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# Assessment of Psychological Distress and Coping Strategies among Dental Undergraduate Students in a Malaysian University during COVID-19 Pandemic

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## Abstract

Objective: Drastic changes took place in Malaysia due to COVID-19 pandemic including education where the students had to undergo remote teaching and learning at their respective hometown to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This change in the mode of learning is a stressful event faced by the students. This study aimed to assess the psychological distress and the coping strategies of undergraduate dental students during COVID-19 pandemic. Materials and Methods: A cross sectional study was conducted on a sample of 224 undergraduate students of Faculty (Kulliyyah) of Dentistry in the academic session of 2020/2021. The psychological distress level was assessed using the Kessler psychological distress scale (K10) and the coping mechanisms of the students were determined using the Brief-cope questionnaire. Results: The rate of severe psychological distress was found to be 40.18%, while 22.32% and 18.75% had mild and moderate distress respectively. Students that are less than 21 years old showed a significantly lower mean of psychological distress compared to students above 21 years old. There was no statistically significant difference in psychological distress in terms of gender. More students showed approach coping strategy than avoidant coping. Approach coping showed a negative correlation with psychological distress while avoidant coping showed a statistically significant positive correlation with psychological distress. Conclusion: Psychological distress during COVID-19 pandemic is occurring at a high rate among dental students. Psychological distress level is increased in students with avoidant coping strategies © 2022. All material is licensed under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0) license unless otherwise stated

## Author keywords

Coping strategy; Covid-19; Dental student; Malaysia; Psychological distress

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