

## **THEME 7 HEALTH AND MORBIDITY**

### **IMPACT of COVID-19 RESPONSE MEASURES on the MENTAL HEALTH of ADOLESCENT GIRLS and WOMEN WORKING in the INFORMAL SECTOR in BURKINA FASO**

#### **Subject description**

In order to halt the transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the government of Burkina Faso took prompt action upon the initial appearance of cases within the country in March 2020. The government implemented a series of measures to contain the spread of the virus, including the imposition of lockdowns, the closure of places of assembly such as educational and training institutions, markets, places of worship, restaurants and leisure centres, the introduction of a curfew, the suspension of inter-urban transport and the closure of borders. These measures have had a significant impact on people's daily lives, with notable effects on economic activities in the informal sector (MINEFID, 2021).

A review of studies in countries with the most robust response measures to the global pandemic of SARS-CoV-2, including China and numerous European countries, indicates that these measures have resulted in an increase in mental disorders, stress, depression, and anxiety among vulnerable populations, particularly women and young people (Santomauro et al., 2021; Xiong et al., 2020).

The objective of this paper is to document the impact of the response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic on the mental health of adolescent girls and women in the informal sector in Burkina Faso. It is of significant interest to examine the medium-term impact of the consequences of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic and the measures taken to contain it on the mental health of adolescent girls and women in the informal sector in Burkina Faso. Indeed, the most affected demographic in this country with regard to the response to the pandemic are those in precarious employment, of whom 53% are adolescent girls or women (INSD, 2020).

#### **Theoretical framework**

The development of economic activity is contingent upon the presence of favourable mental and physical dispositions (Torres and Thurik, 2019). This is particularly crucial for individuals engaged in precarious economic activities, as it serves to guarantee a certain degree of autonomy.

In accordance with the theoretical framework developed by O'Donnell and colleagues (2021), responses to health crises such as the current pandemic have been observed to result in or exacerbate violence, malnutrition, and the burden and stress associated with caregiving and domestic work. This presents a significant risk to the mental health of those most affected by these circumstances, namely women and girls. Furthermore, the decline in economic activity and the subsequent reduction in income have led to an increase in poverty and food insecurity within households, which in turn has resulted in elevated stress and anxiety levels among individuals, particularly women. Additionally, factors that vary from country to country are also elucidated. These factors include survival from a severe form of COVID-19, fear of contracting the disease, the ordeal of grief due to the disease, a difficult economic situation and/or fear of job loss (Mallet et al., 2022; Santomauro et al., 2021; Xiong et al., 2020). To the best of our knowledge, no studies have been conducted in Burkina Faso to examine the impact of the changes brought about by the global pandemic of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and the responses to them on the mental health of adolescent girls and women in the informal sector.

#### **Data and Methodology**

The data presented here were gathered through a quantitative survey conducted as part of the project "Mieux intégrer les adolescentes et femmes du secteur informel dans la définition de mesures de riposte aux pandémies FSI-CoV-19," which is currently being implemented in Burkina Faso. The objective of this study is to document the impact of the response measures implemented in response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic on the economic activities and mental health of adolescent girls and women in the informal sector in the cities of Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou. The quantitative survey was conducted on a sample of adolescent girls and women aged 15-64, residing in one of the two cities and engaged in economic activity in the informal sector in March 2020. A total of 1,609 adolescent girls and women were surveyed. A descriptive analysis was conducted on the data

in order to elucidate the evolution of the prevalence of mental health disorders in the surveyed population between January 2020 and August 2023. Binomial logistic regression was employed to ascertain the correlates of exposure to mental health disorders.

## Results

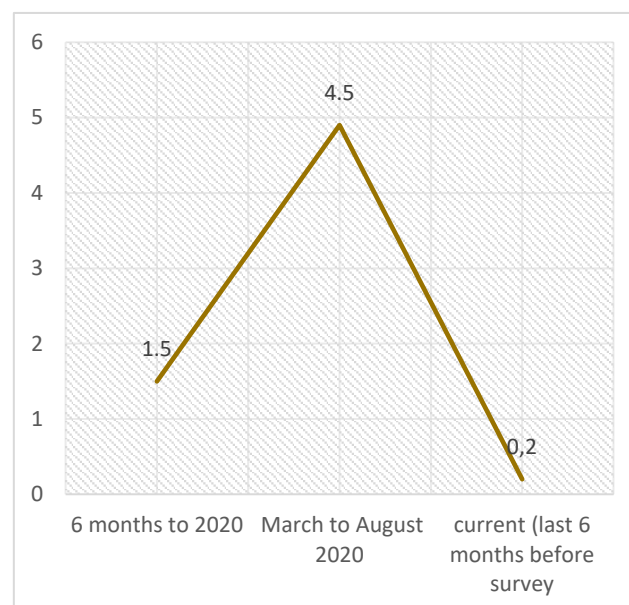
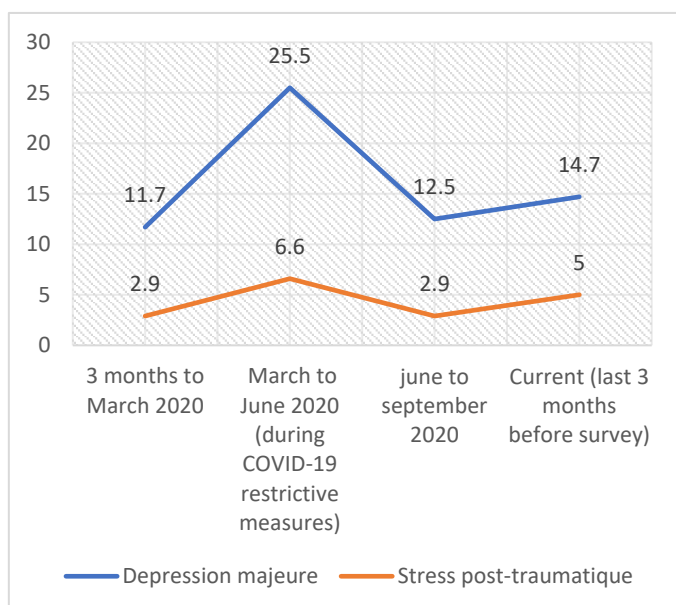
### 1. Impact of the pandemic on the mental health of adolescent girls and women in the informal sector, considering the period preceding, during and following the pandemic

The figures below illustrate the progression of mental health disorders among adolescent girls and women in the informal sector. They span the period from January 2020 (the initial three months preceding the outbreak of the pandemic in Burkina Faso) to July-August 2023 (three months prior to the interview). The data have been divided into three phases. The data suggests that the period of greatest prevalence for depression and post-traumatic stress disorder among respondents was between March and June 2020, which corresponds to the introduction of government measures in response to the pandemic. There was a downward trend in the prevalence of major depression and post-traumatic stress disorder between July and September 2020, a period when restrictive measures were lifted. Subsequently, there was an upward trend at the time of the survey, namely between April and August 2023. It is important to note, however, that the prevalence of these two mental disorders remained higher from the onset of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic than before its onset.

In the context of the global pandemic, there was an observable increase in the prevalence of generalized anxiety symptoms from the initial outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 virus until the lifting of restrictive public health measures. A significant reduction in prevalence was observed between April and August 2023, in comparison to the period preceding the onset of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

**Figure 2 : Trends in the prevalence of major depression and post-traumatic stress disorder among adolescent girls and women in the informal sector between December 2019 and August 2023**

**Figure 1 : Trends in the prevalence generalized anxiety among adolescent girls and women in the informal sector between December 2019 and August 2023**



Source: data from the FSI COVID-19 project

## 2. Factors associated with the prevalence of mental disorders among adolescent girls and women in the informal sector between March and June 2020

The objective of the multivariate analysis is to identify the period of peak prevalence rates of different mental disorders. As illustrated in Table 1, women in the informal sector aged 30-34 exhibited a markedly elevated risk of developing major depression. Furthermore, adolescent girls and women in the informal sector residing in Ouagadougou exhibited a 1.8-fold and 7.6-fold increased likelihood of experiencing depression and anxiety, respectively, compared to those residing in Bobo-Dioulasso. Furthermore, the results indicate that individuals who experienced an increase in domestic responsibilities were three times more likely to develop post-traumatic stress and three and a half times more likely to experience generalized anxiety. Furthermore, it was observed that an increase in financial strain was associated with elevated stress levels. Furthermore, adolescent girls and women in the informal sector who lost or ceased their principal economic activity in March 2020 exhibited fourfold increased levels of anxiety compared to those who did not experience such circumstances.

**Table 1: Factors associated with mental disorders among adolescent girls and women in the informal sector between March and June 2020**

Variables	Odds ratio of prevalence of mental health conditions between March and June 2020 [95% CI]		
	Major depression	Post-traumatic stress disorder	Generalised anxiety disorder
<b>Age group</b>			
15-19 years old (Ref)			
20-24 years old	1.49 [0.57-3.93]	0.53 [0.10-2.73]	0.05 [0.00-0.85]
25-29 years old	2.1 [0.80-5.48]	1.45 [0.35-5.98]	0.97 [0.10-9.63]
30-34 years old	2.83*[1.12-7.15]	1.84 [0.46-7.27]	1.18 [0.13-10.98]
35-39 years old	2.28 [0.90-5.82]	0.93 [0.23-3.78]	0.43 [0.04-5.01]
40-44 years old	2.61 [0.98-6.94]	0.78 [0.17-3.70]	0.26 [0.02-3.28]
45-49 years old	2.44 [0.92-6.47]	0.68 [0.13-3.55]	1.03 [0.10-10.76]
50-54 years old	1.98 [0.71-5.49]	1.52 [0.32-7.25]	1.84 [0.17-20.24]
55-59 years old	2.93 [1.05-8.16]	2.17 [0.47-10.09]	0.4 [0.02-7.26]
60-64 years old	1.51 [0.42-5.36]	0.75 [0.10-5.70]	1 [1.00-1.00]
<b>Marital status</b>			
Monogamous Bride (Ref)			
Bachelor	1.15 [0.74-1.88]	1.77 [0.74-4.2]	0.81 [0.16-4.1]
Polygamous bride	1.01[0.66-1.57]	0.88[0.36-2.14]	0.93[0.26-3.23]
Cohabitation	0.99 [0.3-.5]	2.17 [0.5-8.3]	1.04 [0.09-12.7]
Divorced/separated	2.07 [0.9-4.41]	0.19 [0.03-1.05]	1.18 [0.17-7.96]
widow	1.67 [0.9-2.8]	1.77 [0.76-4.12]	1.58 [0.48-5.29]
<b>City of residence</b>			
Ouagadougou (Ref)			
Bobo-Dioulasso	0.56***[0.42-0.75]	0.13***[0.07-0.26]	0.64 [0.27-1.52]
<b>Slowdown in activity</b>			
No (Ref)			
Yes	1.19[0.7-1.97]	0.7[0.3-1.54]	0.5 [0.15-1.71]
<b>Business Shutdown/Loss of Activity</b>			
No (Ref)			
Yes	1.16 [0.74-1.81]	1.5 [0.74-3.01]	3.98** [1.74-9.10]
<b>March 2020 Main Activity Revenue Decline Level</b>			
No Loss (ref)			

Revenues have decreased slightly	1.17 [0.56-2.39]	3.6 [0.85-13.32]	3 [0.5-.16.83]
Revenues have fallen by less than half	2.12 [1.02-4.23]	5.74** [1.56-.17.83]	3 [0.86-.17.83]
Revenues have fallen by more than half	1.38 [0.71-2.71]	3.21* [1.19-10.88]	0.83 [0.82-3.88]
Activity was hardly generating any income	1.58 [0.82-3.02]	6.1** [1.92-19.15]	0.65 [0.2-2.14]
<b>Increase in domestic chores</b>			
No (Ref)			
Yes	1.21 [0.88-1.66]	3*** [1.73-5.22]	3.5** [1.42-8.63]
<b>Comments</b>	<b>1609</b>	<b>1609</b>	<b>1519</b>
<i>* p &lt; 0.05. ** p &lt; 0.01 *** p &lt; 0.001</i>			

Source: data from the FSI COVID-19 project

### **Conclusion and discussion**

The analysis of data collected in Burkina Faso indicates that the period during which interventions to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus were implemented was characterised by a notable increase in the prevalence of mental disorders among adolescent girls and women engaged in informal economic activities in the cities of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso. These findings are consistent with the results of numerous studies conducted globally on the prevalence of mental health disorders in the general population between 2020 and 2021 (Santomauro et al., 2021; Xiong et al., 2020; Mallet al. 2022). During this period, the prevalence of depression was higher among women in Ouagadougou than in Bobo-Dioulasso. This can be attributed to the efficacy with which the response measures were implemented in the former city. In accordance with the theoretical framework proposed by O'Donnell and colleagues (2021), our findings indicate that heightened domestic responsibilities, the termination or reduction of activities, and the decline in income represent additional sources of stress and/or anxiety for adolescent girls and women in the informal sector. Furthermore, our findings indicate that the 30-34 age group is particularly susceptible to major depression. It is imperative that health crisis management and post-pandemic recovery policies prioritise the mental health of the population, particularly those who are most vulnerable to adverse working conditions and unequal gender relations.

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