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A Systematic Review

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about social disruption due to job loss, financial insecurity, social distancing, and confinement. Inevitably, this impacted families as there was significant change in their ability to be productive and to form meaningful relationships. Families' dynamics have evolved as a result of a longstanding global crisis. This systematic review aims to explore and correlate existing evidence of the impact of COVID 19 pandemic on family dynamics. Qualitative and quantitative studies were identified by way of the PRISMA flow diagram, using search terms including "COVID-19 pandemic," "family dynamics," and "family relationship," in research databases. A total of 31 journals were included in the study. These were appraised using CASP, the JBI critical appraisal tool, and MMAT and significant findings were synthesized by inductive approach. The COVID-19 pandemic produced the most significant effect on the process of communication in family dynamics. It was determined that punitive and neglectful parents had depressed and lonely children, whereas expressive and caring parents had more emotionally stable children. Furthermore, there seemed to be a predominance of negative impact on the families' communication and organization processes, which focused on the following themes: mental health, financial effects, family routines and interactions, and involuntary isolation. Overall, this systematic review revealed an objective reality: there are positive and negative impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on family dynamics, specifically on the processes of communication, organization, and belief systems. A close-knit and supportive family that fosters emotional support, economic stability, connectedness, and meaning making can overcome pandemic burden. Family-based interventions are necessary to help families cope and adapt.

Keywords: COVID-19; family dynamics; positive impact; negative Impact; worldwide

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a pandemic on March 11, 2020, which affected many families all over the world. In this time, the virus caused expansive and rapid infection that resulted in increased mortality across populations. As a consequence, nations have imposed safety protocols, including lockdowns and quarantines to halt its spread. The degree of distancing depended on the severity of the disease in each country (Carrion-Martinez, 2021). According to Prime et al. (2020), this brought about social disruption due to “job loss, financial insecurity, social distancing, and confinement”. Inevitably, this impacted families as there was significant change in their ability to be productive and to form meaningful relationships. Families’ dynamics have evolved as a result of this longstanding global crisis.

‘Dynamics’ encompass factors that determine associations within the family (SAGE Publications, 2020). Family dynamics consisted of behaviors that made family life and family functioning unique. In this study, family dynamics was defined as an interaction between related persons, including all factors that may influence this, and roles and responsibilities shared (Jabbari & Rouster, 2021). The pandemic’s effect on family dynamics included caregiver role strain because of “parenting stress, psychological distress, and mental health symptoms” (Prime et al., 2020). Furthermore, children were able to adjust, but were occupied with emotional issues, changed behavior, compromised schooling, and limited peer interactions (Prime et al., 2020). On that premise, family dysfunction was expected as proven by the Family Systems Theory (FST) (Priest, 2021); wherein the individual’s psychosocial, behavioral, and physiological state can affect the quality of his or her interpersonal relationships within the family. This explained how stressful situations can impact a caregiver’s relationship with his or her children, and vice versa.

The pandemic challenged families to face difficult life events, which endangered their dynamics. Risk of abuse within the family, financial turmoil, caregiving stress, and isolation (Prime et al., 2020) became evident as personal conflicts contributed to friction within marital, parent-child, and sibling subsystems. Based on Walsh et al., (2015) concept of family wellbeing, the processes of communication, organization, and belief systems existed among family members, being pivotal sources of resilience in times of crisis. Given that family wellbeing can influence family dynamics (Rouster, 2021), family dynamics was also considered to be an interplay of communication, organization, and belief systems in this study. Prime et al., (2020) defined communication as “clear information, emotional sharing, collaborative problem solving, dyadic, and family adjustment” (p. 638) while organization referred to “adaptability, connectedness, and access to social and economic resources” (p. 638). Belief systems pertained to “meaning making, hope, and spirituality” (Prime et al., 2020, p. 638). Any alteration in these processes made each family vulnerable to existing threats in the middle of a pandemic.

Harmonious family relationships were a result of positive interactions and communication (Pramono, 2020). As part of the three overarching processes of family dynamics, communication allowed family members to openly share information, emotions, and opinions for better collaboration and coping. On organization, family structure and quality of life were given primary focus (Voydanoff et al., 1994). It described connection, role adaptation, and resources available for family use. Lastly, belief systems accounted for the families’ ability to construct a personal sense of reality to equip themselves with resilience (Usó-Doménech & Nescolarde-Selva, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally shifted families’ communication, organization, and belief systems. For this reason, there is a need to understand its

fundamental impact on family dynamics. This is for the benefit of families worldwide, so that professionals and institutions can develop family-based interventions to assist families as they cope with existing pressures of today. Despite available literature on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on family dynamics, there seems to be not enough systematic reviews on this matter. In order to fill this gap, the current study relies on systematic review of qualitative and quantitative literature to explore and correlate existing evidence of the impact of COVID 19 pandemic on family dynamics.

Methodology

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following inclusion criteria were taken into consideration upon searching for journals on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on family dynamics: quantitative and qualitative studies conducted worldwide, and English language publications from January 2020 to March 2022. The population of interest included all types of families who resided together and whose family characteristics, family situation, and family relationships and interactions were affected during the pandemic. Journals that contained descriptions only of an individual's physical, emotional, social, or mental issues during the pandemic, non-English language publications, meta-analyses, systematic reviews, and editorials were excluded.

SEARCH STRATEGY

Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies were identified using accepted systematic review methodology in four electronic databases: 1) PubMed, 2) Science Direct, 3) Google Scholar, and 4) EBSCOHost. All databases were last consulted in March 2022.

The search strategy was designed to capture all journals related to COVID-19 pandemic and family dynamics. Synonyms of family dynamics, derived from literature, were utilized to broaden the search. Journal search was conducted using combinations of 10 search terms including “COVID-19 pandemic” and “family dynamics” or “family relationship” or “family interactions” or “family life” or “family mental health” or “family well being” or “family functioning” or “family resilience” or “family stress” or “change in parent-child relationships”. “Family dynamics,” “family relationship,” “family interactions,” “family life,” “family wellbeing,” and “family resilience” were from the journal entitled “Risk and resilience in family well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic” by Prime et al., (2020). On the other hand, “family mental health,” “family functioning,” “family stress,” and “change in parent-child relationships” were from the journal entitled “The concept of family resilience: Crisis and challenge” by Walsh et al., (1996).

All journals published between January 2020 and March 2022 retrieved at the search date were selected.

SCREENING AND APPRAISAL OF STUDIES

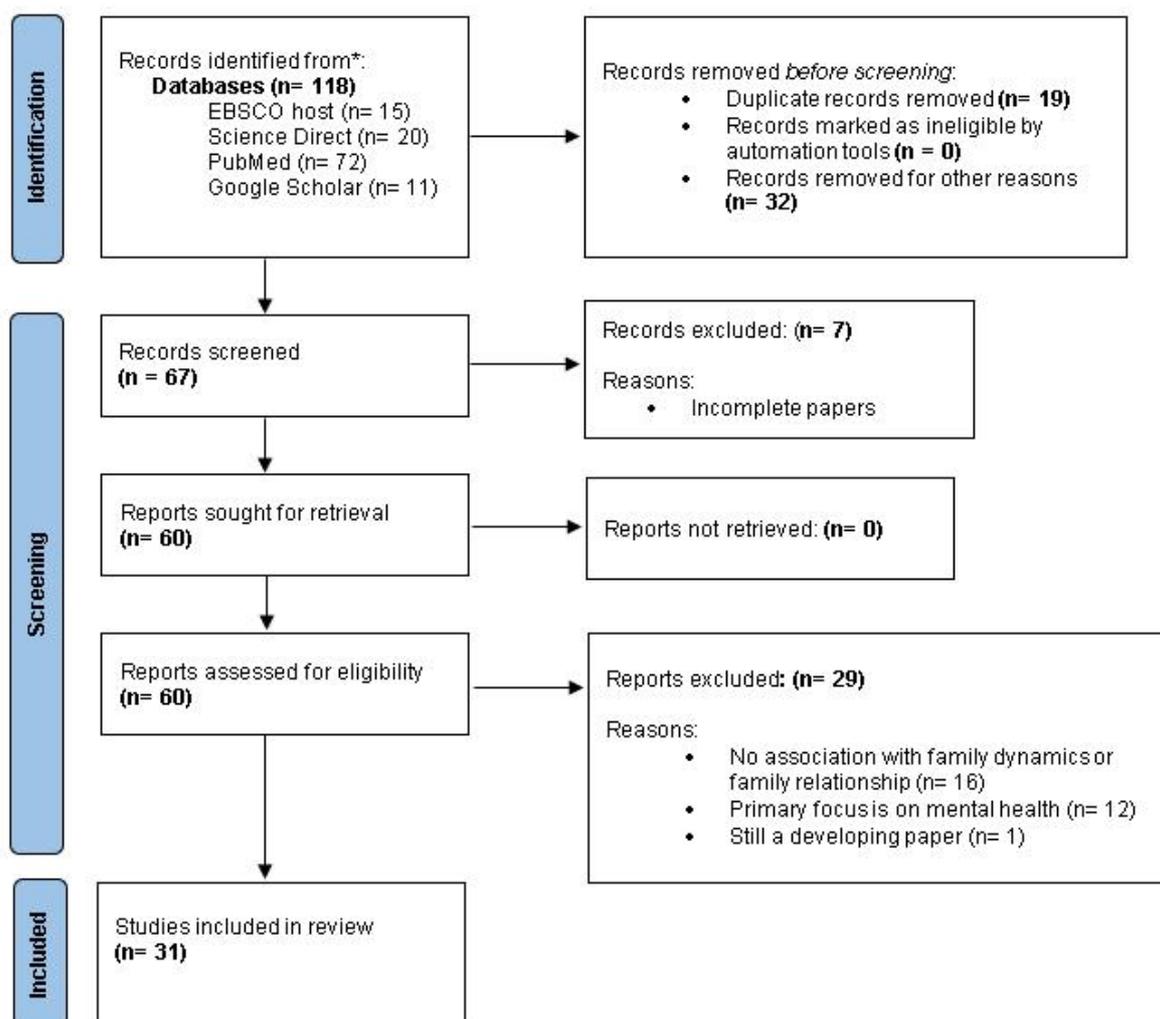


Figure 1. Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) Flowchart

The search was conducted in March 2022; 118 journals were initially identified using the 10 predetermined search terms in each of the four databases. This was done by eight researchers, divided amongst four groups with two members each, G.P. and J.R. for EBSCOhost, L.R. and P.R. for ScienceDirect, P.F.R. and M.R for PubMed, and R.T.R. and R.L.R. for Google Scholar. The number of journals obtained per database were 15, 20, 72, and 11 respectively. Afterwhich, 118 journals were tabulated and counterchecked by two researchers, G.R. and M.R.

From 118 journals, it was narrowed down to 67 journals since 19 journals were duplicates and 32 journals did not meet the search criteria. Following the screening, 60 journals were considered to be potentially related to the topic, while 7 journals were excluded because these were incomplete papers. Full articles were retrieved for the remaining 60 journals. Upon further review, 29 journals were excluded because 16 journals were not associated with family dynamics or family relationships, 12 journals were primarily focused on mental health, and 1 journal was still a developing paper.

Finally, 31 journals were included in the study based on the eligibility criteria. Quality appraisal was conducted for all 31 journals using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP), the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Tool, and the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT).

RISK OF BIAS ASSESSMENT

The researchers utilized the CASP tool (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018), JBI (Joanna Briggs Institute, 2017) critical appraisal tool, and MMAT (Hong, et. al., 2018) for appraisal of the 31 eligible journals.

The CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018) tool was developed by The Critical Appraisals Skills Programme to assist in healthcare decision-making and comprehend scientific evidence. It has a set of eight tools for the appraisal of systematic mixed studies reviews. It consists of appraisal checklists for both qualitative and quantitative studies (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018). Each checklist contains questions answerable by Yes, Can't tell, and No. The score is determined by the number of yeses over the total number of questions. The perfect score varies by study design.

The Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) (Joanna Briggs Institute, 2017) critical appraisal tool was developed by the JBI and collaborators to help those in the healthcare field to identify the extent to which a study's design, conduct, and analysis have taken into account the possibility of bias. It is a set of thirteen tools for reading and appraisal of research journals. It provides appraisal checklists for both qualitative and quantitative studies. With it are corresponding questions answerable by Yes, No, Unclear, and Not Applicable. The score is determined by the number of yeses over the total number of questions. By the end of the checklist, an overall appraisal is included to guide researchers in the inclusion and exclusion of journals. The perfect score varies by study design.

The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) (Hong, et. al., 2018) is a critical appraisal tool developed for the appraisal of systematic mixed-methods reviews to help assess qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies. The questions in the checklist are answerable by Yes, No, Can't tell, with a comment section provided. Similarly, the score is determined by the number of yeses over the total number of questions. All 31 journals included in the review had low risk of bias.

DATA EXTRACTION

Key information was extracted, including authors, complete title, year of publication, country, research design, sample size, objectives, and significant results. Subsequently, key themes were identified via the inductive approach of the journals' results. Themes derived were categorized into overarching processes of family dynamics and impact of COVID-19 on family dynamics. The former was focused on the effect of the pandemic on the processes of communication, organization, and belief systems of families, while the latter emphasized its positive and/or negative impact.

Results

Table 1 Study Characteristics

Author	Title	Year	Country	Design	Sample size
Rania, N., Coppola, I., Lagomarsino, F., & Parisi, R.	Family Well-being During the COVID-19 Lockdown in Italy: Gender Differences and Solidarity Networks of Care	2021	Italy	Qualitative	560
Vaterlaus, J. M., Shaffer, T., Patten, E. V., & Spruance, L. A.	Parent–Child Relationships and the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Exploratory Qualitative Study with Parents in Early, Middle, and Late Adulthood	2021	USA	Qualitative	365
Wang, Y., Liu, W., Wang, W., Lin, S., Lin, D., & Wang, H.	Left-behind children's social adjustment and relationship with parental coping with children's negative emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic in China	2021	China	Qualitative	3280
Dubois-Comtois, K., Suffren, S., St-Laurent, D., Milot, T., & Lemelin, J. P.	Child Psychological Functioning During the COVID-19 Lockdown: An Ecological, Family-Centered Approach	2021	Canada	Qualitative	1078
Christner, N., Essler, S., Hazzam, A., & Paulus, M.	Children's psychological well-being and problem behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic: An online study during the lockdown period in German	2021	Germany	Qualitative	2672
Wissemann, K., Mathes, B., Meyer, A., & Schmidt, N. B.	COVID-related fear maintains controlling parenting behaviors during the pandemic	2021	USA	Qualitative	249
Andrés-Romero, M. P., Fluja-Contreras, J. M., Fernández-Torres, M., Gómez-Becerra, I., & Sánchez-López, P.	Analysis of Psychosocial Adjustment in the Family During Confinement: Problems and Habits of Children and Youth and Parental Stress and Resilience	2021	Spain	Qualitative	883
Wang, M. T., Henry, D. A., Del Toro, J., Scanlon, C. L., & Schall, J. D.	COVID-19 Employment Status, Dyadic Family Relationships, and Child Psychological Well-Being	2021	USA	Qualitative	447
Bülow, A., Keijsers, L., Boele, S., van Roekel, E., & Denissen, J. J.	Parenting Adolescents in Times of a Pandemic: Changes in Relationship Quality, Autonomy Support, and Parental Control	2021	Netherlands	Qualitative	323
Chu, K. A., Schwartz, C., Towner, E., Kasparian, N. A., & Callaghan, B.	Parenting under pressure: A mixed-methods investigation of the impact of Covid-19 on family life	2021	USA	Qualitative	99
Liu, J., Zhou, T., Yuan, M., Ren, H., Bian, X., & Coplan, R. J.	Daily Routines, Parent–Child Conflict, and Psychological Maladjustment Among Chinese Children and Adolescents During the COVID-19 Pandemic	2021	China	Qualitative	1594
Essler, S., Christner, N., & Paulus, M.	Longitudinal Relations Between Parental Strain, Parent–Child Relationship Quality, and Child Well-Being During the Unfolding	2021	Germany	Qualitative	3811

COVID- 19 Pandemic					
Bates, C. R., Nicholson, L. M., Rea, E. M., Hagy, H. A., & Bohnert, A. M.	Life Interrupted: Family Routines Buffer Stress During the COVID-19 Pandemic	2021	USA	Quantitative	300
Gadermann, A. C., Thomson, K. C., Richardson, C. G., Gagné, M., McAuliffe, C., Hirani, S., & Jenkins, E.	Examining the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on family mental health in Canada: findings from a national cross sectional study	2021	Canada	Quantitative	618
Janssen, L. H., Kullberg, M. L. J., Verkuil, B., van Zwieten, N., Wever, M. C., van Houtum, L. A., ... & Elzinga, B. M.	Does the COVID-19 pandemic impact parents' and adolescents' well-being? An EMA-study on daily affect and parenting	2020	Netherlands	Quantitative	231
Donker, M. H., Mastrotheodoros, S., & Branje, S.	Development of parent-adolescent relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic: The role of stress and coping.	2021	Netherlands	Quantitative	240
Russell, B. S., Hutchison, M., Tambling, R., Tomkunas, A. J., & Horton, A. L.	Initial Challenges of Caregiving During COVID-19: Caregiver Burden, Mental Health, and the Parent-Child Relationship	2020	USA	Quantitative	420
Lawson, M., Piel, M. H., & Simon, M.	Child Maltreatment during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Consequences of Parental Job Loss on Psychological and Physical Abuse Towards Children	2020	USA	Quantitative	342
Kalil, A., Mayer, S., & Shah, R.	Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Family Dynamics in Economically Vulnerable Households	2021	USA	Quantitative	1912
Skinner, A. T., Godwin, J., Alampay, L. P., Lansford, J. E., Bacchini, D., Bornstein, M. H., ... & Yotanya Maneewong, S.	Parent-adolescent relationship quality as a moderator of links between COVID-19 disruption and reported changes in mothers' and young adults' adjustment in five countries.	2021	USA	Quantitative	466
Feinberg, M. E., A Mogle, J., Lee, J. K., Tornello, S. L., Hostetler, M. L., Cifelli, J. A., ... & Hotez, E.	Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Parent, Child, and Family Functioning	2021	USA	Quantitative	399
Tang, S., Xiang, M., Cheung, T., & Xiang, Y. T.	Mental health and its correlates among children and adolescents during COVID-19 school closure: The importance of parent-child discussion	2020	China	Quantitative	4391
Pan, Y., Yang, Z., Han, X., & Qi, S.	Family functioning and mental health among secondary vocational students during the COVID-19 epidemic: A moderated mediation model	2020	China	Quantitative	5783
Liu, K., Yang, Y., Li, M., Li, S., Sun, K., & Zhao, Y.	Parents' and adolescents' perceptions of parental involvement and their relationships with depression among Chinese middle school students during the COVID-19 pandemic	2020	China	Quantitative	1550

Uzun, H., Karaca, N. H., & Metin, Ş.	Assessment of parent-child relationship in Covid-19 pandemic	2020	Turkey	Quantitative	219
Neubauer, A. B., Schmidt, A., Kramer, A. C., & Schmiedek, F.	A Little Autonomy Support Goes a Long Way: Daily Autonomy-Supportive Parenting, Child Well-Being, Parental Need Fulfillment, and Change in Child, Family, and Parent Adjustment Across the Adaptation to the COVID-19 Pandemic	2021	Germany	Quantitative	970
Bate, J., Pham, P. T., & Borelli, J. L.	Be My Safe Haven: Parent-Child Relationships and Emotional Health During COVID-19	2021	USA	Quantitative	158
Wolf, J. P., Freisthler, B., & Chadwick, C.	Stress, alcohol use, and punitive parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic	2021	USA	Quantitative	342
Cassinat, J. R., Whiteman, S. D., Serang, S., Dotterer, A. M., Mustillo, S. A., Maggs, J. L., & Kelly, B. C.	Changes in Family Chaos and Family Relationships During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Evidence From a Longitudinal Study	2021	USA	Quantitative	2046
Eales, L., Ferguson, G. M., Gillespie, S., Smoyer, S., & Carlson, S. M.	Family resilience and psychological distress in the COVID-19 pandemic: A mixed methods study.	2021	USA	Mixed-method	469
Browne, D. T., Wade, M., May, S. S., Jenkins, J. M., & Prime, H.	COVID-19 Disruption Gets Inside the Family: A Two-Month Multilevel Study of Family Stress During the Pandemic	2021	USA	Mixed-method	1647

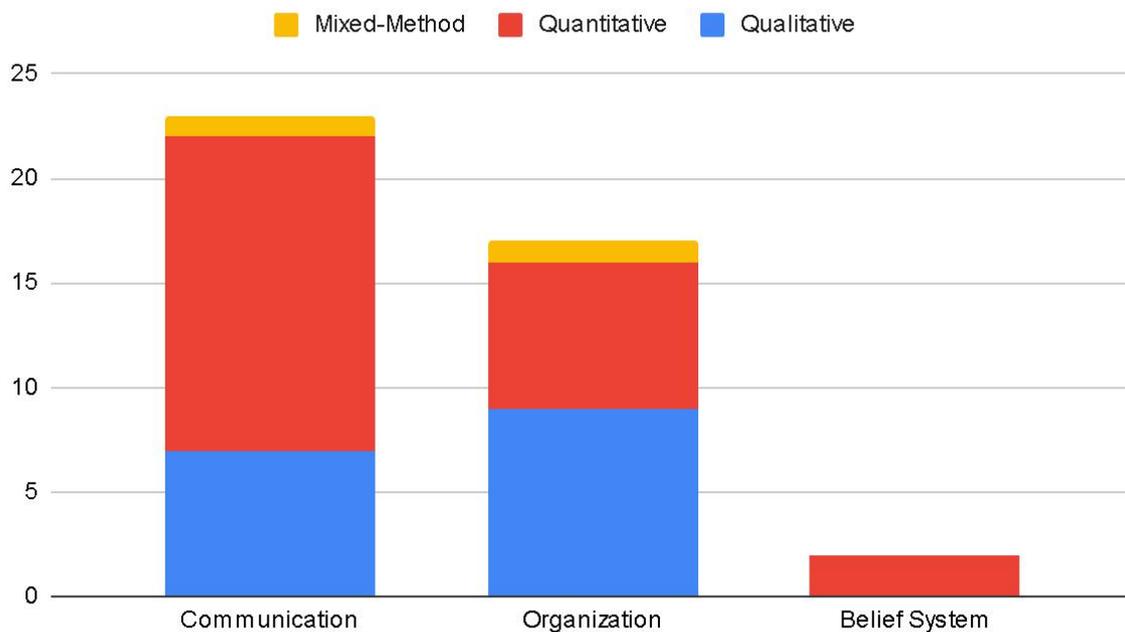


Figure 2. Study Distribution of Three Overarching Processes of Family Dynamics

Note. a) Communication: Total = 23, Qualitative = 7, Quantitative = 15, Mixed-method = 1; b) Organization: Total = 17, Qualitative = 9, Quantitative = 7, Mixed-method = 1; c) Belief system: Total = 2, Qualitative = 0, Quantitative = 2, Mixed-method = 0.

Table 2 Overarching Processes of Family Dynamics

Author	Year	Country	Design	Overarching Processes of Family Dynamics	
Rania, N., Coppola, I., Lagomarsino, F., & Parisi, R.	2021	Italy	Qualitative	Organization	Parents reported taking part in solidarity activities within the community.
Vaterlaus, J. M., Shaffer, T., Patten, E. V., & Spruance, L. A.	2021	USA	Qualitative	Communication	Parents and children experienced great anxiety, fear and stress, which led to less patience and tension in the parent-child relationship. They also spent more time together during the quarantine.
				Organization	Parents have balanced new and existing roles, including teaching their children how to prevent spread of the virus and explaining the need for social distancing. For parents who are apart from their children, parent-child relationship was maintained by way of technology platforms and devices.
Wang, Y., Liu, W., Wang, W., Lin, S., Lin, D., & Wang, H.	2021	China	Qualitative	Communication	Some parents were expressive, encouraging, and affluent while others were punitive and neglectful. This resulted in emotionally unstable children, and depressed and lonely children respectively.
Dubois-Comtois, K., Suffren, S., St-Laurent, D., Milot, T., & Lemelin, J. P.	2021	Canada	Qualitative	Communication	Lock downs have caused children to experience higher levels of emotional problems, depression, and anxiety, and lower levels of academic adjustment. Expressive, encouraging, and affluent parents had more emotionally stable children, while punitive and neglectful parents had depressed and lonely children.
				Organization	Chaos within the family resulted in family dysfunction or poor parent-child attachment.
Christner, N., Essler, S., Hazzam, A., & Paulus, M.	2021	Germany	Qualitative	Organization	Children had no interaction with others, whether family or friends; they also had less freedom because their parents were around; they were unable to pursue hobbies; there were disagreements in media consumption; and they were unable to leave the residence as they wished.
Wissemann, K., Mathes, B., Meyer, A., & Schmidt, N. B.	2021	USA	Qualitative	Organization	Fear among parents became an effective driver of change in controlling parenting behaviors. Children were at an increased risk for negative mental health outcomes due to controlling parents.
Andrés-Romero, M. P., Fluja-Contreras, J. M., Fernández-Torres, M., Gómez-Becerra, I., & Sánchez-López, P.	2021	Spain	Qualitative	Communication	Families experienced emotional and psychological difficulties. Children were more angry, cried more, and were sadder. Behavior problems and hyperactivity were common among those under three years old; more emotional symptoms from six to twelve and more problems with peers in girls and boys in middle school.
				Organization	The lockdown modified the family's routines and habits. Parents were overburdened with child care and parenting, while children experienced sleep problems and lack of contact with peers and some family members.

Wang, M. T., Henry, D. A., Del Toro, J., Scanlon, C. L., & Schall, J. D.	2021	USA	Qualitative	Communication	Some parents found emotional respite in spending more time with their children through work from home set up. There was increased warmth and togetherness.
				Organization	During COVID-19, low-income parents were more likely to lose their jobs and were unable to work from home than middle-high-income parents.
Bülow, A., Keijsers, L., Boele, S., van Roekel, E., & Denissen, J. J.	2021	Netherlands	Qualitative	Organization	Some families were in a dysequilibrium because of conflicts over novel rules, while others were able to instill increasing autonomy support despite continued societal restrictions. During lockdown, rules to organize everyday routines were routinely introduced. Time spent on phones and gaming was limited and the majority of adolescents saw this restriction as advantageous and showed no defiance.
Chu, K. A., Schwartz, C., Towner, E., Kasparian, N. A., & Callaghan, B.	2021	USA	Qualitative	Communication	Parents exhibited fears, parenting stress, and worry about the state of the world. These were reversed through perspective taking, gratitude and learning to adjust. Children were egocentric, upset about their school and social life.
Liu, J., Zhou, T., Yuan, M., Ren, H., Bian, X., & Coplan, R. J.	2021	China	Qualitative	Organization	During the COVID-19, children and adolescents who endorsed more regular routines reported less loneliness and fewer depressive symptoms.
Essler, S., Christner, N., & Paulus, M.	2021	Germany	Qualitative	Communication	Higher parental strain resulted in poor wellbeing of children. This leads to negative relationship quality within the family, lower parental self efficacy, and greater problematic behavior among children.
Bates, C. R., Nicholson, L. M., Rea, E. M., Hagy, H. A., & Bohnert, A. M.	2021	USA	Quantitative	Organization	More involvement in family routines was linked to higher caregiver self-efficacy and family resilience.
Gadermann, A. C., Thomson, K. C., Richardson, C. G., Gagné, M., McAuliffe, C., Hirani, S., & Jenkins, E.	2021	Canada	Quantitative	Communication	Parents reported unique pressures, including worrying about their children's health, mental health, education, balancing work and parenting, and financial concerns.
Janssen, L. H., Kullberg, M. L. J., Verkuil, B., van Zwieten, N., Wever, M. C., van Houtum, L. A., ... & Elzinga, B. M.	2020	Netherlands	Quantitative	Communication	Parent's negative affect increased during the lockdown and social distancing. However, emotional problems vary from household to household. In general, families were able to adapt to COVID 19 restrictions.
Donker, M. H., Mastrotheodoros, S., & Branje, S.	2021	Netherlands	Quantitative	Communication	Adolescents reported lower levels of parent-adolescent negative interactions during the pandemic, compared to before the pandemic.
Russell, B. S., Hutchison, M., Tambling, R., Tomkunas, A. J., & Horton, A. L.	2020	USA	Quantitative	Communication	Parent and child conflict were associated with generalized anxiety, depression symptomatology, caregiving burden, and stress.

Lawson, M., Piel, M. H., & Simon, M.	2020	USA	Quantitative	Communication	Psychological abuse was more likely related to parents who lost their jobs. Parents with a history of physical abuse were more likely to physically abuse their children during the pandemic.
Kalil, A., Mayer, S., & Shah, R.	2021	USA	Quantitative	Communication	Parents who experience job loss are most likely to lose temper or yell at their child. Specifically, mothers suffered mentally from stress and worried about the future.
				Organization	Parents who were struggling financially were much less likely to say that their children enjoy spending time with them.
				Belief System	Parents with both job and income loss report feeling less hopeful about the future as do those who struggle to make ends meet. Exposure to COVID-19 is correlated with a decrease in feeling hopeful.
Skinner, A. T., Godwin, J., Alampay, L. P., Lansford, J. E., Bacchini, D., Bornstein, M. H., ... & Yotanya Maneewong, S.	2021	USA	Quantitative	Communication	Young adults reported an increase in anxiety or sadness and externalizing behaviors during the pandemic. Supportive parents result in warmth, acceptance, and better parent-child relationships.
				Organization	Maternal supportive parenting resulted in low behavior problems and personal disruptions among adolescent children.
Feinberg, M. E., A Mogle, J., Lee, J. K., Tornello, S. L., Hostetler, M. L., Cifelli, J. A., ... & Hotez, E.	2021	USA	Quantitative	Communication	Parents were more likely to report high levels of depression due to increased internalization of problems, which can affect a child's behavior.
Tang, S., Xiang, M., Cheung, T., & Xiang, Y. T.	2020	China	Quantitative	Communication	Children who had multiple discussions about COVID 19 with their parents experienced less depression, anxiety, and stress. Verbal expression rather than just supportive behaviors allow better coping.
Pan, Y., Yang, Z., Han, X., & Qi, S.	2020	China	Quantitative	Communication	Some families have good family functioning, able to support and encourage one another. They experience less loneliness and their mental health is better.
				Belief System	Hope reduced the mediating influence of loneliness in the relationship between family functioning and the mental health of secondary vocational students.
Liu, K., Yang, Y., Li, M., Li, S., Sun, K., & Zhao, Y.	2020	China	Quantitative	Organization	Some parents were psychologically controlling causing excess burden among their children. Parents may not be equipped with enough

					skills, confidence, and time to support their children's learning at home. Parents who were burdened financially by their children's online learning, and parents who believed the pandemic reduced their expected income were considerably more depressed.
Uzun, H., Karaca, N. H., & Metin, Ş.	2020	Turkey	Quantitative	Communication	Since children are at home 24/7 a week, parenting tasks have increased significantly, causing them much stress. Some have had to deal with demands of their children being educated at home while trying to meet their own employment needs.
				Organization	Unemployed and occasionally employed fathers are better at their relationships with their children than employed fathers. Parents in urban regions were more democratic than parents in rural ones.
Neubauer, A. B., Schmidt, A., Kramer, A. C., & Schmiedek, F.	2021	Germany	Quantitative	Communication	Autonomy-supportive parenting improved family cohesion during the pandemic.
Bate, J., Pham, P. T., & Borelli, J. L.	2021	USA	Quantitative	Communication	Parents and children require a safe haven or emotional support in times of crisis. Some families have conflicts due to lack of emotional support from its members.
				Communication	Parents and children grow more fatigued during the day, resulting in irritability and a higher chance of negative interactions
Wolf, J. P., Freisthler, B., & Chadwick, C.	2021	USA	Quantitative	Organization	Punitive parenting approaches are used by parents who reported to have higher levels of stress. In comparison to non-drinkers, monthly drinkers were more prone to utilize punitive parenting. In comparison to abstainers, parents who report drinking monthly were more likely to use harsh discipline when they are under stress.
Cassinat, J. R., Whiteman, S. D., Serang, S., Dotterer, A. M., Mustillo, S. A., Maggs, J. L., & Kelly, B. C.	2021	USA	Quantitative	Communication	During the first few months of the pandemic, parents learned more and got more involved in their children's education. Stay-at-home policies may have given parents more chances to watch and interact with their kids in person, which could have helped them learn more.
				Organization	Change in family processes resulted in family chaos. Chaos at home includes high levels of noise, crowding, disorganization, and instability are threats to optimal family functioning.
Eales, L., Ferguson, G. M., Gillespie, S., Smoyer, S., & Carlson, S. M.	2021	USA	Mixed-method	Communication	Families were spending more unstructured and enjoyable time together both indoors and outdoors, many experiencing this as a blessing for which they were grateful, although in one case, family time was reported to crowd in on personal time/space.
Browne, D. T., Wade,	2021	USA	Mixed-method	Organization	Higher levels of COVID-19 disruption were

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associated with greater caregiver distress,
family dysfunction, and family-average mental
health problems.

OVERARCHING PROCESSES OF FAMILY DYNAMICS

The three overarching processes of family dynamics were presented in figure 2 and table 2. In communication, a total of seven and 15 articles were qualitative and quantitative studies respectively, and two were mixed methods studies. There have been relevant effects on communication, as evidenced by 25 journals discussing emotional and psychological difficulties, and family warmth and togetherness. In organization, a total of nine and seven articles were qualitative and quantitative studies respectively, and one was mixed methods studies. Effects on organization were discussed in 18 journals, which focused on family connectedness, economic resources, family routines, and family adaptability. Finally, in belief systems, a total of two journals were quantitative studies. Effects on belief systems were discussed in two journals, with a central theme of hopefulness.

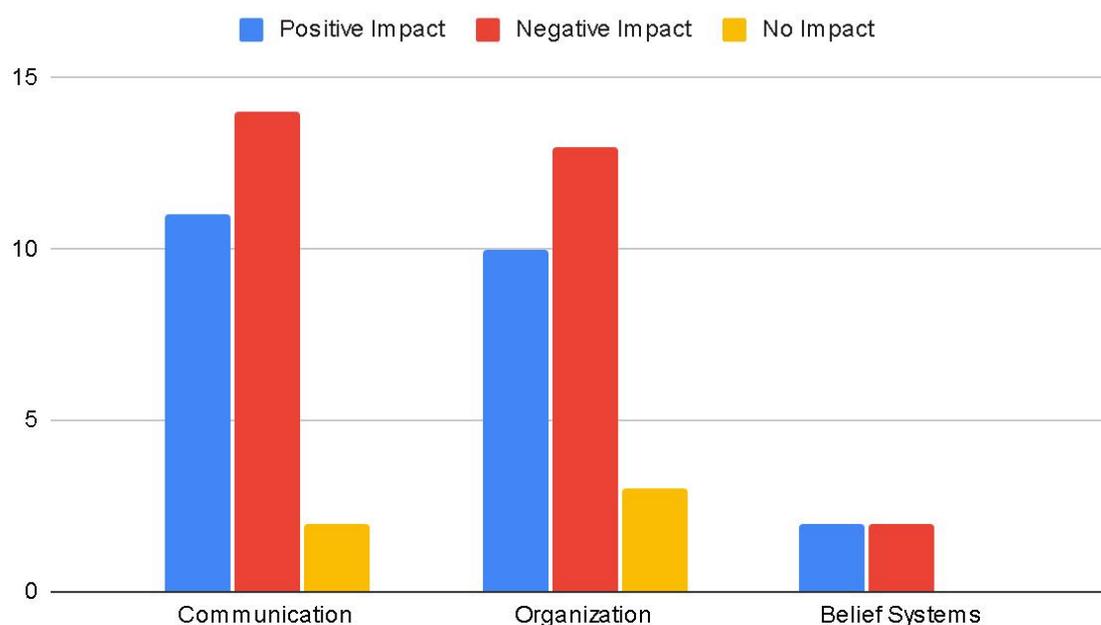


Figure 3. Impact on Family Dynamics

Note. a) Communication: Positive impact = 11, Negative impact = 14, No impact = 2, b) Organization: Positive impact = 10, Negative impact = 13, No impact = 3, c) Belief system: Positive impact = 2, Negative impact = 2, No impact = 0.

Table 3 Impact on Family Dynamics

Author	Year	Country	Design	Impact on family Dynamics	
Rania, N., Coppola, I., Lagomarsino, F., & Parisi, R.	2021	Italy	Qualitative	Negative	Parents showed a very low level of well-being, most of them (76.9%) reported common mental disorders, including adjustment and stress disorders. More frequently, women have reduced their working hours to increase their domestic work hours, and their work has been much more fragmented and interrupted than that of fathers due to childcare needs.
Vaterlaus, J. M., Shaffer, T., Patten, E. V., & Spruance, L. A.	2021	USA	Qualitative	Positive	Participants in the early and middle years of adulthood claimed that they spend more quality time with their children because work decreased or their busy schedule slowed down.
Wang, Y., Liu, W., Wang, W., Lin, S., Lin, D., & Wang, H.	2021	China	Qualitative	Positive	Left behind children (LBC) were less lonely than their non left behind children (NLBC) counterparts because they were living with their parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Academic adjustment was also significantly stronger in LBC than in NLBC.
Dubois-Comtois, K., Suffren, S., St-Laurent, D., Milot, T., & Lemelin, J. P.	2021	Canada	Qualitative	Negative	When parents show negative emotions, children will experience the same emotions and vice versa. Children who were reluctant to stay alone even before lockdown experienced more distress during lockdown.
Christner, N., Essler, S., Hazzam, A., & Paulus, M.	2021	Germany	Qualitative	Positive	Children had additional time spent with their families. Factors such as housing (with balcony and garden) were contributory to the well being of a child. With good housing the child was less hyperactive.

				Negative	Children and solo parents have struggled because of limited access to other family members in different households. Thus, single parents experience more stress.
Wisseman, K., Mathes, B., Meyer, A., & Schmidt, N. B.	2021	USAs	Qualitative	Negative	Children who were exposed to changes in parental behaviors were at increased risk of developing negative mental health outcomes.
Andrés-Romero, M. P., Fluja-Contreras, J. M., Fernández-Torres, M., Gómez-Becerra, I., & Sánchez-López, P.	2021	Spain	Qualitative	Negative	There was decreased physical activity among children, with threat of developing aggressive behavior due to fear and uncertainty brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.
Wang, M. T., Henry, D. A., Del Toro, J., Scanlon, C. L., & Schall, J. D.	2021	USA	Qualitative	Positive	Work from home (WFH) parents have increased parental warmth. This was attributed to their ability to better supervise their children during school closures. This alleviated the stress of grappling with alternative childcare arrangements or being unable to monitor children during remote schooling. Additional protective factors related to WFH included financial stability, job security, professional autonomy, and schedule flexibility. These factors may have buffered parents against psychological distress.
				Negative	Low-income families experienced more parent-child conflict and less parental warmth than middle-high income families. Heightened economic pressure incited parental distress that fomented harsh parenting and antagonism between parents and children.
Bülow, A., Keijsers, L., Boele, S., van Roekel, E., & Denissen, J. J.	2021	Netherlands	Qualitative	Positive	Findings demonstrated that the daily routines of families with adolescents changed quite strongly during the lockdown, with youths spending more time with their parents and less time with friends.
Chu, K. A., Schwartz, C., Towner, E., Kasparian, N. A., & Callaghan, B.	2021	USA	Qualitative	Positive	Many parents expressed gratitude for living in an economically developed nation, having financial security, having good health, having supportive relationships, having better childcare, having stronger faith, and more time spent together.
				Negative	Many parents expressed empathy and concern about how COVID-19 impacted their children's lives. Concerns were focused on education, missed opportunities, and children's mental health.
Liu, J., Zhou, T., Yuan, M., Ren, H., Bian, X., & Coplan, R. J.	2021	China	Qualitative	Positive	Children and adolescents endorsed regular routines, reported less loneliness, and experienced fewer depressive symptoms during the COVID-19 stay-at-home period. Routines provide children with a sense of predictability and security in the household and promote a sense of control over daily schedules.
Essler, S., Christner, N., & Paulus, M.	2021	Germany	Qualitative	Negative	During the strict lock-down restrictions, children's well-being and problem behavior were most strongly related to parental strain. As restrictions were loosened, parental stress and children's problem behavior decreased, and child emotional well-being increased.
Bates, C. R., Nicholson, L. M., Rea, E. M., Hagy, H. A., & Bohnert, A. M.	2021	USA	Quantitative	Positive	Higher engagement in routines during the COVID-19 pandemic buffered relations between COVID-19-related stress and family functioning. It was also associated with improved parent and child relationship since they interacted better.

						Reduced family routines, specifically bedtime and screen time routines, during COVID-19 may have negative implications for children's health behaviors. Screen time, particularly before bed, was associated with poor sleep duration and quality. Participants from lower income households (less than \$50,000) reported greater COVID-19 stress than those from higher income households.
						Overall, parents reported that they experienced increased positive interactions with their children, including having more quality time, feeling closeness, showing love or affection to their children, and increased resilience.
Gadermann, A. C., Thomson, K. C., Richardson, C. G., Gagné, M., McAuliffe, C., Hirani, S., & Jenkins, E.	2021	Canada	Quantitative			Among parents with children at home, deteriorating mental health was significantly more prevalent among women, parents under age 35, parents with a pre-existing mental health condition, parents with a disability, parents of younger children (≤ 4 years), and parents reporting financial stress. Many experienced suicidal thoughts, deliberately hurting themselves and alcohol use. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, parents reported more negative interactions with their children, including more conflicts, yelling/shouting, disciplining and using harsh words.
Janssen, L. H., Kullberg, M. L. J., Verkuil, B., van Zwieten, N., Wever, M. C., van Houtum, L. A., ... & Elzinga, B. M.	2020	Netherlands	Quantitative	No impact		Parental warmth and criticism from both parent and adolescent perspective, did not differ between before and during the COVID-19 pandemic which was different from what was expected at the baseline. Interestingly, even though the negative effect of parents increased compared to the period before lockdown, this did not seem to affect parenting behavior.
Donker, M. H., Mastrotheodoros, S., & Branje, S.	2021	Netherlands	Quantitative	Negative		Negative interactions during adolescence mainly concern daily hassles, and were thought to have an important function in the development of a more equal relationship between parents and adolescents.
Russell, B. S., Hutchison, M., Tambling, R., Tomkunas, A. J., & Horton, A. L.	2020	USA	Quantitative	Negative		Parents who reported higher rates of caregiver burden also reported higher rates of generalized anxiety, depression, and parent perceived child stress. Specifically, there were significant linkages between parents' caregiver burden, mental health, and perceptions of children's stress. These were significantly linked to child-parent closeness and conflict.
Lawson, M., Piel, M. H., & Simon, M.	2020	USA	Quantitative	Negative		Parental job loss during the COVID-19 pandemic presented significant risk for children's concurrent development and long-term adjustment due to increased psychological maltreatment. Parental job loss was additionally associated with an increased probability of physical abuse during the pandemic.
						Families who lost their jobs but maintained their income sometimes reported better family interactions, specifically more positive interactions with their child. Their child enjoyed time spent with them.
Kalil, A., Mayer, S., & Shah, R.	2021	USA	Quantitative			Parents who experienced job and income losses, and those who reported an inability to make ends meet were much more likely to experience diminished mental health. They were more likely to admit being overwhelmed by their responsibilities as parents.

Skinner, A. T., Godwin, J., Alampay, L. P., Lansford, J. E., Bacchini, D., Bornstein, M. H., ... & Yotanya Maneewong, S.	2021	USA	Quantitative	Positive	Youth disclosure in adolescence buffered the negative impact of pandemic disruptions on internalizing and externalizing behaviors.
Feinberg, M. E., A Mogle, J., Lee, J. K., Tornello, S. L., Hostetler, M. L., Cifelli, J. A., ... & Hotez, E.	2021	USA	Quantitative	Positive	Middle-income parents, who did not have the financial resources of wealthy parents, hired others to perform household or childcare duties. This may lead to positive and supportive parenting despite their own elevated levels of stress. With the additional strains brought on by the pandemic, these middle-income parents' ability to self-regulate and maintain positive parenting in the face of their already higher levels of depression may have been most compromised.
Tang, S., Xiang, M., Cheung, T., & Xiang, Y. T.	2020	China	Quantitative	Positive	Children and adolescents considered home quarantine as more positive than negative, and this yielded less psychological distress and more life satisfaction. Their perceived benefits of home quarantine included increased time available to spend with parents and on personal activities.
Pan, Y., Yang, Z., Han, X., & Qi, S.	2020	China	Quantitative	Positive	Good family functioning helped relieve anxiety and restlessness and fostered better coping with learning and life events and thus improved their mental health.
Liu, K., Yang, Y., Li, M., Li, S., Sun, K., & Zhao, Y.	2020	China	Quantitative	Negative	Parental involvement behaviors themselves can impose psychological burdens on students, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the parental control tendency of Chinese parents. Students felt that they were being controlled or monitored. Combined with the stressful situation of COVID 19, this might further jeopardize students' mental health.
				Positive	Mothers with graduate education set more limits on their children in terms of the disciplinary dimension. They were not controllers in the dimension of autonomy, rather more participatory in the activities of their children. High education level of the mother during the quarantine process was an advantage in organizing and managing domestic relations, and developing coping strategies.
Uzun, H., Karaca, N. H., & Metin, Ş.	2020	Turkey	Quantitative	Negative	While quarantine allowed people to spend more time with their loved ones, it also put a significant strain on parents, who had to teach their children while also running their own business and working. This point of view supported the result that women who worked were better for their children's relationships. Being left alone without other resources was a particularly difficult situation for parents who had to cope with the quarantine process while balancing their personal life, job, and parenting. This puts parents at risk of experiencing more discomfort and compromises their ability to be supportive caretakers. Having more than one child at home has made this process even more difficult for parents.

Neubauer, A. B., Schmidt, A., Kramer, A. C., & Schmiedek, F.	2021	Germany	Quantitative	Positive	Autonomy-supportive parenting was associated with improved family cohesion across 3 weeks. Parents' fulfillment of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness was associated with an increase in parents' vitality and a decrease in their perceived stress. Autonomous-supportive behavior might have positive downstream effects not only on the receiving child but also on the social system (the family) and the support provider—also in challenging times as during the Corona crisis. High conflict and low positive qualities in the relationship appeared to strengthen the positive association between parents' and children's mental health difficulties during this pandemic.
Bate, J., Pham, P. T., & Borelli, J. L.	2021	USA	Quantitative	Negative	High conflict and low positive qualities in the relationship appeared to strengthen the positive association between parents' and children's mental health difficulties during this pandemic.
Wolf, J. P., Freisthler, B., & Chadwick, C.	2021	USA	Quantitative	Negative	The presence of alcohol might be an accelerant in the use of punitive parenting for parents who experienced stress, thus resulting in irritability and a higher chance of negative interactions.
Cassinat, J. R., Whiteman, S. D., Serang, S., Dotterer, A. M., Mustillo, S. A., Maggs, J. L., & Kelly, B. C.	2021	USA	Quantitative	Negative	Chaos at home included high levels of noise, crowding, disorganization, and instability and was a threat to optimal family functioning. Findings from the present investigation are in line with family stress theory and confirm that household chaos increased with the onset of the pandemic. Turning to parent-child relationship qualities, with the exception of maternal intimacy, changes in parent-child relationship quality were associated with family chaos, such that more family chaos during the pandemic was linked to decreases in paternal intimacy and increases in mother and father-child conflict.
Eales, L., Ferguson, G. M., Gillespie, S., Smoyer, S., & Carlson, S. M.	2021	USA	Mixed-method	Negative	Many parents reported more sibling arguments and fights and some children's needs for more personal space from siblings, whereas others reported better sibling connection and interactions and more quality sibling time, especially through joint play. As was true for whole-family dynamics, there was also a mixed experience in some households where some sibling relationships (or some aspects of them) improved, whereas others worsened.
Browne, D. T., Wade, M., May, S. S., Jenkins, J. M., & Prime, H.	2021	USA	Mixed-method	Negative	Households struggled more when COVID-19 disruption was high, families experienced greater dysfunction, and more child mental health problems, which predicted caregiver mental health and parenting behavior over time.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Figure 3 and table 3 synthesized the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on family dynamics. 11 out of 27 journals showed a positive impact, 14 out of 27 journals showed a negative impact, and 2 out of 27 journals showed no impact on the process of communication. On the other hand, 10 out of 26 journals showed a positive impact, 13 out

of 26 journals showed a negative impact, and 3 out of 26 journals showed no impact on the process of organization. Lastly, 4 journals equally showed positive and negative impact on the process of belief systems.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there seemed to be a predominance of negative impact on the families' communication and organization process; thus, influencing their dynamics. Evidence from table 4 revealed that positive and negative impacts on family dynamics were focused on mental health, financial effect, family routines and interactions, and involuntary isolation.

Discussion

OVERARCHING PROCESSES OF FAMILY DYNAMICS

Communication

Adversities encountered by families during the COVID-19 pandemic require strong family leadership, characterized by nurturing behaviors, positive communication, and emotional intelligence (Walsh, 2015). Among the three overarching processes of family dynamics, effects on communication were shown to be the most significant, emphasizing family warmth and togetherness, and emotional and psychological problems. During the lockdown and social isolation, parents' negative emotions rose and parenting roles have evolved (more chores, homeschooling, etc.) significantly as a result of children being at home 24/7, causing them much stress. Punitive and neglectful parents had depressed and lonely children, whereas expressive and supportive parents had more emotionally stable children. Some families who spent more time together during quarantine, were more anxious, fearful, and stressed. As a consequence, there was less patience and more tension

among family members. In contrast, other families had more opportunities to positively engage with their children, especially in their education. Parents who had a good relationship with their children were more likely to engage in developmental parenting behaviors such as “affection, responsiveness, encouragement, teaching, involvement, appropriate discipline, and supportive co-parenting” (Newland, 2015, p 7), even in distance learning.

The shift to work from home (WFH) setup allowed some parents to spend more time with their children and have multiple conversations about COVID-19, which brought emotional comfort and low levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. Despite the fact that some parents were communicative, supportive and affluent, others were harsh and inattentive. During the pandemic, supportive parenting strengthened family cohesion by encouraging one another. Communication within the family is critical because it allows families to express issues. Proper communication promotes an environment in which family members may freely discuss their differences; hence making problem solving easier (Olson & Gorall, 2003).

Organization and Belief Systems

During the COVID-19 pandemic, low-income parents were more likely to lose their jobs and were unable to WFH than middle-high-income parents. Parents who struggled financially were less likely to say that their children enjoyed spending time with them (Stack & Meredith, 2018). Likewise, the lockdown modified the family's routines and habits (work/school hours, bedtime, meal time, screen time, etc.), as rules to organize everyday routines were introduced. Engagement in routines buffered COVID-related stress among families, as proposed by Bates et al., 2021. On the other hand, some parents reported taking

part in solidarity activities within the community, and were able to instill increasing autonomy support despite continued societal restrictions. COVID-19 pandemic changed family processes causing family chaos. Chaos at home included high levels of noise, crowding, disorganization, and instability, which were considered threats to optimal family functioning. A study by Cassinat, et. al (2021) claimed that as the pandemic spread, families saw an increase in chaos, which was linked to negative changes in parenting processes, parent-child interactions, and sibling relationships. Therefore, increased COVID-19 disruption was associated with greater caregiver distress, family dysfunction, and family-average mental health problems. On belief systems, job and income loss made parents less hopeful about the future. Hope reduced the mediating influence of loneliness in the relationship between family functioning and mental health. Individuals with hopefulness benefit from finding several pathways toward their goals. This can inspire them to stay focused and pay attention to appropriate cues (Snyder, 2002).

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Across the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic was and continues to be a clinical and general wellbeing crisis because it led to social confinement, compulsory isolations, and distance learning and work. In this study, these effects brought about positive and negative impacts on family dynamics. As general findings, significant themes on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic among families revolved around issues on mental health, financial effects, family routines and interactions, and involuntary isolation. Families experienced a negative impact on their finances and mental health. Households greatly struggled when COVID-19 stress overwhelmed the family, leading to further dysfunction. As cited by Brown et al., (2021), the Family Stress Model depicted how economic pressures affected mothers and

fathers psychologically. They had fewer psychological resources (time and patience), which increased anxiety, depression, and perceived stress. As a consequence, there was poor parenting quality and children struggled with mental health problems (Browne et al. 2021). Hence, lower income families were more vulnerable to the challenges brought about by the pandemic (Bates et al. 2021).

When it comes to routines and interactions, the quarantine process became an obligatory change that resulted in the positive development of family relationships. Remote work and learning allowed parents and children to spend more quality time together. Karaca et al., (2020) claimed that improved caregiver-child interactions reduced family conflict. As mentioned, more regular routines have been adapted by families during the pandemic. Children and adolescents who follow regular routines have less mental health issues (Liu, Zhou, Ren, Bian, and Coplan 2021). According to Karki et al., (2020), mothers and fathers' roles have also evolved to better fulfill their duties and responsibilities. This implied increased childcare needs, changes in personal habits, and increased workload on top of personal struggles (dealing with loss of loved ones and issues about safety). Then, parents tend to neglect their own well being, which can be detrimental to the whole family (Karki et al., 2020).

The aim of the study was to identify how COVID-19 impacted the dynamics of the family. This was to acknowledge that each family was affected by this crisis differently, either positive or negative. The selected studies showed that negative impact was predominating in terms of communication and organization processes. On communication, this suggests that family members may suppress feelings or have difficulty expressing their emotions and thoughts (Prime et al., 2020). Children who were exposed to this negative environment will most likely have adverse mental health outcomes (Weisseemann, Mathes,

Meyer, & Schmidt, 2021). On organization, negative impact may be attributed to lack of financial resources, structures and interactions, and separation within the family (Prime et al., 2020). On belief systems, families with hope were able to cope better. Based on the study conducted by Prime et al., (2020), this reflected favorably among families experiencing external stress, like the pandemic.

The findings on family dynamics in this review need to be interpreted within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, journals included were mostly from developed countries since fewer studies have described family dynamics among developing nations. Family dynamics worldwide may not have been accurately described. Lastly, data from selected journals was gathered at different points in time—acute and sustained phases of the pandemic. Thus, issues on family dynamics may vary in the acute phase, where there were stricter health protocols versus the sustained phase, where more permissive rules and regulations were implemented.

Conclusion

This systematic review revealed an objective reality: there are positive and negative impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on family dynamics, specifically on communication, organization, and belief systems. Open communication results in better problem solving and feelings of warmth and togetherness, while the inability to express oneself has poor implications on mental wellbeing. In addition, harmonious parent-children relationships create an atmosphere of connectedness within the family, while poor organization inevitably leads to conflict and dysfunction. The ability to shape one's perception of reality through hopefulness, helps reduce the adverse effects of stressful situations, while

hopelessness discourages families from making ends meet. Overall, a close-knit and supportive family that fosters emotional support, economic stability, connectedness, and meaning making, can overcome disruptions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations

It is recommended that additional studies must be acquired from developing countries on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on family dynamics. As mentioned, 'family dynamics' is fluid because it reflects the unique behavior and attitudes of families. That is why adequate representation must be obtained to provide an extensive analysis on this regard. In addition, longitudinal studies are preferred to reflect family functioning at all phases of the pandemic. Ultimately, the researchers ought to consider the need for policies and provisions that assist families with regard to their mental and emotional wellbeing.

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