



CHALLENGING SITUATIONS FACED BY WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND ASSOCIATED EMOTIONS DURING COVID -19 WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHENNAI CITY (TAMIL NADU)

Social Work

Dr. Sudha M*

Assistant Professor Christ College, Department Of Social Work , Thiruvallur.
*Corresponding Author

Sarah Daphne

F.J, II Yr MBBS, Meenakshi Medical College Hospital And Research Institute

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION Though pandemic is a medical phenomenon, it has its impact on various aspects of individual and society. The restrictive measures taken to slow the pandemic death have great impact on the mental health of the individuals. This paper throws light on the emotions faced and also examines the various challenges faced by the respondents.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To understand the different emotions faced by women & children during pandemic.

To throw light on physical manifestations of emotions faced.

To analyse the various challenging situations faced.

METHODOLOGY The data was collected from clients who approached helpline of ICWO – Chennai during pandemic. Data was collected through In Depth Interview. Qualitative method was used to collect data. When the research felt that the information received has attained a saturated point the interviews were stopped. 4 women, 3 male children & 4 girl children were interviewed.

Major Findings

Emotions Emotions such as anger, fear associate about future an about acquiring infection, confusion, helplessness, guilt, hopelessness, sadness, numbness, frustration, irritation, loneliness, boredom, anxiety, worthlessness and denial were very prominent.

Physical Manifestations Sleeplessness, lack of appetite, lack of concentration, inability to recall things, sudden outburst of tears, irritable skin, rise in blood pressure, changes in energy level, desire lack of hygiene, changes in menstrual cycle.

Challenging situations Stigma face by one respondent was so strong that the family did not share the demise of their mother to neighbours, loss of spouse, parent, loss of job, shifting of respondent from private school to government school, pregnancy, abuse due to increase in intake of alcohol, loss of job, sibling rivalry, strain in marital relationship, unexpected marriage.

CONCLUSION It is very much evident that due to pandemic the mental health of individuals especially children are affected and it is very essential that these needs to be addressed cannot be ignored.

KEYWORDS

Women, Pandemic, Children, Emotions

INTRODUCTION

The Disease caused by Corona Virus was declared as a global pandemic on 11th March 2020 (WHO, 2020). Millions of people across the world were infected and had a notable mortality rate. Though the initial focus was limited to physical health, mental health concerns which were linked to pandemic came in light eventually.

Lockdown, Unemployment, Work from home, online classes, loss of parents were few by-products of pandemic. These situations were not only new to people and they put forth many challenges. These challenges affected the mental health of the population. Some of the symptoms that were commonly noticed were anxiety, depression, and stress. Lock down lead to rise in Partner Violence, physical violence, economical violence and sexual violence. (Giusy Barbara, Federica Facchin et al, 2020)

People not only were traumatised about acquiring the virus but also about the associated stigma. If we take the Indian scenario, ones the test result was positive, health workers from the government would visit the home and the printed notice with the name of the patient infected with Corona virus was stuck. The patient was also moved to the hospital. Stigma, isolation and fear of death made many patients delay their testing and thus their health conditions grew worst. Many patients who had recovered were not allowed to enter the community. Many patients who would have recovered faced death due to delay in testing and treatment and stigma had a great role to play in this.

The fear towards the virus lead to the denial of burying the death in cremation grounds and even health worker were forced to vacate their rental houses as the owner of the house feared contacting the disease.

The pandemic not only affected the physical aspects of the population but it created many other challenging situations This paper has tried to analyse the different challenging situations we have faced during pandemic. The researcher has chosen the two vulnerable group of the population, Women and Children. It examines the new situations, the physical and its emotional manifestations

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METHODOLOGY

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Review of Literature

An online survey was conducted, using the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS-21) and the Facebook Bergen Addiction Scale (FBAS). 751 participants originating from all the Tunisian regions completed the questionnaire. Respondents who were allegedly abused during lockdown were found to have more severe symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. Violence against women also reportedly increased significantly during the lockdown (from 4.4 to 14.8%; $p < 0.001$). Psychological abuse was the most frequent type of violence (96%). Sabrine Sediri, Yosra Zgueb et al, 2020

Study by Amir shows the presence of stigma. The research was done among COVID- 19 survivors. The findings of study indicated that COVID-19-related stigma is prevalent. The common form of stigma was social rejection and labelling. Results showed that the survivors of COVID-19 pandemic faced social rejection and community ostracism. Based on the results, reducing stigmatization of the COVID-19 survivors is vital to control the spread of the pandemic. Thus, an all-inclusive effort is needed to address COVID-19-related stigma and its debilitating consequences by health workers and policymakers. (Amir K, 2020)

In the study “Emotions of COVID-19: Content Analysis of Self-Reported Information Using Artificial Intelligence” it was found that fear and sadness emotions were more prominently expressed. Emotions transitioned into anger and disgust over time. Negative emotions, except for sadness, were significantly higher ($P < .05$) in the second lockdown, showing increased frustration. (Archin Dhikari 2020)

Ms. Sukshma Ramakrishnan from Times of India talks about the battles faced by the survivors of Covid 19. She says that many of the survivors though battled against Covid 19 were severely damaged by stigma from the community. In a survey conducted in Tamil Nadu, 32% of 150 respondents who were working in unorganised sector reported that they had lost their jobs.

Kavitha Muralidharan is a Chennai-based independent journalist and translator. Points out to the number of suicides due to shunning of the patient and the family members, threats they had received from the community members and also local politicians.

Major Finding

Emotions manifested by the respondents

Emotions such as anger, fear associate about future and about acquiring infection, confusion, helplessness, guilt, hopelessness, sadness, numbness, frustration, irritation, loneliness, boredom, anxiety, worthlessness and denial were very prominent.

Mentioned here are some of the verbatim of the respondents

Respondent 14- "I feel angry, when so many people are alive, why did my mother die?"

Respondent 3- "I am scared that my father will die like my mother."

Respondent 1- "I don't feel anything. I don't feel any pain."

Respondent 8- "It is so very boring to be inside home all the time. I can't even talk to friend."

Respondent 10- "Does my parents love me?"

Respondent 3- "What will happen to me and my father?"

Respondent 13- "I know my husband is good. We both lost jobs. Still am angry, how can he beat me. I don't know what to do."

Respondent 11- "I have no choice but to be silent, when I see my husband I feel so irritated".

Physical Manifestations

Sleeplessness, lack of appetite, lack of concentration, inability to recall things, sudden outburst of tears, irritable skin, rise in blood pressure, changes in energy level, desire lack of hygiene, changes in menstrual cycle.

Respondent 3- "I am unable to sleep, I don't wish to eat, nothing is good"

Respondent 5- "I cannot remember what I study, I am studying only still"

Respondent 10- "I feel very stressed, I feel no one likes me, no one wants me, no one supports me"

Respondent 13- "For no reason I cry, at times I don't bath even for a week, it is almost a month since I washed my hair"

Respondents 11- "Even with medication my Blood pressure is always high"

Challenging situations

Challenging Situations faced by the respondents

Stigma face by one respondent was so strong that the family did not share the demise of their mother to neighbours, loss of spouse, parent, loss of job, shifting of respondent from private school to government school, pregnancy, abuse due to increase in intake of alcohol, loss of job, sibling rivalry, strain in marital relationship, unexpected marriage.

Respondent 3- "I was not even allowed to cry loudly, past few days I close my mouth with cloth and cry... My father is feeling ashamed to tell neighbours that my mother dies due to Covid"

Respondent 7- "Already the notice is stuck in our door and people don't talk to us"

Respondent 9- "people from the government will catch us and take us to government hospitals... Like how police catch thieves... if not how they catch dogs"

Respondent 5- "My mother always supports my sister. They got her a new mobile but I have to use my mother's old mobile. What ever she does... my parents support only her".

Respondent 10- "When I have online classes she will talk loudly, will watch tv and will distract me.... but if I even whisper during her classes she will complain to my mother... I will get the beating".

Respondent 8- "My sister can talk to any one on phone, but if I talk my dad will ask... who are you talking to, he is always suspicious of me... he checks my mobile often" Respondent 12- "Before my husband use to drink but now it has increased to a larger extend."

Respondent 11- "This is the first time... first time he has hit me. Now a day he finds fault with every thing. I feel

DISCUSSION

Earnshaw V (2020) in his research paper discusses on the stigma faced by the patients and also puts out impact which varies from delay in treatment to suicide. He shares that patients of COVID-19 are stigmatized and hence are bearing the consequences that are far more pernicious than the condition in its own self. Social rejection has created a barricade between them and society with repercussions for their physical, psychological health, and well-being. The patients are

fearful of being shamed and stigmatized by society, extreme enough to exhibit the symptoms of hysteria. Some have also equated their distress to posttraumatic stress disorder. Stigma was very common in the data which was collected in the current research. One of the respondents shared that he had to pretend that his mother has gone to native while she was death. He also shared his inability to cry loud on the loss of his mother.

IANS conducted an survey and it was shared by The New Indian Express (2020) that 61% of Indians have mental health issues during pandemic. The emotions shared by the respondents in this research confirm the same.

Article published in The Times of India (may 2020), discusses the arise in domestic violence during pandemic and also throws light on the increase in alcohol consumptions. This is also evident in the current research.

Suggestions

We are well aware that this pandemic has startled us physically, economically, socially and psychologically. The impact on physical, economy and social are manifested psychologically. Thus it makes it very glaring that psychological aspect of the populations needs immediate attention. NGOs can join hands and assist the individuals to handle their new challenges of life. Government can appoint medical social workers or counsellors in Primary Health Care centres. Health workers, animators can be trained to reduce the anxiety of the patients and stigma in the community level.

Schools should appoint counselors to address the issues faced by children. Hospitals can appoint Medical social workers and Psychiatric Social workers to address the psychological needs of the patients.

CONCLUSIONS

This research clearly establishes the deep fissures, which manifest in times of crises, such as a pandemic. Pandemic has taught as main this and one of them is the impact of pandemic on mental health. All relevant stakeholders, including the government, media and local administrative bodies, as well as hospitals and school should work towards reducing the stigma and this would eventually improve the testing and treatment. Counselor can play an importance role in these new challenging situations. The sessions with counselors can enhance the problem solving skills and also assist in improvising our coping strategies.

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