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Psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on university professors at a University Institution in North Lima

Impacto psicológico de la pandemia COVID-19 en profesores universitarios de una Institución Universitaria de Lima Norte

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: psychological distress is one of the events that compromise the mental health of University professors in a situation that puts their physical and mental well-being at risk, therefore, the objective of the research is to determine psychological distress in University professors that are of a University Institution in North Lima.

Methods: it is a quantitative, descriptive, non-experimental cross-sectional study, with a total population of 147 participating health professionals, who responded to a questionnaire of sociodemographic data and the depression, anxiety, and stress scale (DASS-21).

Results: the results show that in health professionals, 61 (41,5 %) present high psychological distress, 44 (29,9 %) medium psychological distress and 42 (28,6 %) low psychological distress.

Conclusions: it is concluded that strategies should be sought to improve the mental health of health professionals, who are in the first line of care for COVID-19 patients and this should be increased in mental health services that allow attending to professionals who are at a higher risk of psychological distress.

Keywords: Psychological Distress Coronavirus; Depression; Anxiety; Stress; Work Stress.

RESUMEN

Introducción: el malestar psicológico es uno de los eventos que comprometen la salud mental de los docentes Universitarios en una situación que pone en riesgo su bienestar físico y mental, por lo tanto, el objetivo de la investigación es determinar el malestar psicológico en docentes Universitarios que son de una Institución Universitaria de Lima Norte.

Métodos: es un estudio cuantitativo, descriptivo, no experimental de corte transversal, con una población total de 147 profesionales de la salud participantes, quienes respondieron un cuestionario de datos sociodemográficos y la escala de depresión, ansiedad y estrés (DASS-21).

Resultados: los resultados muestran que en los profesionales sanitarios, 61 (41,5 %) presentan malestar psicológico alto, 44 (29,9 %) malestar psicológico medio y 42 (28,6 %) malestar psicológico bajo.

Conclusiones: se concluye que se deben buscar estrategias para mejorar la salud mental de los profesionales sanitarios, que se encuentran en la primera línea de atención a los pacientes COVID-19 y ésta debe incrementarse en los servicios de salud mental que permitan atender a los profesionales con mayor riesgo de malestar psicológico.

Palabras clave: Distrés Psicológico Coronavirus; Depresión; Ansiedad; Estrés; Estrés Laboral.

INTRODUCTION

The worldwide spread of the coronavirus (COVID - 19) since last year has generated consequences in University professors where the increase in psychiatric distress and morbidity has been related to public health diseases,⁽¹⁾ and that the symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress have been elevated in the same health workers.⁽²⁾

In such a way that University professors may experience psychological distress due to the fact that they directly care for patients infected by COVID-19,^(3,4) upon having knowledge that a relative has been infected or has died from this disease,⁽⁵⁾ are factors that contribute to a negative effect on the mental health of University professors.⁽⁶⁾

Likewise, it is increasingly being recognized that psychological distress in them,⁽⁷⁾ generating a negative impact on their job performance, on the quality of care and job satisfaction;⁽⁸⁾ where contagion and the burden on health services in University professors are events that damage the work and psychological level of themselves.^(9,10)

Therefore, the need is sought to be able to carry out immediate measures that allow evaluating the mental health of University professors during the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce the symptoms that lead to experiencing psychological distress during the care provided to infected patients by COVID - 19.^(11,12)

That is why, for this study, a comprehensive analysis of greater relevance has been carried out for the selection of antecedents that identify the main theme of the study, in which they were found in information sources such as Scopus, Web of Science, PLoS One and PubMed.

In a study carried out in South Korea,⁽¹³⁾ it was observed in their results of 265 participating doctors that 90,4 % presented emotional exhaustion, 17,4 % depression, 20 % anxiety and 4,3 % stress, concluding that the Doctors were predisposed to present psychological distress because the increase in infected patients, deceased and the need for more personnel influences the mental health of health professionals.

In a study carried out in Brazil,⁽¹⁴⁾ it was observed that University professors who work directly with COVID-19 patients were affected by psychiatric disorders related to depression, anxiety, stress, distress and insomnia, and due to these factors, the University professors presented high levels of indirect traumatization because of the situation generated by COVID - 19.

In a study carried out in Cameroon,⁽¹⁵⁾ it was observed in the results of 292 participating University professors that they presented depressive and anxious symptoms, where 27,10 % presented moderate anxiety and 15,10 % anxiety, on the other hand, in depressive symptoms, 33,9 % had moderate depression and 9,6 % had severe depression.

Therefore, the objective of the research is to determine the psychological distress in university professors who are of a University Institution in North Lima.

Therefore, its research hypothesis is that psychological distress considerably affects the mental health of university professors in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODS

Type of Research

In the present research, due to its properties and the way of collecting data according to the present variables, it is a quantitative approach, with a descriptive, non-experimental and cross-sectional methodological design.⁽¹⁶⁾

Population

The population is made up of 147 University professors who are in the first line of care against COVID - 19.

According to the study, the survey was conducted with a sampling bias of voluntary response of the teachers since the type of sampling in the research was for convenience.

Inclusion criteria

- University professors working in COVID - 19 services.
- Doctors.
- Nursing graduates.
- Nursing Technicians.

Exclusion criteria

- University professors who do not work in COVID.19 services.
- University professors who are not health professionals.
- University professors who do not agree to participate in the study.

Technique and instrument

The technique for the study was carried out using the DASS-21 questionnaire or data collection instrument, which aims to measure psychological distress in university professors who are in the first line of care against COVID-19.

The depression, anxiety, and stress scale (DASS-21), each of the three DASS scales contains 14 items, divided into subscales of 2 to 5 items with similar content. The depression scale assesses dysphoria, hopelessness, devaluation of life, self-loathing, lack of interest or participation, anhedonia, and inertia. The anxiety scale assesses autonomic arousal, skeletal muscle effects, situational anxiety, and the subjective experience of anxious affect. The stress scale is sensitive to levels of non-specific chronic arousal; it evaluates the difficulty to relax, nervous excitement and discomfort, agitation, or irritation, over reactivity and impatience. It consists of 4 response alternatives, 0 "not at all", 1 "sometimes", 2 "most of the time" and 3 "very often of the time" that serve to rate the degree to which they have experienced each state during the past week. To obtain the final score of the DASS-21, the total score obtained must be multiplied by two (data x2).⁽¹⁷⁾

The validity of the instrument to measure psychological distress was determined based on the exploratory factor analysis technique. The Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin sample adequacy measure obtained a coefficient of 0,944 (KMO > 0,5), while the Bartlett sphericity test obtained significant results (X^2 approx. = 2672,758; gl = 210; p = 0,000).

The reliability of the instrument was determined with the Cronbach's Alpha statistical test, in which a coefficient of 0,968 ($\alpha > 0,8$) was obtained for the items (i = 21).

In this research, the depression, anxiety, and stress scale (DASS-21) will be used as a data collection instrument. The data collection processing was carried out in a database in the SPSS Statistics Base 26.0 program, in which the data analysis and processing was carried out to make tables and figures to later be described and interpreted in results and discussions. respectively.

Instrument location and application

The survey was carried out to measure psychological distress in university professors who are of a University Institution in North Lima that was carried out in different hospitals in North Lima.

In the data collection processing, prior coordination was carried out with university professors (Doctors, Nursing and Nursing Professionals) from the Essalud Marino Molina Hospital, the Sergio Enrique Bernales Hospital, and the LanFranco la Hoz Hospital to participate in the research work, although there were limitations since not all the personnel were available due to the time they had been working.

RESULTS

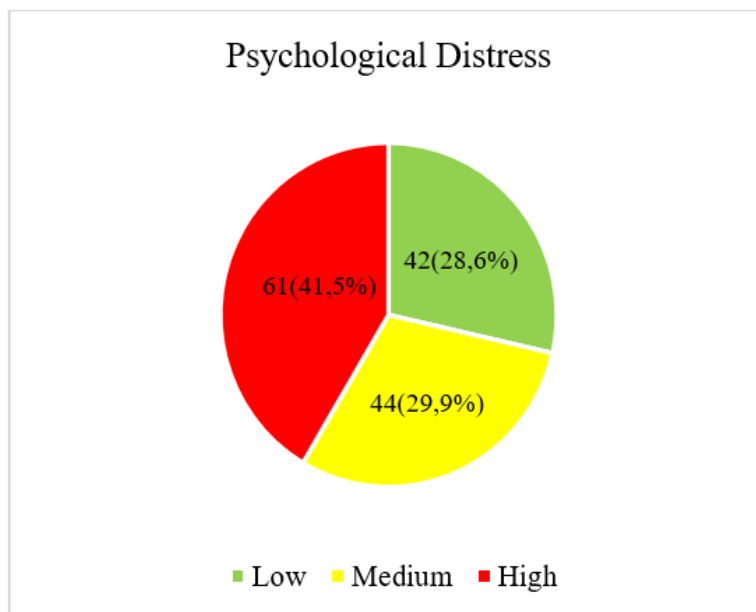


Figure 1. Psychological Distress in University professors who are of a University Institution in North Lima

In figure 1, we can observe in university professors that 61 (41,5 %) present high psychological distress, 44 (29,9 %) medium psychological distress and 42 (28,6 %) low psychological distress.

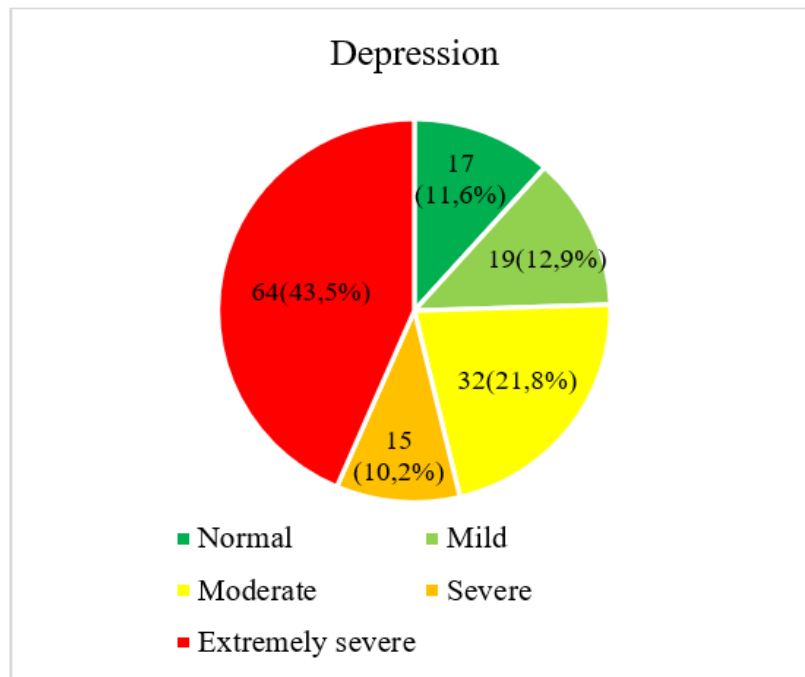


Figure 2. Psychological Distress in its dimension Depression in University professors who are of a University Institution in North Lima

In figure 2, we observe in the depression dimension in health professionals, where 64 (43,5 %) present extremely severe depression, 15 (10,2 %) severe depression, 32 (21,8 %) moderate depression, 19 (12,9 %) mild depression and 17 (11,6 %) normal depression.

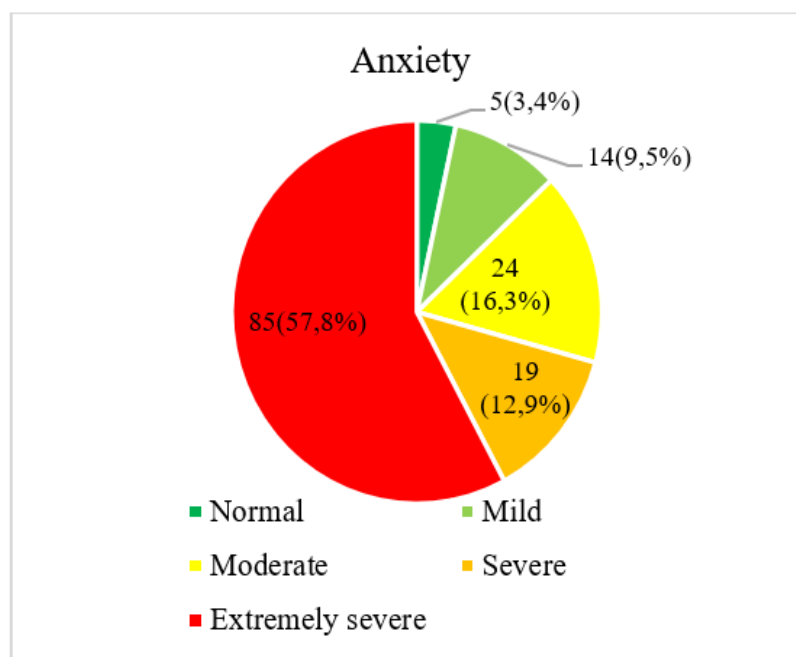


Figure 3. Psychological Distress in its dimension Anxiety in University professors who are in the front line of care against COVID - 19

In figure 3, we observe in the anxiety dimension in health professionals, where 85 (57,8 %) present extremely severe anxiety, 19 (12,9 %) severe anxiety, 24 (16,3 %) moderate anxiety, 14 (9,5 %) mild anxiety and 5 (3,4 %) normal anxiety.

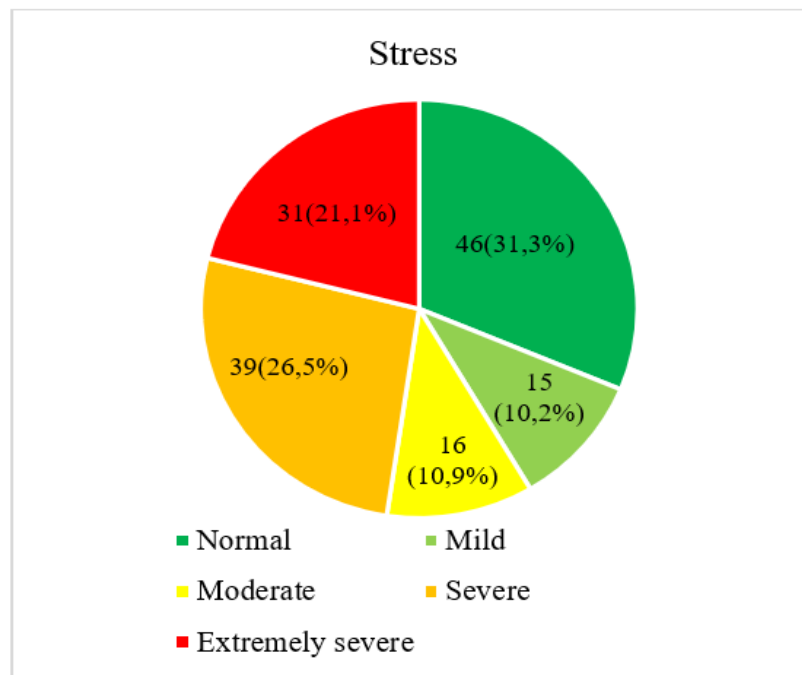


Figure 4. Psychological Distress in its Stress dimension in university professors who are of a University Institution in North Lima

In figure 4, we observe in the stress dimension in health professionals, where 31 (21,1 %) present extremely severe stress, 39 (26,5 %) severe stress, 16 (10,9 %) moderate stress, 15 (10,2 %) mild stress and 46 (31,3 %) normal stress.

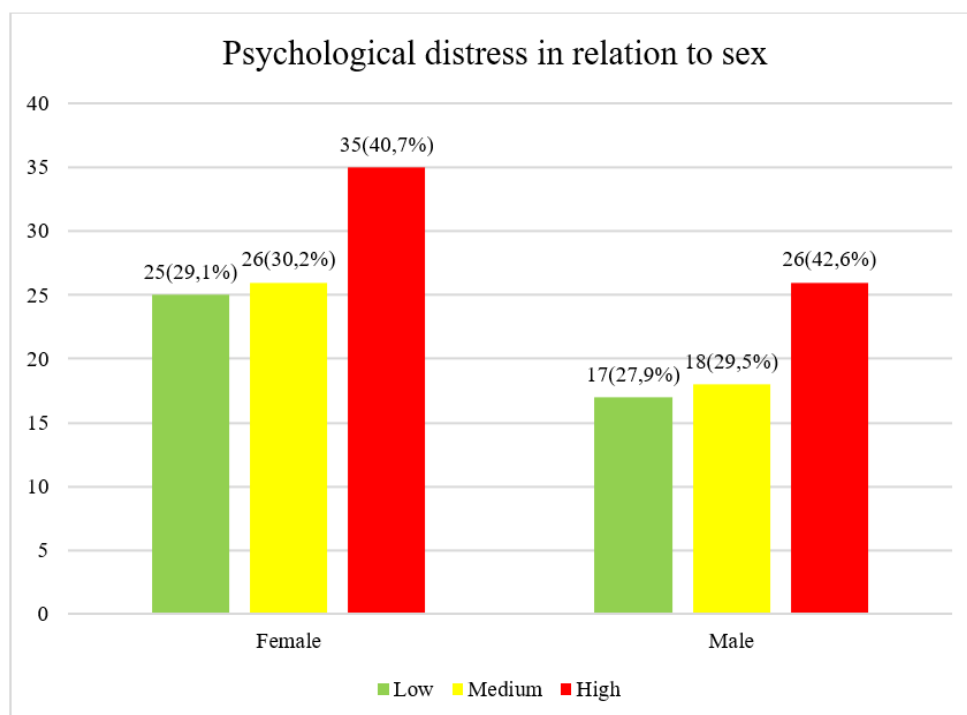


Figure 5. Psychological Distress in relation to sex in university professors who are of a University Institution in North Lima

In figure 5, we observe the University professors in relation to sex where the female sex 35 (40,7 %) present a high psychological distress, 26 (30,2 %) medium psychological distress and 25 (29, 1 %) low psychological distress; as for males, 26 (42,6 %) present high psychological distress, 18 (29,5 %) medium psychological distress and 17 (27,9 %) low psychological distress.

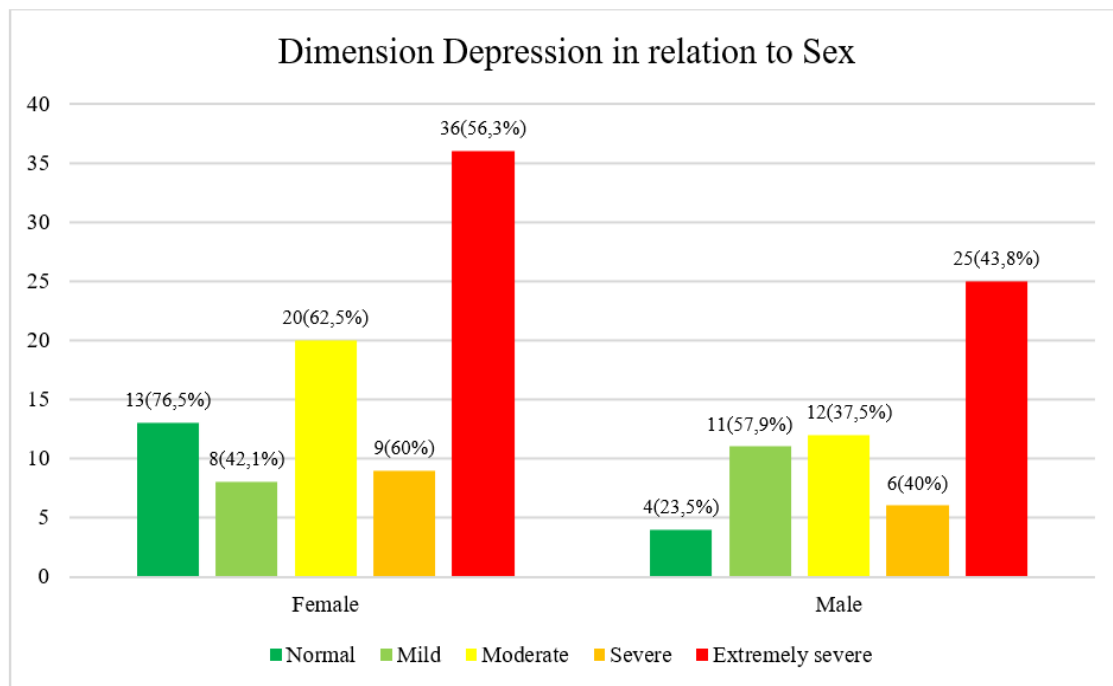


Figure 6. Dimension Depression in relation to sex in university professors who are in the front line of care against COVID - 19

In figure 6, we observe in the depression dimension in relation to the sex of University professors that in the female sex, 36 (56,3 %) have extremely severe depression, 9 (60 %) severe depression, 20 (62,5 %) moderate depression, 8 (42,1 %) mild depression and 13 (76,5 %) normal depression; as for males, 25 (43,8 %) present extremely severe depression, 6 (40 %) severe depression, 12 (37,5 %) moderate depression, 11 (57,9 %) mild depression and 4 (23,5 %) normal depression.

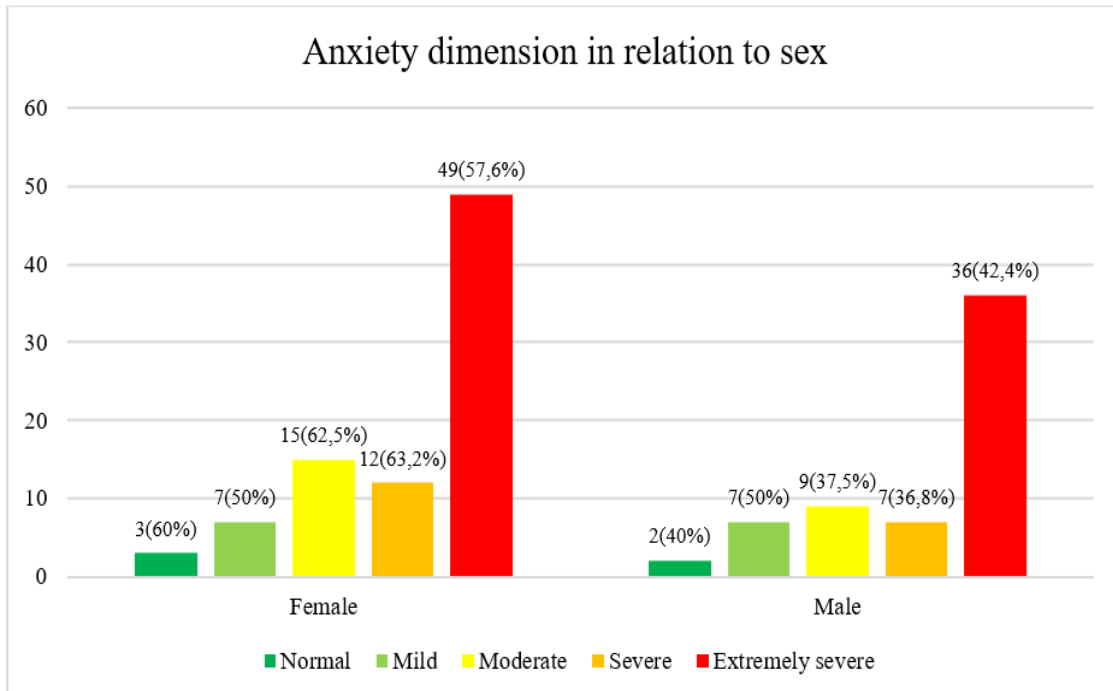


Figure 7. Anxiety dimension in relation to sex in university professors who are of a University Institution in North Lima

In figure 7, we observe the anxiety dimension in relation to the sex of the health professionals, where in the female sex, 49 (57,6 %) present extremely severe anxiety, 12 (63,2 %) severe anxiety, 15 (62,5 %) moderate anxiety, 7 (50 %) mild anxiety and 3 (60 %) normal anxiety; as for males, 36 (42,4 %) present extremely severe anxiety, 7 (36,8 %) severe anxiety, 9 (37,5 %) moderate anxiety, 7 (50 %) mild anxiety and 2 (40 %)) normal anxiety.

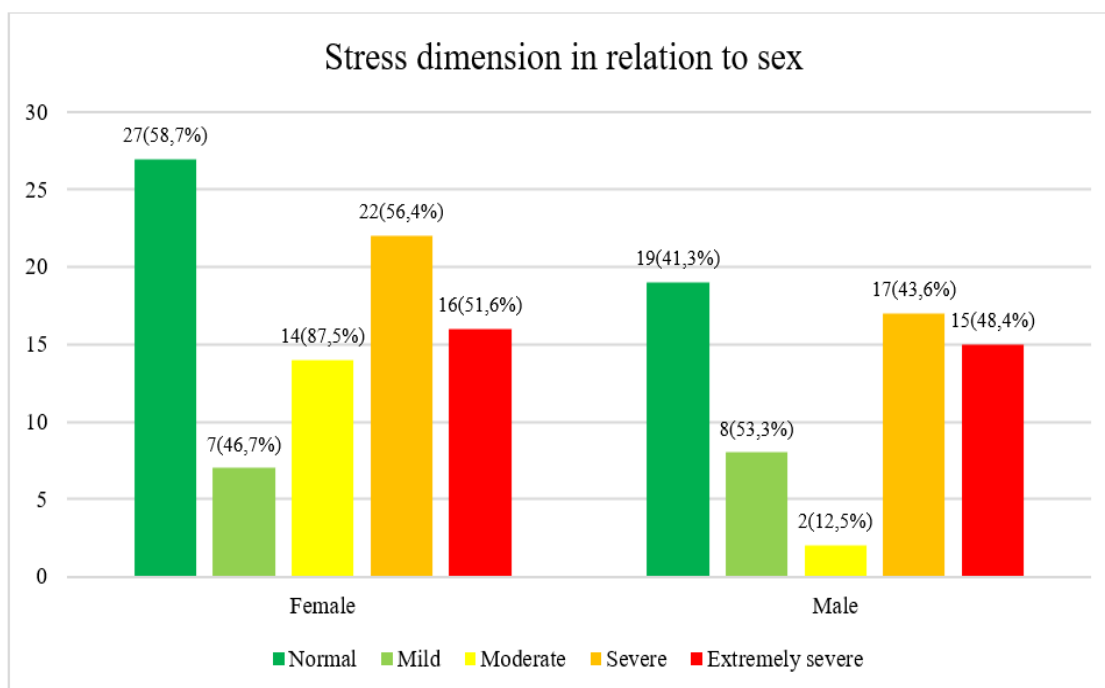


Figure 8. Dimension Stress in relation to sex in university professors who are of a University Institution in North Lima

In figure 8, we observe the stress dimension in relation to the sex of the University professors where, the female sex 27 (58,7 %) present normal stress, 7 (46,7 %) mild stress, 14 (87,5 %) moderate stress, 22 (56,4 %) severe stress and 16 (51,6 %) extremely severe stress; Regarding males, 19 (41,3 %) present normal stress, 8 (53,3 %) mild stress, 2 (12,5 %) moderate stress, 17 (43,6 %) severe stress and 15 (48,4 %) extremely severe stress.

DISCUSSION

From our perspective, the study was carried out emphasizing the mental health of university professors who work in the first line of care for COVID-19 patients, so that strategies are sought that allow professionals not to manifest symptoms of psychological disorders that harm both their personal and work well-being.

Therefore, in our results in the study, it is observed that psychological distress in University professors is high, this is due to the fact that University professors like nurses, doctors and nursing technicians who are in direct contact with positive patients with the disease, they have triggered risk factors at the mental level in themselves, factors such as fear, hopelessness, worry, anxiety, stress and depression, drastically influence the fact that inadequate care is carried out, where due to these factors they aren't in optimal conditions to do their job effectively. In ⁽¹⁴⁾, the authors argue that, as health personnel continue to attend more patients for COVID-19, the burden at the mental level will be high, because they develop symptoms of work stress, anxiety during care for the fear of getting infected, and depression due to the alarming number of patients who die from the disease.

In the results regarding its dimensions, it was observed that in its dimensions depression and anxiety are the most altered, this is due to the fact that health professionals, due to the excessive load of working hours, are away from their family due to they are afraid of infecting them, they present symptoms of depression and anxiety, although both factors are related to each other, however, the constant symptoms of depression and anxiety make nursing professionals manifest a short-term mental health disorder or long term. In ⁽¹³⁾, they argue that the mental burden presented by University professors is due to the high demand of patients who resort to their care, the lack of personnel, the scarcity of resources to satisfy in patient care and the deceased patients, causes the mental burden on University professors to lead to a mental illness that can harm their person and their work.

In the results regarding psychological distress in relation to sex, it was observed that the female sex presented a high psychological distress, this is due to the fact that the mental well-being of the female sex is compromised by the COVID-19 that affects their routine that they carried out during their care, where factors such as the increase in patients in the service, fear of contracting the disease and infecting their family members, causes the symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress, insomnia to be noticeably present at the time of performing their care. In ⁽¹⁵⁾, they argue that in the female sex factors such as worry, fear, low self-esteem,

pessimism, make the symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress are higher, and consequently, as the symptoms are more present, complicates their physical and mental recovery.

Regarding its dimensions in relation to sex, it is observed that the depression and anxiety dimensions are higher in the female sex, this is due to the COVID-19 pandemic, where in University professors they are made to perform shifts during the 24 hours, and factors such as insomnia, changes in physical and nutritional activity, feelings of frustration, causes anxious depressive symptoms to considerably aggravate their well-being, causing hypochondriacal behaviors that is evidenced in worry, and fear of suffering COVID-19 disease. In ⁽¹⁵⁾, they argue that the anxious depressive symptoms that women present is due to work factors such as the service environment, the relationship with new staff and the entry of several patients for their care, it makes their mental health overloaded manifesting their symptoms and this hinders their actions during their work shift.⁽⁶⁾

This research work will be beneficial for future studies, since the study focused during the COVID-19 pandemic and how it affects the mental health of university professors with depression, anxiety and stress disorders generated in the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to our history of studying the same topic in different countries, He has given an exhaustive comparison in which, given the situation of vulnerability of professors who are mainly health professionals, that is why, the approach in this population of our country, has given us the necessary information about how vulnerable university professors are to serious situations that compromise their mental health.

CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that strategies should be sought to improve the mental health of health professionals, who are in the first line of care for COVID-19 patients, and this should be increased in mental health services that allow to attend to professionals who are at a higher risk of psychological distress.

It is concluded that emotional support to university professors should be improved to protect them from adverse emotional symptoms that compromise their mental health and mental health services at a virtual level play an important role in assessing their psychological health.

The limitation in our study is the availability that university professors had taking into account that they are also health professionals, in which most were reserved, and because of this, the collection of information could not be carried out on certain days designated to carry out; In addition, the available times that the study could be carried out was when it was in class hours.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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