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## A study on association between perceived stress among people with chronic health disorders during COVID - 19 pandemic lockdown period

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### Abstract

The study was undertaken to find the association between the health disorders and perceived stress among people with chronic health disorders during COVID-19 lockdown period. The study was carried out in Bapatla mandal of Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh state during 2020. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. A total of 30 adults aged between 30–70 years with chronic health disorder like heart problem, diabetes and paralysis are selected. Perceived stress among adults suffering with chronic health disorders was measured with the help of perceived stress scale. Perceived stress scale consists of 10 statements related to stress with three alternatives Never, Sometimes, and always with scores of 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The data was analysed through frequency, percentage and chi-square test. The results in the study indicated that 30.00 per cent of the respondents belonged to the age group of 51-60 years. Equal per cent (50.00%) of respondents belongs to both the genders (male and female). About 30.00 per cent of the respondents who are having heart problems were facing stress, followed by 26.67 per cent of paralysis respondents were facing stress and 23.33 per cent of diabetes respondents were facing stress. The findings of the study also revealed that there was no significant relationship between age & perceived stress, gender & perceived stress and chronic health diseases & perceived stress.

**Keywords:** Chronic health disorders, perceived stress, COVID-19, stress scale, lockdown period

### Introduction

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) had caused significant distress around the globe. Apart from the evident physical symptoms in infected cases, it has caused serious damage to public mental health. India reported the first confirmed case of the coronavirus infection on 30 January 2020 in the state of Kerala. (The Hindu, 2020). World Health Organization on 11 March 2020, declared Novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak as a pandemic and reiterated the call for countries to take immediate actions and scale up response to treat, detect and reduce transmission to save people's lives. The government of India ordered a national wide lockdown for 21 days from 24<sup>th</sup> march 2020, to limiting movements of the entire population of India, as a preventive measure against the COVID-19.

The virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person generated through coughing and sneezing, and touching surfaces contaminated with the virus. Person with pre-existing medical conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes appear to develop serious illness more often than others. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness and dry cough etc. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, running nose, sour throat or diarrhoea. It was assumed that one out of every six people who get affected to COVID-19 become seriously ill and develops difficulty in breathing.

According to WHO (2020), two groups of people are at higher risk of getting severe COVID-19 disease. The older people and those who are underlying medical conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetics and chronic respiratory disease are facing the threats and challenges at this time. The lockdown period which was first of its kind created unknown fear among the people. The official news of the government and unofficial messages in social media created panic situation. The people with chronic health problems and disorders underwent psychological phobia. This phobia created a source of stress for many people in the society.

Stress is a natural psychological and mental reaction to life experiences. Perceived stress is a dynamic multidimensional concept, with a wide spectrum of causative and conductive factors.

a dynamic multidimensional concept, with a wide spectrum of causative and conductive factors. It is feelings or thoughts that an individual has about how much stress they are under at a given point in time or over a given time period. If stress is not managed, prolonged stress on an individual affects his or her health. Hence an attempt was made to study the stress experienced by people with chronic health disorders during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period.

**Objective**

To study aimed at bringing out the association between perceived stress and age, gender, health problems among people with chronic health disorders during COVID 19 lockdown period.

**Materials and Methods**

The study was conducted to find the association between perceived stress among people with chronic health disorders during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period in Bapatla mandal of Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. A total of 30 respondents were selected as sample. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select the respondents suffering with chronic health problems like diabetes, paralysis, and heart problems. Age, gender and health problems were considered as independent variables and perceived stress as dependent variable. Perceived stress of respondents was measured by using a perceived stress scale (PSS) developed by Cohen, S. and Williamson, G. (1998) [1]. The scale was intended to measure how often the respondents experience stress due to unfavourable conditions. The responses were categorised as never, sometimes and always with scores of 1, 2, and 3 respectively. The scores were interpreted as higher the score, higher the perceived stress

experienced by the respondents. The data was analysed through frequency, percentage and Chi- square test. Chi-square test was computed to find out the association between perceived stress and age, gender, health problems among people with chronic health disorders. The null hypothesis formulated for the study are

H<sub>1</sub>: There exist association between health problems and perceived stress among people.

Sub Hypothesis

H<sup>0</sup><sub>1</sub>: There exist no association between age and perceived stress.

H<sup>0</sup><sub>2</sub>: There exist no association between gender and perceived stress.

H<sup>0</sup><sub>3</sub>: There exist no association between chronic health disorder and perceived stress.

**Results and Discussion**

The findings of the study are discussed below.

**Perceived stress among people with chronic health disorders**

Taking mean and standard deviation into consideration the respondents were categorized into three groups. Respondents who scored above 21.58 were considered as high perceived stress, respondents who scored less than 15.88 were considered as low perceived stress and respondents who score in between 21.58 to 15.88 were considered as medium perceived stress.

The results in the table 1 shows that, majority 76.66 per cent of the respondents belonged to medium level of perceived stress, whereas 13.33 per cent were in high perceived stress, and only 10.00 per cent belonged to low perceived stress.

**Table 1:** Perceived stress among people with chronic health disorders n = 30

Perceived stress	f	Percentage (%)
High	04	13.33
Medium	23	76.67
Low	03	10.00

**Age**

The results in table 2 shows that, 30.00 per cent of the respondents were in the age group of 51 to 60 years, whereas 26.67 per cent of them were in the age group of 31to 40 years, followed by 23.33 per cent were in the age group of 41 to 50

years and 20.00 per cent respondents were in the age group of 61to70 years. One third of the respondents belonged to the age group of 51to60 years. The Chi- square value was non-significant with age and perceived stress among people with chronic health disorders (7.37).

**Table 2:** Association between age and perceived stress among people with chronic health disorders n=30

Age	Low	Medium	High	Total
31-40	0	6 (20.00)	2 (06.66)	8 (26.67)
41-50	1 (03.33)	6 (20.00)	0	7 (23.33)
51-60	1 (03.33)	8 (26.66)	0	9 (30.00)
61-70	2 (06.66)	3 (10.00)	1 (03.33)	6 (20.00)
Total	4 (13.33)	23 (76.66)	3 (10.00)	30 (100.00)
Chi-square value				7.37
Level of significant at 5%				NS

Null hypothesis accepted

**Gender**

The results in the table 3 indicated that, the sample consists equal per cent of (50.00%) of the male and female respondents. Chi-square test was applied to find out the

association between gender and perceived stress among people with chronic health disorders. The Chi- square value was non-significant with gender and perceived stress among people with chronic health disorders (1.36).

**Table 3:** Association between gender and perceived stress among people with chronic health disorders n=30

Gender	Low	Medium	High	Total
Male	3 (10.00)	11 (36.66)	1 (03.33)	15 (50.00)
Female	1 (03.33)	12 (40.00)	2 (06.66)	15 (50.00)
Total	4 (13.33)	23 (76.67)	3 (10.00)	30 (100.00)
Chi-square value				1.36
Level of significant at 5%				NS

Null hypothes is accepted

### Chronic health problems

The results in the table 4 reveals that 30.00 per cent of the respondents were suffering with heart problem, whereas 26.66 per cent of them were suffering with paralysis, followed by 23.33 per cent were suffering with diabetes, 13.33 per cent of the respondents were suffering with paralysis and diabetes, and only 06.66 per cent of the respondents were suffering

with heart problem and diabetes. Chi-square test was applied to find out the association between chronic health disorders and perceived stress among people with chronic health disorders during COVID-19 lockdown. The results in the study indicated that there is no significant relationship between chronic health disorders and perceived stress chi-square value (6.27).

**Table 4:** Association between chronic health disorders and perceived stress among people with chronic health disorders n=30

Health disorder	Low	Medium	High	Total
Paralysis	0	6 (20.00)	2 (06.66)	8 (26.67)
Diabetes	2 (06.66)	5 (16.66)	0	7 (23.33)
Heart Problem	1 (03.33)	7 (23.33)	1 (03.33)	9 (30.00)
Paralysis and Diabetes	1 (03.33)	3 (10.00)	0	4 (13.33)
Heart problem and Diabetes	0	2 (06.66)	0	2 (06.67)
Total	4 (13.33)	23 (76.67)	3 (10.00)	30 (100.00)
Chi-square value				6.27
Level of significant at 5%				NS

Null hypothesis accepted

The results of the study were in line with Curtis *et al* (2004) <sup>[3]</sup> and Vancampfort *et al* (2017) <sup>[4]</sup> whose study revealed that there is a significant association of gender, age (older age), education with higher perceived stress. In the present study it was observed that there was no significant association between age and perceived stress, gender and perceived stress, chronic health disorders and perceived stress.

disease-(covid-19)

### Conclusion

The people with chronic health disorders like paralysis, heart problems and diabetes were found that they experience stress due to COVID-19 lockdown situation. However, there was no significant association with perceived stress and age, gender, health disorders among people with chronic health disorders.

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