

CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

Frontline victims: Doctors and health workers keeping children engaged at a COVID-19 care centre in New Delhi. | Photo Credit: [AP](#)

A nationwide lockdown may have prevented the COVID-19 pandemic curve from peaking earlier but it certainly has shown adverse impact on the psychological profile of people in the form of rise in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), said a dip-test, pan-India, web-based survey conducted via Google form during the last week of April 2020 when the nation had completed four weeks of lockdown. The survey was conducted by the Department of Community Medicine, Vardhman Mahavir Medical College and Safdarjung Hospital.

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PTSD is a mental health condition triggered by a terrifying event, causing flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety and the “survey indicated that 28.2% of population [that participated in the survey] suffered from PTSD during lockdown in India,” said Anita Khokhar, under whose supervision the research was carried out by Suraj Prakash Singh.

Dr. Khokhar said that ever since COVID-19 had been declared a pandemic, life had not been the same.

“A nation of one billion plus was forced into a lockdown in an effort to cut the chain of transmission of the virus which has caused devastation in many countries with a health care system rated far superior to India. People were restricted to the confines of their homes, unable to meet family and friends or even neighbours face-to-face to interact. Also, there has been uncertainty about the future and fear of pandemic. Under such circumstances, the psychological profile of people is likely to be affected,” she said.

The study was done in four weeks with recording scaling of symptoms of PTSD from “not at all” to “extremely.”

The survey asked the participants to indicate the degree of their distress for each of 22 symptoms according to a five-point scale — 0 indicates that the symptom occurs “not at all”; 1, “a little bit”; 2, “moderately”; 3, “quite a bit”; and 4, “extremely.”

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The survey found the prevalence of PTSD at 28.2%. The PTSD of 13.7% participants was a clinical concern with a score, while for 8.1% PTSD was a probable diagnosis. A majority (55.6%) of participants reported that they had trouble staying asleep, 7.3% reported it ‘extremely’. About 41.5% participants said other things kept them thinking about the lockdown.

On being asked how much they felt irritable and angry after four weeks of home lockdown, 40.2% reported it ‘quite a bit’ and 9.4% reported it ‘extremely’. About 37.6% reported that they avoided letting themselves get upset when they thought about lockdown or were reminded of it ‘quite a bit’ and 9.4% reported experiencing the same ‘extremely’. About 55.1% of participants thought about the lockdown when they didn’t mean to ‘quite a bit’ and 5.1% ‘extremely’.

“The actual prevalence of PTSD may even be higher as the lockdown was extended and people had this sense of uncertainty as to when they will be getting back to a normal life. Also not all the strata of society could participate in this study due to its conduct via Google forms as no other method of conduct of this survey was possible during the lockdown and we did not miss this special setting for the purpose of study,” said the researcher.

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The survey has recommended that health care professionals and other authorities, psychiatrists, psychologists, physicians, nursing staff etc should be made aware of this aspect of lockdown and that mental health specialists and physicians should brace themselves for increased number of consultations for PTSD and should be able to manage them appropriately.

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