

Family Relationship and Empathy During Pandemic

Prerna Singh¹, Ishita Sharma², Saman Saad³, Mansi Singhal⁴

¹*Abode of Healthy Mind, Lucknow*

²*Department of Psychology, Rajasthan University*

^{3,4}*Department of Psychology, IGNOU*

Abstract- As coronavirus disease continues to spread across the world, it has been causing disruptions in the daily routines of everyone's life. This pandemic has made us live in a quarantine phase with our families and the uncertainty still persists. This has caused changes in family relations and empathy among them. In a family, people are related to each other and share an emotional bond which helps us to relate to human agony with care and understanding, acting in ways that bring comfort to those around us. The objective of the current study is to analyze and explain the effect of family relationships on empathy during the lockdown period due to COVID-19. For this study, an alternate hypothesis was used and it was hypothesized that there will be a significant relationship between family relationships and empathy. 181 adult participants who lived with their families during the lockdown period completed the Index of Family Relations (IFR) and the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire. The data of 181 participants were statistically analyzed by SPSS. If there is a positive significant relationship, between family relationships and empathy, it will elucidate the effect of engagement and communication on changing levels of sympathy and empathy for family members. However, if the result shows a negative relationship between family members and empathy, it will widen the area to explore other factors that affect the empathy of family members.

Index Terms - Empathy, Covid19, Pandemic, Family relationships, Lockdown.

INTRODUCTION

Empathy is the ability to understand and share another person's feelings, experiences, state of mind, etc. The term empathy was coined by Titchener by adapting from the German word 'Einfühlung', 100 years ago (Wispé, 1986). Edgar wind, the art critic (1963) reported that the term 'Einfühlung' was first used by Robert Vischer in 1873 in his discussion of aesthetics and form perception. Vischer's psychology of aesthetic appreciation involved a projection of the self

into the object of beauty and this idea was widely accepted by others. The term 'Einfühlung' was described in English by the English critic and novelist Vernon Lee in a lecture given in London in 1895. It refers to an individual's ability to effectively or cognitively understand others' conditions and situations. The ability to empathize is an important part of social and emotional development, affecting an individual's behaviour toward others and the quality of social relationships.

THEORIES EXPLAINING EMPATHY

Neuroscientific Explanations

Studies by Decety (2011b) have shown that specific areas of the brain play a role in how empathy is experienced. Researchers have found that different regions of the brain play an important role in empathy, including the anterior cingulate cortex and the anterior insula.

There are important neurobiological components to the experience of empathy. The activation of mirror neurons in the brain plays a part in the ability to mirror and mimic the emotional responses that people would feel if they were in similar situations (2022).

Functional MRI research also indicates that an area of the brain known as the inferior frontal gyrus (IFG) plays a critical role in the experience of empathy. People who have damage to this area of the brain often have difficulty recognizing emotions conveyed through facial expressions (Murugesan, 2021).

Emotional Explanations

The philosopher Adam Smith stated that sympathy allows us to experience things that we might never otherwise be able to fully feel. This can involve feeling empathy for both real people and imaginary characters.

Prosocial Explanations

Sociologist Herbert Spencer proposed that sympathy served an adaptive function and aided in the survival of the species. Empathy leads to helping behaviour, which benefits social relationships. Humans are naturally social creatures. Things that aid in our relationships with other people benefit us as well.

When people experience empathy, they are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviours that benefit other people (Parker et al., 2008).

Daniel Goleman and Paul Ekman have identified three components of empathy: Cognitive, Emotional, and Compassionate.

Types of Empathy: Daniel Goleman and Paul Ekman have identified three components of empathy: Cognitive, Emotional, and Compassionate.

- 1) Cognitive Empathy “Simply knowing how the other person feels and what they might be thinking. Sometimes called perspective-taking.” If you imagine yourself in your friend’s shoes, you know she is likely to be feeling sad, as well as anxious because she relies on that income to pay her student loans. However, having only cognitive empathy keeps you at a distance from your friend. To truly connect with your friend, you need to share their feelings.
- 2) Emotional: “When you feel physically along with the other person, as though their emotions were contagious.” This type of empathy can also extend to physical sensations, which is why we cringe when someone else stubs their toe. In this case, you would look inwards to identify a situation where you were similarly anxious about the future.
- 3) Compassionate: “With this kind of empathy we not only understand a person’s predicament and feel with them but are spontaneously moved to help if needed.” It is the balance between Cognitive and Emotional Empathy that enables us to act without being overcome with feelings or jumping straight into a problem-solving process (Levine, 2022).

Additional Types of Empathy-

- 1) Affective Empathy: It's the type where we address other people's emotions accurately and respond accordingly, finding ourselves to be feeling

similar emotions to a level where it's personally distressing.

- 2) Somatic Empathy: Having similar physical reactions as the other person in distress may have, crying if the other person is crying because of a sad event that has nothing to do with you, shaking or having an upset stomach because the other person is out of nervousness.

A large body of theorists views empathy as multidimensional. While some theorists stress that it has affective and cognitive components. Davis (1983) termed the affective component as an empathic concern (or sympathy). It depicts concern for other people based on the understanding of their internal state. The cognitive component was termed perspective-taking and pertains to the cognitive understanding of others’ internal states and cognitions. Empathy is connected with concepts such as imitating, emotional contagion, compassion, and sympathy. It is viewed as an interpersonal process and individual ability. It is also described as the knowledge that changes the empathic person, brings new sympathy, new feelings, as well as new cognition and other forms of intersubjectivity (Riess, 2015).

It has been found that empathy plays a vital role and a prosocial sensation that stimulates healthy and satisfying family relationships.

THEORIES OF EMPATHY

- 1) Theory-Theory: This theory asserts that individuals hold a basic or 'naïve' theory of psychology to infer the mental states of others, such as their beliefs, desires or emotions. This information is used to understand the intentions behind that person's actions or predict future behaviour. The term 'perspective taking' is sometimes used.
- 2) Simulation Theory of Empathy: It is a theory that holds that humans anticipate and make sense of the behaviour of others by activating mental processes that, if carried into action, would produce similar behaviour. We project our own mental states onto others

Both Simulation theory and Theory-Theory are not primarily a theory of empathy, but rather a theory of how people understand others and the world around us in general that they do so by way of a kind of empathetic response in Simulation Theory of Empathy

and by the way of holding different perspectives in Theory-Theory.

- 3) Appraisal Theory of Empathy: According to this theory, emotions for others are based on how we evaluate their situations, just as first-hand emotions are based on how we evaluate our own situations(Wondra & Ellsworth, 2015).

Parenting Styles

To better understand these differences and why one child is different from another and the role of parent's behaviour on their children may be described as Parenting Style Parents are generally the primary caregiver of their children which includes responding to their child's needs and the way they respond to their child (indulgent/ neglecting) reflect their idea of the world. In the 1960's Diana Baumrind a well renowned developmental psychologist gave 3 parenting styles which include authoritarian/ disciplinarian, permissive, and authoritative.

Later in 1983 Maccoby and Martin divided permissive into two parts permissive style (indulgent) and the neglectful parenting style (uninvolved style).

- 1) Authoritarian- Parents with high demand but with low communication and strict rules with one side communication can be described as authoritarian parents. These parents are less responsive to their children's needs and impose their orders with no explanation and punishments. Many kinds of research show an inverse relationship between authoritarian parenting style and level of empathy. Children with these parents are more insecure, have low self-esteem, temper tantrums, and are more prone to drug abuse. For instance: Continuing with the above example, here Rekha will be asked to come home by 10:00pm with no explanation for coming late.
- 2) Permissive- Parents following the permissive parenting style have no rules and are not strict with their children. These parents are high in responsiveness but cannot set certain boundaries for their children as a result this parenting style has the worst outcome. Children with this parenting style tend to follow no rules, have no self-control, encounter more problems in relationships, and possess egocentric tendencies. For instance- In this parenting style Rekha would have no time limit to come home and can stay out for the whole night jeopardizing her safety.

- 3) Uninvolved- This parenting style is also known as neglectful parenting style in which parents have no demands from their children and are least responsive. Here parents themselves may be going through some mental health problems. Children with these parents have no guidance and tend to be more impulsive, have addiction problems, and cannot self-regulate their emotions. For instance- Rekha does not have to ask for permission to go to a night party. She can come whenever she wants, not concerning her parents.
- 4) Authoritative- Authoritative parents invest time and energy into preventing behaviour problems before they start. They also use positive discipline strategies to reinforce positive behaviour, like praise and reward systems. Researchers have found kids who have authoritative parents are most likely to become responsible adults who feel comfortable expressing their opinions(4 Types of Parenting Styles and Their Effects on Kids, 2021).

Attachment Styles

Attachment is defined as a “lasting psychological connectedness between human beings” (Bowlby, 1969) and may be considered interchangeable with concepts such as “affectional bond” and “emotional bond”.

The three attachment styles (Huang, 2020):

- 1) Avoidant attachment (Group A)- The infant showed little or no proximity with the mother, even after separation there were no signs of distress and showed similar behaviour with the stranger. In the future, these children may become independent emotionally and physically which may lead to low empathetic behaviour as they do not get affected by others' problems or distress.
- 2) Secure attachment (Group B)- Children with this attachment style maintained a high proximity level with the mother especially after they reunite. They got a little anxious with the stranger but showed interest in interacting with the mother because they believe in their mother's responsiveness towards them. These children have high chances of developing empathy because of their relationship with their family, friends, and society. Tia M.Panfile (2012) in a study examined the influence of multiple factors on individual differences in empathy; namely, attachment, negative emotionality, and emotion

regulation. A total of 63 mothers completed the Attachment Q-set and questionnaires about their children's empathy, negative emotionality, and emotion regulation when children were 3 years old. Results of path analyses indicated that more-secure children were rated higher in emotion regulation and, consequently, higher in empathy. Children higher in empathy were observed to behave more prosocially.

- 3) Ambivalent attachment (Group C)- In this attachment style, love and affection are not provided consistently by the caregivers to the children. As a result of the study, infants were hesitant to approach their mother at the time of reunion. This kind of attachment makes children anxious and unconfident about their mother's response.
- 4) Disorganized attachment (Group D)- Main and Solomon (1986) stated that a group of infants didn't fit either Group A, B, or C. So a new group was created i.e Group D. In this attachment style infants expressed odd behaviour. For instance, approaching mother after reunion but then immediately pulling away. These infants in the future may develop romantic relationships with more negative emotions than positive ones or may withdraw themselves without any reason. People with this attachment style may be highly empathetic at one moment and show no care at another moment.

ROLE OF FAMILY ON EMPATHY

A family is an *arranged group, usually related by blood or some binding factor of commonality, where individual roles and relationships modify over time.* Family relations are typically long-term and generally have a period in which common space is shared. According to Pearson families share common characteristics and share a living space for a prolonged time. The family environment has a large impact on a child's personality. The type of parenting style used, level of prosocial behaviour practised in the family, practising stereotypes, and prejudice in the family affect a child's personality either consciously or unconsciously. Similarly, another factor that is equally important in determining a person's psychological well-being is the level of empathy that a person experiences in their family. For instance, Sneha and

Mohit worked very hard for their exam but were not able to clear it. After this failure, Sneha's parents talked to her, felt her pain, and motivated her. As a result, she stood first in her next exam. On the other hand, Mohit's parents didn't talk to him and discouraged him to the level that he suffered from depression. According to Hodges and Myers, "Empathy is defined as understanding another person's experience by imagining oneself in that other person's situation. People growing up in a family where members practice empathetic behaviour may show empathetic behaviour toward other problems and handle their ups and downs maturely(Lumen Learning Support, n.d.).

FAMILY ENVIRONMENT DURING PANDEMIC

In research from Berduzco-Torres et al. (2020) parents use inductions and encourage or model prosocial behaviours and give explanations for expected prosocial behaviours from their children. Children can be more receptive to socialization practices to foster concern for others when parents model other-oriented behaviour and elicit or encourage affection and connectedness toward their children. Theorists and researchers have argued empathy because it is a motivating component of prosocial behaviours. Eliciting an emotional reaction that is highly similar to the affective state or condition of another person.

Due to their intensity, relationships between parents and their offspring have an important impact on adult offspring's life course. According to Fingerman (2001), the main reason is the complexity of these types of relationships: mostly long-standing and emotionally intense. In the case of the mother, this bond strengthens at the moment of the birth during skin-to-skin contact between mother and newborn baby (Hojat, 2016). Based on this, Bowlby (1982) proposed his "attachment theory" as an explanation for the dynamics (and its consequences) that accompany the infant's repeated encounters with primary caregivers. According to him, individuals develop internalized working models of their relationships as they move from childhood to adulthood.

For some authors (Hojat, 2016), these early encounters, when they are positive, create a solid basement for later interpersonal and social relationships.

Ainsworth (1985a, b) argued, for example, that this type of attachment developed in early childhood is likely to endure throughout life.

Lam et al. (2012) say although parents are a primary source of socialization, sibling interactions afford unique opportunities for children to learn about their own and others' affective responses and emotions (Dunn, 1998). For many children, a sister or brother is the first person with whom they share secrets, argue, and negotiate. In contrast to peer relationships, however, sibling relationships are non-elective and thus can be taken for granted, and because siblings spend substantial amounts of time together, often without adult supervision, they must learn to avoid or manage conflict (Katz et al., 1992). Their constant companionship shared history of family experiences, and sometimes competing interests and needs make for emotionally intense relationships, or a "love-hate" dynamic (Dunn, 2002). As such, sibling relationships constitute a distinct component of the family context, one in which youths can learn and practice a range of social competencies, including understanding another's emotional state and point of view (Dunn, 2003; Harris, 1994).

Coronavirus-19 or COVID-19 has led to this current health emergency situation which has made many countries decree drastic measures of quarantine. The outbreak of this deadly disease and its worldwide spread has brought social, economical and personal distress. It can be said that everyone's life has been paralysed after entering this pandemic. Being allowed to only access the essential products and services while working online had an impact on family, work, and education are not able to access the Internet and social life in this arduous situation. Not just physically but studies have shown that there have been psychological changes too which are directly affecting the population's health. The biopsychosocial model explains the call for not only physiological symptoms but also for social and psychological elements like anxiety, suicidal thoughts, depression, panic disorders, psychotic symptoms and loneliness which are the outcome of this situation of quarantine and social hurdles like unemployment, inflation and closure of companies. In a study done in Iran, Moghanibashi-Mansourieh (2020) has shown how the anxiety level is significantly higher in women than men, being told the age variant as 21 and 40 years old. He has also exposed how low education levels have increased the anxiety

rate. In terms of empathy, it has been observed higher in crisis situations because people are socially esteemed and cooperative so prosocial behaviour is common in emergency situations and has a positive effect on the physical and psychological well being of the affected population. This aspect is important for the present situation as a family has to look after not only the affected members but also those who have been suffering mentally due to financial crisis, educational aspects etc. Mandatory working from home for students and job-related members has emerged Work-family conflict (WFC) due to the difficulty in separating work life and family domains, concerns about their performance at work from home, increased use of technology, not able to participate in leisure activities to recover from workload, loss of boundaries and privacy at home, all this has created a negative effect on physical as well as mental health such as having musculoskeletal problems, depression, stress. Some recent studies have shown that work-family conflict could partially mediate the interrelation between some demands, resources and perceived stress and also burnout. In the healthcare sector, nurses have been prone to more mental health-related problems and unable to give time at their home which affected the spouse relationship and mother-child bonding, taking voluntary retirement, and reduced job satisfaction. There should be an investment in time and energy to manage multiple roles to handle work and home. All this has created a surge in work and family demands.

In the first wave of this outbreak the children, adults and families had been deprived of their education, work, and activities like spending time in parks, movie theatres, going on vacations and also they have lost contact with their friends and relatives, therefore making them feel more lonely and helpless. Parents who used to work out now suddenly have to manage their work online and help their children at home with school work. The stress of the pandemic like economic instability, fear of getting the illness and social isolation appears to have a negative impact on the emotional and behavioural adjustment of adolescents. Many families had to suffer the pain of their sick or dead relatives and close ones. Now the family has become the only point of reference because of the quarantine since the other references are not available for now and no one knows when we have to live in this situation. As told by the World Health Organisation

(WHO) this pandemic situation could have long term negative effects and consequences on psychological well being therefore there is a need to invest in mental health services including other services. Both domestic and international studies have shown a significant increase in children's mental illnesses like anxiety, depression, and emotional and behavioural disorders due to their family environment, social isolation, interruption of school and finishing off their education as well as extracurricular activities. Research in Italy showed that parenting stress during the pandemic and the lockdown increased their child's psychological, emotional and behavioural problems (Spinelli et al 2020). As confirmed by Brooks et al.,2020 the stress of quarantine can affect the psychological well being of adults too which might also have long term effects(Liu et al.,2012).

The second wave held India in its tightest grips of ongoing devastating scenarios. From lack of medicine and oxygen and beds in hospitals to no space for burial or cremation of the COVID affected deaths, there was chaos everywhere. People started to help others which showed a significant increase in empathy not only socially but also in families as they started to protect and care for their loved ones more than in comparison to the first wave. People were running for their lives and at the same time, they were helping others as much as they could.

External stressors such as economic hardship, demanding jobs and risk to health can threaten the quality, stability and interaction of spouse or couples relationships which could create outcomes such as domestic violence, less responsive support and attachment insecurity. So far there is no report on the over results of family relationships impacted by COVID-19 and the empathy involved.

The best thing that the pandemic brought to the table is "empathy". The privileged lot is getting more aware of their surroundings and is willing to help. The world, which is otherwise very self-engrossed and competitive, today has become more benevolent. A few were aggressively reaching out to the needy and hence others followed. Today it has also become a very trendy status quo for that matter to achieve a few minutes of happiness and fame or maybe to impose a tender sense of polarization on the needy; while for a few extending help has become a call of their tickling sensitivity or maybe just to do good following the words of karma. No matter for whatever reason people

are going out of their way to help their fellow beings, all that matters is the result. The ones at the receiving end are indeed getting a certain boost or renewal to their sustainability in these times of crisis(Times of India, 2020).

As Empathy is learnt and can very well be learnt through observation as proven by Bandura's experiments time and time again if children are exposed to videos and real-life experiences of empathetic gestures it's very likely that their mirror neurons will start to work and they will copy that behaviour as it will produce positive reactions from elders and peer group.

Since the 60s, Empathy Training has been discussed in a lot of research papers suggesting children can be trained in their classrooms by their teachers or research professionals.

Empathy in comparison develops and fluctuates throughout the lifespan and small or big events affect its levels, exactly what we are trying to learn in this study and because of that adults like us can increase our Empathy levels as well by learning new things which can be difficult for us but will make us more compassionate and humane towards people who can already do that already, as part of the feeling is understanding the other person, for eg, learning a new language, a new skill like stitching or painting.

Nothing triggers our compassionate Empathy where we feel like we need to take some action to help the other person more than when we are taking care of someone, a baby, an elderly in the house or even a pet as they come with a lot of responsibilities making us humbled and responsible towards other activities as well, so we'll feel the similar care and understanding towards others as well.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The purpose of the current study is to analyze and explain the effect of family relationships on empathy during the lockdown period due to COVID-19.

Background

Due to the spread of Coronavirus across the world, people have spent most of their time with families which has impacted their social and psychological well-being causing changes in empathy.

Hypothesis

In this study it was hypothesized that there will be a significant relationship between family relationships and empathy.

Sample

The sample of 181 adult participants who were above 18 and lived with their families during the lockdown period with no gender specification was taken for the research.

Inclusion criteria: Participants above the age of 18 years who either lived in a joint or nuclear family were included.

Exclusion criteria: Participants who lived away from their family or lived alone were not included.

Research design

Correlational research design was used to check for the existence of a possible significant relationship between family relations and the empathy of the adults.

Variables

The two nominal variables in the current study are family relations and empathy where family relationships are independent variables and empathy is the dependent variable.

Data Collection

For data collection, convenience and snowball sampling methods were used which are a type of non-probability sampling that involves the collection of data from easily available members who can voluntarily be part of this study. Snowball sampling is referred to as chain referral sampling. This sampling method was used because at the time of data collection, the third wave of COVID-19 was on a rise. The questionnaire method was used in which google form was created and was sent via email and WhatsApp. The two questionnaires that were used are the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire and the Index of Family Relations.

Procedure

The questionnaires were administered to the sample in the form of google forms and data was collected. Each participant was asked for his/her consent before the questionnaires were given. They were debriefed about the topic and were given instructions regarding how they are supposed to provide their responses. A token

of thanks was given after the data was collected from each participant.

Description of Tools

1) Index of Family Relations: It was developed by Walter W. Hudson (1992). It is a 25 items scale answered on a 7 point Likert scale ranging from “1=none of the time” to “7=All the time”. It is designed to measure the magnitude of problems that family members have in their relationships with one another. It is regarded as an overall measure of intrafamilial stress.

The IFR is scored by first reverse-scoring items listed at the bottom of the scale, summing the scores, subtracting the number of completed items, multiplying the answer by 100, and dividing by the number of completed items into 6. This produces a range from 0 to 100 with higher scores indicating greater magnitude or severity of problems. The lesser scores indicated that the family relations are quite good and healthy.

The IFR has two cutting scores. The first is a score of 30(+/-5); scores below this point indicate the absence of a clinically significant problem in this area. Scores above 30 suggest the presence of a clinically significant problem. The second cutting score is 70. Scores above this point nearly always indicate that clients are experiencing severe stress.

The IFR has an internal consistency with an alpha value of 0.95. The IFR has a validity of 0.60.

2) Toronto Empathy Questionnaire: It was developed by R.N. Spreng, M.C. McKinnon, R.A. Mar, and B. Levine (2009) as a brief measure of empathy as an emotional process. It consists of 16 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “never” to “often”. Some items are reverse scored as mentioned in the scale itself. The highest score is 64. Higher scores indicate high levels of self-reported empathy.

Data analysis

Spearman rank correlation coefficient was used to check for the relationship between family relations and the empathy scores of the participants. SPSS software was used for data analysis.

Result Tables

Table 1: *Tests of Normality*

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
relations	.156	151	.000	.870	151	.000
empathy	.101	151	.001	.973	151	.005

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Note. This table demonstrates the normality test values of Shapiro Wilk to check for the normality of the data.

Table 2 - Correlations

Correlations				
			Relations	Empathy
Spearman's rho	Relations	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2 Tailed) N	1.000 180	.173 .021 180
	Empathy	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2 Tailed) N	.173 .021 180	1.000 180

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

Note. This table demonstrates the correlation between the variables; Family relations and Empathy and their correlation are significant at a 0.05 level

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between family relations and empathy among adults during the corona pandemic. The hypothesis proposed was that there will be a significant relationship between family relations and empathy among adults. Pearson r correlation was employed to test for the existence of a correlational relationship between the variables. The Pearson r-value that was calculated came out to be -0.248 (refer to table 2.2) which was significant at the 0.01 level. The negative correlation signifies that the lesser the problems in family relationships, the more empathy among the individuals. In other words, it means that when the family relations are healthy and wholesome, empathy development will be much better.

The correlation was significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed). It implies that during the lockdown period there was a positive significant relationship between family relationships and empathy which affects the empathy levels of the individuals. According to the study, the family is seen as one unit rather than discrete units of

individuals. Therefore, empathy enables us to have better communication, care, and understanding and to

have better interpersonal relations among family members on the other hand family relations can change the levels of empathy in family members and family as a whole.

Pandemic has made our lives so restricted and damaged our relations with family members, put a lot of emotional strain on us which resulted in a lot of behavioural changes one of which is changes in the levels of empathy, which enables us to understand people better, deepening our bonds with them.

To make our society better we need to understand this connection between family relations and empathy so that we know how people become cold and selfish or supportive or selfless human beings.

This study shows a positive significant relationship between family relationships and empathy which means growth of family relations will increase levels of empathy in each family member leading to better communication, interpersonal relation, understanding and compassion. Whereas weak family relations will reduce empathy levels among individuals resulting in poor communication, conformity, and social and psychological well-being. The importance of this study post-pandemic will be making people aware of the relationship between family relationships and empathy so that they're motivated to maintain and strengthen their relationship with family members and also improve their levels of empathy.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to establish a relationship between family relations and empathy among adults in times of lockdown. The findings of this study suggest that there exists a significant correlational relationship between the variables thereby confirming the proposed hypothesis.

Empathy is important, but it is all the more important during a public health crisis. Locked up in the homes most of the time to combat the coronavirus, the immediate social entity with which the people can interact are their families. The difficult and uncertain times have made humans spend more time with their families. Work from home jobs, online schools and college lectures, online pieces of training, video calls; socialization have been brought to an online platform. When previously, these activities and interactions required people to leave their families and not spend much time with them, with the digitalization of

socialization and learning because of covid, now people can share their valuable time with their families.

Families are the first school, parents are the first teacher and siblings are the first friends. During the lockdown, their influence is explicit on the development and experience of moral values not only in children but also in adults. Empathy is a valuable process and feeling that people can share and experience within the familial environment. Generation gaps that adults often complain of, can be reduced and a deeper understanding of the relationships can be restored if empathy is practised within the family. Empathizing with others can help one feel less lonely and more connected. Not only do healthy family relations contribute to the development and experience of empathy among individuals, but the experience of empathy can also strengthen family relations. Staying too much with the family can indeed be tiresome sometimes as quarrels, arguments, and disagreements are an inevitable part of any relationship. But empathizing with the members of the family can help reduce the stress and build relationships stronger than before.

This correlatedness of family relations and empathy is important during lockdown periods and stay-at-home situations because covid has impacted everyone in the world. It hasn't spared anyone. A family is a social unit that works on many factors to function properly. One such factor is stress. Its presence creates tensions and friction in the family relations which in turn affects the mind and the mental health of the members. Corona also has brought with it a lot of stressors that are new for people. As a collaborative unit, every family member is required to look after each other so that the load on the mind is shared by all and divided so that members can deal with it and move ahead. In this relation, empathy solely can do wonders if practised and expressed regularly. It can be safely said that empathic concern will help the families in coping with the covid stress and anxiety as they will have each other's support and care.

As stated earlier this study shows a positive significant relationship between family relationships and empathy which means growth of family relations will increase levels of empathy in each family member leading to better communication, interpersonal relation, understanding and compassion. Whereas weak family relations will reduce empathy levels among

individuals resulting in poor communication, conformity, and social and psychological well-being. The importance of this study post-pandemic will be making people aware of the relationship between family relations and empathy so that they're motivated to maintain and strengthen their relationship with family members and also improve their levels of empathy.

We saw mainly two types of behaviours from masses during the lockdown and the following data implies that; According to The National Commission for Women (NCW) there was a 94 per cent increase in complaint cases where women were assaulted in their homes during the lockdown (Mohanty & Mohanty, 2021). Data provided by lawyers of family courts indicates that there is at least a 30 per cent increase in petitions seeking a divorce over 500 people every day (Mehta, 2021) and 21 people every hour were forced to move out of their homes during this period (DTE, 2021) when the country saw two deadly waves of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, an analysis by the Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN), an independent organization that works on research, education, and advocacy related to housing and land rights, showed. An estimated 1 in 10 older adults (age ≥ 60 years) experience elder abuse annually in the United States (Makaroun et al., 2020). This includes physical, sexual, or psychological abuse, as well as financial exploitation (such as diversion of money without permission or scams) or neglect by caregivers. Violence against US health care workers has been on the rise for at least a decade. According to US Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the incidence of violence-related health care worker injuries has increased by 67%, from 6.4 per 10 000 full-time workers in 2011 to 10.7 per 10 000 in 2018 (Larkin, 2021). The pandemic also affected animals (both pets and wildlife) directly and indirectly either due to owners being sick or complete ignorance towards stray animals and even hatred towards many wildlife animals like pangolin and minks etc (Wikipedia contributors, 2022).

On the other hand, we have also seen some positive implications as well,;

One study shows, that NASA satellites have documented significant reductions in air pollution—20-30% in many cases—in major cities around the world.⁵ Based on those declines, Marshall Burke, an

environmental economist at Stanford University, predicted in a blog post that two months' worth of improved air quality in China alone might save the lives of 4000 children under the age of 5 and 73 000 adults over the age of 70 (a more conservative calculation estimated about 50 000 saved lives). Researchers in Portugal and the UK told The BMJ that they were beginning to see shifts in the incidence of sexually transmitted infections but we're still collecting data to support their observations (Mousazadeh et al., 2021).

The lockdown has decreased the electricity demand by 30% in India, and by 12–20%. Additionally, the expenditure on the fuel supply has decreased by 4% in 2020 as compared to the previous years (2012–2019). In particular, The global demand for coal fuel has been reduced by 8% in March and April 2020 as compared to the same time in 2019 which means a healthier environment and fewer pollution-related diseases will affect people as compared to previous data which will result in maintaining family morale and keeping hopes up in difficult times like the lockdown (Mousazadeh et al., 2021).

The first positive family impact: Family resilience is built by finding the flexibility to react to changing circumstances, leading to cooperation and closer family bonds. The second positive family impact is children have more control of their time, allowing them to manage more of their day. This can encourage independent behaviours such as preparing snacks, doing chores and resolving sibling disputes when parents must focus on work. The third positive family impact is involving children in the work of the family helps their self-regard and responsibility, increasing self-esteem. The fourth positive family impact is that children have more time to rest without travel to school, work and after-school activities (Jason Sabo, PhD, site supervisor at Lee Health's Pediatric Behavioral Health Practice) (Sabo, n.d.).

The data above shows that there was an increase in domestic violence, elder abuse, animal starvation, abuse of medical practitioners, increase in divorces and breakups due to friction between the partners and in-laws but besides all the horror we have also seen a positive side of the pandemic, a little ray of hope amongst everything like people helping the poor and needy with food or transportation, one article suggests that 50% of landlords did not take rent from tenants, pollution and greenhouse gasses reduced which is

good for the climate and ultimately creates a positive impact on everyone's physical and mental health globally, families became more resilient, closer and self-esteem and individuality increased of each member, these variations in behaviour were influenced by a lot of environmental and familial variables and according to our study one of the biggest factors in these drastic behaviours are the levels of empathy in individuals fluctuating due to interpersonal relations among family members, better relations caused positive behavioural changes like increase in family resilience and self-esteem whereas bad relations caused divorces and induced crimes like violence and abuse not only in a domestic setting but also outside the confines of our houses.

This study tells us to practise empathy in order to survive not only this pandemic but any other medical emergency we face in the future either globally or nationally and if any other natural disaster finds us and breaks our hopes for the future, we can go through it all as one unit of the family being more empathetic than we were a day before, always trying to think and feel the other family member's issues and decision making. Thinking about what they are going through and that they are not alone will also promote empathetic behaviours from others because of The reciprocity principle: It says that in many social situations we pay back what we received from others (Cherry, 2020).

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