



Psychological Effects of COVID-19 on Generation Y in Turkey: A Qualitative Research Study

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Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic had various psychological effects on people because of uncertainty, social distance, restrictions, quarantine periods, etc. This study focuses on the psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on generation Y, who mainly prioritize individualism, freedom, and career advancement. Phenomenology, a qualitative research pattern, was used as the research method. The data regarding this research were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 participants from generation Y, who were selected through purposeful sampling. The data obtained in this research were defined, analysed, and reported through the thematic analysis method. This study reveals the overall situation by describing the psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic as direct (emotional state, social isolation, maintaining physical and mental

health, expectation) and indirect (social interaction, habits, personal development, and change) effects on generation Y in Turkey. The results of the research showed that the perceptions of generation Y in Turkey on daily life practices have changed, and they developed strategies to cope with the COVID-19 process, change, and stress and to maintain their physical and mental health. In this sense, this study contains significant points to be considered for developing strategies for generation Y. It draws attention to the psychological effects of the pandemic on generations.

Key words: COVID-19, pandemic, mental health, psychological effects, generation Y.

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1. INTRODUCTION

After the declaration of the global pandemic on March 11, 2020, by WHO (2020a), COVID-19 emerged as a hazard and a threat that psychologically, sociologically, and economically impacts people's lives (Lai et al., 2020; Rajkumar, 2020). Besides threatening the lives of millions throughout history, pandemics, such as HIV, SARS, MERS, etc., have also had sociologic, economic, and psychological aftermaths on people (Jung & Sung, 2017; Piot et al., 2001; Sung, 2016; Wang et.al.2020). Since it is a high-risk disease (Amirudin et al., 2021), it has affected individuals from various age groups, families, institutions, states, etc. (Masten & Motti-Stefanidi, 2020) to an incalculable level (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et.al., 2020; Tamarit et.al. 2020). In this sense, the uncertainties and fears regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown periods, and economic stagnations have led to an increase in the number of mental diseases (Xiong et.al., 2020).

The British Academy (2021) indicates that the people were affected by the stress factors caused by the COVID-19 virus as much as the virus itself. Within this context, the most common effects of COVID-19 were found to be related to psychological state and mental health (Brodeur et al., 2021; Layard et al., 2020; Schäfer et al., 2020; WHO, 2020). At this point, effects such as symptoms of anxiety, panic, and depression (Colwell & Kato, 2003; McGinty et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2020), fear, despair, insomnia (Khan et al., 2020), poor sleep quality (Schäfer et al., 2020), reduced life satisfaction and momentary happiness (Schmidtke et al., 2021), freedom, physical health, and future anxieties (Tarhan, 2020), were observed.

In the emergence of these effects, the factors such as social distancing, lack of communication, being away from the family, reduced daily life activities and routines, financial difficulties, the intense work environment at home (Murthy, 2020), anxiety and worry, being at home together with all family members and spending so much time together (Saha et al., 2020), uncertainty and fear, isolation (Crew, 2020), lockdown of restaurants and shopping malls (Schmidtke et al., 2021), loss of loved ones, job insecurity, and job loss (OECD, 2021), have become determinant factors in psychological affection of the people.

At this point, the people of generation Y, who can be described as independent, innovative, sophisticated (Andrea et al., 2016), well-educated, and technologically advanced individuals¹ (Lemmens, 2010), had severely affected by this process. Twenge et al. (2010) describe the people of generation Y as the "Me Generation" and state that they attach great importance to individualism and social life and prefer to work under more liberated conditions. On the other hand, since generation Y cares about the specificity of opportunities in business life, such as promotions, authority, etc. (Martin & Tulgan, 2006), and since they are open-minded and innovative individuals, who can express themselves (Cairncoss & Buultjens, 2007), they were psychologically negatively affected by the periods of social isolation and lockdown (Mastrotheodoros, 2021; Parola, 2020). At this point, while generation X showed 50% and Baby Boomers showed 56% emotional endurance against issues such as seeking answers for the behaviours of themselves and others (Kramer, 1999), disturbed daily routines, and high levels of uncertainty (Justo-Alonso et al., 2020), this rate was found as 42% in generation Y (McCrindle & Fell, 2020). Within this context, this study aims to seek answers to the following question: What are the psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the people of generation Y?

In their study, where Azimi et al. (2022) investigated how the values of generation Y and Z were affected during the pandemic, and they found that the people of generation Y and Z were anxious because of health issues, financial security, maintaining relationships, and uncertainties about

¹ Generation is a concept that indicates a period, in which the people, who were born in a similar span of time, share and shape certain events, trends, and developments within that period (Bristow, 2015). Different theoreticians suggest different age ranges for generation classification. Accordingly, generation Y is categorized as individuals who were born between 1980 and 2000 by Straus and Howe (1991); between 1981 and 1999 by Lancaster and Stillman (2002); between 1980 and 2000 by Twenge et al. (2010); and between 1980 and 1999 by Zemke et al. (2013).

future during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a study conducted by [Wang et al. \(2020\)](#) to find the reactions to the pandemic, individuals between the ages of 15 and 45 were found to be more anxious and stressed.

A study by [Headspace, National Youth Mental Health Foundation \(2020\)](#) in Australia found that 74% of young adults had mental disorders, 75% had negative emotional states, and 59% had sleep disorders because of COVID-19. In terms of emotional regulation, anxiety and rumination levels of generation Y were found to be extremely high during the pandemic ([Wagener et al., 2022](#)). In addition, it was also found that their perceptions of COVID-19 and job insecurities led to emotional irregularities and higher anxiety levels in generation Y ([Mahmoud et al., 2021](#)). In addition, the young adults, who work their way through college, and the service industry employees, such as hospital and household workers, had to work overtime ([Pereznieto and Oehler, 2021](#)). It was found that working through video conferences for longer periods led to "zoom fatigue," which was associated with anxiety and exhaustion ([Lee, 2020](#)).

COVID-19 has led to significant changes in the daily life practices of people; in a sense, the "normal" has changed for everyone, and new norms have emerged, particularly for human relations ([Tarhan, 2020](#)). The most significant change occurred when individuals had to carry their work and education environments into their homes ([Viner et al., 2020](#)). In this sense, according to the results of the research conducted on the daily routines of generation Y and Z, generation Y spends 12.7 hours, and generation Z spends 10.9 hours of the day at home, and 23% of individuals from generation Y and Z work at their living rooms ([Riska et al., 2022](#)). Longer screen times lead to depraved physical activity and sleeping routines; thus, headache, neck pain, myopia, digital eye syndrome, cardiovascular risk factors, obesity, increased blood pressure, insulin resistance, etc., as results of sedentary time ([WHO, 2020 b](#)). On the other hand, since staying home for longer periods and working from home lead to social disconnection and the emergence of feelings ([Kanekar & Sharma, 2020](#)), such as emptiness and solitude ([Pandya & Lodha, 2021](#)), digital platforms (such as social media, messaging applications, videoconference, etc.) became a saviour to communicate and keep in touch with the others ([Kietzmann et al., 2011](#)).

At this point, along with its adverse effects, it was found that the pandemic also had positive effects and helped the individuals to understand the importance of their social ties with their family members ([Karunathilake, 2021](#)), realizing the necessity of communicating with others and social

integration (Mohialdin, 2021). In another study, which investigated the effects of social isolation on different generations, it was found that 25% of generation Y, 14% of generation X, 17% of Baby Boomers, and 31% of generation Z spent time on screen, and this provided them with an opportunity to see the negativities in their lives (McCrindle & Fell, 2020). In addition, since the majority of young adults from generation Y run back and forth between school, work, and social life in their daily lives, they stated that they found an opportunity to take a breath thanks to these lockdown periods during the pandemic (Leavey et al., 2020). On the other hand, it was found that the members of both generations focused on exercising at home and created a space for exercising at home (Riska et al., 2022).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study aims to describe the psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on generation Y. Within this context, this study aims to seek answers to the following question: What are the psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the people of generation Y? The method of this study is qualitative phenomenological research methodology (Williams, 2021). Phenomenological research aims to describe the participants' life experiences as phenomena and thoroughly investigate their lives (Cilesiz, 2010; Zahavi, 2017; Zahavi, 2018).

Semi-structured interviews, each of which took approximately 40 minutes, were conducted face-to-face with each participant between 20th December 2021 and 20th January 2022. The participants were asked 11 open-ended questions on the semi-structured interview form, which was prepared based on the literature. In addition, participants' permissions were asked for audio recording, and each participant signed the ethical form. The interview form was prepared based on obtaining similar information from different individuals (Patton, 2002).

The data obtained were analysed via the thematic analysis method. The thematic analysis method aims to reveal the participants' experiences, their interpretations regarding the subject, and the meanings and importance of events or concepts within that specific society (Mayring, 2010). Within this context, the framework of deductive and inductive coding was used. Here, the purpose is to thematize and categorize the data obtained from the interviews and reveal each category's dimensions. The coding framework was created by generalizing and summarizing the categories to demonstrate the final framework at the end of the analysis performed by each researcher (Schreier, 2012). At this point, for validity and reliability of the research, long-term interaction with the

participants and participant confirmations for internal validity (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996); analysis of process and results by a third-party researcher for external validity were ensured (Creswell, 2003).

3. PARTICIPANTS

According to the data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUİK, 2019), this group, called generation Y, constitutes a large part of the population (25.939.249) (Çil, 2021) in Turkey. Furthermore, when the employment rates of generations in Turkey were analysed (TUİK, 2017), it was observed that 52.76% of generation Y are employed in various business sectors, and this generation constitutes young adults between 20 and 39 years of age (Ok, 2019). For this purpose, the research sample was determined through purposeful sampling method. Purposeful sampling involves making a strategic selection of participants who are believed to ideally represent the population and provide the most useful information (Palys, 2008). Accordingly, 10 participants were determined based on Straus & Howe's (1991) generation classification (generation Y: born between 1980 and 2000).

When the demographics of 10 participants of this study were analysed, it was found that 50% were male, and the remaining 50% were female; 30% were married, and 70% were single. The age average of the participants was 31.0; the age average of male participants was 31.8, and the age average of the female participants was 30.2. All participants in this study were college graduates. The participants included pilots, copywriters, flight attendants, communication specialists, engineers, and psychologists.

4. FINDINGS

At the end of the thematic analysis performed according to the answers given by the participants, two themes were found: psychological effects and direct and indirect psychological effects. The theme of direct psychological effects was categorized as emotional state, social isolation, maintaining physical and mental health, and expectation; the indirect psychological effects theme was categorized as social interaction, habits, communication behaviours, personal development, and change.

Theme 1: The Direct Psychological Effects

Category 1: Emotional State

The participants were asked to describe their emotional states and how they felt in March 2020, when the first COVID-19 case in Turkey was observed. When the answers were analysed, it was found that the participants felt *fear and anxiety* because of uncertainty. Both feelings were expressed by different participants as follows:

"I thought it was the end of the world and all civilization as we know it, and I was terrified." (P3)

"I was anxious because an unknown and deadly virus was looming around the world" (P1)

"I was terrified because everything would be restricted. I felt anxious because of this uncertainty and because all plans would be cancelled." (P2)

It was found that some participants did not feel fear or anxiety, did not panic, and they managed to keep calm. At this point, the measures taken against the previous epidemics and the treatment methods became determinant factors. With respect to this, the following statements by P4 serve as a description of his emotional state:

"I did not care much about it. I was calm and had no concerns. I thought it was something like swine flu, and it would probably be brought under control within a couple of months. All in all, it was something like influenza." (P4)

On the other hand, some participants, who were calm at the beginning, began to feel anxious, angry, alone, and hopeless with the increased uncertainty. P1's statements may be an example of this:

"...Even though I played along with the rules within the first couple of months, my anxiety level was lower than during the following lockdown periods since I thought the pandemic would not take that long. I basically felt anxious, angry, surprised, alone, terrified, hopeful, and hopeless." (P1)

When the participants were asked to compare their fears and anxieties between the time when the COVID-19 pandemic was first declared, and the time of the interviews, it was found that their emotional states had changed. The most distinguishable difference was that their intense fear at the beginning of the pandemic had remarkably decreased; however, their anxiety levels remained the same. At this point, uncertainties about the COVID-19 pandemic still exist, leading people to remain unclear about their emotions and behaviours, and thus, feel anxious. However, the

statements of P9, P7, and P6 indicated that the fears have faded out, and a sigh of relief has come into prominence through some developments, such as getting used to this situation, acquisition of knowledge, learning to take measures within this process, and communicating with the individuals, who went through this illness.

"I think I have learned to live with this pandemic within the past 1.5 years. My initial concerns and fears have turned into more reasonable measures. We have learned that we can protect ourselves from this disease if we take necessary precautions." (P9)

"My initial disturbance and overall discomfort with our inability to socialize have slowly disappeared after I was vaccinated, now I feel calmer." (P7)

"I do not worry about this disease anymore in my everyday life. I feel more relaxed now. I guess the main reason for this relief is that the initial uncertainty and obscurity have disappeared". (P6)

At this point, when the participants were asked to assess their anxiety states on a scale of 1 to 10, it was found that their initial anxiety levels were between 7 and 10 at the beginning of the pandemic, while it was between 2 and five at the time of these interviews. It was also observed that the anxiety level of one participant remained the same, and he was still concerned about the pandemic as much as he was at the beginning of pandemic.

Category 2: Social Isolation

The answers to the question regarding the effects of social isolation on individuals indicated that the participants had positive thoughts about social isolation at the beginning because it was considered necessary for keeping healthy and preventing infection. Later on, however, social isolation led to increased anxiety, stress, and depression. In addition, it was found that staying home constantly as required by social isolation led to disturbance of daily routines, creating a negative mood. The answers by P5 support this conclusion:

"I can easily say that I was frustrated and darkened by this situation since I am very active and sociable. Even though I was with my family and friends, the idea of "not being able to go anywhere" and the idea of "not being able to see others effortlessly" were pieces of evidence of my mood." (P5)

Social isolation was impossible for some people because of their duties and professions. Their concerns and fears about infecting their families and loved ones and risking their health and lives became quite tiresome. At this point, P1's statements support this conclusion:

"Since I worked at the hospital throughout the pandemic, strict quarantine and working from home were impossible for me. It was so frustrating for me to go to the hospital every day, go back home to my family, and put their health and lives in danger while everyone was at home in quarantine. I felt angry and anxious the whole time..." (P1)

Another significant impact of social isolation was the "feeling of loneliness" resulting from lessened communication and social sharing. P9's answers could be given as examples to express the emotions created by social isolation:

"Lockdown of restaurants and bars, not being able to meet our friends, while continuing our daily lives and chores, intensified the feeling of solitude during when I was living alone." (P9)

Some participants, on the other hand, stated that they were tired of their busy work schedules and living on the fast lane, and in a sense, working from home made them feel better. P2 and P3's statements prove this:

"That was actually good for me. I had been working really hard, and I was overwhelmed with work. Tranquillity, staying away from people, and working from home actually made me feel good." (P2)

"I felt terrific. I never got bored, liked the empty streets, and enjoyed being at home. We used to be in a rat race until then, we could not spend much time at home, so it actually made me feel better". (P3)

However, even though the individuals enjoyed the isolation and working from home at the beginning, it was observed that the positive feelings evolved into negative emotions, such as anxiety, not being able to socialize, and getting lost on others. P4 and P7's statements support this conclusion:

"...I was flying once a month. Three months before that, I used to fly 80 hours a month. Even though it sounds great to spend time at home, it was pretty challenging for me..." (P4)

"I have been working from home for about 1.5 years. I was working in the mornings till noon and exercising alone in the evenings. I felt like an antisocial person". (P7)

Category 3: Maintaining Physical and Mental Health

The participants were asked how they managed the effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The answers indicated that they made various changes in their lives to maintain their physical and mental health and put in a great effort to adapt themselves to this situation. Accordingly, it was observed that the participants took up new hobbies, spared more time on their current hobbies, practiced yoga, meditation, and exercises, learned to play instruments, and focused on healthy nutrition. P7 and P6 gave explanatory statements regarding this matter:

"I gained a lot of weight at the beginning of the quarantine period because I was comfort-eating. Then I lost 20 kg by eating healthy and exercising during lunch breaks and evenings. It was actually good for my physical and mental health." (P7)

"At the beginning of the pandemic, I concentrated on hiking and exercising and did yoga and meditation for my mental health. As many others did, I spent time at home and did DIY projects, learned to play an instrument, and video-called my family and friends, and tried to spend as much time as possible with them." (P6)

On the other hand, it was observed that some participants preferred to focus more on their work to maintain their mental health and tried to deal with this situation by avoiding the pandemic and focusing on their work. P3's statements regarding this matter were as follows:

"I think I work more than I ever did. I did not do anything for my physical health. I started to work harder for my mental health." (P3)

It was also observed that some participants discovered that reduced communication, being alone with themselves, and maintaining their inner communication actually made them feel better. In addition, it was found that sharing their emotional states with their friends and doing some activities themselves positively impacted their mental health. P2, P4, and P10's statements support this conclusion:

"Since I got to spend more time alone, I actually enjoyed reading books, watching TV series and movies, playing computer games, etc." (P2)

"...I learned to turn to myself and pay attention to myself whenever I felt mentally exhausted... My stress management also helped me through this process..." (P4)

"I try to communicate with my friends and share my concerns... Other than that, watching series or movies and reading books made me feel better". (P10)

Category 4: Expectation

The participants were asked about the changes in their expectations before and after the pandemic. When the answers were analysed, it was found that the pandemic had a negative impact on their life plans and expectations. In this sense, hopelessness and lack of expectancy were the prevailing feelings. The answers of P3, P5, and P10 support this conclusion:

"We saw that everything could turn upside down at any moment, and we should do everything we could to protect ourselves..." (P3)

"...I cannot say I expect more than being more prepared for these sorts of crises in the future." (P5)

"I expect less from the future. The less you expect, the more you feel positive and stress-free... Even though I try everything to remain positive after the pandemic, somewhere in my heart, I always feel hopeless". (P10)

Theme 2: Indirect Psychological Effects

Category 1: Social Interaction

One of the most significant effects of COVID-19 on people is the changes in frequency and type of social interactions. When the answers regarding the effect of COVID-19 on the frequency of social interaction were analysed, it was found that the social interaction frequency decreased, and people could only see certain people or their closest circle of friends and family, and they began to travel less. On the other hand, people also started to spare more time for themselves and their families and realize the importance of this interaction. In this sense, the statements of P3, P10, and P8 support this conclusion:

"Now I live more isolated. I only see my closest friends. I don't see my friends as often as I used to see them. We used to do something every weekend, now we don't do that anymore." (P3)

"I used to be very social before the pandemic. Now I only see a couple of friends; I feel like I don't have the energy to meet new people." (P10)

"I spent the pandemic with my husband/wife. It was pretty good and productive for us. We both got to spend time together and spare time for ourselves." (P8)

It was found that changing social interaction frequencies led people to become more selective in their relationships to maintain their personal well-being and focus on relationships where they achieve positive feelings. Therefore, the frequency of social interaction and the people they communicate with became significant decisions for individuals. The statements of P4 and P8 support this conclusion:

"I communicate and socialize with people who make me feel good. Rather than individuals, who leave me with nothing but their negativity and emotional burdens, I try to become friends with individuals who make me feel good." (P4)

"After we have gotten over our initial concerns, it felt really good to stay away from work and hang out at home. I was actually happy to be able to spend more time for myself and my loved ones..." (P8)

When the statements about the changes in the form of social interaction were analysed, it was found that the participants began to prefer to meet at their homes or outdoors instead of going to indoor places. These decisions were influenced by the infection risks and the prescribed rules. P1, P8, and P5's answers regarding the form of social interaction provide an explanation:

"We no longer meet at cafes or restaurants, now we hang out at home." (P1)

"I prefer to hang out with my friends at home." (P8)

"Now I rarely do physical activities like exercising, in which I had to be in close contact with others. Time limitations and social distancing rules in social environments had a great impact on this process." (P5)

Category 2: Habits

It was found that people developed new behaviours and habits because they had to stay home for long hours and because of reduced social interaction due to social isolation. The statements of P7, P9, P5, and P1 support this conclusion:

"I no longer hug or shake hands with people I barely know. I usually fist bump them. I will continue to do so even if this pandemic ends." (P7)

"...I think I began to excessively use hand sanitizers and carry a bottle with me wherever I go." (P9)

"...I think we will continue to use applications, such as Zoom, WhatsApp, etc., as often as we did during the pandemic." (P5)

"I have gotten used to online shopping during the pandemic, and I began to travel less..." (P1)

Category 3: Personal Development and Change

The answers regarding the positive effects of COVID-19 indicated that the participants gained positive acquisitions regarding personal development and change. In this sense, it was found that the participants learned to spend private time at home, learned to go with the flow, enhanced their decision-making processes, and learned to go with their plans and not procrastinate. P4, P1, and P2's statements support this conclusion:

"I learned how to go with the flow and realized that worrying about the things that are beyond my control would give me nothing but pain." (P4)

"I learned to spend time at home. I realized that solitude makes me feel better, and it is a functional way to listen to and understand my thoughts." (P1)

"I began to take quicker decisions since I get to spare more time for myself. I also changed my job..." (P2)

5. DISCUSSION

According to the findings of this study, the psychological effects of COVID-19 on generation Y were investigated under two themes: direct and indirect psychological effects. The effects of COVID-19 or the pandemic on individuals are discussed as positive and negative impacts

(Mohialdin, 2021; Karunathilake, 2021; Amirudin et al., 2021; Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2021), experiences (Fioretti et al., 2020), and psychosocial effects (Buzzi et al., 2020).

Along with its physiological impacts, such as respiratory syndrome (Sung, 2016; Jung & Sung, 2017), the COVID-19 pandemic also had significant psychological impacts on individuals. In furtherance with these results, this study found that the individuals felt extremely anxious, worried, bored, hopeless, and alone throughout the pandemic. Furthermore, while Meyer et al. (2021) suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic led to psychological burnout, Bhumika (2020) reported that this pandemic resulted in emotional burnout, leading to work-family conflicts.

In this study, it was observed that the participants from generation Y are vulnerable to fear, anxiety, solitude, and hopelessness. Even though the uncertainties about COVID-19 began to diminish, they still feel concerned and have no expectations for the future. The most powerful negative feelings in young adults during the pandemic were reported as anxiety, fear, stress, depression, and sleep disorders (Wagener et al., 2022; Stravidou et al., 2020). On the other hand, in their study, Farooq et al. (2021) found that young adults under 45 years of age are more vulnerable to depression, stress, and anxiety. In this study, the most significant reasons for these negative psychological impacts were uncertainty, social isolation, working from home, and reduced social interaction. In addition, uncertainties during times of change may sometimes trigger negative emotional states, such as anxiety, and long-term negative feelings may negatively impact both physiological and psychological health (Farooq et al., 2021).

In addition, the age averages of the participants were 31.8 (male) and 30.2 (female), and this was considered a significant factor for stress and anxiety because the majority of generation Y (young adults) are still members of the active workforce. According to Wang et al. (2020), young adults were stressed and anxious throughout the pandemic. On the other hand, it may be concluded that since all participants were college graduates and are still members of the active workforce, they feel concerned and stressed because of uncertainties about the future and working from home. At this point, this study also supports the previous findings on the fact that the people from generation Y are emotionally more triggered than the other generations because they are concerned for the future (Tarhan, 2020), uncertainties about the future (Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2020), and job insecurities (Mahmoud et al., 2021).

When the reactions of different generations to the COVID-19 pandemic were analysed, it was found that each generation had different perceptions regarding the pandemic, resulting from the fact that different generations had different experiences and needs (Wagener et al., 2022). In this sense, each generation shows different psychological symptoms and has its own reactions. McCrindle & Fell (2020) reported that the COVID-19 pandemic affected the emotional states of the generations as follows: Generation Z, 49%, generation X, 47%, and generation Y, 45%. It was found that the individuals between 18 and 33 years of age feel more depressed, anxious, and stressed; the ones between 18 and 25 years of age feel more sleep-deprived, and their daily routines are severely disturbed by claustrophobia and somatization (Justo-Alonso, 2020). Furthermore, this study found that since the participants were socially more active due to their age range, they had limited communication with their friends, travel opportunities were restricted, they had no chance for outdoor activities, and they had to stay at home at all times, i.e., since their daily routines had utterly changed, so they experienced mental breakdowns. In this sense, the results of this study support the previous findings on the fact that uncertainty and limited personal freedom (Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2020), having to stay home under uncertain conditions, and caring about the protection and welfare of others (Azimi et al., 2022), and having lower emotional endurance levels (McCrindle and Fell, 2020), all affected the emergence of mentally negative impacts (Parola, 2020).

This study found that the generation Y used some behavioural strategies to cope with the psychological effects of social isolation and quarantines due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as performing various activities for their personal development, exercising, practicing yoga, and meditating to maintain their physical and mental health, talking with their friends and family through digital channels for emotional support, and spending time with their closest circle of friends at home. These findings also support the previous results on finding new ways during the pandemic (Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2020) and focusing on turning negative impacts into positive ones (Fioretti et al., 2020). In this sense, it was found that the participants took up new hobbies, spared more time for their current hobbies, exercised and practiced yoga and meditation, learned to play an instrument, and focused on spending more time with their families, giving more importance to their inner communications, forming interactions through social networks, and healthy diets. Riska et al. (2022) also suggested that generation Y prioritized exercising and needed a space for exercising at home during the pandemic.

Leavey et al. (2020) suggested that generation Y not only lingered on the negative impacts of COVID-19 measures, periods of lockdown, and long-term isolation but slowing down actually made them feel better and more relaxed. In this sense, the findings of this study indicated that the participants turned this into an opportunity for activities, such as reading books, listening to music, painting, etc., and these results support the outcomes of the study by Leavey et al. (2020). At this point, these results also support McCrindle & Fell's (2020) opinions stating that the pandemic became an opportunity to realize the negativities in life. Furthermore, the participants stated that they enjoyed spending time with their families at home, which significantly contributed to their communications and relationships. In this sense, these findings differed from Saha et al. (2020), which showed that being at home with all family members increased the possibility of domestic conflicts.

The participants stated that social disconnection and reduced social interaction made them feel stressed and anxious, and they used digital channels for social interactions and communicated through messaging or videoconferences. In this sense, as reported by Kanekar and Sharma (2020); Pandya and Lodha (2021); Kietzmann et al. (2011); Mastrotheodoros (2021), reduced social interaction had a negative impact on the mental well-being of the individuals, and they preferred to communicate through digital channels. Viner et al. (2020) reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had created major changes in individuals' lives, and working from home has become a part of everyday life. Accordingly, while some participants perceived working from home as being at home at all times and felt lonely, some turned this into an opportunity for inner communication and spending more time with their families.

LIMITATIONS

The researchers had difficulties reaching the research population because of the pandemic. They had to keep face-to-face interviews short because of the pandemic, which has become a constraint for both the researchers and the participants.

6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study showed that the COVID-19 pandemic changed the daily life practices and perceptions of the people of generation Y. It affected them negatively when they encountered situations they had never experienced before. On the other hand, it was observed that they developed some strategies to cope with this negative emotional state and cared about maintaining their physical

and mental health. The fact that the participants are still active in work life indicates that they must develop strategies to maintain and facilitate their lives. However, not all participants received mental support when developing and implementing these strategies, and they fulfilled these through their own efforts and personal capacities. The results of this study show that generation Y had positive experiences due to the changes they have made in themselves, their relationships, and their lifestyles throughout this pandemic. Even though they had some positive experiences from this pandemic, it may be concluded that the expectations of generation Y had negatively affected. In this sense, the pandemic still exists in their lives as a source of stress. At this point, future studies may focus on mental support provided by clinicians throughout the pandemic and how they helped individuals deal with stress. In addition, since this study focused specifically on generation Y, similar studies on other generations will reveal the psychological effects of the pandemic on different generations and help the researchers find out the strategies they developed. Accordingly, the psychological reactions of generations during the pandemic may be revealed through comparative analysis.

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