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Coronavirus Stress: Stressors and Socio-demographic Correlates among Malaysian Women in the Midst of Lockdown

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Kalaimagal Ramakrishnan ; Vimala Balakrishnan ; Ng Kee Seong ; Norliyana Mohd Shuib All Authors



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Abstract:

This study identifies the stressors and socio- demographic correlates among Malaysian women amid the COVID-19 pandemic nationwide lockdown (March 2020–June 2020). An online questionnaire adapted from previous studies, the Distress Anxiety Stress Scale - 21 and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support scale was used to solicit data, resulting in 1,793 women. Stress prevalence was observed among 24% (N = 430) of the women (M = 11.08; SD = 8.25). Structured equation modelling revealed Marital Issues ($\beta = 0.091$), Financial Issues ($\beta = 0.091$), Emotion ($\beta = 0.340$), Working from Home ($\beta = 0.122$) and Social Support ($\beta = -0.094$) to collectively account for 25% of the women's stress, with all path coefficients being significant at $p < 0.05$. Further, significant differences were noted for age and monthly total household income with younger women and those with lower incomes experiencing more stress than their counterparts. The study and its findings provide a strong basis for

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relevant authorities including mental health professionals and policymakers to devise specific measures to help this vulnerable cohort to cope psychologically better.

Published in: 2021 International Conference on Computer Science and Engineering (IC2SE)

Date of Conference: 16-16 November 2021 **DOI:** 10.1109/IC2SE52832.2021.9792049

Date Added to IEEE Xplore: 13 June 2022 **Publisher:** IEEE

Conference Location: Padang, Indonesia

► **ISBN Information:**

Kalaimagal Ramakrishnan
Faculty of Science and Engineering, University of Nottingham Malaysia,
Semenyih, Malaysia

Vimala Balakrishnan
Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, Universiti Malaya,
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Ng Kee Seong
Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Norliyana Mohd Shuib
Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, Universiti Malaya,
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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I. BACKGROUND

The Coronavirus or simply known as COVID-19 outbreak has taken the world by storm early last year, with recent statistics indicating more than 100 million cases worldwide. The outbreak of the infectious respiratory disease resulted in countries adopting drastic measures, including travel bans, complete/partial lockdowns, and stay-at-home orders. Apart from causing deleterious effects on the economy, education and employment, the pandemic has specifically resulted in increased emotional distress worldwide, including to those who are not highly at risk [1].

Authors 

Kalaimagal Ramakrishnan
Faculty of Science and Engineering, University of Nottingham Malaysia,
Semenyih, Malaysia

Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Ng Kee Seong
Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Norliyana Mohd Shuib
Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, Universiti
Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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