

# The Psychological Impacts of the Coronavirus Crisis on Athletes in Jordan

Maen Z. Zakarneh\*

Department of Sport Science, Arab American University, Jenin, Palestine

## Abstract

This study investigated the psychological impacts of the Coronavirus crisis on athletes in Jordan. It was carried out during this crisis in Jordan, specifically in September, 2021. Through the use of a descriptive approach, the data was obtained through conducting interviews with forty (40) athletes who were chosen purposively from 15 gyms that are located in Amman, Jordan. Several questions were asked to obtain data from them about the impacts of this crisis on them. The researcher found that this problem leads to promoting psychological alienation, pessimism, frustration, depression, anxiety and stress among athletes in Jordan. He recommends providing psychological support to athletes in Jordanian sport clubs and gyms. He recommends holding training courses for promoting awareness among athletes in Jordanian sport clubs about the way of managing stress during crises, including health crisis. He recommends recruiting specialists in psychology at Jordanian sport clubs and gyms to improve the psychological being of athletes.

**Keywords:** Psychological impacts • The Coronavirus crisis • Jordan • Athletes

## Introduction

The Coronavirus crisis is a very severe global crisis that has been affecting the whole world, including Arab countries like Jordan. It refers to the prevalence of a virus called the COVID 19 virus) in the whole world. The latter virus is classified under the respiratory viruses. It may lead to suffering from pneumonia that is deemed very severe. It emerged for the first time in a city located in China which is called (Wuhan). It emerged at the end of December, 2019. It can be transmitted through the process of inhalation. It may be transmitted through the droplets of infected people. In terms of the incubation period of the latter virus, it falls within the range of (14 days-2 days). As for the symptoms of being infected with this virus, it involves fever, coughing, and having difficulty to breathe. It also involves suffering from sore throat, fatigue, malaise, and etc... The symptoms are mild for most of the ones infected with this virus. However, the latter virus may be deemed as a life threatening virus for elderly people. The same applies for the ones suffering from comorbidities. In fact, it may progress into acute respiratory distress syndrome that is abbreviated as (ARDS). It may progress into multi organ dysfunction or pneumonia. The fatality rate among the ones infected is within the range of two to three percent [1].

On April 12, 2020, the Jordanian government recorded 389 cases of people infected with the coronavirus. In order to control the Coronavirus crisis, Jordan took several control and preventive measures. Such measures involve: social distancing, enforcing curfew, and suspension of the operations of airport. It involves activating the provisions of the Defence Law Measures were also taken to manage cases clinically and detect cases. Civil society organizations in Jordan have been playing a role in fighting against the spread of this virus. In other words, the Jordanian government and organizations have been taking measures to reduce the severity of the economic, social and financial impacts of this virus on Jordan and Jordanians [2].

Pfizer vaccine was developed in 2020 to provide people with immunity against this virus. It proved its effectiveness in protecting people. It shows that it can protect people from this virus with a rate of protection estimated to be 90%. It contributes to reducing the burden on the healthcare sector. However, it's still not clear whether this vaccine has side effect or not. It's not clear whether this vaccine provide long-term protection or not [3]. Thus,

the researcher noticed that many Jordanians are hesitating to take the vaccine. It's suggested that the Coronavirus has major and serious negative psychological impacts on people. For instance [4] add that the quarantine in Jordan is associated with anxiety which varies from mild to moderate to severe. They add that 40% of Jordanians suffered from anxiety during the quarantine. They add that such anxiety is affected by several factors, such as: social support, age, social network, and income [4].

Al-Shannaq [5] add that this crisis affected the quality life of people in Jordan. This crisis led to promoting depression. The ones who suffered from depression the most during this period are the ones holding undergraduate degree, the ones employed and the ones having chronic physical problems or mental health problems [6]. Al-Shannaq, and Mohammad (2021) add that most people in Jordan during the lockdown had changes to their daily life activities and routines, increased use for social media, and increased use for mobile phones. They add that many people in Jordan during the lockdown had experienced fear of this virus. They add that this fear led to promoting depression, stress and anxiety. However, the researcher noticed that athletes are amongst the ones who were influenced psychologically by this crisis. That applies to athletes in all countries, including Jordan. For instance, Uroh and Adewunmi, add that this crisis led to promoting sadness, hopelessness, and psychological distress among athletes [7]. They add that this crisis negatively affected the psychological well-being of athletes. That's attributed to the lock down which put them in social isolation and deprived them from the social support that should be provided by friends and relatives. McGuine, et al. [8] added that 68.5% of secondary school student-athletes in US suffer from mild or severe anxiety. They found that 70.4% of secondary school student-athletes in US suffer from mild or severe depression. They add that the prevalence of depression, anxiety and lower quality life levels among student-athletes is attributed to school closure and having several sport events cancelled. Grubic, et al. [9] added that this crisis led to promoting frustration and sadness among student-athletes due to the changes that occurred to their daily life routine, training and postponement of sport events. The promotion of frustration and sadness among student-athletes can be also attributed to the poor ability of athletes to manage stress due to the lack of social and psychological support by the team members [9]. Add that postponing Olympic and Paralympic Games led to promoting psychological distress and reducing their job security levels.

\*Corresponding Author: Maen Z. Zakarneh, Department of Sport Science, Arab American University, Jenin, Palestine; E-mail: m\_zaiad@yahoo.com

**Copyright:** © 2021 Zakarneh MZ. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

**Received date:** 20 October, 2021; **Accepted date:** 03 November, 2021; **Published date:** 10 November, 2021

This crisis affected the mental health of athletes [10]. In the light of the aforementioned, it can be understood that athlete worldwide –including in Jordan– has been suffering much in psychological aspects due to the Coronavirus crisis. Hence, the researcher investigated the psychological impacts of the Coronavirus crisis on athletes in Jordan.

### Objectives

This study investigated the severity of the Coronavirus crisis on the psychological wellbeing of athletes in Jordan. It investigated the psychological impacts of the Coronavirus crisis on athletes in Jordan.

### Questions

This study answered the question below:

- 1) What is the severity of the Coronavirus crisis on the psychological wellbeing of athletes in Jordan?
- 2) What are the psychological impacts of the Coronavirus crisis on athletes in Jordan?

### Significance of the study

The results of this study are deemed highly significant, because they promote awareness among the owners of sport clubs and gyms in Jordan about the way of dealing with athletes during this crisis. The results promote awareness among the owners of sport clubs and gyms in Jordan about the significance of providing athletes with psychological support during this crisis due to having fears from this virus.

### Limits

- Spatial and temporal limits: This study was carried out in several gyms in Amman, Jordan during September, 2021.
- Thematic limits: This article explored the psychological impacts of the Coronavirus crisis on athletes in Jordan.

### Limitations

The results that the researcher reached can't be generalized, because those results are affected by the sample size and characteristics, and validity of the instrument.

### Theoretical framework

The results that the researcher reached can't be generalized, because those results are affected by the sample size and characteristics, and validity of the instrument.

### Definitions

**Theoretical definitions:** Coronavirus crisis: It is classified under the respiratory viruses. It may lead to suffering from pneumonia that is deemed very severe. It emerged for the first time in a city located in China which is called (Wuhan). It emerged at the end of December, 2019. It can be transmitted through the process of inhalation. It may be transmitted through the droplets of infected people. In terms of the incubation period of the latter virus, it falls within the range of (14 days-2 days). As for the symptoms of being infected with this virus, it involves fever, coughing, and having difficulty to breathe. It also involves suffering from sore throat, fatigue, malaise, and etc.

**Athlete:** A person who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports, or games requiring physical strength, agility, or stamina (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 1828)

**Operational definitions:** Athlete: A person who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports, or games and suffered from the effects of the Coronavirus crisis in Jordan. Impacts: They refers to the psychological impacts of the Coronavirus crisis on athletes in Jordan.

### Theoretical framework

Alkhamees investigated the psychological effects of this health crisis on individuals in Saudi Arabia [11]. They employed a survey for gathering data from 1160 individuals who live in Saudi Arabia. They used a descriptive

analytical approach. They concluded that 23.6% of the sampled individuals suffer from psychological impacts which levels range between moderate to severe due to this crises. They found that females and employment in the medical sector contribute to raising stress, anxiety, and depression levels. They found that suffering from mental disorder(s) shall raise the latter levels too among people. In addition, the degree to which one practice the precautionary measures –e.g. washing hands– shall have a positive impact on mental well-being during this crisis. The amount of time spent indoors does not have an impact on the levels of stress, depression nor does anxiety add that the home quarantine during this crisis negatively affected the psychological well-being of people, especially the ones who are old. That is attributed to the social distancing measures and restrictions enforced on family. Such measures and restrictions deprived people from interacting with others which is needed just like food and water [1]. To illustrate more, home quarantine contributed to promoting eating disorders among people and making changes to people's weight. For instance, it's suggested that people tend to eat more and eat food that is high with sugar and unhealthy food during crises and stressful events. That is because one may use the eating behaviour as a self-defence mechanism to reduce the cortisol hormone and increase dopamine hormone. It is because one may use the eating behaviour as a way to fight against stress, anxiety and depression and self-harm behaviours. However, it should be noted that the eating disorder may be life threatening in some cases. Alasmari (2020) adds that the home quarantine during this crisis contributed to promoting feelings and behaviours of aggression. That may be attributed to depriving people from some rights during the home quarantine. It may be attributed to frustration and stress. It may be attributed to one's failure to adapt socially and psychologically with the surrounding environment. In addition, the home quarantine contributed to promoting feelings of isolation, alienation, and helplessness. It contributed to suffering from financial and economic loss and raising the unemployment rate. Such loss and increasing rate led to promoting stress, anxiety and depression [1]. Alasmari (2020) adds that the surrounding environment and circumstances affect the probabilities of experiencing psychological problems during home quarantine. For instance, the place of the home quarantine must be having adequate food, access to air, sunlight and internet to stay connected with the world. It must be clean. In addition, the psychological problems associated with home quarantine could have been avoided through having psychological immunity and gaining knowledge about the way to deal with this crisis. Liang add that this crisis led to the spread of post-traumatic stress disorder among youth [12]. Sher, adds that this crisis led to the rise of the rates of suicide, stress, substance use, anxiety, and mood disorders [13]. He adds that the rise of such rates is attributed to economic distress, social isolation, fears. Serafini et al., add that this crisis led to promoting feelings of disabling loneliness, frustration, boredom, uncontrolled fears, post-traumatic stress, anger and anxiety [14]. They add that this crisis led to depriving people from their freedom and social support. They add those pregnant women and the ones having young sons/ daughters are at more risk for showing fear during this crisis. They add that this crisis led to reducing the degree to which people interact with others socially or physically, changing people's habits. This crisis made people feel helpless. The feelings of loneliness led to promoting depression and suicidal behaviours among people. It negatively affected people's decision making ability and cognitive functions [14].

### Empirical studies

Tee, et al. investigated the psychological effects of COVID 19 on individuals in Philippines [15]. Data was obtained from 1879 individuals in Philippines through the use of a survey. The survey was passed online. The researchers concluded that one-fourth of the respondents suffered from anxiety which ranges between moderate-to-severe levels. In addition, one-sixth of the respondents suffered from depression which ranges between moderate-to-severe levels. It was concluded that single people and the individuals without children have higher stress, depression and anxiety levels than the rest of the respondents. The individuals who aren't healthcare workers suffered from higher stress and depression levels than

the rest of the respondents. As for students, they suffered from higher anxiety levels. It was found that the lower the academic qualification is, the higher the level of stress shall be. There is a positive relationship existing between staying at home from one side and anxiety and depression levels from another side [15].

The ones who weren't provided with adequate information about this nature of this virus showed greater levels of depression and anxiety. The individuals who acquired information through social media and the web pages about the nature of this virus showed less level of anxiety and depression. The ones who show dissatisfaction with the information broadcasted about this virus reported greater levels of anxiety. 60.7% of the sampled people worry about having one of their families infected. It was found that the confidence level of the infected people in the doctor shall reduce the levels of depression, stress and anxiety. The ones who felt unlikely to survive after becoming infected show higher levels of depression, stress and anxiety. The latter result also applies to the ones who face discrimination [15].

Islam, et al. explored the prevalence of anxiety and depression among a sample of Bangladeshi university students during this health crisis. They obtained the needed data from 476 students in Bangladesh through the use of a survey passed via Facebook and Google Form. They carried out several tests and analysis, such as: univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analysis. They found that 15% of the respondents have moderate or severe levels of depression. They found that 18.1% of the respondents have severe anxiety during this crisis [16].

Ordiozola-González, et al. investigated the psychological effects of the outbreak and lockdown of this crisis on students and employees in a Spanish University. They sampled 2530 students and employees in a Spanish University. They used a survey. They found that 50.43% of the respondents show severe to moderate psychological distress during the 1st week of their confinement [17]. Chinna, et al. investigated the psychological effects of this crisis on students in Asian universities. They sampled 3,679 students from the seven Asian countries. They used a survey for gathering data. They found that 1.9% suffered from anxiety to a moderate level. They found that 13.7% of the students suffered from anxiety to a high level. They found that 20% of students enrolled in the universities China and Bangladesh suffered from anxiety which ranges between severe to moderate degrees. They found that 10% of students enrolled in the universities Malaysia, Indonesia and India suffered from anxiety which ranges between severe to moderate degrees. 15.9% of the female respondents suffered from anxiety. They attributed the stress during this crisis to remote online learning, financial constraints, and uncertainty about academic performance. They attribute the stress during this crisis to concerns about the future career [18].

Alhalaiqa, et al. investigated the psychological problems that healthcare workers have been suffering from during this health crisis (i.e. the Coronavirus crisis) in Jordan. They used the convenience sampling method. The sample consists from 225 healthcare workers in Jordan. Online survey was used for obtaining data from the sampled workers. The researchers concluded that the healthcare workers who are responsible for treating the patients infected with COVID 19 virus are more prone for having high levels of anxiety and depression. Those healthcare workers have lower mental well-being and resilience levels than the other healthcare workers. About half of the respondents have high levels of depression and anxiety [19].

## Materials and Methods

### Approach

This study used the descriptive approach to explore the psychological impacts of the Coronavirus crisis on athletes in Jordan.

### Instrument

The instrument is represented in the questions of the interview. Those questions are shown below

- What is the severity of the impact of the Coronavirus crisis on your psychological wellbeing as an athlete in Jordan?

- What are the psychological impacts of Coronavirus on you as an athlete in Jordan?

### Sample and population

The population involves all the athletes in Jordan. The sample consists from forty (40) athletes who were chosen purposively from 15 gyms that are located in Amman, Jordan. Those forty athletes were interviewed to obtain data from them. Data about the sample is displayed in the following Table 1.

**Table 1.** Data about the sample.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	29	72.5
	Female	11	27.5
Academic qualification	Less than BA degree	2	5
	BA degree	36	87.5
	MA degree	2	5
	PhD degree	0	0

N=40 respondents

### Instrument Validity

This validity was assessed through passing the instrument to 4 experts to assess it. Those experts have a PhD degree in sport education. All the experts confirmed that the instrument is deemed reliable and valid. They confirmed that the instrument allows one to identified the targeted psychological impacts.

## Results and Discussion

### Questions

1. What is the severity of the impact of the Coronavirus crisis on the psychological wellbeing of athletes in Jordan?

To answer this question, the respondents were asked the following question: (What is the severity of the impact of the Coronavirus crisis on your psychological wellbeing as an athlete in Jordan?) (Table 2). 70% of the respondents believe that the severity of the impact of the Coronavirus crisis on the psychological wellbeing of athletes in Jordan is moderate. 12.5% of the respondents believe that the severity of the impact of the Coronavirus crisis on the psychological wellbeing of athletes in Jordan is mild. 17.5% of the respondents believe that the severity of the impact of the Coronavirus crisis on the psychological wellbeing of athletes in Jordan is high.

**Table 2.** Data about the severity.

Level of severity	Frequency	Percentage
High severity	7	17.5
Moderate severity	28	70
Mild severity	5	12.5

N=40 respondents

2. What are the psychological impacts of the Coronavirus crisis on athletes in Jordan?

To answer this question, the respondents were asked the following question: (What are the psychological impacts of Coronavirus on you as an athlete in Jordan?) The psychological impacts of the Coronavirus crisis on athletes in Jordan include the ones below

## Depression

One athlete reported that he suffered from depression during the lockdown. He states the following: (I think that I was depressed during the lockdown period, because I didn't desire to eat nor going out). The same result was reached by Al-Shannaq [5].

## Anxiety

Seven athletes reported that he suffered from anxiety during the lockdown. One of them stated the following: (I experienced much anxiety during the lockdown). Another respondent added: (I experienced much anxiety during this crisis, because I feared losing my job as a trainer). The same result was reached by Massad [4].

## Stress

Twelve athletes reported that he suffered from stress during this crisis. One of them stated the following: (I suffered from much stress during this crisis due to the absence of social support and interaction during this crisis). The same result was reached by Al-Shannaq, and Mohammad.

## Frustration

Five athletes reported that he suffered from frustration during this crisis. One of them stated the following: (I suffered from much frustration during to this crisis, because my income decreased). Another respondent stated the following: (I suffered from much frustration during to the lockdown, because I wasn't capable to get out training like usual). Another respondent stated the following: (I felt really frustrated, because I wasn't capable to engage in sport events in Jordan and outside Jordan). The same result was reached by Grubic, et al. [9].

## Pessimism

Three athletes reported that he suffered from pessimism during this crisis. One of them stated the following: (During this crisis, I had many pessimistic feelings and ideas due to the lack of integration with my friends)

## Psychological alienation

Four athletes reported that he suffered from psychological alienation during this crisis. One of them stated the following: (During this crisis, I felt alienated, because I spent many hours alone without having anything to do). The same result was reached by Alasmari.

## Suggestions for researchers

The researcher recommends: Conducting a study about the impact of the psychological impacts of this crisis on teachers, students and parents. Conducting a study about the financial impacts of this crisis on athletes and the owners of sport facilities in Jordan

## Conclusion

Finally, the researchers explained the improvement of patients' condition due to the application of comprehensive nursing care and continue follow-up care to these patients. The current study concluded that; comprehensive nursing care has a positive effect on reducing the length of patients' duration of hospitalization, and enhanced patients' prognosis.

## Recommendations

➤ The researcher found that this problem leads to promoting psychological alienation, pessimism, frustration, depression, anxiety and stress among athletes in Jordan.

➤ Providing psychological support to athletes in Jordanian sport clubs and gyms.

➤ Holding training courses for promoting awareness among athletes in Jordanian sport clubs about the way of managing stress during crises, including health crisis.

➤ Recruiting specialists in psychology at Jordanian sport clubs and gyms to improve the psychological being of athletes.

➤ Using social media by the owners of sport clubs and gyms to promote awareness about the significance of providing athletes with psychological support.

➤ The current study recommended that establish multidisciplinary rehabilitation programs to determine discharge readiness and the needs of patients recovering from Covid-19.

➤ Integrate the comprehensive nursing care in the protocol of care for Covid-19 patients.

➤ Application of comprehensive nursing care on large samples and variable measurements are in need for generalization of the results.

## Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest and no fund from any institution.

## Acknowledgements

Greatest thanks to all who facilitate the study conduction and completion.

## References

1. Alasmari, S. "Threats to Mental Health Related to Home Quarantine following the Novel Coronavirus, COVID-19." *AJSS* 36 (2020): 265-277.
2. Alqutob, Raeda, Mohannad Al Nsour, Mohammed Rasoul Tarawneh and Musa Ajlouni, et al. "COVID-19 crisis in Jordan: Response, scenarios, strategies, and recommendations." *Med Internet Res* 6 (2020): e19332.
3. Badiani, A A, JA Patel, K Ziolkowski and FBH Nielsen. "Pfizer: The miracle vaccine for COVID-19?." *Public Health Res Pract* 1 (2020): 100061.
4. Massad, Islam, Raed Al-Taher, Faysal Massad and Mohammed Qussay Al-Sabbagh, et al. "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health: early quarantine-related anxiety and its correlates among Jordanians." *East Mediterr Health J* 26 (2020): 1165-1172.
5. Al-Shannaq, Yasmin, Anas A Mohammad and Mohammed Aldalaykeh. "Depression, coping skills, and quality of life among Jordanian adults during the initial outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic: Cross sectional study." *Heliyon* 7 (2021): e06873.
6. Al-Shannaq, Yasmin and Anas A Mohammad. "Psychological impacts during the COVID-19 outbreak among adult population in Jordan: A cross-sectional study." *Heliyon* 7 (2021): e07826.
7. Uroh, Clifford C and Celina M Adewunmi. "Psychological Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Athletes." *Front Sports Act Living* 3 (2021): 603415.
8. McGuine, Timothy A, Kevin M Biese and Labina Petrovska, Scott J Hetzel, et al. "Mental health, physical activity, and quality of life of US adolescent athletes during COVID-19-related school closures and sport cancellations: a study of 13 000 athletes." *J Athl Train* 56 (2021): 11-19.
9. Grubic, Nicholas, Shagun Jain, Valentina Mihajlovic and Jane S. Thornton and et al. "Competing against COVID-19: have we forgotten about student-athletes' mental health?." *Br J Sports Med* 55 (2021).
10. Håkansson, Anders, Karin Moesch, Caroline Jönsson and Göran Kenttä. "Potentially prolonged psychological distress from postponed olympic and paralympic games during COVID-19—career uncertainty in elite athletes." *Int J Environ Res Public Health* 18 (2021): 2.
11. Alkhamees, Abdulmajeed A, Saleh A Alrashed, Ali A Alzunaydi and Ahmed S Almohimeed, et al. "The psychological impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the general population of Saudi Arabia." *Compr Psychiatry* 102 (2020): 152192.
12. Liang, Leilei, Hui Ren, Ruilin Cao and Yueyang Hu, et al. "The effect of COVID-19 on youth mental health." *Psychiatr Q* 91 (2020): 841-852.
13. Sher, Leo. "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on suicide rates." *Qjm-Int J Med* 113, (2020): 707-712.
14. Serafini, Gianluca, Bianca Parmigiani, Andrea Amerio and Andrea Aguglia, et al. "The psychological impact of COVID-19 on the mental health in the general population." *Qjm Int J Med* 113 (2020): 531-537.
15. Tee, Michael L, Chericca A Tee, Joseph P Anlacan and Katrina Joy G Aligam, et al. "Psychological impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines." *J Affect Disord* 277 (2020): 379-391.

16. Islam, Md Akhtarul, Sutapa Dey Barna, Hasin Raihan and Md Nafiul Alam Khan, et al. "Depression and anxiety among university students during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh: A web-based cross-sectional survey." *PloS one* 15(2020): e0238162.
17. Odriozola-González, Paula, Álvaro Planchuelo-Gómez, María Jesús Iruña and Rodrigo de Luis-García. "Psychological effects of the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown among students and workers of a Spanish university." *Psychiatry Res* 290 (2020): 113108.
18. Chinna, Karuthan, Sheela Sundarasan, Heba Bakr Khoshaim and Kamilah Kamaludin, et al. "Psychological impact of COVID-19 and lock down measures: An online cross-sectional multicounty study on Asian university students." *PloS one* 16 (2021): e0253059.
19. Alhalaïqa, FN, Khalifeh AH, Al Omari O and Yehia DB, et al. " Psychological Problems in a Sample of Jordanian Healthcare Workers Involved in Caring for Patients With COVID-19: A Cross-Sectional Study." *Front Psychol* 12 (2021): 679785.

**How to cite this article:** Zakarneh, Maen Z. "The Psychological Impacts of the Coronavirus Crisis on Athletes in Jordan" *Clin Schizophr Relat Psychoses* 15S (2021). 10.3371/CSRP.ZM.111021