



THE IMPACT OF PSYCHOSOMATIC ILLNESSES ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF SOCIETY AFTER THE COVID PANDEMIC – 19



<https://doi.org/10.56238/levv15n41-083>

Submitted on: 22/09/2024

Publication date: 22/10/2024

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Psychosomatic illnesses are conditions in which psychological factors significantly influence the development and progression of physical illnesses. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with its context of social isolation and uncertainty, has brought to light an increase in psychosomatic illnesses, highlighting the complex interconnection between mental and physical health. **Objective:** The general objective of this study is to identify the relationship between mental disorders and post-pandemic social isolation. **Methodology:** This is a systematic literature review. For inclusion, the following criteria were used: articles published between 2019 and 2024, articles written in Portuguese, English, and Spanish. **Results:** The results indicate that the social isolation imposed by the

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pandemic, associated with economic uncertainty and fear of contagion, led to a significant increase in psychosomatic disorders, such as panic attacks, anxiety, and depression. Conclusion: there is an urgent need to develop prevention and treatment strategies for psychosomatic illnesses, emphasizing the importance of humanized and multidisciplinary approaches.

Keywords: COVID 19. Pandemic. Mental health. Panic Syndrome.



INTRODUCTION

In the last century, the psychiatrist Heinroth established what psychosomatic and somatopsychic expression were, explaining the differences between expressions and what influences they have. However, the theme only reached greater importance in the twenty-first century with Alexander and the Chicago School. The approach to the theme was divided into three parts: Initial or Psychoanalytic, Behaviorist and Multidisciplinary (Cunha, 2020).

Psychosomatic illnesses are medical conditions in which psychological factors play a significant role in the origin, development, expression, and course of the disease. Unlike purely physical illnesses, psychosomatic illnesses involve a complex interaction between the body and mind, in which emotional stress, internal conflicts, and other mental states can manifest themselves physically. These conditions challenge what is traditionally known between mind and body, emphasizing the interconnectedness between mental and physical health (Salgado, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a number of challenges to global public health, not only in terms of infections and deaths, but also in relation to the psychological and emotional impact on the population (Mavroudeas, 2020). Due to the disease being highly contagious, there was a need to carry out social isolation, which caused great impacts on the mental health of society and with it, an increase in psychosomatic diseases, causing individuals to have emotional or psychic changes, which generate changes in behavior and in the relationship between mind and body, causing situations of extreme stress for individuals (Ministry of Health, Brazil, 2021).

With the emergence of social distancing measures, prolonged lockdowns, economic uncertainties, and the constant threat of the virus, there has been a significant increase in levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Mavroudeas, 2020).

In this context, psychosomatic illnesses, which are physical conditions exacerbated or caused by emotional factors, have become a growing concern. The choice of this theme is justified, since studying the impact of psychosomatic diseases on the mental health of post-pandemic society lies in the need to better understand how mental and physical health are interconnected. Identifying the main factors that contribute to the emergence of these diseases can guide the creation of effective prevention and treatment strategies, thus improving the quality of life of those affected (Passos, 2021).

Given this reality, the research problem that guided all the work was: how did the pandemic scenario contribute to the increase in the incidence of mental illnesses? Therefore, the general objective was to identify the relationship between mental disorders and post-pandemic social isolation. To achieve this objective, the specific objectives were:

to observe the impact of psychosomatic illnesses on mental health, to explain the impact of humanized care for these individuals and to describe the strategies for coping with mental illnesses.

The present research aims to address the relationship between psychosomatic diseases and the COVID-19 pandemic. The relationship between psychosomatic illnesses and COVID-19 is a relevant and complex topic, especially considering the psychological and emotional impact of the pandemic. Each person has their own way of reacting to each situation, and the pandemic has triggered high levels of stress and anxiety, and caused panic attacks to increase (Ministry of Health, Brazil, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This is a systematic literature review. A systematic literature review is a meticulous, explicit, comprehensive, and reproducible method, aimed at identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the set of works already carried out and recorded by researchers. In order to be considered rigorous, the review must be systematic, following a well-designed methodological approach, explicit in the detailed description of the procedures adopted, and comprehensive in its scope, ensuring the inclusion of all relevant material on the subject. In addition, it must be reproducible, allowing other researchers to perform it in a similar way when reviewing the same theme (Costa, 2021).

The review will have a qualitative approach, in which a time frame of five years was used, from 2019 to 2024. The study design, a non-clinical survey, as described by Brun, was integrated by applying the PICO strategy (acronym for P: population/patients; I: intervention; C: comparison/control; O: outcome) to guide data collection. The PICO strategy is a mnemonic that helps to identify the key topics where the P: Youth and Adults in Brazil, who experienced significant anxiety during or after the COVID-19 pandemic; I means of treatment (therapies and multidisciplinary follow-up); C: does not apply; O:Improvement in quality of life related to mental health.

For the theoretical foundation, the following guiding question of the research was established: Did the pandemic scenario contribute to the increase in the incidence of mental illnesses? The search was carried out through Health Descriptors (DeCS)/ Medical Subject Headings (MeSH): combined with the Boolean operator AND and OR: of the keywords that were defined: "COVID 19", "Mental Health", "Panic Syndrome", "Pandemic", with the English words: "COVID-19," "Mental Health," "Panic Disorder," "Pandemic". The search took place in the databases: Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), PubMed, Virtual Health Library (VHL) and CAPES journals.



For inclusion, the following criteria were used: articles published between the years 2019 and 2024, articles written in Portuguese, articles written in English, articles written in Spanish, articles published in journals, original articles, articles that fit into this research, articles that talk about realistic simulation applied in the training of health professionals.

With the criteria for exclusion: review articles, articles published outside the established temporality, doctoral thesis, master's thesis, course completion work, articles written in languages other than Portuguese, articles that were not original, articles that did not address the topic of the research.

To prepare the results, the following variables of the selected studies will be evaluated: Author(s) of the article/ title/ objective/ method/ result. The methodological quality of the selected research was classified according to the six levels of categories of the Oxford Centre for Evidence-based medicine. Table I shows the studies used to discuss the highlighted topic, that is, psychosomatic diseases and mental health after the Covid-19 pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light a number of challenges that go beyond the physical impacts of the disease, including a significant increase in mental health-related issues. Among these challenges, psychosomatic illnesses have stood out as an increasingly frequent phenomenon, resulting from the interconnection between body and mind. The prolonged stress, social isolation, constant fear and uncertainties of the pandemic period intensified emotional disorders that, in turn, manifested themselves physically in many people causing anxiety and panic attacks. This chapter proposes to explore the impact of psychosomatic diseases on the mental health of society in the post-pandemic context, highlighting the factors that contributed to their increase, their manifestations, and the implications for the health system and social well-being.

THE PANDEMIC AND ANXIETY DISORDER

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on society's mental health, particularly in the area of anxiety. Their worry is associated with anxiety symptoms regarding panic disorder, obsession, and health. In addition, it is linked to maladjusted thoughts, without certainty and with sensitivity to anxiety. Anxiety about the pandemic was correlated with symptoms of somatic anxiety, panic disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Despite the fact that the researchers established that anxiety disorders and related mechanisms were associated with COVID-19 anxiety, the current study sought to

delve deeper into this area by examining which specific symptoms and mechanisms of anxiety disorder (Byam, 2024).

Social isolation, health concerns, and economic instability have all contributed to aggravating stress levels, leading many people to develop or intensify symptoms of anxiety. This disorder, characterized by excessive worry and feelings of tension, became more prevalent as people faced the unpredictability of the pandemic and drastic changes to their daily routines. As a result, there has been a growing demand for mental health interventions, highlighting the need for effective strategies to cope with the psychological impact of the pandemic (Faro, 2020).

Individuals suffering from anxiety disorders may be in an increased vulnerability to experience excessive worry during future pandemics. Mental health professionals should discuss anxiety and panic disorder. Lastly, the study highlighted the importance of considering a variety of symptoms and mechanisms specific to anxiety-related disorders when working to understand pandemic anxiety (Byam, 2024).

Recognition of easily expressed emotions is essential in social interaction, for patients with social phobia, general anxiety disorders, and anxiety, deficits in the recognition of specific emotions and prejudices have been reported. This is the first study to investigate facial emotion recognition patterns in patients with panic disorder. Recognizing facial expressions is extremely important to have a social interaction. Patients with panic disorder have a lot of difficulty expressing this recognition and there are still specific prejudices (Lyra, 2021).

These patients have difficulty identifying and differentiating sadness and anger and are more likely to have explosive emotions. That study investigated these patterns, finding that depression symptoms were more closely linked to facial recognition problems than anxiety symptoms. The distinction of recognition between controls and patients disappear when there is control of depressive symptoms, this effect is discussed in the context of previous studies that report deficits in emotion recognition in depressed patients (Silveira, 2022).

There is an extensive literature on COVID-19, talking about its main complications, symptoms, and signs. But unfortunately, the impacts caused by it are not understood, especially those in the long term, due to the fact that there are few cases and studies showing people's well-being and existing symptoms. In order to evaluate what happens to people after COVID-19 and their low quality of life, showing how hospitalizations and signs and symptoms affect people's well-being and tranquility (Malik et al., 2019).



Twelve studies were carried out with 4,828 patients, and it was found that among patients with PCS (post-acute COVID-19 syndrome), 59% reported a poor quality of life. Based on the studies, there is a prevalence of self-care with 8%, discomfort and pain with 42%, difficulty with mobility with 36%, depression and anxiety with 38%, and other symptoms such as fatigue with 64% and sleep disorder with 47%. In the research, it was shown that the quality of life was considerably worse in patients with PCS admitted to the ICU and with fatigue. Finally, PCS is associated with insistent symptoms and the well-being of patients, and there is a need for further studies and research to understand the factors that were contributed to this event (Malik et al., 2019).

Every day there is a great increase in psychological illnesses. Anxiety can lead to several disorders, and panic attack disorder is one of the most seen today (Nascimento, 2022).

It is classified as an anxiety disorder - according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders; IV Review (DSM – IV) – generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder, agoraphobia, social phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), specific phobias, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Currently the number of diagnoses has increased more and more and the demand for treatment of these pathologies also grows, as people want to reduce their suffering. (American Psychiatric Association; Task Force On DSM-IV, 2000).

GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)

Anxiety disorder is characterized by the constant worry about developing or providing a serious illness, something that has had a lot of impact today. Its main characteristic focuses on ensuring relief in its main symptoms, such as: palpitation, fatigue, muscle tension, excessive worries, headache, excessive sweating, among other symptoms, which have many persistent complaints (Scarella et al., 2019).

Anxiety is something common in the health of society. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (an established and structured approach along with collaboration between the patient and the therapist, seeking a restructuring of behaviors and emotions) and psychopharmacology is an effective treatment that alleviates its main symptoms. It is relevant to understand the clinical characteristics and psychopathology of this disorder in order to work effectively and accurately with patients, always maintaining it in an appropriate professional manner, being empathetic, non-judgmental, and avoiding excessive treatment and physical examination by the physician (Scarella et al., 2019).



Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is defined by excessive anxiety and worry, which can be related to numerous circumstances and activities, in addition, the symptoms must last for at least six months. (American Psychiatric Association Task Force On DSM-IV, 2000).

Signs and symptoms presented with GAD may include agitation, fatigue, lack of concentration, high irritability, muscle tension, and sleep disturbances. According to the National Survey of Comorbidities – NCS – it predicts a predominance of GAD throughout life of 5.7. The same survey showed that women are about twice as likely to have GAD than men who are in the same situation (Souza, 2022).

Women with GAD often have characteristics that are different from those of men. Women diagnosed with GAD, in addition to having the onset of the disease earlier than men, tend to be more likely to demonstrate symptoms of comorbid psychiatric disorders, especially depressive disorders, than the male population (Moreno, 2022).

Studies show that women who have GAD tend to have their symptoms worsen during the period before menstruation – premenstrual. In addition, women tend to have a higher demand for professional treatment for the disease than men who have GAD. In view of this, it is important to continue with more in-depth studies on how acute anxiety disorder affects each individual (Fontes, 2024).

PANIC DISORDER

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the relationship between panic disorder and the conditions imposed by the global scenario has become particularly evident. Panic disorder, characterized by sudden attacks of intense fear and physical symptoms such as palpitations, shortness of breath, and dizziness, was exacerbated by the circumstances of the pandemic (Meirelles, 2021).

The constant fear of contracting the virus, social isolation, economic uncertainties, and abrupt changes in routine have contributed to an increase in the frequency and intensity of panic attacks. The overload of information, often alarming, also intensified anxiety, leading people predisposed to panic disorder to experience greater vulnerability (Barros, 2020).

In addition, limited access to social support and mental health care during isolation has caused many people to face these crises alone, increasing the impact of the disorder on their lives. Therefore, the pandemic has not only triggered new cases of panic disorder, but has also aggravated symptoms in individuals already diagnosed, highlighting the need



for psychological support strategies and specific interventions to deal with this condition in times of crisis (Martins, 2023).

According to research carried out in relation to epidemiology in the general population of the USA, women have a higher rate of developing panic disorder compared to men. It is not yet possible to explain or understand what leads the female population to have a higher risk of developing an anxiety disorder throughout life, in addition, there is little research that proposes to investigate whether the manifestations in women would be different from that of men (Chies, 2022).

Panic disorder can be described and characterized by panic attacks that happen suddenly and recurrently, which are followed for at least a month in which the person worries permanently about having additional attacks, which can bring or even changes that could affect the individual's behavior. (American Psychiatric Association. Task Force On DSM-IV, 2000).

In addition, panic disorder can also be accompanied by agoraphobia, which is nothing more than the fear of places and situations that can cause panic, powerlessness or embarrassment, it is an anxiety disorder that is largely presented after a panic attack episode. (American Psychiatric Association. Task Force On DSM-IV, 2000).

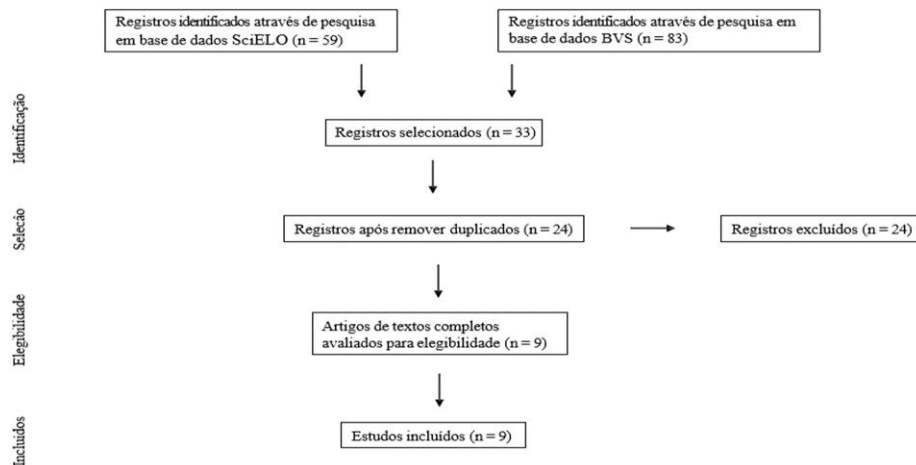
Women have a higher amount than men in relation to having panic disorder. In addition, it is worth mentioning that there is a difference in the signs and symptoms presented between men and women. A greater number of the female population have symptoms related to the breathing area, such as difficulty breathing, fainting, and suffocation, during periods of panic attacks compared to men (Petrelli, 2023).

In addition, some studies have reported that women who have panic disorder have a higher lifetime risk of demonstrating comorbidity with psychiatric disorders in general (Oliveira, 2018). In addition, the female population also tends to have higher rates of agoraphobia, depression, GAD, simple phobia and somatization disorder, compared to men with panic disorder. (Brito, 2023).

In addition, women are also more likely to have alcohol abuse and dependence compared to women who do not suffer from the disorder, which leads to believe that there may be a genetic link between panic disorder and alcohol abuse in women. In most cases, comorbid disorders in women can be more severe and chronic than in the male population (Brito, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1: Flowchart of articles elected for discussion of the featured topic, 2024



After conducting the search with the health descriptors, a total of 142 articles were identified, 59 of which were from Scielo (*Scientific Electronic Library Online*) and 83 from the Virtual Health Library (VHL) database. After filtering the articles found, 33 were adequate to the study criteria. Subsequently, each one was carefully read, resulting in the selection of 09 articles that met the objectives of this review: 6 from the VHL and 3 from SciELO. After selecting the pertinent articles, a summary of the information regarding the nine studies that make up the discussion of this review is presented in Chart 1.

Table 1: Studies selected for full reading after prior reading and filtering

	Author	Title	Objective	Method	Result
1	Silva, Laodicéia Cardoso et al (2024)	Emotional intelligence of health workers and safety climate in hospitals in the COVID-19 pandemic	To analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence of health workers in a hospital environment and the perception of the safety climate in the COVID-19 pandemic.	This is a cross-sectional, analytical study conducted with 81 health workers who worked in hospitals during the pandemic, between September-November 2021. Data collection was carried out with electronic forms bringing together sociodemographic/occupational questionnaires and Brazilian versions of the Safety Attitudes Questionnaire and Schutte Self Test. Spearman's correlation test and single/multiple linear regression analysis were applied	The increase of 1 point in the levels of emotional intelligence had an impact on the increase of 0.487 points in the levels of perception of the safety climate. The most significant predictor of this perception was the ability to manage the emotions of others ($\beta=0.334$; $p=0.003$; $R^2=0.168$).
2	França, Bruna Dias et al (2024)	Educational actions carried out during the pandemic with primary care health professionals: a scoping review	Map the educational actions carried out with Primary Care health professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Scoping review developed in August 2023, covering the CINAHL, Medline, LILACS, IBECs, BDEF, and Web of Science databases. In all, 32 publications were analyzed through content analysis.	The main beneficiaries of the educational actions included 69% of physicians, 56% of nurses, 25% of pharmacists, 13% of social workers and dentists, 9% of psychologists, community health workers and laboratory professionals, and 6% of nursing technicians, nutritionists and physical educators.

Source: Authors, 2024

Table 1: Continued

	Author	Title	Objective	Method	Result
3	Gouget, Daniella Teixeira Dantas & Baptista, Tatiana Vargas de Faria (2024)	The resignification of care in the context of the pandemic	To develop a perspective of care that is presented as a proposal for a possible resignification of illness in the context of a pandemic	Literary essay that discusses the care process of health professionals in the context of COVID-19 from the perspectives of psychoanalysis, under the prism of Donald Winnicott's transitional space.	The perspective of expanded care favors the creative possibility of new productions of meaning and support for professionals, resignifying their life experiences, through love, creativity, practical wisdom, prudent care, live work in action and motor imagination.

Source: Authors, 2024.

Table 1: Continued

	Author	Title	Objective	Method	Result
4	Lima, Pamela Gissi et al (2024)	Care management and leadership in the perception of nurses in the hospital context of COVID-19	Care management and leadership in the perception of nurses in the hospital context of COVID-19	This is a qualitative study conducted at a university hospital in São Paulo, Brazil. The sample consisted of eight nurses who worked in the care of patients who tested positive for COVID-19. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews about experiences in care management in coping with the pandemic. Thematic analysis and interpretation based on the psychodynamics of the work were used in the data analysis.	The results allowed the construction of three thematic categories: The invisible that limits: biosecurity, anguish, uncertainty and fear of the pandemic, protecting oneself and ensuring the protection of others; Instruments of the work process in management: team training, personnel sizing, materials management, creative practice in the face of insufficiency; the competencies involved with the team and leadership.
5	De Olivera, Claudia (2024)	Mental health in Brazil in times of neoliberalism and pandemic: setback and resistance.	To analyze aspects of mental health in Brazil as an active political field, involving a variety of social segments.	Bibliographic documentary review on the historical and political context of Brazil between 2016 and 2021	In the field of mental health, the national policy based on the principles of psychiatric reform suffered serious setbacks.

Source: Authors, 2024.

Table 1: Continued

	Author	Title	Objective	Method	Result
6	Maturino, Manuela Matos et al (2024)	Dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic: prevalence of common mental disorders in workers who are "invisible" in health and their association with occupational stressors	To assess the association between occupational stressors and common mental disorders (CMD) among "invisible" health workers in the context of the COVID19 pandemic.	This was a cross-sectional study with a probabilistic sample of 1,014 health workers from three municipalities in Bahia. The CMDs were assessed using the SRQ-20. The Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) scale and the Demand-Control Model assessed occupational stressors. Descriptive, bivariate and multiple analyses were performed to evaluate the association between the variables of interest	The overall prevalence of CMD was 39.9%; was higher among Community Health Agents/Endemic Diseases (CHA/EDCA) (47.2%), followed by management and surveillance personnel (38.6%), technicians (35.4%) and support/maintenance/cleaning personnel (29.9%).
7	Ferreira, Brisa Emanuele Silva et al (2024)	Nurses and burnout in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic	This article aims to analyze the relationship between nurses and Burnout syndrome in the face of the COVID19 pandemic.	Review of scientific literature that addresses the topic in question	The results show that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the work overload of nurses, who have faced adverse working conditions, such as lack of personal protective equipment and fear of contamination, which has led to an increase in stress levels and burnout.

Source: Authors, 2024.

Table 1: Continued

	Author	Title	Objective	Method	Result
8	Nascimento, Luciana Silva do et al (2024)	Repercussions on the mental health of health professionals at a public hospital in Recife during the COVID-19 pandemic	To analyze factors associated with anxiety and depression in health professionals who provide care to patients with COVID-19 in a public hospital in Recife	This was a cross-sectional study, with the application of an online questionnaire containing sociodemographic and work-related variables and an instrument on a depression, anxiety and stress scale. Descriptive analyses of the independent variables and bivariate analysis using linear regression of the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables were performed.	77 professionals responded to the questionnaire. Physical therapy was the professional category associated with anxiety, and the sector of activity in COVID-19 and exercise time were associated with depression.
9	Silva, Amanda Seraphico Carvalho Pereira (2023)	Arrangements and innovations for mental health care 1 in the fight against COVID-19: an integrative review	To identify the mental health care arrangements that were implemented in the face of the COVID19 pandemic.	A search was carried out in three databases (SciELO, PubMed, and LILACS), in Portuguese, English, and Spanish, with the descriptors "MENTAL HEALTH" or "MENTAL HEALTH" or "MENTAL HEALTH" AND "COVID19", from 2020 to 2021. A total of 3,451 articles were found, 43 of which were selected for analysis	The main arrangements identified were digital, of a public nature, developed at the municipal level and with integration with the health network. The models of mental health care to face the pandemic are discussed based on the types of arrangements produced in this emergency and critical health context. It also presents an excerpt of the reality found in the Unified Health System (SUS), reiterating its resilience.

Source: Authors, 2024.

The authors used several research methods strategically to investigate the relationship between mental disorders and post-pandemic social isolation. Silva (2024) used an analytical cross-sectional study with 81 health workers, allowing the direct analysis of the mental conditions of these professionals and the identification of the consequences of isolation. Nascimento (2024) conducted a cross-sectional study with a sample of 1,014 health workers, expanding the geographic coverage and providing a representative analysis

of mental impacts.

França (2024), Ferreira (2024), and Silva (2023) conducted literature reviews to compile evidence on the impact of the pandemic on mental health. De Oliveira (2024) opted for a documentary review focused on the historical and political context of Brazil, while Lima (2024) conducted a qualitative study with nurses, exploring their subjective experiences.

Finally, Gouget (2024) chose a literary essay based on psychoanalysis, discussing the care of health professionals in the context of the pandemic. This format allowed for a theoretical reflection on the emotional distress and psychic challenges faced by frontline workers, offering a critical perspective that enriches the understanding of long-term psychic effects.

The diverse choice of methods, between empirical studies and theoretical reviews, was fundamental to provide a complete understanding of the relationship between social isolation and mental disorders, approaching the issue from multiple angles and contributing to a robust view of the problem during times of pandemic.

In this scenario, it is worth mentioning that the texts selected in this discussion highlight the negative consequences of the pandemic for mental health, such as increased anxiety, depression, and other psychosocial disorders. In addition, they address the coping strategies adopted by society, including self-care practices, online therapy, and the importance of social support in the search for emotional well-being in times of crisis (Pereira Filho, 2023).

The Covid-19 pandemic is recognized in the recent literature as a factor that has significantly aggravated mental health problems, affecting both patients and health professionals. In view of this reality, the findings of Oliveira (2024) in his article point to a significant setback in the national mental health policy, noting that the principles of psychiatric reform have been seriously compromised. This finding highlights a critical scenario of state negligence, which directly impacted mental health care during the pandemic.

Research has shown that nurses' work overload has intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in serious consequences for the mental and physical health of these professionals, such as high levels of stress and exhaustion (Ferreira, 2024). In addition, it was identified that many health professionals presented cases of anxiety associated with the care of patients with COVID-19, noting that the duration of professional practice was linked to the increase in cases of depression. These findings highlight the direct relationship between prolonged exposure to the pandemic environment and the emergence of mental disorders, highlighting the urgency of interventions to mitigate these adverse effects on the

health of health workers (Nascimento, 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound and wide-ranging impact on global mental health, evidenced by the notable rise in anxiety disorders. Studies show that pandemic-related anxiety manifested itself through somatic symptoms, panic disorders, and obsessive-compulsive disorder, underlining the complexity and severity of this condition in a crisis context (Byam, 2024).

In this context, it is worth mentioning that factors such as social isolation, constant concern with health, and economic instability were determinant in the worsening of stress levels, resulting in a significant increase in anxiety symptoms. These consequences highlight the urgency of effective approaches to address the mental health challenges posed by the pandemic (Faro, 2020).

In a post-pandemic study, it was suggested that difficulty in identifying and differentiating emotions such as sadness and anger can exacerbate panic disorder, highlighting a specific bias in emotional recognition (Lyra, 2021). This thought is in line with the argumentative perspective of some authors, in which they suggest that the symptoms of depression, more than those of anxiety, are interconnected with facial recognition problems. By controlling for depressive symptoms, the difference in emotion recognition between patients with panic disorder and individuals without the disorder tends to disappear, suggesting an overlap in symptoms between depression and panic disorder (Silveira, 2022).

In addition to anxiety and panic disorders, Post-Acute COVID-19 Syndrome (PCS) is associated with reduced quality of life and high rates of depression and anxiety among affected patients. These findings highlight the need for further studies on the long-lasting effects of COVID-19 on mental and physical health, emphasizing the importance of long-term interventions and support. It was noticed that during the pandemic, psychological disorders, including panic disorder, became more prevalent during the pandemic, exacerbating symptoms in people already predisposed and revealing new cases, which indicates an urgent need for mental health care in the pandemic and post-pandemic context (Nascimento, 2022).

Thus, the circumstances of the pandemic scenario, such as the constant fear of contracting the virus and social isolation, contributed significantly to the intensification of this disorder. Economic uncertainties and abrupt changes in daily routine act as additional triggers, exacerbating both the frequency and severity of panic attacks (Meirelles, 2021).

Undoubtedly, the overload of information, often alarming and contradictory, has increased anxiety among the population. This amplified anxiety made individuals

predisposed to panic disorder even more vulnerable, increasing the incidence and intensity of crises (Barros, 2020).

Additionally, according to epidemiological studies carried out in the United States, women have a higher rate of developing panic disorder compared to men. Although the reason for this risk difference is not yet fully understood, and despite the paucity of research focused on the specific manifestations of the disorder in women, it is evident that the impact of the pandemic has exacerbated this vulnerability, pointing to the need for a more gender-sensitive approach to the treatment and prevention of panic disorder (Chies, 2022).

In view of the consequences of the pandemic for the mental health of all those involved, the literature after 2019 is vast in recognizing that during the pandemic a collective mobilization was required, integrating the efforts of health professionals, psychological support, and self-care strategies, in order to mitigate the emotional and psychological impacts that affected various layers of society (Schmidt, 2020).

Thus, the urgent need to develop psychological support strategies and specific interventions to deal with panic disorder in times of crisis became evident. The pandemic has exposed the fragility of support networks and the insufficiency of resources available to treat severe anxiety disorders during global emergencies. It has been observed that emotional development can play a protective role in crisis situations (Martins, 2023; Silva, 2024).

On the other hand, the educational actions carried out during the pandemic benefited the majority of 69% of doctors, 56% of nurses, and 25% of pharmacists, indicating that interventions aimed at health education were effective in training a wide range of professionals, strengthening collective action in facing the health crisis (França, 2024).

The results brought a more subjective perspective, suggesting that expanded care provided a resignification of life experiences after the pandemic, favoring creativity and promoting a healthier emotional adaptation for professionals. This psychoanalytic approach highlights the importance of emotional care in the post-pandemic context (Gouget, 2024).

Given this scenario, studies reflect the challenges faced by nurses in hospital daily life during the pandemic, revealing structural limitations, but also the strengthening of leadership and collaborative work as key aspects for overcoming difficulties (Lima, 2024).

Consequently, the literature highlights that mental health care models, discussing the different arrangements, were developed in response to the emergency health crisis. This discussion pointed out that care models needed to be adapted quickly to respond to the new demands imposed by the pandemic (Silva, 2023).

During the pandemic, cognitive behavioral therapy and psychopharmacology

emerged as effective treatments to alleviate these symptoms. However, the pandemic presented an additional challenge: social isolation and limited access to mental health services made it difficult for these treatments to continue and be effective. This reinforced the importance of deeply understanding the clinical features and psychopathology of GAD in order to provide empathetic and effective care, avoiding excessive physical examinations that may not meet the emotional needs of patients during the pandemic (Scarella *et al.* 2019).

The prevalence of Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is significantly higher in women, who are about twice as likely to develop this disorder compared to men. This information is especially pertinent in the pandemic context, where many women face an overload of domestic responsibilities and family care, resulting in elevated levels of stress and anxiety (Souza, 2022).

Women with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) present, more frequently than men, psychiatric comorbidities, such as depressive disorders (Moreno, 2022). This situation may have been aggravated during the pandemic, due to the lack of social support and the increased emotional load. In addition, GAD symptoms in women tend to intensify in the premenstrual period, which should be considered by health professionals when developing treatment and support strategies, especially in times of crisis, such as during the pandemic (Fontes, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to its devastating impacts on physical health, has brought to light the relevance of psychosomatic illnesses, highlighting the complex interconnection between mental and physical health. Social isolation, economic uncertainties, and the ongoing fear of contagion have exacerbated psychological conditions, such as stress, anxiety, and panic attacks, which manifest themselves physically in a significant proportion of the population.

This study confirms that the pandemic scenario has contributed to a significant increase in psychosomatic illnesses, highlighting the urgent need to develop prevention and treatment strategies that consider this interrelationship. Humanized interventions, which prioritize the comprehensive and emotional care of individuals, are essential to mitigate the effects of these conditions and improve the quality of life of those affected.

In addition, understanding the factors that contributed to the emergence and worsening of these diseases during the pandemic is essential for building more effective public health policies that can face future crises with greater preparation and sensitivity. In



short, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of investing in mental health as an integral part of global health care, reinforcing the need for multidisciplinary and humanized approaches in times of crisis.

It is concluded that there is an urgent need to develop prevention and treatment strategies for psychosomatic illnesses, emphasizing the importance of humanized and multidisciplinary approaches.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, we would like to thank God for guiding us through each step of this journey, allowing us to reach this milestone with perseverance and wisdom, without His guidance, none of this would be possible.

Our family, our safe haven, who have always been by our side, offering love, support and understanding, our eternal gratitude for believing in us, for the words of encouragement, for always setting an example of dedication and resilience and also for having understood our moments of absence so that we could complete all our dreams. This work is as much ours as yours.

To the faculty, our sincere thanks for all the knowledge transmitted, especially our Advisor Profa. Me. Karina Brito da Costa Ogliari for her patience and guidance along this journey that contributed significantly to our professional and personal growth.

To all of you, our thanks and eternal gratitude!



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