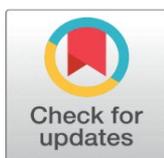


IMPACT OF COVID-19 AMONG THE INDIAN CLASSICAL ARTISTS - AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 is an ongoing pandemic worldwide that started in the year 2019 in the city of Wuhan China. As the spread of this virus was rapid, people were suggested to wear masks and maintain social distance to avoid the same. This fell like a big challenge in a country like India with a high density of population. The number of restrictions and lockdowns affected the livelihood of almost all the professions. The artist community was one among them. This study aims at understanding the impact of the above-mentioned situation on the Indian Traditional Artist community. An online survey was conducted through Google Forms and collected responses using the COVID-19 Peritraumatic Distress Index (CPDI) questionnaire from 188 artists along with other demographical and professional details. This study shows that the artist community underwent a considerable amount of distress, with creative block being the topmost difficulty faced, followed by financial and Health issues (Physically and mentally). The study also shows that the digitalization of the Art form has been well accepted and adapted, leading to the opening of new boundaries to the traditional art forms of India.

Keywords: Covid-19, Pandemic, Indian Classical Arts, Artist, India

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1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional Art forms of India have a great history that some of them can be traced back by a few thousands of years. The major form of education or learning was through Shravana or by listening. Vedas are the greatest example of such a knowledge system. That is, they are in the form of oral tradition. Another unique system of the Indian Subcontinent was the Gurukulam system. The origin of the same can be dated back to around 5000 BC.

[Chandwani \(2019\)](#) In this system, the Guru or the Teacher and the students lived under one roof, usually in the house of the Guru. Students learned in a natural environment as they lived along with their peers. However, this system went out of vogue with the entry of the modern system of education in India by Lord Macauley in the year 1835. Even after that, teachers of some Art forms were still following the Gurukulam system as well as the new modern style of education. The institutionalisation of the arts started in the early 20th century. Institutions like Kalakshetra, Nrithyodaya and Universities like Rabindra Bharati University, Banaras Hindu University, University of Madras started teaching Dance and Music in a way almost in the pattern of the modern education system.

According to Bharata muni's Natya Shastra, Natyam or Dramaturgy was created by Lord Brahma as the fifth Veda, by combining different elements of the Four existing Vedas as a medium of educative entertainment. This was widely performed in temples and courts. After the legal battle between Pro and Anti Nauch, the dance form was given a new name Bharathanatyam. Along with the name, the art form faced many changes, with costume, orchestra, the itinerary of compositions, and the duration of the performance. The place of performance majorly became the Auditoriums. [Roy \(2016\)](#)

All the above were the evolution in the teaching and performing of fine arts. Digitalization of Art forms had already started seeping in with the development of technology. However, there is a booming digitalization of Arts during the current pandemic situation due to Covid-19. That is, teachings, workshops, seminars, Conferences, Lecture Demonstrations, Performances, and other aspects related to the exchange of knowledge and skills have been happening over various online platforms in full fledge for over two years. This complete digitalization of art form would have been a challenge to both teachers and the students.

1.2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

A survey was conducted, by a Singapore-based consumer research firm, Milieu Insight, collecting responses from around 1000 participants who belong to the age category of 16 and above. The samples were nationally representative across gender, age, and income groups. The result was published in The Sunday Times on June 14th, 2020, revealing the people's perception of essential jobs during the pandemic. The article with the title "Essential, or not?" listed the Artist as the topmost non-essential job, which was the belief of 71% of the survey respondents [Macdonald \(2020\)](#).

The various state governments of India also restricted and shut down many forms of entertainment, from theatres to auditoriums. Even the place of worship was closed due to the same, leading to the cancellation of numeral performances and the temple festivals. Schools and colleges were closed, and so were various art training schools and institutions abiding by the rules of the government. All the above factors may be causing a huge negative impact on the basic livelihood of several Artists.

This study aims at understanding the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic situation on the Artist community of Indian Classical art forms at multiple levels. That includes the artists' creative, financial, physical, and psychological aspects.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. SAMPLE

The research study was conducted by Qui et al. on 188 (37 males; 151 females) Indian classical music or dance Artists to understand the impact of the Covid-19 in this field. Samples were chosen through the Snowball Sampling method. The sample consisted of artists performing, teaching or both performing and teaching of age 18 and above. The data was collected using a questionnaire that tested psychological distress due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.2. MEASURES

Covid-19 Peritraumatic Distress Index (CPDI) Questionnaire by Dr Jianyin Qiu from Shanghai Mental Health Center was used to study peritraumatic psychological distress during the epidemic. The internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha of CPDI is 0.95 ($p < 0.001$). CPDI inquired about the frequency of anxiety, depression, specific phobias, cognitive change, avoidance and compulsive behaviour, physical symptoms, and loss of social functioning. The questionnaire consists of two sections.

- Section 1 consisted of demographic information and understanding of the artistic process during the pandemic.
- Section 2 includes 24 Questions (CPDI) with a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) intended to find whether the sample falls under the category Not Distressed, Mild to Moderately Distressed or Severely Distressed in context to the Covid epidemic.

2.3. PROCEDURES

The purpose of the study was distinctly communicated to the participants who agreed to be a part of the study. The questionnaires were sent online to the subjects as google forms. They were instructed to answer all the questions without pondering much on any individual question. The responses collected were kept confidential and were put through further analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study showed the level of distress among the Artist community of Indian Classical music and Dance due to The Covid -19 Pandemic situation. Responses from 188 participants were collected through google forms. Out of 188, 151 (80%) were females, and 37 (20%) were males. More than half of the participants were aged below thirty-five years, with a mean age of 35.31.

Table 1

Table 1 Indicating the Demographic Details of The Participant	
Variables	N (%)
Gender	
Male	37 (20%)
Female	151 (80%)
Age Group (in Years)	
Generation Z (24 & below)	37 (20%)

Millennials (25 – 40)	94 (50%)
Generation X (41- 56)	47 (25%)
Baby Boomers (57 & above)	10 (5%)
Type of Employment	
Self-employed/freelancing	125 (67%)
Employed at an Organization	21 (11%)
Both	42 (22%)
Nature of Profession	
Teaching	22 (12%)
Performing	28 (15%)
Both	138 (73%)
Other source of Income	
Yes	46 (24%)
No	142 (76%)
Need to support others Financially	
Yes	104 (55%)
No	84 (45%)

By nature of their profession, 73% of the samples were teachers and performers, while 12% were only teachers and 15% were solely performers. According to the type of employment, 67% were Self-employed or freelancers, 11% were working at an organization, and 22% were Employed in both ways. Over 76% of the samples had no other ways of income other than through Art form, while 24% had other sources of income. Also, over 55% of the participants had people dependent on them for financial needs, while 45% did not have to support others' financial needs.

3.1. DIRECT IMPACT ON THE ART FORM CONCERNING THE ARTISTS

For the question asking if they were able to practice during the pandemic period, only 31% of the participants answered yes, while the major, 69% couldn't. Regarding the quality of their new work, which was created during the pandemic, 57% of the artists felt their productivity was better pre-pandemic, while 43% felt they did better during the pandemic. This may be due to several difficulties reported by the respondents in creating artwork during the pandemic.

Table 2

Table 2 Indicating the Difficulties in Creating New Artwork of The Total Sample			
Difficulty	No. of Responses	Percentage	Rank Order
Creative block	27	29%	I
Financial issues	25	27%	II
Health Issues (Physical & Mental)	24	26%	III

Art is a field that majorly depends on the process of creativity. Creativity and mood research shows that a positive mood enhances creativity (Baas et al., 2008; Davis, 2009). From Table II, it is evident that during the pandemic, difficulties of financial, physical, and psychological issues were faced by most of them, it can be understood that these aspects would have contributed more to such creative blocks. Lack of Opportunity, Technological Issues, changes due to Lockdown and restrictions, Lack of Housekeeping Help and Lack of Appropriate space were reported as other reasons for the inability to create artworks. The same may be the reason for artists who couldn't practice or felt their work was better pre-pandemic.

3.2. DIGITALIZATION OF ARTS

Due to the pandemic situation, almost everything became digital and contactless. In the field of art, especially classical music, and dance, most of the performances usually happen in closed air-conditioned auditoriums. Owing to this, at the beginning of the pandemic all the scheduled performances were called off. Since the situation did not seem to have a near end, artists had to adapt to digitalization. Out of the samples who attended online sessions during the lockdowns, over 46% found it manageable while a good 24% found it to be good 21% felt very good about the concept and technology of online sessions. A bare minimum of about 9% of the sample alone had some difficulties and felt not so good about it. More than half of the samples (57%) who either watched or performed online found it to be good and 29% felt manageable. Only 14% of the samples had difficulties in watching a performance or performing online and felt not so good about it. Overall, when asked about how participants managed the digitalization of arts, which includes, teaching, learning, performing, and spectating, most of the sample (54%) could manage well with around 31% found it to be easy, only a handful (15%) of samples had difficulties. It was found that over 71% of the sample prefer to have both, in-person as well as the online platform regarding the field of fine arts. Over 28% prefers only the pre-pandemic ways of operating in future, without much digitalizing the art. A unique 1% of the sample prefers art to be only through the digital platforms.

Largely, the digitalization of art form had been accepted well, maybe because over 70% of the sample belongs to Gen Z and Millennials. These generations are part of the unstoppable digital revolution. Hence It is natural for them to easily adapt to the digitalization of any field or sector [Raval \(2019\)](#).

3.3. DISTRESS DUE TO COVID -19 PANDEMIC SITUATION

Covid - 19 Peritraumatic Distress Index comprises of statements regarding assessing the sample's Negative mood, Changes in behaviour and cognitive skills, Tired and hyperactivated and Somatization concerned with the COVID outbreak. It was found that over half (50%) of the samples have mild to moderate distress and an alarming 47% of the samples reported to have severe Distress. Only 3% of the samples were found to be devoid of any stress regarding the Covid situation. This level of distress is found to be common among all the groups within the sample. That is irrespective of gender, age, type of employment, nature of the profession, presence, absence of an additional source of income, or the need to support others financially. In general, the sample at large is found to have a moderate to severe level of distress with a mean value of 51.49.

4. CONCLUSION

The study results show that the samples of the artist community from Indian classical Dance and Music face a considerable amount of distress. This may be since art majorly relies on creativity and constant training, which was disrupted to a large extent during the pandemic period owing to various constraints and restrictions. Another primary reason could be financial issues. This was evident from the survey 'Taking the Temperature' (2nd Edition) by The British Council, FICCI, and Art X Company to gauge the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on India's creative economy, found that 67 per cent of surveyed respondents are uncertain that they can survive for more than a year with current resources and funding. Individual professionals and artisans are facing short-term hand-to-mouth existence even as sectors are adapting to digital and live business models to stay afloat [Awasthi \(2020\)](#), [COVID-19 impact report on India \(2021\)](#).

India being a country of rich culture and heritage, it is essential to preserve the ancient traditional arts by uplifting the artist's livelihood. It will have a more significant impact if Government and policymakers take the necessary steps while framing policies to contribute to the same. Arts and the Artistic community can easily be looked over or given the least priority during a challenging situation like a global pandemic. However, it is a part of the country's historical identity that needs to be conserved.

Regardless of how the crisis and its aftermath unfold, there is no doubt that digital technologies will continue to transform the way we live and work. Through the responses received from the samples, it can be said with some certainty that digitalization was well received in the field of Indian classical performing arts. Most participants could manage the sudden shift in the platform from offline to online well. Most of the traditional classical art forms of India have withstood numerous hardships from invasions to modernization by constantly adapting and evolving, thus has been surviving to date. Irrespective of this Pandemic situation that resulted in serious Physical, Psychological, Social and Financial damage, with the scaffolding of the Digitalization and innovations, the art and the artists may survive this well and shall rise to the situation.

5. LIMITATION

- 1) Larger sample size may be a better representation of the population.
- 2) A comparative study with other professions may help understand the intensity of the impact of Covid-19 on the Artist profession.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declared no conflict of interests.

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