



## ANXIETY AND OBSESSION ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19 PANDEMIC AMONG GENERAL POPULATION.

**Dr. Lija R Nath\***

Professor, Department of Community Health Nursing, Sree Gokulam Nursing College, Thiruvananthapuram. \*Corresponding Author

**Dr.Haseena T.A**

Professor & HOD, Department of Medical Surgical Nursing Sree Gokulam Nursing College, Thiruvananthapuram.

### ABSTRACT

Human civilization probably is passing through the most critical juncture of this millennium. Its existence is being challenged by the emergence of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-Cov-2) pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 on mental health of the masses has emerged as a matter of enormous concern. The purpose of the study was to assess the anxiety and obsessive thoughts associated with COVID-19 pandemic among general population. The study was conducted among 720 Indians living in different parts of the world. Data was collected by online survey with coronavirus anxiety scale (CAS) and Obsession with COVID-19 Scale (OCS). It was found that out of the 720 participants 86 (12%) felt extreme social isolation due to COVID 19 pandemic. Nearly one third of the participants (28%) reported moderate level of anxiety and majority of the respondents (62%) experienced disturbing thoughts about contracting COVID-19.

**KEYWORDS :** Anxiety and Obsession with covid 19 pandemic

### INTRODUCTION

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are undeniably severe. As a result of the emergence of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak a situation of socio-economic crisis and psychological distress rapidly occurred worldwide. This unpredictable, fast spreading infectious disease has been causing anxiety, stress, fear, frustration and depression to people all over the world.<sup>2</sup>

Social isolation related to restrictions and lockdown measures are linked to feelings of uncertainty for the future, fear of new and unknown infective agents resulting in abnormally increased anxiety.<sup>1</sup>

The impact of COVID-19 on mental health of the masses has emerged as a matter of enormous concern. A number of factors related to COVID-19 can adversely affect the mental health of individuals, with an even higher risk in those predisposed to psychological conditions.<sup>2</sup>

COVID-19 thinking roughly corresponds to spending at least three to seven days, dreaming about the coronavirus, repetitively thinking about the coronavirus, having disturbing thoughts that one has caught the coronavirus, and having disturbing thoughts that one saw particular people who may have the coronavirus. These kinds of persistent and distressing thought patterns are, shown to be maladaptive and are also found to be associated with issues, ranging from drugs/alcohol coping to thoughts of suicide. Therefore, it is vital for health professionals, researchers, and policy makers to be able to recognize dysfunctional thought processes related to the COVID-19 crisis.

Therefore assessing corona pandemic related anxiety using the Coronavirus Anxiety Scale (CAS) and obsession with COVID-19 Scale (OCS) help identify those particularly affected by the fear and uncertainty of this growing pandemic crisis.<sup>3</sup>

### II. Background of the study

According to a study on prevalence of stress, anxiety and depression among the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic in different continents, the highest prevalence of anxiety was found in Asia 32.9 % (95% CI: 28.2–37.9).<sup>4</sup>

The International Labour Organization recently projected that up to 25 million jobs could be lost or affected due to COVID 19 outbreak. A number of factors related to COVID-19 can adversely affect the mental, health of individuals, with an even higher risk in those predisposed to psychological conditions.<sup>2</sup>

A study from Eastern India noted that majority of the responders felt worried about financial restraint during lockdown and 25.6% of the respondents found that COVID-19 had threatened their existence.<sup>6</sup>

The amount of anxiety among college students due to the COVID-19 outbreak in China was positively associated with hampered daily life schedules and delays in academic activities affected by the lockdowns.<sup>7</sup>

One study among more than 1200 subjects from almost 200 cities in China noted that nearly one-third (29%) reported moderate to severe anxiety symptoms and more than 75% of respondents experienced worry about their family members contracting COVID-19.<sup>5</sup>

A study from Eastern India noted that majority of the responders felt worried about financial restraint during lockdown. More than half of the subjects were preoccupied with the idea of getting infected with COVID-19 and 25.6% of the respondents reported that COVID-19 had threatened their existence.<sup>6</sup>

### III. Statement of the problem

Anxiety and obsession associated with COVID-19 pandemic among general population residing in India.

### IV. Objectives

1. To assess the anxiety associated with Covid-19 pandemic among general population.
2. To determine the obsessive thoughts association with Covid-19 pandemic among general population.

**V. Acknowledgement:** The researchers are extremely grateful to Lt.Col.Prof.Meera K Pillai, Principal,SGNC for her immense support for the completion of the study.

### VI. Materials and methods

The study was conducted among 720 Indians in the age group of 18 to 65 years living in different parts of India. Data was collected by online survey with google form. Using a non-randomized referral sampling method, participants were contacted using electronic communication channels including posts on social media platforms, direct digital messaging, personal and professional email lists and through WhatsApp groups. The purpose of the study was explained and got informed consent digitally from the participants. Survey conducted with coronavirus anxiety scale (CAS) and obsession with COVID-19 Scale (OCS).

Non-randomized referral sampling technique was used. Along with socio personal performa general information sheet was used to collect data about home isolation conditions, level of social contact and financial condition.

Coronavirus anxiety scale (CAS) is a self-report mental health screener of dysfunctional anxiety associated with the covid 19 pandemic. Each item of the CAS is rated on a 5-point scale, from 0 (not at all) to 4 (nearly every day), based on experiences over the past two weeks. Obsession with COVID-19 Scale (OCS) is a self-report mental health screener of persistent and disturbed thinking about COVID-19. Each item of the OCS is rated on a 5 point scale, from 0 (not at all) to 4 (nearly every day), based on experiences over the past two weeks.

**VII. RESULTS:**

It was found that majority of the participants (53%) belonged to the age group of 35 to 44 years and nearly two third (73%) of the respondents were females. More than half (56%) of the study participants were graduates. Regarding the employment status, 63% of the participants were full time workers and 21 % were unemployed and remaining participants were engaged in part time jobs. Average family income of most of the participants (38%) was in the range of Rs 150,00 to 30,000.

**Table 1: Data on the extend of social isolation related to COVID 19 (n=720)**

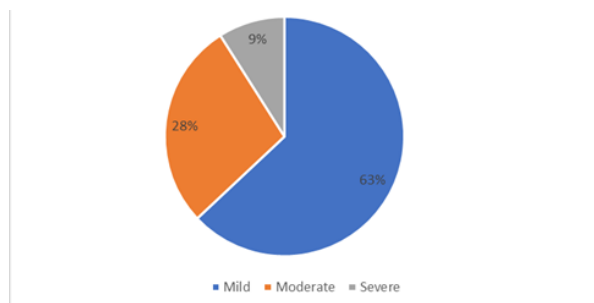
Responses	frequency	Percentage
Not at all	119	16.50
A little much	371	51.50
Very much	144	20.00
Extremely	86	12.00
Total	720	100

Table 1 shows that out of the 720 participants 86 (12%) of participants felt extreme social isolation due to COVID 19 pandemic. Majority ( 51.5%) answered 'a little much social isolation' and 16.5 % of participants did not felt any kind of social isolation .

**Table 2: Data on financial situation related to COVID 19 (n=720)**

Responses	frequency	percentage
Comfortable with extra	74	10.3
Enough but no extra	143	19.9
Have to cut back	389	54.00
Cannot make ends meet	114	15.8
Total	720	100

Majority of the participants (54%) answered that they had to cut back the expenses and 15.8 % were suffering from severe financial crisis. Out of the 720 participants only 74 had comfortable financial status.



**Figure 1: Distribution of participants based on the level of anxiety (n=720)**

Above figure depicts that nearly one third of the participants (28%) reported moderate level of anxiety and 9 % of the participants had reported severe anxiety about the pandemic.

**Table 3: Distribution of participants based on obsessive thoughts about COVID 19 (n=720)**

Sl No	Obsessive thoughts during last 2 weeks	Items	Frequency	Percentage
1	I had disturbing thoughts that I may have caught the coronavirus.	Not at all	33	4.6%
		Rare	75	10.4%
		Several days	166	23.0%
		Nearly every day	446	62.0%
2	I could not stop thinking about the coronavirus.	Not at all	41	5.7 %
		Rare	88	12.2%
		Several days	238	33.1%
		Nearly every day	353	49.0%
3	I dreamed about the coronavirus.	Not at all	354	49.1%
		Rare	295	41.0%
		Several days	57	8.0%
		Nearly every day	14	1.9%

Majority of the respondents (62%) experienced obsessive thoughts nearly every days about contracting COVID-19 . Nearly half of the participants had disturbing thoughts every day and only 8 % of the participants had frequent dreams about coronal virus .

**VIII. Discussion :**

According to the study findings out of the 720 participants 86 participants felt extreme social isolation due to COVID 19 pandemic and majority (51.5%) reported ' a little much social isolation'. Social isolation related to restrictions and lockdown measures are linked to feelings of uncertainty for the future, fear of new and unknown infective agents resulting in abnormally increased anxiety.<sup>1</sup>

Findings related to the financial situation related to COVID 19 shows that majority of the participants (54%) had to cut back the expenses and 15.8 % were suffering from severe financial crisis. The findings are supported by a study from Eastern India in which majority of the responders felt worried about financial restraint during lockdown and 25.6% of the respondents found that COVID-19 had threatened their existence.<sup>6</sup>

Anxiety level of participants was assessed with coronavirus anxiety scale (CAS) and was found that nearly one third of the participants (28%) reported moderate level of anxiety and 9 % of the participants had reported severe anxiety about the pandemic.

Similar findings were observed in a study among more than 1200 subjects from almost 200 cities in China. Study noted that nearly one-third (29%) reported moderate to severe anxiety symptoms.

Another study on the prevalence of stress, anxiety and depression among the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic in different continents showed that the highest prevalence of anxiety was found in Asia ( 32.9 %) (95% CI: 28.2–37.9).<sup>4</sup>

Regarding the obsessive thoughts about COVOD 19 pandemic, most of the respondents (62%) experienced obsessive thoughts nearly every day about contracting COVID-19. Nearly half of the participants had disturbing thoughts every day. These findings are consistent with a study conducted in China in which more than 75% of respondents experienced worry about their family members contracting COVID-19.<sup>5</sup>

Another study from Eastern India noted that more than half of the subjects were preoccupied with the idea of getting infected with COVID-19<sup>6</sup>

## IX. CONCLUSION

Previous global disease outbreaks has shown that people suffering from pandemic-related anxiety tend to exhibit elevated levels of post-traumatic stress, anxiety and suicidality. Obsessive and disturbing thoughts were shown to be maladaptive and were also found to be associated with issues, ranging from drugs/alcohol coping to thoughts of suicide. Therefore, it is vital for health professionals, researchers, and policy makers to be able to recognize the pandemic related anxiety and dysfunctional thought processes related to the COVID-19 crisis.

## REFERENCES

1. G Serafini, A Amerio, A Aguglia, L Sher, M Amore Psychological impact of COVID-19 on the mental health in the general population QJM: An International Journal of Medicine, Volume 113, Issue 8, August 2020, Pages 531–537, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qjmed/hcaa20>.
2. Sherman A. Lee. How much "Thinking" about COVID-19 is clinically dysfunctional? *Brain Behav Immun.* 2020 Jul; 87: 97–98.
3. Sherman A. Lee, Amanda A. Mathis and Emily A. Pappalardo. Clinically significant fear and anxiety of COVID-19: A psychometric examination of the Coronavirus Anxiety Scale. *Psychiatry Research.* Vol290, August 2020.
4. Nader Salery et al. Prevalence of stress, anxiety, depression among the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Globalization and health* article 57 2020.
5. Wang C., Pan R., Wan X., Tan Y., Xu L., Ho C.S. Immediate psychological responses and associated factors during the initial stage of the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) epidemic among the general population in China. *Int J Environ Res Publ Health.* 2020;17:1729
6. Chakraborty K., Chatterjee M. Psychological impact of COVID-19 pandemic on general population in West Bengal: a cross-sectional study. *Indian J Psychiatr.* 2020;62:266–272.
7. Cao W., Fang Z., Hou G., Han M., Xu X., Dong J., Zheng J. The psychological impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on college students in China. *Psychiatr Res.* 2020;287:112934.