

COVID-19: A stressor, need a pressor

Bhim Kumari Pun^{1*}, Suman Kumari¹

ABSTRACT

Since the inception of humankind, the man has been witnessed fatal diseases that have taken a substantial toll on them. History records diseases like, Smallpox, Chicken pox, Ebola etc., that lived through populations like the proverbial scythe of old man time. These diseases killed millions of people throughout the globe. Likewise another dreadful viral illness known as COVID-19 has raised its head in November 2019 in China, which kills millions of people. As per sources, India has reported 33, 610 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 1,075 death cases. This increased number of cases has surely a big triggered impact on people and their well-being. This ailment is not only the fatal and painful but it carries with a hefty load of fear, anxiety stress and so on, which directly affects individual's psychological well-being and quality of life. While keeping these things in mind the researcher's pen down this research article, to highlight the psychological issues faced by the people due to this corona virus (COVID – 19) disease.

Keywords: Covid-19, Mental Health, Stress, Anxiety, Mass Hysteria

Today's pandemic outbreak of COVID-19 has created chaos in whole world. The corona virus has infected 210 countries and territories. The infected cases have reached to 3,152,959 with a mortality rate of 218,636. In India, situation is further deteriorating with cases multiplying faster than DNA replication. The confirmed cases are found to be 31,332 with a mortality rate of 1007 till now. People have locked themselves inside homes just like the animals in zoo. It seems like the earth is reciprocating back and is in the process of purifying herself. It is the first time in history to see such a remarkable event where earth is inversely proportional to mankind. With this outbreak, people are dying in enormous numbers. The pandemic of Black Death in 1347- 1351 with death rate of 75-200 million had huge impact on social, religious and economic bases of European history. Even the world's deadliest pandemic Spanish flu infected one third of world population lasting for 36 months with a death rate of 17-50 million populations. But it never happened in history where a pandemic could hold the power to shut down the entire world.

Although the impact of SARS-CoV-2 has shaken the health, economy, lifestyle and normalcy of individual's life. The most common impact has been found on mental health. Either it's a doctor, nurse, politician, police man, soldier, business man, celebrity or a common man, everyone is facing the mental burden such as stress and anxiety. The stress and anxiety are in

¹ MA Clinical Psychology, Lovely Professional University, India

*Responding Author

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the form of either lack of food, shelter or fear of disease or death. The major stress and anxiety faced by people during COVID 19 crisis are listed in this article.

Financial stress

Remittances, “is a vital source of income” for developing countries (David Malpass, President, World Bank). In India, it has been estimated to fall by 23% in 2020 i.e. declination from \$83 billion last year to \$64 billion this year and globally by about 20% due to the financial crisis produced by covid-19. Malpass stated that remittances enables families to supply basic needs, foods and healthcare. Present covid -19 has caused economic recession, thus pressurised more stress to shorten the time to recover for advanced economy. Covid has greatly affected global economics putting question marks on the supply services, import – exports of products, thus put a pause to chain of supplies. Transportation from international to national and even in states are paused which compelled individuals to work from home situations, which is obviously a great demerit from the economic point of view , leading to recession. Tourism industry has also taken a huge toll, Educational institutes are shut down , schools board exams has been postponed for tenth and twelfth , causing more stress to educational system and students.

Covid 19 has come as a novel serious disease, providing unpredictability, uncertainty about the ongoing lockdown, which has affected the well-being of the population in terms of their mental health and morbidity.

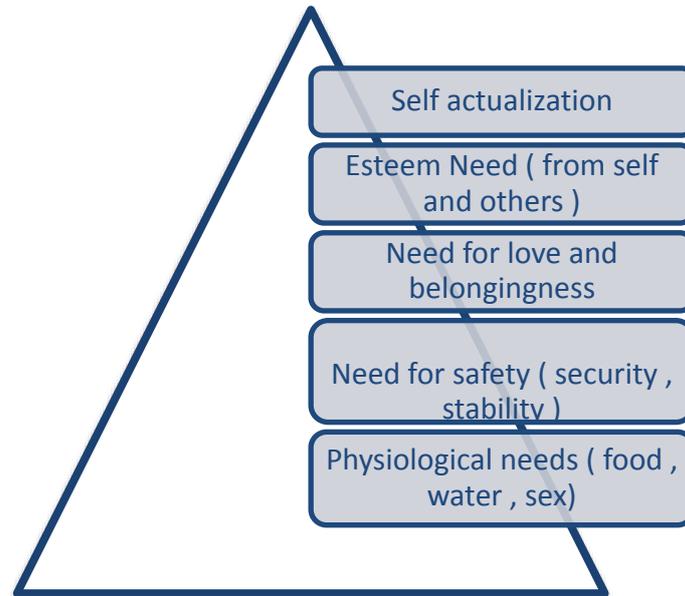
Frontline Stress

“Teri mithi mai mil jawa, gul banke mai khil jawwaa” ... (Song: Teri mitti , movie : kesari) Nowadays this enthuziasting lyrics are touching millions of hearts, and it’s the most trending song on tiktok in context to dedicate to our frontlines , i.e. doctors, nurses , healthcare workers , paramedics, police , volunteers . As per P.M. modi’s call whole nation applaud these frontlines and celebrate their significant role in this breakdown. but actions are more powerful than words, and same happens, frontlines are facing violence, abuse, discrimination which vary from refusal by taxi , cabs facing problems in reaching hospital , hostility from community , spat on , stoned and even beaten with sticks and these cases are increasing on daily basis. Healthcare workers are being evicted by their landlords, resulting in homeless conditions amidst a compete lockdown. One doctor stated that as per his landlord, since he works in a hospital so he will bring infection and spread it to whole colony”, and the same is reported by other doctors in states. One nurse, 38 (Kolkata) was forced to leave her apartment with her two young , even though she was not treating any covid patient and had no symptoms. To encounter with these shameful behaviour, several hotels has been provided for the healthcare workers. Guwahati’s Taj Vivanta serving as a centre for all health care workers during quarantine. Similarly Delhi government has hired hotel Leela of east Delhi for Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality and GTB Hospital doctors and nurses.

Our frontlines heroes are at more significant risk for the adverse mental health, the reason include their working hours, more susceptible to risk, loneliness, lack of necessary safety equipment, away from family.

Maslow hierarchy need: level of stress, causes for mental imbalance due to covid

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According to Maslow theory he enlisted five innate needs of an individual, levelling from strongest to weakest in terms of their strength, potency and priority. Thus, in lockdown period, the stress will be depending upon the level of need which are fulfilled. For examples, daily wagers due to the lockdown are struggling for their basic needs (food), unfulfillment of this physiological need may causes survival crisis, stress, detoriation in physical and mental health. This category includes, daily wagers, autorikshaws drivers, delivery persons, shopkeepers.

Safety needs – A conditions which requires stability, security and free from any worries, fear, anxiety. Whole nation, globe comes in this category, but the most vulnerable populations are our frontlines, who are made homeless, becoming victims of abuse, violence, discrimination thus providing unsatisfied feeling of safety, security , making them more vulnerable to mental stress.

Need for love: this physiological relationship is mainly expressed by our close friends, family and loved ones which is necessary for our sense of belongingness, enables us for emotional adjustment and healthy and sound psychological state. 22,982 active cases , 1008 death cases , 1 migrated patient, 1813 new cases and 7 death is last 24 hours (Ministry of Health and family Welfare ,29 April , 2020 , Business today). Due to the increased cases, government has been very strict for the lockdown and isolation of any suspected cases. Due to this lockdown and isolation, many are stuck, away from their family, loved ones, making them more prone to mental imbalance, irritable, frustration, feeling of loneliness, maladjustment. E.g. frontlines, susceptible cases that are kept in isolation, long distance relationship.

Esteem and Self- actualization need- During massive lockdown, people have more time to spend for themselves creating boredom and stress. But keeping positive mind-set towards ourselves helps them to find out the ways to explore and learn skills for earning. Many people have started teaching online whereas many students are taking the initiatives to develop technologies to support during crises. Not only this, people are trying their luck to cook and paint they have never done before. Even our celebrities are found to do household chores,

painting and crafting during lockdown. This has not only reduced the mental pressure but helped people in knowing themselves and identifying their potential and capabilities in achieving goals.

Marital distress:

The incidence of marital distress are dominating the headlines of newspapers. Within 25 days of lockdown (23 March – 16 April) , 257 complains has been received via WhatsApp and email which is double from last 25 days. There was a case reported where both husband and wife were well educated (husband – businessman, wife – consultant), started argument over household works leading to physical abuse (slapped) to his wife. A similar case was reported in Nainital where a Delhi based women was beaten up by her husband. Sunanda Desai, a working woman stated that “I am questioned every single day for things not been done well. There is stress at work and at home. I ’am shouted by my husband, in laws and even children. There are fights and violence in the house that I have never experienced before in my ten years of marriages”.

Marital distress –Calhoun – Defensible space theory: he performed experiment: where he take numbers of rats in different types of environments out of which some were spacious with wide open areas, in contrast to these others were broken into single or individual rooms. Here rats were compelled to live without any justifiable space which results in aggressive, frequent and quick fights between rats. While those rats were provided with spacious environment, no fights were reported irrespective to the population of rats living there. Thus, this experiment implies the effect of environment in psychology. Suppose we are living in a room with no spacious privacy, thus causing stress. Similarly, lockdown has made work from home, thus eliminating distance between family members and loved ones. Due to self-isolation , work from home, initial days were well enjoyed but as days passes working members of a family are getting a sense of suffocation , feeling of boredom , irritability , meaning of life getting diminished, lack of privacy which causes stress , frequent conflict with the partner, leading to marital distress , resulting in mental and physical abuse , domestic violence. Lockdown has resulted in boredom lifestyle thus increased the dependency on internet, and the most frequent search sites on lockdown are online dating apps for quick romantic chats, contributing to extramarital affairs. WHO stated “the risk of intimate partner violence is likely to increase, as distancing measures are put in place and people are encouraged to stay at home”?

Apart from this, Women either homemaker or working, are now feeling a double burden due to the lockdown, since they have to took care of each family members all the time both physically and emotionally.

Anxiety

Anxiety, an irrational feeling of possible future, and due to the uncertainty nature of covid, the prevalence of anxiety has been increased, leading to stress and vice – versa, thus hampering the sleep cycle of an individual. A 30 year old man (South Delhi’s Sukhdev Vihar) displayed some behavioural changes after his brother found to be corona suspect, as per resources he locked himself for 2 days, exist from family WhatsApp group, behaving differently. Similar case has been noticed in Noida for a 60-year-old man. As per the reports, 2 weeks ago he came to know that his grandson is trapped in one of the viruses affected country, after which he used to wake up at mid night, screams his grandson name.

Anxiety has become a new challenge during this lockdown. The reasons are enlisted:

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1. Fear of covid-19 (due to rapid increased death rates due to covid-19)
2. Fear of isolation (increased cases of covid-19 , separation from loved ones)
3. Uncertainty nature of covid-19
4. Social stigma of covid-19 (north-eastern evidences like beating, discrimination, isolation)
5. Daily news of infection and death rates (e.g.3 patient died and hundreds are quarantined)

Psychodynamic theory view anxiety as a signal, which indicate the disturbances in inner psychological state, known as a signal anxiety.

Signal anxiety → ego → repression (defence mechanism)
In anxiety, failure of Repression → no activation of secondary mechanism, thus evident symptoms of anxiety.

This theory is most appropriate for those who are themselves a frontlines, or a family member of frontlines, or the one who have the covid positive member in their family, or had lost their dear one due to covid-19, history of mental illness, anxiety disorders.

Behaviour theory

This theory view anxiety as an inborn response to stimuli which is perceived as danger, threaten. Here, Stimulus (Covid -19), contact with covid positive) → danger (health issues, isolation, job loss, death)

A recent study by Debina Roy et.al (2020) identified high anxiety level among Indian population during covid-19 pandemic. Approximately more than 80% of the population are preoccupied with the thought of covid-19. Consequences of anxiety: 12% of people reported sleeping difficulties, 82% reported decreased social contact, and 90% reported avoided gathering, partying (Debina roy et. al, 2020). Safdarjung Hospital (19 March), one person when suspected to have covid -19 jumped from 7th floor of the buildings. In Kolhapur, Maharashtra a man has been beaten up in public for sneezing and spitting.

Mass hysteria “Covid-19”

Now here the question pops that why covid -19 has been crowned as “Mass“Hysteria”. Due to advance technology, tons of media channels, on every click of T.V. button, newspapers, Whats App, social Medias, are flooded with covid-19 information, creating widespread panic. As day passes, the number of deaths has been piled up, “thus everything is getting negative and further creating anxiety. Even if a person sneezes, cough or show symptoms of fever, fatigue , they perceive it as a sign and symptoms of covid -19 , and start thinking that they are goanna die” (Rajiv Mehta , Vice Chairperson , Institute of Psychiatry and Behavioural Science , SGRH). Thus, mass hysteria has been developing and leading to incidences of panics and anxiety.

CONCLUSION

From the above studies it can be predicted that there are chances for more cases of mental illness in coming days. Even during recession and after lockdown, people are facing and will face overload of mental burden due to economy breakdown and unemployment. So the government of India should take initiatives to deal not only with physical health but mental breakdown as well. There should be affordable online counselling session for each individual and every state should provide the facility to appoint psychologist to deal with such situations and remedial measures.

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Not only this, people should accept this pandemic as a warning of our nature and should act to conserve them. The biggest wealth is not money but life. And this life can only be sustained with healthy mind.

“Out of all the things I have lost, I miss my mind the most.” ~ Mark Twain

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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