

Adjustments and Support Provided by Family During COVID 19

Abstract

This paper elucidates parents' perspectives related to online education and family relationships, along with lifestyle changes in times of pandemic. The study shares findings from strand A part of the study. It was gathered through an online questionnaire. A total of 50 parents were taken to share their views on various aspects of their wards' lives, online education and maintaining balance in life. There were parents of primary grade students and parents of adolescent children.

Section B part of the study described Strand-III of the study. In this, detailed narratives of two students were selected. One of the COVID-19 affected families and the other family is of COVID-19 anxious family. Both the narratives described the family beliefs system, life during the lockdown, life after COVID-19 (when lockdowns were gradually opening) and many more aspects.

Thus, the findings from both strands bring out interesting aspects of family life and lessons to build resilience and strength.

Keywords : *family, lifestyle, online education, beliefs*

Introduction

In India, a family is a basic unit, and it's continuously changing over some time. In times of the pandemic when schools, offices, and other workplaces were closed, it was the family that provided the space to adapt and cope. Homes became offices and students were constrained at homes. Moreover, many families witnessed deaths and sufferings. In these difficult times, many questions arise. What did our families do to cope up with stressful situations? How did relationships change? What happened to our grandparents, parents, siblings, relatives, neighbours, and beloved ones? With these questions, this article opens a new perspective regarding our view of family and its importance.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey method through an online questionnaire. It explored the basic five themes: change in Lifestyle, relationships with family and friends, psychological well-being, financial status during the pandemic and education of their children during the pandemic.

In the study, two kinds of parents were chosen. One group of parents had young children and another group of parents had adolescents' children. In parents of young children, the majority 52% of the parents had a female child. However, parents of adolescents aged children had 64% male children. More than half of the parents with young children (52%) reported being home-makers. However, in the parents of adolescents group the figure was 48% were

home-makers A large portion of the parents of young children (84%) reported that their ward was admitted in private schools. Therefore, most of the participants belonged to the middle-income group (84%) followed by an equal percentage (8% each) of higher and economically weaker section (EWS) groups. In contrast, 68% of the participants in the adolescent group mentioned that their ward went to a Government School. Thus, 80% of the sample belonged to the middle-income group in parents of adolescents. 12% sample was from an economically weaker section and 8% of the sample was from High-Income Group

Section A

The current section shares the findings from the macro part of the study. This was gathered from an online questionnaire from parents of Primary grade and adolescents' groups. The four areas outlined were already mentioned above. Regarding the change in Lifestyle, sub-themes explored were the health status of the family, participation of members in the household, physical activities, screen time, dietary patterns. In Relationships with family and friends, areas explored were family time, the impact of the pandemic on relationships, regaining connections during the pandemic. For psychological well-being, further themes explored were state of mind, the impact of work on mental well-being, coping with stress, the role of media. Because of financial status during pandemic involved employment status, expenses, and budgeting. Regarding online

education, adjustments made at home, school fees, receptivity, and the impact of digital learning were explored.

The study came up with interesting results to mull over about adaptations made during challenging times.

Findings from the Strand-I of the study

The findings of the study obtained from a separate online questionnaire have been shared below, organized in five themes as follows:-

Change in Lifestyle

Health Status of the Family

On being asked about the health of the family members, 48% of the parents of young children revealed that it was the same as before the pandemic. 8% reported that there was also improvement in the health of the families due to lockdown. On the contrary, 32% of respondents from the primary group were reported to be diagnosed from COVID-19. However, 12% of parents reported symptoms of flu, typhoid and dengue. According to the parents of adolescents, 76% of the respondents said that the health status of their family has remained the same as before the Pandemic. 12% of the sample shared that few members of their families have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and the same number confirmed that their family had suffered from common flu, typhoid, Dengue etc. 4% of the participants said that their health, as well as the physical health of their family members, has improved during the pandemic.

Participation in Household Chores

When asked about the involvement of parents in the household chores, it was found that 72% of parents with young children had been more engaged than before the pandemic. However, 24% of parents from this group reported their involvement was the same as before the pandemic. Furthermore, 4% shared less involvement in household activities than before the pandemic.

Participation in household chores during the Pandemic had increased for 56% of the parents with adolescent children, while only 4% (n=1) differed and said their involvement had been higher than before the pandemic. For the remaining 40% (n=10), the involvement in household chores had stayed the same as before.

Physical Activities

When asked about the physical activities during the pandemic, 40 % of the parents with young children shared that they attempted new physical activities online such as yoga, aerobics and so on. This was followed by the 32% of parents of young children who witnessed no change in their physical activities as it remained the same. 16% of participants openly shared that there was no involvement in physical activities, and 12% of respondents shared decreased physical activities than before. Among parents with adolescent children, 36% had tried new physical activities like yoga classes, online aerobics etc. during the Pandemic while 28% said that their participation in physical activities had decreased and an exact number of participants, 28% said their activity has remained the same as before. 8% were not doing any physical activity.

Screen Time

On being asked regarding the impact of screen time on their health, 44 % of parents of young children agreed that screen time has increased considerably and impacted eyesight and health. However, 36% of participants reported that it has increased but not impacted their health. 20% of parents of young children shared that screen time has remained the same for them as it was before lockdown.

Among parents with adolescent children, 36% confirmed that their screen time has increased a lot during the Pandemic and has impacted their eyesight and health. However, 44% of them did not face any such issues. The screen time remained the same for 20% of the sample in this category.

Dietary Patterns

The diet patterns for 52% of parents of young children witnessed the incorporation of healthy foods, followed by 28% of respondents' diet remaining the same as before the pandemic. Furthermore, 8% of parents of young children who reported started including multivitamins in their diet. 4% of parents reported that they started eating junk food, followed by 8% of participants whose diet patterns got disturbed due to the pandemic. 40% (n=10) of the parents with adolescent wards started including healthy foods in their diets, half of which have started including multivitamins in the diet. 24% of this sample was continuing with the same dietary pattern as before the Pandemic. A few participants (4%) faced imbalance in diet plans,

restricted junk food and had only home-cooked food by avoiding food from outside.

Relationships with Family and Friends

Family Time

When asked about spending family time during the lockdown, 40% of parents with young children reported that they spent indoor time primarily watching television. This was followed by 36% who reported spending time together by playing indoor games and sports. However, 16% of respondents shared that they adopted any old/new hobby or interest. In contrast, 8% of respondents shared that their family time has decreased due to official work.

Among parents of adolescent children, 48% played indoor games and sports together with the family to spend time together, 28% preferred watching television with their families. 16% had restarted an old or adopted a new hobby or interest. However, there were 8% of the respondents in this sample, who felt that their family time has decreased due to the official work that was to be done from home owing to the pandemic.

Impact of the pandemic on Relationships

When the parents were being asked about the impact of the pandemic on their family relations, 68% of parents of young children responded that the pandemic had helped them to know each other better. However, 16 % of respondents shared that it had led to more conflicts and for the remaining 16% of participants of young children it had remained the same as before the pandemic.

Among parents of adolescents, 52% shared that the pandemic and lockdown allowed them to spend more time together with family and that has helped them to know each other better. Whereas, 24% said that more time together has led to more conflicts and the same number of participants maintained that nothing has changed much within their family relations due to the pandemic situation.

Regaining Connections during Pandemic

On being asked regarding the ways the parents connected with their family and friends during the pandemic induced lockdown, 84% of parents of young children reported that they connected through online platforms by making audio and video calls frequently. This was followed by

16% of respondents who started calling frequently through phones/ mobile phones. With the parents with adolescent children, 84% confirmed that they had started using audio and video calls to keep in touch with family and friends during the pandemic. There were 8% of the participants in this group who were meeting quite regularly, and also another 8% who had started calling and meeting occasionally to connect with family/friends in these changing times.

Psychological Health/ Mental Well-being

State of Mind

When asked about the mental well-being of parents during the lockdown, 28% of parents of young children reported that they suffered frustration, 16% of participants felt happy and calm. However, there were 12% of caregivers felt anxious in this group. Considering the state of mental health during the pandemic, 20% of the parents with adolescent children shared that they were calm, while 16% (n=4) stated they felt annoyed and the same proportion said they were often frustrated during the Pandemic. However, of the comparatively same proportion, 12% confirmed being happy, angry, and anxious.

Impact of work on Mental well-being

Ques 10. What are your views about the "Online studies /work " during the pandemic ?

25 responses

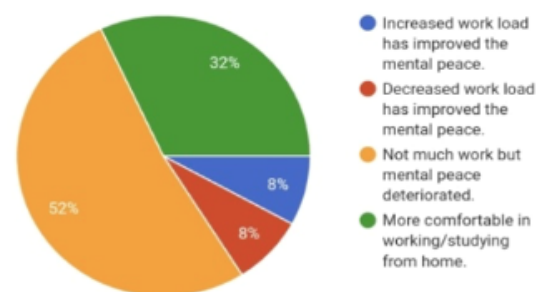


Fig 4.1 Parents of young children

44% of parents of young children reported that online work had deteriorated their mental peace. On the contrary, 28% had supported online work as it improved their mental well-being, along with 20% of parents too supported work from home culture. However, 8 % of respondents shared their work had been decreased online, which led to mental peace. Around 32% of the parents with adolescent children felt comfortable

in working/studying from home, while 52% (n=13) opted towards that, though they have less work online, their mental health had deteriorated. 8% of participants felt that along with their workload, their mental health had also improved during the online work mode, while the same number of participants felt that decreased workload had improved their mental peace.

Ques 10. What are your views about the "Online studies /work " during the pandemic ?

25 responses

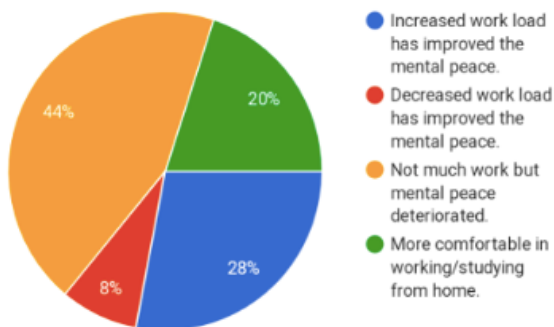


Fig 4.2 Parents of adolescents

Coping with Stress

To cope with stress during the pandemic, 52% of parents of young children reported that they talked to a friend/ family member. This was followed by an equal number of participants, i.e., 36% shared that they started listening to favourite music and reading new books, watched series or movies/ comedy shows and were involved in household activities. However, 32% of caregivers spent more time with children playing indoor games. Few of them developed a new hobby and started physical activities indoor and outdoor activities (12% in each category).

When asked about the activities that participants may have taken up to cope with stress during the pandemic, 56% of parents with adolescent children had started watching series, movies, or comedy shows while 52% choose household activities. Another 40% of the sample had started spending more time with children in playing and school activities, and the same number was found to be talking with friends/family to cope with stress during the pandemic. 16% were involved with indoor/outdoor physical activities like yoga, Zumba, aerobics. 28% developed a new hobby and 20% of respondents developed

reading habits, 36% started listening to their favourite music during stress.

Role of Media

Ques 12. How media/news has changed your perception about pandemic?

25 responses

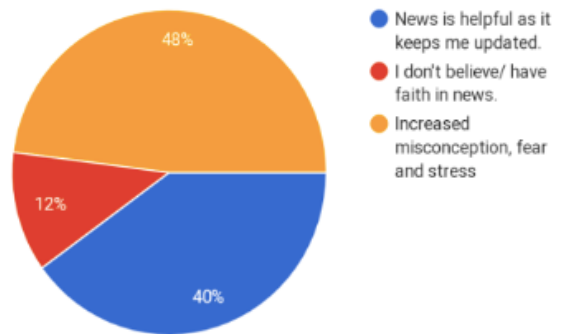


Fig 4.3 Parents of young children

Ques 12. How media/news has changed your perception about pandemic?

25 responses

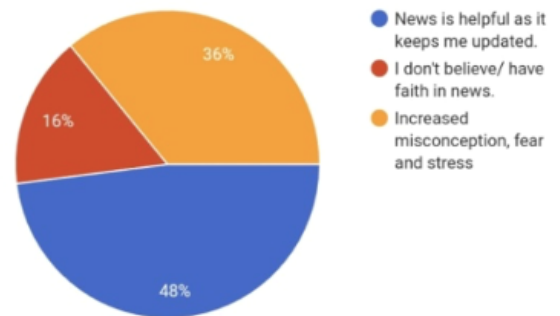


Fig 4.4 Parents of adolescents

Regarding the role of social media in changing their perception about pandemics, 48% of respondents from the sample of parents with young children reported that it had increased misconception, fear, and stress. However, 40% felt it helped update them with current news. Only a few caregivers of young children (12%) felt that they did not have faith in the news. For parents in the adolescent group, 48% said news helped keep them updated, while 16% from the same group had no faith/belief in the news. Rather, 36% of them believed that the media had increased their misconceptions, fear, and stress during the pandemic.

Financial Status during the Pandemic

Employment during Pandemic

The data on employment status among parents of young children revealed that 40 % of

participants worked for the same job/ business. The other 28% reported they were either struggling for income or had no source of income. In addition, 40 % of the participants of the study shared that they were dependent on their spouse/ family. Moreover, 4% of parents of young children shared that they switched to a new job/ business.

52% of the participants in the second group continued working for the same job/business, while 12% joined a new job/business during the pandemic. However, 20% of them were struggling for a source of income and 12% had either no source of income or were dependent on their spouse and other family members. There were also 4% of the respondents who started a small enterprise during the lockdown.

Expenses during Pandemic

When asked about areas where the expenses increased during the pandemic, 60% of participants and 48% of parents of young children mentioned Groceries and Sanitation and safety-related materials, respectively. The other areas included internet-related expenses for 40% of the caregivers of young children. An increase in school fees remained for a few of the participants (28%) followed by medical expenses for 16 % of participants. Grocery and internet expenses have increased during the pandemic, as reported by 56% of the parents of adolescent children. 48 % confirmed that expenses on sanitation and safety materials too had increased. For the remaining 28%, medicine expenses had increased during this situation.

Budgeting during the Pandemic

Ques 15. Has there been a need to cut down the expenses? If yes, what all expenses have you cut down ?

25 responses

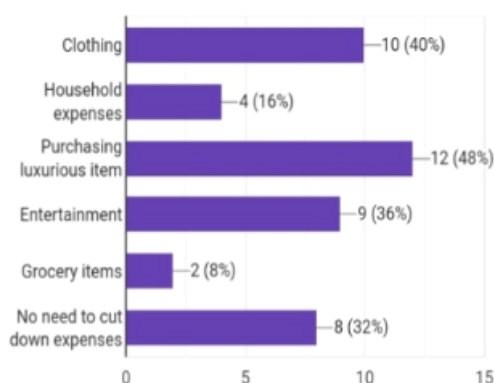


Fig 4.5 Parents of young children

Ques 15. Has there been a need to cut down the expenses? If yes, what all expenses have you cut down ?

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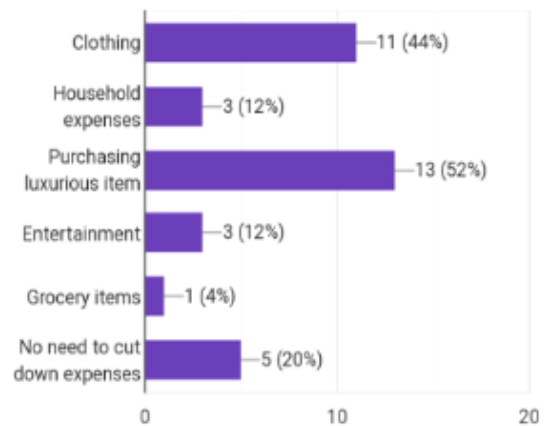


Fig 4.6 Parents of adolescents

The areas where expenses needed to be cut down were on luxurious items for 52% of the participants, followed by clothing-related expenses. The least emerged areas in the study were household related expenses and entertainment areas for 12 % of the respondents (each). Within the group of parents with young children, 20% of the respondents said that there was no need to cut down expenses during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, 48 % of the respondents in the latter group confirmed that they had cut down the expenses on luxurious items. While 40% reduced their budget on clothes, there were 36% who saved on entertainment expenses. 32% of respondents in this group found no need to cut their expenses.

Education during Pandemic

Adjustments at Home

Ques 16. What changes have you brought in your house for online classes of your child?

25 responses

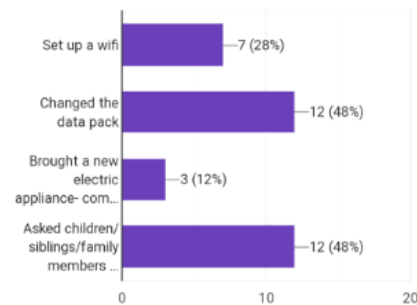


Fig 4.7 Parents of young children

Ques 16. What changes have you brought in your house for online classes of your child?

25 responses

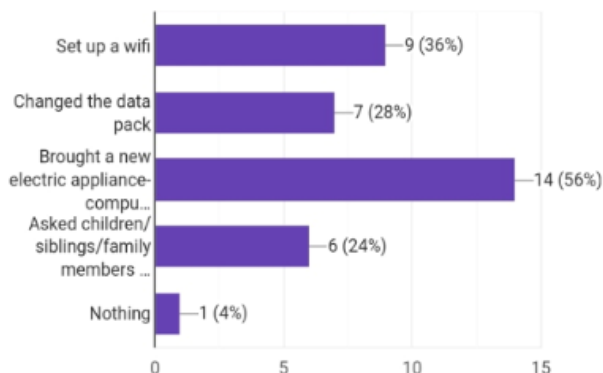


Fig 4.8 Parents of adolescents

In the study, 48% of caregivers of young children reported that they changed their data pack. In addition, an equal number of participants, i.e., 48% requested their children to adjust with their siblings by sharing for online education. However, 28% of participants had to set up their Wi-Fi and very few participants (12%) reported bringing new electronic appliances such as computers.

During the pandemic, many changes have to be brought in the houses for the online classes of adolescent children. 56% of parents in this group had to buy a new electrical appliance like a computer, laptop, and phone, while 36% had to set up Wi-Fi and 28% had to change their data pack. 24% of the respondents of this group had to request their children/siblings/family members to adjust with each other for the online classes.

School Fee

Paying school fees was reported not a problem during the pandemic for 52 % of the parents of young children. However, 16% of parents of young children spent savings on school fees, along with 8% of parents who reported borrowing fees. In addition, 20% of participants reported that it was deferred. Thus, 48 % of the parents faced some kind of difficulty paying school fees. Among parents with adolescent children, 40% did not face any difficulties while paying school fees for their children while 24% shared that they had to spend their savings to pay the school fees. The Remaining 36% (n=9) said that they had to delay the fee payment during the pandemic.

Receptivity towards Online Classes

Considering the perceptions and experience with online classes, 56% of parents with young children said that it had increased workload and stress for their ward. However, 32% of caregivers reported that their child/children had started missing school environments. However, 12% of parents of young children reported that their children started enjoying learning from home. Around 44% of the participants with adolescent children mentioned that their children were facing an increased workload and stress due to the changed mode of education. 36% shared that their children started missing the school environment, while 16% said that this new set-up has decreased the workload and stress among children.

Continuation with Online Education

Ques 19. According to you, should online classes continue after the pandemic ?

25 responses

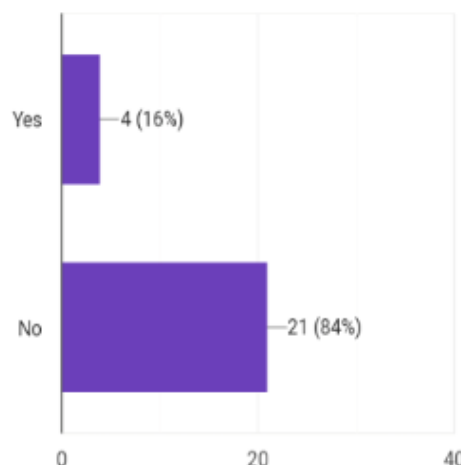


Fig 4.9 Parents of young children

Ques 19. According to you, should online classes continue after the pandemic ?

25 responses

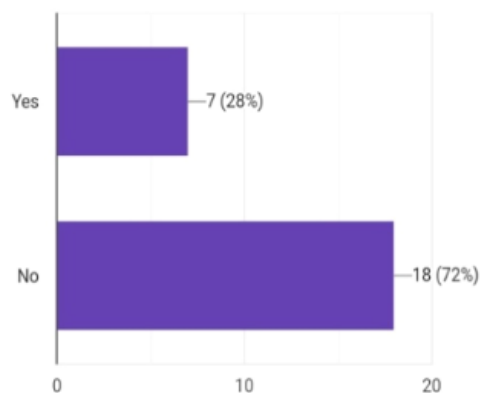


Fig 4.10 Parents of adolescents

The continuation of online classes after the pandemic was not supported by 84% of the parents of young children. However, only 16% of the respondents supported this phenomenon.

When asked about the preference for the continuation of online classes by parents in the second group, 72% shared that the online classes should not continue after the pandemic, while the remaining 28% confided that they would like the online mode to continue.

Impact of Digital Learning

On discussing the impact of digital learning on their ward's future, 60 % of parents of young children out rightly shared that this would reduce the performance of their children. However, the rest of the 40% of parents of young children reported that it would bring interest in the content and mode of learning and create more opportunities in their children's careers.

When asked about the effects of digital learning on the child's future, around 68% of parents with adolescent children felt that this would reduce the performance of their children. While 20% felt that this will create more career opportunities and 16% felt that digital learning has brought interest in the content and ways of teaching.

Section B

The current section particularly elaborates on two case studies viz. one of a COVID-19 affected family i.e., The Lakheras and the other is a case study of a COVID-19 anxious family i.e., The Naga Family. A special effort is made not to edit any part to give a complete picture of a family in both the case studies. Both the stories reflected on changing dynamics within the family, students' life, mental state and many more interesting aspects during unprecedented times.

Case Study 1: The Lakheras Family

In the Lakhera household, COVID-19 was received differently by each of the four members of my family, including myself. There is Mr. Suresh Lakhera, 53; father and business person, my mother Mrs. Seema Lakhera, 49; Businesswoman, brother Abhishek, 21; who has recently started a new job in Noida. I am Ekta; 24, a prospective teacher. We are a very close-knit group and rely on each other immensely, from menial tasks to mental and emotional support. My brother and I have been raised by

our parents in a "protective" manner. My father's parenting style has evolved tremendously from my childhood to the present day, almost adapting to the changes in his children and the environment. This reflection about him is important as it is also his biggest strength, his adaptive nature and ability to grow. His motto in life which he states quite often is "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade". My father and mother work hard every day. They had instilled this ethic deeply in my brother and me. They head separate businesses in the same field of electronics. As both of them contribute to the family income, we have slowly and steadily been able to increase our standard of living over time. There is an enhanced appreciation of the upper-middle-class lifestyle that we enjoy due to this gradual succession. Hard work, honesty, and focus were the values that rang in the household growing up and in hindsight, this has impacted my identity and relationships tremendously.

All four of us are very different personalities, but all of us share the trait of strongly associating our identity to our work. This shared sentiment during the lockdown resonated in the household. The house we live in is a two-room flat in Karol Bagh. My mother and father have one room and the other is shared by my brother, Abhishek and me. We have stayed in this arrangement for most of our lives. Sharing a room with a younger brother has taught both of us how to coexist in a small space. It has made us more accommodating to each other's differences. It also taught us a way to find a corner for ourselves within a shared space. This has helped both of us adjust to being confined to the same space without irritation or conflict. Our mutual understanding has also developed over the years, but this strange and difficult duration of time has if not anything strengthened the bond I share with my brother. He was particularly Stoic in times when I panicked and helped me with my anxieties. There is, in the aftermath of corona infection, an enhanced camaraderie and joy in my household.

Life during Lockdown

My mother is the driving force of positivity and fun even when her health wasn't great. She maintained her fun-loving attitude and amused all of us with new ideas for family games and entertainment. My father has only seldom been spotted in the house lazing around due to his hard-working ethics, and also got to spend more

time around the family. Initially, after the lockdown was imposed, what a great fun time we had as a family. It was the first time in my family that all of us sat and talked. Before that, everyone was busy working or leading their own separate lives.

The first day after the lockdown was imposed was quite memorable as that night we sat and played cards the whole night and my father prepared tea which we all enjoyed quite a lot. The laughter and fun lifted the veil of anxiety and looming fear, even if just for that time.

Every family has a value system, and mine is not very different in this manner. In our household, another big value is treating your body as a temple. All four of us, even in our busy schedules, manage to find time for exercise. My father, as a rule, wakes up early to go for a walk. My brother and I hit the gym regularly. My mother enjoys yoga and Zumba classes. We eat a relatively healthy and balanced diet. My mother who takes primary responsibility for cooking has always tried to give us a healthy balanced diet. None of us has had a health problem in the past and none of us has any history of medical ailment, so there wasn't much anxiety in the household initially concerning coronavirus. We all however took individual measures to continue our exercises in different manners.

My father woke up at the crack of dawn to avoid any contact and walked into the colony despite guidelines restricting movement outside the house. He came home every day and sanitized everything feverishly; from his chappals to his mobile. My brother and I took turns in exercising in our lobby. We would help each other with our postures and poses and in the duration of lockdown managed to shed significant weight. My mother on the other hand bordered on fanaticism for exercise. She exercised in the morning and evening with undying devotion for an hour and a half each session. "It keeps me engaged" she would say as my brother and I would tease her about it.

We also learned to give our parents the support and love they needed during this time. I learnt cooking during this time and prepared quite a few meals for my family. The family breakfast prepared by me was something my family has started looking forward to. I would plan elaborate breakfasts with an element of everyone's liking. I saw the delight and pleasure

at the breakfast table, and it made me appreciate the task of cooking more.

After a few days of lockdown, our parents had asked us to cut back on unnecessary expenses and shorten the elaborate grocery list. This had come after the panic which had swept the labour community. My father also had labourers working under him who were stuck at worksites and otherwise, and most of them had expressed the need for funds and the desire to go home. This labour crisis also resonated in our household, as my father would get frantic calls from labourers who wanted to go home and were in fear of being stuck without funds. My father had decided to help his employees by helping them reach their homes and extending monetary help to each of them from his savings. This created a crunch of cash in our household, but everyone accommodated fast to this change. Mother declared that no luxury grocery items would be had, and we would have to eat what was served. There were no biscuits to be had with tea and bread was now a luxury, but my mother and I rose to this challenge and started baking bread and cookies at home. No one noticed or missed any item we sacrificed. Everyone shared empathy for the labourers and was happy contributing as much as we could from the comfort of our homes.

The Lakhera household has evolved together from this shared experience. We have learnt to communicate more freely and openly. My father, a recluse by nature, has also opened up and started communicating to all of us, a change felt most by my mother who is grateful for it. My brother after having a conversation with both my parents felt so alien that he confronted me with his feelings about the experience. "It must have been the first time I've talked to both of them at the same time without anyone arguing. It felt good to casually talk to them about life" It was not as if we had just started talking to each other, but in our experience, we would say that we had just started listening to each other and that has made a world of difference in our relationships.

Abhishek, my brother, is a graduate of Indraprastha University, from where he has done his undergraduate in Mass communication. By nature, he is an extrovert and a social butterfly. He has many friends and in his own words finds the best way to unwind around the company of his friends. He very recently got employed at a public relations firm based in Noida. He was the

one out of us four who was visibly irritable after a few days of the imposition of the lockdown. "I remained confined to my room and my phone, maybe Initially I isolated myself from the family." He was initially overwhelmed by the possibility of staying confined for a long time within the house as a big part of his day entailed going to work and interacting with people.

He works in public relations, and it is something he loves to do, as he is a people's person. His favourite relaxing activity is also going out with friends, and not being able to go out and meet his friends was a big stressor during the time. It was also however very clear to him that coronavirus infection was no joke and hence stayed away from socializing even when restrictions were lifted. "After a point, I had to go out for even a breath of fresh air. I was feeling suffocated inside". He stayed clear of interacting with other people but went out for early morning runs. "It gave me a breather and helped me cope up with not being able to socialize". "I wasn't scared of the virus until the virus infected me."

My brother was the first one in the family to report a fever. This happened after the lockdown restrictions were lifted and people were allowed to go to markets and start their businesses, which had been heavily affected. My father was already itching to go out. We took all precautions, but my father has an office in a crowded market. We expected the worst and had prepared for it. We had decided to place a shield in front of the office gate to avoid direct contact with customers, and bottles of sanitiser and gloves were also put in the office. It could have been anything. Maybe my father slacked in his sanitization or there was some unavoidable contact that he made, but one day my brother came to me and said that he wasn't feeling so well. He reported feeling slightly feverish and fatigued.

Life during COVID-19

The first day nobody jumped to a conclusion, in my mind COVID-19 was a possibility, but my parents were too reluctant to even consider the possibility of him having the virus. "It's normal to have a slight fever this time of year," my mother said. The fever did not subside after day 2. I remember having a conversation with my brother, telling him to consider the possibility of having coronavirus. He said to me, nonchalantly,

"I'm sure that I'm coronavirus positive". He said he had all the symptoms, fatigue, fever, dry cough and loss of taste. He said, "Loss of taste was the differentiator for me". In the evening, when Dad came back from work, my brother announced to the parents that it had been three days and his fever had not subsided. My parents' reaction was far from reasonable.

"I was angry because they were endangering themselves and others". My mom and dad still found it hard to believe that my brother could indeed have Coronavirus, and was firm on the decision to not get tested. "I did not get any sleep that night, I was worrying if we all could die of not being provided treatment due to this bizarre denial from parents".

Not long after my brother got sick, all of us started experiencing the same symptoms. I started feeling hot 3 days after my brother reported fever and soon after my mother also fell ill. It had been 4 days since all of us had fallen ill, and my brother's and my protests continued. We wanted to get tested for coronavirus and our parents were not in support. On the night of the 4th day, a heated argument ensued and everyone in the house found themselves to be more stressed than ever. The next morning, I woke up, and mom and dad were nowhere to be found. On the family, WhatsApp group were messages from our parents stating that they had gone to get tested. "I thanked God for bringing them back to senses' ". Although I was happy that they had gone to get tested, I was expecting the obvious, just as my brother was. A few minutes later, my father confirmed our fears in the group by sending a picture of their positive reports. They came back to the house with defeated looks on their faces. My brother and I felt a little guilty about not being more patient with them.

My father admitted his lapse of judgement, however, the same could not be said about my mother. She seemed angry that first day when her reports came. I remember her telling me, "Now you are happy, I am confined in the house. The government workers could come and paste stickers outside the house and everyone would know". This behaviour was not alien coming from my mother, and I understood her sentiments quite well. My father stepped up on this occasion and at night organized a movie night. He asked us to play our mother's favourite movie and I cooked the food. After the movie, the spirits were a little better in the house, which

gave me and my brother the window to explain to our parents our stand and why getting tested was important not only for ourselves but to also prevent infecting someone else. The tensions between family members had subsided, but there were health tensions still floating.

All of us had the coronavirus and at the time felt very vulnerable and scared. I remember waking up in the middle of the night and my mom would still be walking in the hall. "I'm not able to sleep," she said. Our temperatures rose from 99°C to 102°C. I felt fatigued all the time and unable to get up from my bed. My mother was also fatigued, but the household duties had to be done. Food had to be prepared and my mother and I took turns to prepare it. Cleaning was done by my brother as he reported his fever had dropped, and he would do it at any odd hour when he felt the least tired. My father at this time would try to contribute to each of these tasks wherever he could. He would sometimes prepare breakfast, which to our great surprise would be tasty. My brother's fever had subsided a few days before my fever, but he had started reporting a complete loss of taste and smell. He felt increasingly irritated at not being able to taste food, and as a result, would also eat less.

A day or two after, I suffered from the same loss of taste and smell. It was strange at first and then for a short time it became a source of fascination for me and my brother as we amused ourselves by trying out different food groups and if we could taste them, but it also affected my appetite drastically. Since I could not smell or taste the food I was eating, it became very difficult to eat consistently in adequate amounts.

My mother did not experience this loss in smell and taste, and neither did my father. During this time of recovery, I tried to maintain a positive outlook. I started listening to songs and watching positive movies, it helped uplift my spirits. I'm a naturally anxious person and getting infected was certainly very stressful for me, but I knew stress would only add to the ailment and what I needed to do was to keep my mind and body healthy. All of us during this period avoided the news and especially kept my mother away from the news as she was already feeling the stress. She however had her 25th anniversary to look forward to. She was quite excited about celebrating it and even though the pandemic drastically altered our plans for having a big celebration she was still quite excited about

having a small party for family only. We knew of this and frequently discussed with her the details of the party. It became a source of joy for her and soon after she started getting up from bed more and moving around the house, eventually, her fever also subsided, what remained was the fatigue which after a few more days was no longer there. It took our family 2 weeks to fully recover from COVID-19, and the entire time we provided each other with the mental support that any of us needed.

My mother comes from a traditional family and has grown up with that value system. Her parents have ingrained in her a fear of society and rejection from it. It seems more pronounced in her, as she is a very social person. She has a lot of close friends, she is very active, she is independent as well. A large part of her self-image is associated with her perceived image by everyone else around her. Even though she feels that one should not do things that attract criticism from society, she has never stopped me or my brother from our divergent thinking. When coronavirus came to the capital and spread in the capital she believed "*jisko hoga bachna mushkil hai*" and hence she said she became engrossed in doing everything she could to keep herself healthy. For her, outside the house was what she longed for, but it was something that she knew she had to avoid. So, she would consider going grocery shopping for her time out and enjoy it quite so much. She started joining dad in his early morning walks, and she started to love exercising even more. She bought a mat and started doing yoga. "It filled me with energy and positivity". She was loving the clean air outside when no one was to be seen. "*Maine itna saaf aasmaan dilli mein shayad kabhi nahi dekha*". She for the whole lockdown and even before it remains on alert as she was the one who purchased masks for the family even before it was a guideline. I remember going on a walk before the lockdown was imposed, and her friends made light-hearted fun of the fact that there was only a case or two in India, and she was already wearing a mask. In hindsight, it might have demotivated her a little.

"*Ab mask necessity lagti hai*" she says, reflecting on the months of lockdown. She also has now purchased masks of different styles to go with her dresses. "It is just to break the monotony. Why does everything have to be plain and sad"? She was very happy with the fact that

I learned to cook during the lockdown and helped her with the cooking, especially when she fell ill. After she got a diagnosis, telling all her family and friends didn't come easy to her. She avoided telling them, but her friends in the colony knew since they had seen the tape outside the house. She was thankful that they were supportive and helpful.

“They advised me to drink Giloy and Kadha every day”. All sorts of advice, some sound but other dodgy, were being given and this new commotion of calls from all friends and family also kept her busy. Her sisters would call her every day, and that helped my mom overcome her anxiety of being ostracized for having corona. *“Mujhe darr tha ki theek hone par bhi mujhse logg door bhagenge hai aur darte hai jinko corona hota hai unse, ye soch kar ki mujhse logg ab door bhagenge mujhe bahut bura lagta tha, raat ko neend aana band ho gayi thi”*

However, during the time she was in lockdown, her friends in the colony continued to call her. They tried to make her feel loved and that helped her overcome this fear. She also said the anniversary kept her going. “My 25th was something I had planned for so long, and I was really upset because I thought the lockdown would not allow me to celebrate at all. When the restriction was lifted a bit, it gave me a ray of hope. It was more than okay to just celebrate with family. That's all I needed” At that point in the lockdown the restriction was lifted, and it was allowed to have a gathering of 100 people. We decided it was best to invite 50 that covered all of our immediate family. We made lists and were planning the event, but then on one occasion my mother's sister and her niece showed reluctance to come to the event. They were uncertain whether we were still infected or not. Even though we had completed the mandated days of quarantine, there was a looming fear if we could still infect.

To me and my brother, the fear was unfounded but reasonable, so we thought it was best to get tested before inviting anyone over. The same did not sit well with my mother at all. For her, it was as if her worst fears had been realized. “I knew that once they knew I had COVID-19, they would treat me as if I would have it forever.”. At home, we tried convincing her that it was not true, and it was because people cared for their safety that this precaution was necessary. Mother

took it hard and stopped talking to any of us. She stopped receiving calls from her sisters as well. My brother and I meanwhile got tested and informed everyone that we were free of the virus. My mother's oldest sister out of love for her younger sister came to visit her and cheer her up. This followed a very emotional exchange between the two. My mother expressed to her sister how low she had been feeling, and not going on and not being able to interact with anyone for three weeks had taken a toll on her. She was feeling exceptionally low and depressed during the time of her sickness and thought everyone would abandon her afterwards. It opened my eyes to the struggle of my mother during the COVID-19 period. After reassurance from her sister, she felt way better in the days to come.

My own COVID-19 experience has been a rollercoaster from start to finish. As it goes for anything in life, you never think it's going to be you. When I got infected myself, it felt unreal, but it was happening. I took all the precautions, my family was on high alert, but we were also aware that going out meant risk. When the lockdown restrictions were lifted, my father jumped to work not only because he could no longer bear it to sit at home and do nothing, but also it was straining him mentally the awareness about lack of funds and a worldwide pandemic. He had spent a lot of his savings trying to help the labourers he had working under him, but that had set us back and put us in a tight crunch. He still was responsible for feeding us primarily and also the workforce under him. Not only that, but he felt compelled to go to work. We had no choice but to let father open up the office, and when he did, we took that risk. Living in a pandemic state, for a short while, was quite enjoyable and relaxing for me. I am a homebody, and the first few days were especially relaxing and nice. I read books, cooked, listened to songs, finished movies, but as days turned into weeks, an unsettling feeling of not being able to do productive work started taking over. I am a person prone to anxiety and depressive thoughts, as is anyone during a worldwide pandemic. It is quite difficult to stay sane when there is a disease infecting everyone and everything becomes about survival. My initial reaction to the pandemic unfolding was one of caution.

I had in college done engineering in biotechnology, which has become the centre or

focal point during this pandemic. Although the word biotechnology isn't being thrown around as much, there is a lot of anxiety and hope surrounding vaccines and a huge part of biotechnology is engineering a vaccine for its production and marketing. I was very much familiar with the situations of the outbreak and the intricate process of vaccine making. I was scared about the veracity of reports running around on news channels feeding my loved ones who did not care to check. I was also worried about how dangerous the virus is.

I started reading research papers immediately about initial reports and found the virus was extremely infectious and was expected to spread very fast, this put me on alert. A few days after the cases started rising, and the lockdown was imposed, I gave all the information I had gathered from sources I considered to be credible and gave it to my family. They put their trust in me and knew I was more informed and knew about the issue, and essentially took my word for it. "Mask is essential to avoid contracting the virus." We had masks at home, but also, we bought some new ones which were better quality. We sanitized every object that went out, like chappals or mobile phones. We considered washing hands with hand wash every time we went out, an extremely crucial step. These precautions helped all of us maintain confidence and a sense of control over this unprecedented situation that had occurred out of nowhere. I initially enjoyed my time staying inside and doing things that I had wanted to do for so long but couldn't find the time to do.

I read a lot of books. I listened to a lot of music and learned how to cook. As time went by and the cases kept on increasing, my anxieties related to COVID-19 started increasing, and they had reached a peak when my father had decided it was best to resume work. I had a particularly paranoid time every day as I convinced myself that I would eventually contact the virus due to my father going out. It was not an unfounded fear, but the intensity of panic and paranoia of contracting the virus was causing a lot of stress for me every day. If I had a slight irritation in my throat, I would think of the worst. Here to calm down I started reading and meditating. I read a book called Ikigai, which also made me realize that there was no matter in fretting about things that were out of my control. The more I started to perceive it that way, the less paranoid I

became. I understood that what was within my control was taking precautions, but to some misfortune, anyone could catch the virus and that small lapse of precaution was not in my or anyone's control. At that point anyway it had been declared a pandemic and that meant that if we were suffering, we were not alone because this time the world was sharing this problem. Everyone was stuck in their homes; everyone was dealing with COVID-19 anxiety and loss of social contact. A lot of people were out of work and were facing financial crises.

I started reading about people's accounts and experiences of COVID-19 so far, their anxieties and fears and stories. It made me aware of the sphere of life on earth and how we had been affected. During that time all nature was flourishing. The sunset and sunrise seemed even more beautiful. The skies had cleared due to pollution reduction. The animals were free to frolic around in the streets but a lot of them were also searching for food which, in the absence of people, was getting harder and harder to obtain. After getting tested positive for COVID-19, my mentality towards keeping good health also changed drastically. I'm anaemic by birth, so this grievance could have set me back drastically had I not taken good care of my health from day 1. I also took the supplements that were advised. I made sure I exercised daily and also meditated to keep myself free from anxiety and stress.

My dad is in the age bracket that was getting the most affected during this pandemic. The whole family depended on him during the time to provide.

He not only had our responsibility on his shoulders but also the workers who were appointed under him. They were going through a lot of stress and anxiety related to the pandemic. The lack of knowledge and misinformation also caused a lot of panic, and my father was very involved in seeking to resolve their issues and problems. We used to see on the television as a family what happened to the migrant labour, and it touched us all. Labour was not just labour, but we had been acquainted with all the people who had worked with our father. From an early age, we used to call them uncle or bhaiya. There was a sense of familiarity and pleasantness being with them.

To see them go through a tough time when they had worked with my father with loyalty for over

decades, it was time for us to give back to these people and provide whatever help they needed. “Some of them were stuck at a worksite in Saharanpur. They were scared and had asked me to give them money weekly for their food supply and recharges. I did what I could” Funds were also getting short as time went on. It was getting harder and harder to feed all the labourers, provide for their maintenance, food, clothes, mobile recharges. They were getting more and more anxious each passing day.

“I think they were more scared because of the news stories and the rumours, and when the borders were sealed, it was the nail in the coffin”. There were a lot of calls made to and for from the workers, and they expressed their desire to go to their hometown as soon as possible. “They wanted mainly to be around their family in an unpredictable situation like this. In their hometown they were surrounded by family and neighbours who would help each other in difficult times. “I understand that family support is important, so I helped them go back.” Some buses were on for labourers and my father gave them adequate monetary support as well as mental support.

“When they reached safely, at least for that time, there was a sense of calm”. My dad is the biggest hard worker I’ve seen, and his need to work constantly was something that bothered him during the time of lockdown. “It was boring and unproductive”. My father spent most of his time through the net or fixing things around the house to feel as though some work was getting done. It was running in the house. “Don't fix what ain't broken”. That did not put a stop to his need to be doing something all the time. Small chores around the house found their way into his hands. He was responsible for the morning tea, and we got it exactly at the same time every morning without fail.

My family in hindsight could only get through this with the help of the constant mental and emotional support of our extended family and friends, and also each other. Our family’s consistent watch on our health, positivity from the youngest to the oldest member of the family kept us happy and raised our spirits.

My mother was the worst hit in terms of deterioration of health. She had a high fever for quite some time on and off, and also had fatigue. Her singular positive outlook and her will to get

better fast helped us keep our wits on hold. She was the centre that provided us with the comfort we needed. We also followed the advice of our doctors, whom we consulted after we were tested positive. The right guidance and help are a very important part of the security we felt. We were as a family very aware of the privileges or made aware of the privileges we had through the struggle of the people that helped run the family business. This time was when we as a family appreciated the time, we could spend with each other and understood the importance of keeping a check on our mental health.

Case Study 2: The Naga Family

When the first COVID-19 case was found

I was with friends in college and that is when we heard about the first case of COVID-19 and now, COVID-19 is already a year old. We didn’t know that the COVID-19 was here to stay. The past few months have been like a rollercoaster journey where it started with us not caring about COVID-19, thinking it is just a phase that’ll pass but later, when the cases got worse, we became a lot more careful, taking all precautions and staying home to the situation right now where we have normalized a lot of things. We are now used to the new normal.

When the first case of corona in India was found, many people didn’t take it seriously. Our college arranged a field visit to Lal Quila with the whole batch and a guide. My friends and I reached the monument wearing our N95 mask and our gloves, but we noticed that many of the people, including our college friends, were not wearing a mask at all. They were not bothered, and they did not like the idea of wearing masks. During my stay in Delhi over the years, I have always opted on wearing the mask because of all the dust and therefore, it wasn’t a problem for me. We did our best in taking all the precautions, but we ended up eating our lunch in McDonald's. It is not that we were not scared, but we were hungry. Our mid-semester break was in just a few days.

Our family had planned a trip to Bangalore to drop our youngest brother at his new college and to meet my other sibling. We are a nuclear family with three siblings and my parents. My father wanted us to cancel our trip because of the outbreak of coronavirus in Wuhan, but my mother and I insisted on going. I received a call from my father. “Won’t it be better for you to

cancel the trip and plan some other time?" he asked, and I could hear the concern in his voice, but my mother doesn't go on any vacations, so I wanted to take her and promised him that I will take full precautions.

My mother and Norsang (my youngest brother) were to leave first, and I was to join them later. I prepared everything from masks to sanitisers to gloves to ensure their safety. I realized that the price of the mask had gone up, and I remember buying 50 masks for 5000 Rs, but it was an emergency and I had no choice but to pay the price. They were received by my other sibling who works as an engineer in Bangalore, Tridhe and stayed at his place till I came.

When the mid-semester break was announced, I booked an early morning flight to Bangalore. I had taken all precautions starting from mask to sanitisers to gloves and tried to maintain as much distance as possible, but the seats were all together, so there was nothing much to be done. I could only pray that I do not get the virus.

My brother had come to pick me up from the airport. When I reached his home, the stares that I was getting from all the people were so scary, and I could hear them whispering 'corona, corona' just because of the way we looked. This stare didn't end at all. Throughout my whole trip around Bangalore, Mysore and visiting Bylakuppe (Tibetan settlement), the stare and the constant whispering continued. We tried to take all precautions throughout our holiday and finally took a flight back to Delhi.

It was just me and my mother who came back. Norsang joined his new college and Tridhe had to stay for his internship and to finish his college. I received an email from the college saying that the college is closed for 21 days due to coronavirus. It was scary for my mother to continue her stay in Delhi and therefore, we booked her ticket to Dharamshala (our home) immediately. My mother wanted me to come with her, but I thought I'd have to join college after 21 days and therefore decided to stay back.

I continued to stay home and was discussing assignments with my friends online. I was staying at Majnu ka Tila (MKT) in Delhi and there are a lot of restaurants, hotels, and cafés in Majnu ka Tila (MKT). It was when I received the message about the shutting of Majnu ka Tila (MKT) from the next day that hit me so hard about the fact that it is getting serious. We

immediately went to buy all sorts of stuff to eat which includes rice, flour, dal, veggies, a lot of instant noodles and ten dozen of mineral water. We were so scared.

That same night, I received a call from Tridhe, my brother from Bangalore. "My exams got cancelled, and I got the permit to work from home for two weeks. I want to come home" he said. He immediately booked his flight and I booked the bus ticket from Delhi to Dharamshala. I called and confirmed at least five times about the operation of the bus, and the bus conductor agreed that it would be going. That same night, I received a call from the bus conductor that they wouldn't be going and that we would have to find a different means of transport. I immediately called my brother to cancel his ticket, but it was too late. His flight was in two hours, and we thought it was such a waste of time and money to come here for just two weeks, and the expense of booking a taxi is expensive. Even if we cancelled the flight, we were hardly getting any refund.

They say everything happens for a reason, and I felt it too. My brother soon received another mail from his office saying the work from home has been extended for 2 months and his flight didn't go to waste. I went to pick him up from the airport, and we grabbed our meals from McDonald's for takeaway. There was no indoor seating in McDonald's and I knew that the time had come for me to go home. Delhi didn't feel safe anymore.

Since there was no bus operating from Delhi to Dharamshala, we booked a taxi which cost us 10,000Rs, but we didn't have any option. It was me, my brother Tridhe and my cousin Wangchuk travelling with us. Wangchuk is my cousin who was in his second year of B.Ed. and his home was in Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, he decided to come home to Dharamshala to visit my parents with us. To enter the border of Himachal Pradesh, the ID proof of being a resident of Himachal Pradesh was required, and so we borrowed one for him from a friend just so that he could enter Himachal.

We didn't face any problem getting home. We got entry into Himachal Pradesh as well, but all our ID cards were checked at the border and a lot of policemen were on duty. It was all thanks to the masks that we were wearing. We haven't informed our parents that we were coming, or

we knew that they'd worry all night. It was a surprise for them, not sure if it'd be a good surprise or a bad surprise.

In my home in Dharamshala, my parents and two cousin sisters were staying together. We reached Dharamshala at around midnight, 22nd March 2020 just before the Janata Curfew. Our parents were super happy to see us. We recorded everything in a video as well. We were asked to get changed, wash everything, keep our luggage outside, and we slipped into bed.

The next morning, our home was filled with people. The term 'quarantine' was new to us, and all of us were locked in our homes together. There were 7 people at home during the lockdown: mom, dad, my brother Tridhe, two cousin sisters Tashi Tsomo and Chuki and one cousin brother Wangchuk. Unlike any usual day, we had to make a huge amount of breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Our home has only two rooms, one kitchen, one storage and washroom. All of us chose our beds, and some had to sleep on the floor.

Announcement of lockdown

We were all enjoying our dinner and watching the news for any kind of update. That's when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that there will be a nationwide lockdown for 21 days. Everybody panicked with the announcement of the lockdown. We immediately went to check our ration to see if we had enough food for 21 days. Luckily, my parents like to stock everything beforehand, and we didn't face any problems. Soon, the condition of having to stay in institutional quarantine came by, and we felt so lucky to be able to be home just before the lockdown was announced. We heard various stories of friends and family having to stay in institutional quarantine with unknown people and poor facilities.

Our lockdown journey started with some wonderful memories. Most of us were coming back from cities and this seemed like our long-awaited holiday. We were filled with family members. None of us had online classes and all of us were free. We cooked for each other, talked about all kinds of things, read books, planted flowers and that's how we spent the first week.

After spending a week with each other, we realized that some were working a lot and some were just chilling the entire day, which didn't seem fair. So, we had a meeting one night. "Let's

all divide our work and make a system since we will be staying together for a long time," I suggested some seemed okay with the idea and some were not sure if it was necessary. But we finally decided to go with the suggestion. We made sure that our parents need not work, and we will divide the work among ourselves.

Division of work

There were five of us at home. We usually have roti or puri with alu, egg and tea for breakfast and lunch, it is rice, dal and sabzi and finally, for dinner, we have steamed bun/roti with some sabzi. Depending on the amount of work that would be required, we decided that 2 of us will make breakfast, 2 for lunch and 1 for dinner. The pairings were to be changed every day, and we wrote our names on paper every night to see who is assigned to which duty for the next day. We played games every night to assign our duty for the next day.

Other than the preparation of the meals, there was no system at home to be followed. My father made all of us sit one day. "It is a very bad time for everybody, and there is very little that we can do for other people. I would like it if all of us could pray for an hour for all sentient beings" he said. The last time when I prayed with a lot of people together was when I was in school. We had time allotted for prayers. We realized that we spend hours on our phones not doing anything productive and therefore, we agreed to what he had to say.

The next morning was a little different. All of us started waking up early, doing our chores and praying for an hour. Honestly, I did feel a lot better when I could devote one hour of my time to praying. It was successful. Everybody started showing their skills in cooking meals and YouTube was a great source for learning new recipes. During every meal, we would switch on our TV and watch the news. The news of migrant workers having to walk o his/her hometown, how the market has been affected very badly and the number of people suffering from coronavirus increased tremendously reached us every day, and it would break our hearts. It was very scary and there was no good news at all. Every bad news on television made us realize how fortunate we are to not have to worry about food and shelter during the tough time. We would occasionally watch movies or

dance shows during the weekend. It became a family activity that made us spend time together.

COVID-19 anxiety

We were all aware that the coronavirus wasn't going anywhere and that all we can do is take precautions and stay at home. We didn't step out from our home at all for a week. But soon, our ration and vegetables started to finish and to buy more, stepping out of the house was necessary. There was a time when people could go out to buy necessary items. My parents were super scared. "Let's just try to survive on what we have at home and if need be, let's eat Tsampa" they said. Tsampa is a staple Tibetan food (roasted barley) that we have stocked at home. We can simply eat that with hot water or Tibetan butter tea, and it's heavy food. But to survive on that alone didn't sound reasonable.

The younger members of the family had a meeting that night and decided that the boys would go out in the morning at 7 and buy all things necessary for at least a week. We arranged the masks and gloves for them to wear. We kept our main gate open so that they wouldn't have to touch the gate when entering, turned on the geyser and kept their changing clothes outside. As soon as they came home, all the things were kept outside, sanitized, washed everything and took them in after several hours only. They had to take shower, change all their clothes, put them in a machine and then only could they walk into the house. It was for their safety and everybody else's as well.

The rising cases of coronavirus were heard, but none in our area were tested positive. It was not until one case of corona in our neighbourhood was found that it hit us, the effect of lockdown. We couldn't even get out of our home to do anything. We were all stuck in our home and considering we were so many people in one small home, it started to get a little suffocating. We started having small fights and not talking to each other, and the situation got a little worse.

Starting a YouTube channel

We started recording our daily lives on our phones just for memory, to begin with, but a lot of people started creating their own YouTube. Tridhe also started editing one video, to begin with about our journey from Delhi to Dharamshala. We weren't expecting many viewers or subscribers but on the first day itself, our video received 500 views and 100

subscribers. It was unexpected and this somehow motivated us to make more videos. All of us started recording random stuff that we do at home and the jokes, and Tridhe would edit them all.

The love we received on the YouTube platform was unbelievable, and we slowly started making money on it as well. I used to assemble all the videos that I think would make a good video, and he could edit them since he has a good sense of humour. Finally, to have more viewers and attract viewers who don't speak Tibetan, I started adding subtitles as well. It brought light to our monotonous life. Our family and relatives all around the world loved our videos and the audience loved them too.

We would spend hours watching and re-watching our videos, reading the comments and discussing them. Many of the Tibetan people these days are concerned about preserving our Tibetan culture and language, and they were fond of us speaking in Tibetan language, taking time to study the Tibetan language from our dad and that we prayed. Moreover, they liked the bonding and the fondness in the family. We made fun of each other all the time, and they enjoyed the pranks we did on each other.

Education and work experience

All of us were engaged in one thing or another before the lockdown was announced. I was in my first year of Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and soon the online classes started. It was nothing like the classes that I would attend in my college. Some teachers never took classes, and we were given lots of assignments since the exam was cancelled. I knew that we would be marked, but sometimes I didn't know on what basis. I am good with computers and using internet connection, but somehow even then the online mode of classes was not very suitable. I couldn't focus most of the time.

My brother Tridhe is in the final year of his Engineering and he gave his exam online. We are living in the hills and the internet connection wasn't very good. We lost power in between while giving exams sometimes. It was a difficult time for him too. He was doing his internship at Cerner and had to apply for a job afterwards but didn't know if the online mode would be sufficient. Luckily, online was suitable for computer science engineers and hence he got the

job after his internship and completed his studies as well. He now has a full-time job online.

My cousin brother Wangchuk was in the second year of B.Ed. and he gave the exam online. It was time for him to find work and start his career but due to the lockdown and the situation, he is unemployed and is helping a friend out running a café at the moment. ‘You spend years studying all kinds of things and this is what you end up doing, watering’ said some of his friends, which did hurt his feelings. It is not a job that he’s doing, but hurtful comments kept on coming.

My mother works as a curator at the museum of Tibetan Medical and Astrology Institute. When the nationwide lockdown was announced, her office was closed, and she didn’t have to go to work. But slowly when things started to get better, employees living on the premises of the organization were offered work and were given full salary whereas my mother didn’t get to work and was given only 25% of her salary. Even though she wanted to continue working and earn, she wasn’t allowed to. Her workplace was 5 minutes away from home. It was difficult to stay at home and not earn for her also. “I miss going to work, I am tired of staying at home” are what she would often say. Her work is mostly offline, and her physical presence is required at the office to do so. Therefore, working from home was not possible. She loves flowers and gardening and therefore, to get her mind off the sad situations, she got herself engaged in a lot of gardening, and she loved it.

My father is the head of the Cultural and Research Department at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archive. Unlike my mother, his organization was kind enough to let him stay at home and pay the salary in full as well. But my father loved working, and he was not allowed to go to his office also, even though it was fifteen steps away from our home. “People should be allowed to work, but in a lesser number” was what he would often say. He brought plenty of work from the office when the lockdown was announced and continued to do all of them during the lockdown. He is the head of the publishing department and therefore was involved in editing all day long.

My two cousin sisters, Chuki and Tashi Tsomo. Tashi Tsomo also works as a teacher at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archive and didn’t

have any salary reduction. She enjoyed her stay at home and was happy to be able to work on her Tibetan language even more under my father’s guidance during the lockdown. Chuki was an IInd year English honours student from Delhi University. She is a very outgoing girl, and therefore she had much difficulty staying home. My father would make her read books and write essays, but she was keen on not doing anything. Soon, she got into the habit of playing PubG and ruined everybody’s mood every single day. There was no time limit for her playing and was often very loud. Many fights have happened at home because of her PubG, but the game is addictive, and she couldn’t stop playing.

Engagement with social media

We were always engaged with social media, but the use of social media during the quarantine period has increased drastically. The connectivity in our home wasn’t that great and therefore, we installed a Wi-Fi connection at home. Engagement with social media has increased for everybody, including our parents. My mother is always on her phone, talking with her siblings and other relatives. She speaks on the phone for hours because there wasn’t much communication inside the home except for when we are having a meal together.

My father started being on Facebook a lot more than usual and updated his status regularly. All his posts were mindful, educative and his ideas. Then he would spend hours replying to each comment. It was unusual to be on his phone all the time, and we would often tease him, but he would always defend himself by saying all his posts for other people to learn. When we were young, my father would frequently scold us not to be on the phone all the time, and now it was the other way around, we tell him all the time to get off his phone and be present with us.

The rest of us were young, our engagement with social media has increased drastically because there was nothing much to be done at home. All of us started watching a lot of series on Netflix, Amazon, and YouTube. Many young Tibetan started their own YouTube channels as well, and we used to enjoy watching their videos. There is one YouTuber that caught our attention. He was a schoolmate of mine and during the lockdown, he started helping a lot of people in need and would shoot videos about it. It would give us immense joy to just watch the people in need get

what they are deprived of, and the smile on their faces would make our day. There were times when they asked for contributions to help a particular family, and I have contributed too.

Other than wasting time on social media, on the brighter side, I learned a lot of new recipes on YouTube and started cooking nice meals, sweets and started baking as well in the rice cooker. My mother used YouTube to watch videos about flowers, and she grew a lot of plants and vegetables in our very small garden. My brother used YouTube to not just upload his videos but learned to code on it which benefited his work as well. It wasn't all a waste of time.

Family tension

No family is perfect and there are disputes, and it is not always happy. We fought several times among ourselves regarding work and space. Since the house was very small to fit seven people, it was very difficult at times. There was no privacy at all. Sometimes, the frustration of one would be taken out on the other, and this is how the family tension grew. We stopped making videos because the tension in the house was growing, there was more silence than talk, and it was awkward. We would get angry at each other for all the small matters, and it was sad, to be honest.

The office soon provided a house for Tashi Tsomo, and she shifted to her new home with all the cousins. It did feel a lot better to have a bed, space, and quietness at home. It was just me, my brother and my parents left at home and the peace felt good. The workload on me and my brother increased, but it was better to have our own space after all we are all adults. My father even managed to rent a different room near our home so that my brother and I could have a workspace as well.

We were being extra cautious, and we were not going out at all unless necessary after taking all precautions. But the neighbours didn't refrain from doing all that. They went on hiking, picnics, restaurants, etc. every weekend. It was very scary because we share the same washroom and I give tuition to the son of the neighbour. We are in contact all the time, and I was often reluctant to teach whenever he would come with a red or runny nose and cough. I cancelled many classes and told them to rest at times. But we obviously couldn't tell them to not go out. COVID-19 has put all of us in very awkward

and uncomfortable situations where we are unsure how to react and deal with it. One time, they even went to Manali for a week and expected me and my father to take our classes with their son as soon as they were back. I refused to teach. I told them to quarantine for at least a week, and then we resumed our teaching where no signs were shown. My father teaches him Hindi and Tibetan. We started with the idea to help the child because his parents were both illiterate and online teaching wasn't very effective for the child.

Visitor from Delhi

I was living with my boyfriend in Delhi before the lockdown. I was lucky enough to come home at the right time, but my boyfriend Rinchen was left behind. He had some work to take care of earlier and then the lockdown happened and was stuck in Delhi since then. He recently got a job as the Executive Director at Tibetan National Sports Association and was supposed to join the office in June in Dharamshala, but due to lockdown, he couldn't join. Furthermore, he would often call me and tell me how suffocating and difficult it is for him to stay in Delhi alone. The pressure to stay home every day and not do any work was hitting him badly. I could hear the tension and the anxiety in his voice every time he called, and I would always tell him to come to Dharamshala.

He owns a spa in Delhi called Om Health Spa. Due to the lockdown, the work has stopped and so has the income. He still had to pay the rent, electricity bill and the salary of the spa. To be in Delhi without any income and huge expenses, was very tough for him. Sometimes, there were times when he couldn't even speak on the phone. There was nothing much he could do in the room as well, so the thought wouldn't go away as well. He would often tell me that he is depressed. I was lucky enough to be surrounded by family during the lockdown, but he was all alone.

His parents are in Nepal and all the international flights were cancelled and there was nothing much he could do. The decision to come to Dharamshala was good because his job would also start soon, and one source of income would be better than having none. Travelling in times of COVID-19 was different. The Central Tibetan Administration had turned one whole school into a quarantine centre for Tibetans who are coming to Dharamshala. We planned that he would come

to Dharamshala in his car, quarantine himself at the facility provided by CTA, get himself tested and then would come home after that.

None of the things went as planned. He was stopped in his car at some unknown place after entering the border of Himachal. He was told to quarantine and get himself tested in a school turned quarantine centre by the Himachal government. The facilities were very poor. The safety was in his own hands to wear a mask at all times. He was provided with a very thin mattress to sleep on. Luckily, the food was nice, and he said that he didn't face many problems. He was tested negative and was soon allowed to go home. He isolated himself in the room that we had arranged. All the food was provided to him until he completed his two weeks of quarantine, and then only was he allowed to go out and visit us as well.

Living with COVID-19

In June, everybody realized that COVID-19 was not going anywhere and the decision to reopen most of the offices was taken. My parents, sister, and boyfriend started going to their office. Their office was on alternate days to ensure that there is the maintenance of social distancing and less contact. All of us made major changes in our lives and started living with COVID-19. Masks and sanitiser became our essentials, and even speaking to other people felt dangerous. Changing our clothes before entering the home, washing our hands regularly, became the new normal.

Earlier, when cases of COVID-19 were found in our area, we would freak out and won't even step out at all, but that has also changed. We still go out to purchase necessary items but with better precaution. We have come to realize that there is nothing much that we can do. All that we can do is to take precautions because safety is in our own hands. We have now learned to live with COVID-19 and slowly, the economic activities are also resuming. The things that we were missing out on like meeting friends, eating outside, and going for a walk, etc. have now resumed. I do meet my friends and go out to eat outside occasionally. We all try not to go out unnecessarily but when we do go out, it is with our masks on, sanitisers in our bag and less contact with other people. I tell the taxi drivers to wear masks all the time whenever I ride a taxi.

My father didn't step out from our neighbourhood at all for almost 6 months. It is only recently that he updated on his Facebook status 'I have stopped fearing the virus, I have learned to live with it. I will take full precautions, but it won't stop me from doing other things.' it said. I liked the mindset that he was following, and it made me realize that all human beings are slowly learning to live with COVID-19. It is a difficult time for everybody, but it is the mindset that one has that can help people get through it.

We were very lucky that none of the family members suffered from COVID-19, but we have never taken the situation lightly. We do not step out from home unless necessary and with all precautions. We are now getting used to the new normal, and we have also realized the safety of ours in our own hands. Wearing a mask is not even a problem anymore, it has become a habit to wash our hands regularly and to wear masks. If I step out without a mask, I feel incomplete.

by Tenzin Dronme Naga

Discussions

From the above two strands, we could see that in a family, marked changes were observed. This is gathered from Strand-I of the study. The main findings related to change in lifestyle where more than half of the parents in both the groups found their own and their family members' health same as before the pandemic or improved during the pandemic. Parents of young children were more involved in household chores during the pandemic as compared with the parents of adolescents. Fewer parents with adolescent children were involved in exercises as compared with parents of young children who attempted to stay active through joining online physical exercises such as yoga, aerobics and other activities. Both sets of parent groups were including healthy food in their diet patterns during the pandemic. In comparison with parents of adolescent children, more participants with young children agreed that screen time has increased and affected their eyes during the pandemic.

Concerning relationships with Family and Friends, the findings suggested that parents of younger children were watching television together, while parents with adolescents chose to play indoor games with their children. More than half of the participants in both groups felt that

spending more time with the family has helped them understand each other better. The majority of participants in both groups had regained contact, using audio and video calls, during the lockdown.

For Psychological Health/Mental Well-being, findings bring out that the parents with young children were feeling more frustrated as compared to the parents who had children in the adolescent years who were calmer. More than half of the participants with adolescent children reported that though the workload was less, their mental peace has deteriorated during the pandemic. While parents of young children felt the workload may have increased. Watching television, talking to a friend, and engaging in household activities were the highest chosen strategies to combat stress in both groups. None of the participants opted for counselling or medical treatment as a strategy to deal with stress. As compared with the other group, parents with adolescents felt that news was helpful to keep themselves updated during the pandemic, while more participants in other groups felt that news created misconceptions and fears.

The findings in financial status during the pandemic suggested that more than half of the parents with adolescents continue with their old jobs, as compared to the parents of young children. More participants from the latter group were dependent on the income of other family members than the former group. Grocery, Internet, and safety and sanitation material were the items on which the participants from both groups spent the most. Clothing and purchasing luxurious items were the areas where expenses were cut by the participants in both groups.

The most critical part was education that was online during the Pandemic, the findings showed that parents with adolescent children had bought more electronic devices as compared to the parents of young children. The younger students were asked to adjust more during their online classes as compared to the senior students. Almost half of the participants in both groups said they did not face any problem while paying the school fee. Delay in payment was more reported by parents of adolescents. In comparison with parents of adolescents, the parents of younger children felt that online classes have increased workload and stress for their children.

More than one-fourth of participants in both groups confirmed that their children have started missing the school environment due to the online classes. The majority of the parents in both groups had shown an aversion to the idea of continuing online education for their children.

Conclusion

From the above analysis and discussion, it brings out that during the pandemic, the family was the foundation to adapt and deal with the crisis. Everyone at home adapted to the changes happening outside and took utmost precautions. Parents could sense that screen time had increased for students and pressures at the workplace mounted. Even though there has been no satisfaction from online education for both parents and students, it was a solution to continue education in times of crisis. Online education was more a compulsion than a choice. Financially, many parents struggled but managed with unity at home. Adjustments were made with the siblings and ways to engage self were found such as reading books, cooking, and many more. Watching television together was another way to combat stress. Talking to relatives, family members, friends was also a way to deal with the mounting stress and workload at home.

Many students and parents resorted to social media for good and bad reasons. Parents and students both said it led to more fear, spreading misconceptions than they helped. Many families disliked what was evident in Strand-I and Strand-II of the study was that cuts on luxurious items were made and restricted to essentials. To follow COVID-19 appropriate behaviours, sanitisers, masks, and physical distancing became mandatory items. Along with expenditure on data packs and connecting online also led to the diversion of funds. Thus, having a congenial environment, adjusting with each other, adapting to the family needs becomes important to deal with the crisis.