

# WHAT COULD BE THE TAKEAWAY MESSAGE FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC FOR FUTURE PANDEMICS? - A PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

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## ABSTRACT

CoronaVirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus-2 [SARS-CoV-2]. It has caused a lot of deaths worldwide and is growing uncontrollably. Many factors like public co-operation and handling of the government efficiently are responsible for control. As new norms were formulated and observed, in this current COVID-19 pandemic, This study aims to find the perception of people on the takeaway message from this pandemic to any other upcoming similar scenario. A self administered questionnaire was prepared comprising about 9 questions based on the topic of the survey and circulated to about 100 people through an online google sheets link. The questions were studied carefully and corresponding answers were marked by the participants. The data was collected and statistically analysed. The overall result was positive wherein the public was co-operative about the lockdown and found ways to keep themselves occupied and they believe that the government of India was performing efficiently and that it is well-equipped and can handle any future pandemics. This study helps us understand the public perspective on the current, serious issue going on in the world.

## KEYWORDS:

Pandemic, COVID-19, Message, Public safety, Precautions,

## INTRODUCTION:

COVID-19 and its spread has been affecting millions of people over the globe. Being an easily communicable droplet infection, its spread is very rapid. The role of the public in this is extremely crucial. The citizens should abide by the rules of social distancing strictly (Johnson et al., 2020) (Sekar et al., 2019) (Seppan et al., 2018) (McMillen, 2016b). The perspective of the public and their opinions on how they view this is key to controlling the spread. The government of India is handling the issue so efficiently unlike many other well-developed countries. The public feel like India is well-equipped to handle any further pandemics in the future. (Sironi et al., 2020) (Shah, 2016) These can be the important takeaway message that we try to understand from COVID-19 and can imply for future pandemics also. (Krishna and Babu, 2016)(Oldfield and Malwal, 2020)(Nogueira, 2020)

The government of India had urged the citizens to stay aware and alert to this novel coronavirus. Every Indian had to resolve to fight against the Covid-19 and exhibit restraint by practicing social distancing and avoiding hoarding. (Divya et al., 2020) (Choudhari and Thenmozhi, 2016)

The government has assured the nation that the supply of essential services will not be hampered while the country fights the disease. People with a relatively better financial situation were also urged to be kind and humane towards their employees or domestic help workers during the time of crisis. (Subashri and Thenmozhi, 2016)(Huremović, 2019a). Resolution and restraint are very important in combat against this global epidemic. As citizens, people need to strengthen their resolve to follow the advisories issued by state and central governments to fight efficiently. (Kannan and Thenmozhi, 2016) Restraint is compulsory to protect ourselves and remain healthy. People are requested to go out of their homes only if essential. Social distancing is a crucial and effective method to ensure that deadly coronavirus is contained. (Nandhini, Babu and Mohanraj, 2018) (Sriram, Thenmozhi and Yuvaraj, 2015; Nandhini, Babu and Mohanraj, 2018) Everyone, except those in essential services like government jobs and medical facilities, must try to stay at home as much as possible.(Cárdenas-González and Álvarez-Buylla, 2020; Kangovi and Asch, 2020; Torbay, 2020) (Polkinghorne and Branley, 2020) Go out only if it is absolutely necessary and even then do not meet people or stand in groups. People above the age of 60 were asked to not venture out of their homes over the next few months. (Thejeswar and Thenmozhi, 2015)

People must avoid going to hospitals for regular health check-ups, If you have an appointment for any non-essential surgery, please postpone it for some time. We should keep in mind that pressure should not come to hospitals. (Keerthana and Thenmozhi, 2016) If you still need an urgent consultation, try to get in touch with a family doctor or a doctor who might be a relative to get a consultation over the phone. But it is not recommended to visit hospitals as it will put pressure on the health care facilities. (Kangovi and Asch, 2020; Torbay, 2020) (Menon and Thenmozhi, 2016) People are also requested to reschedule any elected surgeries. The people of our nation have been assured that no essential services like ration and milk will be affected by the current restraints imposed in view of the coronavirus outbreak. Our country has been put under several restrictions to avoid the spread of the deadly disease, the supply of essential services like food items will not be affected. People should refrain from panic buying to stock essential commodities. (Lei and Klopach, 2020) Steps will be taken by the government to ensure there is no scarcity of groceries and everyday products (Samuel and Thenmozhi, 2015)(Hafeez and Thenmozhi, 2016) People are also requested to support their employees and house workers and be considerate towards their living conditions in whichever way possible. (Honigsbaum, 2019; Taylor, 2019) People belonging to well settled, knowledge and aware households could do so by not deducting their salaries and can teach them how to keep themselves safe and protected.(Menon and Thenmozhi, 2016; Pratha and Thenmozhi, 2016),(Thejeswar and Thenmozhi, 2015)

These months during the pandemic may be the first ones of an era that is posed by the threats of a pandemic. We cannot say what is in store for the future. There are new possibilities and shocks with every passing day, bringing more light onto our reality. These past 5 months will be studied extensively by the epidemiologists and even longer by the historians.

Although we can see the formation of rough contours, we are learning what works against Covid-19 and understanding how to fight against it. From surveying the ruins of the third Coronavirus to turn into an epidemic this century accompanied by two other animal influenza and several waves of Ebola, lessons on which kind of societies are required to resist the future outbreaks are being discovered by scientists who believe it to be inexorable and soaring. This study is aimed at obtaining the right perception of those futuristic needs among the general population.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The study setting is an online setting which is a cross-sectional observational study. It is approved by the Scientific Review Board, Saveetha Dental College, Chennai. The Sample size of the survey was 100. The sampling method used was non-probability convenient sampling. All necessary measures are taken to minimize the sampling bias. The data collection or tabulation of the survey for questionnaire consisted of a self-constructed questionnaire containing 9 questions. The questionnaire validity checking was done. The internal validity was checked, by giving the questionnaire to 3 staff from college and the validity was checked. The external validity was checked by giving the questionnaire to 3 random people. The data collection software used was the GOOGLE FORMS and for descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis, SPSS version 20 was used. The method of preservation of each output variable was through pie charts and bar charts. The list of independent variables used was the gender of the respondent against the perception, awareness, and attitude of the public.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

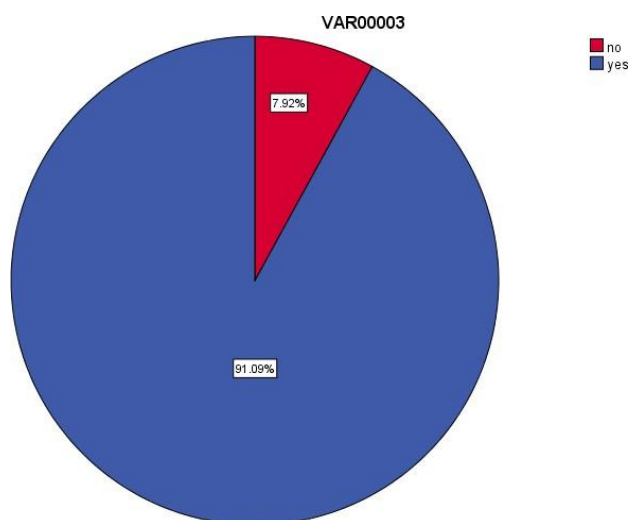


FIGURE1: Pie chart representing the percentage distribution of awareness about the presence of COVID-19. Majority of the participants, 92% answered yes (blue) and 8% answered no (red).

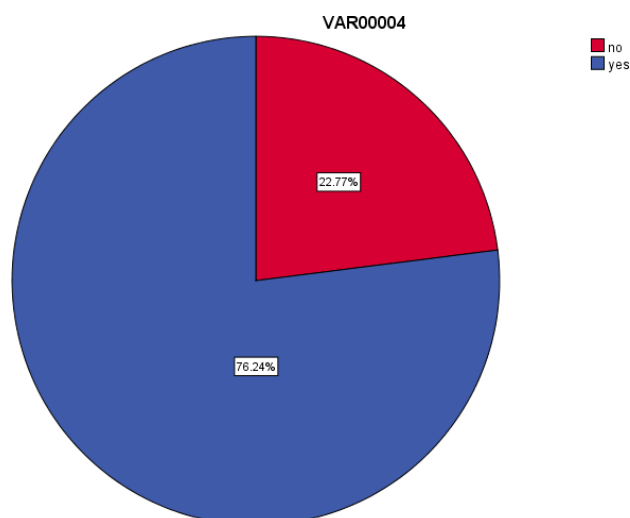


FIGURE 2: Pie chart representing the percentage distribution of participants who were affected psychologically or with regards to their health. Majority of the participants, 77% answered yes (blue) and 23% answered no (red).

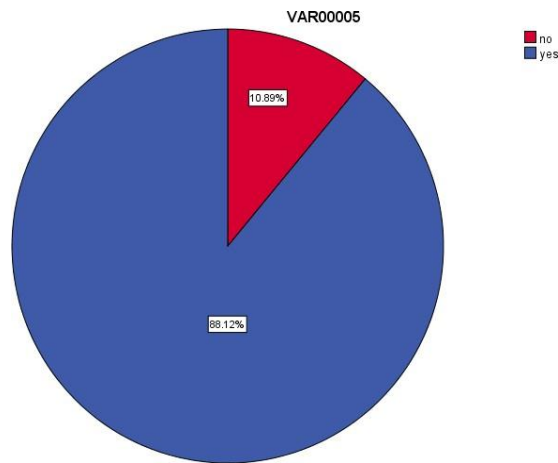


FIGURE 3: Pie chart representing the percentage distribution of participants that thought vaccines could have helped the situation get better. Majority of the participants, 89% answered yes (blue) and 11% answered no (red).

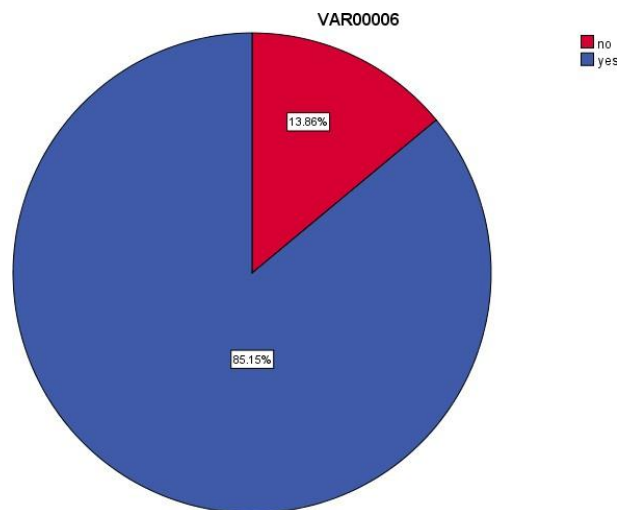


FIGURE 4: Pie chart representing the percentage distribution of participants who thought social distancing is the best way to control the situation. Majority of the participants, 86% answered yes (blue) and 14% answered no (red).

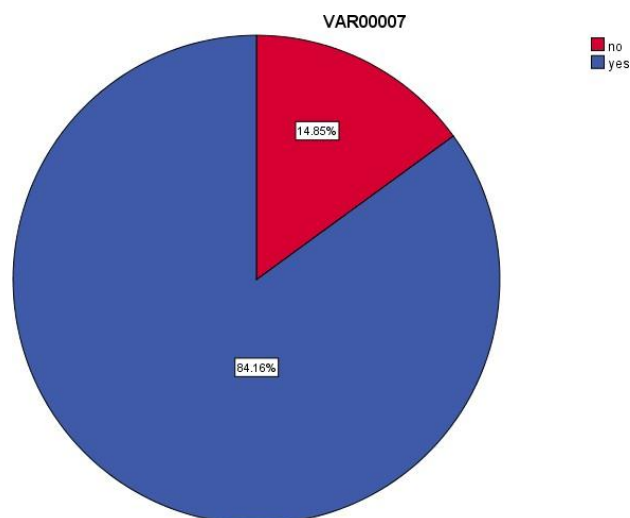


FIGURE 5: Pie chart representing the percentage distribution of the participants who agreed that leisure activities helped pass time easier. Majority of the participants, 85% answered yes (blue) and 15% answered no (red).

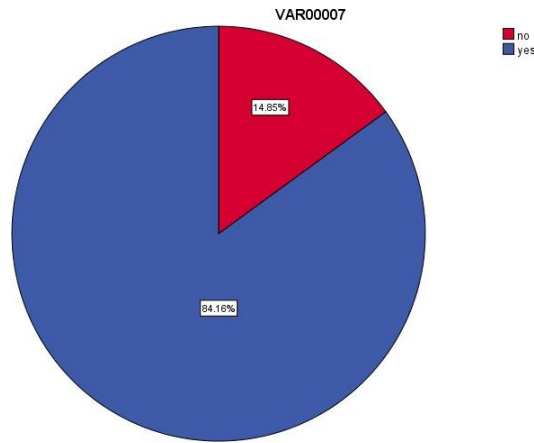


FIGURE 6: Pie chart representing the percentage distribution of participants who thought a vaccine in the future will help situations get better. Majority of the participants, 92% answered yes (blue) and 8% answered no (red). (Honigsbaum, 2019).

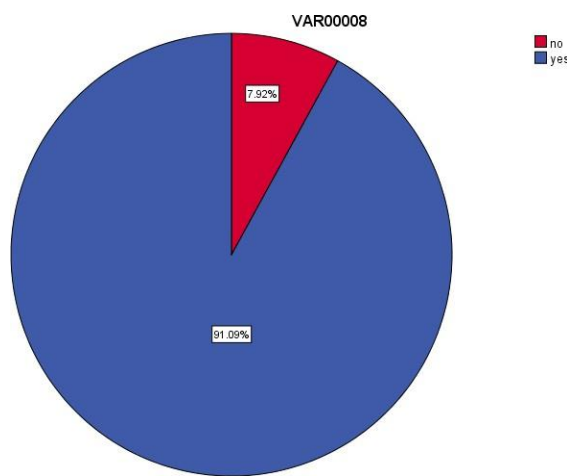


FIGURE 7: Pie chart representing the percentage distribution of participants who thought that the government of India was handling the issue efficiently. Majority of the participants, 89% answered yes (blue) and 11% answered no (red).

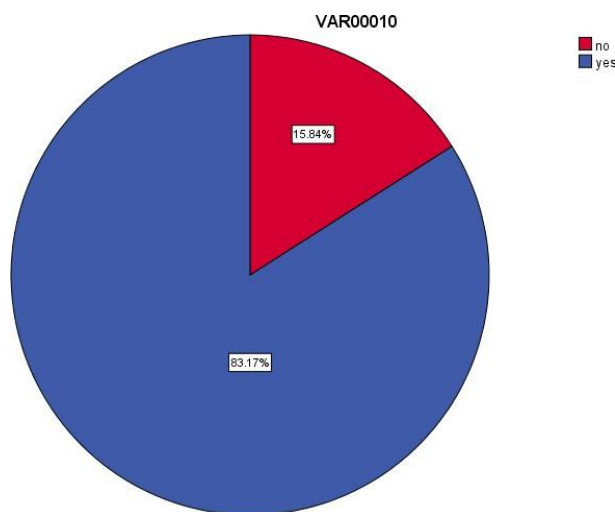


FIGURE 8: Pie chart representing the percentage distribution of participants who think that the government of India will be well-equipped to handle future pandemics. Majority of the participants, 84% answered yes (blue) and 16% answered no (red).

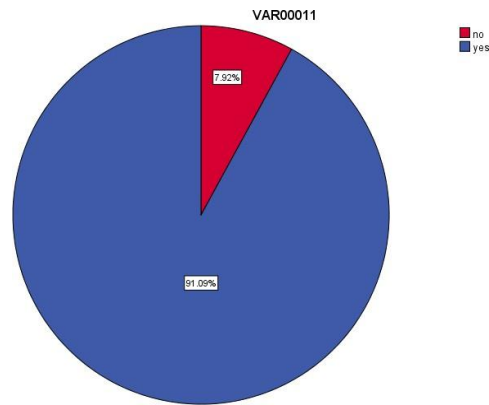


FIGURE 9: Pie chart representing the percentage distribution of participants who believed that public co-operation is needed to fight any pandemic. Majority of the participants, 92% answered yes (blue) and 8% answered no (red). (McMillen, 2016a; Davis and Lohm, 2020a).

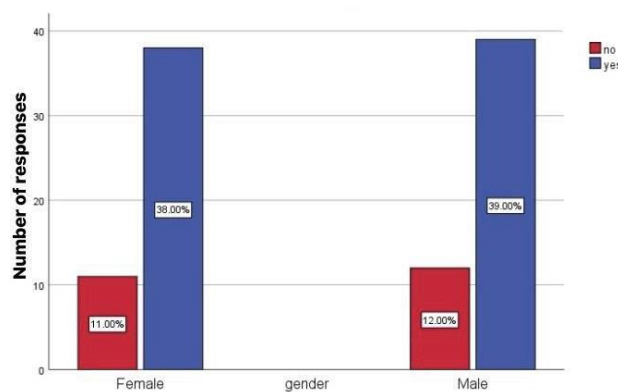


FIGURE 10: The Bar graph represents the association of gender and any mental and physical health issues faced during the pandemic, where blue colour denotes ‘yes’ and red colour denotes ‘no’. X axis represents gender and Y axis represents No. of responses. Out of the 76% participants who think they were affected psychologically or with regards to physical health, 39% were male and 38 % were female. The association between the variables were analyzed using the Chi-square test (Pearson’s Chi-square value - 1.017; df-1,P-value -0.463) at 95% confidence interval and was found to be statistically not significant which signifies both males and females faced similar health issues during the pandemic.

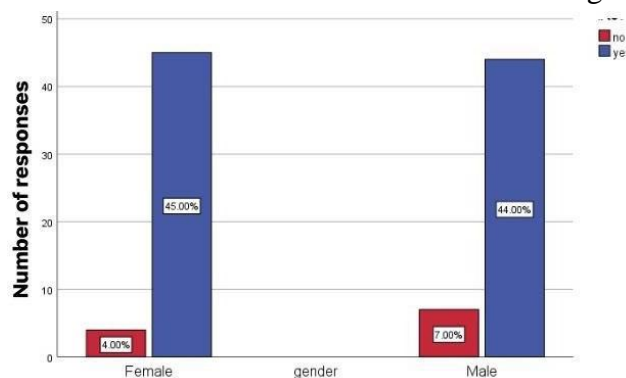


FIGURE 11: The Bar graph represents the association of gender and their opinions on whether vaccines would have helped the situation get better, where blue colour denotes ‘yes’ and red colour denotes ‘no’. X axis represents gender and Y axis represents their opinion on whether vaccines would’ve made the situation better. The association between the variables were analyzed using the Chi-square test (Pearson’s Chi-square value - 1.789; df-1, P-value -0.512) at 95% confidence interval and was found to be statistically not significant which signifies both males and females have the same opinion on the probable role a vaccine could have played in the given situation.

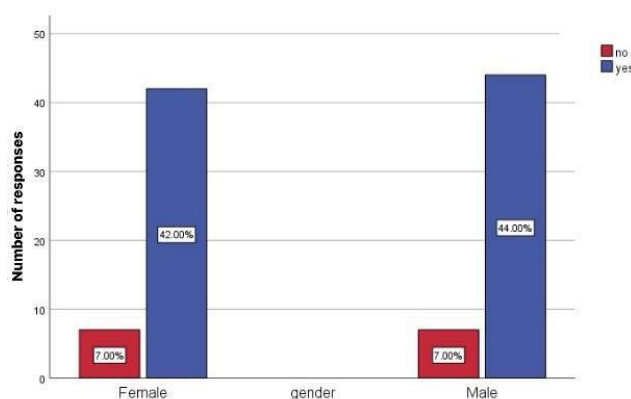


FIGURE 12: The bar graph represents the association of gender and their opinion on social distancing as the best way to control the situation where blue colour denotes ‘yes’ and red colour denotes ‘no’. X axis represents gender and Y axis represents their views on social distancing as the best way to control this situation. The association between the variables were analyzed using the Chi-square test (Pearson’s Chi-square value - 1.007; df-1, P-value -0.728) at 95% confidence interval and was found to be statistically not significant which signifies both males and females have the same assumption that social distancing is the best way to control the pandemic situation.

The results were collected and analysed. The majority of respondents understood that public co-operation was very crucial for efficient handling of pandemic by the government (McMillen, 2016c). The total participants had positive views over the lockdown and they all thought the best way to control pandemic was through social distancing (McMillen, 2016b; Davis and Lohm, 2020b). The general public was convinced that the government of India was handling the issue efficiently and was well-equipped to handle future pandemics (Denton, 2019; Huremović, 2019b). This proves it to be an outright positive report (Davis and Lohm, 2020c). From figure no.1, 92% of the participants were found aware of the presence of COVID 19 and 8% were not aware (Hays, 2005; Davis and Lohm, 2020c). From figure no.2, 77% of the participants were affected psychologically or with regards to their health while 23% of the participants did not feel so. (Von Lubitz and Gibson, 2018) From figure no.3, 89% of the respondents thought vaccines could have helped the situation get better while 11% did not feel so. Another study talks about another major pandemic and how people survived it (Hays, 2005). From figure no.4, 14% of the respondents did not think it was the best way to control while 86% thought it was the best way to control the issue. From figure no.5, 85% of the respondents agreed that leisure activities helped them pass time easier while 15% did not agree to that. From figure no.6, 92% of the respondents said yes when asked if vaccines will help us from this situation in the future and 8% said no for vaccines helping in the future pandemics and how to fight against them (Hansmann and Kind, 2020).

From figure no.7, when asked do you think that the government of India is handling the current situation. 89% of the respondents thought it did and 11% of respondents thought it did not. Another study talks about how the governments should be prepared to build extra ICUs during emergency situations like these (Doherty, 2013). From figure no.8, when asked do you think the government of India will be well-equipped to handle future pandemics efficiently. 84% of the respondents think it will be well-equipped and efficient where 16% don’t think that way. Another study talks about how to be prepared for future pandemics (Hansmann and Kind, 2020; Torbay, 2020). From figure no.9, when asked do you think public cooperation is needed to fight any pandemic, 92% of the respondents believed to whereas 8% of the respondents thought public co-operation wasn’t that crucial. Another study talks about how public cooperation is a key factor in speedy recovery (Huremović, 2019b). The limitations are that this study includes minimised articles and it has a limited study population. Results may vary with a bigger

population. This study helps to understand public opinions and perspectives and aims at providing a message for any other further pandemics in the future.

### **CONCLUSION:**

This study was conducted to understand the public perspective on the current, serious issue going on in the world. This study was also done to know what are the messages to be carried and lessons to be learned from the current scenario that could provide readiness for further, future pandemics. The general public believed that swift government policy making, finding a vaccine, following a strict lock down could be the takeaway messages for future pandemics.

### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS:**

All the authors contributed equally in concept, design, carrying out the research and analysis of the study.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

The authors have none to declare.

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