

Psychological Impact of Global Pandemic on Workers Who Lost Their Jobs

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ABSTRACT

The research was done to explore the psychological impact of the global pandemic on the workers who lost their jobs. A questionnaire was prepared for the participant in order to check whether there were any significant impacts on their mental health due to job loss and to evaluate their psychology. According to the other surveys and papers studied for this particular paper, it was seen that the participant gave similar answers to the ones given in the other papers investigating the same topic as well. This study found that the participants had some negative impact on their mental health as of the others due to their financial situation.

Keywords: Global Pandemic, Covid-19, Layoffs

Corona-virus disease 19 is a highly contagious respiratory disease which is said to be caused by the SARS-coV-2. It gets its name, 'corona' from the spike like structure which is seen at the surface of the virus. The symptoms of this virus can lead from severe respiratory problems to mild common cold. The strain of the covid pandemic started after the first reported case in Wuhan, in December 2019. Since then, the virus had spread throughout the world, infecting, and killing millions of people. As of July 25th, 2021, there have been 195,584,821 confirmed cases and 4,187,077 deaths due to this deadly virus.

This virus is a highly contagious one and can spread very easily from one infected person to another as backed up by the number of rising cases each day. It can spread when an infected person talks, coughs, sneezes, sings or breathes within the six feet of you. The virus can even linger in the air for minutes to hours from an infected person even if the person has left the premises, these are more likely to happen in places in poor ventilation. Even the objects which come in contact with the virus can make a healthy person ill if they touch the object and then touch their faces. Covid-19 enters the body through the mouth, nose, or eyes, it travels from the back of the nasal passages and in the back of the throat. It then attaches to the cells and begins to grow inside the lungs and from there it spreads to other tissues. People who travel a lot, people who are in contact with a suspected covid-19 and the hospital staff and doctors are the ones who are at most risk of getting covid-19.

It is not a secret that each and every person went through challenging times and got affected by this virus and the global pandemic that is going on for several months, and not just

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physically but also psychologically and financially. When the Government called for a nationwide lockdown in order to get the virus under control and minimize the spreading of it, almost all of us had to accept the sudden change in our lifestyle and to improvise.

The pandemic caused a heavy setback to the country's economic stability and for that reason almost all the jobholders had to undergo some major changes in one way or another. During the lockdown, unfortunately a lot of people lost their jobs and were laid off during these grim times. The changes in the economic market and the high unemployment rate did not help with the situation but also made it harder for people to find a different job to support their dear ones.

Added stress of job loss with the pandemic situation made it a lot worse for the recently unemployed people. All this stress can have a negative impact on one's mental health which could potentially grow worse with time.

In this paper we would conduct an observational study by questioning the participant with the help of an open-ended questionnaire who had undergone a comparable situation of losing a job during the times of pandemic and we will study whether that event has specifically impacted in some psychological changes.

A study was conducted in Israel comprising of 398 young people ages between 20-35 who were not employed after and during the Covid outbreak. All the data were collected during the month of April and the first week of May of the year 2020, at the time where strict restrictions were imposed all over the world. The researchers shared a link to the questionnaire through social media like Facebook and Whats-app and posted links weekly on relevant Facebook groups. Psychological Distress or PD was assessed using seven items referring to the Covid period. Participants were divided into two groups, 1- the ones who worked before and during the crisis and 2- the ones who worked before the crisis but were fired, furloughed, or had to close their businesses. It was seen that the unemployed participants (16.61) reported to have greater distress than those who had their jobs (15.08), the ones who reported emerging budgetary crisis also had greater distress level than those who were able to meet ends. Psychological distress was also higher among the participants who had a tough time trusting other people and were lonely, and the increased feeling of loneliness during the covid outbreak further increased the psychological distress. In this study the researchers tried to explore the association between unemployment during the first wave of pandemic and psychological distress amongst the young people of Israel, and according to the findings, it was seen that no employment possesses significant threat to the mental health alongside of loneliness and low perceived trust among the young people during the Pandemic.

Another study was conducted with 1600 participants between the age of 18-65, using three two weeks apart wave of data which was taken from the Understanding American Study which showed the that the wage workers and self-employed people experienced greater psychological distress due to financial insecurity. The survey was launched on March 10, 2020, and all the data were collected in 3 parts and the participants were given two weeks to answer. The scale which they used to measure the psychological distress was the seven item Generalized Anxiety Disorder scale (Spitzer et al., 2006). The researchers analyzed whether the psychological distress was the same as of the 1st week in the 2nd and 3rd week as well. It was seen that there was no change in the psychological distress due to financial insecurity in wage workers and self-employed workers throughout the three-wave apart survey that was

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collected, so it was to be said that the financial insecurity and the fear of running out of money during the Pandemic period was anxiety inducing and stressful for both the wage workers and the self-employed people. Also, it did not matter whether the participant was a wage worker or self-employed as it was seen that both did suffer from psychological distress throughout due to economic instability.

A study was conducted among 551 participants, estimating the extent of psychological distress among people losing work during the Covid-19 pandemic in Australia, also examining the associations between psychological distress, nature of work loss and degree of social interaction. The data were collected from an online survey just weeks after the introduction of social distancing and movement restrictions which caused widespread unemployment all over. The data was collected on Kessler-6 scale. Nature of work loss, demographic, social interactions, job, and occupational characteristics data were also collected. Out of 551 participants, 1/3rd (31%) of them reported psychological distress, 35% in those had already lost their jobs and 28% were still employed but were getting less paid. Age, gender, work status and social interactions were strongly correlated with the distress. This study showed that 76% of the participants reported moderate to severe psychological distress.

A study conducted among 342 participants who were parents living in the United States, in order to see whether the job loss during the pandemic causes mental distress and causes significant risk of child abuse. The parent child conflict tactics scale and the family crisis oriented personal evaluation scale were used for this study. Parents job loss was positively and significantly associated with psychological distress and maltreatment and physical abuse towards children. Child of parents who lost their jobs during pandemic were nearly five times more likely to be psychologically maltreated than those whose parents did not lose their jobs. The parents also had depressive symptoms which lead to the maltreatment of their children.

A study conducted on 797 US (United States) residents from April 6th to 12,2020, during which the US unemployment rate reached the highest it had been since the great depression. Participants were taken from the panel provider Qualtrics for a larger longitudinal study on the effects of Covid-19. This study was conducted to determine whether job insecurity due to Covid-19 and financial concerns were associated with worse mental health during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The seen item general anxiety disorder-7 (GAD-7) scale was assessed for the symptoms of anxiety and had been shown to demonstrate excellent internal consistency. Around 53.7% of the participants reported, 'minimal to none' anxiety symptoms, 21.4% reported 'mild' anxiety symptoms, 16.4% reported 'moderate' symptoms, 8.5% reported 'severe' anxiety symptoms. Most of the participants reported some level of worry about the effects of covid-19 on their employment.

METHODOLOGY

Demography

- Sex of the participant- Female
- Age of the participant- 24
- Ethnicity of the Participant- Indian
- Educational Qualification of the participant- Graduate

The sample comprised of three hundred persons. There were two groups of children between the ages of 7 and 13 years and their mothers. Group I consisted of 75 chronically ill children

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and their mothers 75 and Group II consisted of 75 normal healthy children and their mothers (75). Group II served as a control group. In Group I ; children who were suffering from some type of chronic illness like TB, epilepsy, kidney trouble, rheumatic heart disease, congenital heart disease, sickle cell anemia and asthma were included. In both groups children from different socioeconomic classes – low, medium, and high were interviewed.

Instruments

Please make yourself comfortable and relax. As you can see, I have a questionnaire for you which consists of a set of open-ended questions relating to the topic, ‘Psychological impact of global pandemic on workers who lost their jobs.’ I will pass the questions to you, and you will have to answer them, you can take as much time you want. Once you are done with the you can pass the questionnaire back and then you can take your leave.

Procedure

The participant was given a questionnaire containing 10 items intended to check whether the participant is having any psychological impact due to losing their jobs during the global pandemic. The participant was handed out the questionnaire and was asked to fill out each item in an elaboration manner. The researcher kept the data of the questionnaire and based on the answers given by the participant, the results, discussion, and conclusion were drawn out.

RESULTS

Questions:

The first item on the questionnaire was, “Did it affect you psychologically when you lost your job, if yes then how?”. To which the participant replied with, “Yes, it was depressing and mentally challenging to cope with the situation.”

The second item on the questionnaire was, “Did the loss of job affect your relationship with your loved ones?” To which the participant replied with, “Yes, it became difficult to maintain healthy relationships due to stress, frustration, and anger management.”

The third item on the questionnaire was, “How did you adjust at home after losing your job?”. To which the participant replied with, “I resorted to hobbies and favorite past times, made new friends, went outside for walks, played with my pets, meditated, and tried thinking positive.”

The fourth item on the questionnaire was, “How did the Pandemic affect your search for a new job?” To which the participant replied with, “The Pandemic made it difficult to find a job in my preferred industry.

The fifth item on the questionnaire was, “How were your relations with other colleagues/acquaintances after leaving?” To which the participant replied with, “We are in good terms with each other. Although not as connected as we were, which is obvious.”

The sixth item on the questionnaire was, “How did you keep yourself positive and motivated after the incident?” To which the participant replied with, “Identifying that I might still have better opportunities in near future as I am still pursuing my studies and acknowledging there would be new innovative job opportunities keeping the Pandemic constraints in mind.”

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The seventh item on the questionnaire was, “Did you learn something new during the time of lay off?” To which the participant replied with, “I learned to play basic ukulele chords.”

The eighth item on the questionnaire was, “How did you process the news and all the changes?” To which the participant replied with, “It was hard to swallow at first but as I resorted to different activities, it became bearable and with the upcoming opportunities I finally accepted the change.”

The ninth item on the questionnaire was, “Did you seek and therapy/ psychotherapy to cope up with your situation and if yes then how did it help you?” To which the participant replied with, “Yes, it helped me to an extent by modifying my perception towards the situation.”

And the final item on the questionnaire was, “What was the one thing you were most worried about after losing your job and why?” To which the participant replied with, “Earnings, as in today’s world, it is among the most important things for survival.”

DISCUSSION

The participant was a 24-year-old female who was working as an interior designer for a private company for more than 3 years but was laid off during the Pandemic. As of with all the other surveys and studies done under the similar topic I.e., psychological impact on the workers who lost their job during the global pandemic, has reported that almost all the participants were affected negatively due to the whole situation, they were stressed and were suffering mentally as there was potential financial instability in the future. Many participants had developed mental illnesses and others who were already diagnosed with mental illnesses were said to have gotten worse due to the situation. A lot of them started suffering from anxiety and depressive symptoms due to economic instability. Although my participant showed occasional mental and physical exhaustion and worry, they tried to be positive most of the time and did not let their minor setback take a huge toll on their mental health.

When they lost their job, it came as a shock to them, and it also affected their relationship with others, and they were even worried and concerned about their financial situation, but the participant tried to keep things positive, they went to therapy in order to get some professional help to cope up with the whole situation, they started looking it as a new opportunity, they started to focus on themselves and even learned some new things which further helped them to keep their mind off from the negativity. Even with all this, the participant was still a bit worried about their financial condition and they kept on the search for a new job to get some stability in life and somewhat secure the future.

There were some negative psychological impacts on the participants' minds as for losing their jobs in such tough times, but they were able to cope with it and it did not harm their mental health to some major extents.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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