



# A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE EMOTIONAL WELL BEING OF THE MOTHERS OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER.

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## Abstract:

A study was done on 100 mothers of ASD children from New Delhi, India. The outcome measure used was General Health Questionnaire (GHQ – 12)<sup>[21]</sup>. The result of the study was that the lockdown restrictions due to COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the emotional well being of the mothers of children with ASD. Mean and Standard deviation were calculated for the above sample.

Index terms: Covid-19 pandemic, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Mothers, Emotional Well-being

## Introduction:

In the cutting-edge COVID-19 pandemic disaster, the instantaneous implementation of emergency measures and surprising alternate and disruption of scheduled sports additionally had a profound impact on kids with disabilities and their own circle of relative members. In general, kids or adults with autism are susceptible people who regularly face fitness inequalities and are uncomfortable with the alternate of their day by day routine<sup>[3]</sup>. Normally, kids with ASD have problems in social interplay and communication. Other problems consist of ordinary language development, cognitive delays, repetitive and confined behaviors, interests, or sports and behavioral issues like aggression, tension, tantrums and non-compliance. Multiple research have suggested the problem in dealing with kids behaviors with ASD<sup>[4]</sup>. Adverse mental kingdom manifesting with inside the shape of pressure, despair and tension in mothers<sup>[5]</sup>, decrease own circle of relative functioning, low quality of existence with multiplied pressure in moms' private domain or stigma-associated tension-despair in moms of kids with ASD turned into discovered<sup>[6]</sup>. From India, reviews of seriously impaired quality of existence with low power and emotional issues, psychosocial issues like stigmatization affecting intellectual fitness, despair amongst moms are discovered amongst mothers of kids with ASD.

A study found that parents of kids with ASD had lower subjective emotional well-being and enhanced physiological stress<sup>[12]</sup>. It was also found that caregivers of youngsters with ASD had greater levels of the symptoms of parenting stress and more symptoms of depression than those of typically developing children. Moreover, mothers of youngsters with ASD, especially, are reported to experience habitual stress according to that experienced by soldiers in combat<sup>[13]</sup>.

Further, parents of youngsters with ASD have additional demands aside from the standard parenting demands, that is, parents got to care for their child's behaviour and emotions which may frequently be unpredictable. Deficits in social communication and behaviours that are repetitive and restrictive are characteristic of persons with ASD<sup>[14]</sup>. Moreover, children with ASD may have challenges with their behaviour. As an example, they'll have challenging eating habits like, selective eating of food supported presentation, texture, or type, or they'll display disruptive behaviours at mealtime<sup>[12-15]</sup>. Parents of youngsters with ASD consequently may have to perform complicated care activities like, managing their children's behaviour and aggression, while simultaneously dealing with all other facets of family and work commitments<sup>[16]</sup>. Limited social awareness and support may cause families to struggle to know the behaviours of their children. This successively can increase the extent of stress the family experiences and consequently hinder both the diagnosis of ASD during a child and planning of its treatment<sup>[17]</sup>. Moreover, the build-up of pressure thanks to parenting a toddler with ASD can enhance the strain experienced by parents and threaten their emotional well-being. Consequently, there's an excellent likelihood that the impact of both the pandemic's implications and therefore the measures implemented to reduce transmission of COVID-19 on individuals with ASD and their families are going to be unfavourable. Moreover, the daily routines of children with ASD could be affected in various ways<sup>[19]</sup>. Including the parents' anxiety regarding their own work, the ambiguous economic situation, limited access to treatment and medical facilities, and prolonged delays in obtaining entry to intervention programmes may severely impair their capacity to affect their children with ASD during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, it's been highlighted that while some parents would be ready to demonstrate resilience within the challenging situation, it had been highly probable that others would experience worsening of existing vulnerabilities which successively could detrimentally impact their levels of stress<sup>[20]</sup>. Due to the measures taken by the government of India during the COVID-19 pandemic, children with ASD are confined to their homes alongside their parents since early March 2020. Consequently, the aim of this study is to research the impact to the strain and emotional wellbeing of mothers thanks to the change in routine for his or her children with ASD during the COVID-19 outbreak. It's hypothesized that stress levels of the mothers could have significantly increased, and their emotional well-being could have significantly deteriorated in contrast to their state before the closure of faculties thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study is critical because it endeavors to draw attention to the status of mothers of youngsters with ASD during COVID-19 situation and to study the changes in the emotional well being after the lifting of lockdown regulations also by suitably supporting them through different means like tele-rehab.

### **Methodology:**

A pretest post test group design was used. The study was concluded with 100 mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Convenient sampling method was used for data collection.

Outcome measure:

1. Demographic data of the mothers such as age, marital status, educational qualification, family income, current working situation (e.g., working from home, not working due to COVID-19, etc.)
2. Family ASD status such as, number of children with/without ASD, age of children with ASD, gender of children with ASD, severity of ASD symptoms.
3. Emotional well-being using the Validated GHQ-12 (12-item version of the General Health Questionnaire). The GHQ-12 is composed of 6 positive and 6 negative items which measure positive and negative mental wellbeing. The scoring methods typically used for this scale are bi-modal (0-0-1-1) and Likert scoring (0-1- 2-3).

General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) was used to measure the emotional well being among mothers of children with ASD. GHQ-12 scales have been validated by previous studies, no items were removed from the questionnaire.

### Procedure:

100 mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder participated in the study. Participation was voluntary and data collected was confidential. Individuals were explained about the program, the risks and benefits involved in the program. Consent form was duly signed by the mothers of children. General assessment of children was carried out.

Each individual was then evaluated for Emotional Wellbeing. Each individual responded to the GENERAL HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE (GHQ-12). Post assessment was done 6 months after removal of lockdown. The score obtained was analyzed statistically.

### Data

The data was managed on excel spread sheet and was analyzed using SPSS (statistical package for the social sciences) software, version 21. For all statistical tests, the level of significance was set at  $<0.05$ . Statistical difference was tested with the parametric paired sample t-test to determine any significant difference in parametric

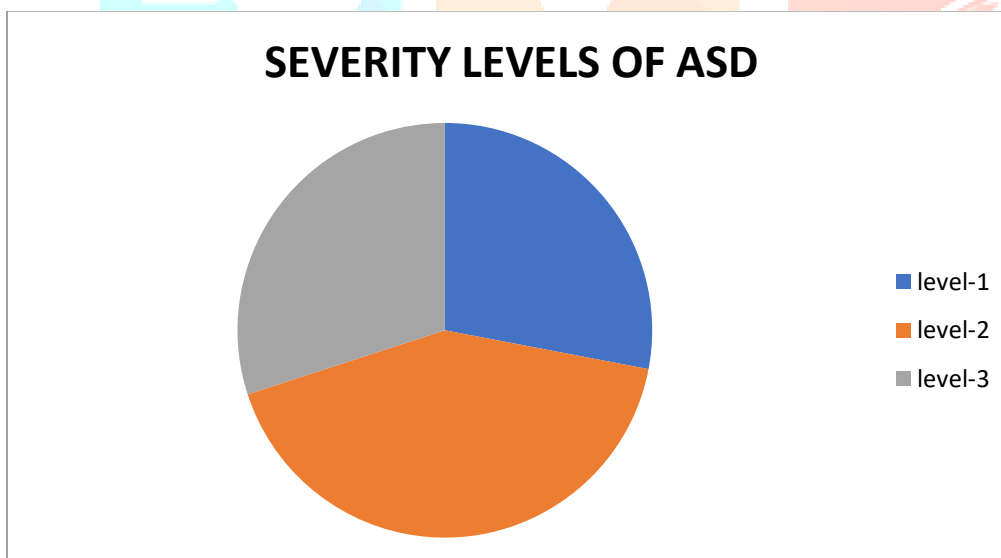
### Analysis:

variable.

### Result:

Total 100 participants were selected in which 30% were mothers of children with Level 3 of ASD, 42% were Level 2 and 28% were Level 1 of ASD.

Graph 1: Distribution of severity levels of ASD in children



**Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation of pretest and post test of emotional well being of mothers of children with ASD**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
emotional well being score pre test	100	13	38	26.90	5.604
emotional well being post test	99	5	25	14.60	3.771

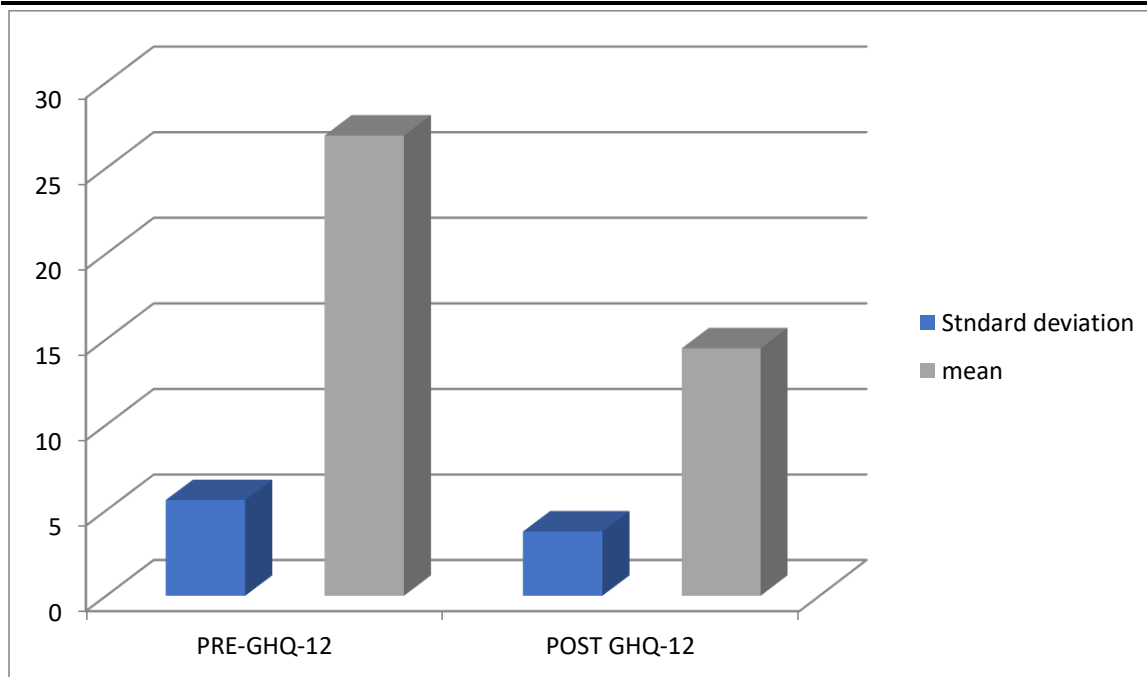
Table 2:

**Paired Samples Statistics**

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 emotional well being score pre test	26.90	100	5.604	.560
emotional well being post test	14.57	100	3.761	.376

**Paired Samples Correlations**

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 emotional well being score pre test& emotional well being post test	100	.205	.040



**INTERPRETATION:** Shows comparison of pre and post of emotional well being measured using GHQ-12 scores of subjects have significantly decreased post covid-19 lockdown from Mean of 26.90 to 14.57. Results are highly significant at the 'p' value of 0.05.

### Discussion:

Globally, COVID-19 had a terrible effect on the bodily and intellectual fitness of the population. This scenario has garnered the interest of researchers from around the world and has induced them to perform studies on its effect on a pair of elements like knowledge, awareness, mindset, tension, behavioral issues, practices, etc. The findings of this examination concerning the mindset of the mothers within the direction of COVID-19 changed into in settlement with comparable research on awareness, mindset and exercise at some stage in COVID-19 in several socio-demographic businesses within which the importance of social distancing, use of face masks, hand-wash, self-quarantine, etc. was emphasized [7-8]. A high-quality mindset of mothers at some stage during this outbreak is significant to govern the strain of parenting and additionally to govern the child's conduct at domestic [9]. Behavioural troubles in kids with ASD are nicely known, however, at some stage within the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic confinement and closure of schools might also notably grow their behavioural troubles that might likely be one amongst the motives for expanded tension in the mothers. Likewise, way of life conduct modifications like a decreased bodily hobby and expanded sedentary [10] and conduct troubles like annoyance, impatience, distress, frustration and tedium are also located in kids at some stage in COVID-19 [11] during this examination, the mothers want for perceived intellectual fitness care contemplated a negative mindset, which must probably be due to a pair of motives at some stage in COVID-19 similar to the child's complex conduct, expanded frustration and anger of the parents, confrontation among parents, loss of own circle of relative's support, loss of support-services, etc. that might lead to intellectual distress This study drew attention to the impact to the emotional well-being of mothers of kids with ASD in an Asian country as a downstream impact of the changes to their children's severity of ASD behaviours thanks to the enforced lockdown and alter in schedules caused by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Further, the study found that the severity of the children's ASD behaviours had changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, on the full, an element that has been found to impact the well-being of mothers. The study's findings also served to strengthen the findings of previous studies which have highlighted, in general, that the behaviour and emotions of kids with ASD are the foremost common measure impacting mother's stress and well-being. Also, the findings of the study confirm that the severity of ASD symptoms has a task to play in impacting the strain and well-being of the mothers, which got better after the lifting of lockdown regulations and with the help of interventions like tele-rehab.



**Conclusion:**

The study is among the few to utilize GHQ-12 scale within the context of mothers of youngsters with ASD in capital of India, India. This study found that the mother's emotional well-being of youngsters with ASD in national capital, significantly deteriorated during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. These mothers are already at considerable risk of stress and poor emotional well-being, and it's apparent that the restrictions and guidelines enforced by the govt during the COVID-19 pandemic have served to accentuate the chance. At the moment there's considerable uncertainty across the world regarding the COVID-19 pandemic but, the measures taken to house the case have largely been successful. Also, after restrictions are safely lifted, a big change within the stress and emotional well-being levels may be seen within the same. During this context, this study highlights the impact to mothers of youngsters with ASD in capital of India, with the intent of studying the restrictions and want of appropriate support and action during such conditions. Further, this study by obtaining the perceptions of mothers of youngsters with ASD across different age groups ( $\leq 12$  years) and of mixed gender and severity of ASD symptoms, has found that mother's emotional well-being were impacted irrespective of their children's age, gender, and severity of symptoms. Hence, it's vital that support be provided to assist mothers(primary caregivers ) of kids with ASD cater to this pandemic situation and to equip them for changes that lie prospectively ahead at the tip of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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