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COVID-19: Emergence of Mental Health Upheaval and Transition in Human Future Perspectives: A Qualitative Study

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
	The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic is constantly posing warning and creating mental health crisis among people without any discrimination. Therefore, the current study purpose is to explore mental health upheaval and transition in future perspectives due to COVID-19. Using exploratory study design, semi structure interviews were conducted. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed by using Thematic Content Analysis. The major themes which were identified showed that COVID-19 is constantly eliciting panic and mental health issues such as anxiety, stress, and depression, fears of death, xenophobia, OCD and uncertainty about future among general population. Results also indicated the major transition in public future perspectives and perception. Concern related to adjustability in life after pandemic is major emerging future concern among Pakistani People. During pandemic outbreak, people are becoming vulnerable to different mental health problems. To overcome these issues successfully, role of mental health professionals cannot be denied. There is strong need to devise activities and strategies which help people to increase resilience and build strong relationships during the period of social distancing. This paper gives a deep insight into mental health problems among general population due to COVID-19 and it also implicates need of psychological services to overcome these issues.

1. Introduction

At the end of 2019, humanity faced very dreadful days and nights hovering with fear of deaths everywhere. Thus, this novel Coronavirus, COVID-19, after causing huge deaths rate was declared as worldwide pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020. COVID-19 pandemic has not only harmed population worldwide physically but also psychologically. It caused a large number of deaths in all over the world and also elevated the rate of anxiety, OCD, stress and other psychological issues experienced by people (Shigemura, Ursano, Morganstein, Kurosawa, & Benedek, 2020). As, COVID-19 is considered a global health crisis and different researchers are also emphasizing the need to work on the mental health crisis in all countries.

Due to this global emergency situation, people are facing many challenges and stressors such as financial issues, loss of job and loss of outdoor activities and so on. So this situation is setting off alarms and demanding mental health professionals to get ready to cope with the crisis created by this silent pandemic. Latest research also investigated the current issue and highlighted the psychological issues that will inevitably transpire from this current pandemic (Galea, Merchant, & Lurie, 2020). Keeping in mind the current situation of COVID-19, it is observed that it is changing people thinking pattern, affecting social life, disturbing human behavior and altering the emotional patterns of dealing with calamities of life. Researchers need to conduct researches to study this pandemic in order to design interventions in future. By looking at the cases diagnosed in different countries and specifically in Pakistan, it is observed that people are forced and suggested to remain at homes and practice physical distancing from society which is known as "social distancing". So this "national behavioral pattern" made us

to shut down all our daily functioning. Students cannot go to schools, so they need to resume their academic activities online. Besides medical issues, the current situation is disrupting people's emotional, behavioral and cognitive responses and thus is posing a threat to our behavior and changing our psychology. People are experiencing many psychological issues resulted from the insurmountable pressures (Li et al., 2020). Moreover, social distancing due to lockdown in all over the world is developing adverse psychological issues in people. Social connection and interaction are considered important for human's social and mental growth. But due to current situation people are in lockdown situation, people have started to get lethargic when they don't have positive inputs into their small world and symptoms of depression and anxiety can be intense during isolation (Ellis, 2020). People experience loneliness, anxious, depression and sometime behave aggressively. Other than anxiety people are also reporting uncertainties about future and OCD symptoms (Brooks et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our lifestyle and daily routine with uncertainty and people are facing many financial pressures and diverse alteration in daily routines. Moreover, COVID-19 pandemic has transformed focus point of ones' demands and needs. One of the major changes that are brought by this pandemic is the change in the Maslow hierarchy of needs. People are more worried about their safety need and physiological needs and want them to be addressed immediately instead to struggle for self-actualization (Geher, 2020).

This pandemic is now changing human psychology and future perspective. People have no clue how long this situation will last and our brain is continuously trying to predict what will happen next. Therefore, we human being are going through many phobic situations such dead phobia and xenophobia. Xenophobia is leading to racism all around the world. Cases of racism have reported globally during this pandemic. In Melbourne, a recent incident of racist attack on Asian students made situation more terrified (Butler, 2020). This incident has clearly explained how our cognition, behavior and thinking abilities are changing. Now the question is that which kind of mental health issues are experiencing by general population? What will be our future perspective after this pandemic situation comes to an end? As we are always told to connect with people, students like to build social relationship, wants to play in playground with their peers but now situation is opposite. Therefore, the present study aims to explore emergence of mental health upheaval and transition in people future perspectives.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Design

The present research paper used exploratory study design through semi structure interviews to qualitatively analyse the emergence of mental health upheaval and transition in human future perspectives.

2.2 Participants

By using random sampling method, we selected 20 participants for interview. The inclusion criteria included (1) participants with age range from 18-35 and (2) participants with working and student's status. People, who were already unemployed, stressed and students who were already part of some distant learning programs, less than 18 years were excluded from the present study. Participants were approached via WhatsApp video call and Skype for the interviews. We determined the number of required respondents by interviewing who met inclusion criteria until the data were saturated and no new topics were generated. The study was approved by Ethical Committee of University.

2.3 Interview outline

After consulting relevant literature, subject matter experts' opinion and selecting 3 participants for pre-interview, we formulated the interview outline. As, interview was semi structure, so few main structure questions of interview are the following: (1) what kind of differences you are facing during the lockdown which u didn't face before in any other calamities or disaster? (2) How lockdown is affecting your routine or daily behavior pattern. How much it is change? (3) How do you think people will react towards a certain community after the emergence of COVID-19? (4) What do you think the virtual environment could bring feasibility of replacing human interaction and physical environment with technology all around the globe after the Pandemic ends? Are we becoming more dependable on this technology?

2.4 Procedure

After communicating the purpose and significance of study, informed consent was obtained for conducting interviews. Telephonic and online interviews were scheduled by the convenience of the participants. Interviews were recorded and participants were assured about the use of information for the research purpose only. Interview took 40-70 minutes per person.

2.5 Data Analysis

After taking interviews, the recordings were transcribed and analyzed by using thematic content analysis. Four independent researches who have expertise in their field, reviewed the generated themes. After generating themes, inter rater reliability was calculated with the help of Cohen Kappa and it was found to be substantial agreement (.78).

3. Results

For qualitative analysis, after transcribing the data, different inter connected themes were identified. Table 1 and 2 shows main themes of discussion. Themes were divided into two categories as themes related mental health upheaval and transition in future perspectives due to COVID-19. Themes related to emergence of mental health upheaval among people are discussed in Table 1.

Table 1: Themes representing emergence of mental health upheaval among people

Themes	Subthemes	Quotations
1. Disaster preparedness can lessen the impact of calamity	Localized calamities with confined time period	"Previous disasters or calamities were more localized and of less duration".
	Precautionary measures and unplanned behavior toward calamity	"We are more cautious and have to take preventive measures and we were not ready to handle this pandemic."
2. COVID-19 and Psychosocial issues	Psychological problems	"Due to by remaining at home, mood is frustrated and anxious and we are becoming aggressive as we don't have any indoor activities".
	OCD and obsessions	"OCD is increasing as we are becoming obsessed with hygiene issues".
3. Transformation in daily life and behavioral pattern	No physical activity and disturbed sleep pattern	"Our monotonous routine is messed up. We are in our homes all day long and doing nothing but spending our days and nights on mobile and have no sleeping routines".
	Disturbed education life and lethargic behavior	"We are becoming lethargic and do not have any goals to pursue".
4. Uncertainty about future	Uncertainty about future	"We are uncertain about when will this entire situation be over and we will go back to our normal lives".
5. Change in people needs	Change in perception and shift toward primary needs	"COVID-19 has changed our perception and concerns have shifted to basic needs rather than secondary".
6. Xenophobia and Stigmatization	Racism and stereotype	"All this situation has made us angry on Chinese's because they are responsible for this pandemic".
7. Fear of death and Isolation	Cautious behavior	"We have to take precautionary measures to protect ourselves and our loved ones".
	Fear of death and isolation	"Fear that we might catch this virus and might be left alone without having any beloved people around us".
8. Social Distancing and Mental health	Loss of social connectivity	"Due to social distancing or by avoid gatherings, we are becoming stressful".

3.1 Disaster preparedness can lessen the impact of calamity

It is being observed that every country in the world have some planned behavior and preparedness toward calamities or disaster. Many people have identified that lack of preparedness toward covid-19 pandemic has made situation worse. As they communicated in interview "*We were not ready to handle this pandemic as we handle previous calamities. So this situation is making us more stressful…*"

3.2 COVID-19 and Psychosocial issues

COVID-19 pandemic is becoming a constant threat to mental and social wellbeing of people. During interview, participants highlighted the elevated rate of stress and anxiety "by *remaining at home, we feel frustration, stress and become anxious as we cannot hang out with friends or cannot go outside...*" This pandemic is making people more obsessed and increasing the severity level of OCD. As participant has highlighted that "*we can notice a change in our thoughts, now we are becoming more obsessed with the cleanliness and hygiene issues and always remain fearful about germs and developing virus*".

3.3 Transformation in daily life and behavioral pattern

Covid-19 is not only affecting us physically, psychologically or economically but has also brought a drastic change in daily life style and set behavioral pattern. People monotonous routine is messed up without any goals or preplanned activity. As, it is stated by participants in interview that "*We are in lock down and have nothing to do…. Staying up late at night, as we don't need to go to school, college or job, so our sleeping cycle is disturbed*".

3.4 Uncertainty about future

World is still in a grip of COVID-19 and has confined people in their homes. Fear and uncertainty is making people overwhelming with mental health crisis. People are uncertain about future as mentioned by participants, "*We don't know what we need to do or tomorrow there will be good news about this pandemic or not …this uncertain situation is making us more stressful and worried*".

3.5 Change in people needs

Beyond unprecedented health and psychosocial implications of COVID-19, a great shift in needs and perception are being observed. As participants have explained in interview "this *pandemic has made us more conscious toward our basic and primary needs…., make ourselves secure from this pandemic*". People concerns have now shifted toward physiological and safety needs instead of self-actualization or self-esteem.

3.6 Xenophobia and Stigmatization

COVID-19 inflamed xenophobia and stigmatization among people about specific community. Xenophobia is increasing day by day. Participants in interview explicated their apprehensions about Chinese people as "*All this situation has made us annoyed because Chinese are responsible for this pandemic. When we see any Chinese we tend to avoid them*".

3.7 Fear of death and Isolation

Due to this pandemic, people are becoming obsessed with fear of death and isolation about developing virus. As participants explained during interview about their fears "*we feel fearful because we might die alone without having any loved one around us or there won't be anyone to attend our funeral*". So this pandemic, since last year till now, has caused many deaths and enlarged fearful situation all around the world. As in most of the interview participants have mentioned, "*when we go outside, we get frighten if someone around us might have virus….. if we might catch that virus we need to separate ourselves from our family and friends or we can die as well.*"

3.8 Social Distancing and Mental health

As COVID-19 cases are rapidly increasing, social distancing is considered important in preventing the spread of COVID-19, but on the other hand, it accelerated mental health problems. Participants have described in interview "*we need to remain at home and avoid social gathering .As we cannot hangout with our friends, this situation is making us more anxious*".

Conversely, themes related to major transition in future perspectives due to COVID-19 pandemic among people are summarized and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Themes representing transition in human future perspectives

Themes	Subthemes	Quotations
1. Transformation in future human behavior	Social distancing	"When pandemic would end, Gathering might be awkward after such a long social distance".
	Cultural shift of values	"People will not meet and greet (no hugs, shake hands etc.) each other like the way they used to".
	Work from home	"Working strategies like working from home might become a new

			policy and new opinions about this might be taken into consideration".
		Need time to adjust with previous daily routine	"After the lockdown, it will be very difficult for us to get back to our previous routines".
		Fearful working atmosphere	"Fear will be there in the working atmosphere in offices. People will still maintain the distance".
		Low level of energy	"The energy will be low because of all that lazy routine. It will take time to get back to the routine".
2.	Predilection toward religiosity	Uncertainty leads to religion	"In future people would get more close to their religion because they do not know what to do in this uncertain situation".
3.	Technology as replacement of physical environment	Technology can affect human interaction	"Excessive use of virtual environment can replace human interaction".
		Physical environment	"Physical environment is important to grow socially and mentally".
		Technology as supporting factor	"Technology can make our lives easy but cannot replace human because we all need physical environment".
		Technology addiction	"We would become dependable on technology".

3.9 Transformation in future human behavior

Unpredicted time period of this pandemic depicts that life after COVID-19 will not be same as before the pandemic. People are going to experience many alterations in life as home pattern and social interaction will change." *After pandemic, gathering might be awkward after such a long social distance. People will not meet and greet (no hugs, shake hands etc.) each other like the way they used to…."* Another important future concern is after lockdown, it would be time taken for many people to resume normal life. For instance, verbatim of participant highlighted this issue "*after this pandemic, we can face difficulties to adjust our normal routine ……. Gathering might be felt awkward after practicing social distancing for a long time".*

3.10 Predilection toward religiosity

Due to this pandemic, people would get closer to religion and might develop more attentive behavior towards religion. As stated by participants in interview on questions related to future perspective such as "*might be we get closer to our religion as compared to present… as we don't know what we could do in this situation except praying."*

3.11 Technology as replacement of physical environment

Now homes are converting into virtual environment for study and office work purpose. As Participants during interview also shared their views " *as we are now using mobile, laptop excessively during quarantine , so we might become addicted to these digital devices and found very feasible to study and work from home through virtual environment"*. But still there is another probability that people would understand the importance of human relationship as participants also highlighted importance of physical environment "*as we believed that after covid-19 pandemic, we will cherish our relationships more".*

4. Discussion and conclusion

COVID-19 pandemic has brought abrupt change in human psychology and increased mental health issues. People are suffering from many psychological issues and have major future concerns. But still, we are social creature and need to connect with each other. Importance of timely precautions to control the adverse effects of any calamity cannot be

overlooked. Current findings are found to be consistent with latest researches that preparedness for calamities can help to control situation from getting worse (Sameh Wahba, 2020). Furthermore, the current pandemic has increased the alarming stage for all mental health professionals about how they are going to deal with these problems. Lack of proper treatment and uncertain situation make people more panic and anxious (Lunn et al., 2020). According to WHO (2020), there is need to introduce now measures for people during pandemic as level of depression, loneliness, self-harm or suicidal behavior are expected to increase (Organization, 2020). We identified in present study that not only sleep hygiene, diet pattern are effected greatly and but this uncertain situation is also making people anxious. It is observed that people are becoming lethargic and addicted toward technology (Morison, 2020) . this situation also increasing fears among them (Dong & Bouey, 2020). So in this most challenging time, people focus is now on to fulfill basic needs. COVID-19 has changed people perception toward the fulfillment of needs and made to prioritize the primary needs instead of secondary needs (Wilson, 2020). On the other hand, findings also suggest a major alteration in people attitude toward specific community or nation for instance different cases are recently reported which involved verbally and physically attack on Chinese and minority groups (Devakumar, Shannon, Bhopal, & Abubakar, 2020). "COVID-19 is not just a health issue, it can also be a virus that exacerbates xenophobia, hate and exclusion," said Fernand de Varennes, UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues ("COVID-19 stoking, 2020). Therefore this traumatized and fearful situation is leading many people to different mental health issues (Panoutsopoulou, 2020). Most recent researches have showed that social distancing is increasing anxiety, depression and stress in people. People are now confined due to social distancing, isolation or quarantine (Venkatesh & Edirappuli, 2020; Williams, Armitage, Tampe, & Dienes, 2020). So this is making people detached form their family, liberties and short or long term mental health problems. Findings also have demonstrated that after pandemic people who already get used of virtual environment, might not want to return to their offices or educational setting (Makhno, 2020). In Pakistan, Government also took initiative of launching "Tele School" to engage students on virtual platform and same as many private institutes also teaching through virtual learning environment. It is observed that during COVID-19 internet search for prayers by people related to different religion has increase rapidly in 75 countries in March 2020 (Bentzen, 2020).our findings also highlight this phenomena People have become more focused toward religion. Religious beliefs have a strong effect on individual and try to find comfort in God to bless them with happiness (Sinding Bentzen, 2019). Therefore, in future religion will become a great source of conform for people. This pandemic has given us time to reflective back on our lives and to mend our ways to build better community full of love, care and affection. Although, people are in lockdown for prolong time but this situation has inculcated a strong sense on interdependency and connectedness. Therefore, we can help out each other by calling or texting to relieve worries of another person. Mental health professional also needs to initiate online mental health services to overcome psychological issues. Human is the only creature who can always find a ray of hope in the face of adversities. Although this pandemic has wreaked chaos all around the world but on the other side it also has realized us now it is the time to change unsustainable life pattern for successful future.

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