



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Psychology**

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A REVIEW ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF WOMEN**

**KEY WORDS:**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Covid-19 Pandemic is life time experience to all human beings and it greatly affected human lives across the globe. Social isolation, high risk of infection, economic problems have increased mental health issues, and stress levels. Stress experiences may lead to various chronic health conditions such as hypertension, coronary heart disease, and prolonged stressful events that can decrease performance level. Females play multiple roles in society and are more vulnerable to social isolation, quarantine, loss of jobs, lockdown due to various factors. An increase in financial problems, prolonged homestay time for all members, loss of education, increased domestic violence have adversely affected the psychological health of females during the present period of crisis. Women play major roles in collective social wellbeing. Attention needs to be focused to build up policies including a multidisciplinary approach to deal with the physical, mental health of females.

**INTRODUCTION :**

One of the biggest disparities they found in their research was that 27% of women had reported increases in challenges in relation to mental illness. This compared to 10% of men. They identified that due to the fact that unpaid labor in the house had increased exponentially in many cases this had led to stress, worries about food, work and health care. Women were also almost twice as likely to report that accessing quality healthcare services that they needed had been harder during the pandemic As people have faced new working conditions and isolation, it's hardly surprising that mental health has suffered. However, added pressures like looking

The Covid-19 Pandemic crisis has greatly affected human lives across the world. Social isolation, high risk of infection, economic problems have increased mental health issues, and stress levels<sup>1</sup>. Stress is a complex body response with emotional, cognitive, and biological changes. Excessive stress may lead to long- and short-term disability in various human systems and cause activation of different defense mechanisms. The stress responses differ according to the type of stressors and the individual's physiological responses. The responses consist of neuroendocrine and behavioral adaptations, as well as the changes in the activity of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and immune function.

Covid -19 Pandemic and Mental health: The hazardous effects of COVID-19 on mental health is an international urgent public health problem. A rapid review conducted on 16 studies (Eleven studies were from China, two from India, and one from Spain, Italy, and Iran) demonstrated the following observations: Prevalence of all forms of depression was 20%; anxiety 35%; stress 53%. The prevalence rates of depression, anxiety, stress, sleep problems, psychological distress were found to be higher during the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>1</sup>.

A cross-sectional study was conducted in Assam to understand the impact of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and lockdown on the mental health status of the local population. Mental health status was assessed with DASS-21. As compared to the National Mental Health Survey of India, conducted in 2016, the frequency of individuals with moderate to extremely severe depression, anxiety, and stress was quite higher.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. To study the present scenario of the women During covid 19 Pandemic

**Methodology:**

The article is based secondary data from literature various

studies from respective journals, newspapers, books, websites and BBC news covering wide range of collection of related information on women mental health and wellbeing condition.

**Review :**

The problems associated with the virus outbreak, lockdowns, economic recession are predicted to lead to increases in suicide as well as mental disorders associated with suicide across the globe. In Canada suicide cases associated with joblessness increased from 418 to 2114. Similar findings were also observed in the USA, Pakistan, India, France, Germany, Italy. An increase in psychological distress in the general population was also observed in different studies conducted during this period<sup>6</sup>. Mental health problem of Females and the Pandemic: A significant degree of heterogeneity has been noted in different studies. Higher rates of symptoms of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, psychological distress, and stress were reported in the general population in China, Spain, Italy, Iran, the US, Turkey, Nepal, Denmark. Risk factors associated with distress measures included the female gender. There are plenty of challenges faced by modern women in daily lives and more so in developing countries. Poverty affects women more than men. All these factors add extra stress to life and are on the rise during the present pandemic.

Gender as a determinant of mental health and mental illness. The patterns of psychological distress and disorders among women are different from men. Women have a higher mean level of internalizing disorders while men demonstrate a higher mean level of externalizing ones and women predominate in rates of common mental disorders. Women who are alcoholic or drug edicts are more likely to attribute their drinking to a traumatic event and are more likely to have been abused. Social and gender-specific factors determine the prevalence and course of mental disorders in females.

Women are more vulnerable to social isolation, quarantine, loss of jobs, lockdown due to various factors. Females play multiple roles in society. An increase in financial problems, prolonged homestay time for all members, loss of education, increased domestic violence have adversely affected psychological health. Women play major roles in collective social wellbeing. Stress can lead to early aging and death or sometimes in reduced levels of performance. Stress experiences often lead to various chronic health conditions such as hypertension, coronary heart disease.

Gendered violence has specifically become a prominent topic of discussion in developing countries in recent times. Dowry deaths, honor killings, witchcraft-related murders,

female infanticide, female foeticide, sexual crimes, rape, human trafficking, forced prostitution, domestic violence, forced and child marriage, abduction, acid attacks are on the rise.

A study was conducted to assess the effect of the COVID-19-related lockdown on Tunisian women's mental health and gender-based violence. DASS-21 and FBAS were the two tools used. Among 751 participants more than (57.3%) reported extremely severe distress symptoms, as per the DASS-21. Those subjects who had a history of mental illness and who were allegedly abused during lockdown were found to have more severe symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. Violence against females was found to be increased significantly during the lockdown with psychological abuse being the most common type of violence (96%). Women who had experienced abuse before the lockdown were at an increased risk of violence during the lockdown.

Not only violence but several other factors add up to the stress levels in females. Unhealthy competitions at workplace, performative gender roles, insecurities at home and outside, are only a few of the several factors. Psychological stress at work or at home raises the risk of myocardial infarction across all ethnic groups in both genders across the globe. Stress at work is an important risk factor for the emergence of metabolic syndrome. Plausible pathophysiological mechanisms involve direct neuroendocrine effects. An autonomic imbalance is associated with stress and results in a decrease of parasympathetic influence and increased sympathetic activity.

Negative emotions are found to be strongly related to the development of heart diseases. Silent transient myocardial ischemia is a condition in which a reduction in positive mood and increase in worry can reduce blood supply to the heart just within 15 minutes. The WISE (Women's Ischemic syndrome evaluation) study is changing the concept that women suffer less from heart diseases. The cardiovascular death rate has declined steadily only in men. In patients with Coronary artery disease, mental stress is a well-known cause for the development of ischemia. Mental stress increases myocardial oxygen demand.

Though women have a life-expectancy advantage over men, a marked disadvantage exists concerning morbidity. Individual differences in physical and mental health are further notably explained by the degree of stress individuals endure, with women being more affected by stressors than men. Urban populations are at higher risk of developing CHD and the prevalence rate per 1000 for CHD is higher in females as compared to males in the age group of 25-54 years. There are various risk factors for the development of CHD. Some are modifiable (cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, elevated serum cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, sedentary habits, stress) and others non-modifiable (age, sex, family history, genetic factors). Stress is a modifiable risk factor for the development of CHD. Women and men are different in their physical attributes and psychological makeup. Women and men communicate, deal in relationships, express their feelings, and react to stress in different ways. The gender-sensitive viewpoint of psychological theories is known as alpha bias. Alpha bias may be rooted in the social conditioning and power structure of the societies.

**CONCLUSION :**

Psychological well-being is inextricably linked to lifestyle behaviours, such as diet, exercise and sleep. Therefore, changes in these behaviors, such as declines in sleep quality, diet quality and physical activity, have been associated with negative mood during the COVID-19 pandemic. postpartum women reported less opportunity for incidental physical activity due to working from home, the closure of retail shops

and the cancellation of children's activities and events in the community. There was also limited opportunity for out-of-home exercise due to quarantine. The closure of exercise facilities and avenues, such as gymnasiums and swimming pools, further reduced exercise opportunities. These behavioral changes in response to the pandemic are associated with weight gain, which in turn could be an additional source of distress associated with body dissatisfaction and weight stigma in women. Thus, changes in these lifestyle behaviors could contribute to poor mental health status.

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