

SHORT ARTICLE

Assessment of psychosocial health during COVID-19 Pandemic among Indian adults

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Abstract

Background: Lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic has an effect on all the dimensions of health. Previous epidemics and pandemics had made a catastrophic impact on mental wellbeing of general public. **Methods:** A cross sectional online study was carried out in the month of May. Data collection was done using Google form which contained semi-structured questionnaire. **Results:** Total 450 individuals participated in the study. About one-fourth of the participants felt depressed (28.9%) listening to the constant news updates about corona virus. Almost half of participants (50.7%) had altered eating habits. Nearly one-third of the participants had difficulty (35.1%) in falling asleep. **Conclusion:** This study reports that there is a negative impact on psychosocial health of general public who were confined to their homes due to COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

Keywords

COVID-19; Psychosocial Health; Pandemic

Introduction

In December 2019, a novel SARS-CoV2 was reported in Wuhan City of Hubei province of central China. A cluster of about 40 cases of pneumonia of unknown aetiology was identified, some of the patients being traders in the Huanan Seafood market. The

concerned market in Wuhan was closed on 1st January 2020 for sanitization and disinfection.(1) On 25th March, 2020 our honourable Prime Minister, `Narendra Modi announced a 21-day complete lockdown in 1st phase across the India to control the spread of SARS-CoV2. As on 12th Oct, 2020, there were 861853 active cases, 6149535

cured or discharged cases and 109150 deaths according to official government reports.(2)

Social isolation, due to lack of contact with society, can lead to a wide range of consequences mainly on psychological wellbeing of an individual. Previously conducted epidemiological studies reported depression, anxiety, negative psychological effect, panic attack, psychomotor excitement, psychotic symptoms, delirium, and even suicidal tendency among the survivors of the SARS epidemic.(3,4)

Aims & Objectives

To assess impact of COVID-19 pandemic on psychosocial health

Material & Methods

This cross-sectional study was carried out in May 2020 for a period of four days. The information was collected through online semi-structured questionnaire which was developed using Google form with consent form attached in the beginning. Data was collected regarding socio-demographic characteristics and Psychosocial health from the participants. Study participants were of age 18 years and above, having internet on their mobile phones and/or WhatsApp users and those who were able to read and write in English. Total 450 responses were received. Ethical clearance was taken from Institution Ethics Committee. Data was entered and analysed using SPSS version 21. Statistics used to report the findings were frequency and percentage.

Results

As shown in (Figure 1), nationwide, a total 450 individuals, consented to participate in the study. Maximum number of participants were from Uttar Pradesh (37.1%) followed by New Delhi (23.1%).

The mean age of the participants was 29.2 years (S.D = 10.06) ranging between 18 to 71 years. Male (52.9%) and female (47.1%) gender was almost equally distributed among study population. Almost half of the participants belonged to nuclear family (44.9%). The education level of the study participants was on the higher side as nearly one-third of the participants were graduates (37.1%) and postgraduates (31.1%). Students, home makers, retired and those who were out of work were grouped together as unemployed and formed more than half (54.7%) of the study participants while the remaining were employed (45.3%). During the lockdown period, out of the total 204 participants who were employed almost half of the participants

worked from home (53.4%). Majority of participants were health care professionals (63.6%).

(Table 1) highlights the psychosocial health impact due to COVID -19 pandemic. More than one-fourth of the participants felt that incessant news and updates of corona on every platform makes them feel sad and depressed (28.9%). Almost half of participants had no change in eating habits (49.3%) during last 15 days while the remaining study subjects either were eating more (27.8%) than normal or eating lesser (22.9%) than the amount they usually consume. Almost two-third of participants had no difficulty (64.9%) in falling asleep however, 4% participants always had sleeping difficulty due to constant worrying about pandemic. Nearly one-third (30%) of the participants observed that they never felt scared by social media posts on COVID-19 pandemic in last 5 weeks nonetheless, social media feeds had freaked out the remaining participants in varying degree (occasionally sometimes, often and always). Majority of study subjects strongly disagreed (32.7%) with the statement that social relations with the health care workers should be cut off as they act as a possible source of COVID-19 transmission. In an open-ended question participant were asked about how do they keep themselves occupied during lockdown. Social media (69.6%) and television (65.3%) were the most commonly employed method to stay engaged.

Discussion

Psychosocial health is impacted to a great extent due to lockdown imposed to curb spread of COVID-19 worldwide. Hence this study was conducted to get an insight into the health of general public due to this pandemic.

In our study the majority of the participants in our study had above high school education level. This is similar to the study done by D. Roy, et al. where the lowest educational level was observed to be standard 10th and the highest qualification of more than 90 % of the population was graduation and above.(5) This should be by default as only those individuals who could read English and use smartphones were included in the study.

Almost half of the study participants in the present study reported either eating much more or much less than what they eat normally. This is in line with a survey conducted among participants from the United States and Netherlands which reported a

wide range of eating disorders among its participants during COVID-19 Pandemic. (6)

In our study, sleep was not affected (64.9%) for majority of the participant due to the pandemic. This was in contrast to study done by Chakraborty et al in which near about one-third of the respondents reported of having disturbed sleep in the past 2 weeks. This was also in excess of the reported prevalence of nonorganic insomnia in a community sample.(7)

According to our study 29.8% of participants observed that they never felt scared by social media posts on COVID-19 pandemic in last 5 weeks whereas only 3.8 % of total study population were always scared by social media posts on COVID-19 pandemic in last 5 weeks. Media influences the psychological well-being and adds to the level of anxiety. The swine flu pandemic of 2009–2010, which resulted in high mortality worldwide also caught global media attention and evoked anxiety among the public significantly (Everts, 2013).(8)

It has been identified that there was a positive correlation between public anxiety and the media coverage during outbreak of SARS (Xie, et.al, 2011).(9) Social media usage and Television were most often used medium to stay mentally engaged during social isolation by our study participants. Government of India has issued a number of documents, audio-visuals and guidelines recommending on how to handle social isolation and emotional problems during pandemic. Also, a toll-free number has been launched for advice on psychosocial health to the general public.

Conclusion

The study revealed that COVID-19 pandemic is creating psychological distress among the individuals. Moreover, efforts should be put to raise the awareness to counterattack stigma against healthcare workers. There is a need to promote awareness regarding infodemic that is going in parallel with COVID-19 pandemic to promote mental wellbeing of individuals.

Limitation of the study

Study was conducted among mobile phone users and people who could understand and write in English. This potentially affected the generalizability of the study.

Authors Contribution

All the authors have contributed at various stages of composition of the final manuscript.

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Tables

TABLE 1 DISTRIBUTION OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO IMPACT ON PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH DUE TO ON-GOING COVID -19 PANDEMIC (N=450)

Variables (N=450)	N (%)
Feelings perceived due to constant news and updates about corona on every platform	
Makes you sad/depressed	130(28.9)
Feel scared	125(27.8)
Eagerly learn new things	114(25.3)
Doesn't affect you in anyway	52(11.6)
Others	29(6.4)
Changes in eating habit during last 15 days	
Eating less	103(22.9)
Eating more	125(27.8)
Not affected	222(49.3)
During the past 5 weeks, how often have you had difficulty in sleeping by being worried about the COVID-19 pandemic?	
Never	292(64.9)
Occasionally	67(14.9)
Sometimes	61(13.6)
Often	12(2.6)
Always	18(4)
During the past 5 weeks, how often does the idea of Novel Corona Virus Infection post on social media freak you out?	
Never	135(30)
Occasionally	127(28.2)
Sometimes	128(28.4)
Often	43(9.6)
Always	17(3.8)
Social relation with health care workers should be cut off due to the probability of spread of COVID-19 infection through them	
Agree	51(11.3)
Disagree	132(29.3)
Neutral	111(24.7)
Strongly agree	9(2)
Strongly disagree	147(32.7)
Strategies used to stay motivated and engaged in lockdown (*multiple responses)	
Using social media	313(69.6)
Watching television/Netflix/Amazon prime etc.	294(65.3)
Talking with people	244(54.2)
Listening music	239(53.1)
Reading books	221(49.1)
Exercise	215(47.8)
Playing games on electronic device	130(28.9)
Yoga/Meditation	117(26.0)
Others	5(0.4)

Figures

FIGURE 1 STATE WISE DISTRIBUTION OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS (IN PERCENTAGES) (N=450)

