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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INTOLERANCE OF UNCERTAINTY AND FEAR OF COVID-19 IN EARLY ADULTS IN KOLKATA

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Abstract

The present research has been done to study Intolerance of Uncertainty and Fear of COVID-19 in Early Adults in Kolkata. In this study 25 males and 25 females of the age range, 18 years to 25 years residing in Kolkata has been selected and their data has been collected through online forms. The tools used in this study are "Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale- Short Form" and "Fear of COVID-19 scale". The data has been analyzed through SPSS and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and the Independent Sample t-test has been done for data analysis. The findings are suggestive of the absence of a significant relationship between Intolerance of Uncertainty and Fear of COVID-19 and the presence of a significant gender difference in the case of "Intolerance of Uncertainty".

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Introduction:-

We as individuals like being in control of our lives and knowing what is at stake helps us in planning for the future. The sense of not being in control of our life, our actions and future is a huge stress in itself and can lead to a lot of mental health issues. The term "Uncertainty" mainly indicates a situation in which we are not certain or unsure about what is going to happen in the near or far future. This lack of information is stressful and everyone has their unique ways and levels of tolerating this uncertainty. In this regard, "Intolerance of Uncertainty" (IUD) can be understood as an innate characteristic of an individual along with certain negative beliefs regarding the concept of uncertainty which makes them react to any uncertain, unpredictable and uncontrollable event with extremely negative cognitive, emotional as well as behavioural reactions (Buhr & Dugas, 2009). People with high levels of IUD finds it tough to deal with daily hassles and are vulnerable to face a lot of mental health issues and gets a lot diagnosed with "Generalized Anxiety Disorder", "obsessive-compulsive disorder" and "panic disorder" (Gentes&Ruscio, 2011). There is a presence of gender differences in "Intolerance of uncertainty" and it has been found that women show higher levels of IUD than men (Doruk et al. 2015).

The present-day scenario is filled with news of the effect of the "COVID-19" all around the world. The rising cases and the mutating nature of the virus are making it tough for Scientists and Medical professionals to predict its course and exact treatment. This situation of lack of proper information is making the situation pretty uncertain and can make it difficult for people with high IUD to cope. The "fear of the coronavirus" is pretty realistic because of the definite life-threatening nature of the virus yet some people are so afraid of it that their daily functioning is getting affected and their normal life is getting compromised. This fear is not only limited to coming in contact with the virus but also to the probable anxiety of someone close being getting infected by it. Thus, the fear of losing someone close adds up to this fear. According to Schimmenti et al (2020), there are mainly four pillars of this "fear of the coronavirus" and these are a "fear of the body", "fear of significant others", "action and inaction" and "uncertainty".

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The fear of being suffering from COVID-19 and also being a probable carrier of the virus have also made a lot of people commit suicide because they didn't want to infect their loved ones and feel burdened by carrying it (Goyal et al. 2020; Mamun & Griffiths, 2020).

There are a few sources of literature regarding the association of "intolerance of uncertainty" and "fear of the coronavirus" among people. According to the study by Satıcı et al. (2020), there is a significant relationship between "intolerance of uncertainty" and "fear of the coronavirus" among individuals in Turkey and both of these also have been found to have affected the well being of these people. According to studies by Leduc & Liu (2020), the coronavirus outbreak is filled with the shock of uncertainty which has affected the economic life of people and has eventually affected their wellbeing. Studies by Elsharkawy & Abdelaziz (2020) has found out a positive relationship between "fear of the coronavirus" and "intolerance of uncertainty" among university students in China. Another study by Mertens et al. (2020) on a sample from 28 countries (including India) has found out that "intolerance of uncertainty" is a predictor of "fear of coronavirus". This study has found no gender differences in "fear of the coronavirus". Another study by Doshi et al. (2020) has found that Indian women have a higher "fear of the coronavirus" than their Indian male counterparts. The review of the earlier stated findings indicates a lack of information about "intolerance of uncertainty", "fear of coronavirus" as well as their association in the Indian culture. Culture does have a huge impact on our cognitive styles such as fear and uncertainty and thus, it becomes necessary to research these clear gaps. Other than this, there are also contradictory findings regarding the relationship between gender and "fear of the coronavirus" and thus, it needs further exploration. The present research is aimed at studying "intolerance of uncertainty" and "fear of the coronavirus" and their relationship among early adults of age range 18 years to 25 years residing in Kolkata. The present research also aims at finding whether there is any relationship between gender and "intolerance of uncertainty" and between gender and "fear of the coronavirus" among individuals residing in Kolkata.

Objectives: -

1. To find out the relationship between "intolerance of uncertainty" and "fear of coronavirus" among early adults in Kolkata.
2. To find out whether there are any gender differences in the relationship between "intolerance of uncertainty" and "fear of coronavirus" among early adults in Kolkata.
3. To find out any gender difference in "Intolerance of uncertainty" among early adults in Kolkata.
4. To find out any gender difference in "Fear of coronavirus" among early adults in Kolkata.

Methods:-

Procedure

The questionnaires were distributed in the mode of online form keeping in mind the present situation. The questionnaire comprised of an Information schedule, "Intolerance of Uncertainty scale" and "Fear of COVID-19 scale". Purposive sampling was used primarily to collect data from individuals within the age range of 18 years and 25 years with a minimum Higher Secondary educational qualification. 47 female responses and 43 male responses were collected and from them, 25 male and 25 female response forms have been randomly selected for the final data analysis. Statistical analysis has been done through SPSS and the results have been interpreted and a conclusion has been drawn.

Tools

1. **Fear of COVID-19 Scale:** This scale has been developed by Ahorsu et al (2020) and it consists of seven items that can be scored on a five-item Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". It has been found that the scale has a very good internal consistency reliability (0.85), excellent Cronbach alpha reliability (0.87) and good construct validity.
2. **Intolerance of Uncertainty scale- short form:** This scale was developed by Carleton, Norton, & Asmundson (2007) and this short form consists of 12 items which can be scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all characteristic of me" to "entirely characteristic of me". This scale has internal consistency reliability of 0.85 along with good construct validity.

Results & Discussion: -

Table 1: - Correlation Between Intolerance of Uncertainty and Fear of Covid-19 Among 50 Early Adults from Kolkata

Correlations			
		Intolerance of uncertainty	Fear of COVID-19
Intolerance of uncertainty	Pearson Correlation	1	.212
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.139
	N	50	50
Fear of COVID-19	Pearson Correlation	.212	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.139	
	N	50	50

It can be seen from the above table that the correlation between “Intolerance of Uncertainty” and “Fear of COVID-19” in this sample is 0.212 which indicates a mild positive relationship. Despite this relationship, further analysis shows that this correlation isn’t significant at 0.05 level of significance and thus, we can infer that there lies no significant correlation between “Intolerance of Uncertainty” and “Fear of COVID-19” in the present sample.

Table 2: - Correlation Between Intolerance of Uncertainty and Fear of Covid-19 Among 25 Early Adult Males from Kolkata.

Correlations			
		Intolerance of uncertainty	Fear of COVID-19
Intolerance of uncertainty	Pearson Correlation	1	.173
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.410
	N	25	25
Fear of COVID-19	Pearson Correlation	.173	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.410	
	N	25	25

It can be seen from the above table that the correlation between “Intolerance of Uncertainty” and “Fear of COVID-19” among the males in this sample is 0.173 which indicates a mild positive relationship. Despite this relationship, further analysis shows that the correlation isn’t significant at 0.05 level of significance and thus, we can infer that there lies no significant correlation between “Intolerance of Uncertainty” and “Fear of COVID-19” among the males in this present sample.

Table 3: - Correlation Between Intolerance of Uncertainty and Fear of Covid-19 Among 25 Early Adult Females from Kolkata

Correlations			
		Intolerance of uncertainty	Fear of COVID-19
Intolerance of uncertainty	Pearson Correlation	1	.294
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.154
	N	25	25
Fear of COVID-19	Pearson Correlation	.294	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.154	
	N	25	25

It can be seen from the above table that the correlation between “Intolerance of Uncertainty” and “Fear of COVID-19” among the females in this sample is 0.294 which indicates a mild positive relationship. Despite this relationship, further analysis shows that the correlation isn’t significant at 0.05 level of significance and thus, we can infer that there lies no significant correlation between “Intolerance of Uncertainty” and “Fear of COVID-19” among the females in this present sample.

Table 4:- Mean Difference Between 25 Males And 25 Females of Kolkata in Terms of Intolerance of Uncertainty

Gender	Mean	Sd	t-test score	Significance level
Male	33.88	12.20	2.022	0.049
Female	40.20	9.76		

It can be seen from the above table that the obtained t value is 2.022 which is significant at a 0.05 level of significance. Thus, it can be inferred that there lies a significant difference among males and females in the present sample in terms of Intolerance of Uncertainty. The mean values suggest that females have higher intolerance of uncertainty than males ($40.20 > 33.88$).

Table 5:- Mean Difference Between 25 Males And 25 Females of Kolkata in Terms of Fear of Covid-19.

Gender	Mean	Sd	t-test score	Significance level
Male	14.16	5.88	0.976	0.334
Female	16.04	7.63		

It can be seen from the above table that the obtained t value is 0.976 which isn't significant at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, it can be inferred that there lies no significant difference among males and females in the present sample in terms of Fear of COVID-19. The mean values suggest that females have a slightly higher fear of COVID-19 than males ($16.04 > 14.16$).

From the results, it has been found that there is no significant relationship between intolerance of uncertainty and fear of COVID-19 in this present sample of 25 males and 25 females of the age range 18 years to 25 years. The data analysis of the relationship between intolerance of uncertainty and fear of COVID-19 individually in both genders has also found no gender differences are present in this relationship as no significant relationship has been found between intolerance of uncertainty and fear of COVID-19 in both males and females. The t-test findings have shown that there is a significant difference between males and females in terms of Intolerance of uncertainty while there isn't any significant difference between males and females in terms of fear of COVID-19. The absence of gender difference in fear of COVID-19 and the presence of gender difference in Intolerance of Uncertainty supports the absence of a relationship between Intolerance of Uncertainty and Fear of COVID-19 in this present sample. The absence of gender difference in terms of Fear of COVID-19 can be supported by the findings of Mertens et al (2020). The presence of gender difference in terms of Intolerance of Uncertainty can be supported by the findings of Doruk et al (2015). The absence of a relationship between intolerance of uncertainty and fear of COVID-19 may also be due to the smaller number of samples being used in this study and thus, further studies with a larger sample can be recommended.

Conclusion:-

The present research was done to study the relationship between Intolerance of Uncertainty and Fear of COVID-19 among early adults in Kolkata as well as to study whether there lie any gender differences in terms of Intolerance of Uncertainty and Fear of COVID-19 among early adults in Kolkata. From the findings, it can be concluded that:

1. There lies no significant relationship between "intolerance of uncertainty" and "fear of coronavirus" among early adults in Kolkata.
2. There lie no significant gender differences in the relationship between "intolerance of uncertainty" and "fear of coronavirus" among early adults in Kolkata
3. There lies a significant gender difference in "Intolerance of uncertainty" among early adults in Kolkata.
4. There lies no significant gender difference in "Fear of COVID-19" among early adults in Kolkata.

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