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Original Research Article

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out to assess the impact of Covid-19 on socio-economic and psychological life of Indian people. The study was carried out through web based data collection from July 17 to 30 July 2020. A total of 256 individuals of various economic groups and various professions participated in the survey. The study reveals that Covid-19 affected the normal daily routine and eating habits in majority of the people and also created a sense of fear in them. The main cause of fear was Covid-19 related information shared by the news channels and information circulated on social media. About 41 % the participants also revealed to have taken immunity enhancing products to improve their immunity and to cope with the stress due to Covid-19. Majority of participants accepted to be more worried about their relatives during the period. Covid-19 has created anxiety, stress, depression and fear. Economic condition of the people was also adversely affected due to Covid-19. The people, working in private sectors and businessmen were primarily affected economically.

KEYWORDS: Covid-19, Socio-economic, Psychological Impact, Lockdown, Social Media

Covid-19 is the most dreadful disease which has affected almost every country of the world. The disease, caused by Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, was first reported in Wuhan Hubei Province, China, in the December 2019. On March 11, 2020, World Health Organization (WHO) declared it as a pandemic disease. Coronavirus are a group of related RNA viruses that have long been recognized as important pathogens to cause respiratory infections. Covid-19 virus (SARS-CoV-2), a positive-stranded RNA virus with a crown-like appearance, exhibits faster human-to-human transmission as compared to SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV. The Corona virus is named after the crown-like spikes on the outer surface of the virus structure (Shereen *et al.*, 2020). The virus belongs to the family Coronaviridae in the Nidovirales order. The main problem with Covid-19 virus is its fast transmission rate. The virus spreads through small droplets, expelled by a person with Covid-19, during coughing, sneezing or speaking. Though people of any age group can be affected by Covid-19 but elderly people, and people with pre-existing medical conditions like hypertension, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory illness are at high risk (Zimmer *et al.*, 2020). Since till today no medicine or vaccine is available to prevent and treat the disease, the only available option is to prevent the spread of the disease. Keeping this in mind, Prime Minister declared countrywide lockdown on 25th March, 2020 in India. This was a major step, taken by the government to cope with this pandemic. Initially, the lockdown was announced for 21 days but due to uncontrolled situation, lockdown was further extended up-to June in different phases. With high rise in rate of transmission of the pandemic, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths on the global Scale, lockdown is the only method to control the virus from reaching the rest of the mass.

Though lockdown was an essential step to contain the spread of the disease but it has affected the people in many ways. It has not only affected the physical and mental health of the people but has also affected their social life. The lives of people were drastically affected with lockdown and fear related to the disease's potential effects and transmission (Shah *et al.*, 2020). In the opinion of Parashar (2020), Covid-19 pandemic needs to be considered more than a health crisis; it is all economic, social and human crises. It also has impact on most of the industries, business and tourism due to restrictions in the movement of the people. People have to reduce their demands for clothes, entertainment and travel and were more confined to the basic needs. Social distancing, self-isolation and travel restrictions have led to a reduced workforce across all economic sectors and caused many jobs to be lost (Nicola *et al.*, 2020). The normal life has been totally disturbed. A study by Kumar and Dwivedi (2020) has shown that people feel socially isolated due to lockdown as they are bounded to stay inside their home and not allowed to go outside or meet people. According to Chen *et al.*, (2020) prolonged home stays can change the behaviors that lead to inactivity. Staying at home for long time has also created a sense of fear and despair in the minds of people.

Not only Covid-19, but studies from the influenza, SARS, Ebola and swine flu outbreaks all recorded various types of impacts on the society (Douglas *et al.*, 2009; Barrett *et al.*, 2011 and Shapovalova *et al.*, 2015). Outbreaks of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndromes (SARS) in 2003 and Influenza A Virus Subtype H7N9 (H7N9) in 2013 also caused huge negative impacts on population health and the economy. A study by Qui *et al.*, (2018) revealed that outbreaks of SARS and H7N9 had very important impact on China, causing significant negative impacts on health, the economy and

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even national and international security. Bhat *et al.*, (2020) have made a study to understand the impact of initial stages of Covid-19 on the people of Kashmir. They studied the behavioral changes in the people during early stages of Covid-19. Bhavani (2020) has studied the impact of Covid-19 on rural lives and livelihoods in India and found that Covid-19 has severely affected lives and livelihoods across rural India. The present study was carried out to evaluate the impact of Covid-19 on the social and economic life and psychological mindset of the people across the country.

METHODOLOGY

To analyze the probable impact of covid-19 lockdown on the social, economic and psychological life of the people a study was carried from 17th July 2020 to July 30, 2020. The study was carried out by online data collection survey through Google form. Total 256 people participated in the survey. A self-prepared semi-structured anonymous questionnaire was used to record the responses of the participants. The questionnaire

carried questions related to the social, economic and psychological life. Participants were free to omit any question if they were willing to do so.

The study was carried out on the people above of 18 years. Four age groups were selected viz. 18-35, 36-45, 46-60 and 61 onwards to understand the impact of Covid lockdown on the people belonging to different age groups. Both males and females were involved in the survey. Since economic condition is a key factor in determining the social and family life of the people, the criterion of income was also taken into account and four income groups were set up for the study i.e., monthly income less than Rs 50000, between Rs 50000-100000, between Rs 100000-200000 and monthly income more than Rs 200000.

OBSERVATIONS AND RESULTS

Total 256 people, belonging to different age groups, income, profession, and educational qualification participated in the survey. Both males and female were part of the survey.

Table 1: Socio-economic Profile of the Participants

Socio-economic conditions		Number of participants	% of participants
Age group (in years)	18-30	109	42.6
	31-45	64	25
	46-60	69	27
	61 onwards	14	5.4
Gender	Male	117	45.7
	Female	139	54.3
Highest educational qualification	Undergraduate	50	19.5
	Post graduate	123	48
	Doctorate	71	27.7
	Professionals	10	3.9
	Upto XII class	2	0.8
Profession	Government employee	92	35.9
	Private employee	36	14.1
	Business	5	2
	Self employed	12	4.7
	Unemployed	9	3.5
	Student	96	37.5
	Retired	6	2.3
Income groups (monthly income, in rupees)	Less than 50000	47	18.4
	Between 50000-100000	43	16.8
	Between 100000-200000	45	17.6
	More than 200000	22	8.6
	No income	99	38.7
Marital status	Single	101	39.5
	Married	155	60.5
Family	Nuclear	167	65.2
	Joint	89	34.8

Socio-Economic Profile of the Participants

The socio-economic profile of the participants has been given in table 1. Out of the total 256 participants, a majority of the participants (42.6%) were youngsters and belonged to the age group 18-30 years. 5.4% participants were of more than 61 years age. Both males and females participated in the study and more than half of the participants (54.3%) were female. 60.5% were married and more than half of them (65.2%) had nuclear family. Most of the participants, who participated in the survey, were of good educational qualification. About half (48%) of them had postgraduate as their highest educational degree and only 0.8% had education up to higher secondary. About half of the participants were regular employees (government or private). Only 2% businessmen participated in the present study. A large number of students (37.5%) participated in the survey. A small number (2.3%) retired people also took part in the present survey. People from diverse income groups were part of the present survey. 18.4% participants had monthly income of less than 50000 rupees. As the higher income group is concerned, 8.6% participants earned more than 2 lakhs per month. Since a large number of youngster (students) also participated in the survey, they were of no income group.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social Impact of Covid-19

Impact of Covid-19 on social life has been shown in figures 1 to 8. Majority (94.4%) of the participants was of the view that Covid-19 had affected their normal life. For 55.5% people the effect was very significant. In 40.9% respondents Covid-19 had no considerable effect.

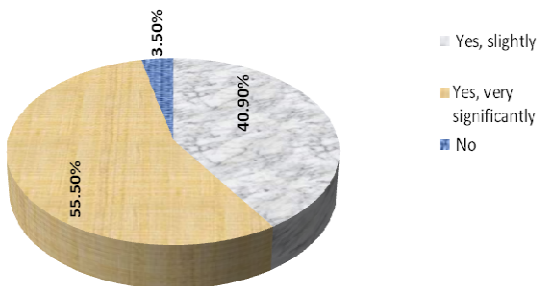


Figure 1: Do you think Covid19 has affected your normal life?

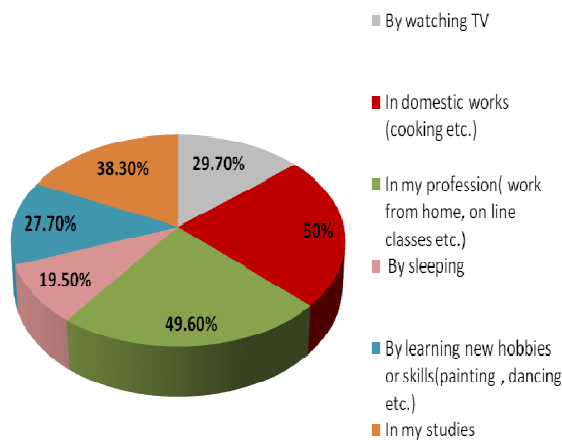


Figure 2: How did you spend your time during lockdown period?

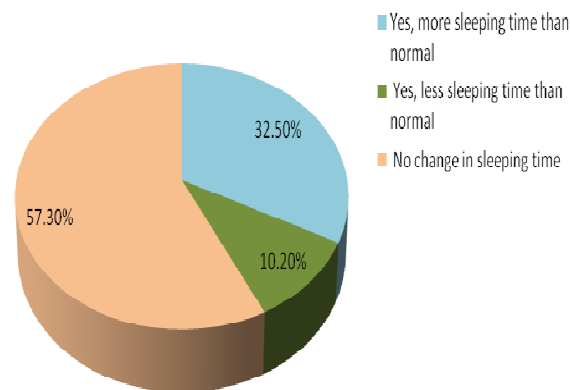


Figure 3: Has Covid-19 altered your sleeping hours?

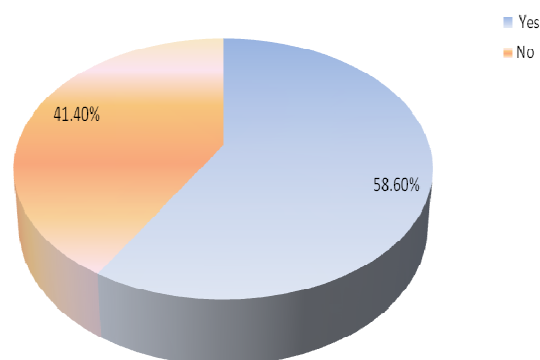


Figure 4: Has lockdown changed your eating habits?

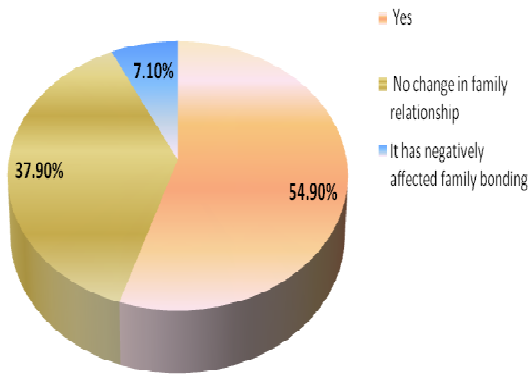


Figure 5: Do you think that Covid-19 period has helped in improving the family bonding?

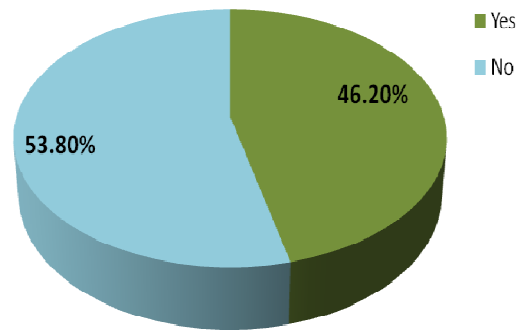


Figure 8: Did you participate in any social activity like distribution of food or helping the migrants or poor people during lockdown/ Covid-19 period?

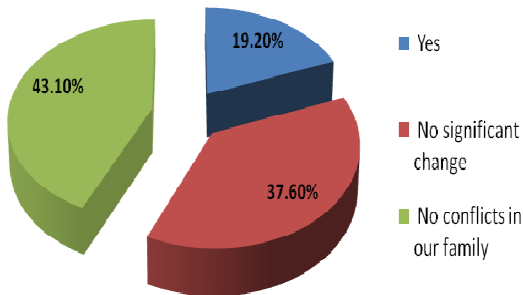


Figure 6: Did you notice a rise in family conflicts in your family during Covid-19?

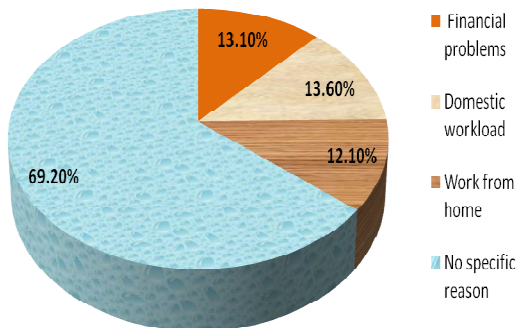


Figure 7: What was/were the reasons for the conflicts?

In response to, how the people spent their time during lockdown period, about half of the participants (49.6%) spent their lockdown period in domestic works and also in the works related to their profession i.e., work from home or in case of teachers, in online classes. During the lockdown, as maids were not allowed in most of the houses, this increased the domestic workload and people had to work more. Since, about 37 % participants in the present study were students, it was also found that 38.3% participants also studied during lockdown and it was a meaningful way of spending time. Most of the participants involved in more than one activity during the lockdown period. 27.7% respondents (mainly students and people in the age group of 18-30 years) also learnt new hobbies during the Covid-19 period and made the best utilization of their lockdown period. 19.5% participants also used sleeping as their pastime during the lockdown period. It was more with the people in the age group 46 to 60, and 61 and above. But for more than half of the participants (57.7%) Covid-19 had no effect on their sleeping time, though 32.5% participants slept more than usual during the Covid-19 period. For 58.6% participants, Covid-19 also influenced their eating habits and they ate more and more types of food items during lockdown.

Since during the lockdown, people had to stay at their homes and were not allowed to move out, it could also affect their family relationships. When asked if the lockdown helped the people in improving their family relations, about 55% participants claimed that lockdown period had a positive impact on their family rapport and lockdown helped in improving family bonding. But in 7% cases, lockdown negatively affected their family relations. About 19% participants accepted a rise in family conflicts during Covid-19, but majority of them had no specific reason for such conflicts. According to Powar (2020), cases of domestic violence have more than doubled in the country during lockdown period.

According to him, staying in a confined space with family is not all a rosy picture for everyone. It can be extremely oppressive and claustrophobic for large low-income families huddled together in small single-room houses. The low percentage of respondents, having negative impact on family relations, observed in the present survey, might be because that about 42% participants in the present study, were from the average or above average income group and about 61% respondents had no significant effect on their income due to lockdown. In addition to financial crises, overload of domestic work, stress and professional responsibilities could be the other probable reasons for family conflicts. For about 38% participants lockdown had no significant effect on their personal relations and they found no change in family bonding due to lockdown.

A large section of the society, especially laborers had to suffer a lot during the initial period of lockdown. Covid-19 also provided an opportunity to the people to come forward and help such people. Many people, from all sections of the society, helped the sufferers in different ways. About half of the participants (46%) of the present survey also participated in such social activities like distribution of food or helping the migrants or poor people during Covid-19 period. It is a very positive sign for the society as a whole.

Psychological Impact of Covid-19

Figure 9 to 13 represent psychological impact of Covid-19 on the participants. Varshney et al., (2020), on the basis of their survey, concluded that Covid-19 in India had a significant psychological impact. Approximately one third of respondents in their studies had significant psychological impact. A study conducted by Sønderkov et al., (2020) from Denmark also reported psychological well-being as negatively affected. Anxiety, depression and stress are very common during a pandemic situation. Covid-19 pandemic had created a sense of fear in the people. A major portion of the participants (about 75%) felt scared and depressed during the lockdown, though for about 30% participants, the feeling of fear was mainly during the initial period. As the time passed, they were able to adjust themselves with the situation. About 12% participants admitted that they were not able to cope with the situation and felt afraid or depressed during the whole lockdown period and even today. In response to a question, asking the reasons for their fear, a major percentage of the participants (about 70%) were of the opinion that Covid-19 related news on the news channels were the main reason for their fear. Their response indicates that media has very vital impact on the people and it is very important that news channels must understand their responsibilities and should try to avoid news which could cause a negative effect on the people in such type of situations. In addition to the news on the TV channels, social media did play an important role in creating panic. About 46% of the participants

found that the messages, circulated on the on the social media, were also responsible for creating fear in their minds. Proper use of social media is very essential and fake and irrelevant messages must not be circulated.

When asked about the concern of the people for their near and dear ones, most of the participants (91%) replied that they did worry about their relatives and friends during Covid-19 lockdown. Out of these, about 60.4% participants answered that they worried more than usual during the Covid-19 period. For about 9% respondents Covid-19 did not have much effect and they were not anxious for their loved ones. 31% respondents were worried about the well beings of their relatives and friends but it was as usual. Kumar and Diwedi (2020) also found similar results in their study and they reported about more than two-third participants (79%) to be more worried about their family and friends than before lockdown due to the disease condition.

Covid-19 had created very deep effect in the minds of some of the people. About 24% participants in their responses admitted that, some of the times, they felt that they themselves were infected with Covid-19 though they did not have any major symptom of the disease. It was just because of the fear in their mind. But a large number of participants (76%) did not have any such feeling. As the people were very much concerned about their health and government also emphasized on this issue, a question was asked about the measures taken by them to improve their immunity, if any. A large number of participants said that they gave proper emphasis on proper and balanced diet to boost their immunity. In addition to that about 40.6% participants also took immunity boosting medicines and products.

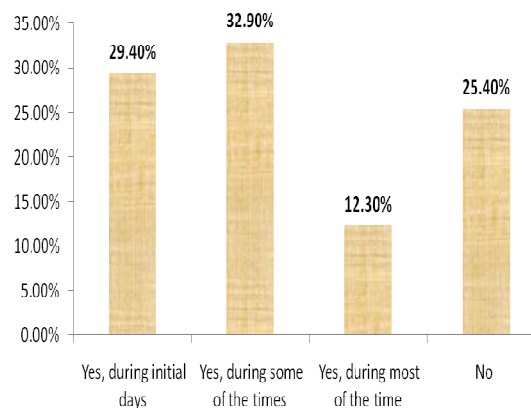


Figure 9: Did you feel afraid or depressed during lockdown?

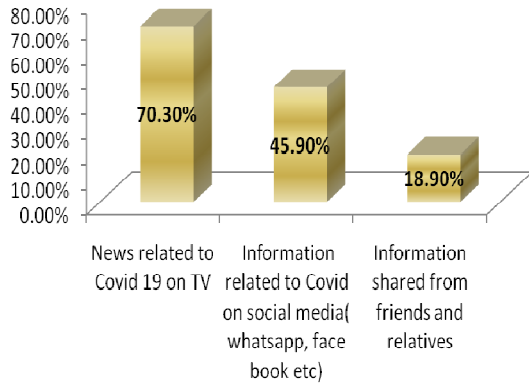


Figure 10: What was/were the main causes that afraid or depressed you most?

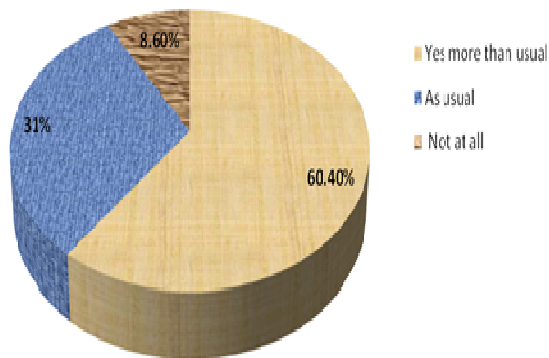


Figure 11: Were you worried about your family and friends due to Covid-19 disease

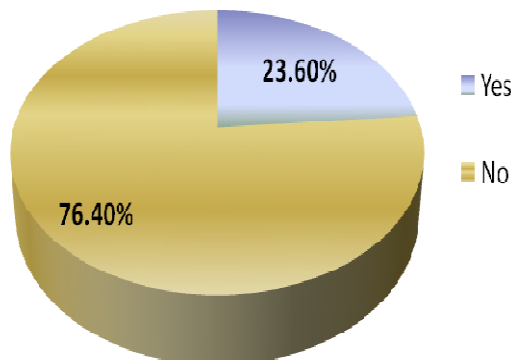


Figure 12: Did you ever feel that you have been infected with Covid-19?

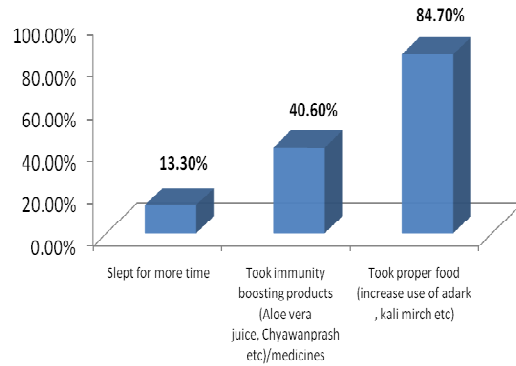


Figure 13: Did you try anything to boost your immunity during these days?

Economic Impact of Covid-19

As lockdown was imposed during Covid-19 period for more than 3 months and people were not allowed to move out from their homes it could affect the income of the many people. Impact of the lockdown on economic conditions, in our study, has been shown in figures 14 and 15. About half of the participants (48%) faced financial crises due to Covid-19. This number also includes some of the students who faced reduction in their pocket money. In the present study about 61% participants did not have any significant change in their income. This good proportion of the participants, having no change in their income was due to the fact that a large number of participants in the present survey were government servants and in case of government servants there was no significant change in their salaries. But participants working in private sectors and businessmen did have adverse effects on their income and that is the reason that about 34% participants had reduction in their salary or income from business. 1.85% participants had to change their job and 2.46% participants, in our study, lost their jobs. A very less number (0.61%) of participants had increase in their income. The increase in income was of the people, involved in business related to medicine or grocery.

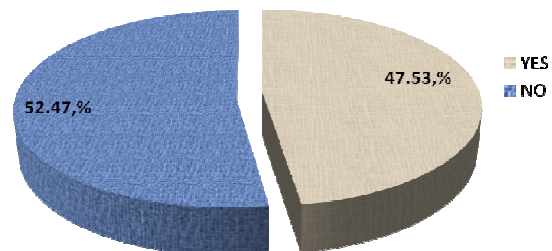


Figure 14: Did you face any significant financial crises due to Covid- 19

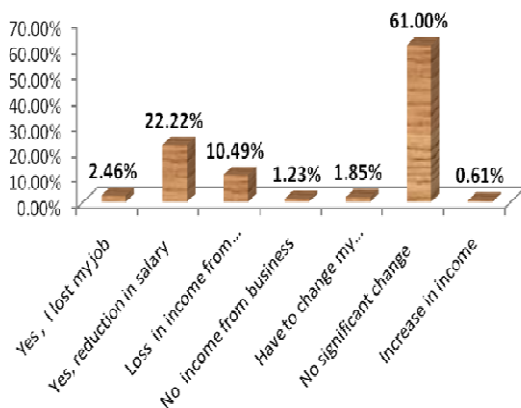


Figure 15: Was there any effect of Covid- 19 on your job/business/income?

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the present study it can be concluded that Covid-19 had a significant effect on the lives of the people. It not only affected their social life but also created panic and an environment of fear. Covid-19 created stress in most of the people, though the intensity and duration could vary from person to person. Covid-19 adversely affected the economic condition of a lot of people. It definitely had a negative effect on the source of income of many people, especially business men and the people working in private sectors. Some people had to lose their jobs while some others had to change their profession. On a positive side, lockdown period also provided an opportunity to the people to spend time with their family members and taught them to live a simple life in minimum budget.

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