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## EFFECTS OF LOCKDOWN ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG GENERATION

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### Abstract

Covid-19 pandemic affected the lives of every age cohort. This study aims at highlighting the level of mental health distress and changes in the behavioral pattern of youth during the pandemic. It seeks to examine the impact of the pandemic on youth mental health and its effects on daily activities, family relations, academics, and health. It also analyses the psychological disorders that are being faced by the youth. Through both online as well as an offline survey it is found that lockdown had severe adverse impacts on the mental health of youth due to factors such as disruption of education and routine, household income, an increase in domestic violence etc. Females reported symptoms of anxiety, depression, tension during the COVID-19 pandemic. Low self-esteem, lack of confidence among youth have disturbed their mental health badly. Some reported that they feel deeply anxious and are losing motivation and hope for the future. 73.8% of respondents reported that they felt lonely or isolated during the pandemic period, even though 26.2% were been able to stay in touch with friends. Youths have expressed concern about the fears of their future. Inexorable circumstances like the closure of school and colleges, bad family relations, financial problems, and future concerns which are beyond normal experiences lead to stress, anxiety, and feeling of helplessness in all.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Mental health, youth, domestic violence, stress, psychological disorders

### 1. Introduction.

The pandemic came at a time when many educators were already concerned about the rapidly rising level of stress being experienced by children and young people facing pressure to succeed academically and professionally and to sustain in a heavily competitive environment. As compared to adults the pandemic has increased long-term adverse consequences on youth. The switch to online learning disturbed their studies given that many students lack access to mobile

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and the internet. As per the current world happiness report 2021 India has been ranked 139 out of 149 countries. We examine the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of youth and its effects on their daily activities, family relations, academics, and health. We also analyze the psychological disorders that are being faced by the youth. To achieve this objective, both online and offline surveys were conducted covering students from age groups 10 to 25 years. A total of 865 responses were collected.

## **2. Effects on the mental health of youth due to disruption of education and routine.**

Pandemic has caused disruptions to the education of children. Students reported that because of not going to school, their power of thinking and understanding is decreasing. Children have to lock themselves inside their rooms and kept themselves isolated from their friends. Many adults have admitted that they are having difficulty in sleeping and eating. Many parents and caretakers have reported that children's behavior has changed and they are facing mental and emotional difficulties. They are not acting normal as they were before the pandemic.

Students are facing difficulties while concentrating in their classes. We also find that students often get bored with online classes due to a lack of engagement. They also have to face technical problems. Some students do not have access to the internet, smartphones, or laptops to attend online classes. This shift of studies from the physical classroom to online learning has become a source of mental illness among youth. While conducting the survey we find that many youths are facing disorders like obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). In this state, people have unwanted and repeated thoughts, feelings, sensations, and behavior that drive them to do something again and again.

The second is attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). People reported that they are having trouble focusing on a single task and even they are unable to sit at a particular place for a long time.

The third is an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), in this people become frustrated and short-tempered when their routines get disturbed. These are some disorders that we observed among most of the youths during the pandemic. They reported that these changes in their behavior are due to a lack of engagement in social activities and a lack of physical outings. They feel like they have alienated at their place.

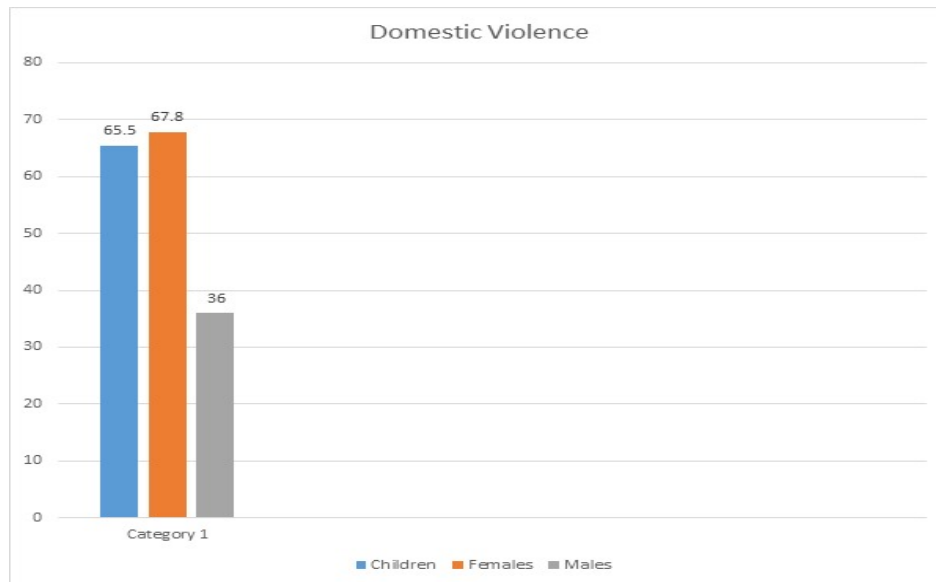
## **3. Effects on the mental health of youths due to domestic violence.**

The COVID-19 pandemic poses major challenges to the mental health of youth due to the increasing rate of domestic violence at their place. While both offline and online survey was conducted but people especially women were more likely to respond via online medium about domestic violence against them. In offline surveys, most of the people ignored answering these types of questions. We observed that domestic violence is not just limited to women but it's to children also. 67.8% of females have reported that they faced physical abuse, sexual abuse by their intimate partners. They reported that mostly male members of the family increased the intake of alcoholic substances due to loss of their jobs and financial pressure. This also has created an impact on their mental health and has become a reason behind all these abuses.

Exposure to these kinds of violence is harming the family's children's emotional and psychological well-being. 65.5% of children reported that due to the bad conditions of their house, their mental health has also been severely affected.

It is not just female young adults but male young adults are also the victim of violence at their places. 36% of males reported for the same. They have isolated themselves socially and experiencing loneliness and lack of support which is contributing to the feelings of depression. They are feeling hopeless or sad about their life. They are unable to make a decision or concentrate on anything.

**Figure 1: Percentage of Victim of Domestic Violence**



#### **4. Females reporting symptoms of anxiety, depression, tension during the COVID-19 pandemic**

COVID-19 pandemic has affected the mental and physical health of females. It was observed that women are more likely to report poor mental health as compared to men. Women have to manage the financial condition of their families. They are also a victim of domestic violence. They have the responsibility of the whole family, and their bad mental health also impacted their families and children. It's obvious that men also faced lots of challenges due to the loss of their jobs and banned sources of income, but because of their homesickness women used to be the victim of their anger. This disrupted their mental health badly. According to our research, 62% of females have reported the disrupted mental health of themselves. They also reported that either male members go out for work or they are allowed to become financially self-independent so that they can get rid of this kind of mental pressure.

Males also reported bad mental health during the pandemic as around 70% are facing bad mental health and are going through all the tensions related to disrupting economic conditions. All responsibilities of family and future have made a bad impact on their mental state. Many of them started taking alcoholic and smoking substances to overcome this mental stress which is deeply affecting their physical health also.

## **5. Effects on Mental health due to the impact on household income.**

Pandemic exposed many people to experience situations linked to poor mental health outcomes such as job loss and lack of income opportunities. Many people lost their jobs and source of income. Based on responses that we received we can identify that people with lower incomes are generally more likely to report major negative mental health impacts from worry or stress. Both rich and poor, everyone is worried about the financial loss. 56% of people whose income is 1 lakh or below/ annum reported major stress and mental pressure, and it's not just working member of the family who is suffering, but their whole family has to suffer from the same mental pressure.

45.8% of people whose income was between 1 to 5 lakh/annum have reported that they were also not getting salary as before the pandemic, they were getting half salary just because of online work, it's also affected their economic conditions and working from home with computer, laptops, and mobiles affected their mental and physical health also. And not getting proper salaries also affected their financial condition and that's the main reason for mental stress among them.

48.2% of people whose income was between 5 to 8 lakhs/annum reported that their economic conditions were negatively affected. But we observed from their responses that they were not affected much by the pandemic, economic loss was also there but it's not as pathetic as poor or middle-class people. 33% of people who were above 8 lakhs/annum reported major stress just because their financial status was deteriorating, that was the main reason for mental stress and anxiety but a thing to notice here that in this case, all mental stress was just on parents or those who were working, children were not found stressed here.

## **6. Impact of the pandemic on the mental health of underprivileged youths**

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the life of underprivileged children and youth vulnerable. Daily wage workers who use to earn and eat daily, their work has been snatched and they are jobless that led to economic problems and starvation.

We have also met people who reported that they have to work as MGNREGA workers (Mahatma Gandhi national rural employment guarantee act) to earn money to pay their fees and help their families financially. And these types of cases have also been in news.

The closure of schools snatched the mid-day meal benefits from children. They were mostly from poor families who cannot even afford food.

We have also covered people like street vendors, ragpickers, and beggars helping their families with work to earn their livelihood. They have to suffer a lot during the pandemic. They told us that most of the day they have to sleep without food, their children are being malnutrition and ill. Many children and adults have been found working in small shops selling fruits, vegetables, clothes, and many others things to earn their daily livelihood. Many of them are found helping their parents in farming. Child labor can easily be seen here. They have to work for their survival. The children who were already malnourished and in a precarious situation have gone under a high level of anxiety and stress because of the pandemic.

Financial pressure at young age denies youth the right to happiness, education, and equal opportunities in life. Around 43% of underprivileged youth facing mental trauma due to their bad economic condition. They have reported more somatic symptoms and feelings of suicide.

An increasing number of poor and street children have no source of income, no home, and no food to eat. These children have an increased risk of being exploited as the victim of violence and malnutrition.

### 7. Effects of the pandemic on the mental health of youth according to age.

Children experienced mental distress due to disruption in routines, stress in households, loss of social contact. Child abuse also started which lead to emotional and psychological problems. 47% of children from the 10 to 15 age group faced mental stress due to the pandemic.

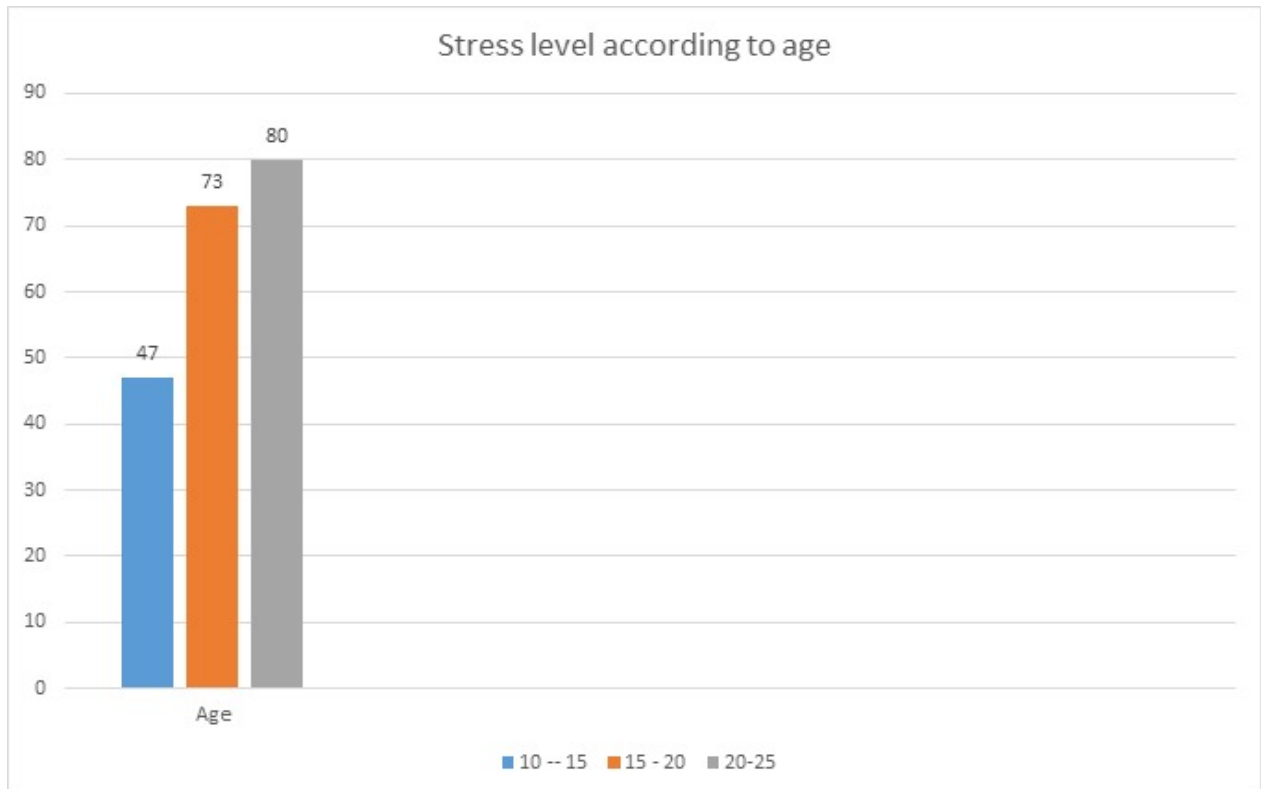
Young adults are the major sufferers of the pandemic due to a lack of social contact with friends and family. 73% of people from the 15 to 20 age group have endured mental stress.

Many adults reported specific negative impacts on their mental health and well being such as difficulty in sleeping, eating, increase in alcohol consumption and substance use, worsening chronic conditions. 80% of people from the age group of 20 to 25 have endured challenges and disturbed mental conditions.

As we can easily find here that as the age group increases, the mental troubles of the people are also increasing in the same way.

We have also discussed all these problems in previous sections. Here we are just briefing it with data so that the mental impact on the people according to age group can be ascertained.

**Figure 2: Stress level According to Age**



## **8. Major problems faced by youth before and after the pandemic.**

Though pandemic has affected the lives of people badly and created a scenario of stress, anxiety, tension, depression, and a lot of other issues also. Anxiety and stress, depression levels affecting the mental health of youths as reported that 68% of the young generation are facing these issues. It directly affected the mental health of people and made them emotionally and mentally retarded.

We reported from our survey results that suicidal tendency is particularly pronounced for young people with 23.6% reported serious thoughts of suicide. And they even tried to end their life due to ongoing family issues and their disrupted mental health.

Before COVID-19 pandemic mental health of people was not much disrupted. They found themselves busy with their daily schedule. Mental pressure was also there but exposure to the outer atmosphere and social interaction or interaction with friends or outdoor games kept them busy so that their problems didn't get a chance to create any adverse mental impact. 41.5% of respondents agreed that they had felt lonely, stressed, depressed and isolated even though 58.5% had been able to stay in touch with friends and were calm and happy.

Before the pandemic, most youths were in a race of competition to achieve higher marks, higher designation, and better jobs. People have reported that their mental health has both positive and negative impacts of the pandemic. Before the pandemic people were so busy with their work that they don't have time to spend quality time with their family members. Everybody was scattered and busy with their work.

Despite their problems, many people have also responded that they are enjoying themselves with their family members since the pandemic has been started. They are getting a chance to sit with their family and spend time. Earlier due to work, job, studies, and busy schedule there was no opportunity to spend time together but after the pandemic, it has changed, now many people are sharing happy and quality time with their parents and grandparents.

Children also learned many creative things and learn various things due to the availability of time.

## **9. Conclusions**

Although the Coronavirus pandemic has created a lot of adverse impacts on the mental health of youth. Low self-esteem, lack of confidence among youth have disturbed their mental health badly.

Some reported that they have started feeling deeply anxious and losing motivation and hope for the future. 73.8% of respondents agreed that they felt lonely or isolated during the pandemic period, even though 26.2% were been able to stay in touch with friends. Youths have expressed concern about the fears of their future.

Inexorable circumstances like the closure of school and colleges, bad family relations, financial problems, and future concerns which are beyond normal experiences lead to stress, anxiety, and feeling of helplessness in all.

Many adults responded that they have increased the intake of alcohol use. They are having problems in sleeping, eating, and interacting with people.

Most of the youths are losing their knowledge, they have become fully dependent on the internet for their every work. This is disrupting their ability to do anything with their knowledge. Students are losing their self-confidence while giving an interview and having problems while answering any question.

Children who are at the age of new learning i.e. 1st to 5th class, are not able to catch their basics. Many parents have shown concern that their child's behavior is not normal as before which has become a major concern for them. Youth also faced gender-based violence.

It is very clear from the research findings that high levels of anxiety, stress lead to serious thoughts of suicide among youth which is not good at all for their sake and mental growth. However, not every individual is in the same condition. Many youths have also responded that their mental health has become stable after the pandemic as they set time to live with their families and learned many new creative things.