MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

by:
Febbie Yloisa A. Banao

The situation in the world today has affected so many people across the globe. It brought to light numerous issues in the system, especially in the field of health and education. It highlighted the lacking preparedness and facilities in the country as well as the competency, or the lack thereof, of government officials in handling large scale disasters. The devastation that this health crisis has brought is exponential.

But in the shadow of these ginormous issues lies the silent battles that many are faces due to the pandemic. The coronavirus is a disease spread through interaction and exposure, thus closing up work places, schools, and leisure establishments is a logical approach. To avoid the people from going places, non-essential travels are also banned. Many of us are fed up at home because of these restrictions, not being able to what we usually do. But for some, this lock downs and quarantines are more than just a simple setback, there are people out there who are fighting battles within their minds. These restrictions take away their way to cope, the physical and social distancing rips them from their support systems.

According to an online article in kff.org, the reports of mental health related symptoms increase from 11% in January-June 2019 to a whapping 41.1% in February 2021. It can also be translated to 4 out 10 individuals from the common statistics of 1 out of 10. Although these are just the reported ones, given the stigma of mental illnesses, there is high possibility that there are many more who just kept to themselves. This fact is attributed to the resulting issues from the covid-19 pandemic.
For years, mental health is a taboo topic, there is a stigma that comes with the very thought of mental illnesses. In the Philippines, mental illness usually views as a one general condition where someone loses their mind, hallucinates, experience paranoia, and have violent erratic behavior, however, that depiction is more towards one example of chronic brain disorder known as Schizophrenia, and even that is still too generalized compared to the complexity of the disorder.

Mental illness can come in all sorts of face, color, size, and form. Someone who looks absolutely ‘normal’ in the standards of the society can be suffering from mental illnesses. One sample of mental illness that is highly prevalent during this pandemic is depression.

Depression or also called as Major depressive disorder is a very common mental illness that affects a person’s way of thinking and behavior. Some of the most observed symptoms of depression are; sudden loss of energy or interest in the things that they were passionate with, change of appetite resulting either weight loss or weight gain, change in sleeping patterns, difficulty in focusing and or making decisions, the feeling of immense guilt over inconsequential things, the feeling of impending doom, losing the sense of propose, and in the worse cases the thought of death and suicide. Some believe that depression means feeling sad all the time, while in reality, depression is a troublesome mixture of various deep and excessive emotions at once. It is so convoluted that a general representation is impossible. The sad thing is that, there are individuals that wear their symptoms so well, that no body, not eve their closes of friends and family suspects that they are suffering until the final straw is cut and that person loses their battles.

The normal and unessential things like being able to hang out with friends or travelling, can be what stands between life and death from some people.

Indeed, covid-19 is a health crisis, physical health as well as mental health. So, if you have some spare time, check on your friends, make sure their ok. A simple message of encouragement can save a life.
References:

https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/mental-illness/in-depth/mental-health/art-20046477
https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/schizophrenia/what-is-schizophrenia
https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression