

## The Effectiveness Of Community Mental Health Counseling On The Mental Health Of Farmers During The Covid-19 Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic creates new stressors for farmers and creates pressure and uncertainty for farmers and has a negative impact on the mental health of farmers and the wider Community. In connection with these problems, one of the solutions that can improve mental health in farmers is health counselling. The purpose of this study was to determine community-based counseling on the mental health of farmers during the covid-19 pandemic. The type of research used in this study is a quasi-experimental with a sample of 80 respondents with purposive sampling technique. The measuring instrument uses a Self-Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ). Data analysis used the Wilcoxon Paired test and the Mann Whitney test. The results of the Wilcoxon test in this study showed that the experimental group had a p value of 0.00 and in the control group a p value of 180 then the two groups were tested differently using the Mann Whitney test showing a p value of 0.00 where these results indicate that there is an effect of counseling community based on the mental health of farmers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The uncertainty of Covid-19 coupled with the new social environment makes it even more important to understand the importance of mental health counseling for farmers in rural areas to help support farmers in adapting to the habits of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the economic outlook for farmers has deteriorated, leading to comparisons with the agricultural crisis. More and more farmers are struggling, which causes the level of stress and anxiety among farmers to increase. In addition to the ongoing challenges and stressors in farming life, farmers have also been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Hagen et al., 2019). They face challenges related to their own stress, the health and safety of their families and employees, and various financial problems, such as disruptions to food supply chains and the food service industry. Building resilience in the mental health of farmers during COVID-19 is a collection of resources that must be developed to assist farmers and communities in dealing with the COVID-19 Pandemic (1).

Based on the prevalence of farmers' mental health during the pandemic. 67% of farmers surveyed reported feeling more stressed, 63% feeling more anxious, 38% feeling more depressed, and 12% feeling more suicidal. The challenges that have affected their mental health during the time of the pandemic and the main drivers they identified are the reduction in social contact and problems with the general public due to social distancing (2). Then based on the results of a preliminary study with several farmers in the Jember Regency area, 55% experienced stress due to the inhibition of supply of agricultural products due to social restrictions and 45% experienced anxiety due to the very high spread of Covid-19.

Stress is a common aspect of life and its effects can vary from mild anxiety to life-threatening mental health and suicidal thoughts. Farmers face a unique set of acute and chronic stressors including the impact of the massive global spread of COVID-19 and its impact on the status of agriculture and

*The Effectiveness Of Community Mental Health Counseling On The Mental Health Of Farmers During The Covid-19 Pandemic. M.Elyas Arif Budiman, et al*

the economy. Along with the COVID-19 pandemic, it marked the beginning of the agricultural transition period with major changes in public services received by farmers and land managers and changes in the agricultural system due to social restrictions (2). External shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic can create new acute stressors for farmers and rural communities and intensify existing chronic stressors. Together, they can create stress and uncertainty for many people and have a negative impact on the mental health of individuals and the wider community and sectoral resilience (3).

Various organizations are supporting farmers during this time of stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic including the government, and peer groups and communities. They offer a variety of formal and informal supports such as: counseling, financial assistance, crisis assistance, advocacy, advice, friendship, information exchange and spiritual and religious guidance (2). Mental health promotion is needed to be able to increase farmers' knowledge about forming good coping and how to maintain farmers' mental health (4). In connection with the above problems, there is a need for solutions and actions that can improve mental health in farmers, one of which is mental health counseling.

Counseling is an activity that occurs when a problematic person invites and allows another person to enter into their particular type of relationship (5). Mental health counseling also provides the application of mental health, psychological principles or human development through cognitive, affective, behavioral or systemic interventions, health strategies to deal with well-being, personal growth, or career development and disorders so that researchers are interested in conducting research with the aim of knowing the effect of community-based counseling on the mental health of farmers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## 2. METHOD

The type of research used in this study was a quasi-experimental research design using a pre-test-post-test control group design. The research was conducted on a group of farmers in the Jenggawah Jember Health Center working area with a sample of 80 respondents divided into two groups, namely the experimental group of 40 people and the control group of 40 people using purposive sampling technique. The intervention given in this study was in the form of mentoring counseling activities on mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic for 1 month at the Jenggawah Jember Health Center which consisted of 4 sessions where each session lasted 25 minutes.

The measuring instrument used to measure the mental health of farmers is using the Self-Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ) questionnaire, this scale was prepared by the world health organization (WHO) which has been translated into Indonesian by the researcher. The data that has been obtained from the measurement results will be processed properly using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 21 program which is then analyzed to determine the differences in the mental health of farmers before and after being given community-based counseling activities and knowing the comparison between the experimental group and the group. control. The data was then analyzed to determine the difference before and after treatment through the calculation of the Wilcoxon Paired test which is a non-parametric statistical tool used to test the difference between two paired samples, the form of the data scale used is the ordinal scale while for the different test using the Mann withney test.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the test results, the univariate and bivariate data analysis showed the following results;

Table 1 Characteristics of Respondents in the Experimental Group at the Jenggawah Health Center, Jember Regency 2021

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	26-35	8	20,0
	36-45	22	55,0
	46-55	10	25,0
	Total	40	100,0
Gender	Woman	19	47,5
	Man	21	52,5

*The Effectiveness Of Community Mental Health Counseling On The Mental Health Of Farmers During The Covid-19 Pandemic. M.Elyas Arif Budiman, et.al*

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Ethnic group	Total	40	100,0
	Madura	19	47,5
	Java	21	52,5
	Total	40	100,0
Education	Primary school	17	42,5
	Junior high school	14	35,0
	Senior High School	9	22,5
	Total	40	100,0
Farm Type	Rice Farmer	12	30,0
	Tobacco Farmer	13	32,5
	Corn Farmer	5	12,5
	Vegetable Farmer	10	25,0
Farming Old	Total	40	100,0
	>10 years	17	42,5
	>20 years	23	57,5
	Total	40	100,0

Based on the results of the research in the experimental group based on the characteristics of the respondents, namely in the age category the most respondents with productive age are 36-45 years by 55%, while in the gender category the most are men with a percentage of 52.5%. The most ethnic groups in this study are Javanese with a percentage of 52.5% and the most educational background is elementary school graduates with a percentage of 42.5%. The largest types of agriculture in this study were tobacco farmers as much as 32.5% and rice farmers as much as 30% while the longest farming period was >20 years as much as 57.5%.

Table 2 Statistical Test Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test in the Experimental Group

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Mental Health Before Intervention	Good Mental Health	5	12,5
	Moderate Mental Health	22	55,0
	Poor Mental Health	13	32,5
	Total	40	100,0
Mental Health After Intervention	Good Mental Health	25	62,5
	Moderate Mental Health	11	27,5
	Poor Mental Health	4	10,0
	Total	40	100,0

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) ,000

Based on the results of research in the experimental group, it showed that the mental health of farmers during the Covid-19 pandemic was in the category of moderate mental health as much as 55% and poor mental health as much as 32.5%. Then the results of the farmer's mental health test after being given counseling activities on community-based mental health, the mental health level of the farmers was in the good mental health category, which was 62.5%. The results of the Wilcoxon signed ranks test analysis showed Sig.000 where the results of this analysis were below 0.05 which indicated that there was a change in the mental health status of farmers in the experimental group before and after being given community-based mental health counseling activities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 3 Characteristics of Respondents in the Control Group at the Jenggawah Health Center, Jember Regency 2021

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	26-35	7	17,5
	36-45	17	42,5

*The Effectiveness Of Community Mental Health Counseling On The Mental Health Of Farmers During The Covid-19 Pandemic. M.Elyas Arif Budiman, et.al*

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	46-55	16	40,0
	Total	40	100,0
	Woman	23	57,5
	Man	17	42,5
	Total	40	100,0
Ethnic group	Madura	20	50
	Java	20	50
	Total	40	100,0
Education	Primary school	15	37,5
	Junior high school	19	47,5
	Senior High School	6	15,0
	Total	40	100,0
Farm Type	Rice Farmer	14	35,0
	Tobacco Farmer	13	32,5
	Corn Farmer	2	5,0
	Vegetable Farmer	11	27,5
	Total	40	100,0
Farming Old	>10 years	15	37,5
	>20 years	25	62,5
	Total	40	100,0

The results of the study in the control group based on the characteristics of the respondents, namely in the age category the most were respondents with productive age, namely 36-45 years at 42.5%, while in the gender category the most were men with a percentage of 57.5%. The most ethnic groups in this study are Javanese and Madurese with a percentage of 50% and the most educational backgrounds are elementary school graduates with a percentage of 47.5%. The largest types of agriculture in this study were tobacco farmers as much as 35% and rice farmers as much as 32.5% while the longest farming period was >20 years as much as 62.5%.

Table 4 Statistical Test Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test in the Control Group

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Mental Health Before Intervention	Good Mental Health	5	12,5
	Moderate Mental Health	22	55,0
	Poor Mental Health	13	32,5
	Total	40	100,0
Mental Health After Intervention	Good Mental Health	25	62,5
	Moderate Mental Health	11	27,5
	Poor Mental Health	4	10,0
	Total	40	100,0
Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	

Based on the results of research in the control group, it showed that the mental health of farmers during the Covid-19 pandemic was in the category of moderate mental health as much as 55% and poor mental health as much as 32.5%. Then the results of the farmer's mental health test after being re-measured showed that the mental health level of the farmers was in the category of moderate mental health as much as 62.5% and poor mental health as much as 25%. The results of the Wilcoxon signed ranks test analysis show Sig.180 where the results of this analysis are above 0.05 which indicates that there is no change in the mental health status of farmers in the control group before and after being given community-based mental health counseling activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Then later analyzed to find out the difference between the two groups using the Mann Whitney statistical test with

the final result of 0.00 which indicates that there is a difference between the two experimental groups and the control group.

Based on the results of the study, it was shown that before the action was taken the farmers experienced adequate mental health and some farmers experienced poor mental health. The underlying reason for poor mental health among farming communities lies in the unique social, environmental and economic challenges of rural food production due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, therefore targeted interventions to assist farmers in overcoming mental health problems are particularly beneficial in this regard [1]. It is proven that the farmers after being given assistance in the form of counseling activities to the farming community. The results of the intervention showed that the mental health of farmers was better than that of farmers who did not receive counseling assistance interventions.

Many of the impacts of COVID on rural farming communities are long before individuals who have difficulty seeking assistance with agricultural access. The global pandemic of covid-19 clearly has a major impact on the mental health and well-being of farmers [2]. When multiple stressors occur, the experience of stress can be amplified and have a negative impact on mental health [3]. There is a relationship between poor mental health and other challenges in agriculture (finance, administration, welfare and the global Covid-19 pandemic) as cyclical and also directly related [4]. Several interviews with farmers revealed that farmers find it difficult to ask for help and feel anxious and stressed about distribution and difficulty accessing services in the agricultural sector during the Covid-19 pandemic [5]. But some farmers seek support, though later have difficulty when problems become too complex to unravel or resolve.

Basically all mental health disorders that occur are initiated by feelings of anxiety (anxiety). Anxiety itself is a response to certain threatening situations, and is a normal thing to happen. Anxiety begins with a threatening situation as a dangerous stimulus (stressor) [6]. At a certain level, anxiety can make a person more aware of a threat, because if the threat is considered harmless, then a person will not do self-defense [7]. In connection with facing the Covid-19 pandemic, anxiety needs to be managed properly so that it continues to provide awareness but does not cause excessive panic or lead to worse mental health disorders [8].

The sudden and almost continuous news of the pandemic made farmers anxious. Assessing the level of danger of Covid-19 through selecting the information received and policies are the key to managing anxiety [9]. Information and policies can influence one's assessment of the threat of Covid-19 misinfodemic resulting in errors in coping strategies taken. Misinfodemic is the term used for misinformation that contributes to the spread of disease and is quite common for COVID-19 [9]. This also happens a lot among farmers so that it becomes an additional stressor among agriculture.

Poor mental health, income challenges for farmers and increasing unemployment due to social restrictions have become difficulties surrounding high rates of poor mental health, so it is important to understand the provision and effectiveness of mental health support for farmers [10]. Mental health support with community counseling activities can help farmers overcome mental health problems experienced by farmers. Counseling activities in helping farmers' mental health problems provide the application of mental health, psychological principles or human development through cognitive, affective, behavioral or systemic interventions, health strategies to deal with mental well-being [10].

Through this counseling activity, the farmers who were the targets of the research were provided with information and trained how to increase their knowledge of mental health impacts on farmers and their agriculture [11]. This counseling activity program aims to increase awareness and use of self-ability to cope with high levels of stress due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The results showed that for 1 week, this program helped farmers to adapt to new habits by teaching farmers to accept the Covid-19 pandemic. Acceptance means giving farmers full awareness that the COVID-19 pandemic is a reality. If farmers have accepted that the current conditions are not normal conditions, then the farmers are ready to adapt.

Covid-19 has hit at a time when the agricultural community is already facing the most substantial change to industry in a generation. The uncertainty of Covid-19 coupled with the ongoing social restrictions make it even more important to understand how important mental health assistance is for farmers in rural areas to help support farmers in adapting to the Covid-19 pandemic.



#### 4. CONCLUSION

Mental health counseling also provides mental health applications for farmers, which is very effective in improving the mental health of farmers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The counseling activity program for farmers provides benefits for increasing their ability to cope with high levels of stress due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The results show that this counseling program helps farmers to adapt to new habits by teaching farmers to accept the Covid-19 pandemic..

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