

## Perception of Healthcare Workers Regarding the Psychological Impact of COVID-19 on Their Children

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**Abstract :** Background and Objective: Pandemics like COVID-19 adversely affect children's behavior and psychological development by disrupting routine life activities. Children of healthcare workers are exposed additionally due to the fear of parental exposure to the virus. The objective of this study was to assess the perception of frontline healthcare workers (HCWs) regarding the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their children. We also sought to identify the difference in the psychological impact on children of male and female healthcare workers. Methods: A survey questionnaire was developed comprising 10 questions about the perception of HCWs regarding the psychological impact of COVID-19 on their children. It was distributed both online and face-to-face among 150 healthcare professionals working in training and non-training posts in 4 public and 5 nongovernment hospitals in Pakistan. The mean and standard deviation were calculated for each survey item using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 26.0. Results: The response rate was 71.3%, and the majority (64.2%) of the healthcare professionals were  $\geq 30$  years of age. Ninety-two HCWs (85.98%) either agreed or strongly agreed that parental separation from their kids for long hours during the pandemic had a negative psychological impact on their children. There was a significant difference in the perceived psychological impact of COVID-19 on the children of male and female HCWs, with a mean survey score of  $2.29 \pm 1.82$  and  $1.69 \pm 0.79$ , respectively ( $t = 2.29$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.024$ ). Conclusion: Children of healthcare workers experience more stress and anxiety because of long duty hours and working in high-risk settings. Continuous psychological support and counseling services may be adopted formally to prevent unforeseen adverse events or any long-term negative impact on their physical and mental health.

**Keywords :** healthcare workers, pandemic, COVID-19, anxiety, psychological

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