

PsyAid: The Innovation of Psycho-Education Platform to Increase the Use of Psychological First Aid (PFA) As First Mental Health Response to COVID-19 Pandemic Survivors

Earlene Rundengan, Utrecht University, Netherlands
Angelina Kartini, Airlangga University, Indonesia

The European Conference on Arts & Humanities 2024
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

This study aims to demonstrate how Psychological First Aid (PFA) can enhance mental health among COVID-19 survivors through psycho-educational tools such as video learning and social media content. Addressing the 25% increase in anxiety and depression among COVID-19 survivors (WHO, 2022), the PFA model provides immediate help and support to individuals in distress due to a recent crisis. It is simple and straightforward, focusing on methods to reduce distress during times of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. While not a long-term solution, the PFA model is valuable and timely during emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Minihan et al., 2020). Therefore, the PFA model could help address the shortage of mental health professionals in Indonesia, where only 3,970 mental health workers are available, constituting about 0.1125% of the 3.53 million COVID-19 survivors. PFA can be implemented by anyone with appropriate training (Fox et al., 2012). Using a sample size of 59 Indonesian COVID-19 survivors and employing a curriculum design research method by Akker et al. (2010), this study found notable improvements in knowledge and attitudes among participants exposed to PFA psycho-education (PsyAid). Participants received five learning modules through video and social media content. Data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, revealing significant differences in the cognitive dimension with a p-value of .00 ($p < .05$). Additionally, the majority of participants expressed intent to recommend PsyAid to others, recognizing its benefits in providing immediate emotional and practical support and helping survivors manage stress and anxiety effectively right after a crisis.

Keywords: Psychological First Aid, COVID-19, Psycho-Education

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

Cases of COVID-19 in Indonesia are increasing each day. This can be shown from the increase of 191.891 new cases of COVID-19 from August 29 to September 1 (WHO, 2021). Until September 2, 4.100.138 cases have been confirmed in Indonesia. The addition of COVID-19 cases increase anxiety in society and also the lack of preparation in order to deal with the pandemic situation (Fitria & Ifdil, 2020). These kind of situations will have many impacts to COVID-19 survivors, their relatives, and even individuals who have never experienced COVID-19.

It is supported by the survey's result, which from 21 respondents who have relatives with COVID-19, 15 of them once diagnosed with COVID-19.

Problems that has been faced by the respondents or their relatives who are diagnosed with COVID-19 are feeling anxious, panic, difficulty to find medicine, and also difficulty to find a place to do self-isolation. Activities that can be used to cope with these problems are doing the health protocol, meditating, exercising, and trying to entertain themselves, but none of them tried to give some supports. Respondents also stated that they have difficulties in searching for some information about regulating emotions, overcoming negative feelings such as panic and anxiety, and information about self-isolate, medicine availability, and other medical information.

In order to enhance the feeling of readiness and knowledge that is needed to face COVID-19, information and knowledge about how to handle COVID-19 are needed. The lack of clinical psychologists in Indonesia has been an issue, where there are only 2500 of them and the number of psychiatrists in Indonesia are only 600-800. Meanwhile, the cases of COVID-19 in Indonesia are increasing up to 3,53 million cases until August 2021 (Pradilla, 2021). The gap between mental health workers and COVID-19's survivors or even individual who hasn't been diagnosed with COVID-19 can be overcome using the knowledge and application of Psychological First Aid (PFA) which can be used and done by everyone. According to WHO, PFA can be known as a humanistic and supportive response to others who suffer and need support (in Minihan et al., 2020).

According to WHO (2011), there are four principles to PFA: prepare, look, listen, and link. Psycho-education platforms, as an intervention, can improve knowledge among survivors or individuals who are not or are currently diagnosed with COVID-19 via internet-based platforms such as websites or Instagram (Harrer, et al., 2021).

Research Method

This study employed the Curriculum Design Research method as outlined by Akker et al. (2010). The research was conducted in four stages:

1. Preliminary Investigation

In the initial phase, data was gathered from 21 respondents who are relatives of COVID-19 survivors. The findings revealed that common challenges faced by these individuals upon learning of their relative's diagnosis include anxiety, panic, difficulty in obtaining medication, and challenges in securing a place for self-isolation. To manage these issues, respondents typically adhered to health protocols in their daily activities, engaged in meditation, and

exercised regularly. Notably, none of the respondents reported providing emotional support to their relatives diagnosed with COVID-19, despite research by Rahmatina et al. (2021) highlighting the importance of emotional, instrumental, and informational support for COVID-19 survivors in navigating their daily lives.

2. Theoretical Embedding

The researchers conducted a review of relevant theories and empirical evidence to inform the development of psycho-educational content.

3. Empirical Testing

The researchers disseminated information about Psychological First Aid (PFA) via a dedicated website and an Instagram page, making these resources accessible to COVID-19 survivors and the broader community.

4. Documentation, Analysis, and Reflection on Process and Outcomes

The effectiveness of the website and Instagram page as psycho-educational platforms was assessed using a pre-test and post-test approach. These tests, administered to readers, were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test in SPSS version 23. The evaluation focused on the learning outcomes, specifically changes in the respondents' knowledge, comprehension, and application of PFA.

Conclusion

PsyAid is a psycho-educational platform designed to provide accessible information and training on Psychological First Aid (PFA) through a website and Instagram. Developed in response to the global impact of COVID-19, this platform aims to support individuals in managing the psychological effects of crises like the pandemic.

The development of PsyAid followed a structured Curriculum Design Research method, which included stages such as preliminary investigation, theoretical embedding, empirical testing, and rigorous evaluation. During the preliminary investigation, it was found that many individuals associated with COVID-19 survivors experienced anxiety, panic, and challenges related to self-isolation, yet emotional support was often overlooked. The platform was then built with these findings in mind, incorporating evidence-based practices to address these gaps.

To evaluate PsyAid's effectiveness, content related to PFA was disseminated via the website and Instagram. Users' cognitive, skill, and attitude changes were measured through pretests and post-tests using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. The results showed significant improvements across all dimensions ($p = .000$, sig. > 0.05), indicating that the platform successfully enhanced users' understanding and ability to apply PFA.

Overall, PsyAid is a compelling and valuable tool that significantly contributes to the public's ability to provide psychological support during crises. The platform's user-friendly design and evidence-based content make it a highly recommended resource, as reflected by the positive feedback from users.

References

- Cameron, D. (2001). *Working with spoken discourse*. London: SAGE.
- Coates, J. (2007). Talk in a play frame: More on laughter and intimacy. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39, 29-49.
- Dorri, S., Akbari, M., & Sedeh, M. D. (2016). Kirkpatrick evaluation model for in-service training on cardiopulmonary resuscitation. *Iranian journal of nursing and midwifery research*, 21(5), 493. doi: 10.4103/1735-9066.193396
- Drew P., & Heritage J. (1992). Analysing talk at work: An introduction. In P. Drew, & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Talk at work* (pp. 3-65). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fitria, L., & Ifdil, I. (2020). Kecemasan remaja pada masa pandemi Covid-19. *Jurnal EDUCATIO: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, 6(1), 1-4.
- Harrer, M., Apolin'ario-Hagen, J., Fritsche, L., Salewski, C., Zarski, A., Lehr, D. Baumeister, H., Cuijpers, P., Ebert, D. D. (2021). *Effect of an internet- and app-based stress intervention compared to online psycho-education in university students with depressive symptoms: Results of a randomized controlled trial. Internet Interventions* 24 (1-11).
- Li, Q., Guan, X., Wu, P., Wang, X., Zhou, L., Tong, Y., Ren, R., Leung, K. S. M., Lau, E. H. Y., Wong, J. Y., Xing, X., Xiang, N., Wu, Y., Li, C., Chen, Q., Li, D., Liu, T., Zhao, J., Liu, M., ... Feng, Z. (2020). Early transmission dynamics in Wuhan, China, of novel coronavirus–infected pneumonia. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 382(13), 1199–1207. <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmoa2001316>
- Minihan, E., Gavin, B., Kelly, B. D., & McNicholas, F. (2020). COVID-19, mental health and psychological first aid. *Irish journal of psychological medicine*, 37(4), 259-263.
- Pradila, D. (2020). Kenapa saat ini Indonesia gak butuh Psikolog dan Psikiater?. Satu Persen. Retrieved 3 September 2021, from <https://satupersen.net/blog/kenapa-saat-ini-indonesia-gak-butuh-psikolog-dan-psikiater>
- Rahmatina, Z., Nugrahaningrum, G. A., Wijayaningsih, A., & Yuwono, S. (2021, February). Social Support for Families Tested Positive for Covid-19. In *Proceeding of Inter-Islamic University Conference on Psychology* (Vol. 1, No. 1).
- Wibowo, U. D. A., & Wulandari, D. A. (2021, February). Psychological First Aids (PFA) by Online untuk Mengurangi Kecemasan Covid-19. In *PROSIDING SEMINAR NASIONAL LPPM UMP* (pp. 586-589).
- World Health Organization, War Trauma Foundation and World Vision International. (2011). *Psychological First Aid: Guide For Field Workers*. WHO: G.