

7th Annual Congress on **MENTAL HEALTH**

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Exploring the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Mental Health of women in poverty: an online survey on women receiving Comprehensive Social Security Allowance in Hong Kong**Cui Jialiang***Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong*

Statement of the Problem: the association of mental ill-health and poverty has been well established in the existing literature, particularly in research on women's mental health. Strong social network is often considered a protective factor against mental illness for women with low socioeconomic status. However, this network may be severely compromised by the strict social distancing policy enforced in some countries, exacerbating the difficulties faced by women in poverty during the COVID-19 pandemic. This makes an investigation on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their mental health timely and important. This exploratory study aimed to explore women's concerns and needs during the pandemic and the protective and risk factor in relation to their mental health. Method: An online survey with 405 women receiving Comprehensive Social Security Allowance in Hong Kong was conducted in April 2021 during the 4th wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey investigated participants' demographic characteristics, socioeconomic status, mental health and social support. The validated Chinese version of Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale, and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support was used. Statistical analysis was performed to describe the data and identify correlations. Findings: results showed that nearly one-fifth of the women experienced severe to extremely severe levels of depression, and more than a half of them were suffered from severe to extremely severe levels of stress. Their risk for mental health problems was found to be associated with the social support they received, which was perceived to deteriorate by nearly half of the respondents. It was also significantly related to the increase of rent, internet and food expenses, and the level of worries concerning parenting and Children's education. Implication for policy and practice will be discussed.

Biography

Cui Jialiang, Angela is an assistant professor from the Department of Social Work, the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She received her PhD from the Centre of Social Research in Health of the University of New South Wales, Australia. She seeks to contribute to the scholarship of health and disability by enthusiastically engaging with NGOs in the local and international context for service and research purposes. Angela is a registered social worker in Hong Kong and with the Australian Association of Social Workers. She has extensive practice, research and policy advocacy experience in the social service sector, particularly in the mental health and disability field, in Hong Kong and Australia. She has served as a trainer and mentor for a broad range of workshops and programs.

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