



THE IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID19) PANDEMIC ON EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH

Sylvia R. Atoko

Dean, Faculty of Business & Management

International University of East Africa, Kampala, Uganda

atoko.sylvia@gmail.com, sylvia.atoko@iuea.ac.ug

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic is putting a huge strain on people's mental wellbeing. The aim of this research study was to establish the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic on employee mental health. Referring to the classification by Grant & Booth (2009), secondary data was obtained from recent literature that was reviewed from articles in Google scholar. The articles were selected according to their relevance to the research topic and publication date(s) which fell between March and June 2020. The findings of this research study established that the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic has had a devastating effect on the mental health of employees. Conclusions based on the findings of this research study are that the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic has impacted negatively on the mental health status of employees. This research study had some limitations, therefore the limitations of this study should form the basis for future research studies. Although the reviewed literature has helped to achieve this goal, it was highly subjective and may have compromised on the findings. The methodology of this research study was restricted to secondary data, i.e. literature review. Future research studies should therefore be more objective and adopt other methodologies like descriptive, explanatory, survey, case studies etc. Future research studies can also use the literature reviewed to design a research model that can be tested. These findings are therefore not conclusive because the pandemic is still with us and the information is still fluid. More research studies should therefore focus on current and updated information regarding the pandemic.

Keywords: *Coronavirus (COVID19) Pandemic, Employee Mental Health, Stress, Anxiety, Job Security, Social Distancing*



INTRODUCTION

According to Grensing-Pophas (2020), mental health issues in the workplace have been an area of concern for some time, but with the COVID-19 crisis, the emotional challenges employees are confronting have spiked. Employees are feeling stress and experiencing significant change. They are concerned about the stability of their jobs, have been asked to work from home or required to come onsite despite heightened health risks. Some employees are juggling child and elder care issues and responsibilities. Anyone could experience crippling levels of stress and anxiety now, so it's important for HR professionals and people managers to be alert to signs that may indicate employees are struggling to cope. HR professionals should therefore strive for early and often communication to employees, including honest and transparent information about what they know and what they don't know" about issues such as job security, as the situation develops.

In response to the current Coronavirus crisis, most state and local governments are requiring closures of non-essential businesses and schools, prohibiting large gatherings, and requiring quarantines for travelers, in addition to encouraging social distancing. A majority of states have declared mandatory stay-at-home orders for all but non-essential workers. A broad body of research links social isolation and loneliness to both poor mental and physical health. Former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has brought attention to the widespread experience of loneliness as a public health concern in itself, pointing to its association with reduced lifespan and greater risk of both mental and physical illnesses (Dr. Murthy serves on the KFF Board of Trustees). Additionally, studies of the psychological impact of quarantine during other disease outbreaks indicate such quarantines can lead to negative mental health outcomes. There is particular concern about suicidal ideation during this time, as isolation is a risk factor for suicide (Panchal, et al. 2020)

Before the term COVID-19 had entered our vocabulary, burnout, stress, and anxiety were significant issues in the workplace, and society generally. Throw the pandemic's mental health impact into the mix, and work-related stress is likely to reach staggering levels in the coming months. Business leaders need to brace themselves for this aftershock and be prepared to meet a dramatically heightened need for support and services. The Coronavirus pandemic will be the most psychologically toxic disaster in anyone's lifetime. This pandemic is a disaster of uncertainty, and the greater the uncertainty surrounding a disaster, the greater the psychological casualties (Beheshti 2020).

All employees all over the world have either been affected or infected by the Coronavirus (COVID19) Pandemic. Many employees have been infected by the virus in their various lines of duty, some of whom have succumbed to the virus. Employees who have not been infected by

the virus are not lucky either, because they are affected in some way. The virus has affected their mental well-being as they watch their colleagues succumb to the virus. Health workers all over the world are suffering from burnout as a result of attending to the overwhelming numbers of the Coronavirus patients. They are also worried of being infected by the virus in the line of duty and passing on the virus to their immediate family members. Most health care workers have not received proper training on how to protect themselves from the virus while attending to COVID19 patients. There has also been a common complaint of insufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs). With time the Coronavirus (COVID19) graph will start flattening and very few deaths will be experienced. This is the time when employees will experience the aftershocks of the pandemic which may lead to mental illness if not quickly addressed. Infact experts have already predicted another pandemic after the COVID19 which is the MENTAL ILLNESS. According to Lew Levy, MD, chief medical officer, Teladoc Health, the COVID-19 pandemic has given the mental health dialogue even greater importance and further advanced awareness and support for mental health on a broad scale, and specifically among employers who are making it a priority for their employees.

Many organisations have lost their most valued employees after succumbing to the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic. For instance, Dr. Sadeq Elhowsh, a long-serving orthopedic surgeon with St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals - NHS Trust, succumbed to the novel corona virus, after serving more than 17 years in the medical career (Jawhar 2020). In another case, Brazil's Federal Council of Nurses (COFEN) reported 116 deaths (as at 17th May 2020) among nurses, nursing assistants and technicians (Ferreira 2020). Moreover, a senior Kenya Airways pilot Captain Daudi Kimuyu Kibati, paid the ultimate price for his heroic efforts to evacuate Kenyans stranded in the Covid-19-hit New York City after performing his last international assignment. Captain Kibati was in charge of the last flight from New York to Nairobi which evacuated Kenyans stranded in the United States. Captain Kibati, who piloted the Dreamliner 787, was tasked with evacuating Kenyans from a city ravaged by the virus under very strict timelines. Captain Kibati, a retired Major of the Kenya Air Force put his life on the line to rescue his countrymen trapped abroad. The previous week, the pilot had flown another flight from Nairobi to Rome, and back to Nairobi, before being dispatched to New York (Daily Nation 2020).

The list of government officials, celebrities, athletes and other prominent personalities who have been infected by the virus is endless. Some of the government officials who have tested positive globally include:- Riek Machar: South Sudan's Vice President and his wife Angelina Teny, who serves as defence minister, Ferozuddin Feroz: Afghanistan's health minister, Olga Lyubimova: Russia's Culture Minister, Asad Qaiser: Pakistan's parliament

speaker, Carmen Calvo: Spain's deputy prime minister, Prince Charles: The Prince of Wales and heir to the British throne, Abba Kyari: The Nigerian president's chief of staff, Rand Paul: The Republican from Kentucky senator, Prince Albert: Monaco's Prince Albert II. Michel Barnier: The European Union's chief Brexit negotiator, Bento Albuquerque: Brazil's Mines and Energy Minister, Augusto Heleno: Brazil's national security adviser, Jeremy Issacharoff: Israel's ambassador to Germany, Kozo Tashima: The head of Japan's football association, Nadine Dorries: A minister in the UK's health department, Peter Dutton: The Australian home affairs minister, Massoumeh Ebtekar: The Iranian vice president, Quim Torra: The local leader of Spain's Catalonia region, Pere Aragonès: The Catalan deputy head of government, Irene Montero: The Spanish minister, Franck Riester: The French minister of culture, Francis Suarez: The mayor of the US city of Miami, Fabio Wajngarten: The press secretary for Brazilian President, Michal Wos: Poland's environment minister, Oumarou Idani: Burkina Faso's minister of mines, Stanislas Ouaro: Burkina Faso's minister of education, Simeon Sawadogo: Burkina Faso's interior minister, Alpha Barry: Burkina Faso's foreign minister, Boris Johnson: The prime minister of the United Kingdom, Matthew Hancock: Britain's Health Secretary, Seyi Makinde: Nigeria's Oyo State Governor, Yaakov Litzman, Israel's health minister, Ali Larijani: Speaker of Iran's parliament, Nuno Gomes Nabiam: Guinea-Bissau's prime minister, and Mikhail Mishustin: Russia's prime minister (Al Jazeera & News Agencies 2020).

There is no health without mental health, therefore there is need to address the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic on the mental health of employees. Employees are considered to be an organization's most valued asset because they enable organisations to achieve their goals. The mental health of employees is not negotiable, it is therefore the responsibility of organisations to undertake to protect their employees from succumbing to mental health related illnesses especially during this pandemic by offering proactive mental health support in the form of creating awareness, education and offering virtual health care on mental health. If the issue of employee mental health is not addressed, then the world is at a risk of losing more people to mental health illness than to the virus itself. Most of these people are productive employees of various organisations worldwide. It is important for employers to recognize that there are some skills that are scarce in the labour market. There are also some positions in organisations that are considered to be key and critical. In addition, some employees may not be easily replaceable due to their extra ordinary performance, after they have been separated from the organization after succumbing to the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic. Organisations therefore need to consider employees' mental health a priority, especially during this period of the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic is putting a huge strain on people's mental wellbeing. If the necessary measures are not taken by organisations to support employees' emotional and psychological wellbeing during this COVID19 period, the productivity of organisations will be immensely affected in the future. In addition, organisations stand to lose their most valued employees to the consequences of the pandemic. The Coronavirus pandemic (COVID19) is therefore a reminder to employers to give priority to employee health and wellness over productivity. This is a long term investment for those organisations that will adhere to this call. Some of the benefits to be realized by such organisations will include, enhanced employee motivation, commitment and loyalty, low labour turnover, harmonious relationships between employees and employers, good public image and enhanced employee performance resulting to increased productivity. At this particular moment, the health of employees is superior to the productivity of organisations.

Research to illustrate the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic on employee mental health is still on-going. Hence there is insufficient knowledge on the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic on employee mental health. This study has therefore made an effort to establish the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic on employee mental health.

This paper focuses on the Impact of the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic on employee mental health. Section one of this paper discusses the background to the study. Section two provides the literature review, Section three outlines the research methodology that was adopted in the research study, while section four is devoted to the findings of the research study. Section five has discussed the conclusions and lastly section six has discussed the recommendations for further research studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Ho (2020), the Coronavirus pandemic has touched every part of our society, shutting down entire parts in countries and challenging our very nature as humans to be social through social distancing, stay-at-home measures and restrictions on travel. In the employment context, stress and anxiety may well be exacerbated, employees will have been displaced and working from home, perhaps furloughed and, for many, concern about future employment. The social distancing measures imposed by governments around the world mean that people are now more isolated than ever before. Our homes have turned into home offices, gyms, playgrounds and schools, and we are dealing with considerable uncertainty and change due to financial worries, health threats and potential job losses. Many employees are experiencing high levels of uncertainty, worries and stress. Those with pre-existing mental health conditions

such as depression, anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) have these conditions being worsened by the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic. Most employees who are used to sending emails to communicate across multiple time zones have suddenly adapted to videoconferencing and other similar technologies instead of face-to-face contact. Use of these technologies has enabled employees to maintain output and engagement levels through remote working. But this has resulted to longer working hours and non-separation between professional and personal lives. Closure of schools has made working parents to struggle to balance between their work and family obligations.

This is a calamitous time, and employees are under tremendous stress, both personally and professionally. This stress is undoubtedly exacerbated by the need to engage in social distancing, which can make people feel even more isolated. Ambiguity contributes to employee stress and anxiety and this pandemic is creating tremendous uncertainty; indeed, it is still unclear how long this pandemic will last and how devastating it will ultimately be. Companies can help reduce uncertainty by communicating openly and honestly with employees. By being more transparent and discussing worst-case scenarios, managers cannot only reduce stress but also other dysfunctional outcomes, like increased gossip and decreased commitment, which often occurs when employees are faced with ambiguous situations. Furthermore, information sharing is often seen as an indicator of trust, so managers who are more open are also likely to be seen as more credible and trustworthy. Stress is greater when employees are working in contexts with high demands and low control. In other words, jobs are especially stressful when they are characterized by heavy workloads, time pressure, and intense concentration combined with low levels of autonomy and decision making input. In fact, a recent study found that jobs with low control and high demands are not just more stressful, but also may also shorten employees' life expectancy. Although managers may be less able to reduce job demands during this pandemic, they should be able to empower their workers by giving them greater autonomy and decision-making authority, and doing so can make a meaningful difference. Reactions to job stressors are often a matter of perception. In particular, when employees view stressful situations as a challenge, they tend to exhibit greater motivation and performance; however, when those stress factors are seen as a hindrance or obstacle to achieving their goals, employees' motivation and performance tend to suffer. Employees are especially likely to feel hindered by things like unclear objectives, conflicting requests, red tape, organizational politics and other hassles. The idea of challenge-versus-hindrance appraisals suggests that managers should help their employees see this difficult time as an opportunity for them to grow, develop, and help others. At the same time, managers should do their best to eliminate bureaucratic headaches that make it more difficult for employees to carry out their duties.

The Coronavirus is here, and it is disrupting our way of life. Those who are fortunate enough to keep their jobs will need to find new ways of working. During this difficult time, managers need to be especially mindful of the stress and anxiety of their workers. By providing more open and honest communication, empowering their employees, and removing roadblocks, managers can help make this stressful time less overwhelming. Beyond these actions, managers should be virtually, if not physically, available and present for their employees. Indeed, we know that social support can help people cope with stress, so social distancing needs to be more about physical separation than social or psychological isolation as we deal with this pandemic (Bolino 2020).

According to Kassler (2020), companies that set up programs to address workforce well-being and mental health issues can help mitigate many of the negative psychosocial factors that adversely impact people and teams. He recommends the following three focus areas on mental health that employers and employees should prioritize during the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic. (i) Resilience: being able to bounce back from a traumatic event and adapt to adversity. Resiliency can apply to organizations as well as people, and it's not an inherent personality trait, but a skill that can be learned, strengthened and practiced. Companies can foster resiliency through culture and policy. (ii) Fear – understanding that fear is an evolutionary signal that captures our attention when we sense danger. Companies can provide tools and resources to help develop a clear plan of action for our workforce, ourselves, our families and our communities, which in turn helps us to put that fear in perspective, focus on action, and find a new sense of equilibrium. (iii) Self-care – a combination of what we need to do to protect our mental and physical health. Adopting policies at the employer level that offer resources for self-care — think mindfulness apps, access to mental health professionals, online courses, exercise videos, etc, help employees balance their personal and professional lives and stay engaged.

Zhang and Ma (2020) investigated the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and quality of life among local Chinese residents aged more than 18 years in Liaoning Province, mainland China. They concluded that COVID-19 pandemic was associated with mild stress.

The findings of a longitudinal research in the United Kingdom by Kousoulis et al. (2020) on the impact of financial inequalities on mental health during the pandemic were as follows:- One in five people surveyed (20.55%) – and more than one third (34.01%) in full-time work – are concerned about losing their job. One fifth (19.70%) of people surveyed who identified as unemployed have had suicidal thoughts and feelings in the last two weeks – this is compared to 8.64% of people in employment. People most worried about financial concerns are people in middle age. Twice as many unemployed people (25.85%) surveyed say they are not coping

well with the stress of the pandemic compared to people in employment (12.25%). Over one in 10 (10.93%) unemployed people surveyed say nothing has helped them cope with the stress of the pandemic. Whilst the overall picture for many is improving, one third (32.66%) of UK adults say they are worrying about their finances, such as bill payments and debt. Using a broad categorization, people in lower socioeconomic groups (c2de) (35.11%) are more likely to have financial concerns than people in higher groups (abc1 – 30.81%). Almost half of people surveyed who are unemployed (44.7%) say they were worried about having enough food to meet their basic needs in the past two weeks, compared to 29.32% of people in employment). Since early April, unemployed people are the only group for whom worry about this issue has not reduced. Protecting people's mental health is of critical importance during this period. If the lockdown is very prolonged and/or repeated the UK might lose more people to the social and economic consequences of the lockdown than to the virus itself.

A study done by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) on March 25 found that more than one-third of Americans (36%) say Coronavirus is having a serious impact on their mental health, and most (59%) feel Coronavirus is having a serious impact on their day-to-day lives. Most adults are concerned that the Coronavirus will have a serious negative impact on their finances (57%), and almost half are worried about running out of food, medicine, and/or supplies. Two-thirds of Americans (68%) fear that the Coronavirus will have a long-lasting impact on the economy (Selko 2020).

According to Blanchard (2020), in the weeks following stay-at-home orders and the shutdown of commerce, 88% of U.S. workers say they've experienced moderate to extreme stress, according to a survey of full-time workers conducted by Ginger, a provider of mental healthcare solutions. 69% of workers say that right now is the most stressful time of their entire careers, even more so than during the September 11 terrorist attacks or the 2008 Great Recession. 43% of workers say they have become physically ill due to work-related stress. 62% of workers report losing at least one hour a day in productivity due to COVID-19-related stress, and 32% say they lose at least two hours per day.

Twenge (2020) collected data on mental health during the pandemic and compared it to previous data before the pandemic. The differences in the findings were worse than anticipated. She surveyed 2,032 adults in USA using a standard measure of mental distress that asks questions such as 'how often a respondent felt sad or nervous in the previous month'. She compared the responses with a sample of 19,330 demographically similar people in a 2018 government-sponsored survey of adults in USA that asked similar questions. The results were staggering. The 2020 participants were eight times as likely to screen positive for serious mental illness, 28%, compared to 3.4% in the 2018 survey. The vast majority of the 2020

participants, 70%, met criteria for moderate to serious mental illness, compared with 22% in 2018. This clearly shows that the pandemic has had a devastating effect on mental health. However, the findings of this study are preliminary. In addition, calls to mental health hotlines appear to have surged, suggesting that mental health is suffering during the pandemic.

Nearly 7 in 10 employees indicated in a survey by mental health provider Ginger that the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is the most stressful time of their entire professional career, which has aligned with stark increases in new prescriptions of antidepressant, anti-anxiety, and anti-insomnia medications. According to Ginger, 88% of workers reported experiencing moderate to extreme stress over the past 4 to 6 weeks. Among those reporting stress, 62% noted losing at least 1 hour a day in productivity and 32% lost at least 2 hours a day due to COVID 19 related stress. The prominence of stress among the workforce could prove costly for employers, especially nonessential businesses, seeking to optimize workflow amid the pandemic. As lost time from work has been indicated to potentially cost employers upwards of \$23 billion, decreased employee productivity could further amplify these predictions (Gavinda 2020).

According to Beheshti (2020), the economy is now a significant source of stress for 70% of Americans. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), this compares with 46% in their 2019 Stress in America survey. The government's response to the crisis is causing stress to 67% of Americans. This high-stress response is both a challenge and an opportunity for business and community leaders, who must step up to fill that leadership void. More than one-third of Americans have displayed clinical signs of anxiety, depression, or both since the Coronavirus pandemic began. A Pew Research Center survey found this figure was significantly higher (55%) for those experiencing financial difficulties. As people return to work, business leaders will have to make employees feel comfortable voicing their concerns. Only 50% of employees are comfortable discussing mental health issues. This same poll, conducted by the American Psychiatric Association, also found that a third of employees worry about retaliation or firing if they seek mental health care. Psychological safety, the freedom to authentically be yourself at work, is increasingly recognized as a key driver of engagement and innovation. In the months and years ahead, that safety must include feeling comfortable discussing mental health issues. Nearly one-in-five Americans say they have had a physical reaction when thinking about the outbreak. Mindfulness programs that help people cultivate mind-body awareness will be more crucial than ever. In a March Pew survey, 18% said they had experienced nervousness or anxiety most or all of the time during the past week. Text messages to a federal disaster distress hotline increased more than 1000% in the previous months. Mental health is poorest among those unemployed for six months or more. According

to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate rose from 15.9 million to 23.1 million in April. This sharp increase reflects the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic and efforts to contain it. Nearly 20% of people unemployed for over a year stated that they currently had or were being treated for depression at the time of the study. The long-term psychological consequences of collective traumas can last a decade or more. According to a CDC expert who manages hurricane response teams, mental illness and substance abuse are the primary long-term effects of such disasters. A hurricane and a pandemic are two different stressors, but we should not be surprised to see the Coronavirus's psychological toll persist for some time. Pandemic stress is significantly higher in young people. According to Pew, one-third of adults ages 18 to 29 are in the high distress group, compared with just 15% of adults 65 and older. The ideas and creativity of young workers are essential for economic innovation. Business leaders will have to devote extra care to nurturing these employees through the recovery period.

According to Gurchiek (2020), between 22 percent and 35 percent of U.S. employees often experience symptoms of depression as they live through the COVID-19 pandemic, according to new research by the Society for Human Resource Management. The survey of 1,099 employees found that women, younger workers and people living with at least one person who is a member of a vulnerable population, such as a health care worker or someone with a compromised immune system, were affected the most. Nearly two-thirds of respondents who said they felt like a failure lived with someone who is vulnerable. Symptoms of depression the survey asked about included difficulty concentrating, feelings of failure or letting the family down, hopelessness, little interest or pleasure in pursuing activities, and feeling tired. Work-related concerns left more than 40 percent of employees feeling hopeless, burned out or exhausted as they grapple with lives altered by COVID-19. The survey found that 41 percent of respondents felt "burned out. However, more than one-third of all respondents said they have not done anything to cope with their feelings; only 7 percent had contacted a mental health professional.

A new study by Teladoc Health highlights the widespread negative mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the corresponding growing proactive support by employers to help meet the need, and the increased interest and comfort in virtual care options as part of American's mental health and wellness. The study of 1558 employees (or those recently employed) in the U.S. and Canada, was conducted in mid-April by marketing research and analytics firm, leger which was commissioned by global virtual care leaders, Teladoc Health (NYSE: TDOC), as a follow up to the company's 2019 international mental health study conducted last fall by Ipsos MORI. As a result of COVID-19, a significant number of respondents said their mental health has been negatively impacted (47%), with the negative

impact on women (52%) far greater than men (42%). Nearly half (49%) between the ages of 18-34 reported being negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, a trend that was similar to Canadian respondents (52%) of the same age, and consistent with findings from the fall study that revealed a greater need among this demographic. Those over the age of 65 – an age group that has been deemed most at risk for the virus – experienced the lowest reported negative impact in the United State (38%) and Canada (37%). Since March 1, Teladoc's mental health visits for ages 18-30 more than doubled over the prior two months, and members diagnosed with adjustment anxiety disorder has increased by 60%. Results also showed that to support the growing impact on employees' well-being, there is progress in opening the dialogue and closing the gap for mental health support in the workplace. The data shows that 27% of U.S. employers (compared to 39% of Canadian employers) are proactively responding to their employees with some or all of the following initiatives: Offering additional mental health support, Raising the discussion of employee mental health needs and waiving fees for mental health support. For example, Teladoc Health has expanded its benefits offering – assuring that all of the company's 2,400 employees around the globe have access to and are aware of their free mental health benefits. This recent study shows a positive trend in the awareness of and dialogue around mental health. Currently the majority of U.S. respondents (55%) with an employee benefits plan are aware of the mental health resources available to them, although the total is less than their Canadian counterparts (66%). Furthermore, there is growing acceptance for virtual care with both Americans (79%) and Canadians (82%) indicating strongly that employee benefits plans should include virtual care for mental health needs just as they do physical health needs. This new data represents a significant increase in support for virtual care over the past six months; during the fall study just 40% responded that they would welcome remote forms of care.

Panchal, et al. (2020) revealed that the most recent data from the Department of Labor, stated that 5.2 million people filed for unemployment benefits during the week of April 5, bringing the four-week total to a historic 22 million people filing for unemployment. In addition, certain industries have been hit harder than others, such as the leisure and hospitality sector. Analysts at S&P Global predict the U.S. unemployment rate will continue to rise in the wake of the pandemic and that the country is nearing a recession. Research also shows that job loss is associated with increased depression, anxiety, distress, and low self-esteem; and may lead to higher rates of substance use disorder. Additionally, as unemployment rises and a recession nears, suicides may increase. The study also revealed that people with low incomes are also more likely to report major negative mental health impacts from worry or stress over Coronavirus. Twenty-six percent of those making less than \$40,000 reported experiencing a

major negative mental health impact, compared to 17% of those with incomes between \$40,000 to \$89,000 and 14% of those making \$90,000 or more. The same study also revealed that many hospitals across the country are overwhelmed with the growing number of patients presenting with symptoms of COVID-19. This has rapidly increased the demands on frontline health care workers, some of whom are also overwhelmed by supply shortages. The Research indicates that burnout in hospitals is particularly high for young registered nurses and nurses in hospitals with lower nurse-to-patient densities. Physicians are also prone to experiencing burnout and can consequently suffer from mental health issues, including depression and substance use. The risk of suicide is also high among physicians. In a recent KFF poll, about half (51%) of people in households with a health care worker said worry and stress about Coronavirus has had a negative impact on their mental health, which is statistically similar to the 44% of people experiencing a negative impact who do not live in households with a health care worker. A recent study examined the mental health outcomes of health care providers working in China during the Coronavirus outbreak, finding that providers reported feelings of depression, anxiety, and overall psychological burden. This experience was particularly acute among nurses, women, and providers directly involved in diagnosing and treating patients with COVID-19.

According to Mayer (2020), many employers did not have the benefits, programs or culture in place to adequately address mental health concerns even before Coronavirus. With the Coronavirus pandemic putting the spotlight on a growing number of mental health conditions and how they affect employees, experts say companies need to step up and take a hard look at gaps or flaws in their coverage. While almost all employers believe improving mental health in the workplace is good for their business, 17% acknowledge not offering any resources at all, according to a survey of 1,379 U.S. business decision-makers, including HR and benefits leaders, from Transamerica Center for Health Studies. At a striking rate, employees, too, feel coverage is missing: 65% of workers say they don't feel their employer offers benefits or programs that help support or improve their mental wellbeing, according to MetLife research just released in April. Specifically, only 13% of companies provide on-site stress-management programs, and just 11% provide mindfulness or meditation benefits, according to the latest available data from the Society for Human Resource Management. While employee-assistance programs have largely been the mental health benefit of choice for employers, only 79% of companies offer them. And, for the most part, utilization is low: Usually less than 10% of employees use EAPs, according to SHRM. The pandemic has created a sense of urgency for employers to add resources and catch up quickly, as experts point out just how widespread mental health issues are and as employers begin to see the effects stress and anxiety have on their workforce. They are obviously very concerned about the distress that their employees are

sharing with them, and they have a desire to help minimize that distress, so they're looking at programmatic alternatives, whether it's EAPs or communication, or how to push information to them.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Based on the literature that was reviewed, the findings of this research study are as follows:-

- The Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic has had a devastating effect on the mental health of employees.
- Many employees are experiencing high levels of uncertainty, worries and stress as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic.
- The pandemic has impacted negatively on employees' productivity.
- The daily lives of employees have been negatively affected by the pandemic.
- The finances of employees have been negatively affected by the pandemic.
- Most employees are concerned with losing their jobs due to the pandemic.
- Most employees are worried about having enough food and meeting their basic needs as a result of this pandemic.
- The pandemic has also resulted to other physical illnesses among employees.
- The pandemic has negatively impacted on the global economy.

Further discussions regarding the findings of this research study have been summarized in the table below:

Table 1: Summary of the Analysis and findings of the research study

No.	Author	Discussions
1	Beheshti 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is need for psychological support and solidarity. • Business leaders should review their Employee Assistance Programs to address a full range of mental health needs adequately. • Managers should be trained to identify the signs and symptoms of mental illness so they can be better equipped to support their employees. • Companies should implement a holistic and comprehensive employee wellness programme that includes stress management workshops and coaching. • Business leaders should embrace the challenge of creating work environments that meet fundamental needs of employees that will make a substantial contribution towards collective recovery.

2	Blanchard 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers need to make mental health support a critical aspect. • Companies should recognize the vital importance of their employees' psychological wellness by advocating for greater mental health awareness.
3	Bolino 2020	<p>Managers should:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide open and honest communication to employees. • Provide social support to employees. • Empower employees and remove roadblocks. • Help their employees see this difficult time as an opportunity for them to grow, develop, and help others. • Be mindful of the stress and anxiety of their workers.
4	Gavinda 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers need to make mental health support a critical aspect of that plan, or risk a dramatic impact on employee health and productivity.
5	Gurchiek 2020	<p>Employers should:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize mental health in their benefits plan and remind employees of offerings that may be especially helpful. Employers can offer health coaching, health and wellness tips, online courses, and health challenges to help employees who are struggling with loneliness, anxiety or depression. • Use technology to offer mental health resources: Employees should be made aware of a variety of mental health programs, such as licensed counselors on call, meditation platforms and virtual education for employees to learn coping mechanisms and stress management. Resources also may include employee assistance programs (EAPs), webinars and online assessments. • Stay in touch with employees: reach out with regular video conferences, daily e-mail updates or a message communication app. • Offer emotional support: offer a list of resources for mental health support or community programs that may help to ease the burden on staff during this time.
6	Ho 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting in place support mechanisms and creating a culture where employees feel able to share challenges with mental health should enable employers to identify the risks and devise strategies to manage them.
7	Kassler 2020	<p>Companies should:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up programs to address workforce well-being and mental health issues and mitigate many of the negative psychosocial factors that

		adversely impact people and teams.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster resiliency through culture and policy. • Provide tools and resources to help develop a clear plan of action for workforce. • Adopt policies at the employer level that offer resources for self-care
8	Kousoulis et al. 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting people's mental health is of critical importance during this period.
9	Mayer 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Apps from third parties that focus on and promote different areas of mental health, from meditation to sleep to emotional resiliency. • Availing to employees, information about mental health benefits. • Being prepared and equipped to handle employee mental health issues. • Employees should be comfortable speaking openly about their mental health struggles.
10	Panchal, et al. 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those with mental illness and substance use disorders pre-pandemic, and those newly affected, will likely require mental health and substance use services.
11	Selko 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging and strengthening the Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) to provide better service. • Training front-line leaders to recognize signs and symptoms of suicide and other mental health concerns to make sure conversations are being started with those who need it. • Creating and maintaining a mentally healthy work environment. • Having a culture conducive to conversations on COVID-19. • Educating employees on how to manage stress through self-care.
12	Teladoc Health, Inc. 2020.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking support to address mental health concerns is the new normal as more people choose not to bottle up their issues and keep them to themselves. • The call for support is trending upward, and employers are working to help improve mental health education and awareness.
13	Twenge 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pandemic has had a devastating effect on mental health. • Policymakers need to be prepared for a potentially unprecedented number of people needing mental health services.
14	Zhang & Ma (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 pandemic was associated with mild stress.

Source: Author's compilation

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions based on the findings of this research study are that the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic has impacted negatively on the mental health status of employees. Companies should therefore help reduce uncertainty by communicating openly and honestly with employees. This is because Information sharing is often seen as an indicator of trust. Companies should also set up programs to address workforce well-being and mental health issues to mitigate many of the negative psychosocial factors that adversely impact people and teams. Hence the focus areas on mental health should be fostering Resilience, elimination of Fear and providing resources for Self-care. This research study has therefore contributed to the body of knowledge because it has established a strong relationship between the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic and employee mental health.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research study had some limitations, therefore the limitations of this study should form the basis for future research studies. The aim of this research study was to establish the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic on employee mental health. In addition, the research aimed at providing information on the possible solutions to the mental health problems of employees during this period. Although the reviewed literature has helped to achieve this goal, it was highly subjective and may have compromised on the findings. The methodology of this research study was restricted to secondary data, i.e. literature review. Future research studies should therefore be more objective and adopt other methodologies like descriptive, explanatory, survey, case studies etc. Future research studies can also use the literature reviewed to design a research model that can be tested.

These findings are not conclusive because the pandemic is still with us and the information is still fluid. More research studies should therefore focus on current and updated information regarding the pandemic. A specific group of employees for example, teachers, health workers, etc, should be the main focus in future research studies rather than generalizing on all employees.

REFERENCES

- Al Jazeera & News Agencies (2020). Coronavirus pandemic: Which politicians and celebs are affected? Top politicians, celebrities and sportspeople have been infected as governments take strict measures to curb the virus. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/Coronavirus-pandemic-politicians-celebs-affected-200315165416470.html>
- Beheshti, N. (2020). 10 Eye-Opening Statistics on the Mental Health Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nazbeheshti/2020/05/28/10-eye-opening-statistics-on-the-mental-health-impact-of-the-Coronavirus-pandemic/#65032c4a2df0>

- Blanchard, D. (2020). Help Them If You Can – They're Feeling Down. <https://www.ehstoday.com/covid19/article/21130750/covid-on-the-mind-mental-health-awareness-in-the-workplace>
- Bolino, M. C. (2020) "Managing Employee Stress and Anxiety during the Coronavirus" <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-thoughtful-manager/202003/managing-employee-stress-and-anxiety-during-the-Coronavirus>
- Daily Nation (2020). Pilot succumbs to COVID-19 after evacuating Kenyans from virus-hit New York City. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/COVID-19-kills-KQ-pilot-who-evacuated-Kenyans-from-New-York/688334-5513290-7711h5z/index.html>
- Ferreira, L., (2020). The unwanted record: 116 nurses succumbed to COVID-19 in Brazil. <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-05-17/The-unwanted-record-116-nurses-succumbed-to-COVID-19-in-Brazil--QxX6pAZySl/index.html>
- Gavidia, M. (2020), How Has COVID-19 Affected Mental Health, Severity of Stress Among Employees? <https://www.ajmc.com/newsroom/how-has-covid19-affected-mental-health-severity-of-stress-among-employees>
- Grant, M. J., & Booth, A., (2009). A Typology of Reviews: An Analysis of 14 Review Types and Associated Methodologies. *Health Info Libr J.* 26(2): 91-108.
- Grensing-Pophas, L., (2020). Pandemic Takes a Toll on employees' Emotional well-Being. <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/benefits/pages/pandemic-takes-a-toll-on-employees-emotional-well-being.aspx>
- Gurchiek, K. (2020). SHRM Research: COVID-19 Takes a Toll on Employees' Mental Well-Being. <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-news/pages/shrm-research-covid-19-takes-a-toll-on-employees-mental-well-being.aspx>
- Ho, A. (2020) "Coronavirus: the hidden Impact on Employee Mental Health" <https://www.pinsentmasons.com/out-law/analysis/Coronavirus-employee-mental-health-impact>
- Jawhar, J. (2020). Libyan Doctor Succumbs to COVID-19 After Treating Patients in the UK. <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/2248681/libyan-doctor-succumbs-covid-19-after-treating-patients-uk>
- Kassler, W. J. (2020). Businesses and employees must prioritize health – and that includes mental health. <https://newsroom.ibm.com/Protecting-mental-health-during-a-pandemic>
- Kousoulis, A., McDaid, S., Crepez-Keay, D., Solomon, S., Lombardo, C., Yap, J., Weeks, L., O'Sullivan, C., Baird, R., Grange, R., Giugliano, T., Thorpe, L., Knifton, L., Rowland, M., Bortel, T., John, A., Lee, S., Morton, A., Davidson, G., (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic, financial inequality and mental health. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/Coronavirus-mental-health-pandemic/covid-19-inequality-briefing>
- Mayer, K. (2020). Is COVID-19 a turning point for workplace mental health? The Coronavirus pandemic finds more employees struggling—and employers playing catch-up in the rush to help. <https://hrexecutive.com/will-covid-finally-make-employers-fix-their-mental-health-problem/>
- Panchal, N., Kamal, R., Orgera, K., Cox, C., Garfield, R., Hamel, L., Munana, C. & Chidambaram, P. (2020). The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use. <https://www.kff.org/Coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>
- Selko, A. (2020). COVID on the Mind: Mental Health Awareness in the Workplace. <https://www.ehstoday.com/covid19/article/21130750/covid-on-the-mind-mental-health-awareness-in-the-workplace>
- Teladoc Health, Inc. (2020). New Study by Teladoc Health Reveals COVID-19 Pandemic's Widespread Negative Impact on Mental Health. <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2020/05/06/2028434/0/en/New-Study-by-Teladoc-Health-Reveals-COVID-19-Pandemic-s-Widespread-Negative-Impact-on-Mental-Health.html>
- Twenge, J. (2020) "New study shows staggering effect of Coronavirus pandemic on America's mental health" <https://theconversation.com/new-study-shows-staggering-effect-of-Coronavirus-pandemic-on-americas-mental-health-137944>
- Zhang, Y., & Ma, F. Z., (2020). The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health and Quality of Life among Local Residents of Liaoning Province, China: A Cross-sectional study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.* 1-12.