

PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTION MODEL OF KERALA, INDIA DURING PANDEMIC COVID 19: “OTTAKKALLA OPPAMUNDU” (YOU’RE NOT ALONE, WE’RE WITH YOU)

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Background: The pandemic Corona Virus Disease-2019 (COVID 19) is a major public health concern as it is causing distress to large spheres of lives globally. In India, first case of COVID 19 was reported in Kerala, in January 2020. Several measures such as lockdown, isolation of positive cases and quarantine of travelers and contacts, were introduced to flatten the curve since then. However mental health experts anticipated that such measures along with fear of disease, could adversely affect the psychological health of the society. Hence a psychosocial support system was introduced in the state to provide support for general population during the pandemic. This study intended to explore the details of this intervention. **Methods:** This study employed descriptive approach using qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the details of Kerala’s psychosocial support system during COVID 19 pandemic. Key informant and in depth interviews were carried out to explore the perceptions of the stakeholders including beneficiaries regarding the program. The interviews were transcribed, translated and coded manually. Thematic analysis was done after inductive coding. The secondary data available in connection with the program were accessed and analyzed using Microsoft excel. **Results:** The results are summarized under four overarching themes: (i) process of implementation (ii) issues addressed (iii) experiences and (iv) success stories. This intervention targeted the whole population with specific focus on quarantined/isolated individuals and selected vulnerable groups. This pandemic sowed several negative emotions including anxiety, stigma and fearful thoughts comprising of suicidal ideations, trepidation regarding family members and misinfodemics in general. Social and religious corollary of the pandemic have intensified the psychological agony. This intervention was definitely a boon to the beneficiaries. Nevertheless the providers also gained a lot of satisfaction out of this program. **Conclusion:** The study provides an overview of the psychosocial intervention adopted by the state during the pandemic.

It has facilitated to promote positive thinking among the beneficiaries and modified their attitude towards the disease. Quite a few psychiatric emergencies including suicides and aggressive behaviors could be averted through timely intervention, which is commendable. Considering the efficiency, flexibility and sustainability, this model can be replicated in any low resource setting.