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Italy has been one of the countries most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic since the very beginning. In fact, it was the first European country to deal with a massive spreading of the virus in February/March 2020. Italy is also one of the countries that decided for a complete “stay at home order”, known as “lockdown”, to enforce social distancing and preventing the spreading of the virus for the period of approximately two months (March 9 to May 17). After a relatively calm Summer, the number of infections started to increase again and at the end of October, new countermeasures that limit the freedom of movement of the population and determine restricted business hours for commercial activities have been implemented. Nowadays, the situation seems calmer thanks to a massive vaccination campaign that started among controversy.

Leaving aside the huge economic impact, both the pandemic and its countermeasures, also affected individuals and families psychologically in different ways, according to the period (lockdown/second wave/vaccination campaign) and according to the personal situation of the individuals.

Since August 2020 I have been conducting ethnographic fieldwork and media analysis, to evaluate the social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy. Drawing on interviews with psychologists and psychotherapists operating in Italy, this presentation aims to present some aspects of the psychological impact Covid-19 pandemic on the Italian population. It is usually said that the impact of the lockdown was severe, but from my interviews, I have also gathered information regarding the effect of going out again after the lockdown and how anxiety and fear can present themselves at a later stage when individuals restart their activities to face new challenges in a world much scarier to the one they knew before the pandemic.

The aim of the presentation is also to provide the background for a larger comparative discussion about the impact of Covid-19 in different countries to reflect on differences and commonalities.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on population mental health: International perspectives