

Psycho – Emotional Impact of the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic denotes, not just public physical health emergency, but also a serious mental health problem. In order to control the spread of COVID 19 various state and central Governments implemented the lockdown measures, which would potentially damage the mental well – being of the population. The lockdown measures and quarantine impact can have a larger effects in mental health for a long period of time (Lorena, 2020). There is a strong need to gain knowledge about how this pandemic has psychologically and emotionally impacted the general population, so there is a need to draft this article to detail about the psycho – emotional impact of the COVID 19 pandemic. For this purpose, systematic review was employed and prisma model was used to review the previous research papers. After final screening process, 41 articles were extracted and studied in detail. From which 6 sub themes were extracted and it is been found that the pandemic quarantine and the lockdown effects have inversely effected the general and subjective well – being. The covid 19 pandemic had various psychological effect for different people depending upon their age group and the nature of the work they do.

Keywords: COVID 19 Mental Health, Psycho Emotional Health, Psychological Impact, Pandemic Mental Health

The word psycho stands as an abbreviation for psychology, which is the study of human behaviour, mental characteristics and their thought process. Emotions are the affective component which are caused by the chemicals secreted by the brain. Feeling are the long standing affect of emotions, which are the conscious experience of emotions due to a specific circumstance. The psycho emotional aspect contributes to the feeling experienced due to a particular situation that determines our characteristic thought pattern and behaviour. Covid 19 pandemic has led to the incidence of higher mental health problems (Vaishali, 2020). With relatively increase in high rates of psycho emotional symptoms among which anxiety (6.33% to 50.9%), depression (14.6% to 48.3%), post-traumatic stress disorder (7% to 53.8%), psychological distress (34.43% to 38%), and stress (8.1% to 81.9%) reported in the general population in China, Spain, Italy, Iran, the US, Turkey, Nepal, and Denmark (Xiong, 2020). In Tamil Nadu every 1 in 5 persons experience some form of COVID-19 related stress, and 2.7% possess severe stress. For the age group between 25 – 34

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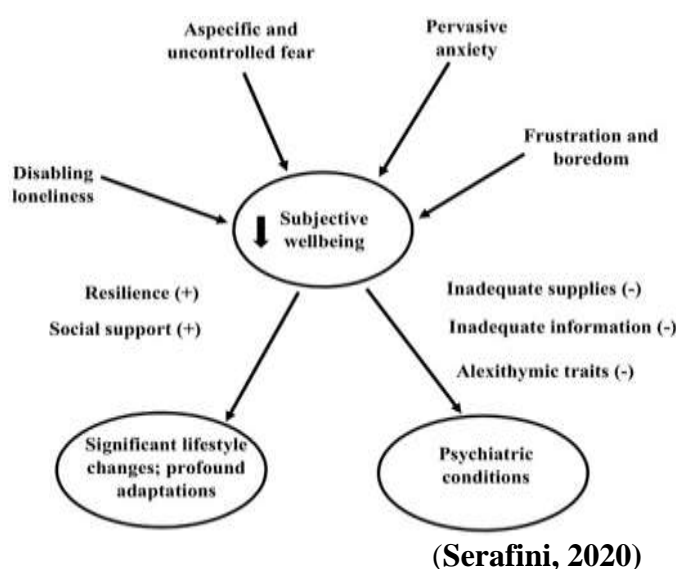
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years, those with an annual income of 2.5–5 lakh, and married, were more prone to stress. A total of 6% were irritable and entered into conflict with family members more than usual, 2.4% of the population had bad dreams related to COVID-19 which lead to severe sleep disturbances (Vikhram, 2020). There is also a strong association with age and gender, the prevalence of mental health disorder increased with increase of age and females were more vulnerable to develop mental health disorders than males (Vaishali, 2020).

The inability to cope with the pandemic along with personal and family concern has led to raise in suicide rates (Prabhakar, 2022). It has and will produce acute panic, anxiety, obsessive behaviors, paranoia, and depression, and may also lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the long run (Bakul, 2020). The subject well being showed a dramatic drop in higher number of people due to increased level of anxiety, frustration, boredom and loneliness (Serafini, 2020). The relative raise in mental health problems during this period has led to a greater attention towards the psycho emotional impact.



Aim

The study aimed to detail the psychological and emotional impact of the pandemic.

PICO guidelines followed for the systematic review.

- P – Population/patient = Human participants
- I – Intervention = NIL
- C – Comparator/control = Pre Pandemic period
- O – Outcome = Emotional experiences

For this purpose systematic review was conducted based on the preferred reporting item for systematic review and PICO guidelines.

Database searched

The databases like PubMed, the Google Scholar, and the Research Gate search engines were used to identify the previous researches. Keywords such as COVID 19 mental health, psycho emotional health, psychological impact, pandemic mental health were used to extract the past research studies.

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Inclusion criteria

The articles published in peer reviewed journals in English language right from 2020 till the present year 2024 were included for the study.

Exclusion criteria

The articles published in predatory journals, dissertations and articles published in languages other than English were excluded.

Data extraction

A total of 41 articles were obtained to study in detail. At the first step articles were screened using the title and the abstract while at the second step the full articles were screened.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

All the papers that involved the psychological aspect of COVID 19 from 2020 to 2024 were included for the study. Initially a total of 54 articles were identified which was then scrutinized to 41 articles by the final screening step. Which was then grouped under the following sub themes.

1. Psycho emotional impact of pandemic in children
2. Psycho emotional impact of pandemic in adults
3. Psycho emotional impact of pandemic in elderly people
4. Emotional impact of frontline workers
5. Measurements and assessments of the psycho - emotional impact during pandemic
6. Positive and negative emotions experienced during pandemic

The detailed elaboration of the subthemes is sketched below,

Psycho emotional impact of pandemic in children

Globally there are millions of children who has missed out their education during the pandemic. Though classes were conducted through online and internet modalities, it was not standardised to reach out children from all the corners of the globe. As in traditional classroom set up the children cannot physically interact with their peers and procrastination is inevitable because students become complacent with the flexibility of deadlines (Lathrop, 2011). Depression and anxiety are common mental health problems experienced by university students and it can impair their academic performance and social functioning which effects their future career opportunities (Agnes, 2020).

Apart from the academics side, children primarily enjoyed positive emotions over negative emotions during the pandemic. As most of the children had less concern over the family burden, they perceived the pandemic as a long vocation. Although anxiety, boredom, and frustration were experienced, most of the children were confined primarily to emotions of gratitude, joy, and hope (Martha, 2021). In contrast the mean post – traumatic stress scores were four times higher for children who experienced quarantine and severe impact of COVID 19 in close their close family members than their counterparts (Serafini, 2020).

Psycho emotional impact of pandemic in adults

Most of the working adults other than the frontline health care workers went through work from home mode of work, which impacted their mental health in both positive and negative way. There was an increased level of stress, anger and feeling of hopelessness among adults during pandemic primarily due to economic and psychosocial stressors caused by lifestyle and economic disruptions (Lilly, 2020). Labours under contract basis suffered from loss of

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work, and unemployment was also increased during the pandemic which contributed to the increase in stress level. Increased psychological distress among them lead to the emergence various emotional disorders create mental health problems. Those who have been quarantined due to close contact with COVID 19 patients reported patients reported higher level of fear, nervousness, sadness and guilt (Serafini, 2020). There was increased consumption of high-sugar foods and drinks among those with considerable COVID-19-related worries and those with psychological distress compared to the overall population, which could potentially lead to emotional eating disorders (Mitra, 2021). There was a huge change in their daily routine habits and life style practices which would adversely both physical and mental health.

Psycho emotional impact of pandemic in elderly people

Elderly people lacked the required resources to deal effectively with the stress of pandemic, which includes lack of knowledge about smart technology access, lack of social resources as they have only a limited family members or friends and lack of biological resources as they do not possess the ability to take up the physical exercises (Ipsit, 2020). Even with of absence of social isolation or loneliness there were other psychosocial stressors that lead to the developed panic disorder and depressive, multiple contextual and cultural variables precipitated and exacerbated the development of mental illness in elderly people (Uvais, 2020). Elderly people went through more of emotional distress and were predominantly anxious and depressed than the younger adults (Lorena, 2020). As elderly people were more vulnerable to COVID 19, major emotions of fear, anxiety and pervasive sadness experienced elderly people can be due to their perceived vulnerability. On contradictory, certain studies have found that older adults experienced comparatively less negative affect as they used more problem focused coping strategy to deal effectively with the stress during this stressful pandemic period (Nathaniel, 2021; Javier, 2021). Depending upon the cultural and contextual variables the emotional effect the elderly people went through significantly varied.

Emotional impact of frontline workers

Frontline workers were the ones directly involved and working with the COVID 19 patients. They were exposed directly to the COVID virus which puts them in a highly stressful situation than the general public. They witnessed more number of COVID deaths and also COVID survivors. In order to keep themselves at lower risk of getting effected, they were supposed to wear the personal protective kit all the day, when they are in the professional set up, which was very tiring physically and adds another to the bucket of stress. Almost 30 percent of the frontline workers possessed the symptoms of acute traumatic stress, depressive disorder, alcohol use disorder, anxiety disorder and sleep disorder (Wright, 2021). They felt it as a heavy burden to fulfil their personal, professional and social responsibility, they were in the place to protect and safeguard everyone's life (Newman, 2021). They had negligible amount of time for personal and leisure activity which could have been an additional reason for their increased level of burnout and frustration.

Measurement and assessment of the psycho - emotional impact during pandemic

The sudden storm of corona virus has a strong emotional impact among the general global population along with physical impact it has caused. So there arose a strong need to assess and measure the level of emotional impact it has induced, in order to provide the necessary help to maintain the emotional well – being among the global population. To ascertain these various tools were developed and standardised.

1. Pandemic Emotional Impact Scale (PEIS)

Pandemic Emotional Impact Scale (PEIS) was developed by Ballou, Gray & Palsson (2020) and standardised with U.S population (N = 1500), to assess the nuances emotional impact of the global pandemic. It aims to capture the fear/worry regarding one's own safety along with the health and safety of others, fears about economic/political instability in local and global, and frustration/disappointment concerning the complete disruption of daily activities (Sarah, 2020). The scale consists of 16 items on a 5 point rating scale that are attributed directly to the pandemic related emotional experiences. The scale is highly reliable and has an excellent internal consistency with Cronbach's α of 0.94 and Guttman split-half reliability of 0.95. The scale also possess an excellent concurrent validity as it showed moderate to strong correlations with other emotion- and wellbeing-related outcome measures. Therefore, the scale possess a sound psychometric property and can be quickly used to measure the emotional impact during this pandemic and also during future pandemics.

2. The Fear of COVID-19 Scale (FCV-19S)

The Fear of COVID-19 Scale (FCV-19S) was developed by Ahorsu et al (2020) and was standardised with Iranian population (N = 717), to assess the fear of corona virus. It aims to report the information about an individual's fear towards COVID – 19 to the health care professionals for designing appropriate programmes to take care of the developed fear. The scale consists of 7 items on a four point likert rating scale. The scale is highly reliable and has a good internal consistency with Cronbach's α of 0.82 and a composite reliability of 0.88. The scale also possess a strong concurrent validity with Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) and Perceived Vulnerability to Disease Scale (PVDS). Therefore, the scale possess a sound psychometric property and can be quickly used to assess the fear towards the corona virus.

3. The Pandemic-Related Perceived Stress Scale of COVID-19 (PSS-10)

The Pandemic-Related Perceived Stress Scale of COVID-19 (PSS-10 – C) is a modified version of Perceived Stress Scale (PSS – 10) developed in 1983. The modified version was developed by Adalberto C.A, María José P.C and John Carlos P.P (2020) and was standardised with Columbian population (N = 406), to establish psychometric performance of a pre-established instrument to quantify emotional wellbeing during the pandemic. The scale consists of 10 items on a five point rating scale on which the test taker rate their emotional experience during their past seven days. The scale is highly reliable and has a good internal consistency with Cronbach's α of 0.86. Therefore, the scale can relied to measure the emotional well – being of the test taker during the pandemic situation.

4. Kessler Psychosocial Distress Scale (K 10)

Kessler Psychosocial Distress Scale (K 10) was developed by Kessler RC et al (2003). The scale was developed to assess the test – taker's emotional state during the psychological distress. The scale consists of 10 questions on a five point rating scale. The scale is highly reliable and has a good internal consistency with Cronbach's α of 0.86. Therefore, the scale can relied to measure the emotional state especially depression and anxiety symptoms during psychological disaster.

5. COVID-19 Peritraumatic Distress Index (CPDI)

COVID-19 Peritraumatic Distress Index (CPDI) was developed Jianyin Qiu et al., (2020). The scale was developed to assess anxiety, depression, specific phobias, cognitive change, avoidance and compulsive behaviour, physical symptoms and loss of social functioning in the past week (Ramesh, 2021). The scale consists of 24 items on a five point rating scale

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under four domains as negative mood, changes in behaviour and cognitive skills, tired and hyperactivated and somatization. The scale is highly reliable and has an excellent internal consistency with Cronbach's α of 0.92. And content validity of the tool was established. Therefore, the scale is valid and can be relied to measure the emotional distress of the test taker during the pandemic situation.

6. Copenhagen Burnout Inventory

Copenhagen Burnout Inventory was developed by Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen, & Christensen (2005). The inventory was developed to assess the burn out i.e, fatigue and physical and emotional exhaustion level and psychological wellbeing of the individual under three domains as personal burnout, work-related burnout and client related burnout. The tool was standardised with 1914 participants from seven different types of workplaces. The scale consists of 19 questions on a five point rating scale. The scale has a high internal of 0.85 – 0.87. The established validity of the scale also suggests that the inventory is highly reliable and valid to use with the general population.

Positive and negative emotions experienced during pandemic

It is very clearly understood that along with the negative emotions like fear and anxiety there were also a lot of positive emotions experienced during the pandemic. Subjective wellbeing is predicted by overall balance between the positive and negative emotions experienced by the individual (Diener, 1991).

Positive emotions

According to broaden and build theory, positive emotion helps to build resources to cope with negative emotion. "As positive emotions broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources" (Fredrickson, 1998). Some of the positive emotions and their impact during pandemic is discussed below,

Joy and happiness

Joy is the sudden spontaneous feeling of contentment for a particular situation which is short lived. Whereas happiness is a stable pervasive state of mind which exists for a longer duration than the joy. The feeling of joy predisposes to the happy state of mind. During the beginning of the pandemic children may had the feeling of joy and happiness due to the long leave announced for them. For working young adults the initiation of work from home culture and various relaxations from the work duty would have created a state of happiness. Work from home convenience, autonomy and psychosocial safety served as predictor for perceived happiness (Mehta, 2021). But the pervasiveness of the happiness and joy all along the pandemic period largely depends upon the individuals' personality disposition. If healthy life style changes were adopted by the individual it would have also contribute to the positive state of mind.

Love and affection

Love and affection shown towards and received from the family members, friends and neighbourhood would have contributed to the positive emotional wellbeing. During social isolation though physically separated the electronic media served as a bridge for emotional connect. The quality of time spend with the significant emotional support figure increased the positive feeling amidst the peak of the pandemic. Individuals who were affection deprived had higher odds for stress, loneliness and depression (Hesse, 2021). The stable level of romance, sexual functioning, intimacy, love, care and support increased the odds for positive emotional wellbeing. But unfortunately, COVID 19 related stress contributed to the

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lower sexual and romantic functioning, which in turn effected the individuals' wellbeing (Pollard, 2022). Apart from the connection shared with the humans, the quality of connection shared with the pet animal like cat and dog, i.e., the human – animal relationship, has been related to fewer physical health problems and mental health problems, and also shown to decrease loneliness and isolation (Bussolari, 2021). Therefore, more the affectionate relationship experienced by the individuals lower the emotional problems being reported.

Gratitude

Gratitude is sense of being thankful and grateful, expressed by appreciating the helpful action received from other people (McCullough, 2002). Gratitude is prevalent across most of the tradition and religion as a cultural norm. In Christianity, “thanks giving” is celebrated as a festival during which a piece of bread and a drink is given as a symbol of gratitude. The feeling of being thankful and involving in thanks giving activity create an upward spiral by promoting happiness and flourishing (Seligman, 2011). Before COVID 19 pandemic shaking hands severed as a short act of showing the gratitude. During COVID 19 pandemic Government of India initiated several activities to show the gratitude to the frontline warriors among which “JantaCurfew” gained more attention. In “JantaCurfew” the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited all the citizens of India to wholly stand in the open space of their own houses on December 5, at 5 pm and to clap for 5 minutes as an act of expressing gratitude to all those working 24/7 to make the nation COVID free. Gratitude is found to reduce stress and depression among frontline workers by promoting social support and hope (Feng, 2021). Practising gratitude exercises like starting a gratitude journal, contrasting and reframing past negative experiences during COVID era and also afterward is considered to enhance the general mental health well-being (Fishman, 2020).

Hope

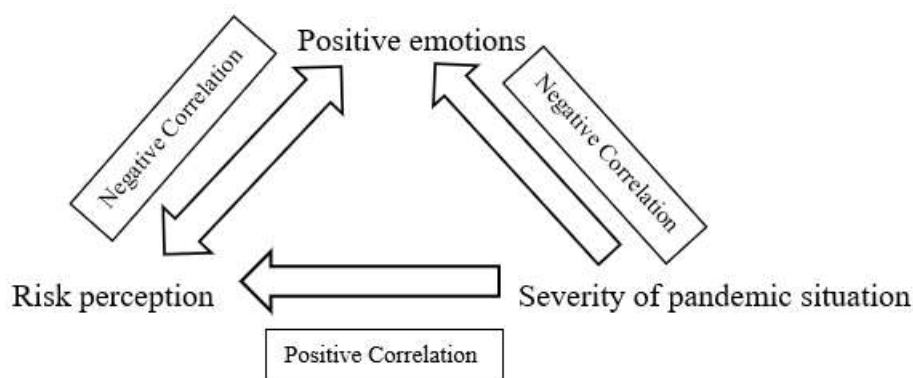
Hope is an essential positive emotion to cope with the stress, it shares a dynamic and reciprocal relationship with cope (Folkman, 2012). High level of hope and optimism among college students lead to lower level of stress during pandemic which promoted the subjective well-being (Genc, 2021). Hope of getting back to the normalcy again severed as a motivational factor to strive again the stressful pandemic period. Hope severed as a mediator for caregiver burden and perceived stress of the caregiver, high level of caregivers' hope lead to lower level of stress perception by the caregiver (Castr, 2019). Certain activities like the initiation lead by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called “Challenging the Darkness”, in which on April 5, at 9 pm, all people in India from being in their own houses switched off all the lights in their houses with only a candle light or a torch light alone being lit for 9 minutes, as a symbol of their unity and hope to raise above the stressful pandemic situation.

Positive emotions in relations to other variables during pandemic

During the uncertain pandemic period, in worldwide it was a huge challenge to stay positive with the worst situational factors. Though there were high level of mental distress, people still experienced positive well-being. There were certain variables that contributed and effected the positive emotional wellbeing. The positive emotion such as hope, joy and happiness were negatively correlated with risk perception, i.e, happier the individual was, lower he possessed the fear or the anxiety towards the COVID risk. But when the pandemic situation was severe it had an adverse effect on the positive emotions, which would eventually effect the risk perception (Zhang, 2021). Therefore, risk perception and severity

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of the pandemic had an impact of positive emotions experienced by the individual during the pandemic.



Students who possessed high level of positive refocusing, positive reappraisal and positive planning ability along with high level of resilience experienced lower level of psychological distress like anxiety, depression, sleep disorders during the pandemic (Yang et al., 2020). Among young adults optimism was negatively correlated with depression, anxiety and somatisation during the pandemic crisis (Aslan et al., 2020). Among older adults, overall positive emotional experience was relatively higher which was contributed to the perception of closeness they shared with their friends and family members (Cavallini, 2021). More frequently the individual used his phone for contacting with his social circle led to reduction of negative emotions and expansion of positive emotions (Monin, 2020).

Negative emotions

Due to the high stress experienced during the pandemic period, negative emotions were predominant over the positive emotions. The perceived fear of oneself and the close family members being affected by the virus, quarantine and loneliness, lockdown and economic crisis were the major contributors for the negative emotions.

Fear and anxiety

Fear is the result of danger that is in front of the eyes whereas anxiety is the emotional stress that is attached to the danger that may or may not occur in the future. Fear about the virus and anxiety about the death due to viral attack and losing the affectionate ones were more prevalent. At some point of time most of the people will experience some sort of health anxiety which is seen as a vigilant and a protective mechanism to safeguard from the serious disorders and for early detection and treatment of the symptoms (Asmudson, 2020). But when the concern of getting a potential disorder prolongs and exaggerates even after proving the absence of underlying physical cause, it becomes a psychosomatic disorder to be treated with psychotherapies. COVID health anxiety, which means excessive irrational worry about being effected by the virus was more prevalent among those who has already been effected by the virus. When this form of anxiety is left untreated it might propagate to significant degree of depression (Tyrer, 2020). Due to emotional suppression and lack of psychological need fulfilment during the pandemic, COVID health anxiety lead to the impairment in work progress and family engagement along with repeated somatic complaints (Trogakos, 2020). Along with health anxiety, other anxieties and fears might also been experienced, among which fear of losing the job and economic anxiety would have been experienced by majority of the people.

Boredom and loneliness

Boredom and loneliness was commonly experienced by most of the people but students and youngsters were more susceptible particularly during the lockdown. Students and youngsters in nuclear family where both the parents had work from home job, who had no siblings, residing in a separated compound and those quarantined due to exposure of the virus or in close contact with the one effected by the virus were more prone to boredom and loneliness. Boredom and loneliness has also been found to effect the physical weight by maintaining and precipitating obesity due to its impact in dietary habits (Heinberg, 2021). The increase in weight and obesity would eventually increase the risk for worsening the course of the COVID 19 especially when hospitalised. The emotional coping of boredom in a maladaptive way would adversely effect the overall health of the individual.

Sadness and depression

Pervasive sadness, low mood, lack attention, lack concentration and lack of interest in all activities of daily routine leads to depression. Those who experienced loneliness, fear of death, change of residence for quarantine had sleep problems and felt hopeless and worthless and started using nicotine and alcohol and eventually fell into depression (Ustun, 2020). Psychological distress is often associated with the onset, duration and prevalence of depression. During pandemic psychological distress was marked by poor sleep, changes in daily routine, financial uncertainty, COVID health anxiety, isolation and loneliness, which drove as a contributing factor for depression. Severe depression leads to suicidal thoughts, ideation and attempts, increase in the suicidal rate during the pandemic tell us about the increase in rate and severity of depression during the pandemic period.

Frustration

Frustration was experienced by almost everyone during the lockdown period. As the hotels were also closed and there was also scarcity in the provision of groceries and market products, the homemakers felt it frustrating to cook all meals of the day with the available products. The school and the college students underwent online class, they felt technology, classwork, research, family, social, emotional, behavioural, and financial aspects of life frustrating due to loss of contact with the campus environment and classroom setting (Hagedorn, 2021). Adults engaging in work from home job felt it frustrating to spend all their time in front of the electronic screen missing out the contact with their office campus. Therefore, some sort of need frustration was experienced by everyone irrespective of the age group and the work they engage.

Guilt

During pandemic guilt might have arised when not compelling to the lockdown and other safety protocol norms and making oneself susceptible to the disease. The top most reason for experiencing guilt during pandemic is being the source for the spread of disease in one's own family and seeing the loved ones suffering because of the safety protocol not followed by the self. The second major reason for guilt is being in a state of not being able to help and witnessing the death of the loved ones due to the wild storm of the virus. Third major cause of guilt might have arised due to the financial crisis, the sense of not being able to satisfy the basic needs of the family properly. Frontline health care workers would have experienced guilt while they weren't able save the life of the symptomatic individuals. Most of the people holding responsibility for either their family or the society would have experienced some sort of guilt depending upon the situation they underwent during the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, the wild storm of the COVID 19 pandemic has lead to a wide range of emotional impact among the whole world population. Across the globe there was an average increase of the mental health problems during pandemic than it was before the beginning of the pandemic era. Due to the increased psychosocial stressors during pandemic, though emotions were predominantly negative, it wasn't restricted to it, certain type of positive emotions were also experienced. The emotional experiences varied along with the age group, occupation, social situation, personal predisposition, financial situation and family situation. The emotional experience of the frontline workers grabbed more attention as they were exposed to the coarse situation than the general public The crisis lead to the strong need for the development of various psychological scales to assess the emotional impact of the individual in order to figure out the emotional impairment and to provide the necessary intervention. While joy, happiness, love, affection, gratitude and hope marked the major positive emotions, fear, anxiety, boredom, loneliness, sadness, depression, frustration and guilt marked the major negative emotion experienced during the pandemic.

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Conflict of Interest

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