

## PEER-REVIEW REPORT

**Name of journal:** World Journal of Psychiatry

**Manuscript NO:** 64820

**Title:** The psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals with serious mental disorders: A review of the literature

**Reviewer's code:** 05849395

**Position:** Peer Reviewer

**Academic degree:** BSc

**Professional title:** Adjunct Professor, Chief Physician

**Reviewer's Country/Territory:** China

**Author's Country/Territory:** Austria

**Manuscript submission date:** 2021-02-25

**Reviewer chosen by:** AI Technique

**Reviewer accepted review:** 2021-04-18 10:41

**Reviewer performed review:** 2021-04-22 13:00

**Review time:** 4 Days and 2 Hours

<b>Scientific quality</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade A: Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Very good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade C: Good <input type="checkbox"/> Grade D: Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Grade E: Do not publish
<b>Language quality</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade A: Priority publishing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Minor language polishing <input type="checkbox"/> Grade C: A great deal of language polishing <input type="checkbox"/> Grade D: Rejection
<b>Conclusion</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Accept (High priority) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accept (General priority) <input type="checkbox"/> Minor revision <input type="checkbox"/> Major revision <input type="checkbox"/> Rejection
<b>Re-review</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Peer-reviewer statements</b>	Peer-Review: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anonymous <input type="checkbox"/> Onymous Conflicts-of-Interest: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No



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#### **SPECIFIC COMMENTS TO AUTHORS**

It is an useful and enlightenment manuscript with hot issue related to psychiatric services in pandemic era.

## PEER-REVIEW REPORT

**Name of journal:** World Journal of Psychiatry

**Manuscript NO:** 64820

**Title:** The psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals with serious mental disorders: A review of the literature

**Reviewer's code:** 02445242

**Position:** Editorial Board

**Academic degree:** MAMS, MBBS, MD

**Professional title:** Professor

**Reviewer's Country/Territory:** India

**Author's Country/Territory:** Austria

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**Reviewer accepted review:** 2021-04-16 07:49

**Reviewer performed review:** 2021-04-25 07:21

**Review time:** 8 Days and 23 Hours

<b>Scientific quality</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade A: Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Very good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade C: Good <input type="checkbox"/> Grade D: Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Grade E: Do not publish
<b>Language quality</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade A: Priority publishing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Minor language polishing <input type="checkbox"/> Grade C: A great deal of language polishing <input type="checkbox"/> Grade D: Rejection
<b>Conclusion</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Accept (High priority) <input type="checkbox"/> Accept (General priority) <input type="checkbox"/> Minor revision <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Major revision <input type="checkbox"/> Rejection
<b>Re-review</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Peer-reviewer statements</b>	Peer-Review: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anonymous <input type="checkbox"/> Onymous Conflicts-of-Interest: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

## **SPECIFIC COMMENTS TO AUTHORS**

Although the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the health of patients with psychiatric disorders is quite evident, attempts at systematically collating the data from studies have been surprisingly few. This applies to patients with SMIs as well. While I could find more than 10 reviews on SMI over the past one year, only three were systematic reviews. The first by Brown et al. was published in May 2020 and included only 3 studies. The second by the CEBM, Oxford (Barber et al. Aug 20-<https://www.cebm.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SMI.jpg>) included 4 studies. The most recent one by Zhand & Joobar in 2021 is much broader in scope and includes 47 studies and reviews. Some of the areas covered by the authors' review have been included by Zhand & Joobar. Therefore, there is a need for more systematic reviews on this topic and the authors' efforts are to be commended. However, they have not provided a proper background to their review by mentioning all the other ones and their findings or conclusions. This background would have emphasized the need for the authors to undertake their review. It might have allowed the authors to make a stronger case for conducting their review. Therefore, I would suggest that they make the necessary changes in this regard. I am surprised that the authors have done all the hard work of systematically searching the literature, but have not followed any guidelines for a systematic review. If they had done so, it would have lent more significance to their findings. On the other hand, not following guidelines has given rise to many shortcomings. For example, the period of their search is not mentioned. It is not clear why the number of studies in their review was much less than the review by Zhand & Joobar. There are problems with their search terms. For example, the phrase "serious mental illness" is not included. They could have missed some papers with this title. It seems to me that they could have missed some studies that included all

types of psychiatric disorders including SMIs. Finally, the quality of the articles included should have been assessed properly. Although the authors mention the methodological limitations of the studies included, rating should have been done using a standardized instrument. There are problems that resulted from not following a systematic approach to analysing the data. For example, the authors state that this about their aims: " The following questions will be answered: How are individuals with SMI affected by the pandemic in comparison to healthy controls (HC) and what are the main psychiatric symptoms they are displaying? What are risk and protective factors that influence the severity of psychiatric symptoms and who is particularly vulnerable to these factors? How does symptomatology and frequency of illness episodes change during the course of the pandemic?" The authors have organized their results according to the type of disorders, e.g. SMI, affective disorders, bipolar disorder, major depression, and schizophrenia. It would have been helpful if they had also categorized their results (according to the questions listed above) into symptoms, risk/protective factors, and course of illness. This would have made for a more accurate interpretation of the data. For example - About the course of illness in the section on SMI, the authors write in their results that: ".. two studies found that psychiatric symptoms remained stable over time in individuals with SMI[48,49], while another one found that the relapse rate did not significantly increase during the pandemic[36].The few participants experiencing a worsening of symptomatology in these three studies were elderly individuals[49] or had been hospitalized at a more recent date than the individuals who remained stable[36]." But in the table - the findings of the study by Riblet et al. (ref. 49) are: "There were no relevant changes concerning psychiatric symptoms during the pandemic compared to before. Few participants, who were significantly older (M = 71.7 years) experienced a decrease in symptomology." Thus, this study did not have any information on relapse rates, while the other two (refs. 48 and 36)

appeared to have findings related to relapse. Similarly, it is stated that: "On the other hand, a high amount of studies showed a third of individuals with SMI to exhibit symptoms indicative of a recurrence of their illness[50,51]" - but I could find no mention of recurrence in these 2 studies. So, better categorization of studies and more careful analysis of their findings is required. Certain conclusions have been made in the discussion section, which do not seem to be fully borne out by the results of the studies included in the review. For example - "Notwithstanding, these results suggest that individuals with mental illness were less affected by the pandemic than HC[25,27]."

I could not find ref. 27 (Skoda et al.) in the table. A number of statements have been made about patients with schizophrenia being less affected by the pandemic than those with affective disorders - e.g. "Although those diagnosed with SZ were more worried and anxious than HC[79], they seemed to be least affected by the crisis among individuals with SMI, as the majority of SZ patients reported only little or no changes in their mental health[48,55]." I could not find any mention of a comparison between these 2 groups in the study by Pinkham et al. (ref. 48). So, this conclusion appears to be based on a single study. Moreover, it is rather counter-intuitive, because the weight of the current evidence seems to be showing that people with schizophrenia are disproportionately affected by the pandemic. (See for example, Nemani et al. JAMA Psychiatry 2021;78(4):380-386) Some other problems that need to be addressed are: Reference numbers of studies should be included in the table. The word - teletherapy is somewhat idiosyncratic. Perhaps the authors should use more conventional terms such as telemental health services. Therefore, my suggestion would be that the authors convert this manuscript into a systematic review according to standard guidelines. This should not be too difficult given that they have done most of the hard work required. They should organize the manuscript in a fashion that the answers to the questions they are posing become evident from their results. They should carefully interpret the



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findings of each study and not make conclusions based on one or two studies. They should put greater emphasis on methodological limitations of research and issues that remain unresolved. All this will go a long way in increasing the value of their review.