

Contemplating Life during Lockdown Amid COVID-19 Outbreak

Paper Submission: 12/07/2020, Date of Acceptance: 28/07/2020, Date of Publication: 29/07/2020

Abstract

The present review is taken to account the fact that the whole world is facing COVID-19 crisis presently and has been under lockdown as a preventive measure taken by the Indian Government to break the cycle of its spread. As per the current status, India, home to 1.3 billion people, is the world's third-most infected nation with more than 3.5 million cases, behind the US and Brazil.(1) The present study tries to note down the experiences and observations of people. It also attempts to explain the impact of this lockdown over peoples' life in general and especially on their psychological health and wellbeing.

Keywords: COVID-19, Lockdown, Experiences, Psychological Health and Wellbeing.

Introduction

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS -Cov-2).(3) At first this disease was identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China and has resulted in an ongoing pandemic since then.(3,7) In February 2020, the World Health Organisation designated the disease as COVID-19, which stands for CoronaVirus Disease 2019.(9) The disease COVID-19 was declared a 'Pandemic' by WHO in the month of March due to its widespread scale of outbreak worldwide.(9). As of now, more than 25 million cases have been reported across 188 countries and territories resulting in more than 851,350 deaths.. Many are still fighting a hard battle till date. The outbreak has led to many questions about survival and future of human species.(7) The first case of Covid-19 pandemic in India was reported on 30th January 2020 . India, having a huge population of 1.3 Billion people, too became strongly and rapidly affected by this pandemic. To control the spread of the Coronavirus outbreak worldwide and in India too, it was imperative to confine the people across the world to their home and prohibition of all social, political, sports, entertainment, cultural and religious activities--termed as 'Lockdown'. Despite the perceived hardships from the lockdown, an overwhelming majority of people are of the view that it was necessary. (8)

Life during Lockdown

At the time of global pandemic, to break the chain of the infection and slow down the spread of virus India announced nationwide lockdown from 25th March 2020 and was extended in phases till May 31.

Faced with uncertainty, fear and doubt the period of lockdown has been a roller coaster. It all started with claps, clanging of plates, and even firecrackers in the 'Janta Curfew' on 22 March 2020, evening to express gratitude for frontline workers (the doctors, medical staff, police sanitation workers etc battling fearlessly against the deadly Covid-19 pandemic. Initially as the lockdown was implemented, everyone was quite excited for a long break that lay ahead. But as the days passed by and the lockdown was extended in phases, there was a lot of fear, anxiety and uncertainty that overpowered everyone's mind.(5)

The pandemic is far more than just a health issue or disease or crisis, it was fear of contacting the corona disease unknowingly, overcoming it without specific medicine and therapy procedure and rehabilitation . This disease is affecting the whole society and the complete economy at its core. While the impact of covid-19 may vary from country to country it may more likely increase poverty and inequalities at a global scale. The pandemic affected the lives of people as there was an economic crisis in many households. People lost their jobs and their busy lives suddenly came to a screeching halt. Government's initiative of providing food to the



Anuradha Singh

Associate Professor and Head,
Dept. of Psychology,
M.K.P.(P.G.) College, Dehradun,
Uttarakhand, India.

less fortunate was remarkable but not sufficient enough for a developing country like India.(4)

Aim of the study

The main purpose of the present study was to note down the experiences and observations of people during lockdown. It also attempts to explain the impact of this lockdown over peoples' life in general and especially on their psychological health and wellbeing.

Methodology

Objectives of the study

1. To explore and construct an overall picture of social and psychological lives of people around, in families, neighborhood, friends circle, known people residing in other cities or countries.
2. To understand what impact the lockdown period had on the psychological health and wellbeing of the people around.

Sample

The data of 100 families mainly belonging to middle class families was acquired via social media, internet or telephonic calls. The families had members across all age groups from 4yrs to 88 yrs (mean age 46 yrs.)

Tool used

A self made questionnaire of 35 items, framed with 10 close ended and 25 open ended questions was made, covering the social and psychological issue prevailing in COVID-19 lockdown scenario with respect to these six categories.

1. Children- their activities and schooling etc.
2. Adolescents and college going students- their stay at home, studies, friends and social circle.
3. Professionals/officials/young working adults - working online, work load, work schedule, commutation, job issues and salary.
4. Housewives-workload, help from family members, family budget etc
5. **E) Businessman-** money management at home and business, future prospects etc.
6. **F) Old aged and covid-19 prone diseased people** (60 yrs and above) health issues, supportive family members, sense of security etc

Procedure

An adult of each family was asked to respond to the questionnaire via social media, internet or telephonic calls. 73% of the respondents were females (mean age-43 yrs), and rest 27% were males (mean age-45 yrs). The data collected by close ended questions were analysed numerically, whereas for open ended questions the content of the answers were analysed and contemplated to reach a conclusive remark.

The Results

The results of this study are presented in two parts. The first part, Section A explores and constructs an overview of the various social and psychological experiences felt by the people during the lockdown period. The second part, **Section B**, illuminates the impact of lockdown period on the psychological health and wellbeing of the people under study.

Section A

Social and Psychological Experiences

Descriptive Data

Through this study the content of the answers were analysed and the following social and psychological experiences and observations across families under following six categories were noted down:-

A) Pre primary and school going children (4 -13 yrs of age)

1. Vacation time
2. No school
3. All time TV or troubling parents
4. Online classes
5. Cannot go out to play and multiple restrictions

B) Adolescents and college going students (14 - 22 yrs of age)

1. Exploring the self and doing new things
2. Online classes- unable to manage the studies/assignments and new study pattern
3. Online tuition / no tuitions
4. Cannot enjoy it even after staying at home the whole day.
5. No privacy as everybody is at home and keeps on disturbing
6. Identity crisis, impatient, irritated, restless
7. Cannot go out and meet friends and enjoy.

C) Professionals / officials/young working adults (20-56 yrs of age)

1. Work from home
2. Increased workload
3. Cut-offs in salary
4. Job insecurity
5. Unpredictable future-job, family, relationships
6. Bound in the home premises
7. Had to spend more time for family
8. More time to explore the self and new ventures
9. More good family times together
10. Reduced travel time and expense
11. Have to spend from the savings
12. Mood swings and sleeplessness, minor physical problems

D) The housewives (27-59 yrs of age)

1. Increased workload in the kitchen as everyone at home/increased food demands
2. More time with all the family members
3. No maids and helpers - increased household activities
4. More responsibilities
5. Budgeting the family expenses
6. Have to spend from the savings
7. Sleep disturbances, aches and minor physical issues .

E) The businessmen (32-63 yrs of age)

1. Work from home not possible in most cases
2. Stress due to no sale - no money
3. Salary payments of service providers
4. Using up savings for daily expenses
5. uncertainties due to time lapse in business
6. Negative thoughts and irritations
7. Can spend more time with family

F) The old aged people (60 yrs and above)

1. Gets to spend time with all the family members
2. Many people to look after them

3. Sometimes insecure, irritated and stubborn as they cannot go out or they want peace in a family environment .

4. Apprehensions about Health dangers.
5. Concerns about others -neighbours, friends etc
6. Unable to cope with concurrent demands

Tabulated Data

Table 1 Percentage of Families against Categories and Respective Age Group

S No.	Category	Age Group	Percent of families (n=100).
A	Children	4 yrs to 12 yrs	46%
B	Adolescents	14 yrs to 22 yrs	80%
C	Professionals and /or officials	20 yrs to 56 yrs	83%
D	Housewives	27 yrs to 59 yrs	32%
E	Business	32 yrs to 63 yrs	17%
F	Old aged people	60 yrs and above	22%

Table -2 Percent of Families Experiencing Social & Psychological Issues

S.No.	Social and psychological issues	Percent of families (n=100)
1	Time spent with family	94%
2	Food	89%
3	Informations from digital & social media	100%
4	Social distancing	100%, later on relaxed
5	Help in household work	90%
6	Experience of anxiety,insecurity,fear of death etc.	74%
7	Working -online	67%%
8	Reduced salary/loss of job	28%
9	Reported to hospital/doctor	13%
10	Able to overcome lockdown issues	59%

Section B

The Impacts of Lockdown on Psychological Health and Wellbeing

During this challenging time when the fear of this deadly virus had confined people to their homes,the thought about self and the situation around them had become the main focus.For the generations of this 21st century it was something new - a kind of an extended vacation whereas for the older generation it was both a curse and blessing. The youth of this time with lots of uncertainties, was like a pendulum, dangling between working and holidaying. For most of the families (94%), time spent with the family members at home, the family time was most important. But only as a wish to spend "little" time with the family and not the entire day because they were too much engaged in their personal,social and work related life that they barely could give time to their family to sit and talk .

Covid-19 and the lockdown also focused the interest of people to the thing that remains one of the most basic biological need-food (89%) .But during this lockdown period this basic need got converted into 'psychological needs' for most of the people. Many found shelter in the kitchen and numerous dishes that they could learn, prepare and eat thereby making some purposeful use of time.

As the lockdown kept on extending, very soon people got conscious of health issues, and suppressed their ego of having rich and delicious food, switched to the superego of having healthy food. Now 'want of food' was taken over by 'need of food'. People also became conscious not only for themselves, but more for family members,near and dear loved ones. This all was consistently supported by health media and loads of advertisements of immunity booster products.

Since the lockdown also emphasized on social distancing the gymnasiums, parks,shops, public places, roads,local areas due to declaration of containment zones were closed no morning -evening walks,no shopping, no loafing around, no party,no gatherings people became lazy and restless, hyper anxious.people relied only on digital and social media for exchange of informations in and outside the family(100%). The frequent use of the Internet to cope with the monotonousness of the lockdown period also turned many people into a sort of net addiction.

Social distancing, being an important phase of the lockdown also laid emphasis on, no household help from outside for work. This led to people taking responsibility and initiative for their respective household chores thereby instilling a sense of time management in them. Adults and children who used to be dependent on household helpers for work started working on their own.Almost in 90% of the families, the family members helped each other,while 10% of families' members stuck to their own wish of helping each other.

As the lockdown closed all non essential business and services, its impacts on the economy was significant.Though many of the young professionals could shift to their work online (67%) some lost their jobs short termly(no work,no pay). Many were forced to work on reduced salary.(28%)The pandemic induced lockdown had a devastating impact on the business as well..As the markets were closed, transportation was at halt,no labour,no salespersons and of course no buyers, the local business just got shut off.iThis drastically affected the daily sales and marketing thus reducing the income of family forcing them to survive on their savings.Only 17% of the families had their own small or big business, while other families had people

working in govt offices, companies, banks or corporate (83%)

The lockdown had a profound social and psychological impact on most of the people in study. The plethora of information everyone got through news channels created a lot more of a negative effect on the psychological health of the people. Media was talking about lots n lots of people dying day by day .A panic was felt and an end of life was aforesen, helplessness was creeping into the minds of the people omnipotently, across all age group of sample. A total of 74% of the families felt that their mental health has been impacted by the lockdown.

Reduced or no access to family members, friends and other social support systems, also caused lack of resourses, loneliness and fear of death, thus increasing mental issues like anxiety, depression and panic disorders.(10) This was very significantly observed among old aged people and other people suffering ailments like asthma, diabetes, lung infections, cancer or other chronic diseases where, their immunity was suppressed.

As expected, the presence of anxiety and depressive symptoms led to feelings of insecurity, self-reported sleep disorder, aggression and changing behavioural patterns across all the families and its members. Through constant emotional support of family members, friends, yoga, exercise, hobby, creative learning and optimism, 59% of the families could overcome the negative feelings aroused during these lockdown phases.

In addition to various psychological problems, Covid-19 pandemic has caused severe threats to the lives and physical health of people across the globe as the health system was absorbed with covid-19 diseased patients. (7) Although isolation, nutritious food, rest, self care and management did reduce many infections as well as the hypochondriac thoughts of being ill, helped drastically reducing the number of OPD patients at hospitals. Only 13% of the families reported to hospitals for any medical aid or assistance during the lockdown.

Contemplating the Social and Psychological Impacts of Lockdown

The results indicated that real happiness lies in the little things that one does, as everyone got enough time spent with the family, they adopted new hobbies such as gardening, painting, singing, dancing, and spending some time with nature. The lockdown has made everyone realise the importance of actually appreciating the things that people often take for granted and it also taught the spirit of togetherness. The attention was refocused from external to internal being by practicing mindfulness. This led to change in the overall thought process and negative thoughts reduced to some extent. In fact, the extended time spent with family members, free of the stress of normal working and school days, may well have strengthen family bonds and restored balance to life, leading to an actual improvement in the quality of life during the lockdown.

Of course, the opposite situation prevails with those who do not get along well with their

families, inducing more conflict, rage, and violence thus promoting poorer outcomes during this period of staying together.

The lockdown has taught us to value the present' since it is actually a gift to us from God. While most of us spend our time reliving the past and planning for the future it is the present which we must learn to enjoy. It also taught us an important lesson to decide whom we should spend our time with. The lockdown also brought us closer to our parents and grandparents. However in India by virtue of its social structure, a variety of personal and social resources are there that help cope with such crises. The lockdown helped, recover numerous old memories thereby reviving the very Indian essence of being together forever. Family is one such vital resource, and being in close touch with relatives, in real life or virtually via social media or net decreases stress considerably and enhances self-worth and well being.

This lockdown had a healing effect on Mother Earth due to reduced emissions from factories and vehicles thereby improving the quality of air and water significantly. This lockdown resulted almost like an overhauling to the mechanisms, so as for basic survival of various species on EARTH. It also helped man realise the fact that Earth is not only his home but also an abode for every living thing that resides on it.

Conclusion

The review throws light on the uncertainties and anxieties evolved in the lives of people during lockdown due to Covid-19 virus. This pandemic has altered the way people work, behave and lead their daily lives. The perception about mere existence has changed. Anticipatory stress and anxiety, along with loneliness, during lockdown, did not only affect the mental health of people but also led to a decline in their quality of life. Mental health became a crucial issue as all the modes of communication revolved around COVID-19 disease.(2). However there are many factors which operate at an individual level to overcome it, such as the kind of job (menial, farming, skilled, semiskilled, office worker manager or professional worker), the availability of resources (money, manpower, etc and the psychological makeup of an individual (resilience, coping and optimism).

Thus it is required to handle these stressful times with a lot more understanding about oneself as well others and create a less tense and peaceful environment around. The lockdown period has taught us the most important lesson in life - to realise the fact that very little is needed to live a contented life and thus making it a happy life.

References

1. "Coronavirus COVID-19 (2020) Global cases." Issued by the Center for Systems and Engineering (SSE), Johns Hopkins University. (JHU CSSE).
2. Hiremath, P., Kowshik, C.S.S, and Shettar, M. (2020). "COVID 19: Impact of lockdown on mental health and tips to overcome." *Asian journal of psychiatry*. June ;51 doi:10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102088

3. Hui, D.S., Azhar, E.I., Madani, T.A., Ntoumi, F., et al (2020). "The continuing 2019-n-Co V- Epidemic Threat of Novel Coronavirus to Global Health- The latest 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak in Wuhan, China." *International journal of Infectious Diseases*. Vol-91,264-266.
4. India-COVID-19 Overview (2020), Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. Johns Hopkins University.
5. Kaul, Astha and Chapman, Terri, (2020) "Life in Lockdown: A Survey of India's Urban Youth.", ORF research and analysis.
6. Mayo Clinic (2020) "Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID - 19) - Symptoms and Causes.", www.mayoclinic.org/symptoms/coronavirus-disease-2019/symptoms-overview
7. Qiu, J., Shen, B., Zhao, M., Wang, Z. et al. (2020). A Nationwide Survey of Psychological Distress Among Chinese People in the COVID-19 Epidemic: Implications and Policy Recommendations. *General psychiatry*. April 33, Issue 2; doi:10.1136/gpsych-2020-100213.
8. Thomas, L. (2020). "How India's lockdown has affected mental health". *News Medical Life Sciences*.
<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20200527>
9. WHO, (2020). Director General's opening remark at the media briefing on COVID 19. World Health Organisation (WHO) 5 th of January.
10. Zhou, X., Snoswell, C.L., Harding, L.E., et al., (2020). "The role of telehealth in reducing the mental health burden from COVID-19." *Telemed E-health*. doi:10.1089/tmj.2020.006