



A STUDY ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CRISIS DURING THE LOCKDOWN CAUSED DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC¹

Sujata Saha¹ and Dr. Tinni Dutta²

¹ Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Surendranath College, Kolkata, India

² Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Asutosh College, India

ABSTRACT: *The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is the defining global health crisis of the current time and the greatest challenge that we have faced since World War II. Countries are racing to slow the spread of the virus by testing and treating patients, carrying out contact tracing, limiting travel, quarantining citizens, and cancelling large gatherings such as sporting events, concerts, and schools. The World Health Organization, which has officially declared the outbreak a pandemic, has called on "all countries to continue efforts that have been effective in limiting the number of cases and slowing the spread of the virus." However, the rest of the country remains under lockdown. Everyone else is only allowed to leave to purchase food or medication, visit the sick and go to the hospital. So, understanding the uncertain lockdown period, the present study focused on the psychological crisis among different categories of people during this vulnerable time of the community transmission of the virus. Twelve participants from different life roles were selected and were assessed on some negative and positive domains undergoing this worldwide phenomenon. A qualitative analysis was done to interpret the content of the information received from the participants. The study clearly indicated that apart from the life uncertainties psychological distress and economic worries that prevail genuinely but there are also some optimistic thought about the lockdown that can save our lives, rebuild trust and cooperation, within and among nations, between people and their governments and considered as a best practice in this crisis that might reduce threat among the participants during this lockdown period.*

KEYWORDS: Coronavirus, Pandemic, Psychological Crisis, Lockdown, Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has already gained its place on the dark side of world history for a variety of reasons: sudden onset, speed of global transmission, mistakes in recognition and management, politically inspired neglect or minimizations. The already dramatic infection and mortality figures have led to seemingly desperate and extreme government decisions in many countries. It has social, economic/financial, and public health impact is very impressive and, obviously, more powerful and damaging among the poor and disadvantaged population segments worldwide. Apart from this, the crisis had reminded us that our psychological well-being gets affected, the forced family time is generating new creative genres. Despite our differences we are able to rise to the occasion and help, comfort and take care of each other, remain optimistic that when we wake up from this long sleep, this long pause, we will be ready to take on the new challenges with vigour and compassion for all.

¹Paper presented at the International E-Conference on COVID-19 Global Impacts, 20-21 July, 2020.



A pandemic is just one of nature's ways of finding some kind of balance. The present crisis is teaching us dramatic and insightful lessons. There were a smaller number of people on the streets; some are empty.

Working from home, we are realising that in many cases expensive office space is not required. We are also, perforce, spending more time with family; there is greater bonding. Communication between parents and children and between life partners has improved. We have started reading books again, something that we had not done since long. Perhaps the universe is slowing us down. People who suspect they may have come into contact with the corona virus are being advised to self-isolate (stay at home) for 14 days.

According to studies, as many as 60% of those who experienced self-quarantine reported symptoms of depression, only 5% of those impacted remember a positive experience when quarantined. The isolation and boredom of the experience led to increased rates of fear and anxiety. While "lockdown" isn't a technical term used by public-health officials, it can refer to anything from mandatory geographic quarantines to non-mandatory recommendations to stay at home, closures of certain types of businesses, or bans on events and gatherings, Lindsay Wiley, a health law professor at the Washington College of Law.

With the World Health Organization (WHO) labelling corona virus a pandemic, the threat appears more real. "COVID-19 is a corona virus outbreak that initially appeared in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, in December 2019, but it has already evolved into a pandemic spreading rapidly worldwide. Because it makes it real, it can increase worries and anxieties. With increased worries and fears, we may also see an increase in feeling of depression", Dr. Robin Gurwitch, psychologists and professor at Duke University Medical Center, tells MEA Worldwide (MEAWW). It is not atypical to be struck by anxiety during a crisis. When the virus was raging in China, a survey by the Chinese Psychological Society revealed that about 43% of 18,000 participants experienced anxiety.

A new report by the Kaise Family Foundation finds that mental health burden is increasing for just about everyone. In a mid-March (2020) poll, 32% of people polled said that worry and stress about coronavirus had a negative impact on their mental health. Two weeks later in late March (2020), this number had risen to 45%. Psychotherapist Sophie Gallagher (2020) agrees but warns "panic, too, is contagious", while the Samaritans encourage people to remember that they are not alone in feeling uneasy. So, the present case studies deal with the psychological conditions of different people in Kolkata during the lockdown due to novel corona virus (Covid-19 pandemic). A qualitative analysis was done to observe and understand the spontaneous behaviour of the participants in Kolkata in this current self-quarantine state.

METHODOLOGY

Method: The present study primarily aims to describe the qualitative description of the behaviour and events observed. The investigators collected data in the form of some narrative description for understanding and deriving necessary interpretation about the quality of the behaviour and characteristics of things observed.



Sampling: Demographical features: A purposive sampling is used which is valuable sampling type for special situations. In the current analysis twelve participants three from each group were selected from middle socio-economic strata, currently with four different life roles such as students (age 20-24 years), housewives (age 30-35 years), working males (age 30-35 years) and working females (age 30-35 years). For the desired collection of data, techniques involved was telephonic interviewing / via e-mail based on good rapport and close contact of the researcher with the participants.

Tools: A content analysis technique was used to examine the content or information and symbols contained in written documents or other communication media (/telephonic conversation/ e-mails). So here, to conduct a content analysis, investigators identified some negative and positive body of materials to analyse and then created a system for recording specific aspects in a systematic way. It uses the judgement of an expert selecting cases with specific purpose in mind.

Latent coding system (semantic analysis- look for the underlying, implicit meaning in the content of a text) was used to interpret the current psychological crisis that people are undergoing during the lockdown caused by corona virus globally. The investigators identified eight domains – four negative aspect of lockdown (Depressive mood, Distress, Uncertainty about the future life events and Lack of autonomy to move out during lockdown) and four positive aspects of (Re-establishment of emotional bonds among family members, Understanding and helping in family activities, An activity for leisure time [me time] and Getting faith in mankind) lockdown among the participants taken into considerations.

Procedure: In the present study the participants were selected by close contacts as everyone is undergoing this lockdown globally. Initially participants were considered as students, housewives, male working and female working and then they were contacted over telephonic interviews / via emails as because social distancing need to be maintained during this pandemic situation. The nature of the study was explained properly to the participants and at the same time it was also mentioned that the information would be kept confidential. Some positive and negative aspects of psychological crisis had been identified that the participants might show during this lockdown state. The responses of the selected participants were recorded over the telephone or send via emails about the psychological crisis during the lockdown caused due to Covid-19 pandemic. As the present study emphasised on qualitative research, content analysis method had been used to collect the data and interpreting the texts or content received or recorded from the participants.

RESULTS

Table 1 & 2: shows the Negative & Positive Aspects of Lockdown among different categories of people taken into consideration

**Table 1: Domains of Negative Aspects**

	Depressive Mood	Distress	Uncertainty about the Future Life Events	Lack of Autonomy to move out During Lockdown
Students	Life schedule changes, lack of interest or energy in their studies, laziness, de-motivation arises, excessive thinking about the current situation makes them feel worried and they also pray for the sufferers during this crisis period.	Longer period of home stay makes them distressing sometimes, overreaction to anticipated events are noticeable, negativity after being aware of the pandemic is dominant, it involves a lot of uncertainties and hardships in life	Currently the lives are messed up, future curriculum are questionable, feeling much tensed and worried about what may happen in the upcoming semester studies.	Going out for basic necessities also create anxiety and stress as people are not maintaining social distancing as media proactively making us aware of the accelerated chance of community spread
Working Males	Tensed about the economy. The fear of the looming unknown is definitely large. Avoiding watching news because that creates a depressed state of mind.	Creates anxiety while watching news and keep hearing about the death toll increasing around the world. Uncertainties about the migrant workers	Many people are faced with far more immediate loss of livelihood or lifestyle due to economical setback. Need to re-evaluate any vacation or job-switch. Thinking positively and praying for the current situation to overcome successfully.	As lockdown was necessary for larger benefit and thinking themselves fortune because of their current socio-economic conditions which they could afford staying at home and also concerned about those people who are not so privileged to have work from home and have access to online delivery options.



	Depressive Mood	Distress	Uncertainty about the Future Life Events	Lack of Autonomy to move out During Lockdown
Working Females	As situation seemed to be unclear, sometimes anxiety, irritability arises. Longer stay at home creates emotional turmoil, anger among kid's that need to be handled, sometimes causing cabin fever among children.	Information overloaded from social media about the increasing death toll globally creates worries and tension.	Domestic violence may be the worst thing during this lockdown for many women, vacation needs to get reschedule and kid's school reopening created uncertainties.	Moving out from the house is not the current concern, willing to stay back at home and save the mankind.
Housewives	Losing interest to stick to the rules, disinterest in television channel as they are showing repeat telecast, pandemic fear leads to emotional turmoil, stress and insomnia, limited activities indoors creates frustration and monotony.	Escalating nervousness among many people as employees are getting 30-20% pay cut, daily wages earners are worst sufferer, unknown about the end of this situation creates a sense helplessness and hopelessness.	All upcoming life events are getting postponed for an uncertain period. People have limited access to resources to celebrate these events. Life events are personal but celebrations are social. If there is no gathering means there is no celebration. Uncertainty is not only around life events but also around our lives.	Feeling of helplessness as buying regular as well as lifesaving medicines, baby foods, monthly groceries, day to day requirements, students need their study material and kits, but no one can step out. A sense of worry and stress being created among all but at the same time everyone is aware that staying at home is the only way to fight against this grave situation.

**Table 2: Domains of Positive Aspects**

Categories of Participants	Re-establishment of Emotional Bonds Among Family Members	Understanding and Helping in Family Activities	An activity for Leisure Time (me time)	Getting Faith in Mankind
Students	Escalate family time, accepting and understanding undesirable habits or practices of the family members.	As no support from maids are available during this lockdown, engage themselves to help their parents with all possible household chores, making their work easier and at the same time learning a lot of things by themselves,	Constructive activities by drawing, sketching, designing cloths, stitching, glass painting, cleaning sometimes cooking, watching television, news updates, playing games and doing some college assignments.	Appreciate doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals. as local people trying their best to reach out to the poor and helping them with the essential things. Also, we need to believe in ourselves to take all precautions possible to avoid infection; hence the need to conform the recommended guidelines on prevention is very much essential in the society at large.
Male Working	A feeling of “Extended summer vacation” for the entire family, especially with the kids– without going out for any vacation or without any relatives – but with only the immediate family members.	Without domestic help, works gets divided though being the male counterpart work seemed to be less for them, healthy eating habits develop, helping in studies and teaching newer skills to the kids.	Playing piano, watching Netflix, Amazon prime movies, reading books, and developing photography skills taken from balcony or terrace.	As lockdown was necessary and no words are enough to express gratitude and thanks for the doctors, nurses, police, corporation workers, people involved in essential services – who are putting their lives on the line to ensure we can be safe. On a positive note trust and faith exists.



Categories of Participants	Re-establishment of Emotional Bonds Among Family Members	Understanding and Helping in Family Activities	An activity for Leisure Time (me time)	Getting Faith in Mankind
Female Working	Spending quality time with kid's, husband and in laws, having fruitful conversation, creates positive impact on emotional health as they do not get this opportunity every day.	Without domestic help household chores gets divided among the family members that enhance the family bonding.	Refreshing past hobbies by doing painting, watching movies which were not possible during busy work and family activities.	Happy to see people doing charity, helping the needy, believing in God, in this state treating doctors as God. They are the once who can save us now.
Housewives	Communication with the children increases, lowers lots of doubts, conflicts misunderstanding between couples as well as other family members and making their relations stronger.	Family members enthusiastically engage in r household activities. Perception of doing different household hazards are understood by the nonparticipant members.	As getting more helping hands around them, time could be redirected toward reading and writing, able to manage time for their passion.	Man was always kind before, social media makes us more aware of the facts that during this crisis many people try to help other and posting their good deeds socially. Frontline workers serving the nation worldwide.

DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced millions of people to live under strict lockdown conditions, but the psychology of human behaviour predicts that people will find it harder to stick to the rules the longer the situation continues. The isolation and fear in this lockdown era are driving an escalating nervousness among many people, not just those with pre-existing conditions like anxiety, depression and obsessive –compulsive disorder but also the elderly who are struggling with new levels of loneliness and helplessness.

The present study is concerned with the students, housewives as well as working male and female groups. A content analysis on the negative aspects identified that depressed mood in all the group seemed to be ensured by thinking about the different aspects of economic crisis, anger, emotional turmoil, irritability, anxiety, cabin fever among the kids, losing interest to



stick to the rules, disinterest in television channel as they are showing repeat telecast. Pandemic fear also leads to stress and insomnia, limited activities indoors creates frustration and monotony. Distress created due to long stay at home, uncertainties and hardships about the migrant workers, information overloaded from social media about the increasing death toll globally creates worries and tension watching news and keep hearing about the death toll increasing around the world, escalating nervousness among many people as employees are getting 30-20% pay cut, daily wages earners are worst sufferer, unknown about the end of this situation creates a sense helplessness and hopelessness. Among these group of individuals taken in the present study due to prolonged closure of the educational institutions and offices uncertainty about the future life events for the students and working male seemed like a whirlwind as currently the lives of the students are messed up, future curriculum are questionable, feeling much tensed and worried about what might happen in the upcoming semester studies. Working individuals are faced with far more immediate loss of livelihood or lifestyle due to economical set-back, they might re-evaluate any vacation or job-switch. Domestic violence may be the worst thing during this lockdown for many woman, all upcoming life events need to get postponed for an uncertain period which can affect their psychological well-being in an adverse way. Lack of autonomy as being considered another negative aspect that affect their mental health where these group of participants considering that lockdown had been declared which was necessary for larger benefit and thinking themselves fortunate because of their current socio-economic conditions which they could afford staying at home and also concerned about those people who are not so privileged to have work from home and have access to online delivery options, and moving freely or going out for basic necessities also create anxiety and stress as people are not maintaining social distancing as media proactively making us aware of the accelerated chance of community spread. Sometimes a feeling of helplessness is being created as procuring some basic essentials seemed to be difficult and also a sense of worry and stress being created among all but at the same time everyone is aware that staying at home is the only way to fight against this grave situation.

The enormity and strangeness of this crisis is totally incomparable, both in scale and experience, to anything we have ever seen before in living memory and provokes in everybody a variety of responses: fear, worry, solidarity, grief but also the sense of being united in a common experience albeit tragic and in a purpose not letting the contagion spread. Apart, from the negative aspects there are also some alternate positive feelings that also played a significant role in order to protect the public health and prevent community transmission. Among the positive aspects include re-establishment of emotional bonds among family members where a feeling of “Extended summer vacation” for the entire family, especially with the kids— without going out for any vacation or without any relatives – but with only the immediate family members, having fruitful conversation, creates positive impact on emotional health, communication with the children increases, lowers lots of doubts, conflicts misunderstanding between couples as well as other family members and making their relations stronger. Students engage themselves to help their parents with all possible household chores, making their work easier and at the same time learning a lot of things by themselves. Apart from taking care of different household chores the participants also got opportunities to explore their passions which were shrinking due to lack of time and other life priorities. Most of them occupied themselves in some constructive activities like drawing, sketching, designing cloths, stitching, glass painting, cleaning sometimes cooking, ample amount of sleep of their preference, watching television, news updates, playing



games and doing some college assignments, playing piano, , reading books, and developing photography skills taken from balcony or terrace focusing on positive news , like news of people recovering from the virus also give us hope. Finally, individuals during this lockdown developed faith in mankind as lockdown was necessary, people who render selfless service in these trying times were appreciated and no words are enough to express gratitude and thanks for the doctors, nurses, police, corporation workers, people involved in essential services – who are putting their lives on the line to ensure we can be safe, as local people trying their best to reach out to the poor and helping them with the essential things Also we need to believe in ourselves to take all precautions possible to avoid infection; hence the need to conform the recommended guidelines on prevention is very much essential in the society at large... Again, during this lockdown phase, social media makes us more aware of the facts that during this crisis many people try to help each other and posting their good deeds socially. And believing in God and science will definitely help to fight and win against the greatest challenge ever globally.

REFERENCES

- Gallagher,S(2020). *Coronavirus: How to curb your anxiety about Covid-19 virus according to psychologists*
- Gurwitch,R.(2020). *How to Cope with Coronavirus Stress*.Experts in student support and mental health give advice to the Duke community.
- Mangal,S.K & Mangal ,S. (2015).*Research Methodology in Behavioural Science* ,PHI Learning Private Ltd,2nd Edition.
- Neuman,L.W.(2015).*Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approach*, Pearson India Education Services Pvt. Ltd.
- World Health Organization. (2020).*Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Pandemic*, Latest updates - Live press conference (Geneva). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.