

# COVIDALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON FAMILY AND MARRIAGE: A NEW CONCEPT FOR FUTURE

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Covid-19 has shaken the root of our civilization and we have to redefine our relationships. As per 2022 data of World Health Organization, Coronavirus has infected 306 million people in 222 countries and territories and 6.3 million people have lost lives across caste, class, race and gender. There are sights of people belonging to both majority and minority community using masks, sanitizers, maintaining social distancing, staying at home, avoiding parties, social gatherings, work from home and alike. Human beings were never socialized to behave like this but now they have to learn such practices. Spread and persistence of Covid is modifying the process of socialization and covid socialization is called Covidalization . Although, prediction regarding society of future is difficult but it is necessary to include covid appropriate behaviour in the process of socialization as Covidalization is becoming a reality. Lockdowns forced people to stay indoors and such setting changed division of labour. Men and children also started contributing in household work and education of children which has become online. . The paper like to conclude that there is need for imbibing Covidalization in socialization process for sustaining in future.*

*Key words: Covid-19 ,Socialization,Covidalization, Social distancing*

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## **Introduction**

The coronavirus family causes illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), according to the W.H.O. They circulate in animals and some can be transmitted between animals and humans. W.H.O. (2021) has stated that Covid-19 has changed form to Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta and latest Omicron variant. Several coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans. The present coronavirus outbreak came to light on December 31, 2019 when China informed the World Health Organisation of a cluster of cases of pneumonia of an unknown cause in Wuhan City in Hubei Province. Subsequently the disease spread to more Provinces in China, and to the rest of the world. Later W.H.O. declared it a pandemic. Covid-19 has impact on different aspects of society. Pandemic has seriously affected the institutions of family and marriage.

The structure and functioning of families are complex and therefore, it cannot be simply stated that whether the spread of Covid-19 and subsequent lockdowns have actually led to strengthening of relationships or not. Family is the first and foremost institution which has been impacted the most and it needs to be covidalized. The people who use to stay out of family for longer hours were forced to stay indoors with their families. Children were able to see the faces of their parents for longer hours and similarly aged parents got opportunity to interact with their children. It all has led to strengthening of family bonds. Though there were conflicts in families, but members of families got time to understand each other. On the other hand, the studies across the world show that the lockdowns have led to increase in divorce rate.

The role of family is most important in social development and socialization. As infants, we are completely dependent on others to survive.

Our parents, or those who play the parent role, are responsible for teaching us to function and care for ourselves. They, along with the rest of our family, also teach us about close relationships, group life, and how to share resources. The primary function of the family is to reproduce society, both biologically through procreation and socially through socialization. The family functions to produce and socialize children (Lal,1989). In most of the cultures, marriage imposes upon women the obligation to bear children.

Producing offspring is not the only function of the family. Marriage establishes the legal parenthood of a child; gives the husband or his family control over the wife's sexual services, labour, and/or property; gives the wife or her family control over the husband's sexual services, labour, and/or property; establishes a joint fund of property for the benefit of children; establishes a relationship between the families of the husband and wife. None of these functions are universal, nor are all of them inherent to any one society. In societies with a sexual division of labour, marriage, and the resulting relationship between a husband and wife, is necessary for the formation of an economically productive household. In modern societies, marriage entails rights and privileges which encourage the formation of new families even when there is no intention of having children.

Socialization is the process by which an individual learns to behave in accordance with customs, traditions, and mores. The infant is influenced by the presence and action of people around him. The child behaves in accordance with norms and values of society to win appreciation of the family and group and learns culture. Socialization helps in imbibing spirit of competition, cooperation, acceptance and teamwork amongst the individual. The interaction amongst members also influences each other and gradually social bonding develops amongst them. Different institutions and associations through agencies and mediums of socialization control and shape the personality of individuals.

Socialization process begins in the family and continues till death. Family is considered as one of the most important agencies of socialization and it socializes the individual till death. However, pandemic has brought about a significant change in socialization process. The traditional process of socialization needs to include Covid related learning to survive in the pandemic. The traditional process of learning which include Covid-19 related learning can be termed as Covidalization. In simple terms Covidalization means a social process of learning to live with Covid-19.

The role of family has increased in covidalization due to confinement of people to homes due to lockdowns and curfew. Elders and children were surprised to see working family members at home throughout the day despite working from home and they felt happy in talking with them. Elders contended that it has given them to time to communicate their issues and better understanding in the family. Before proceeding further let us understand aims of socialization which may remain same but the way of achieving needs to be redefined in the wake of pandemic.

In the family, the child learns how to be a socially acceptable member. To remain within social control, what duties and responsibilities are to be shared or owned, and how to cooperate with others(Vardhan, 2008). He also learns in the process tolerance against odds. He incorporates in the process his own values, norms, life style: objective and ends but within the societal means. In fact, family is the basic and primary school of socialization. Family provides for birth, growth and socialization, and society is an extension of family (Kapadia,1966). It is within the family that he learns to control his sexual urge. Incest taboo controls his sexual relationship within the family. According to Johnson “The family is organized in such a way that proper socialization of the individual is possible” (Holborn and Haralambos, 2008). That is why we say that family is the first school of child’s learning.

The spread of variants of Covid-19 during different waves has led to imposing of lockdowns, restrictive movements, containment zones which has curtailed the movements of people from homes. It has also affected the participation of children in different outdoor activities and they are forced to play indoor games and study in a closed environment. Closing of schools prevented children from access to face-to-face learning and restraining their interaction with peers. Exposure to outside world is necessary for their growth and development. Children are feeling uncomfortable in situation with online learning, no face-to-face interaction and is causing anxiety amongst them. Moreover, increase in the exposure to mass media and social media is making them vulnerable to crime and learning wrong behaviour. The role of family has to be redefined in the light of these developments taking place in society and families need to be reoriented towards adapting to the changes due to pandemic, i.e., the families need to be Covidalized first only then they can Covidalize the members.

Similarly, impact of Covid-19 has largely been a worldwide phenomenon, with some countries and cultures more dramatically affected than others. The studies on pattern of marriage have been showing a decline across the world and such downward trend has been accelerated by Covid-19. There has been decline in number of marriages in Japan by 137 percent in 2020 and in Italy it declined by 20 percent in first quarter of 2020 and 80 percent in second quarter. Similar declines were observed in Russia and Turkey (Impakter.com, 2021).

Child marriages take place in South Asia. A Global Girlhood Report 2020 warned that some 500,000 more girls were likely to be at risk in 2020 of being forced into child marriage and one million more are expected to become pregnant. This increase will bring the total number of child marriages to around 12.5 million in 2020. Before the pandemic, India, which

accounts for one in three child marriages globally, had become a world leader in working to reduce child marriage through education and awareness.

There has been curtailment of expenditure on weddings and with less pomp and show and arrangements are becoming efficient and less time consuming. With restrictions on number of people on marriage, there has been cut on expenditure on wedding invitations, food, pandals and decorations. Wedding planners due to restrictions on transport are procuring material from nearby areas reducing costs and the carbon footprint of the occasion. Work from home culture is encouraging digital invitations and ordering online. Though expenditure on giving gifts in form of dowry may not have reduced but wasteful expenditure has been minimized.

### **Review of Literature**

Vardhan, Ranjay, 2020, in a study “Covid-19 Lockdown, Personal Attitude and Family Behaviour” done in Chandigarh on 250 respondents found that large majority of respondents observed social distancing in market, during morning/evening walks and even during visits to others. However, 57 percent respondents followed social distancing norms at home as it is difficult to keep the social distance because of dependency on each other and overlapping of work. Usage of mask and sanitizers has been popularized as panacea for Covid-19. He further found that 85 percent of respondents always used mask, 11 percent sometimes and only 4 percent reported never using mask mainly due to the fact that they never went out. 36 percent of respondents used sanitizers very frequently and did not count number of times used sanitizer in a day whereas 28 percent used it 1-5 times a day, 18 percent 5-10 times and 9.6 percent 10-15 times a day. The findings indicate overall awareness of usage of mask and sanitizer by the respondents.

In a paper Vardhan, 2020, “Covidalization - Covid Socialization: A New Concept In Social Science” introduced the concept of Covidalization and concluded that due to Covid-19 we have to bring changes in our

socialization process so as to survive and sustain in the world. If we do not change our traditional practices of socialization, we will be reducing in numbers at a faster pace.

## **Results**

The study was carried out online and was done using convenience sampling of 400 respondents. 52 percent of respondents belonged to 20-30 age group followed by 22 percent of respondents in age group 40-50. 12 percent respondents were aged less than 20 years while 8 percent were above 50. About 6 percent respondents were in ages between 30 and 40. 54 percent of respondents were females and 46 percent were males. The respondents belonged to different marital status categories as 55 percent respondents were single/unmarried and 36 percent were married and remaining were either widowed and divorced.

The data show that 77 percent of respondents were staying with family and 23 percent were living alone, as Paying Guest and in hostel. Occupation wise distribution show that 20 percent of the respondents were students, 14 percent teachers, 26 percent Manager/Officer, 16 percent doing business, 5 percent doctor and remaining were homemakers. The findings show that respondents belonged to different occupational categories. 93 percent of respondents were using internet on Mobile, 37 percent on Laptop and 8 percent on Tab which indicate that respondents were using internet on more than one gadget.

An attempt was made to know whether the family members of respondents worked/studied from home. The findings indicate that large majority, i.e., 88 percent reported that the family members of respondents worked/studied from home whereas remaining reported not working/studying from home mainly due to nature of their work. When all members of family are at home, there is need for sharing the work by other family members to ease the burden of work. It is significant to point out that 74 percent of the

respondents helped their mother/spouse in household work and only six percent did not offered help to mother/spouse in household work. 51 percent of respondents also assisted in official work of parents/spouse. The data show the respondents realized the need for contributing in household/other work which they may have been doing earlier. The findings indicate a new kind of socialization especially when the present generation is forced by circumstances to become sandwich generation.

Technology has also taken away the family time as people are seen busy on mobile using Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc. It is heartening to find that 93 percent of respondents spend significant time in family chats and 7 percent did not report time being spent in family chats.

The study found that large majority of respondents were taking meals with family. The data show that 64 percent respondents took their breakfast with family, 70 percent lunch, 78 percent evening tea and 81 percent enjoyed dinner with the family. During Covid crisis, quality time spend in family chats and dining is very useful in relieving stress and to understand each other for cementing family bonds.

Studies have shown that during illness and epidemics, families worry about essentials, health of self and family members. Since Coronavirus has serious health repercussion and the lockdown has restricted movement of people, the respondents were asked whether they worried about grocery and essentials, medicine, poor health of family members and fear of corona for self and family to study their level of stress. The data reveal that around 45 percent were worried about grocery and essentials, medicines and poor health of family members but more than two third were afraid of corona for themselves and family members. The findings indicate there is fear of coronavirus and that fear may not be good for health but that fear is keeping them at home.



There is a fear that staying together for a longer period in family could lead to more conflicts due to difference of opinion among the members of the family. Recent studies of Europe and USA show that there has been increase in violence against women whereas in China there has been a significant increase in pregnant mothers during Covid crisis. It has led to more violence against women in India (UNWOMEN, 2021)The findings of research point to not much increase in violence in family rather strengthening of family bonds during lockdown as 38 percent of the respondents strongly agreed and 41 percent agreed with the statement that family bonds have strengthened during lockdown.18 percent remained neutral whereas only 2 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed with the opinion.

The respondents were asked about the changes they have witnessed in marriage. Large majority of the respondents were happy to inform that covid restrictions have saved undue expenditure on marriage. The restricted number of members with time constraints have led to giving of material goods to couples for setting up their homes especially due to job cuts and reduction of wages. Moreover, there has been inter-caste and inter-religious marriages especially in urban areas. Although respondents in rural areas reported child marriages.

Large majority of respondents also informed about the services and assistance offered by various communities. They said that minorities especially Sikhs extended help to all irrespective of caste, class or gender even at high-risk time. They were moved by the gestures of community during crisis.

## **Conclusion**

The most important thing to understand is that the Covid pandemic is not going to be over anytime soon. Curfews and other restrictions will come and go until we all are fully vaccinated and get medicine to cure from the ailment due tocontracting virus. Individuals and families have to adapt

to such critical situation by following covid protocols. Couples need to understand this and plan their weddings accordingly. “We have to rethink the way we celebrate. The virtual mode is the way forward. Sensible couples are resorting to postponing weddings, downsizing them, or making them virtual events. The study recommends that COVID-19 Negative Certificates should be made mandatory for all marriages. The study also found that during pandemic, communities extended help to needy which strengthens brotherhood. In simple terms, Covidalization is Covid Socialization which means a social process of learning to live with Covid-19. Covidalization has to be integral part of society to save humanity.

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