
Fear of COVID-19 among People Living in High Risk Zones in Sri Lanka; Preliminary Data

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People experience fear on COVID-19 in different ways including disruption of day-to-day life, somatic symptoms, anxiety and fear of loss of life. These can lead to severe mental health sequelae in some. This study assessed the validity of the Sinhala version of Fear of COVID-19 scale (FCV-19S) and determined the fear of COVID-19 among people living in high risk zones in Sri Lanka. The FCV-19S was cross culturally adapted and validated using 148 subject aged 42.1±16.7 years, selected randomly from Galle. The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale-21 Items scale (DASS-21) also was used in validation. FCV-19S was re-administered among same subjects after two weeks and the psychometric properties were evaluated. The validated FCV-19S was administered among 225 people aged 36.0±13.8 living in high risk zones. FCV-19S showed a high test re-test reliability measured with intraclass correlation=0.86 (0.81-0.90). The initial Cronbach's alpha was 0.85 but, the item 3 "My hands become clammy when I think about the coronavirus-19" did not meet satisfactory consistency criteria. After deleting the item 3, Cronbach's alpha was 0.87. Remaining 6 items showed single factor structure with Eigen value exceeding 1, explaining 60.8% of cumulative variance, observed in Factor Analysis with Principal Component Analysis. Concurrent validity was confirmed by observing a strong positive correlation between FCV-19S score and the DASS-21 score ($r=0.63$, $p<0.001$). Only 43.6% ($n=98$) experienced high level of fear. Advancing age ($OR=1.74$, $CI=0.96-3.15$, $p=0.04$), low level of education ($OR=0.52$, $CI=0.28-0.96$, $p=0.03$) and being positive or suspected of COVID-19 or exposed to a COVID-19 patient ($OR=3.0$, $CI=1.58-5.70$, $p=0.001$) were associated with high level of fear. FCV-19S modified 6-item Sinhala version showed adequate psychometric properties to be used in clinical settings. The fear experienced by people in high risk zones was relatively low and advanced age, low education and history of exposure were associated with fear.

Keywords: COVID-19, Fear, High risk zones, Sri Lanka