

## **A Phenomenological Study on the Psychological Experience of COVID-19 Survivors**

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### **ABSTRACT**

COVID-19 is viewed as an essential and dangerous disease in the life of person especially who got infected. These patients had gone through a life threatening stress along with physical illness. This extreme outbreaks have impacted negatively on their mental health more than that of their physical health. Patients who got epidemic infections usually feel more psychological stress and emotional feelings in pandemic than any other. Even after the discharge, they experience an unreliable stress and other mental health issues. This crucial need to address the mental health problems is very critical and can't be ignored. A descriptive phenomenological qualitative study was adopted to reveal this study where it was tried to find psychological disturbances of these people based on their lived experiences. The results showed that dreadful disease COVID-19 gave very tiring symptoms and patients experience disturbances such as psychological stress, and the fear of being one of the carrier. In depth knowledge about these stressors can will be a helping hand for future remedies.

### **Keywords**

COVID-19, Corona, Stress, Live Experience

### **INTRODUCTION**

COVID-19 is viewed as an essential and dangerous disease in the life of person especially who got infected. These patients had gone through a life threatening stress along with physical illness. This extreme outbreaks have impacted negatively on their mental health more than that of their physical health. Patients who suffered with these infections usually feels more psychological stress and emotional feelings during Pandemic than any other patients. Even after the discharge, they experience an unreliable stress and other mental health issues. There is a strong need to address the mental health problems is very critical and can't be ignored.

The mental stress and disturbance of COVID-19 patients will be very much effective to know more about the pattern of disease and its impending impressions for life long.[1]. Person's psychological and mental experiences experience usually resulted from the interaction of their thoughts which are associated with the social environment and the experience which he is going through [2], the most useful method to clarify the psychological stress of these patients is to explore the lived in experience of patients who had gone through the situation and survived.

### **OBJECTIVE**

To identify the Psychological experience faced by the survivors of COVID19

### **METHODS**

The approach of the study was descriptive phenomenological study with Colaizzi's approach. The researcher tried to find the psychological stress and problems of people based on their lived experiences.

Ten COVID-19 survivors in Pune were selected by using purposive sampling. COVID-19 survivor, who were hospitalized and isolated at home or Institutions and those who were willing to participate were included in the study.

In- depth interviewes via telephones were taken and asked to describe their experiences. Analysis was done by using Colaizzi's seven-step approach.[3, 4]. At the end of each interview, it was noted and listened multiple times and verbatim were transcribed.

Of the 10 participants, six were male. They were in the 35–49 age . The education range from higher secondary to having a graduation. Maximum participants admitted to the hospital with common signs of fever, and breathing

difficulty. Data analysis resulted to the 16 codes, 9 sub-themes, and 3 themes. The 3 themes of “feeling of non-existence”, “psychological stress”, and “Fear of being a carrier” were extracted.

### **Theme1: Feeling of Non-Existence**

Based on the experiences of the patients ,the uncertainty caused by new corona virus pandemic, perplexity caused as non confirmed diagnosis , and the scenarios from outside world regarding no. of deaths creating a uncertain situation. Participants experienced this situation as this hanging between life and death.

#### **No Proper Diagnosis**

Fear of reappearance and volatile situations had caused psychological stress. The stress was more concerned about the no proper direction of diagnosis and future complications. Verbatims are as as follows

*“I’m worried and searched on the Internet for two or three hours to see what new articles say; I still have the stress; when I have been diagnosed correctly and the treatment is correct or not. I don’t know I will be safe to go in to the society?” (Male patient3).*

*“I am Worried about tomorrow and about the future. And don’t know what will happen next? What will happen? What if my condition get worsen. (Male patient,P2).*

*At one point of time I am thinking that I won’t wake up tomorrow.” (Female patient,P1).*

#### **A Fear of Death**

The disturbances caused by diseases are so dangerous like increased number of deaths; patients experience the feeling of forthcoming life ending situations and death and being sandwiched as life and death situation. The verbatim of their experiences is as follows.

*“All media you watched talked about death. As the deaths increased, so did my stress. When I saw the news and other talks I am feeling that I will also die ?” (Female patient,P3).*

*“Sometime, I was feeling of limp. I thought I am hanging between life and dead end .One day I am feeling I am ok but immediately next point of time I feel like I will die. Thank god I survived (Male patient,1).*

### **Theme2: Psychological Stress of all Alone**

Living in isolated area was like living behind the walls, which is the major cause and set the space for psychological stress .

#### **I and Four Walls**

The solace and isolated time and over and above they were missing their families, added on the stress and it took time time get back to their normal lives. The verbatim are as follows

*“Isolation days were like a hell. It was about weeks that I haven’t see my kids. I was praying when I will be out of four walls” (Female patient,2).*

*“Isolation is difficult for part. It’s like putting an animal in a cage and you are totally cut away from the world. I feel homesick and bored, especially in the evening, I felt really homesick” (Male patient,P3).*

## Family Stress

They see their situation is creating a stress in their family as being an important member of the family and staying a long apart from them . They feel they are now not a part of that, verbatim is as follows

*“My family was disturbed a lot. No I am feeling as not a part of my family we used to talk and laugh about would bother the family members and even end in quarrels. However, I was never addressed in their quarrels, I knew it was all because of my disease” (Femalepatient,1).*

## Theme3: Fear of being a Carrier

It was a big stress and a fear that they can transmit the disease. They were feeling that they will be rejected by the society and will be stigmatized with the disease. This is acting as add on in their stress and disburbed them.

## Fear of Transmitting the Disease

They had the fear of that they will transmit the disease to others as carrier even to their to family members also, They are more tensed about the same and were under constant pressure that they will cause problem in the families too. The verbatim are as follows.

*“The greatest fear you have is harming your family. I was afraid of having transmitted the disease to my family, my parents, or my wife” (Male patient,P2).*

*“The stress of infecting people around you is more than that of the disease itself. After infection and having symptoms, my only concern was my family. When I was told I had to be hospitalized, I was in a very bad mood; my mind was preoccupied; I was thinking of my family, especially my daughter who I was worried about being infected.” (Malepatient6).*

## COVID-19 STIGMA

This was a negative though which were annoying for them. verbatim is as follows.

*“I didn’t come out of my house for so many days thinking about what people will be think aboutme. I still have the same feeling. When people see me, they looked at me like I have done somcrime” (Malepatient,4).*

## DISCUSSION

According to various studies COVID-19 patients have Psychological disturbances due to the uncertainty in the disease across the globe. The people are frequently exposed and no treatment is available [5, 6]. The themes obtained were to describe the emotional disturbances which were faced by the COVID 19 patients and who survived [7].Analysis revealed that psychological disturbances are included fear of death being isolated , psychological distress being in four walls , and stigma of being a carrier.

## LIMITATIONS

This study described the experiences of COVID 19 survivors in Pune. However to generalize the findings its too early to comment as area of spread is too large. For this more geography based studies too be explored to generalized the findings.

## CONCLUSION

The results showed that COVID-19 pandemic survivors not only bear physical symptoms but the mental stress too. They had psychological disturbances like stress fear of being a carrier, stigma of COVID. This study will help to plan further interventions to prevent the further harm.

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