Research Paper

Covid-19: Psychological Impact on Family Environment

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ABSTRACT

Along with physical health, mental health also plays an important role in the COVID-19 pandemic. It has significantly affected people's routine life, however, it also gave us an extended time to be together with our family and loved ones. An attempt to conduct research on the family environment would help us know the impact of self-isolation. Participants (N = 300) involving males and females between the age group of 18 to 50 years shall be studied. Family Environment Scale (FES) by Dr. Harpreet Bhatia and Dr. N.K. Chandra had been adapted for this study. Samples are collected from different states of India using Google Forms due to the COVID-19 fear and lockdown. In the present study, three variables will be investigated on the basis of gender, occupation, and family type. ANOVA and t-test will be applied for data analysis. The results of the family environment revealed that the impact of COVID-19 in context to gender was observed in the area of Cohesion, Expressiveness, Acceptance and Caring. Thereby, in family type the significant difference was witnessed only in the area of Expressiveness while occupational type noticed a significant change in the area of Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict and Acceptance and Caring.

***Keywords:** COVID-19, Family Environment, Pandemic*

COVID-19 has imprisoned the majority part of the world. The term corona itself states self-isolating and social distancing. It originated on 31st December 2019 and since then it has drastically refashioned people's routine. There are physical symptoms of COVID-19 which are visible such as breathlessness, fever, cough, etc. However, there are remarkable changes in the psychological state of people which goes unnoticed. The rapid multiplication of victims and the increase in the death ratio have affected the lives and mental well-being of people around the globe. It has enslaved the minds and bodies of a large number of people over time. The World Health Organization (WHO) claims that there are nearly "4,494,873 people affected by COVID-19" as of May 17, 2020 all around the world and has brought all the countries to a sudden pause.

The coronavirus pandemic and the following social distancing including self-isolating guidelines have resulted in major transitions in people's routine life. It gave people a new normal with the closing of the schools and universities, companies switching to work from home, and constantly being surrounded by family. Work from home creates a lot of

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distractions as one has to manage both family and work. There are various challenges, clashing ideas, arguments, and fights amongst family members, which might make it difficult to spend quality time and have personal space.

Families are complex yet unique so the lockdown either bonds the family or makes it stressful being around family members. Past literature on stress suggests that cognitive, emotional and physical stressors are likely to cause stress for individuals and make them feel anxious and hostile towards others (Bliese, Edwards, and Sonnentag, 2017). There are various difficulties which are faced by all the members of the families because of sudden shifts in the routine lives. Everyone has their own adjustment issues, for example, working women might feel more exhausted as they have to manage both household chores and their office work, men might not be able to work efficiently because of a lack of work environment. The major stressor for children is constantly being indoors, adjusting to home school. Thus, it is very essential to keep a constant check on one's mental health.

Initially, people were inclined more towards their work so they spent less time with their families. The lockdown has brought families together by increased interactions between household family members and helped them to connect and know each other better People who were stuck in isolation are using this lockdown as an opportunity to be more productive and discover various new skills like yoga, cooking, sketching, and helping with domestic chores which had cultivated a sense of responsibility and much more. Hence, it has led to an increase in family time (Evans S, Mikocka-Walus A, Klas A, Olive L, Sciberras E, Karantzas G and Westrupp EM, 2020).

Thus, the current study focuses on the impacts of COVID-19 on the family environment by studying various factors that enhance family bonding. As discussed above, the impact of COVID-19 could be either positive or negative on family life. There are various disturbances expected in the normal functioning of the family. The impact of measures of COVID-19 on family psychosocial functioning varies from normal family issues to severe family adjustments.

METHODOLOGY

Objective
- To study the impact of COVID-19 on family environment differently in both males and females, working individuals, non-working individuals and student, joint and nuclear families.
- To study the effect of two main variables i.e., Relationship and System Maintenance dimension on family environment.

Hypothesis
- There is no significant difference between gender and different dimensions of the family environment.
- There is no significant difference between occupation and different dimensions of the family environment.
- There is no significant difference between family type and different dimensions of the family environment.

Tools

Family environment was measured by family environment scale developed by Dr Harpreet Bhatia and N.K Chandra (FES, 2005). Google form was created and circulated amongst individuals between the age of 18-50 years. There are a total 69 items in the test which are negative and positive statements. Five-point rating scale was used for the scoring of each response like agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. Overall test reliability coefficient of the scale is 0.95. T-test and Anova were applied for data analysis.

Sample

Random sampling was used to collect data from different states of India, majorly from Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Delhi. Participants between the age of 18 to 50 years were a part of this study. A total of 310 samples were collected by online medium using google forms. Thereafter, 300 samples were handpicked and further divided into 3 main groups on the basis of Gender, Occupation, and Family type.

Procedure

Family Environment Scale has a total of 69 questions. Participants were randomly selected and were instructed to read each question carefully and answer them in the reference of the COVID-19 environment and their bond with family during this situation. There is no specific time limit but it was necessary to answer each question. These responses were marked on a five-point rating scale. They were given a consent sheet before they started the test and were assured that their personal information will not be leaked and will only be used for research purposes. Their age, state, gender, and family type were collected for data segregation. Lastly, they were thanked for their time and sharing valuable responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No.1: Family Environment based on Gender

Dimensions of Family Environment	Male (N=154)		Female (N=146)		t-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Cohesion	53.551	6.307	51.287	7.769	0.026*^{s}
Expressiveness	33.175	4.467	31.5411	5.894	0.002^{*s}
Conflict	44.233	6.260	41.705	6.992	0.115*^{ns}
Acceptance and Caring	45.792	5.315	43.835	6.576	0.011*^{s}
Organization	8.577	1.317	8.184	1.423	0.554*^{ns}
Control	15.389	2.642	15.212	2.469	0.382*^{ns}

*-No Significance(ns)   ***-Significant at 0.05 level(s)**

Table No 1 shows the average level of gender differences amongst various dimensions of the family environment. In the area of cohesion, the mean score of male and female is 53.551 and 51.287 respectively. The t-value is 0.026 which is significant at 0.05 level which means there is a significant difference of family cohesiveness between male and female. The result reveals that there is significant difference in the closeness, support, help and degree of commitment in males and females due to the impact of COVID-19.

The area of effectiveness has a mean score of 33.175 in male and 31.5411 in female. The t-value is 0.002 which is significant at 0.05 level. Both male and females express their thoughts, feelings and emotions with their family members during this pandemic period. Thus, there is a major difference in the area of expressiveness observed in gender. One

reason behind this could be that they had not been able to process the whole situation going on around them. Also, from March 2020 to May 2020, the broadcast that people received was mainly related to COVID-19. People across the globe addressed mainly about the pandemic crisis. This left the family members with no topic to be discussed other than COVID-19 and everyone experienced the fear of not being infected. Following the new normal, members got equipped with work that they hardly had any time to share their thoughts with each other.

The mean score of the dimension conflict in male is 44.233 and female is 41.705. The t-value is 0.115 which is not significant at 0.05 level. As a result of COVID-19, there is no significant difference between male and female in the area of conflict. In the area of acceptance and caring the mean score of the male and female is 45.792 and 43.835 respectively. T-value is 0.011 which means the impact of COVID-19 has a significant difference between male and female. When it comes to caring, females are more into caretaking than men but it failed to prove statistically. Comparing the mean, both male and female showed an average level of change in the area of acceptance and caring. Both Organisation and control in the last two areas of the family environment does not show the impact of COVID-19 as there is no significant difference between male and female in the area of organisation and control.

Table No:2: Family Environment based on Family Type

Dimensions of Family Environment	JOINT FAMILY (N=127)		NUCLEAR FAMILY (N=173)		t-value
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	
Cohesion	52.165	6.791	52.659	7.390	0.169*[ns]
Expressiveness	32.228	4.677	32.491	5.670	0.008*[s]
Conflict	42.748	6.501	32.190	6.915	0.189*[ns]
Acceptance and Caring	44.606	5.757	45.011	6.238	0.308*[ns]
Organization	8.362	1.456	8.404	1.328	0.353*[ns]
Control	14.944	2.517	15.566	2.561	0.560*[ns]

 *-No Significance(ns)   ***-Significant at 0.05 level(s)**

Table No 2 describes the relation between family type and different dimensions of the family environment.

There are five main dimensions of the family environment which are measured. One of them is cohesion and it has a mean score of 52.165 and 52.659 in joint and nuclear families respectively which falls under the average level. The t-value is 0.169 which is non-significant at the level of 0.05. Another dimension is expressiveness which has a mean score of 32.228 for joint family and 32.491 for the nuclear family. While the t-value is 0.008 which is significant at the level of 0.05. Conflict is the most important aspect of family environment and it has a mean score of 42.748 for joint family and 32.491 for nuclear family. This clearly states that the nuclear family has a high level of conflict. The pandemic was followed by lockdown so the routine schedule of family members was disturbed. There was less workload division and everyone worked from home and managed household chores. Thus, the aggression and frustration may arise due to the sudden change in the routine life. The t-value is 0.189 which is non-significant the level of 0.05. In the dimension of acceptance and caring, the mean score is 44.606 for joint family and 45.011 for nuclear

family which states that it is at an average level. The t-value is 0.308 which is non-significant at 0.05 level. In organization, the mean score for joint family and nuclear family is 8.362 and 8.404 respectively which falls under an average level. The t-value is 0.353 which is non-significant at 0.05 level. Lastly, control has a mean score of 14.944 for joint family and 15.566 for nuclear family which clearly states that it is at an average level. The t-value for the same is 0.560 which is non-significant at 0.05 level.

Hence, there was a significant impact of COVID-19 on the family type that was witnessed in the area of expressiveness. Both joint family and nuclear family had an average mean score. This means that the members of the joint family and nuclear family do not share their emotions, thoughts, and feelings. There was no significant difference noted in family cohesion, conflict, organization, control, acceptance, and caring. Therefore, in the process of helping, caring, accepting mistakes of other family members and having fun together, families lacked the element of expressing their feelings and thoughts which could be seen very significant in our study.

Table No:3 ANOVA table showing difference between the occupation type.

Dimensions of Family Environment	WORKING (N=130)	NON-WORKING (N=121)	STUDENT (N=149)	F-value	t-value
	Mean	Mean	Mean		
Cohesion	53.515	53.857	51.322	3.788	0.024[*s]
Expressiveness	33.423	34.142	31.221	7.58	0.001[*s]
Conflict	44.284	44.190	41.718	5.554	0.004[*s]
Acceptance and Caring	45.853	46.381	43.738	5.144	0.006[*s]
Organization	8.392	8.142	8.416	0.360	0.0698[*ns]
Control	15.600	15.154	15.303	2.119	0.122[*ns]

*-No Significance(ns)   ***-Significant at 0.05 level(s)**

The objective was to compare the mean score of the dimension of the family environment scale for three different types of occupation (i.e., working, non-working and students). Thus, the data is analysed using one-way ANOVA and the results are given above.

Table No.3 shows the average level of the difference between the occupation type. The first dimension, cohesion has a p-value of 0.024 which is significant at 0.05 significance level. The mean score is 53.515, 53.857 and 51.322 in working, non-working and students respectively. In the second dimension of the family environment, expressiveness has the mean score of 33.423, 34.142, 31.22 in working, non-working and students respectively. The p-value is 0.001 which is significant at 0.05 level. The F-value is 7.58.

The third dimension of conflict has a mean score of 44.284, 44.190 and 41.718 in working, non-working and students. The F-value is 5.554 and the p-value is 0.004 which is significant at 0.05 level.

For acceptance and caring dimension, the mean score for working is 45.853 and 46.381 for non working. For students, the mean is 43.738, F-value is 5.144, and p- value is 0.006 which is significant at 0.05 level.

The impact of COVID-19 on occupational type was witnessed in the above four dimensions. While in the last two dimensions, organization and control, do not observe any impact of COVID -19 as there is no significant difference found between the three occupational groups that are working, non- working and students.

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