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Impact of COVID-19 lockdown on family relationship

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Abstract

The pandemic of Corona Virus (COVID-19) hit public since from earlier days of 2020. Since the lockdown was implemented lifestyle, daily routines, work pattern, individual's interpersonal relations etc., of public has changed. Hence on this issue we made an attempt to conduct an online survey to evaluate "Impact of COVID-19 lockdown on family relationship". Online survey was conducted after the announcement of nationwide lockdown using the principle of snowball sampling, and survey forms sent through social networks like text message, WhatsApp, telegram and e-mails. The survey collected data on socio-demographic and impact of COVID-19 lockdown on family relations from 259 respondents. Results indicated that during the initial phase of Covid-19 social isolation, most of the family member improved their interpersonal communications, spiritual health, marital relationship, learned how to handle the family crises as well as enjoyed family togetherness. After implementation of lockdown employees allowed to do work from home, hence this change made parents to look after their children and engaging children in academic works, understanding about children's needs and also reduce parent-child conflicts simultaneously assisted in taking care of family members. At the same time majority of respondents felt fatigue, bored and become lazy, due to the long period of social isolation. Most of the family members involved in household activities, spent more time in using electronic gazettes.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, lock down, social isolation, family relationship

Introduction

The novel corona virus (Covid-19), taxonomically termed SARS-CoV-2 (Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2), first emerged in Wuhan, China during late 2019 and was labeled a public health emergency by the World Health Organization. The recent and rapid increase in the number of Covid-19 cases has increased panic across countries. India, home to 1.3 billion people, announced a nationwide "lockdown" on 25th March 2020. The lockdown restricted citizens' physical mobility, advocated social distancing norms, and limited a majority of public services while allowing the essentials. Many countries have implemented serious imposition of restriction to prevent the spread of the disease and encouraging their citizens to work from home to promote social isolation. However, these measures of sheltering-in-place, equivalent to an extended quarantine, likely created a stressful environment for the citizens, given the sudden disruption in their daily routines. As lockdown implemented people proceed to work from home this have an unexpected impact on family members and their physical activities, mental status as well as daily works.

The present study was taken up to find the impact of lockdown on individual's relationship with their family, their daily habits, social restrictions and changes in daily routines like professional and domestic work, taking care of family members.

Need of the study

The course of the pandemic in India is different in terms of mortality and spread of infection as compared to some other countries of the world at the present time. The social, economic and psychological impact of the pandemic is noticeable. In scenario it is important to explore the ways, how people have found to cope with the pandemic situation one side with social isolation on the other side lock down situation that was never-seen and experienced before. It is an opportunity to find how people are adjusting to their family environment, routine work, handling children, caring elders, their interests and habits while staying inside their homes. Hence, there is an increasingly urgent need to understand these impacts of COVID-19 lockdown on family relationship through research.

Methodology

- 1. Data collection:** The data was collected by using an online survey that is through Google form as per Indian Government's recommendations to minimize face-to-face or physical interaction. An online survey form was circulated through social networks like text message, whatsapp, telegram and e-mails. Additionally, using the principles of snowballing, the link was circulated by the investigators through social media for capturing data from general population who have some access to Internet. The period of data collection was between 25thMarch to 17thJuly 2020.
- 2. Participants:** The survey was open to youth and adult (18-65 years old) participants provided that they were not working outside the home during the lockdown. A total of 259 valid responses were obtained.
- 3. Study questionnaire:** The survey form consists of 30 questions. Once the respondents clicked on the link they

were informed to register through their e-mail ID's. The nature and purpose of survey was given in the first section of survey form. The second section of the study questionnaire includes socio-demographic information i.e. age, gender, qualification, occupation, income, locality, type of family and size of family. Subsequently, the third section includes the information about impact of COVID-19 lockdown on family relations, quality of life, better understanding of family, interpersonal communication, family conflicts, meeting of psychological needs, emotion regulation, depression, taking care of children and elder, academic work and spiritual health of the respondents.

- 4. Descriptive statistics** were used to analyze the data related to the socio-demographic and family relationship variables.

Results

Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of participants N=259

Socio-demographic variable	n	%
Age(in years)		
12-18	16	6.2
19-24	208	80.9
25-35	16	6.2
36-50	10	3.9
51-65	7	2.7
Gender		
Male	30	11.5
Female	229	88.5
Qualification		
Intermediate	14	5.4
Degree/Graduation	211	81.4
Post-Graduation	28	10.8
Ph.D.	6	2.4
Occupation		
Agriculture	23	8.9
Govt./Pvt. job holder	35	13.5
Entrepreneur/business	10	3.9
Housewife	6	2.3
other	185	71.4
Income		
Below 10,000	92	35.6
10,000-49,999	117	45.1
50,000-1 lakh	29	11.1
Above 1 lakh	21	8.2
Locality		
Rural	141	54.4
Urban	118	45.6
Family type		
Nuclear	211	81.4
Joint	45	17.4
Extended	3	1.2
Family size		
Small (1-4 members)	153	58.7
Medium (5-6 members)	77	29.9
Large (above 6 members)	29	11.2

Table 1. Depicts the demographic details of the respondents. The respondents ranged between 12-65 years of age and majority (80.9%) of the respondents belong to the age group of 19-24 followed by 12-18 and 25-35 age group (6.2% each) where only 3.9 and 2.7 per cent of respondents were from 36-50 and 51-65 age group respectively. Most of the respondents (88.5%) were female. Majority (81.4%) of respondents were graduates followed by

post-graduation (10.8%) and intermediate (5.4%) and very few (2.4%) of them were Ph.D., holders.

About 71.4% participants were working as private employees (others), 13.5% were working in the government sector, 8.9% were doing agriculture related works, 3.9% of participants were having their own business and only 2.3% were housewives.

Nearly half of the respondents (45.1%) were having Rs.

10,000 to 50,000 income per year followed by below 10,000 thousand and 50,000 to 1 lakh and very negligible people were receiving more than 1 lakh income per Annam. More than half of respondents (54.4%) were from rural area and remaining were found urban area. Most of the participants (81.4%) were belong to nuclear family followed by joint family (17.5%) very few of them from extended family (1.2%). More than half of the participants (58.9%) were belong to small family size. Whereas 29.9 per cent and 11.2 per cent were belong to medium and large family size respectively.

Table 2: Impact of lockdown on Family relationships

Sl.No	Statements	n	%
1.	Does lock-down period improved your interpersonal communication with your family members		
	Yes	234	90.3
	No	25	9.7
2.	Spiritual health of family members is enhanced		
	Agree	160	61.8
	Slightly agree	72	27.8
	Slightly disagree	16	6.2
	Disagree	11	4.2
3.	Made me to learn how to handle family crisis in tough situation		
	Agree	170	65.6
	Slightly agree	67	25.9
	Slightly disagree	8	3.1
	Disagree	14	5.4
4.	Felt family togetherness for the first time ever		
	Yes	158	61.0
	No	101	39
5.	Marital relationship strengthened		
	Yes	141	54.4
	No	118	45.6
6.	Strengthened relationship with in-laws		
	Agree	118	45.6
	Slightly agree	78	30.1
	Slightly disagree	18	6.9
	Disagree	45	17.4

Table 2. Represents that impact of lockdown on family relationships. Majority of the participants (90.3%) agreed that, during lockdown their interpersonal communication has been improved. It may be due to the time that they got to spend with their family members and also less work pressure at home. Nearly one fourth of respondents (27.8%) agreed that their spiritual health was also enhanced, this might be due to the increased health consciousness and people started doing Yoga and meditations at home. More than half of the respondents reported that, this lockdown made them to learn how to handle family crisis in tough situation. Because of social isolation, people were affected by insufficient of food supply and resources, transportation, health facilities and irregular income etc. Hence this tough situation made them to be strong enough to handle the family crisis. It is interesting to note that 61 per cent of respondents felt they enjoyed family togetherness for the first time ever because of this lockdown period. Due to the time (24*7) that they spent with family members. More than half of the respondents (54.4%) stated that their marital relationship was strengthened. Less than half (45.6%) of the participants also stated that their relationship with in law's has been strengthened. The reason might be that they got extra time to get into the relationship. This corroborates findings from previous study by A. J. Sharma and M.A. Subramanyam (2020) [1] which

suggested that lockdown situation has given an opportunity to reflect upon one's own life, tried to connect with people around them, spent longer time in spiritual, motivational, and meditational activities

Table 3: Impact of lockdown on parent-child relation

Sl.No	Statements	n	%
1.	Facing difficulty in taking care of children and elderly people during lock-down		
	Agree	39	15.1
	Slightly agree	76	29.3
	Slightly disagree	28	10.8
	Disagree	116	44.8
2.	Are you helping your children in engaging academic work		
	Yes	119	47
	No	12	4.7
	Not applicable	122	48.2
3.	Parent-child conflicts and misunderstandings increased		
	Yes	45	17.7
	No	209	82.3
4.	Sibling relationship strengthened		
	Yes	228	89.4
	No	27	10.6

Table 3.Explains the impact of lockdown on parent-child relations. It is surprising to note that 44.8 per cent participants reported that they did not face any difficulty in taking care of children and also elderly people during lockdown. However in contrary A. Richard (2020) [5] Reported that isolation can disproportionately affect elderly individuals whose only social contact is out of the home, such as at day care venues, community centres, and places of worship. During lockdown more than one-fourth of the participants (45.9%) helped their children in completing academic tasks. It was also interesting note to that, most of the respondents were agreed that this lockdown period has reduced the conflicts and misunderstanding between parents and children. Simultaneously sibling relationships among the children were strengthened since lockdown was implemented and majority of institutions and companies shifted their work culture while allowing their employees to work from home. Hence this change made parents to look after their children and engaging children in academic works, understanding more about children's habits, interests, likes-dislikes, got more time to spend with them. This chance made them to reduce parent-child conflicts and misunderstanding and strengthened the sibling relationships among children.

Table 4: Impact of lockdown on Psychological aspects

Sl.No	Statements	n	%
1.	Does lock-down period helped you in meeting psychological needs of family		
	Yes	217	83.8
	No	42	16.2
2.	Does lock-down period helped you in emotion regulation and patience tolerance		
	Yes	230	88.8
	No	29	11.2
3.	Did social isolation made you depressed		
	Yes	71	27.4
	No	188	72.6
4.	Are you getting bored, lazy and fatigue		
	Yes	152	58.7
	No	107	41.3

Impact of lockdown on psychological aspects was depicted in the table 4. Majority of the participants (83.8%) agreed that, this lockdown period helped in meeting psychological needs of family members and also helped in emotion regulation as well as increase patience tolerance (88.8%). Nearly two-third of respondents (72.6%) did not experience depression but majority of them felt fatigue and become lazy and bored during social isolation. Because of lockdown every-one stayed in their respective home, they got more opportunities to look after each family members and helped them in meeting the psychological needs of family members at maximum level. At the same time there was increased capacity of emotion regulation and tolerance capacity. One of the study by Lai. J (2020) [3] found that most adults were become closer to their families for support and to avoid loneliness especially in a family-centric country such as India. However due to government instructions people were restricted to be in the home for nearly 3 months and because of this respondents felt bore, lazy and also fatigue.

Table 5: Impact of lockdown on leisure activities

Sl.No	Statements	n	%
1.	Involvement of family members in household work has been increased during lock-down.		
	Agree	175	67.6
	Slightly agree	63	24.3
	Slightly disagree	8	3.1
2.	Disagree	13	5.0
	More preference and time was spent on screen (ex. mobile, TV etc.) than interpersonal communication		
	Agree	86	33.2
	Slightly agree	94	36.3
3.	Slightly disagree	42	16.2
	Disagree	37	14.3
	Communication with relatives over phone improved family bonding		
	Agree	133	51.4
	Slightly agree	87	33.6
	Slightly disagree	19	7.3
	Disagree	20	7.7

Table 5 infers about impact of lockdown on leisure activities. Majority of the respondents shared positive opinion towards the involvement of family members in household work has been increased during lockdown. One of the similar study by Mahendra Kumar and Sachin Dwivedi. (2020) [4] stated that, to provide social support and a sense of belonging 75% of our study participants were involved in any kind of actions of mutual assistance towards their family and friends as motivating them to stay positive at this pandemic time and passing important information related to COVID-19. Respondents also expressed that, they spent more time on screen like mobile, TV, tablets and computers etc. than interpersonal communication. Similarly more than half of the participants (51.4%) expressed that communication with family relatives over phone improved their bonding. Because of sudden lockdown people were free from the work, college, school, class, official duties etc. Hence their leisure time was increased and dragged their attention towards entertainment and they spent more time over the screen with electronic gadgets. And also due to isolation they communicated with their friends, relatives, officials persons etc., through calls/phones. Mahindra Kumar and Sachin Dwivedi, (2020) [4] also reported that during the lockdown period people increase

the usage of social media more than their usual duration before lockdown because it assume that social media platforms offer an opportunity to ameliorate social isolation. A. J. Sharma and M.A. Subramanyam (2020) [1] showed that participants who increased the frequency of calling their family members during the lockdown had higher odds of enhancing the quality of their social relationships and reporting increased social empathy.

Conclusion

Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown has caused a lot uncertainty in the lives of Indian public and global level also. Our survey is also one of the study related family relationship data from Andhra Pradesh, India. Results concluded that during the initial phase of Covid-19 social isolation, most of the family member improved their interpersonal communications, spiritual health, marital relationship, learned how to handle the family crises as well as enjoyed family togetherness. After implementation of lockdown employees allowed to do work from home, hence this change made parents to look after their children and engaging children in academic works, understanding about children's needs and also reduce parent-child conflicts simultaneously assisted in taking care of family members. At the same time majority of respondents felt fatigue, bored and become lazy, due to the long period of social isolation. Most of the family members involved in household activities, spent more time in using electronic gazettes. Assuming that the lockdown is likely to continue for some weeks or months along with increased COVID-19 positive cases may bring some other changes and uncertainty among the people.

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