NIP NEWSLETTER

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The whole world is going through such a challenging time that mankind has rarely faced earlier. Where the pandemic of Coronavirus has paralysed the world, socially and economically, it has also shed its implications on psychological domain of every single individual. National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University has initiated an effort to contribute its knowledge and expertise for the well-being of general population. We have decided to initiate a series of NIP Newsletter and invite all the dedicated psychologists across country to share their knowledge and expertise in helping people deal with their psychosocial problems. We have decided to publish special issues of Newsletter, on monthly basis, regarding psychological help in dealing with this pandemic. We also invite all the dedicated psychologists and people who are working in social service sector to join us in this cause and share their knowledge and expertise through our forum.

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A PAGE FROM MY LOCKDOWN DIARY

Dr. Seema Pervez (Rtd. Professor, NIP, Quaid-i-Azam University)

It has been 7 weeks since I put my foot on the road outside my gate. I am following the Government's instructions very seriously. Some may call me a very disciplined and conscientious person while some might feel I am a coward, a person with low positivity or *maira eeman kamzoar hai (my faith is weak).* However, I would like to label myself as a law-abiding citizen.

It was almost a week before the formal lockdown, I started feeling that the "news of a deadly virus" is spreading negativity all around, and as an attempt to combat that I started writing on my Facebook page about ways to stay positive. But after a couple of days, I realized that the problem is so real that asking people to remain positive will push me towards the domain of foolishness.

Even though I am living with my family in very comfortable circumstances from every angle; yet the feeling of being lockdown was a great source of anxiety. So, it made me start empathizing with those who might not be in comfortable circumstances from socio-psychological perspectives.

As a professional, I felt that it was my responsibility to convey some ways of getting rid of anxiety. But when I started thinking at the more humane level it looked very fake to have a desire to see people anxiety-free, in such a globally challenging situation. Rather, I would say that in the present circumstances for every sane person, it is necessary to have a certain level of anxiety and stress. This anxiety and stress will keep us aware of the severity of the situation. We are going through a very rare situation in which almost all the countries; whether rich or poor; developing or developed; all are in a crisis.

There are various segments of society that are impacted in different ways. Some are facing real medical and financial issues, some are having difficulty managing the household without domestic help, some are unable to control their kids and toddlers and some are feeling suffocated because of lack of socializing. But everybody is equally afraid of being infected by the virus.

As we know that the focus of all concerned professionals is on how to control and cure the disease. Rightly so, as human life is the most precious thing. Hopefully *InshaAllah* we will succeed to control it, sooner or later. But the secondary outcome of the disease i.e. its impact on the economy and mental health will have more long-lasting impacts. As a student of Psychology, I am more worried about the impact of the lockdown on our mental health.

I foresee two segments will be most affected by the lockdown situation, (a) the extreme extrovert type people and (b) those who have domestic abusive relationships.

Here I would like to focus on the abusive relationship especially in marital relations, where generally the wife is the victim. Unfortunately, whatever we know about abusive relationships or domestic violence through media and research documents, that is only the tip of the iceberg. Infact, the situation is much more aggravated.

Generally, in such relations, the main respite for the victim is to try to get away from the situation at least for some time, to feel that she has an alternate option (whether she uses it or not), to have some privacy for fighting or patching up. She would find out some self-created cathartic therapeutic strategies: it may be impulsive shopping, having a gossip session with a friend, to find a shoulder to cry on, or to get satisfied on a reconciling phase by the abuser.

Unfortunately, during the lockdown phase, all these options would not be possible and that would create a claustrophobic feeling. The closed environment also snatches one's psychological space. I can envisage that it may bring two types of reactions.

If due to limited physical space in the house, the boundaries of privacy with the children and extended family members are difficult to maintain, then there is a possibility that the level of abuse might increase. There is a chance that the a busive behavior among the partners, would increase due to too much indulgence in each other's affairs, too many other frustrations, and too little escape routes.

Being a big promoter of positivity, I would like to see also a ray of hope; a disguised blessing in this lockdown. With a preconceived notion that both (or one of them) are not pathological or compulsive abusers, they might find the lockdown situation as an opportunity to improve their relationships. When there is no other way out, they will have time to understand each other. They can reflect on the underlying issues responsible for abusive behavior. They might learn to realize the efforts, pains, and difficulties of the other party. They might realize the significance of the other partner in homemaking and child-rearing.

I hope this forced lockdown might bring some positive changes too in making us good human beings and will keep us physically, socially, and psychologically healthy.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF COVID-19: SIMPLE WAYS TO COPE STRESS & ANXIETY

Dr. Rubina Hanif (Associate Professor, NIP, Quaid-i-Azam University)

The episode of coronavirus malady 2019 (COVID-19) may be unpleasant for individuals. The extent and reactions of individuals may differ but every person has experienced some symptoms of stress and anxiety. Fear and uneasiness about illness can be overpowering and cause hard feelings in grown-ups and children. Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.

Stress episode can include following common symptoms:

- Feeling stressed or overwhelmed
- Anxiety, worry, or fear
- Racing thoughts
- Sadness, tearfulness, loss of interest in usual enjoyable activities
- Physical symptoms, such as increased heart rate, stomach upset, fatigue, or other uncomfortable sensations
- Frustration, irritability, or anger
- Restlessness or agitation
- Feeling helpless
- Difficulty concentrating or sleeping
- Feeling disconnected from others

This is very important to keep in mind, that it is Alright and okay to feel this way and that everybody responds in a different way. Remember, these circumstances are temporary and, for most of us, this troublesome experience will pass.

Here are few simple things that can help everyone to deal with this stressful situation:

1. **Keep things in perspective:** the first point is that you should be aware of the situation, what is going on around, the facts and figures but you need to be very cautious to absorb information (*right information through right source and in right quantity*). Do not get involved, excessively, in every news of media or social media. Keep yourself updated but do not indulge yourself too much in every source of information.

2. **Keep social distance physically, but stay connected**: Keeping up strong association with individuals, we believe, is very important for our mental prosperity. So think accordingly and plan the way you'll be able to remain in touch with companions and family members, while requiring you to stay at home.

3. **Keep sharing your concerns with others :** It's normal to feel a bit worried, scared or helpless about the current

situation. Sharing your worries may help in getting way out of some of your concerns. It may help to realize that everyone is facing the same situation and you are not alone in this pandemic situation.

4. **Focus on the present:** Focusing on the present, rather than worrying about the future, can help with difficult emotions and improve our wellbeing. *Relaxation techniques* and *physical exercises* can also help some people in dealing with feelings of anxiety, and stress.

5. **Practice positive thoughts in your acts or behaviors:** Try to focus on optimistic things. Think positive aspects of this outbreak e.g., List what you are grateful for, a unique experience of life, having plenty of time to complete your "to do list, intense experience of bonding and affiliation with your relationships, etc. etc.

SEARCH FOR MEANING: FINDING STARS IN DARKNESS

Dr. Aisha Zubair (Assistant Professor, NIP, Quaid-i-Azam University)

The novel corona virus has touched off another stealthy and growing public health crisis that calls for an equally matched emergency response. Like other pandemics and emerging disease outbreaks, COVID-19 is creating immense psychosocial disturbances. The disease involves an unfamiliar threat that is difficult to detect and challenging to distinguish from more benign illnesses. Protracted and dynamic pandemic conditions have generated immense anxiety among the people all around the world and things are getting worse before they get better. In the absence of any specific vaccine, non-pharmaceutical interventions are the only way to prevent infections, and they dramatically upset everyday bodily habits, social interactions and economic exchanges. It is imperative to understand that key factor that allows us to turn adversity into advantage is the extent to which we fully explore our thoughts and feelings surrounding the event. Cognitive exploration based on general curiosity about information and a tendency toward complexity and flexibility in information processing; enables us to be curious about confusing situations, increasing the likelihood that we will find new meaning in the seemingly incomprehensible.

Finding meaning in our lives during the times of dismay can be metaphorically understood through a folk tradition. Kintsugi is a centuries-old Japanese art of fixing cracked pottery. Rather than hide the cracks, the technique involves rejoining the broken pieces with lacquer mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. When put back together, the whole piece of pottery looks beautiful as ever, even while owning its broken history. Many people are wondering at this time in history whether *we* will have a second life. When put back together, will we recover from the pandemic of COVID 19 with dignity and grace? Existential perspective suggests that not only will we recover, but we will demonstrate the immense human capacity for resiliency and growth.

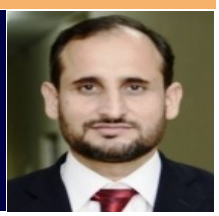
Defining resilience as the ability of people who have experienced a highly life-threatening or traumatic event to maintain relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological and actually common, that it is not the same as the simple absence of psychopathology, and that it can be attained through multiple, sometimes unexpected, routes. Considering that large number of people reports at least one traumatic event in their lifetime, the human capacity for resilience is quite remarkable.

In fact, many who experience trauma (such as being diagnosed with a chronic or terminal illness, losing a loved one, or experiencing sexual assault) not only show incredible resilience but actually thrive in the aftermath of the traumatic event. In lieu to the tendency of resilience assist in developing an extraordinary outstanding characteristic of posttraumatic growth which is reflected as the positive psychological change that is experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances. Mainly it is expressed in various areas of growth that may originate from adversity including greater appreciation of life; strengthening of close relationships; increased compassion and altruism; identification of new possibilities or a purpose in life; greater awareness and utilization of personal strengths; enhanced spiritual development; and creative growth. Nevertheless, most people who experience posttraumatic growth are often surprised by the growth that does occur, which often comes unexpectedly, as the result of an attempt at making sense of an unfathomable event.

On a concluding note, undoubtedly, the trauma of pandemic has shaken up our world and forces us to take another look at our cherished goals and dreams. But we need to reconsider our choices as Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl put it, "When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves." As psychologists, we need to inculcate understanding among the masses about the psychological processes through which people can turn this adversity into an advantage, through the psychologically seismic restructuring which is actually necessary for healthy growth to occur. We can make people to grasp that it is precisely when the foundational structure of the self is shaken that we are in the best position to pursue new opportunities in our lives.

TOBACCO USE AND THE COVID19 PANDEMIC: PROPOSING AN ACTION PLAN

DR. Naeem Aslam (Assistant Professor, NIP, Quaid-i-Azam University)



There has been a great deal of discussion about the potential relationship between COVID-19 and tobacco use, including smoking. Enormous evidence suggests that, compared with nonsmokers, people who smoke cigarettes face a higher risk of developing severe complications and dying from COVID-19 infections. Previous studies have also shown that smokers are twice more likely than non-smokers to contract influenza and have more severe symptoms, while smokers were also noted to have higher mortality in the previous MERS-CoV outbreak. Smokers may be prone to severe COVID-19 infections, in part, because their lungs contain an abundance of entry points that the virus can exploit. Furthermore, tobacco use may increase the risk of suffering from serious symptoms due to COVID-19 illness. Recent research have demonstrated shown that, compared to non-smokers, having a history of smoking may substantially increase the chance of adverse health outcomes for COVID-19 patients, including being admitted to intensive care and suffering severe health consequences. In addition, smokers are likely to be more vulnerable to COVID-19 as the act of smoking means that fingers are in contact with lips which increases the possibility of transmission of virus from hand to mouth.

The pandemic is still under progression. Smoking is detrime-ntal to the immune system and its responsiveness to infections, making smokers more vulnerable to infectious diseases. Smoking is also associated with increased development of acute respiratory distress syndrome, a key complication for severe cases of COVID-19, among people with severe respiratory infections. Evidence from China, where COVID-19 originated, shows that people who have cardiovascular and respiratory conditions caused by tobacco use, or otherwise, are at higher risk of developing severe COVID-19 symptoms. It is also the most important risk-factor for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which causes the swelling and rupturing of the air sacs in the lungs, reducing the lung's capacity to take in oxygen and expel carbon dioxide, and the build-up of mucus, resulting in painful coughing and breathing difficulties. This may have implications for smokers given that the virus that causes COVID-19 primarily affects the respiratory system often causing mild to severe respiratory damage, which could result in fatality. However, given that COVID-19 is a newly identified disease, the link between tobacco use and the disease needs further documentation and research.

Quitting smoking yields large and immediate benefits to health, no matter the time. Perhaps these benefits are larger now than ever. For some smokers, this crisis might provide

inspiration or motivation, or a "teachable" moment for those who hadn't thought much before about quitting. In the end we are proposing few suggestions for those who are intending to quit smoking. Set a quit date, within 2 weeks to give up smoking completely. Share with family, friends and co-workers about this quitting attempt and seek their understanding and support. Anticipate challenges to the upcoming quit attempt and be prepared to address them. Remove tobacco products from your environment. Make your home smoke free. Consider the following steps to help reduce your nicotine cravings and other withdrawal symptoms: Drink a lot of liquids, especially water. Limit coffee and other soft drinks. Do not skip meals. Exercise regularly and moderately. Joining an exercise group provides a healthy activity and a new routine. Try to go to sleep early and get more rest. When cravings hit, distract your-self and do something else immediately, such as getting busy with a task, talking to someone, or taking deep breaths. Change your habits. Take a different route to work, eat breakfast in a different place, or get up from the table immediately after eating. Using these simple strategies one can get benefit to quit smoking and become less vulnerable to COVID 19.

STAYING POSITIVE DURING QUARANTINE

Sara Imtiaz (Research Associate cum Lecturer, NIP, Quaid-i-Azam University)

The world was moving at a very fast pace. People often used to quote deprivation of time for family, outings, socialization, and health care. All of a sudden, emergence of a virus quenched the aggravated pace of life. Outbreak of virus started from China where mobility of people was stopped and the world came to know that this pandemic can only be avoided if you keep yourself away from others by maintaining a social distance, washing hands regularly, and staying at home for the most. No doubt, Corona has been the most frequently used virus name from past few months since

When the virus has started impacting the lives of humanity in all respects whether it be the work itself, working patterns, socialization patterns, traveling, entertainment, home life etc. everything has taken up a new perspective.

Rightly said it is that 'change is nature' but change requires readjustment. When need for change is such great, there comes depletion of flexibility and it can make way to irritability, gloominess, and hopelessness. People being put in isolation, been asked to stay home is definitely difficult as man is regarded a social animal but as it is the demand of situation it has to be done for the greater good of humanity. The situation seems to be chaotic at times because the reign holders who have been authorized to handle it are coming up with multiple contradictory strategies to deal with. In such a scenario, rather than getting perplexed and inoculating others with similar mind set, it is very much essential to generate a positive perspective within oneself and staying proactive to address negativities emerging in others.

Definitely, people are facing difficulty to connect with others, whether they be friends, colleagues, service providers, opponents to play with, but most of us are rejoicing the pleasure of being with our families when many of the people stuck far away from homes. If it is not possible to be physically present at work location it is possible to produce work outcomes virtually, even virtual meetings have enabled to meet the work group. Similarly, the games have taken a virtual perspective, recently a virtual chess tournament had been applauded greatly. People have altered health habits by replacing gym exercise machines with home based accessories to serve the purpose. So there is need to keep oneself calm by readmitting that though routine affairs have been disturbed but there are alternatives as per the situation.

Most toxic thought pattern in any kind of adversity is to view oneself as being alone in the situation which is not the case currently, people have been affected all over the world. is a need to create balanced awareness of scenario and remaining steadfast with currently altered life style along with a hope that one day things will revive. It is not all bad currently, rather less interaction with environment is making up positive changes by rejuvenating it.

Importantly it is to be kept in mind that being a learned person it is our responsibility to guide others around, about severity of issue at hand and addressing it properly but it would only be possible if our own mental equipment is tuned on positive lines. In face of very diverse attitudes ranging from experiencing extreme anxiety to unacceptability about seriousness of issue it is highly essential to approach it tactfully. Very thoughtful consideration is required to handle children during the quarantine period. Parents and other family members should make efforts to involve them into different activities so that they may feel contended by such engagements as their build up energies get well destined by doing so. Whether it be the routine home affairs like room making, cooking, conversations with relatives, the academic activity that may also be designed in a playful manner, or the play itself, they are required to be engaged continuously. Similar attention should also be given to the elderly particularly by keep their social ties alive.

Socialization has been withheld but not terminated, virtual connections are still possible and can oxygenate the life that seems dull and boring at times. So rather than considering current scenario a troublesome and painful thing there is a need to view it from an opportunistic perspective to earn gains. It is a high time to explore the hidden talents and skills or polish the existing ones. People have been reporting about fascinating cooking experiences, joyous beauty attention, fitness folks and what not. The key is to keep pleasing yourself so that others are able to feel pleased too by the virtue of positive energy you emit. Things do seem difficult but hopefully

PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE ON STIGMA OF COVID-19 AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP

Arooj Fatima (Lecturer, NUML)

The most common and prevailing issue of now a days is corona virus (COVID-19). Almost more than 180 countries have been affected by corona virus. Hundreds of thousands of people have been infected and death toll is still escalating. Fear of death, anxiety and social isolation have evoked extreme terror all over the globe.

The social stigma in the context of health is the negative association between the person or a group of people who share certain characteristics and a specific disease (World health organization, 2020). The phenomenon of stigmatization is directly related to psychological wellbeing of person because it creates discrimination, polarity and targets social identity. These components activate stress responses in individual and substantially cause low level of self-esteem.

At international level, in the U.S. and Europe, for example, people of Asian descent especially Chinese have been treated with suspicion and blamed for COVID-19, despite the fact that they are no more likely to spread the virus than is the general population. While in India, the spread of virus has been associated with Muslims.

Along with severe health consequences people suffering from allergies, seasonal flu or fever, hay fever, asthma and other sinus problems are also denounced and out casted.

On the other hand, the debilitating and devastating effects of carrying people to isolation wards, sealing the infected area, breaking social connections and media coverage of these scenarios has further grounded stones of stigmatization of disease. The fear of being labeled has actually worsened the situation than being infected with virus. There are number of people who are hiding their illness, using escape and avoidance strategies, delays in seeking health care facilities, fleeing from the isolation wards due to the same fear. Corona positive and recovering individuals are being treated negatively. They may be targets of verbal, emotional and physical abuse in future.

Certain minorities (like Hijra community in Pakistan) who are already marginalized from mainstream cannot access health facilities and further isolation makes condition dreadful with increased mortality rate. There is also moral imperative in social effects debate of COVID-19 that focuses on just world fallacy. People attribute infected people as sinful. In future, they may be rejected in jobs and educational opportunities. This stereotypical slanting is causing Corona affectees to internalize the stigma.

The humans are wired for sociality and the stigma of COVID -19 is a progressive response to people's behavioral reactions. The feelings of a sociality and social detrimental effects are other significant factors which are flowering pandemic.COVID-19 patients are delaying visits to the doctor because of the stigma associated with the disease. The fear of stigma is so severe and intense that even a doctor died in Karachi because he kept on delaying medical help due to getting stigmatized in his neighborhood and community.

Talking about the ways to lessen the effects of social stigma at international level, all materials should show diverse communities being impacted and dealing together to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Some media outlets have, for example, focused on speculating on the source of COVID-19, trying to identify patient zero in each country. Social media and electronic media both can play fundamental role in psycho-educating people about psychosocial aspects of disease. The notion of safe distance rather than isolation should be promoted to decipher the stereotypes.

At National level, Electronic media should get the facts about COVID-19 from reputable sources such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) and convey the public correct information. Its media's responsibility to share hopeful narratives, foster collective solidarity and amplify success stories like number of individuals recovering from COVID-19.Media must avoid labeling, using all-inclusive language and avoid stigmatizing terminology.

Social media is another useful medium for reaching an oversized number of people with health information at relatively low cost. Sharing of success stories of people beating corona virus is one way of boosting morale. Social influencers such as religious and political leaders, YouTube and Tiktok stars as well as celebrities can also contribute significantly to reduce stigmatization.

Psychologists are of imminent importance in raising awareness, dissemination of accurate information, enhancing social support for affectees and speaking about the negative attitudes including countering negative statements on social media about COVID-19 affectees while boosting empathetic attitude towards them.

While providing health care facilities to COVID-19 patients, first step is to maintain confidentiality and privacy of people having COVID-19.Stigmatized groups may often be deprived of the resources they need to care for themselves and their families during a pandemic. The health care system should, therefore, adhere to an all inclusive approach. Awareness and action oriented approach should be taken to minimize the ostracizing reactions. The infected population has to face burden of illness as well as stigmatization associated psychological outcomes. The sigma reducing strategies should be introduced to increase the resilience of infected people. It is need of the hour to deal with psychosocial impact of the disease including emotional consequences.

Instead of promoting denial and camouflaging symptoms, acceptance and treatment experience should be promoted. Three pronged or triangulated cohesive approach should be taken in order to combat this disease. This tiered approach should consist of involving health care professionals, emotional support from family and psychological help from trained counselors and health psychologists. Health care facilities should include use of social media apps for social support and government should provide free psychological help for affectees by establishing free of cost help lines.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

Fatima Afsar (Ph.D Scholar)

COVID-19 is a severe acute respiratory syndrome corona-virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) officially named in 2019 (World Health Organization, 2020). In Pakistan its outburst started on 27th April, 20, causing severe confusion, chaos, denial.

Using sanitizers, washing hands, covering nose and mouth while sneezing, social distancing are the preventive measures approved by Government of Pakistan and the outer world.

Besides affecting humans and threatening lives, this pandemic has affected approximately 87% (1.5billion) students across the world implementing closure in more than 165 countries including Pakistan. This pandemic has affected education as well as opened new revenues to education. Governments around the world have urged employees to work from home where possible in educational sector as well. Shares in technology companies such as Zoom have shot up as more people rely on video conference calls and email to hold meetings or get tasks done.

Online system is preferred mode of education in the crisis as it was the need of the hour and most sustained in the crisis situation provided that the infrastructures for example, electricity, internet etc. will be provided. Home assignments will be done easily during lock down and other such crisis.

Teleschool have been introduced for the children you don't have internet access and cannot take regular classes as a new trend in educational system of Pakistan. This online, digital system and teleschool learning system initially faced challenges as students and parents were not satisfied with the content and way of teaching which is improving day by day and the content has been upgraded a lot.

On the other hand, the closure of schools have negatively affected the children's education in many ways. The gap in the education of the children, routine change, leisure activities, and such change in the routine has affected learning and education vastly. Closure of schools have placed burden on parents as children in their homes affect the parental routine too affecting the child's mental health besides education. Distance learning, elearning, teleschools etc. are also a burden on parents as they have to manage their children's routine, help them understand the online system, supervise them for the homework and other activities given by the instructors.

Unequal access to the educational resources have been the biggest suffering. Same educational standards cannot be implemented on national level leading to unequal resources and instructions. It is very difficult to assess student's outcome on learning as distant learning lacks supervision of the instructors. The underprivileged are even in a worse situation.

According to UNESCO the way out is to choose most relevant tools which would require minimum expertise and resources for which teleschool service is an initiative in Pakistan.

The second way is to use tools that could connect parents, teachers and children for improved surveillance, learning and coordination. Implementation of the same policies, schedule and content across the nation will help the concerned to promote education. Moreover trainings of the faculty, parents and children on different levels will help understand the upgraded systems and upgrade their selves with the demands of the time.

The challenges faced in Pakistan are the interruption in the power supply, interrupted internet facility, computer literacy deficiency etc. The lack of skills to use computer, internet, online system etc. is a big challenge faced by majority of the educationists whether teachers, parents or students.

Recipients of the education, the students face the same issue but the problems are more unpretentious as Pakistan is a developing country and poverty is a national issue which could cause hindrance in the education attainment. Parents already bear much expenses for the education of their children but online education has increased the cost and utilization of resources has been increased. Due to the lock down imposed on the country along with many others have limited the earning resources and the expenses are increasing day-by-day.

Academic honesty is one such issue which is a morality concern of both the teachers and the students. This should be reflected in the evaluation system too.

The solution to all these issues are much needed. Few of the suggestions for solving issues are:

1. Infrastructure should strong to provide the concerned population with the necessities.

2. Instead of trial and error, already developed systems should be customized to fulfill the need of the universities.

3. Virtual universities, web based programs, and distant learning systems already running such setup successfully must be contacted for facilitation of the online system.

4. Different organizations and learning networks have online lectures already prepared and available on the web whether paid or unpaid must be followed with a contract or agreement to develop understanding and provide the necessary course materials to them.

5. Virtual libraries must be updated and obsolete material must be removed if there is no practical implications of that material.

6. Theoretical assignments must be replaced with skill based assignments to develop their practical skills instead of copy pasting from the internet and theoretically understanding the concepts only.

7. Peer evaluation system should be implemented to lower the burden of the teachers, promote knowledge sharing and propagation, developing skills for critical reviews and increasing sense of responsibility in the students.

8. Anatomical models or virtual models must be introduced in hard sciences most importantly to promote science and scientific research for the solution in critical crisis situation.

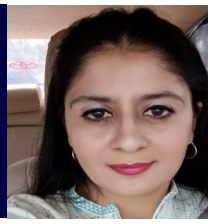
Universities, schools, academies and other educational institutes must join hands with the support of government to facilitate the staff, tutors, and instructors, in terms of internet and equipment.

Till now online system in Pakistan has been implemented in many areas and consistently developing skills to improve further. Educational institutes are playing roles in sensitizing people about the current scenario, research to understand and upgrade living standards while living in a restricted environment.

We hope that the joint efforts put individually and in groups in fighting the pandemic, supporting the national cause, and following instructions will help us succeed in every walk of life overcoming the obstacles and challenges.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PICTURE: MEN AND MASCULINITY AMIDST COVID-19

Dr. Sahira Zaman (Assistant Professor, Department of Gender Studies, Punjab University)



Pakistan is a male-dominated patriarchal society. Men in our society primarily are responsible for breadwinning for families. Stereotypes that a man's place is in the public sphere and a woman's in the domestic sphere are hurting men and their masculine identities at least at two levels in our society amidst COVID-19.

First and foremost, economic recession, layoffs, and cutbacks on incomes are predicted which are making a large number of men in our society more susceptible and increase their vulnerability for mental health problems. Men are primarily economic supporters of their families. So they are more exposed to lose their jobs which can result in serious mental well-being issues. Losing a job can be an emotionally destroying phenomenon and can exacerbate other stressors present in the environment nowadays. Psychologists say that losing a job can be equitable to losing a relationship or significant others so it can result in grief with other emotional trajectories. The response can route through shock, anger, denial, sense of loss, and hopelessness and may transpire in depression. From a great recession to major depression, men's vulnerability of psychological breakdown is far greater than any other gender in the society especially when their masculine identities are closely knitted with their work role saliences and their biggest fear is for long term consequences of this pandemic in this regard.

Second, gender norms in our society expect men to be powerful and show control over situations. Since this lockdown has situated them in domestic spheres so the remaining space to assert their dominance is now over spouses, children, or other family members which in terms are serving as scapegoats and ended up in more stressful circumstances inside the houses.

It is important to understand that the primary socialization of our men is to spend more time in the public sphere as to homes. But this pandemic has compelled them to live inside houses for an unpredictable amount of time. Routine life before the outbreak of COVID-19 is disturbed, men forced to stay at home are left with very less productive work to do. Work from home is an option for a few of them to continue their economic activity but as per an assessment in Pakistan, only 15% to 17% of jobs are well equipped to run from homes. Many men are on the verge of losing their jobs or may have been lost already, so stress and anxiety they are facing would be far greater as compared to others.

The stereotypical brought up, self-fulfilling prophecy to take less personal care of themselves and less involved in taking care of other family members (except economic needs) is expected from them. This pandemic has forced them to live in a situation where they aren't performing their regular roles of breadwinning and the flip side of the situation is that they aren't trained to do any other roles i.e. household chores and may serve as a fuel to fire. So, in these exceptional, unprecedented circumstances, it is hard for them to find equilibrium.

There is always a silver lining at the end of every cloud, and it is rightfully said that crises comes with challenges and opportunities. This pandemic has come with exceptional challenges but also may have provided the opportunity for our men to look into their gender relations from an insider's perspective now. This opportunity has generated an instance to spend more time with families, spouses, children, and the elderly and to look at the world from their standpoints. Suffering financial hardships or losing jobs are great losses but it also gives a chance to overhaul the financial needs and to cut back extra expenses. Spending wisely and devoting quality time to families may result in more gender-fair and balanced relationships after this pandemic. I am hopeful that more gender equality will be the new normal on the other side of the picture.