

Student ID: 2208954

Student Name: Sonia Tariq

Component 1: Project Proposal

Project Title

The Psychological Impact of the Pandemic: A Thematic Analysis of Depression and Anxiety Among Healthcare Workers

1) Aim:

To go beyond the statistical prevalence and undertake a thematic analysis of the current literature conducted on the concept of depression and anxiety in healthcare workers (HCWs) during the COVID-19 pandemic to learn and understand the lived experiences of depression and anxiety in this group of healthcare professionals. It aims to see the contextual meaning, perceived reasons, and non-apparent emotional stories related to the described mental health crisis.

2. Introduction and Background

The COVID-19 pandemic placed an unprecedented and long-lasting psychological stress on healthcare workers (HCWs) worldwide (Temsah et al., 2020). Alarming prevalence rates have been reported in quantitative studies: a 2022 PLOS ONE meta-analysis reported pooled rates of 45% depression and 48% anxiety among HCWs during the pandemic, substantially higher than before the pandemic (Lin et al., 2024). A different systematic review reported that 24% to 36% of frontline nurses had symptoms of depression (Parv, 2025). Although these statistics are a measure of the magnitude of the crisis, they are not the experience of the crisis, the perceived causes, or the subtle emotional stories of the numbers (Schoofs & Claeys, 2021). HCWs endured long-term trauma, moral damage due to the need to make impossible triage choices, fear of infection, and massive systemic pressure (Nagle et al., 2023). The synthesis of the abundant, qualitative information on how such distress was personally perceived and interpreted is critically wanting. The current project, in turn, suggests a thematic analysis of qualitative publications published since 2020. It seeks to transcend prevalence and touch more deeply on the contextualized meanings of depression and anxiety and investigate themes of grief, institutional support, stigma, and resilience. It is a qualitative synthesis that is necessary in order to provide evidence for more empathetic, effective, and human-centered mental health interventions and policies for the healthcare workforce (MacLellan et al., 2015).

3. Research Objectives

The main goal is to determine, discuss, and interpret the common themes and patterns in qualitative research on depression and anxiety among HCWs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key objectives are to:

1. Identify and systematically retrieve qualitative studies (interviews, focus groups, narrative accounts) published between 2020 and 2024.
2. Categorize and analyze textual information manually and determine the main themes related to depression and anxiety.
3. Analyze and frame results using existing psychological theories.
4. Offer highly experiential knowledge to shape more understanding and productive mental health support systems.

4. Methodology

A qualitative secondary research design will be used in this study by applying the thematic analysis to conduct a manual analysis of data in the available qualitative studies (Tate & Happ, 2018).

Data Sources: Qualitative studies will be found on such databases as PubMed, PsycINFO, CINAHL, and Google Scholar.

The inclusion criteria will be peer-reviewed qualitative literature (e.g., phenomenological, case study, grounded theory) published in English (2020-2024) that addresses HCW experiences of depression and/or anxiety during the pandemic.

Data Extraction: Entire qualitative data (full text results/discussion sections) will be taken and assembled together to form a single corpus to be analyzed.

Analytical Approach:

Manual Coding: Following a six-phase method of Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization, initial manual coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting.

Inductive Analysis: Themes will be developed straight out of the data without any preconceived plan.

Trustworthiness: Frequent reflective reports, peer debriefing, and an audit trail to guarantee rigor and transparency.

5) Resources:

Internet Databases: PubMed, PsycINFO, CINAHL, Google Scholar.

University Library: Full-text journals

Software: Microsoft Word (to manage and analyze the data)

6) Timescale:

Stage	Duration
Literature Search & Source Selection	Weeks 1-3
Data Extraction & Familiarisation	Weeks 4-5
Thematic Coding & Analysis	Weeks 6-8
Report Writing & Finalisation	Weeks 9-12

7) Self-reflection as researcher (any strengths or challenges):

My asset is good analytical and synthesis capabilities, which are essential in discovering themes in various studies. One of the major issues will be coordinating the high amount of qualitative data and being focused to achieve a depth of analysis. I would like to train my abilities concerning rigorous thematic analysis and need assistance in keeping an objective and clear audit trail.

References

- Lin, Y.-K., Saragih, I. D., Lin, C.-J., Liu, H.-L., Chen, C.-W., & Yeh, Y.-S. (2024). Global prevalence of anxiety and depression among medical students during the COVID-19 pandemic: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC Psychology*, 12(1), 338. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-01838-y>
- MacLellan, J., Surey, J., Abubakar, I., & Stagg, H. R. (2015). Peer Support Workers in Health: A Qualitative Metasynthesis of Their Experiences. *PLOS ONE*, 10(10), e0141122. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0141122>
- Nagle, E., Šuriņa, S., & Griškēviča, I. (2023). Healthcare Workers' Moral Distress during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Scoping Review. *Social Sciences*, 12(7), 371–371. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12070371>
- Parv, D. (2025). The prevalence of depressive symptoms among frontline healthcare workers during COVID-19 pandemic: A rapid umbrella review. *Global Journal of Health Sciences and Research*, 0, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.25259/gjhsr_25_2024
- Schoofs, L., & Claeys, A.-S. (2021). Communicating sadness: The impact of emotional crisis communication on the organizational post-crisis reputation. *Journal of Business Research*, 130, 271–282. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.03.020>
- Tate, J. A., & Happ, M. B. (2018). Qualitative Secondary Analysis: A Case Exemplar. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 32(3), 308–312. sciencedirect. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedhc.2017.09.007>
- Temsah, M.-H., Al-Sohime, F., Alamro, N., Al-Eyadhy, A., Al-Hasan, K., Jamal, A., Al-Maglouth, I., Aljamaan, F., Al Amri, M., Barry, M., Al-Subaie, S., & Somily, A. M. (2020). The psychological impact of COVID-19 pandemic on health care workers in a MERS-CoV endemic country. *Journal of Infection and Public Health*, 13(6), 877–882. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jiph.2020.05.021>