IS THERE A DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOR DEPENDENT ON THEIR PRIOR INFECTION WITH COVID, IN RESPECT OF GREATER ANXIETY AND PRECAUTIONARY BEHAVIOR?

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Abstract - The recent pandemic has naturally prompted much necessary research on various aspects of the interplay between COVID and human psychology and behavior. In Western populations (UK, US and Sweden), a large scale study (Klaser et al., 2021) compared the effects of catching COVID, versus not, on anxiety and depression shortly after the event. This found only a weak tendency for those infected to be more anxious (using GAD-2 and PHQ-2 questionnaires, with four items in all). That effect was however relatively stronger for those more recently infected (<30 days) and those of age >40 years. A study of the predictors of precautionary behaviour in Mexico (Frías-Armenta et al., 2021) found no relationship between presence of COVID symptoms and such behaviour (measured with six items).

The present study will take up this same theme in a rather different population (Saudi Arabia), longer after the pandemic peak (2022/23), and using a richer range of measures, to see if the same results are found in the longer term, and reveal a more nuanced picture of the psychological and behavioral effects of catching COVID. A sample of typical adult participants (not from the medical or healthcare professions) will be surveyed using the instruments mentioned above together with more elaborate instruments to reveal anxiety and engagement in precautionary behavior in more detail. Predictors examined will be primarily COVID infection history, time since last infection (if any), gender, age, and socio-economic status.

Keywords - COVID, Anxiety, Depression and Precautionary Behavior