

Social Distancing, Social Isolation, and Fake News during COVID-19 Pandemics: A Case of Family Life in Pakistan

Muhammad Shoaib

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Gujrat, Pakistan
shoaibsoc@uog.edu.pk

Farooq Abdullah

Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST),
Mirpur, AJ&K, Pakistan
farooq.abdullah@must.edu.pk

Syed Ali Abid Naqvi

PhD Scholar, Department of Media & Communication Studies, International Islamic University
Islamabad, Pakistan
aliabidnaqvi@gmail.com

Allah Ditta

PhD Scholar, Department of Sociology, Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan
Ad_mas09@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper designed to examine family life during COVID-19 outbreak current situations align with social work and sociology discipline. The family life disturbed due to uncertain conditions prevailed over a long period during the pandemic outbreak. For the present research, a quantitative (n=1786) study design was opted to conduct an online survey. A well-structured questionnaire was administered and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique was employed to measure the effects of the proposed model. The study findings showed that COVID-19 pandemic had disturbed the routines life of people, restricted and working from home. Likewise, people lost employment and businesses. Further, social distancing and social isolation also impacted the lives of people generally and family life particularly. Finally, the study concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic has badly impacted the family lives of the people during the pandemic in Pakistan. The study recommended that sociologists should work and support families to manage family life disturbance in future.

Keywords: COVID-19 Outbreak, Social Distancing, Social Isolation, Social Life, Family

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1. Introduction

Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) unfurled from China's city Wuhan in December 2019 (WHO, 2020b). Primarily, it broke out in the university of Wuhan and later engulfed the local people in Wuhan province (WHO, 2020a). The contagious COVID-19 pandemic posed a serious threat to human health underlying the pandemic (Shoaib & Abdullah, 2021). This pandemic has affected thousands of people who are either sick or killed due to this disease (Shoaib, Ali, & Naseer, 2021). Coronavirus affected the day to day life (Noreen et al., 2020). In the aftermaths, the government of China came to impose lockdown to control the rapid spread of the pandemic

(Shoaib, Iqbal, & Tahira, 2021). It indicated that the outbreak disturbed the economies globally (Shoaib, Tariq, Shahzadi, & Ali, 2022). People lost their job and businesses were shut down due to the lockdowns (Shoaib, Ali, Anwar, & Abdullah, 2022). However, sociologists and social workers played their important role to manage the family issues but the social life of the people was badly disturbed because they were restricted to their homes (Anwar, Shoaib, & Mustafa, 2022). Moreover, family life was distressed due to many factors as the daily routine activities were completely halted (Davies, 2020). A similar situation was found in Pakistan where the businesses and institutions along with industry were closed (Shoaib, Ali, & Naseer, 2021). People were turned unemployed and it further added on the miseries to the lives of people (Naseer, Shoaib, Ali, & Bilal, 2021). Besides, people were not only disturbed due to the lockdowns with restricted mobility but also faced the issues of fake news through media and social media tools (Naseer, Shoaib, Ali, & Ahmad, 2021). As the fake news was found more irritating creating a thrilling situation for the people (Ahmad, Shoaib, & Shaukat, 2021). Particularly the fake news about the outbreak diagnostics and death tolls. In Pakistan similar nature of IPCs and SOPs were developed and enforced (McCauley, Minsky, & Viswanath, 2013; Shoaib & Abdullah, 2020, 2021). Through the social lives of people disturbed due to uncertain conditions prevailed over a long period (Ahmad, Ahmad, Shoaib, & Shaukat, 2021). People remained steadfast although suffered long even after the loss in businesses and employment (Cinelli et al., 2020; C. Li et al., 2020). However, the fake news floating on social media further increased the fears among the people. In Pakistan, people like other parts of the world use media and social media but the reliability of the sources is questioned due to the less awareness among the people about the pandemic (Hassan, Qureshi, & Gul, 2020; Lee, 2020).

1.1 The Study Context

The current pandemic affected all aspects of life including family life in all over the world (Abdullah & Shoaib, 2021). Several social workers and sociologists tried to play their important role to minimize the outbreak effects generally and on families particularly through theory and practices. However, social distancing and isolation affected at large. Further, social and business life was also affected and contributed towards family life disturbance. It is pertinent here to mention that misinformation also contributed negatively to affect family life during COVID-19. It has also been observed that there is lack of research found on the phenomenon so far in Pakistan align with the discipline of social work and sociology perspective. Thus, we attempted to determine the nexus of COVID-19 and social life among the people in terms of family align with the discipline of social work and sociology.

2. Review of Literature

Recent year has been observed as a massive level COVID-19 outbreak in all over the world (Sharfuddin, 2020; Waris, Khan, Ali, Ali, & Baset, 2020; WHO, 2020b, 2020d). This pandemic became a global challenge when broke out to the rest of the world (Swerdlow, Finelli, & Lipsitch, 2020). World Health Organization (WHO) came to declare the health emergency the world over (WHO, 2020a). Moreover, the WHO also issued infection prevention and control (IPCs) to control the pandemic (WHO, 2020b, 2020d). Gradually, it spread to the rest of the world and affected the people across the continents (Scambler, 2009). Particularly, Europe and America were badly affected by the pandemic as according to the WHO (2020) till 14 August 2020, total cases are 20,730,456 (20.73 million) with 751,154 deaths (WHO, 2020c). This shows the intensity of the pandemic generally in the world and particularly the vulnerability of the developed world at large scale (WHO, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d).

On the face of it, worldwide lockdowns were imposed to control the spread of the pandemic that affected every aspect of life (Mucci, Mucci, & Diolaiuti, 2020). In continuation to WHO, developed countries like the United States (Wang & Lund, 2020), England (Brezna, 2020; Freedman, 2020), China (Jianhua, 2020; W. Li et al., 2020), and Hong Kong (Hartley & Jarvis, 2020) also issued the IPCs to save the people from deadliest pandemic along with developing countries (Sharfuddin, 2020). The guidelines issued by the WHO were equally followed by developing and developed countries (WHO, 2020c, 2020d). Moreover, the standard operating procedures (SOPs) were also developed by each country. These IPCs mainly include social distancing, social isolation, and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) i.e., use of mask and gloves and sanitizers, work from home and use of online services (Shoaib & Abdullah, 2020). People adopted social distancing and social isolation among each other (Banerjee & Rai, 2020; Mucci et al., 2020). These steps to minimize the pandemic outbreak resulted in multiple social and business issues. Later it affects family life in a bad way. It affects family practices and customs at a large level not only in Pakistan but also in other parts of the world. It has been observed that several studies used quantitative study design (Shoaib, Ali, & Akbar, 2021; Shoaib, Fatima, & Jamil, 2021; Shoaib, Mustafa, & Hussain, 2022, 2023; Shoaib, Rasool, Anwar, & Ali, 2023; Shoaib & Ullah, 2021a, 2021b; Shoaib, Usmani, & Abdullah, 2023; Shoaib, Usmani, & Ali, 2022; Ullah & Shoaib, 2021), bibliometric analysis (Ali, Shoaib, & Abdullah, 2021, 2022; Ali, Shoaib, & Syed, 2021; Shoaib, 2021; Shoaib, Abdullah, & Ali, 2021; Shoaib, Ahmad, Ali, & Abdullah, 2021; Shoaib, Ali, Anwar, et al., 2021; Shoaib, Khan, & Abid, 2011; Ullah & Shoaib, 2021), and qualitative approach along with mixed method research (Anwar, Shoaib, & Javed, 2013; Mariam, Anwar, Shoaib, & Rasool, 2021; Shoaib, 2021, 2023a, 2023b, 2024; Shoaib, Abdullah, & Ali, 2020; Shoaib, Bilal, Iqbal, Hassan, & Sher, 2012; Shoaib, Khan, & Ashraf, 2011; Shoaib, Khan, & Khan, 2011; Shoaib, Latif, & Usmani, 2013; Shoaib, Munir, Masood, Ali, & Sher, 2012; Shoaib, Saeed, & Cheema, 2012; Shoaib & Shah, 2012; Shoaib, Shaukat, Khan, & Saeed, 2013; Shoaib & Ullah, 2019). Hence, this study attempt to test the model to predict family life disturbance during current pandemic situations i.e. COVID-19 using quantitative approach.

Based on this conceptual framework model, the four hypotheses are developed to test the direct effects of the model among variables. Moreover, six hypotheses are developed to test the indirect effects of the model among variables (see results and discussion section).

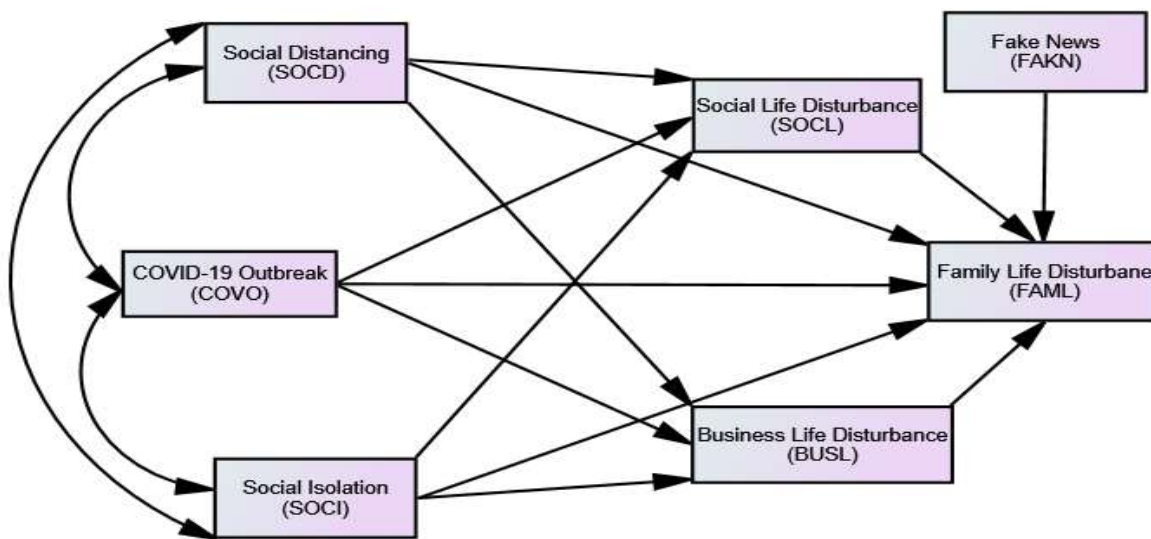


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Materials and Methods

For the present research, a quantitative study design was opted to conduct an online survey. The purpose was to main social distancing during the COVID-19 outbreak and health concerns of the participants. A total of 1786 individuals participated and filled the questionnaire. The inclusion criteria to participate in this study was based as a family member, age (18 to 59 years), residing in Pakistan, male and female, and facing family life disturbance in terms of COVID-19 outbreak. It was important to mention here that the current study was aligned with the discipline of social work and sociology. In addition to this, the consent form and purpose of this study were also online on the first page of the questionnaire. A well-structured questionnaire was administered and pre-tested from 30 respondents. The study used exogenous and endogenous variables along with path and intervening variable i.e. fake news. The results of pre-testing showed the significance of Alpha value ranging from .739 to .826 and overall was .921. This questionnaire consisted of different sections as mentioned in the conceptual framework. Moreover, an attitudinal scale of (dis)agreement was used to measure the responses. Furthermore, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed to confirm the factors. In the end, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique was employed to measure the direct and indirect effects of the proposed model. There were 11 hypotheses based on direct & indirect effects and correlation among variables. The indirect effects were measure by employing indirect effect plugin (Gaskin & Lim, 2018) and the conclusion was drawn align with the discipline of social work and sociology.

4. Results and Discussion

This study asserted that participants had mixed geographical locations (urban and rural) and gender as well (Male=62% and Female=38%). All the participants were literate (above intermediate educational level) and had an age bracket of 19 to 46 years. It was noteworthy here to mention that participants were working in different capacities of life such as government and private jobs, business, farming, driving, and labour. Furthermore, a small proportion was reported as a student, unemployed, and housewife. The educational level of their father was ranging from illiterate to above master level. Moreover, the results also showed that participants were living with up to seven brothers and nine sisters. In addition to the demographic characteristics of the participants, descriptive statistics of the study presented in table 1. It included range, minimum (Min.), maximum (Max.), mean, std. deviation and variance of the variables used in the research.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics (n=2477)

Variables	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Father level of education (in years)	1-6+	1	6+	.64	4.700	2.090
No. of Brothers (in numbers)	0-6	0	6	.94	1.186	406
No. of Sisters (in numbers)	0-8	0	8	.58	1.410	987
Social Distance (SOCD)	1-3	1	3	7.62	2.314	354
COVID-19 (COVO) Outbreak	0-2	0	2	5.23	2.334	5.446

Social Isolation (SOCL)	4	1	0	4	0.83	2	3.2	1
Social Life Disturbance (SOCL)	9			6	4.29	1	1.8	3.
Business Life Disturbance (BUSL)	1			0	7.74	1	2.2	5.
Fake News (FAKN)	2					1	3.5	1
Family Life Disturbance (FAML)	5			0	6.31	1	2.1	4.
			1	0	7.97		64	683

Table 2 described the correlation statistical test of the variables. The results showed that there was a significant positive correlation among all variables. It is worth mentioning to show that social distancing had a high correlation with business life disturbance (.601), social isolation (.580), and family life disturbance (.420). Contrary to it, the lowest significant correlation (.095) had been reported between fake news and social life disturbance. Moreover, it revealed that the results showed in the table presented the significance of the variables selected for this study.

Table 2

Correlation Statistical Test (n=2477)

Variables	Var	SOC D	COVO	SOCI	SOCL	BUSL	AKN	F AML
OCD	S		267**	580**	198**	601**	223**	420**
COVO	CO	1						
SOCL	VO			325**	181**	284**	136**	261**
BUSL	SO			1				
FAKN	CI				244**	499**	271**	413**
FAML	S				1			
	OCL					193**	095**	417**
	BU					1		
	SL						494**	467**
	AK						1	
	N							311**
	F							1
	AML							

Number of observations = 2477

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.1 Direct Effects of the Model

Hypothesis 1: Social isolation, COVID-19 outbreak, and social distancing had direct effects on social life disturbance among individuals

The results presented in table 3 supported hypothesis 1 that there was a significant direct effect of social isolation ($\beta = .167$), COVID-19 outbreak ($\beta = .108$), and social distancing ($\beta = .072$) on social life disturbance among individuals. Therefore, findings support hypothesis 1. The result revealed that during COVID-19 pandemic situations every individual was using safety measures to protect themselves. Moreover, they were following social distancing that resulted in social isolation among them. Moreover, this pandemic outbreak and social distancing badly affected the

social life of individuals in Pakistan. People had to stop all family functions such as childbirth celebrations, marriage customs & traditions, and all other family events. It is noteworthy to mention here that the COVID-19 outbreak also effected death practices and customs as well in Pakistan. Moreover, the interaction patterns of family members were also affected negatively. As a result, the whole social life of individuals was disturbed by this pandemic outbreak (Banerjee & Rai, 2020; Mucci et al., 2020). The study findings were similar to the study findings conducted in developed, developing, and the Muslim world during COVID-19 outbreak (Ghosh, Dubey, Chatterjee, & Dubey, 2020; Godinic, Obrenovic, & Khudaykulov, 2020; Gopalan & Misra, 2020; Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020).

Hypothesis 2: Social distancing, COVID-19 outbreak, and social isolation had direct effects on business life disturbance among individuals

The study findings presented in table 2 depicted that social distancing ($\beta = .458$), COVID-19 outbreak ($\beta = .096$), and social isolation ($\beta = .202$) had direct effects on business life disturbance among individuals. Thus, the results support hypothesis 2. It is pertinent to mention here that individuals were keeping social distancing and social isolation from each other during the COVID-19 outbreak. As a result, it had negatively affected their business life. The market and shops were closed. Organization and institutions stopped their work. Moreover, labour activities were also suspended in Pakistan. Consequently, the COVID-19 outbreak results in social distancing and isolation that stopped the business life of individuals in Pakistan. The results of this study were supported by several pieces of research conducted in developed, developing and Muslim counters in the world during COVID-19 black swan (Adams & Walls, 2020; Addo, Jiaming, Kulbo, & Liangqiang, 2020; Ćosić, Popović, Šarlija, & Kesedžić, 2020).

Table 3

Regression Weights, Covariances, and Variances (n = 2477)

Variables			Standardized Regression Weights	Estimate	S.E.	C.R	P
SOCI	--->	SOCL	.167	.093	.016	5.844	***
SOCD	--->	BUSL	.458	.454	.022	20.264	***
COVO	--->	BUSL	.096	.094	.019	4.921	***
COVO	--->	SOCL	.108	.083	.019	4.453	***
SOCD	--->	SOCL	.072	.056	.022	2.567	.010
SOCI	--->	BUSL	.202	.143	.016	8.791	***
BUSL	--->	FAML	.202	.186	.023	8.124	***
SOCD	--->	FAML	.138	.126	.024	5.241	***
SOCI	--->	FAML	.113	.073	.016	4.539	***
COVO	--->	FAML	.064	.058	.019	3.113	.002
FAKN	--->	FAML	.119	.071	.011	6.199	***

SOCL	--->	FAML	.311	.364	.023	15.543	***
Covariances							
SOCD	<-->	COVO		1.443	.132	10.911	***
SOCI	<-->	COVO		2.460	.189	13.046	***
SOCI	<-->	SOCD		4.362	.206	21.210	***
Variances							
SOCI				10.551	.353	29.875	***
SOCD				5.351	.179	29.875	***
COVO				5.443	.182	29.875	***
e3				12.576	.421	29.875	***
e1				3.006	.101	29.875	***
e2				3.140	.105	29.875	***
e4				2.935	.098	29.875	***
Chi-square = 535.210, df = 6, p-value = .000							
Model fit summary = GFI = .931, AGFI = .907, CFI = .918, RMSEA = .063							
Total number of observations = 2477							

Hypothesis 3: Business life disturbance, social distancing, and social isolation had direct effects on family life disturbance among individuals

Table 3 revealed that there was a significant direct effect of business life disturbance ($\beta = .202$), social distancing ($\beta = .138$), and social isolation ($\beta = .113$) had direct effects on family life disturbance among individuals. Likewise, results also support hypothesis 3. The findings of the study revealed that the business loss of individuals during the COVID-19 outbreak created multiple problems for family life. Moreover, social distancing and social isolation effected greatly family functions such as social obligations and family events in Pakistan. Family life was badly effected during COVID-19 in Pakistan. Furthermore, several studies pointed out that the COVID-19 outbreak affected family life in a negative not only developing countries but also developed world (Banerjee & Rai, 2020; Begović, 2020; Brennen, Simon, Howard, & Nielsen, 2020; Mucci et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 4: COVID-19 outbreak, fake news, and social isolation had direct effects on family life disturbance among individuals

Statistical data in table 1 described that COVID-19 outbreak ($\beta = .064$), fake news ($\beta = .119$), and social isolation ($\beta = .311$) had direct effects on family life disturbance among individuals. Consequently, the results supported hypothesis 4. It was noteworthy here to point out that

individuals were socially isolated during this COVID-19 outbreak. Moreover, fake news also added fear among individuals in terms of a pandemic. As a result, the family life of individuals was effected badly in Pakistan. Moreover, individuals who had a fear of COVID-19 did several irrelevant and dangerous activities that result in family life disturbance (Banerjee & Rai, 2020; Mucci et al., 2020). Furthermore, multiple studies also revealed similar nature of results in terms of family life disturbance in developed and developing nations of the world (Alexander, 1988; Asim et al., 2020; Cinelli et al., 2020).

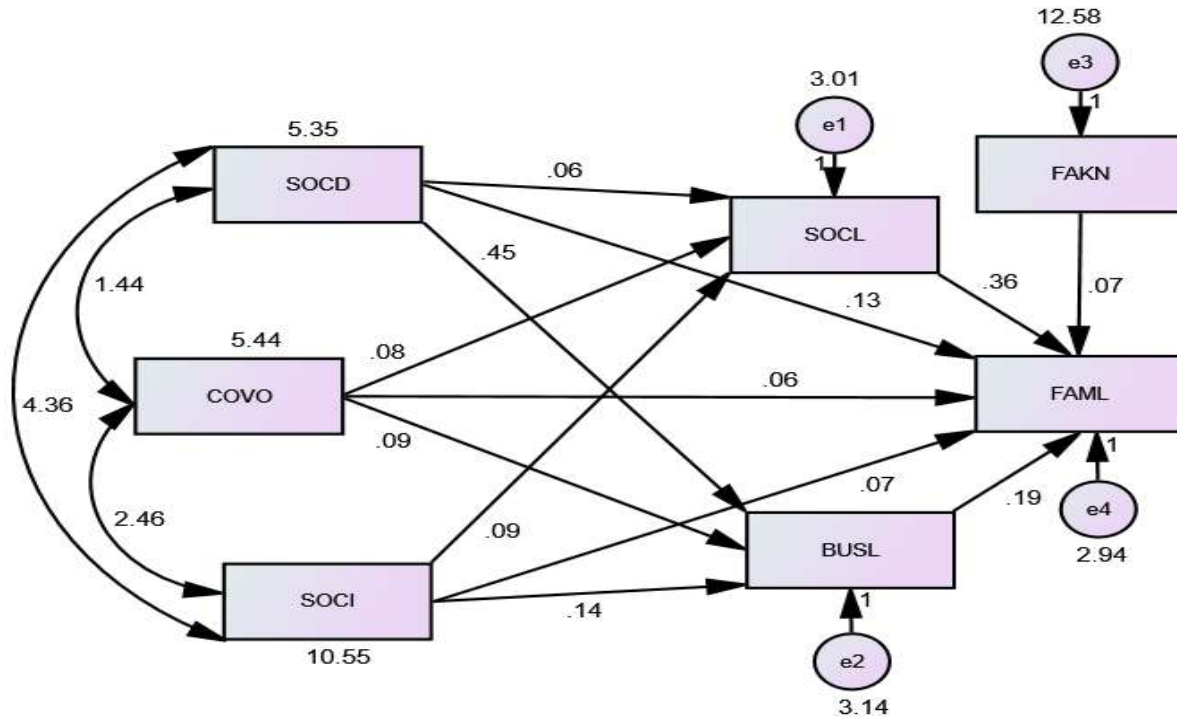


Figure 2: Model Fit Diagram

4.2 Indirect Effects of the Model

Hypothesis 5: COVID-19 outbreak had an indirect effect on family life disturbance among individuals through the mediation of business life disturbance.

The results presented in table 4 supported hypothesis 5 that there was a significant and indirect effect ($SE = 0.019^{***}$) of COVID-19 outbreak on family life disturbance through the mediation of business life disturbance. Thus, findings revealed that hypothesis 5 was accepted. The study findings reported that the COVID-19 pandemic affected family life indirectly. Moreover, it was important to mention here that business life was suspended during the COVID-19 outbreak that resulted in family life disturbance. The results of this study were similar to the study findings from developed, developing, and Muslim nations of the world (Davies, 2020; Desouky, 2020; Erickson, Chai, & Boyer, 2020; Mucci et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 6: COVID-19 outbreak had an indirect effect on family life disturbance among individuals by the mediation of social life disturbance.

The study findings presented in table 4 depicted that there was an indirect effect ($SE = 0.033^{***}$) of the COVID-19 outbreak on family life disturbance through the mediation of social life disturbance among individuals. Therefore, the results asserted that hypothesis 6 was accepted. It is worth mentioning here that COVID-19 effected the whole family life of individuals not only in Pakistan but also in the whole world (Banerjee & Rai, 2020; Mucci et al., 2020). This pandemic

stopped social events of family and social obligations as well (Asim et al., 2020; Assessor, 2020). Similarly, several researchers reported similar nature of results not only in developed countries but also in developing and Muslim world (Amin, 2020; Mostafanezhad, 2020).

Hypothesis 7: Social distancing had indirect effects on family life disturbance among individuals by the mediation of business life disturbance.

Table 4 revealed that there was a significant indirect effect ($SE = 0.092^{***}$) of social distancing on COVID-19 pandemic risk reduction through the mediation of respiratory hygiene among individuals. Likewise, the results pointed out that acceptance of hypothesis 7. It was important to mention here that social distancing among individuals created multiple problems among individuals during COVID-19. Similarly, this social distancing resulted in physical distancing and later in loss of business. Moreover, the study findings also asserted that social distancing had an indirect effect on the family life of individuals (Banerjee & Rai, 2020; Mucci et al., 2020). It was the bad effects of COVID-19 that stopped the business of several countries as a whole in the world (Arthur-Holmes & Agyemang-Duah, 2020). Similar nature of several studies reported similar results of this pandemic in the developed, developing, and Muslim world (Chung, Xu, & Zhang, 2020; Fox & McDermott, 2020; Goggin & Ellis, 2020; Mucci et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 8: Social distancing has an indirect effect on family life disturbance among individuals by the mediation of social life disturbance.

Statistical data in table 4 asserted that there was a significant and indirect effect ($SE = 0.022^{**}$) of social distancing on family life disturbance through the mediation of social life disturbance among individuals. As a result, hypothesis 8 was accepted. Therefore, it was important to assert here that social distancing affected not only the business life of individuals but also the social life of individuals as well. The social life of individuals was badly disturbed during COVID-19 in Pakistan and similar to other nations facing pandemic situations. Family social gatherings and functions were suspended during the COVID-19 outbreak. Thus, the social fabric of family was effected badly while keeping social distancing among individuals (Lee, 2020). Consequently, the findings of this study were similar to the study findings conducted not only in the Muslim world but also in developed and developing countries of the world (Miller, 2020; Mukhtar, 2020; Waris et al., 2020; Zhao, An, Tan, & Li, 2020).

Hypothesis 9: Social isolation has an indirect effect on family life disturbance among individuals by the mediation of business life disturbance.

The study findings in table 4 highlighted that there was a significant and indirect effect ($SE = 0.041^{***}$) of the social isolation on family life disturbance through the mediation of business life disturbance among individuals. Based on the mediation results, hypothesis 9 was accepted. Here, people were keeping social isolation as a protective measure of this COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. However, on the other side, this social isolation created multiple problems for individuals such as family life disturbance and business life disturbance. As business life suspended, family life was affected in a very bad way. Family practices were also stopped and social obligations were not celebrated as per routine during the pandemic outbreak (Banerjee & Rai, 2020; Mucci et al., 2020). Moreover, the similar nature of results was also asserted by several researchers not only in developing countries but also in developed and Muslim nations of the world (Gunnell et al., 2020; Hassan et al., 2020; Hurford, 2020).

Hypothesis 10: Social isolation has an indirect effect on family life disturbance among individuals by the mediation of social life disturbance.

The data in table 4 pointed out that there was a significant and indirect effect ($SE = 0.052^{***}$) of the social isolation on family life disturbance through the mediation of social life disturbances

among individuals. The mediation results revealed that hypothesis 10 was accepted. Moreover, it asserted that social isolation had disturbed the family life of individuals. Similarly, family life was badly affected by stopping social activities among individuals. A large number of social activities such as social interaction among family members were stopped and minimized during the COVID-19 outbreak specifically in Pakistan and generally in other countries of the world. Besides, the study findings were also supported by several results reported in developed, developing, and Muslim countries of the world (Gabriel, Brown, León, & Outley, 2020; Goggin & Ellis, 2020; Mucci et al., 2020).

Table 4

Indirect Effects of the Model (n = 2477)

Indirect Path	Unstandardized Estimate	Lower	Upper	P-Value	Standardized Estimate
COVO --> BUSL --> FAML	0.017	0.012	0.025	0.001	0.019***
COVO --> SOCL --> FAML	0.030	0.018	0.043	0.001	0.033***
S OCD --> BUSL --> FAML	0.084	0.062	0.109	0.001	0.092***
S OCD --> SOCL --> FAML	0.020	0.007	0.036	0.009	0.022**
SOCI --> BUSL --> FAML	0.027	0.019	0.035	0.001	0.041***
SOCI --> SOCL --> FAML	0.034	0.024	0.044	0.001	0.052***

Significance of Estimates: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.010$, * $p < 0.050$

5. Conclusion

As the COVID-19 has enduring impacts on the family life of the people across the globe. It not only disturbed the economies of the countries but also wrecked human social and family life on the face of the earth. It has disturbed the routines of the people where people were restricted to their homes and working from home. However, the lockdowns provided a new direction to the landscapes of the working and dealing with such crises. Moreover, the lives of the people were on the verge of the lockdowns as they were restricted to homes. Similarly, people lost employment and businesses. Besides, the fake news also created disturbance because the people were never found well searched and used to float the information without any verification that further created fear and panic into the minds of people. In the same fashion, social distancing and social isolation also impacted the lives of people generally and family life particularly. It is thus, concluded that the COVID-19 has badly impacted the social lives of the people during the pandemic in Pakistan. The study recommended that social workers should work and support families to manage family life disturbance in future.

6. Research Implications

There are several implications based on the study findings i.e. it makes a significant contribution in the existing body of review of literature in the field of family, social work and sociology.

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