

Psychosocial Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Women's Mental HealthKumar, Sandeep¹¹Professor of Chemistry, and 'by courtesy of psychology', NIILM University Kaithal, Haryana
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Haryana<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-0775-698X>**Abstract**

Women mental health and impact of psychosocial factors on it, is highlighted in various psychological & clinical studies, due to pandemic made it a matter of more focus. Studying the long-term impacts of the coronavirus on society, our mind, body and its analysis perhaps will take more time. Out of the total population, a number of people felt a disrupted sleep as a hallmark of the pandemic, and suffered from depression, insomnia, irritability, violence including domestic violence, distress, work pressure due to online culture of work, and other related negative mental health symptoms as idiosyncratic attributes especially in covid sufferers. Covid-19 pandemic has altered family dynamics. More screen time, unended & fluctuated routines, for working women dissolving boundaries in workplace and personal life altered & flicking habits, all impacted mental health adversely. The human brain is evolved to live in social groups & wired for social interactions, epidemiological studies conducted on covid survivors, convalescents & victims shows altered brain biochemistry due to various psychosocial factors including financial losses, social isolation, intimate partner's negative mental state, discrimination, disrupted sleep & routines, etc. Pandemic might has altered the romantic and loving relationships, and adversity of such psychosocial factors impacted people. Psychological strengths and resilience mainly depend on social determinants like social support, social culture, respect, engagement at workplace, parenting style in childhood & emotional attachment, society & family bonds, self-regulation & behavior controlling, and collective efficacy, all these determinants are positively associated with self-esteem that have direct impact on enhancing psychological strengths. Population for the study

as participants were females in early adulthood & studying, professional and housewives. For data analysis, the statistical tools, descriptive, co-relational and regression analysis is used. The study focuses on effect of adverse aspects of adversity like pandemics financial crises like job losses, allowances or salary deductions, led to economic abuses, and somewhere gender discrimination, sexual abuse, household workload, escalation in family members expectations and responsibilities, adverse impact of these psychosocial factors on women's mental health and role of education, knowledge, skills, and aptitude i.e. abilities & cognitive competencies in coping and managing the adversities like pandemic.

Keywords: Mental Health, Psychological, Social, Women, Depression, Stress, Self-esteem, pandemic, covid-19

Introduction:

Social isolation was recommended by WHO as Covid-19 emerged and the Governments of different countries including India imposed countrywide lockdown in the first wave, in the second wave in India, however the central government didn't recommend imposing countrywide lockdown but some state governments took containment measures at the local level and imposed lockdowns. Both situations forced people for staying at home, and the infodemic through print media, news channels, social media and various other means, affected the mental health of people including children, women, health professionals, and frontline task force, or home stayers. In the homestayer's population, women suffered from mental

health issues that were unintentionally caused by family members, job losses, household workload, etc. As per the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can make a contribution to his or her community". The current correlational qualitative study focuses on the effect of emotional support, respect, expectations, engagement, behavior control, economic abuse, sexual abuse, collective efficacy, discrimination or exclusion, etc., various psychosocial factors, on women's mental health in context to both pandemics' waves. A global study reveals that every woman out of three experience intimate

partner violence, that's economic costs range from 1-4 % of GGDP (García-Moreno et al. 2015). Malhotra S & Shah R. (2015) also examined that $\frac{2}{3}$ married women in India experience domestic violence. Psychological strength is positively associated with emotional factors like attachment and support that helps in stress & depression coping. There is a positive association between natural disasters & interpersonal violence, as studied in by various authors (Antai, D., Oke, A., Braithwaite, P., & Lopez, G. B. (2014). There are pre-existing inequalities or disruptions but adversities like natural disasters including covid-19 pandemic make situations worse where women are disproportionately victimized psychologically, various social factors like limited social support, unemployment, physical confinements, scarcity of basic provisions, economic disruption, etc. (Gearhart S et al. 2018)

People who are high on self-esteem, compassionate, mindful, cognizance exercise self-regulation, this is a habit of controlling one's own behavior. There is a need that this ubiquity should come, but when things become uncontrollable due to the adversities or events make, how much it could be believed that the person will be able to control the event or his/

her behavior. Due to the socio-cultural context in India, men are believed in dominance and women are believed just at the receiving end, and it's in all aspects including financial losses and economic abuse. Mental health and well-being are highly impacted by intimate partner violence and has been reported with high detrimental effects. Study conducted by Amanda M. Stylianou (2018) showed that mental health is uniquely associated with economic abuse and cause negative mental health symptoms. Gender discrimination cause symptoms like negative mental health and poor mental health is closely associated with gender discrimination especially for women. There is a long-term decline in mental health of the women who reported with sex discrimination, sexual harassment or sexual abuse, as revealed by various clinical studies, and causes depressive symptoms over the next 3-4 years. In this study, we mainly focused on the role of cognitive competencies on the ability to cope with negative impacts of psychosocial factors caused by natural disasters like the covid-19 pandemics especially on women's mental health. Being at the receiving end, women might have faced high negative mental health symptoms during covid 19 waves in India.

Objectives of the Study:

There are multiple studies that show the association between pandemic and mental health. Emotional well-being and pandemic burnout have correlation but the role of psychological strength and social factors in coping depression, stress, and related issues in gender differences needed to be studied. Current study is a step in this direction to study the impact of disturbance in psychological & social factors due to covid-19 on mental health of women. The study focuses on the effect of social factors on psychological strengths, and effectiveness of psychological strength in coping with stress & depression. The study also focuses on the correlation between direct or indirect effect of educational standards, knowledge, skills, abilities and cognitive competencies on managing negative mental health symptoms caused by psychosocial factors emerged due to covid-19 on women.

This correlational qualitative study is a testing of the hypothesis that in women higher educational level, knowledge, skills, attitude (abilities) and secure attachment with the care giver, including life partner, and friends, promote psychological strengths that lead to development of cognitive competencies. Cognitive competencies have a major role in coping and managing the negative mental

health symptoms enforced by adversities emerging due to natural disasters like covid-19. To analyze this especially in context to women, working & non-working, the study is carried to examine the effect of variables like social change due to adversity, on mental health of women, and the role of cognitive competencies in managing such adversities impacts, and effects on coping and managing skills, in pandemic-like adverse conditions.

Limitations of the Study:

- The research is confined to a limited area only.
- Time and resource constraint
- Data may be biased from respondents as self-rater bias.

Participants & Design

For data collection mixed method approach is used having four methods were employed. Face to face interactions & other clinical measures to assess level of cognitive competencies in participants like for self-esteem RSES, assessment of stress & depression, Questionnaires & Self-Reports, rating scales for Behavior analysis, family Counseling data to assess attachment status. The study sample consisted of female clients

whose age ranged from 20 to 35 years (M = 28.06, SD = 4.23), a total of 260 clients having consent for the study. All females faced negative mental health symptoms in covid 19. Depression, Stress and Self-esteem were taken as criterion variables, and psychosocial factors like emotional support, social support, affiliation, engagement, respect, efficacy, behavior controlling, economic abuse,

between variables. Based on the clinical assessments and self reports on the educational level, knowledge, skills, abilities and cognitive competencies, participants were divided into two groups.

Summary:

Bivariate correlations and descriptive statistics are reported in tables. Participants with high emotional support, respect, engagement, social

Criterion Variable	Predictor Variable	M	SD	SE	φ	p	R ²
Self-esteem	Respect & engagement	5.31	0.93	0.14	0.96	0.346	0.99
	Social support	5.23	0.92	0.14	0.96	0.348	0.99
	Emotional Support	4.06	1.17	0.14	0.94	0.308	0.97
	Collective Efficacy	4.78	1.18	0.13	0.93	0.302	0.97
	Behavior Controlling	5.41	0.87	0.15	0.92	0.352	0.96
Depression	Economic abuse	4.17	1.17	0.13	0.97	0.349	0.99
	Expectations	4.98	1.02	0.12	0.89	0.373	0.94
Stress	Sexual abuse	4.71	1.18	0.14	0.92	0.349	0.98
	Discrimination	4.63	1.17	0.14	0.88	0.358	0.95

expectation, sexual abuse and gender discrimination are taken as predictive variable, descriptive, regression and co-relational analysis were conducted to find associations

support, collective efficacy and behavior controlling, are found with higher levels of self-esteem and were able to cope the adversity

and reported with lower levels of negative mental health symptoms.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Variables for sample group high education level & high cognitive competencies. Data in the table shows the correlation in psychosocial factors related to self-esteem, higher values on a 7-point rating represents higher levels of psychological strength which is ultimately associated with self-esteem positively. Value of Phi coefficient and R² score represent high correlation between self-esteem and emotional & social support. Relationship respect and engagement of family members with the

females in domestic & household works boost self-esteem and have a high positive correlation with self-esteem. Behavior controlling here is taken for self and collective efficacy is taken as a term for the ability of the participants to control the behavior of family members, it is measured by clinical measures or scales and collected from the clinicians. Woman having high educational level, knowledge, skill, aptitude (abilities) resulted high cognitive competencies, were reported with high self-esteem, and reported with lower level of negative mental health symptoms. Despite adverse social factors, such females were reported with efficient coping and

Criterion Variable	Predictor Variable	M	SD	SE	φ	p	R ²
Self-esteem	Respect & engagement	5.43	0.93	0.15	0.94	0.353	0.98
	Social support	5.17	0.92	0.14	0.96	0.357	0.99
	Emotional Support	5.16	0.92	0.14	0.95	0.318	0.96
	Collective Efficacy	4.09	1.18	0.13	0.93	0.323	0.92
	Behavior Controlling	4.76	1.17	0.14	0.94	0.359	0.97
Depression	Economic abuse	5.78	0.95	0.15	0.98	0.359	0.99
	Expectations	5.86	0.95	0.14	0.87	0.387	0.88
Stress	Sexual abuse	5.05	0.91	0.13	0.94	0.356	0.98
	Discrimination	4.93	1.04	0.12	0.91	0.368	0.96

managerial skills towards negative mental health issue.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Variables for sample group moderate education level & cognitive competencies
Correlation between self-esteem, social & emotional support is high. Respect in relationships and engagement of family members with the females in domestic & household works boost the self-esteem, and have high positive correlation with self-esteem. Behavior controlling here is taken for

self and collective efficacy is taken as the ability to control the behavior of family members measured through clinical measures or scale. Women having moderate educational level, knowledge, skill, aptitude (abilities) and moderate cognitive competencies were reported with lower self-esteem, and they faced higher level of negative mental health symptoms. Such participants faced more difficulties in coping and managing negative mental health issues.

Discussion & Findings:

- Cognitive competent women having upgraded knowledge, skills and abilities have faced less negative mental health related issues in spite of uncontrollable social stressors and adverse conditions, such women were able to cope and manage such issues easily. Psychosocial factors like emotional support by family members & secure attachment with parents in childhood provided them with psychological strength that helped to cope with daily stresses and depression.
- Women having childhood positive & pleasant experiences due to secure & emotional attachment with parents have faced less negative mental health issues.

- Women from families having poor psychosocial domestic environments faced more negative mental health issues.
- Housewives who were dependent on husband income, and pandemic made financial losses, were faced more stress and other mental health issues than independent women
- A few women reported unwanted pregnancy related stress issues.
- Women including unmarried girls having workplace and college/ universities intimate partner relations have faced more stress and negative mental health symptoms.

Conclusions:

Human brain is wired to connect and loves social interaction, lack of social interaction

caused stress, and depression related mental health symptoms in working women and young women in the age of early adulthood having intimate partner relations at study or workplace. Majority of women faced imbalances in hormones & neurotransmitters that are connected with mental health. Higher educational level, knowledge, skills, and aptitude (abilities) enhance the psychological strengths leading to development of cognitive competencies which are positively associated with coping and managing with negative mental health symptoms, enforced by psychosocial factors emerging due to natural disasters like covid-19. This study reveals that psychological strength is positively correlated with cognitive competencies, and cognitive competency impact the coping and managing skills adversity. Psychosocial impact of covid 19 on the mental health of women is reported different for different women due to differences in cognitive competencies.

Suggestions:

- There is need to develop resilience & flexibility from adolescence age.
- Training to deal with feeling of self-helplessness and self-burnout should be provided from childhood.

- Coming out from highly neglecting mental sufferings habituation and transforming from worrier to warrior is very important for developing cognitive competency.
- Developing higher level of controlling behavior with secondary control is needed for high self-esteem. More is needed for the awareness of parenting styles.
- Further studies could be conducted on women empowerment at ground level, mere engagement in responsibilities is not sufficient, distribution of responsibilities and developing independence by developing (HOTS) higher order thinking skills from childhood must be part of nurturing both for parents and teachers.

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