

Research Paper

Specific Phobia During the Covid-19 Pandemic First Wave in Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine the specific phobia among general people during the Covid-19 Pandemic first wave in different districts of Maharashtra. The total sample of 458 people from age group 18 to 60 years out of which 279 Males and 179 Females from various districts of Maharashtra. The data was collected by online mode (Google Form) for avoiding physical contacts as per the government guidelines of physical distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers prepared 20 items questionnaire for measuring specific phobia each items was based on covid-19 pandemic related fear and anxiety such as fear of covid-19 virus, cleanliness, excessive buying, trying home remedies, worried feeling of family members and updating knowledge about covid-19 etc., The result findings revealed that majority of participants 196, 42.14% experiencing high level of phobia, the 34, 7.43% participants were experiencing extreme level of phobia of corona, 176 participants 38.43% were experiencing average level of fear and 55 participants 12% were experiencing very low level fear of covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: *Specific Phobia, Covid-19 Pandemic, Male & Female*

In Maharashtra the first case of covid-19 was found in Pune district and spread very fast all over the state. The number of infected people increased day by day and health sector tries their best to save human life but fail to protect them and the number of deaths is increased. For controlling the spread of infection and save the life central and state government has taken variety of public health measures, such as quarantines for people returning from outside state or district, government & private sector employees work from home arrangements, school are close and online teaching, examination methods were start, and total shutdown of non-essential services, to reduce the risks of infection and impact of the disease. Such all of sudden changes and restrictions in to daily life are the factors that crate the fear, stress, anxiety and affect the mental health of general public.

According to Taylor, S 2019, health threat of closed ones and oneself this kind of psychosocial stressors are related with pandemics and during the pandemic there are major

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disturbance in daily routines such as disconnection from family and friends, lack of availability of daily necessary things, salary deduction of employees, isolation from society and school are close. As per Taylor, S 2019 and Koh, D et al. people give the psychosocial responses to infectious disease such as feelings of anxiety, stress, fear and an overestimation of infection, the immoderate and inappropriate behaviour and an increased use of health care facilities. At the other side some people are not taking care of the infection and fail to follow the instructed health precautions such as frequent hand wash, wear, mask and maintain social distancing (Taylor, S 2019). The Covid-19 pandemic is stressful and anxious for people and communities. During this covid-19 outbreak fear of infection is common among general public and people were know that the health care system fails to cope with this Covid-19 pandemic (Thombs, B.D. et al 2020).

According to Özdin S, Bayrak Özdin Ş. (2020) covid-19 infection negatively affecting on public mental health. The level of anxiety among general population in Iran during the covid-19 pandemic is high (Amir M, 2020). Choi et al (2020) suggested that Covid-19 affected individuals' mental health those people who did not experience the covid-19 outbreak, they were more worried about being infected by Covid-19 and experience more anxiety.

There were lack of health facilities such as lack of hospital beds, oxygen and ventilators to deal with increase number of cases and this situation make the burden on health care services due to all this people feel fear and anxiety of covid-19 pandemic and experiencing negative emotions this pandemic increases poor mental health and it is leads to people wrong interpretation of bodily changes. People anticipate these bodily changes as infection and experiencing fear, anxiety and stress during pandemic (Taylor, S 2019). In response to this Covid-19 pandemic, the state government declared the closures of school, non-essential services, banned social gathering, quarantines people travelling from other states, and encouraged social distancing.

As such, people have to stay at home during this Covid-19 pandemic. Social media play an important role in this outbreak-WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook and google this social connecting media is used by people for updating and obtaining the current information of Covid-19. Therefore, people have been overburdened by getting lots of information of Covid-19 (Fiorillo, A. et al 2020). Social media spreads rumours, incorrect information, and also fear which further increasing fear and anxiety among people (Taylor, S 2019). People who were experiencing more worry being infected were more likely to have poor mental health. During this pandemic people are fearful and anxious that they or their family members will be infected and they take excessive precaution to save their self and their family member's life. The stigma associate with this infection make people worried and fearful that is also one of the causes which affect mental health badly during the pandemic (Person, B et al).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Hypotheses

There would be high level of specific phobia among general people during the Covid-19 Pandemic first wave in different districts of Maharashtra.

Variables

Research Variables:

- Specific Phobia – Covid-19

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- Gender

Controlled Variables:

- Geographical area: The samples were selected only from Maharashtra state.

Method

To examine the specific phobia among general people during the Covid-19 Pandemic first wave in different districts of Maharashtra. For that purpose, researcher decided to use the survey research design. The data was collected by online mode (Google Form) for avoiding physical contacts as per the government guidelines of physical distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. For collecting the data researchers prepared their own 20 items scale for measuring specific phobia.

Sample

It was a convenient sampling. The total sample of 458 people from age group 18 to 60 years out of which 279 Males and 179 Females from various districts of Maharashtra.

Table 1.1 Shows Gender wise sample description

| Gender | Male | Female |
|---------------------------|------------|--------|
| No of Participants | 279 | 179 |
| Percentage | 60.9% | 39.1% |
| Total Participants | 458 | |

Table 1.2 Shows Age group wise Distribution of sample

| Age Group | 18-25 | 26-33 | 34-41 | 42-50 | 51-60 |
|---------------------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| No of Participants | 135 | 96 | 97 | 89 | 40 |
| Percentage | 29.5% | 21% | 21.2% | 19.4 | 8.7% |
| Total Participants | 458 | | | | |

Table 1.3 Shows occupational status of sample

| Occupational Status | Students | Government Job | Private Job | Self Employed | House-wife |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|------------|
| No of Participants | 125 | 154 | 130 | 36 | 13 |
| Percentage | 27.3% | 33.6% | 28.4% | 7.9% | 2.8% |
| Total Participants | 458 | | | | |

Table 1.4 Shows marital status of sample

| Marital Status | Unmarried | Married | Widowed | Divorced |
|---------------------------|------------|---------|---------|----------|
| No of Participants | 188 | 263 | 3 | 4 |
| Percentage | 41% | 57.4% | 0.7% | 0.9% |
| Total Participants | 458 | | | |

Table 1.5 Shows Economical Status of Sample

| Economic Status | Lower Class | Middle Class | Middle Class | Higher Middle Class | Upper Class |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------|
| No of Participants | 54 | | 341 | 59 | 4 |
| Percentage | 11.8% | | 74.5% | 12.9% | 0.9% |
| Total Participants | 458 | | | | |

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Tools

Specific Phobia Scale-Covid-19

Researchers were prepared 20 items online questionnaire (Google Form). This questionnaire was based on the five point rating scale. Each items was based on covid-19 pandemic related fear and anxiety such as fear of covid-19 virus, cleanliness, excessive buying, trying home remedies, worried feeling of family members and updating knowledge about covid-19 etc., Each item was score from 4 (mostly) to 0 (never) the score for whole scale is ranging from 0-80 which score 0-20 indicate very low level of specific phobia of Covid-19, score 21-40 indicate average level of specific phobia of Covid-19, Score 41-60 indicate high level of specific phobia of Covid-19 and score 61-80 indicate extreme level of specific phobia of Covid-19.

Researchers also informed the scores to each and every participant with specific strategy to cope with this pandemic phobia. Participants those acquired score from 0-20 indicates Very low level of specific phobia of Covid -19, so researchers communicate them that there is nothing to worry. Those score from 21-40 indicates average level of specific phobia of Covid -19, researchers informed them that they are managing the fear associated with specific situation, so keep going in the same way. Those score from 41-60 indicates high level of specific phobia of Covid – 19 researchers suggest the some psychological strategies to reduce it and also advise them to take psychological help from a psychologist/counselor and the same method was apply for those participants score from 61-81 which indicates extreme level of specific phobia.

RESULT & INTERPRETATION

There would be high level of specific phobia among general people during the Covid-19 Pandemic first wave in different districts of Maharashtra.

Table 1.6 Shows the score wise percentage of specific phobia

| Score & Interpretation | 0 - 20 Specific Phobia Covid-19 <u>Very Low Level</u> | 21 - 40 Specific Phobia Covid-19 <u>Average Level</u> | 41 - 60 Specific Phobia Covid-19 <u>High Level</u> | 61 - 80 Specific Phobia Covid-19 <u>Extreme Level</u> |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| No. of Participants | 55 | 176 | 193 | 34 |
| Percentage | 12% | 38.43% | 42.14% | 7.43% |

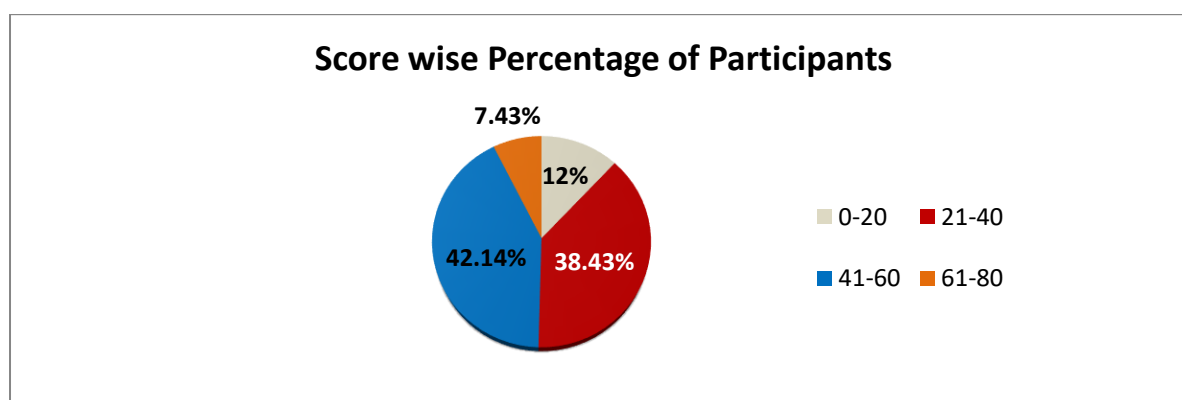


Table 1.6 shows the score wise percentage of participants in terms of specific phobia of covid-19 pandemic. The total 458 participants were involved in the study and the score with

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interpretation were categorized into four categories. The first category 0-20 total 55 means 12% of participants indicated very low level of specific phobia of covid-19. In the second 21-40 category 176 means 38.43% participants experienced an average level of specific phobia of covid-19. The third 41-60 category 193, 42.14% participants were experiencing high level of fears phobia of specific phobia of covid-19 and in the last fourth 61-80 category total 34, 7.43% of participants were experiencing extreme level of specific phobia of covid-19.

These findings indicated that majority of participants were in third category (No. of participant 196, 42.14%) which means maximum of public experiencing high level of phobia (excessive irrational fear) of covid-19 and 34, 7.43% participants were experiencing extreme level of phobia of corona, the participants in this two categories indicates that their mental health is disturb or in danger due to this pandemic and they need some psychological help for controlling or reducing their excessive fear of covid-19. On the second place 176 participants 38.43% public were experiencing average level of fear and on the third place 55, 12% of participants were experiencing very low-level fear of covid-19 pandemic which means they were managing or coping with their fear during this covid-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSIONS

During this covid-19 pandemic people in different districts of Maharashtra are experiencing high level of specific phobia of covid-19 belonging to different age groups, socioeconomic background, gender, their nature of occupations and their marital status.

Implication

The Present research will be useful and helpful to health area for understanding the effects of corona on general public. Covid-19 and lockdown situation is effecting negatively on both physical and mental health of people, those people who are suffering from corona virus infection they are physical infected and also mental health disturb but those people who are safe from this infection they are experiencing the excessive fear, anxiety of this corona virus infection and thinking too much about is virus, lockdown situation and taking excessive care and precautions. This study can be beneficial to health setting for understanding the psychological impact of covid-19 and the various coping methods to overcome from this specific phobia, fear, anxiety and stress during this pandemic.

One of the important implication steps is that governments should provide psychological support to general population during this pandemic. And also for controlling excessive fear, anxiety and stress people can perform some psychological exercises such as: increase positive thinking and experiencing positive emotions, use thought stopping techniques, divert irrational thinking into rational, avoid watching and listening negative news, Spend quality time with your family members, gardening is also stress reducing exercise, read some good motivational and positive books, make yourself busy with some activities which you like more or your hobbies, don't think too much about the situation, perform some yogic exercise, meditation physical exercises and at the same time people can also take the help of counselors and psychologists. So, with the help of this kind of techniques people can cope up from this fear, phobia, anxiety and stress.

Strength of the Study

This study focused on level of specific phobia of covid-19 pandemic among general public of different districts of Maharashtra. This Covid-19 situation is creating fear, anxiety, stress and negative emotions among general public as well as health and emergency services

related people. Covid-19 is an infectious disease this virus spread by social contacting and for controlling the spread and save the human life government declared the lockdown in all states of country due to this close of people are very fearful, cautious and negatively thinking too much about this pandemic. This study through researchers gives an insight to other researchers and public for focusing on various psychological factors associates with this covid-19 pandemic and studying this psychological aspect is also very important because mental health of people is affecting on immune system. So, for stronger immune system people need to focus on their psychological health. This study is also highlighted some interventions which is helpful to coping with covid-19 related fear, stress and anxiety.

Limitations of the study

Small sample group, geographical area, age group of the sample was not controlled, females participants were less as compared to male participants, mood or bias during self-report and other confounding factors such economic condition, their thinking pattern, covid-19 situation in their district, pressure of government policies, some personal issues, interest related issues and some psychological reasons.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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