**SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL FACTORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AMONG ASIAN AMERICAN YOUNG ADULTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE UNITED STATES**

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**BACKGROUND:** Prior research shows increased prevalence of depression and anxiety among the general young adult population during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, it is unclear whether Asian American young adults faced increased risk of psychological distress during the COVID-19 pandemic. The current study examines psychological distress and associated socio-ecological factors among Asian American young adults.

**METHODS:** A national needs assessment survey of COVID-19’s impacts on communities of color was conducted among Asian American participants from January to April 2021. Participants were recruited through email lists, community organizations, and Qualtrics consumer panels. Among the 1,528 Asian American young adults aged 18-29 in the study sample, 39.8% were men, the mean age was 23.0 (SD = 3.0) years, and 53.8% were US-born. Guided by the socio-ecological framework, we examined four models that accounted for protective and risk factors of psychological distress at i) individual, ii) interpersonal, iii) institutional, and iv) community levels.

**RESULTS:** Seven-day PHQ-4 scores indicate that 51.4% of the sample had psychological distress. Using multiple regression analysis, predictors of lower psychological distress in this group include i) older age, male gender, foreign-born individuals living in the US < 5 years, greater sense of gratitude during the pandemic, ii) receiving social support, and iv) living in the South or Northeast US regions compared to the West. Predictors of higher psychological distress include i) having a chronic health condition, ever being infected by COVID-19, coping through substance use, ii) providing social support, greater family conflict, iii) educational challenges with Wi-Fi and class accommodations, delayed medical care, iv) greater food insecurity, housing assistance, impact and stress from discrimination, and greater perceptions of racial bias from politics and media.

**CONCLUSIONS:** These findings point to socio-ecological factors that can inform targeted mental health interventions to promote Asian American young adult resilience during pandemics or natural disasters.

**CONTENT CATEGORY:** Epidemiology

**KEYWORDS:** Psychological distress, COVID-19, young adults, Asian Americans