



## The Impact of Covid-19 on the Mental Health and the role of Social Support in Pakistan

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**Abstract**— The year 2020's recent circumstances have been on high alert and have transformed into a "Fight or Flight" situation. Since the coronavirus (Covid-19) was reported in December 2019, conditions have not yet been controlled and causing tremendous destruction worldwide. The current study aimed to exploring the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of the citizens of Pakistan and the role of social support in this regards. The purpose of this standpoint was to encourage investigations into Covid-19's mental health impacts from an individual needs perspective that recognizes the fundamental danger the virus presents to human well-being, and also how significant social support is in this context. Data was collected from all around Pakistan through electronic means within the age range <20 to 60+. Measurement scales utilized in this study were Impact of Event Scale-Reverse (IES-R) was used to measure the impact of (Covid-19) on the mental health and Short-version of Social Provisions Scale (SPS) was used to measure the social support in this regards on the citizens of Pakistan. Results indicate strong significance between Covid-19 and mental health as well as identifies that effective social support reduces the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health. It's indeed evident that the latest incidence of Covid-19 had an enormous impact on the mental health and further shows that impact on mental wellbeing can be minimized if adequate support is provided to individuals to sustain stable life.

**Keywords**— Covid-19, Mental Health, Pakistan, Social Support

### 1. Introduction

Covid-19, commonly known as Coronavirus 2019, is one the most fatal diseases that has hit the world recently in the shape of pandemic. The 2019 novel coronavirus outbreak (now known as SARS-CoV-2, triggering the Covid-19 illness) had spread from Wuhan all over China and was being distributed to a increasing variety of places, which have since been transmitted further (Lipsitch, Swerdlow & Finelli; 2020). Covid-19 had become a pandemic which was massively complicated. Under certain ways it had involved society, different nationalities as well as places around the world sufficiently or dissimilar in many other ways (Tangwa & Munug, 2020). Recently update that most people afflicted with the Covid-19 pathogen will encounter mild to moderate respiratory problems as well as heal without even any preferential privileges being required. Globally almost 28 million cases reported in 24 hours in which casualties reported almost 900,000 individuals including young, middle and old aged citizens (WHO, 2020).

Mental Health is as essential as physical health but unfortunately the most neglected part of human race. It was reported almost 264 million globally suffering from depression and the rate keeps on growing in women more than men (WHO, 2019). 20% adolescents globally currently

suffering from mental health crisis in which 15% considered suicide as an escape from their suffering (UNICEF, 2019). The world had been increasingly aging worldwide. The vast majority of the world's population above 60 years would roughly double between 2015 and 2050, rising 12% to 22%. Throughout ≥65 years mental health and well-being were just as relevant like in any other phase of transition. Within that age category, behavioral and physical disabilities in elderly people constitute 6.6% of total impairment (DALYs). Around 15% of adults aged 60 and older are suffering from a psychiatric illness (WHO, 2017). In Pakistan more than 15 millions found to be suffering mostly from type of mental illness. Mental healthcare is still not a priority in the health system in Pakistan (Javed et' al, 2020).

Human beings are social creatures and being in contact with other related species is actually the need for socialization is built-in. Social support is one of the biggest motivational element in any one's life span. In descriptions of partnerships the word "social support" also occurs. Social help includes getting friends and other entities to look to in times of need or trouble to give you a wider perspective and a good self-image, like family. Social help increases standard of living and provides a shield to combat negative happenings (PHC, 2017). The definition of social support differs from empirical social life (memberships of the community, relatives, partner, etc.) to subjective reality (e.g.,

emotional support, solitude) (Kamenove et' al, 2016). Evaluating socialization was also used to quantify essential concepts of assistance, implying the way in which an individual is part of social systems. Presumed endorse, or subjective support constructible by the people they believe to be available to them, and received (or enacted) support, which is aid actually provided by other persons. Help experienced and earned take many types. Informative support involves providing advice, recommendations and other useful information (Grey et' al, 2018).

This current study intended to measure Covid-19's impact on mental health and the role of social support in Pakistan; hence, this paper is formulated in the following attempt: a literature review highlighting prior findings undertaken similar to the topic. Continuing to follow with the study method and also the findings of the distributing questionnaires; based on the review which will respond to the paper's proposed hypotheses. The final section of the research would be the conclusions including shortcomings.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Covid-19 Impacts on Mental Health:

The coronavirus outbreak is incredibly quickly spreading throughout the world, causes significant paranoia, worries and anxieties among the general public and also in specific amongst some communities, such as the elderly, caregivers and people with underlying health conditions (WHO, 2020). Covid-19 unavoidably, the current global disease outbreak has risks for mental wellbeing. Such as PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) as well as Anxiety long-term psychiatric morbidity; an emphasis on mental healthcare becomes important given the dramatic changes in stress, complexity and confusion for healthcare staff, the population at large and individuals given psychological problems. (Haider, Tiwana & Tahir, 2020). Similarly, virus alone compounded by mandated quarantine to counter COVID-19 enforced by national shut downs will cause acute fear, anxiety, repetitive habits, hoarding, hysteria, and depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the long run. Furthermore, those have been fuelled by an "infodemic" dispersed through various media platforms. Utterances of sexism, stigmatization, and xenophobia toward individual groups are still being commonly documented. Additionally, professional healthcare staffs are at greater-risk of contracting the disease as well as suffering negative psychological consequences in type of mental exhaustion, agitation, fear of spreading illness, feeling of discrepancies, fatigue, decreased drug-dependence, or PTSD (Dubey et' al, 2020).

The triggers of Covid-19's on mental health symptoms are complex and multifaceted, or undoubtedly involve predictors of genetics, behavior and the environment. In addition, "brain shapes," which have been designed and created as "biotypes" told by either a neuronal taxonomy, that interfere with the fundamental hazard to human interaction requires to understand from a precision scientific standpoint to mental health risks of COVID-19 (Hagerty &

William, 2020). The subsequent economic recession of Covid-19 have adversely affected the mental health of several individuals and built additional challenges for individuals still suffering from mental disease and drug use addiction suggesting that almost 47% reported adverse impacts on mental health due to concern and distress linked to coronavirus relative to those not affected were 37% (Panchal et' al, 2020). In Pakistan as a result of the current Covid-19 pandemic, healthcare professionals (HDPs) face tremendous pressure due to the extreme high load of incidents. Individuals operate tremendously long shifts in several situations, sometimes with scarce money or a questionable framework. There have been 81 (72.3%) respondents with mild to extremely severe depression, 96 (85.7%) respondents with mild to severely extreme anxiety including 101 (90.1%) respondents with high - intensity stress levels (Sandesh et' al, 2020).

### 2.2 Role of Social Support:

Social support is a key factor that affects mental health. A lot of studies have been conducted in past few decades on the importance of social support on mental wellbeing. With reference to the relatively high effect size of the correlation between social support and mental health, higher social support needs when being predisposed, in particular for females, the older generation, patients, laborers as well as students (Harandi, Taghinasab & Nayeri, 2017). Citizens' behavior is affected by social standards: whatever people consider that everyone was doing and which individuals believe that some of us support or oppose to (Bavel et' al, 2020). The benefits of strong social support can be attributed to the fact that this care has a significant impact on our safety and welfare as it supports us with feelings of forecasting, identity, meaning and comfort. Furthermore, is that social reinforcement serves as a shield against different sources of stress and thereby enhances our standard of living and defense mechanisms (Hauken, 2020). Studies suggest that reinforcement may be an effective facilitator of therapies; however, the nature in reinforcement and individual actions can be critical factors in treating soldier's optimally (Black et' al, 2019).

Role of social support in other researches depicts positive outcomes to mental health. For those receiving care, families and friends were considered to be most important to the choice, and an interactively positive activity was considered to be the most important of many positive leader behaviors. In the spread of Covid-19 all over the country, the mental health problems of healthcare professionals seem to be of major concern to ensuring the effectiveness of emergency management which suggests stability may partly mediate the impact of social support on mental health in healthcare providers (Huo et' al, 2020). In Pakistan perceived trauma triggered by depression, anxiety, pain, social and cultural standards or related effects influences women's mental health. Lower emotional stress contributes to improved mental health as ambiguously defined social

interaction can help illustrate the connection among depression, anxiety and stress (Jaffar et' al, 2018).

### 2.3 Role of Social Support with other Variables:

Physician psychological wellbeing impacts the quality of healthcare services and is linked to improving patient outcomes. The severe issues with the doctor-patient relationship in China could even lead to long-term disparities in physician, and also the inadequate physician-patient position will have voiced doubts, which led to the importance of social support (Sun et' al, 2020). Considering the large prevalence and mortality rate of Breast Cancer (BC) in Ghana, the problem of where and how older women cope with having Breast Cancer was therefore chosen to give very less recognition. Women who have been given a diagnosis of Breast Cancer adopt ranges coping strategies to address such obstacles. The categories of coping strategies embraced by female patients with Breast Cancer were influenced by the extent of social support acquired. Psycho - social support and advice seems to be an essential part of maintaining Breast Cancer. Exploration and inclusion of social networking could play a prominent part in Breast Cancer management in Ghana (Benson et' al, 2020).

The negative consequences of loneliness and inadequate perceived social support on physical health and mortality were also identified, but there's really no deliberate fusion of its ties with the ultimate result of mental health problems over time. Loneliness and quality of social support in depression were indeed likely suspects for the development and testing of initiatives, as well as further key constructs with interactions of outcomes so far has been deemed necessary for most other circumstances (Wang et' al, 2018). Positive psychology had also conducted extensive research including well-being in youth. Almost every origin of support has various impacts on aspects of the educational framework. School adjustment played a significant mediating role in the relationship between social support as well as wellbeing. Moreover, women and younger students demonstrated higher adjustment to the school and subjective well-being (Thomas et' al, 2020).

### Study Method

A quantitative study aims to explore the impact of covid-19 on the mental health and the role of social support in Pakistan. Questionnaires were provided through electronic means. Population of the study were Pakistani nationals age ranging <20 to 60+ both (male and female) with a sample size 100 respectively. Likert Scale questionnaires were used in which participants were able to assess them from 1-5 (Not at all-Extremely) and 1-4 (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree) depending as to what they felt appropriate at the time.

Questions were related to the occurrence of Covid-19 with respect to the feelings and emotions of individuals at that time. Furthermore questions were also

referring towards how surroundings helping them in this regards.

The data obtained was analyzed through appropriate statistical techniques in SPSS20 version. Study calculated frequency distribution, Reliability of the scales, Correlation analysis, and also Regression analysis was measured.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

It was received an average of N=100 responses. The demographics were 52% females and 48% males who were married on average 70% compared to single with average 30%. Many respondents were between the ages of 20-40 composed 78% of respondents. The remaining 22% was between the ages of <20, 41-60 and 60+.

Respondents were also asked to provide Family structure which were 53% joint system and 47% were from nuclear family system with respective Family income of 66% from 50,000 – 70,000; 33% were between 20,000 - 40,000 and the remaining 1% between 80,000 and Above.

This indicates that the majority among respondents were single females within age range 20 – 40; with an annual salary of 50,000 – 70,000 belonging to the family joint system, which is about 80% of the survey population.

Respondents were asked to provide insights according to how they feel and how it is affecting them regarding the event Covid-19. Almost 25% individuals in Pakistan responded that they feel irritated and angry, 17% responded that they feel jumpy and startled, 30% respondents claimed they keep on thinking about making them restless, 13% claimed that they have issues concentrating on others thing due to this event and almost 15% responded that thoughts about it keep them awake at night. Results highlight that due to Covid-19 mental health well-being is at risk.

Respondents as well provided the perspective of others in this matter in order to cope up with current scenario. Almost 23% individuals responded that they have people around them who they can depend on if needed help, 17% responded that they have close relations helping them in well-being, 30% respondents claim that they have people who they trust with their problems and 30% responded that they have people in case of any emergency during the occurrence of Covid-19. Results highlight that adequate social support is important to reduce the impacts of covid-19 on the mental health.

**Table 1.** Reliability of scales utilized in the Study

	Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
IES-R	.91
SPS	.75

Table 1 illustrates the reliability of the utilized scales for variables in the study. Cronbach's alpha of the 1<sup>st</sup> scale "Impact of event scale-revised" which was measuring the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health possesses 22 items with 5 Likert scale have the  $\alpha = .91$  and the 2<sup>nd</sup> scale "Social provisional scale" which was measuring the role of social support possesses 10 items with 4 Likert scale in this regards have the  $\alpha = .75$ . Cronbach's alpha at  $0.9 \leq \alpha$  is Excellent, at  $0.8 \leq \alpha < 0.9$  is Good, at  $0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.8$  is Acceptable, at  $0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$  is Questionable, at  $0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$  is Poor, at  $\alpha < 0.5$  is Unacceptable. According to the range of current study Cronbach's alpha suggesting the scales in between acceptable to good range.

**Table 2. Correlation Analysis**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	IES-R	SPS
IES-R	56.16	17.14	1	
SPS	31.16	3.62	.19*	1

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 illustrates that Person correlation analysis on the scales of variables utilized in this study. As the table above suggest that social support is positively correlates with covid-19 on mental health with  $r = .19^*$  which is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). The mean for IES-R  $m = 56.16$  with  $SD = 17.14$  and SPS mean recorded was  $m = 31.16$  with  $SD = 3.62$  respectively. The positive correlation suggests that the impact of covid-19 on the mental health can be overcome with effective social support in Pakistan.

**Table 3. Regression Analysis**

	B	$\beta$	SE	R	R <sup>2</sup>
IES-R	0.42	.19	.02	.19	.39
SPS	0.93	.19	.46	.19	.39

Significance at the 0.05 level

Table 3 illustrates the regression analysis suggesting  $\beta = .19$ ,  $r = .19$  with  $r^2 = .39$  for both IES-R and SPS. The standard error for IES-R was  $SE = .02$  and SPS have the  $SE = .46$  respectively. Regression analysis suggesting that impact of covid-19 on the mental health can overcome if social support is strong enough for individual.

#### 4. Conclusion

Covid-19 not only affects physical health but have immense impacts on the mental health. It was suggested previously by many researchers that due to Covid-19 individuals are suffering in a great deal which includes mental health problems like sleep deprivation, restlessness, irritability and many others (WHO, 2020; & Dubey et al,

2019). It is also suggested that social support may reduced the affects of events which are harmful for mental health well-being (Hauken, 2020; & Black et al, 2019).

As identified in discussion the results indicates the significance level suggesting that covid-19 on do impact on mental health which relates with previous studies as well as signifies the role of social support in order to reduce the mental health crisis during current event which as well supports by previous studies.

The aim of this study was to identify about Covid-19's impact on mental health and the role of social support in Pakistan. Since undertaking the study, it's indeed evident that the latest incidence of Covid-19 had an enormous impact on the mental health and further shows that impact on mental wellbeing can be minimized if adequate support is provided to individuals to sustain stable life.

#### 5. Limitations

First major limitation of this study is the limited spectrum of participants who were approached through electronic mean of filling out the questionnaires related to Covid-19's impact on mental health and social support role in Pakistan. As the sample size of the participants is small the findings of the study cannot be generalize to general public. Another major limitation of this study was that not much research been conducted on Covid-19 and general mental health and general social support. It was hard to relate mental health crisis on general public in Pakistan due to limited research availability. Finally, the study was conducted in a short period of time and the results might not be 100% accurate which opens the door for more studies on this perspective.

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