

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and suicide ideation in community adults in Portugal: preliminary data

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: The aim of the present study was to evaluate the perceived impact of the COVID-19 pandemic state of emergency in Portugal and the contribution of several socio-demographic and clinical variables, including having had a psychiatric diagnosis, on suicide ideation. Further, we tested whether the perceived impact of the pandemic mediated the association between having had a psychiatric diagnosis and suicide ideation.

METHODS: A sample of 227 Portuguese community adults (183 women, 44 men) participated online.

RESULTS: Low education, having had a psychiatric diagnosis, and the perceived psychological impact of the pandemic each related to the presence of suicide ideation. Perceived psychological impact partially mediated the association between having had a psychiatric diagnosis and suicide ideation, as indexed by the total score on the Suicide Ideation Scale.

CONCLUSIONS: Individuals with a psychiatric diagnosis, with a lower education level, and with a perceived psychological impact of the pandemic are at greater risk for experiencing suicide ideation, and psychological impact appears to be stronger for persons with a psychiatric diagnosis and, thus, resulting in more suicide ideation. A potential limitation was the use of only three items for assessing the impact of the pandemic.

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KEY WORDS: COVID-19; Pandemics; Suicide; Mental disorders.

Portugal is the most western point in Europe with approximately 10 million 300 thousand people. Between March 19 and May 1, 2020 (in practical terms extended to May 3 because of the weekend), a state of emergency with a lockdown was decreed throughout the nation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The population was requested to stay at home, going outside only: for exercise; to walk pets; to buy food; or to work, when working at home and/or by videoconferencing was not possible. With few exceptions, travelling between cit-

ies was not permitted. Territorial borders with Spain were closed and flights to other countries were cancelled.

On the first day of the emergency in Portugal, March 19, there were 785 total confirmed COVID-19 cases, 3 total recovered patients, and 3 total deaths. On the first day of this report's data collection, April 9, there were 13,956 total confirmed COVID-19 cases, 205 total recovered patients, and 409 total deaths. On May 3, the last day of the declared state of emergency and of our data collection, there were 25,282 total con-