

## Psychosocial Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

Presently the world is facing the coronavirus disease known as Covid-19. The World Health Organization announced that the outbreaks of the novel coronavirus had constituted a public health emergency. As a result of the emergence of COVID-19, a situation of socio-economic crisis and profound psychological problems rapidly occurred worldwide. This pandemic has multi-dimensional impacts. COVID-19 disease significantly affected the social and economic condition of the world. Various mental health problems, such as stress, anxiety, depression, thanatophobia, frustration, and loneliness, have emerged progressively. This article focuses to systematically review the current literature about the impact of COVID-19 infection on the psychosocial conditions of the world. The mental health problems, as a side effect of quarantine related to COVID-19, have also been emphasized. The psychological burdens imposed by this pandemic on children and the elderly have also been discussed. The protective factors against the negative impact of COVID-19 have been addressed as well.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Psychosocial Impact, Pandemic, Quarantine, Social Distance

The COVID-19 has created an unprecedented crisis for humanity. Several cases of pneumonia (unknown cause) were identified first in the Hubei region of China on December 31, 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) identified the causative agent as a 2019-new coronavirus (2019-nCoV) (WHO, 2020). Later, the WHO re-named the disease as Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Due to the increasing number of cases in China and outside China, the WHO declared corona virus as a global health emergency (Phelan, Rebecca, and Lawrence, 2020). World Health Organization (2020) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic disease due to the increasing cases of coronavirus outside China, claiming thousands of lives across 192 countries population infected with COVID-19. The symptoms of this disease include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

### Global scenario

Globally, on 08 June, 2021, there have been **173,331,478** confirmed cases of COVID-19, including **3,735,571** deaths, reported to the World Health Organization (WHO coronavirus disease dashboard, 2021). In the month of March, 2020, Europe and North America were the epicenters of COVID-19, having main foci in Europe (Italy, Spain, Germany, France, etc.), America (USA, Canada, etc.), and East Asia (China, South Korea, etc.). Nearly 20 million cases of COVID-19 have been recorded worldwide in the month of August (WHO

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coronavirus disease dashboard, 2020). In the month of June of 2021, the highest number of 68,655,985 confirmed patients of COVID-19 are still found in the Americas region. According to the descending number of cases of Covid-19, six regions are Americas, Europe, South-East Asia, Eastern Mediterranean, Africa and Western Pacific (WHO, Coronavirus disease dashboard, 2021). Few Vaccines have been developed worldwide to save lives from COVID-19 disease, These Vaccines are found to be effective in various COVID-19 cases, although their long-term effects on humanity are yet to be analyzed.

### *The Indian Scenario*

India is continuing to struggle to combat the virus as the numbers continue to surge. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (2021) data on June 10, 2021, there have been 29183121 confirmed cases with 1167952 active cases and 359676 deaths. Six states, according to the descending number of current active cases of Covid-19 on June 10, 2021, in India, are Karnataka (215546), Tamil Nadu (204248), Maharashtra (164743), Kerala (139481), Andhra Pradesh (103995) and Odisha (63333) (Indian Council of Medical Research, 2021). Nearly six months after the peak of the first wave in September 2020, a second wave began in March 2021. This wave was much larger than the first. During the beginning of this wave, India faced various problems, such as shortages of vaccines, hospital beds, oxygen cylinders, and other medicines in different parts of the country (Michael, 2021). India's drug regulator has given the green signal to Covishield (the local name for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine developed in the UK), Covaxin (locally-made by pharma company Bharat Biotech), and Russia's Sputnik V Vaccine for vaccination in India. In India, 22,19,01,281 people have taken the first dose of the vaccine, and 5,04,87,502 people have taken both doses. Thus, a total of 27, 23, 88,783 doses of the vaccine have been taken by the people of India till June 19, 2021 (MOHFW, 2021).

### *Impacts of COVID-19*

COVID-19 has influenced the day-to-day life of the human. This disease has greatly affected human health, psychological conditions, environment, and socio-economic conditions. The ample effects of COVID-19 on different aspects of human life worldwide will be analyzed here in detail.

### *Impact of COVID-19 on Physical Health*

This pandemic has affected millions of peoples. COVID-19 infected people are either sick or are being dead by this viral disease. The most common symptoms of this viral infection are cold, fever, cough, and breathing problems, and finally leading to pneumonia. It is a new kind of viral disease. No Vaccine is giving a guarantee for full safety from this virus. Thus, extensive precautions such as various hygiene protocols, regularly washing of hands, use of face masks, and attention to social distance, have been recommended by knowledgeable people. This virus is spreading mainly region-wise. For breaking the chain of this virus spread, many countries are locking their population and enforcing strict quarantine to control the spread of the havoc of this highly communicable disease. Apart from the medical problems faced by corona-affected persons, there are impacts on the physical health of people confined in their homes. To control the spread of COVID-19, Governments imposed various restrictions on citizens, such as lockdowns in states, closures of shops, gyms, schools, malls, public parks, etc. These restrictions increased physical inactivity and weight gain among people, which affected their physical health (Ghosh, Arora, Gupta, Shajit, Misra, 2020).

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COVID-19 has rapidly affected our healthcare systems. It is a severe challenge to diagnose the disease early, quarantine the patient immediately and to start quick treatment of the sick. Suddenly a lot of people became ill due to Coronavirus. It increases the burden on our doctors and the medical system. People suffering from other diseases are not going to hospitals for their treatment. In other words, patients suffering from other serious diseases are getting neglected at this time for fear of getting infected with this infectious disease. During the treatment of patients of COVID-19, doctors and other health care professionals are also getting infected with this disease. They need higher protection to save themselves. COVID-19 has destroyed medical health services in many places (Haleem, Javaid, Vaishya, 2020).

### ***Impact of COVID-19 on Economy***

Now the global economy is in a slump due to COVID-19, no emerging economy can grow at its previous speed. The global economy is projected to contract sharply by -3% percent in 2020 which is much worse than the financial crises in 2008-09 (International Monetary Fund, 2020). The Indian economy was also struggling with its issues, and now COVID-19 made matters worse. The Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented shock to the Indian economy. The Government of India has announced a variety of measures to deal with the situation, from food security and extra funds for healthcare to sector-related incentives and tax deadline extensions. Due to country and state wide lockdown, the global economy turned down. It also disrupted the chain of demand and supply. The Indian economy and the global economy are likely to face a prolonged period of slowdown in development (Dev & Sengupta, 2020).

After the spread of COVID-19, many countries closed their seaports and airports for trade. They have banned import and export activities. The worldwide business activity was affected by the lockdown. Business relations with China were affected due to COVID-19. China is a distributor of raw materials and due to no business relationship with China, the manufacturing of many goods was also affected. India is a developing country. The outbreak of COVID-19 has led the Government of India to begin a lockdown in the country from time to time, which has affected manufacturing and other business activities and ultimately affected the entire economy. There are massive demands for many products such as face-masks and pharmaceutical products during this pandemic. The business is facing a slow down due to the lockdown and pandemic. It breaks the production cycle of the goods, which will further affect the investments (Moore, 2020).

The Indian government has taken various steps to deal with the situation, such as food security and extra funds and incentives for healthcare, business, and tax deadline extensions. The Indian government is now focusing on the *Make in India* project to establish India as an alternative to China for manufacturing products for both the local and global markets. To curb the growing impact of COVID-19 on the economy and the increasing income inequality, the Indian government has emphasized the *Vocal for Local* campaign to improve local trade conditions. (Chakraborty, 2020). The growth of India is expected to dip to 1.9% in 2020 and rebound to 7.4% in 2021. According to International Monetary Fund (2020), India's growth projection for 2020 is 3.9% less than what was projected for the country in January, while its rebound in 2021 is 0.9 % higher than the January projection.

### ***Social Impact of COVID-19***

The COVID-19 outbreak affected all segments of the population. The virus may vanish sooner or later, but the impact of distrust that has been created due to COVID-19 shall

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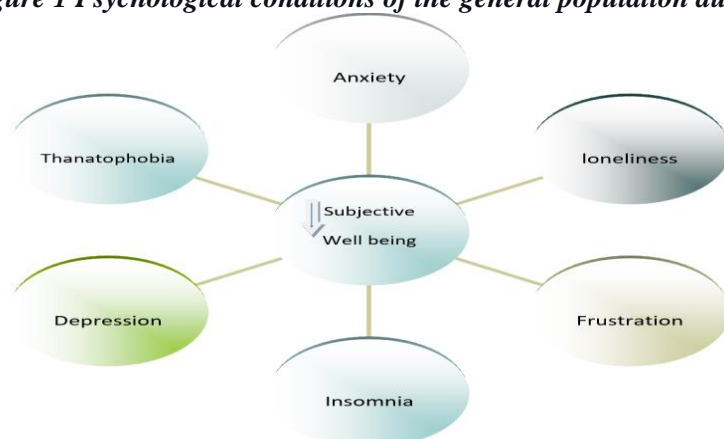
appear large over the social relationship. It primarily affected people living in poverty situations, older persons, persons with disabilities, and migrant workers. Homeless people are highly exposed to the danger of the virus as they may be unable to found safely shelter in place. Refugees, migrant or displaced persons also stand to suffer from the pandemic due to limited movement, fewer employment opportunities, and increased xenophobia. The social crisis created by the COVID-19 may also increase inequality, exclusion, discrimination, and global unemployment in the long term.

COVID-19 has affected the daily routines of older people. Older people are being challenged by requirements to spend more time at home, lack of social contact with other family members and friends. They are suffering from various physical problems along with anxiety, and fear of illness and death of their own and others. Therefore, it is important that we pay attention to foster healthy aging during this pandemic. During the COVID-19 crisis, persons with disabilities find themselves isolated and unable to survive during lockdown measures. There are increments in barriers to persons with disabilities in accessing health services and information. Persons with disabilities also continue to face discrimination and other problems in accessing livelihood and income support, participating in online forms of education and seeking protection from cruelty (United Nations Human Rights Commission, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, many migrant workers used all possible means to reach their destinations in India. Migrant workers faced various problems related to their food, shelter, healthcare, fear of getting infected, loss of wages, concerns about the family, anxiety, and fear (Singh, 2020).

### ***Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health of the General Population***

The uncertainty and low predictability of COVID-19 not only threaten people's physical health, but also affect people's mental health, especially in terms of emotions and cognition. COVID-19 has affected the mental health of people. Many psychological problems and its consequences emerged, including stress, anxiety, depression, frustration, uncertainty progressively (Duan & Zhu, 2020). People's quarantine to prevent the spread of COVID-19 has led to generalized fear and widespread community anxiety among people, usually associated with the outbreak of the disease, and with the increase in new cases. A big reason for this is insufficient, worrying information provided by the media. Social isolation related to restrictions and lockdown measures is linked to feelings of uncertainty for the future, fear of the new and unknown virus, resulting in increased anxiety (Khan *et al.*, 2020). The following image depicted the psychological conditions of the general population during COVID-19 in short.

***Figure 1 Psychological conditions of the general population during COVID-19***



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Brooks *et al.*, (2020) have reported psychological impact of quarantine on the mental health of a person, like irritability, fear of spreading the infection to family members, anger, confusion, frustration, loneliness, denial, anxiety, depression, insomnia, despair, to extremes of consequences, including suicide. They also reported about post quarantine psychological effects, which may include significant socioeconomic distress and psychological symptoms due to financial losses. Inhibition from daily activities generates frustration and loneliness. Interruption of social requirements and the inability to take part in social activities increase the risk of hopelessness and suicidal behaviour in this pandemic (Orsolini *et al.*, 2020). Persons with mental illness reduced their access to medication during the pandemic. It can lead to a relapse of symptoms with increased stress. Overall, long periods of social isolation and quarantine may have detrimental effects on mental wellbeing (Zhai & Du, 2020).

World Health Organization (2020) issued in its guidelines that to reduce COVID-19 related stress people should minimize watching, reading, or listening to news about COVID-19. They should seek information only from trusted sources and only for preparing plans to protect themselves and their family. The constant stream of news reports about the COVID-19 outbreak can cause anyone to feel anxious. Working together as one community can help to create unity in fighting against COVID-19. Due to the necessity of social distance, one can check about the need and extra assistance of neighbours by telephone. Hopeful stories and positive images of local people who have recovered from COVID-19 should be shared with active patients. People should honor healthcare workers for supporting people affected by COVID-19 in the community.

### ***Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health of Children***

Although medical literature shows that children are minimally susceptible to COVID-19 disease, they are mostly suffering from the psychosocial impact of this pandemic. School closure, lack of outdoor activity, irregular dietary and sleeping habits are likely to disturb children's lifestyle. This pandemic promoted monotony, anxiety, frustration, and varied neuropsychiatric symptoms in children. Incidences of domestic violence, child abuse, and polluted online content are amplified in the lives of children and adolescents. The children from poor-families are mainly vulnerable to the infection. Role of Parents, psychologists, doctors, and government organizations are very crucial to control the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 on children and adolescents (Ghosh, Dubey, Chatterjee, & Dubey, 2020).

In the current situation of lockdown, children have constrained access to socialization, play, and even social contact, essential for their psychosocial wellbeing and development. Home confinement imposes a psychosocial impact on children due to extreme changes in their lifestyle, physical activity, and mental stress (Wang, Zhang, Zhao, Zhang, Jiang). Children who were kept in quarantine at institutions felt highly isolated as they were away from their parents. Children who felt detached from parents in this critical time may suffer from everlasting psychiatric consequences, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, psychosis, depression, delinquency, and even suicidal tendency. Hospital authorities and local government need should make arrangements so that children can be in touch with their parents via audiovisual devices. Policymakers should make operational strategies to provide mental healthcare for quarantined children (Liu, Bao, Huang, Shi & Lu, 2020). Although periods of lockdown is a golden opportunity for parents to intermingle with their children, the parents who are in health services, police department, and defence service or in any essential services are hardly finding any time for their family and children.

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The negative impact of COVID-19 on children can be minimized by providing them an opportunity to engage in age-appropriate activities. Children should be encouraged to continue to play and socialize with other family members. Parents should discuss with their children about COVID-19 in an honest and age-appropriate way. Parents-children communication may control the unnecessary anxiety of children. Parents are role models for children. They observe their parents' behaviours and emotions and imitate them to manage their own emotions during difficult times. Parents should help their children to find positive ways to express feelings of fear and depression. Children should be motivated to engage themselves in a creative activity. Children's creation should be appreciated by their parents, for its novelty and originality. Most of the children feel comforted if they can convey their feelings in a safe and supportive environment (World Health Organization, 2020).

### *COVID-19 on Mental Health of Elderly People*

The COVID-19 has a significant psychosocial impact on elderly peoples. Old age itself is a predisposing factor to the physical and mental health of the elderly. The comorbid conditions of the elderly make them more vulnerable to new infections and the associated psychological distress. During this pandemic social isolation of the elderly became a serious concern to their mental health. Social distancing, the strategy to fight COVID-19, is also a major cause of loneliness. Social isolation is an independent risk factor for depression, anxiety, and suicide (Armitage & Nellums, 2020). There is the issue of access to medications and health facilities for elderly peoples due to strict lockdowns. Under this situation, they are bound to suffer a decline in their mental state.

Older peoples may become more anxious, angry, stressed, disturbed, and depressed during the quarantine. Practical and emotional support should be provided to them through family members and health professionals. Family members should clearly explain the information regarding the risk of infection to elderly peoples, especially to those who are cognitively impaired. Family members and other helping people should teach them politely about prevention measures such as washing hands and the use of face masks. Medicines for elderly peoples should be kept in advance at home. Older peoples should perform physical exercises daily at home. Their daily routine should be regular. They should be given opportunities to be engaged in their favourite activities, such as watching television, singing, and painting. Family members should take care of them with love and respect (World Health Organization, 2020).

## **CONCLUSION**

Physical distance, use of masks, maximum testing of the disease and isolation of patients are primary conditions for success in combating COVID-19. After the discovery of the vaccines in the world, the corona is expected to be completely controlled. The severity of the disease was seen less in the people who were vaccinated. There is also a need to do research in the coming time regarding the impact of vaccines, such as why some people died despite being vaccinated. Lessons need to be learned from the dire consequences of the second wave in many countries. At the same time, it should also be kept in mind that due to our carelessness, the third wave of corona can also come. Implementing community-based strategies to support psychologically vulnerable individuals during the COVID-19 crisis is essential for any society. The government and society should rapidly adopt clear behavioural strategies to reduce the impact of disease and related mental health consequences of this pandemic. The pandemic of COVID-19 has made it necessary to pay attention to the poor and marginalized populations to prevent long-lasting adverse health outcomes. The government should implement a national policy to improve the condition of the health



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sector. Collaboration between government and industries will be needed to control disruption in the economy. Professional counsellors may provide support to virus-affected clients and also to individuals having psychological difficulties in the present time.

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