

Marital Life and Sexual Functioning Among Urban Married Individuals During Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Background: Corona virus is an infectious virus which has turned out to be a pandemic all around the world. The preventive strategies of spreading this virus is sanitization hands, surfaces and social distancing leading to a nationwide lockdown. This pandemic has affected the physical and mental health of each individual along with the marital life and sexual functioning of married individuals. Marital quality and sexual functioning are parameters of good psychological health and poor marital life and sexual health often leads to a poor psychological state of mind. **Aim:** This research has been undertaken to assess how the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has changed the quality of marital life and sexual functioning among urban married individuals. **Methodology:** The study was conducted via Google Forms using a semi-structured questionnaire. A total of 60 responses, 30 from married females and 30 from males were recorded. Mean, standard deviation, chi-square was used for statistical analysis. **Results:** Majority of females have reported their spouse to be understanding about their feelings, receiving cooperation from spouse in maintaining domestic responsibilities and work from home, experiencing feeling of security from their spouse, taking decisions and having discussions together with spouse about household matters with an improved quality in overall marital functioning and communication with their spouse. No change has been reported in the sexual functioning when compared to the previous times before pandemic as perceived majorly by females than males. **Conclusion:** The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown has shed light on the importance of relationships like marriage which has been experienced in a more strong manner by the females whereas sexual life, as reported by females has not been found to be affected due to this stressful, difficult and uncertain situation.

Keywords: Marital Life, Sexual Functioning, Urban, Married Individuals, Pandemic

Marriage is described as a personal life event in adulthood and involves the cohabitation of two people with different characteristics and needs^[4]. In a marital relationship both the spouses establish a sense of satisfaction with each other^[5,6]. Ellis defined marital satisfaction as objective feelings of contentment and satisfaction, pleasure experienced by married couple when all aspects are considered in their lives^[2].

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Marital satisfaction is simply the degree of contentment regarding certain aspects of marital relationship as well as the whole relationship. According to some previous researches, marital satisfaction refers to a subjective and global evaluation of the relationship ^[7,8]. It is a situation in which, couples have satisfaction and feel happy living together ^[9]. Marital satisfaction is influenced by many factors, of which safe and pleasurable sexual relationship is mentioned to be one of the most important factors noticed in many researches ^[10]. Sexual satisfaction and needs have been accepted as one of the most fundamental pillars of good marital quality which is very important and necessary ^[10,2]. Higher level of sexual satisfaction results in higher marital satisfaction, which in turn increases good marital life.

During these difficult times of COVID-19 pandemic, nationwide lockdown has been maintained as one of the important strategies to minimize social, physical distancing and spread of the corona virus. This pandemic has caused a severe impact on the mental health of each individual along with different dimensions of the human relationships of which two important aspects are marital life and sexual functioning which are inter-related to one another.

Many couples have been bound with each other at home for over a month, which evoked the underlying conflicts, arguments increased more than usual along with underlying issues of resentment and poor communication which could be devastating to a marital relationship. On the other hand, it could be an excellent opportunity to reconnect with their spouse for many couples, especially during the lockdown times which can affect their sex life.

Married couples are finding it tough to let each other be, that is whether too close implies comfort or not. Also, constantly being in each other's presence amplifies every mistake and quirk that may have earlier slipped under the radar. How long a couple has been together also plays a role in the kinds of difficulties they are facing during the covid-19 pandemic. Older couples may discover that they are not as compatible as they once thought, while those who have started living together only recently may feel as if they are trapped with a stranger. A couple may also have conflicting expectations from each other. Many couples with different personality types are struggling with issues revolving around personal space and time leading to arguments which affects sexual functioning ^[3].

Many Indian couples fail to communicate openly with each other the reason is a fear of being judged by the partner which might be happening during these difficult times especially in the lockdown situation too. Often couples in particular finds it difficult to be clear about their needs, whether practical, emotional, or sexual.

Gendered expectations are also affecting the couples during these tough times including the lockdown situation in terms of doing domestic chores as domestic help is also not always available during these times and often people are doubtful too in allowing outside people in their house in terms of keeping themselves safe from getting infected. When work is not divided fairly, disappointment, anger and frustration creep in, which in turn make 'trivial' issues assume much larger proportions having its effect on sexual functioning.

This pandemic including lockdown has made couples realize that marital incompatibility and sex is a complicating factor that they have to deal with. Romance flies out fast from the bedroom when resentments are simmering. Many couples feel that these stressful times has affected their sex life with their spouse, as both feel tired and anxious by the end of the day after doing all the work from home and domestic chores.

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On the other hand, if it is seen globally, coronavirus has still created sex industry a sales boom. Lelo, a Swedish luxury sex toy brand, says it has seen sales increase by 40 percent. Ann Summers, a sex toy and lingerie retailer, has seen a 27 percent increase in sales of sex toys compared to this time last year, and contraceptive sales have doubled in the space of just a week. UK Meds, an online pharmacy based in Nottingham, reported a spike in Viagra sales and a 23 percent increase in orders of the morning-after pill. With extra time during the day saved by not commuting or working, it's only natural that couples are using it to be engaged in sexual life ^[1].

Hence, keeping these viewpoints in mind, this survey research has been undertaken to assess whether COVID-19 pandemic has affected marital life and sexual functioning among urban married individuals.

METHODOLOGY

This survey research was conducted through online mode using Google Forms. The link has been sent using WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger where there is an advantage of submitting the responses maintaining anonymity. This was an observational survey research carried out on married individuals in Indian context.

Instrument

A 40-item self-designed semi-structured questionnaire was developed, with a consent form attached to it was used for the study. The survey questionnaire would take around 15-20 minutes to complete. The questionnaire started with consent form, information about background data which included age, occupation, whom they are staying with, any previous history of physical and psychiatric illness along with the main section comprising of a set of questions regarding marital and sexual functioning during COVID-19 pandemic period. The survey invitation clearly stated that the participants will have the right not to respond to the questions and participation in the survey will imply providing informed consent.

Sample

Total 60 responses, 30 married women and 30 married men were received after circulation of the google form. These 60 responses are those responses who have given their consent to participate in this survey research. The sampling method used was random sampling.

Inclusion criteria and Exclusion criteria:

- Individuals aged between 25-50 years staying in urban area.
- Married women and married men were included.
- Able to read English.
- Has WhatsApp, Facebook messenger installed on their phone.
- Unwilling and not providing informed consent for the study.

Procedure

The questionnaire using Google Form link was sent to the participants through Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger and on clicking the link the participants are directed to the information about the research and informed consent page. The participants had the liberty to not fill up the survey. Once they gave consent to take the survey, next they fill up the socio-demographic details and sequentially a set of several questions appeared for them to answer. While collecting data, confidentiality and anonymity was maintained. Anyone can opt out from the study if they do not want to continue even in the midway of this survey. Incomplete

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data was removed and the forms with complete responses were entered in the SPSS version 24 and finally analyzed.

Statistical analysis

SPSS version 24 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) was used for statistical analysis. t-test has been used to analyze the continuous variables like age, married life among both the groups. For other discrete variables like education chi-square has been used among both the groups. For the study variables, to assess the difference between women and men group, chi-square has been used.

RESULTS

Socio demographic details

In terms of analyzing socio-demographic details, in terms of comparing age, married life among female and male group, no significant difference has been found among both the groups. The mean age of female group has been found to be 32.70 and mean age of male group has been found to be 33.30 (Table 1a).

Table 1a: Age and Married life (Years)

Variables	Female Group		Male Group		df	t-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Age	32.70	3.87	33.30	4.21	58	0.57 NS
Married life (Years)	6.04	3.89	5.69	3.56	58	0.72 NS

NS- Not Significant

Table 1b: Education

Variable	Female Group	Male Group	df	X ²
Graduation	8	13	2	0.37 NS
Post-Graduation	20	16		
Higher education (M.Phil, Ph.D)	2	1		

NS- Not Significant

Among the female group, the mean of married life is 6.04 and among male group is 5.69 (Table 1a). On comparing the education among both the groups, no significant difference has been found. Majority of the female group (20) and male group (16) is having an education of Post-graduation (Table 1b).

Marital Functioning

- Significant differences have been found between female and male group when analyzed on different areas of marital functioning (Table 2a).

Table 2a: Comparison between female and male group in terms of Marital Functioning

Items		Female	Male	df	X ²	p-value
1. My spouse tries to understand how I am feeling when I share my feelings with	Agree to a great extent	10	0	6	26.97	0.00**
	Agree to a moderate extent	12	4			
	Agree to a slight extent	2	5			
	No change	4	6			
	Disagree to a slight extent	0	6			

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Items		Female	Male	df	X ²	p-value
him/her.	Disagree to a moderate extent	0	4			
	Disagree to a great extent	2	5			
2. My spouse cooperates with me in maintaining domestic responsibilities and work from home.	Agree to a great extent	14	5	6	14.66	0.02*
	Agree to a moderate extent	7	3			
	Agree to a slight extent	4	6			
	No change	1	3			
	Disagree to a slight extent	4	6			
	Disagree to a moderate extent	0	4			
	Disagree to a great extent	0	3			
3. I feel secure with my spouse during this ongoing pandemic period.	Agree to a great extent	19	4	6	27.86	0.00**
	Agree to a moderate extent	4	1			
	Agree to a slight extent	5	5			
	No change	2	5			
	Disagree to a slight extent	0	7			
	Disagree to a moderate extent	0	6			
	Disagree to a great extent	0	2			
4. My affection has increased towards my spouse.	Agree to a great extent	8	5	6	15.35	0.01**
	Agree to a moderate extent	8	4			
	Agree to a slight extent	3	3			
	No change	9	3			
	Disagree to a slight extent	1	5			
	Disagree to a moderate extent	1	5			
	Disagree to a great extent	0	5			
5. My spouse participates in taking decisions for our home together including financial matters.	Agree to a great extent	13	6	6	17.56	0.00**
	Agree to a moderate extent	6	4			
	Agree to a slight extent	9	4			
	No change	2	4			
	Disagree to a slight extent	0	6			
	Disagree to a moderate extent	0	4			
	Disagree to a great extent	0	2			
6. I discuss my problems with my spouse.	Agree to a great extent	12	3	6	24.56	0.00**
	Agree to a moderate extent	9	3			
	Agree to a slight extent	6	3			
	No change	2	4			
	Disagree to a slight extent	1	7			
	Disagree to a moderate extent	0	5			
	Disagree to a great extent	0	5			
7. Our arguments have increased during the ongoing pandemic period.	Agree to a great extent	2	2	6	5.20	0.51 NS
	Agree to a moderate extent	2	4			
	Agree to a slight extent	2	5			
	No change	9	4			

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Items		Female	Male	df	X ²	p-value
	Disagree to a slight extent	4	5			
	Disagree to a moderate extent	4	6			
	Disagree to a great extent	7	4			
8. I feel comfortable in sharing my mistakes with my spouse	Agree to a great extent	12	4	6	16.05	0.01**
	Agree to a moderate extent	11	4			
	Agree to a slight extent	1	4			
	No change	2	5			
	Disagree to a slight extent	1	7			
	Disagree to a moderate extent	2	3			
	Disagree to a great extent	1	3			
9. My trust towards my spouse has increased in these difficult pandemic times.	Agree to a great extent	10	4	6	11.44	0.07 NS
	Agree to a moderate extent	6	4			
	Agree to a slight extent	5	4			
	No change	7	6			
	Disagree to a slight extent	2	5			
	Disagree to a moderate extent	0	4			
	Disagree to a great extent	0	3			

**Significant at 0.01 level

*Significant at 0.05 level

NS- Not significant

- On analyzing further, it has been found that females have agreed to a moderate extent (12) in terms of understanding their feelings on sharing with their spouses and it has been found to be significantly different from males ($\chi^2=27.86$; $p<0.00$).
- Significant differences have been found in terms of cooperation from spouse in maintaining domestic responsibilities and work from home ($\chi^2=14.66$; $p<0.02$) where majority of females have agreed of receiving cooperation from their spouse to a great extent (14).
- With reference to feeling of security during this ongoing pandemic period, significant differences have been found between female and male group ($\chi^2=27.86$; $p<0.00$) where majority of females agreed of feeling secured with their spouse to a great extent (19).
- During the pandemic situation, in terms of affection significant differences between female and male group ($\chi^2=15.35$; $p<0.01$) and majority of females reported of no change (9).
- Significant differences have been found between female and male group with reference to participation of spouse ($\chi^2=17.56$; $p<0.00$) where females have mostly agreed of participation from their spouses in taking decisions for home together including financial matters to a great extent (13).
- During the pandemic situation, in terms of having discussion with spouse, significant differences have been found between females and males ($\chi^2=24.56$; $p<0.00$) and majority of females agreed of having discussion about problems with spouse to a great extent (12).
- With reference to sharing mistakes with spouse significant differences have been found between female and male group ($\chi^2=16.05$; $p<0.01$) where majority of females agreed to being comfortable in sharing mistakes with spouse to a great extent (12).

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- On comparing the quality of marital relationship (Table 2b), significant differences have been found between female and male group with reference to functioning of marital relationship with spouse during pandemic situation ($\chi^2=14.69$; $p<0.02$) and majority of females reported the relationship to be very much improved (8) and moderately improved (8).

Table 2b: Comparison on quality of marital relationship between female and male group

Items		Females	Males	df	X ²	p-value
1.Functioning of marital relationship with my partner.	Very much improved	8	3	6	14.69	0.02*
	Moderately improved	8	5			
	Slightly improved	6	4			
	No change	7	5			
	Slightly worsened	1	3			
	Somewhat worsened	0	6			
	Very much worsened	0	4			
2. Quality of communication between you and your partner.	Very much improved	10	4	6	15.57	0.01**
	Moderately improved	9	4			
	Slightly improved	6	4			
	No change	4	5			
	Slightly worsened	1	6			
	Somewhat worsened	0	4			
	Very much worsened	0	3			
	Moderately improved	11	2			
	Slightly improved	6	7			
	No change	0	6			
	Slightly worsened	2	4			
	Somewhat worsened	1	4			
	Very much worsened	0	5			
3.The interpersonal conflicts between you and your partner	Very much improved	4	8	6		0.15 NS
	Moderately improved	7	6			
	Slightly improved	2	6			
	No change	12	3			
	Slightly worsened	2	2			
	Somewhat worsened	2	3			
	Very much worsened	1	2			

**Significant at 0.01 level

*Significant at 0.05 level

NS- Not significant

- In terms of describing the quality of communication between spouses among female and male group, significant differences have been found ($\chi^2=15.57$; $p<0.01$) where females reported the communication very much improved (10) during this pandemic period.
- Regarding whether the amount of time spent changed over watching TV, using social media, use of laptop, Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Twitter etc during this pandemic among female and male group, significant differences have been found ($\chi^2=25.10$; $p<0.00$) and majority of females reported this time spent to be moderately improved (11).

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Sexual functioning

- No significant difference has been found in terms of sexual functioning before COVID-19 pandemic between female and male group (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison of sexual functioning between female and male group before COVID-19 pandemic

Items		Females	Males	df	X ²	p-value
1. You have thoughts about engaging in sexual activity	At least once per day	3	9	3	5.25	0.15NS
	Two-three times per week	9	5			
	Once per week	15	11			
	Once in a fortnight	3	5			
2. You and your partner used to enjoy sexually stimulating material (videos, magazines) per week	Yes	9	7			
	No	21	23			
If yes, how much time spent	Less than 15 minutes per week	3	2	7	2.62	0.91NS
	15-30 minutes per week	1	2			
	30-60 minutes per week	1	1			
	1-2 hours per week	1	1			
	2-3 hours per week	1	0			
	3-6 hours per week	1	1			
	more than 6 hours per week	1	0			
3. Frequency of engaging in close intimacy with your partner when not doing sexual intercourse during a month	More than once per day	6	11	4	3.75	0.44NS
	Once per day	9	6			
	Few times in a week	8	6			
	Few times in a month	6	4			
	Never	1	3			
4. Frequency of engaging in sexual relationship during a month	More than once per day	3	5	4	7.61	0.10NS
	Once per day	7	5			
	Few times in a week	6	14			
	Few times in a month	14	6			

NS- Not Significant

- No significant difference has been found in terms of sexual functioning during COVID-19 pandemic between female and male group (Table 4).

Table 4: Comparison of sexual functioning between female and male group during COVID-19 pandemic

Items		Females	Males	df	X ²	p-value
1. You have thoughts about engaging in sexual activity	At least once per day	5	9	3	4.85	0.18NS
	Two-three times per week	9	10			
	Once per week	8	9			
	Once in a fortnight	8	2			

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Items		Females	Males	df	X ²	p-value
2. You and your partner used to enjoy sexually stimulating material (videos, magazines) per week	Yes	10	8			
	No	20	22			
If yes, how much time spent	Less than 15 minutes per week	4	2	4	3.75	0.44NS
	15-30 minutes per week	2	0			
	30-60 minutes per week	0	1			
	1-2 hours per week	0	1			
	2-3 hours per week	1	2			
	3-6 hours per week	3	0			
	more than 6 hours per week	0	2			
3.Frequency of engaging in close intimacy with your partner when not doing sexual intercourse during a month	More than once per day	11	16	4	5.12	0.27NS
	Once per day	4	4			
	Few times in a week	8	8			
	Few times in a month	4	0			
	Never	3	2			
4.Frequency of engaging in sexual relationship during a month	More than once per day	5	5	3	7.14	0.06NS
	Once per day	2	10			
	Few times in a week	14	10			
	Few times in a month	9	5			
5.You and your partner are worried about availability of contraceptive measures.	Yes	11	5			
	No	19	25			
If yes	To a great extent worried	2	2	3	5.96	0.11NS
	Moderately worried	5	0			
	Slightly worried	4	3			

NS- Not Significant

- On comparing the quality of sexual functioning (Table 5), significant difference has been found in terms of experiencing desire to engage in sexual activity among female and male group ($\chi^2=14.13$; $p<0.02$) and majority of females reported of no change in this experience during this pandemic (14).

Table 5: Comparison on quality of sexual functioning between female and male group

Items		Females	Males	df	X ²	p-value
1. Pleasure or enjoyment from thinking and fantasizing about sex	To a great extent improved	4	3	6	7.82	0.25NS
	Moderately improved	9	3			
	Slightly improved	4	4			
	No change	8	6			
	Slightly worsened	3	7			
	Moderately worsened	1	4			
	To a great extent worsened	1	3			
2. Desire to engage in sexual activity	To a great extent improved	5	6	6	14.13	0.02*
	Moderately improved	6	4			
	Slightly improved	2	2			
	No change	14	4			
	Slightly worsened	2	5			
	Moderately worsened	0	5			
	To a great extent worsened	1	4			
3. Getting sexually aroused easily	To a great extent improved	7	5	6	9.09	0.16NS
	Moderately improved	6	1			
	Slightly improved	4	6			
	No change	8	5			
	Slightly worsened	3	5			
	Moderately worsened	1	4			
	To a great extent worsened	1	4			
4. It is taking longer than usual for you to become sexually aroused	To a great extent improved	3	5	6	7.25	0.29NS
	Moderately improved	3	3			
	Slightly improved	2	6			
	No change	13	5			
	Slightly worsened	3	6			
	Moderately worsened	3	2			
	To a great extent worsened	3	3			
5. Getting aroused and then losing interest	To a great extent improved	3	2	6	12.26	0.05*
	Moderately improved	3	6			
	Slightly improved	2	7			
	No change	14	3			
	Slightly worsened	3	5			
	Moderately worsened	3	3			
	To a great extent worsened	2	4			
6. Compared with your sex life previous to lockdown, how enjoyable or pleasurable is your sex life right now	To a great extent improved	9	5	6	16.51	0.01**
	Moderately improved	7	4			
	Slightly improved	1	5			
	No change	12	5			
	Slightly worsened	0	3			
	Moderately worsened	0	5			
	To a great extent worsened	1	3			

** Significant at 0.01 level * Significant at 0.05 level NS- Not Significant

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- With reference to getting aroused and then losing interest to engage in sexual relationship, significant difference has been found among female and male group ($\chi^2=12.26$; $p<0.05$) where majority of females reported of no change in this experience (14) during this pandemic.
- Significant difference has been found that on comparing with sex life previous to COVID-19 pandemic, how enjoyable or pleasurable is sex life right now during this pandemic between female and male group ($\chi^2=16.51$; $p<0.01$) and majority of females reported of no change (12).

DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected individuals all across the globe and acts as a stressor for the humanity. There is recognition that the significant psychological consequences are emerging out due to this pandemic. Along with this, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has its effect on marital and sexual relationship too. Marital relationships including sexual relationships can function as a major psychological support especially during these times of uncertainty and can contribute to the emotional well-being of both individuals. With reference to Indian perspective, socially prescribed cultural norms, attitudes, and practices in relation to gender also play a critical role in marital and sexual relationships.

Females have mostly agreed that their spouses understand their feelings when shared with them rather than males. During this stressful time of uncertainty, with mostly absence of helping hands, performing more domestic responsibilities, added with working from home, husbands are found to be more understanding regarding the feelings of their wives which helps them in keeping their mental health safe. This also points to the fact that in current times, women have the ability to express their feelings, thoughts, emotions and they can openly share these with their spouses unlike in earlier times when women were seldom given the opportunity to express their views.

During the pandemic times, females have mostly agreed that they receive cooperation from their spouse in maintaining domestic responsibilities and work from home than males. In this current time specially during the pandemic situation, Indians have witnessed a shift from the defined traditional sex-roles to equal responsibility taking roles which has now become an important factor for a healthy marital relationship. This finding reflects the fact that women are getting cooperation from their husbands to help them in the household chores.

With reference to feeling of security with spouse during this ongoing pandemic period majority of females agreed to a great extent of experiencing security from their spouse than males. Security is one of the important factors of any kind of relationship including marriage which is reflected in emotional bonding. Insecurity leads to conflict in marriage where a constant fear of losing the spouse can lead to fights and arguments with the spouse. Females tend to be more emotional in nature forming close bonds with their family members leading to feel more secure with their spouses in this time of uncertainty.

During this pandemic situation, majority of females reported of no change in terms of increase of affection towards their spouse than males. Emotional bonding among spouses is can be represented in the form of affection in a marital relationship and helps in the development of a healthy bond which has been found to remain unchanged even in the difficult, stressful times of COVID-19 pandemic as perceived by majority of the females.

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Females in majority have agreed to a great extent with reference to participation of spouse in taking decisions for home together including financial matters during the COVID-19 pandemic than males. A health marital relationship includes participation of both the partners equally for taking decisions of all matters. Definite gender-based roles prevails in our society which have shifted to an equal involvement of both the partners in taking decisions of all matters of household leading a balance in family and marital life as perceived by females specially during this uncertain pandemic situation.

In terms of having discussion about problems with spouse, majority of females agreed to a great extent to this fact than males. In most of the times, women seldomly were made a part of discussion in any kind of household problems. However, things have changed in present scenario, especially in the COVID-19 pandemic times where women have the freedom to be involved in discussion and open to express their views in any problem situation. As communication is an important factor in marital relationship, spouses need to focus on the communication during any type of difficult situation in their daily household life.

During pandemic situation, females have mostly agreed to a great extent to the fact of feeling comfortable in sharing mistakes with spouse than males. Trust, communication are important factors of a healthy marital relationship. These factors also make spouses comfortable in sharing their mistakes with one another which is more evident during this stressful time. These times of uncertainty has made spouses closer to one another in maximum instances.

In terms of *quality of marital relationship*, majority of females reported the relationship to be very much improved with reference to functioning of marital relationship with spouse during pandemic situation. The current COVID-19 pandemic has brought along with it several unexpected new challenges, stress and changes. Coping and struggling with these stressful challenges, changes and spending a significant amount of time together within the four walls of the house often evokes more intimacy, sharing of responsibility together which improves the overall functioning of marital functioning^[11].

Females reported the quality of communication between spouses to be very much improved during this pandemic period than the male group. As per previous findings, communication has been found to be improved and stronger during this stressful time of uncertainty^[11].

Another important aspect of marriage is sexual functioning which has also been affected in terms of quality due to this current pandemic. Majority of females reported of no change in experiencing desire to engage in sexual activity than males. During this pandemic situation, there has been an increase in the workload for women, with absence of house help, everyone being at home throughout the day, higher work pressure and interpersonal issues at times. This rise in responsibilities makes women to remain engaged in work for most of the time in a day. Hence, this difficult situation has not created any change in the desire to engage in sexual activity among females. Related to this, females have also majorly reported of no change in getting aroused and then losing interest to engage in sexual relationship. Overall, on comparing sex life previous to COVID-19 pandemic to during the ongoing pandemic, females have majorly reported of no change than male in terms of enjoying and experiencing pleasure in sex life. This can be explained by the fact the stressful uncertain times of COVID-19 pandemic has not affected the sexual relationship and has been maintained like previous times as perceived and reported by females compared to males.

CONCLUSION

This ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has affected every individual in some way. Apart from different conditions, marital and sexual functioning has also been thought to be affected. However, in this current survey, it has been found that majority of females have perceived their marital life to be secured, getting affection from their spouses, cooperation from their spouses in sharing responsibilities, discussing every problem together, feeling comfortable in sharing mistakes than males. Females have majorly perceived their overall functioning and communication of marital functioning to be improved than males during this stressful situation. Quality of sexual functioning has been found to be of similar like the times previous to COVID-19 pandemic as experienced by majority of females than males.

Limitations of this survey can be kept in mind. Since, the responses has been collected through online mode by using random sampling, the subjective factors like motivation, thoughts, emotions, mental set could not be taken in account. The sample size and response rate has been limited. This might be due to the fact that in Indian context, speaking and sharing about intimate details regarding marriage and sexual relationship is a taboo. This may lead to a reduced participation in this survey. Thus, the findings may not be generalized to the entire Indian population. The survey was limited to those participants who were able to read English, have a smart phone with internet connection. The survey included participants from urban area and can be conducted in future with participants from semi-urban and rural area. Other psychosocial variables can be included like marital conflict, domestic violence.

During this ongoing pandemic, it is important to remember that both the spouses are facing the same situation and it is best if spouses work as teammates. In Indian context, among couples, women end up doing the maximum share of domestic work suggesting a clear segregation of tasks. The gender inequality prevailing in our society can increase stress and burden for the couples frequently during this uncertain time. In this environment of uncertainty, where lockdowns appear to be the new normal, many couples have been forced to introspect their marital relationship.

The strength of a good marital bonding can actually make both the partners strong and confident, which will definitely help them to fight this distress together in a better way, individually and also as a strong united couple. Thus, in many instances COVID-19 pandemic has led to an improvement in overall relationship with the partners including sexual relationship, communication with the partner and reduction in the interpersonal conflicts.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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