at a faster rate, “the drug is banned in one hundred and sixty nations including Russia, China, and the EU because of its links to cardiovascular system damage and elevated heart rates” LiveScience “Banned in 160 Nations, Why is Ractopamine in U.S. Pork?” . Despite this the drug is still used in the majority of American pork. This shows that it is extremely easy to eat foods that are damaging to the body and mind, so if someone is not being particularly selective with what they eat they will be put in worse health by default simply because there is such a widespread use of harmful ingredients. The Covid lockdowns have caused many people to gain weight due to being stuck inside and their usual avenues of physical activity such as the gym being closed, this has been so widespread to the point where “42% of US adults have gained weight- 29 pounds, on average” washington post “The Big Number: A major pandemic weight gain”. The various unhealthy foods that they have potentially eaten to gain weight could be causing issues such as cognitive decline and brain shrinkage as shown by the neuroscientist. The issue goes further, as even if they gained weight by purely eating healthy

non damaging foods, the state of being overweight or obese itself can harm their psychology, “Psychological consequences of being overweight or obese can include lowered self-esteem and anxiety, and more serious disorders such as depression and eating disorders such as binge eating, bulimia and anorexia.” MentalHelp.net “Psychological Consequences Of Being Overweight”. My question for the nutritional psychiatrist is what other diets or foods have they observed to be beneficial to mental health besides the mediterranean diet. This adds to my research question by providing another major cause of the increased depression and mental health problems affecting the populace post covid.

- Quotation

“Food is medicine, Food is brain medicine. In your everyday life the number one factor that you have control over in terms of your mental health, its at the end of your fork.”

Conclusion

During my research I have stumbled upon three of the main causes of depression among the population post Covid-19, that saw the prevalence of depression increase three fold. Three of the main causes for this rise as found throughout my sources include financial instability, social isolation, and diet. The part that surprised me the most was the effect that food and weight gain can have on a person's mental health, with it even going as far as possibly causing negative physical effects on the brain that can be observed through scans. The idea of nutritional psychiatry was a new one to me, but it seemed very clear cut as the psychiatrist explained it, where the standard western diet of fat carb/heavy is harmful long term to peoples minds and bodies. The idea that there are so many harmful ingredients and chemicals widely used in American foods that are banned in many other first world nations was one of the most surprising facts I have learned. It further emphasizes that you cannot trust in your government or companies to make sure what you are eating is safe, but rather you must take the initiative,

the mental and physical health of people is treated as a lower priority compared to profits. What i've learned is important because it shows what causes to watch out for in yourself and others that could harm your mental health, but ive also shown what can potentially be done to treat these core problems ultimately improve mental health, such as financial safety nets being set up to alleviate the highest cause of depression among americans as found in source one, financial instability. With government policies creating more financial safety nets it alleviates the stress from lower economic tier groups who would otherwise be suffering from much more stress due to fearing possible unemployment or loss of money. The other cause addressed in source two of social isolation being the primary reason for increased depression and anxiety among the youth was discussed with having possible solutions such as increased mental health training in schools, or increased socialization amongst the youth. The final cause discussed in source three of bad diet causing diminished mental health has probably the easiest solution of all three because the individual themselves can do it instead of having to rely on government support or institutions, individuals can change their diet to something like the mediterranean diet and experience improved mental health as well as overall health. The people that could benefit from my research are people who are perhaps suffering from mental health concerns and could benefit from understanding them more and how to potentially seek help for them, or those who wish to help others on a wider scale by implementing societal changes to help the mentally struggling. With all these taken into account, hopefully society can change for the better and reflect that with improving the rates of mental health.