

Wave of Psychological Pandemic Post COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Mental Health Review

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ABSTRACT

Background: The COVID-19 outbreak which originated in the markets of China had marked its third birth anniversary in December 2022, but its birth has brought more pain than joy. COVID-19, declared as a Pandemic by W.H.O. in March, 2020, has have a tremendous amount of impact on people's physical as well as psychological health. The pandemic has apparently been predicted to bring a "tsunami of mental health illnesses" as its aftermath. Restrictive measures like social distancing, lockdowns, along with other psycho-socio-economic issue has brought an upsurge in the cases of mental health problems during the pandemic especially in the country like India which is known for its unified-diversified demographics. But another Truth is that the success of the global response—the ability of both women and men to survive and recover from the pandemic's effects represent's sex and gender differences. **Objectives:** The aim of this systematic review paper is to employ a fair outlook of the published literature on the effects of COVID- 19 on the women's mental health and understanding the risk factors involved in India. **Methodology:** A systematic search was undertaken for the original research published from the starting of the COVID - October, 2022 using multiple electronic databases, following PRISMA guidelines. **Results:** Women had considerably found to have increased mental health problems due to the lockdown. **Conclusion:** Studies has shown the rise in prevalence of mental health disorders in women. The COVID -19 pandemic is strongly associated with high levels of psychological distress, thus increasing the burden of mental health problems which needs to be addressed with utmost priority.

Keywords: COVID-19, Mental Health, Women, India

Severe Intense Respiratory Disorder Covid 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is the causative microorganism for the Coronavirus. The first case of COVID was found in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. On 30 January 2020, the WHO announced the outbreak of COVID 19 as a public health emergency and by March 2020, it was declared as a pandemic. The COVID 19 has had a significant impact on both physical as well as mental health. Social distancing, mandatory lockdowns, isolation, and anxiety of getting sick, along with no access to any of the recreational spaces, loss of pay, and fear of the future, mutually

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impact the psychological well-being of the individuals. Ryff (1989) stated that psychological well-being refers to the degree to which individuals feel that they have significant control over their life and the actions associated with it. He had introduced six core dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance; Positive relations with others; autonomy; environmental mastery; purpose in life and personal growth. Various research has been done in this line indicated that the outbreak of COVID 19 affected the psychological well-being of people. It affected their mental health. According to the Mental Health Foundation 2020, individuals who lost their job or suffer from some financial instability during the pandemic were at a higher risk of developing mental health problems.

Due to the implementation of lockdown and other restrictions, People had substantial changes to their lifestyle which somehow added stress to many people's personal as well as professional life such as work from home, children not going to school. These kinds of disruptions to the everyday routine increased the chances of depression, loneliness, self-harm, suicidal tendencies, along with the harmful use of alcohol and drug (WHO 2020). During the pandemic, people have lot of concerns like job security, lockdown, fear of being infected, increase in no of cases, closure of school, inability to meet to closed ones. These concerns somewhere distress them, may contribute in the decline of mental health and wellbeing. Many researchers pointed out that those who were worried about getting infected or not having access to healthcare were at risk of developing health-related anxiety and obsessive health behaviours (Abba- Aji et al. 2020; Asmundson and Taylor 2020; Blakey and Abramowitz 2017; Jungmann and Witthöft 2020). The pandemic and ongoing lockdown has made us face some harsh realities of life that while the stress surrounding our life is mounting at an unbelievable pace, one gender is taking the brunt more than the other. The reason for this could be the added stress of childcare, domestic obligations, and professional work on women during the lockdown. McLaren et al. (2020) opined that whether it is war, natural disaster, or pandemic, the women's vulnerabilities increase to supplementary burdens. The prevalent ideal of "we are all in this together" must be critically dissected in order to comprehend the discriminatory impact of the same virus on persons with various vulnerabilities (Arora & Majumdar,2021).

In a survey conducted in India (2020), it was found that coronavirus infected females are more prone to death in comparison to males with the ratio being approximately 4:3 till the end of May 2020. The probable risk factors include higher percentage of females, lack proper nutrition & become anemic, malnutrition, gender biasness, domestic responsibilities etc. All these notable factors untimely weaken their immune system and thus they fall victim to the virus.

Numerous scholars, such as Kaberia and Muathe (2021); Shorey et al. (2021); Kumari et al. (2021); Liu et al. (2021); Dang and Nguyen (2021), have attempted to identify and investigate the effects of Covid-19 on women, however there is very little literature on Indian women. Thus, this paper aims to bring together all the studies on impact of COVID-19 on women's mental health in India, and focuses on implications for preventing and treating the vulnerable groups of the society like Women.

Objectives:

The aim of this systematic review paper is to employ a fair outlook of the published literature on the effects of COVID- 19 on the women's mental health and understanding the risk factors involved in India.

MATERIAL & METHODS

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) guidelines were followed (Mohar 2009). For the review, a selected filtration strategy was used by authors for publications published in English, full-text availability on impact of COVID 19 on women's psychological health or mental health or psychological distress during the Covid-19 pandemic in India. Indian studies pertaining to COVID 19 impact on women's Physical & Psychological health, with adult study population aged 18 years and up, having access to the full text were included. However, researches related to women with medical/ physical ailments; having Duplication of publications, lack of full-text availability and the studies including people from outside India, including other participants except women were excluded.

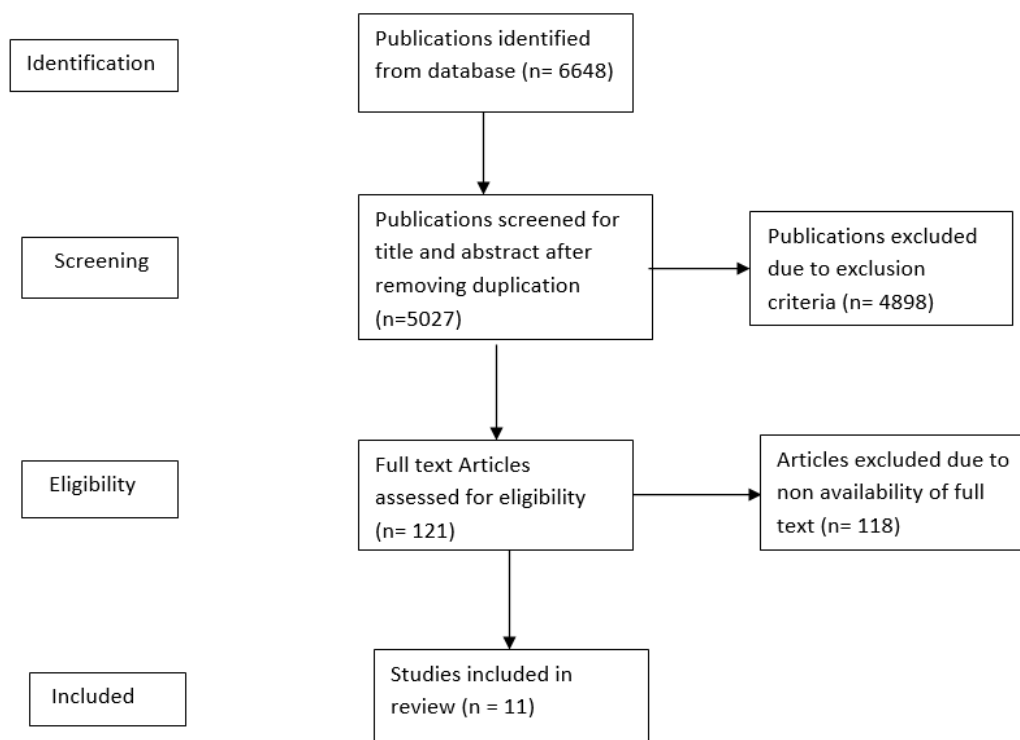
Information Sources & Search Strategy

The authors searched Google Scholar and PUBMED independently with the following search terms "COVID-19" "Physical", "Psychological Impact", "Women" and "India". Articles were searched published from March 2020 to October 2022. First, titles and abstracts were evaluated for research purpose, and all relevant publications were read in full. The authors identified 6648 manuscripts. The search was restricted to manuscripts in English language and time (till October 2022).

RESULTS

In total, 6648 citations on women and mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic in India were obtained from the electronic database "Google Scholar" and "PUBMED". After removing duplicates from the screened papers, we shortlisted 121 papers in full text, and 118 were rejected based on the exclusion criteria. In the end, 11 publications were included. Data was extracted on the following variables independently: References, place of study, population considered, Study Design, year of publication, aim of the study, results of the study.

The flowchart depicts the search process.



Study characteristics

A total of 11 studies were conducted among the Indian population, including 10 general public women population and 01 teacher. The studies published between March, 2020, and October, 2022 was included. The current review included a total of 11 articles and presented in Table-1.

Psychological distress among female general population:

Covid-19 has wreaked havoc on the mental health of India's whole population, particularly the female population. Women had considerably found depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness and adjustment issues. Their self-management skills compromised and have an impact on their quality of life as well.

For the teachers, as their responsibilities has increased. Their work life becomes more challenging which produces more confusion and came out as a major cause of stress. Almost, all the teachers included in the study reported that due to the stress, mismanagement of things occurs that creates more hassles in day-to-day life and becomes a major hinder in managing their work life balance.

DISCUSSION

Beyond the medical risk, COVID-19 pandemic has enormous psychological and social impact. Literature review has revealed an intense and wide spectrum of psychosocial ramifications that this pandemic has inflicted around the globe. The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated gender -linked mental health challenges (Chauhan,2020). This systematic review aims to review what is known about the pandemic’s effect on women’s mental health, what makes them more predisposed to vulnerabilities and adverse impacts. The increased paid or unpaid responsibilities (home and job) on women and significant changes in their lifestyle resulted in psychological and emotional stress (Dogra, P & Kaushal, A.,2022). Mental health issues are increasing and the percentage shows that women are more affected in comparison to men. In a study conducted by Chhabra et.al. (2022) it was found that among 367 mental health-related patients, half of them (48%) showed the signs of depression ranging from mild to severe. Around 40% showed signs and symptoms of anxiety, fear and stress, 15% showed signs of sleep loss. Women (58%) were significantly found to be more prone to mental illness and psychiatric disorders than men (42%).

The mitigating strategies to curb the spread of virus such as lockdowns have led to an upsurge in cases of domestic violence where women and children had no escape from their abusers during quarantine’s (Abramson, 2020; Chandra, 2020). It has become a big threat to women safety.

Factors identified for the psychological problems

Domestic Violence	Financial Crisis/ Strain	Work from home
Reduced social Contacts	Fear of Future	Increased burden of work
Loneliness	Unemployment	
Hunger	Stress	

CONCLUSION

Covid-19 has wreaked havoc on the mental health of India's whole population, particularly the female population. Coronavirus as a threat has added to lot of unrest and stress in the masses which has caused several mental health issues like anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, sleep loss, and post-traumatic stress disorder which must be controlled immediately in its initial phases. It was also found that the domestic violence increased and

become the significant predictor of depressive and anxiety symptoms. Thus, in such a scenario, women safety is at high risk and required more efforts to assist by establishing online services and networks to prevent abuse incidents.

Implications

It has affected women more profoundly and overwrought all aspects of their life. The negative psychological impact of the pandemic as implicated by the increased levels of anxiety and stress observed in this study is really worrisome with no end in sight. Addressing the health needs of men and women equally will help societies recover and resist future human tragedies. Current research highlights the urgency of taking account of gender specific constraints during the health crisis, so, as to institute robust, effective and equitable policy interventions. Considering the impracticability of the face-to-face psychotherapy, use of various online platforms or government-initiated helplines like Tele-MANAS to meet this urgent unmet need is highly desirable. As the crisis evolves and continues, it is very essential to raise awareness and psychological counseling among the community, particularly the women.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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Table 1 showing the studies included in the review:

References	Place of Study	Population Considered	Study design & data collection methods	Assessment Tools	Outcome Findings
Indu et.al., 2021	South India	Married Women, n= 209	Cross sectional study, Physical Interview	PHQ-9, GAD-7, DVQ, Perceived Stress Scale	High prevalence of psychological problems
Sharma, K. et. al., 2021	Maharashtra	Women, n=243	Cross sectional, semi structured interview	GAD 7, PSS	More than half of the women have some form of anxiety and stress
Sandhaya, P. et. al., 2021	Telangana	Farm women, n= 60	Cross sectional, structured interview	Self management skill questionnaire	60% women had low self management skills
Lawrence, J.A. et. al., 2021	Across India	Women, N=510	Cross sectional, online survey	Self structured questionnaire	Lack of concentration, arguments with family members, anxiety, weight gain & sadness
Shah, S., & Meghrajani, I. 2021	India	Women, n =21	Qualitative, Physical Interview	Semi structured interview	Stress, fear, frequent griefs, children's school break

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					and lockdown have increased psychological Issues and concern in women
Kumaresan. A., et. al., 2021	India	I.T. Professionals, n= 934	Cross sectional, Online survey	Maslach Burnout Inventory Scale	Female IT professionals are more prone to experience burnout
Wakode. N., et. al., 2021	India	Indian Population, n=300	Cross sectional, online survey	PSS, GAD-7	Women reported higher perceived stress & anxiety
Dogra, P. Et.al.,2022	India	Women educationist, n=17	Cross sectional, structured interview	Structured Interview	COVID had affected psychological health due to attention paid to multiple tasks
Khandelwal, A., et. al., 2022	Maharashtra	Women, n=384	Cross sectional, physical interview	PHQ9, WHO-QOL	84% had found mild to moderate depression. Severity of depression decreases the qol
Singh. N., et. al., 2022	Mohali	Women, n=34	In depth interview	Semi structured questionnaire	Psychological disturbances were reported
Chabbra. P., et. al., 2022	Haryana	Rural population, n=367	Cross sectional, physical interview	BDI	Loneliness and various mental health problems comes in women