Corona Virus Crisis: Ground Reality during the Lockdown

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***Abstract*---**The Corona virus pandemic has caused devastating effects across the world. With loss of tens and millions of lives and economic shutdown, the pandemic has caused a catastrophic effect which is to be felt by generations to come. This piece reflects on the social, emotional and economical consequences of the ongoing crisis as well as the extreme lockdown that has had overwhelming effect on millions of people across the globe. The COVID-19 pandemic has claimed many lives around the world and poses an unparalleled danger to public health, the food supply, and the workplace. During the lockdown, mental health problems and suicides are at an all-time high. Mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and stress are common during the lockdown. Women and infants, who are the most disadvantaged members of society, are more vulnerable to mental health problems and domestic abuse.

***Keywords*---**COVID-19, lockdown, India, mental health, socio-economical impact, discrimination, racism.

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Introduction

A pandemic of a novel corona virus disease (COVID-19 or n-CoV-2019 or SARS-Cov-2) has spread from Wuhan, China, to every continent since December 2019. According to worldometers.info's interpretation of the most recent United Nations results, India is the world's second most populous country, with a population of 1,390,827,315 people as of Tuesday, April 20th, 2021. [1]With such a high population density, the possibility of SARS-CoV-2 or the corona virus increases. Cases of the Corona virus are at an all-time high all over the world.As of April 20th, 2021, 143,543,719 cases had been registered worldwide, with 122,152,282 cases recovered and 3,057,546 cases dying. In India, 15,616,130 cases have been recorded, with 13,276,039 cases recovered and 182,553 cases dying.[2]The number of confirmed cases is smallerthan the total of actual cases, owing to the lack of f or absence of testing.

Until now, the United States has been the worst-affected country in the world, followed by India, Brazil, France, and Russia. However, with the increase in COVID cases and India's high population density, the country is on the verge of becoming the worst-affected country. According to the Health Ministry, India experienced the worst regular increase ever on April 20th2021, with 2,61,500 new COVID -19 cases and 1,501 deaths from the disease.[3]

The lockdown

Due to the extreme outbreak of COVID-19, almost the entire planet is paralysed. On January 30, 2020, India announced the first case of COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the world's largest shutdown, the "Janta Curfew," which began at midnight on March 25, 2020, and lasted for more than two months, before being phased out except in the contamination region. So, what does lockdown According to GK Today, 2020: "lockdown is an action when there are restrictions on assembly but essential services are available"[13]
People were not allowed to leave their homes except in emergencies or to purchase essential needs such as medicines and groceries, according to the lockdown regulations. The current pandemic and the lockdown are having devastating mental health consequences, with a second wave on the way.

Effect on mental health

The COVID-19 virus, also known as SARS-CoV-2, isn't the only deadly disease at an all-time peak. The global mental health issue is a major concern, and India is not far behind in this regard. "Mental health is a state of well-being in which a person recognises his or her own talents, can cope with normal stresses of life, can function productively, and can contribute to his or her community," according to the World Health Organization."[4]

MNS (mental, physiological, and substance use disorders) are highly common, extremely debilitating, and are linked to a large number of premature deaths. The lack of attention paid to MNS around the world is important, and it has a significant impact on human, social, and economic capital. According to a report, there are over 792 million people worldwide who suffer from a mental illness.

That's slightly more than one out of every ten people on the planet (10.7 percent), with children and teenagers accounting for roughly 20% of the total.[5], [6] Given below are some statistics which clearly indicate that India has a long way to go in terms of mental health.

- The gap between mental health providers and those who suffer from mental illness is enormous. According to the World Health Organization, India has 0.3 psychiatrists, 0.12 nurses, 0.07 psychologists, and 0.07 social workers per 100,000 population, while any number greater than 3 psychiatrists and psychologists is ideal.[7]
- As per WHO, 7.5 percent of Indians suffer from mental illnesses. By the end of 2021, the figure will have risen to 20% due to the current global situation. An estimated 56 million Indians suffer from depression, with another 38 million suffering from anxiety disorders.[7]
- Suicide has exceeded maternal mortality as the leading cause of death among women and teenagers aged 15 to 19. India accounts for 36.6 percent of all suicides worldwide. Indian women account for 36.6 percent of suicide deaths worldwide, while Indian men account for 24.3 percent.[7]
- Mental illness affects one out of every seven Indians, and the economic cost of mental illness is estimated to be around 1.03 trillion between 2012 and 2030.[7]

Economical impact

In addition to being a global pandemic and public health epidemic, COVID-19 has had a direct effect on the global economy and financial markets. Disease prevention policies have resulted in substantial income loss, increased unemployment, and disturbances in the transportation, services, and manufacturing sectors in many countries. The pandemic has thrown most countries into extremely deep recession by the end of 2020. Advance economies hasshrunkby 7% whereas weak economies by 2.3%. Every region has experienced significant growth slowdowns. East Asia and the Pacific have only increased by 0.5%. South Asia has a contact rate of 2.7%, Sun Sahara Africa has a contact rate of 2.8%, the Middle East and North Africa has a contact rate of 4.2%, Europe and Central Asia has a contact rate of 4.7%, and Latin America has a contact rate of 7.2%.[27]

The COVID-19 pandemic is pegged to cost the global economy a total estimate of 11.5 trillion, including 5 trillion to 5.6 trillion in GDP .[28] According to the forecast, the global gross domestic product (GDP) fell by 3.4% in 2020, while if it expected to grow by 2.9 % by the end of 2021.[29]

Economical impact on india

In India, the economic impact has already been estimated to be between 160 billion (5.6 percent of GDP) and 175 billion (0.6 percent of GDP).[30] The lockdown that was announced with less than 4 hours notice was aimed at containing the spread of the coronavirus, triggered the worse humanitarian crisis of several decades as tens and thousands of migrants workers were rendered jobless overnight and were forced to travel tens and thousands of kilometres often via foot

and empty stomach. Hundreds died before they reached their destination, often due to road accidents, starvation or exhaustion.[16]

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing have resulted in enormous stress, predisposing millions across Those with pre-existing mental health conditions are at a higher risk of relapse and/or exacerbation of symptoms. [10] Within a week of the lockdown's implementation, India's mental health problems reportedly increased by 20%. Between the imposition of lockdown and May 9, 2020, suicide accounted for more than half of all non-COVID deaths in India.[12]Liquor and wine stores, like all other non- essential business, were to remain shut. Withdrawal symptoms are common in people who consume alcohol on a regular basis. While suffering from severe alcohol withdrawal symptoms, a 32- year old man from Kerala jumped to his death into a river. Following this incident, the exercise department was ordered to provide alcohol only on the recommendation of a physician.[15]

Social impact

The ongoing pandemic have exacerbated existing social and economic divides, resulting in widespread discrimination against religious and racial minorities, as well as lower castes.[17] The pandemic unleashed a wave of hatred and xenophobia. People of Asian descent were frequently used as scapegoat. With the COVID-19 pandemic, racism and physical attacks against Asian people and people of Asian ancestry spread like wild fire, and government leaders and senior officials directly or indirectly encouraged hate crimes, racism or xenophobia by using anti-Chinese and anti- Asian rhetoric. The Constant use of derogatory terms like "China virus" and Wuhan virus [31,32]Luca Zaia, governor of Veneto, Italy, stated that his country would be better at coping with the virus than China seeing as Italians have a "culturally strong attention to hygiene, washing hands, taking showers, whereas we have all seen the Chinese eating mice alive.[33]

Social impact in India

Since the election of the Hindu nationalist BharatiyaJanta Party in 2015, antiMuslim sentiments are in rise. The Indian Muslims, who were already reeling from the impact of two recent decisions made by the Indian government; namely, the revocation of Kashmir's special status, a heavily Muslim-dominated state, on August 5, 2019, and the brutal discriminatory act against Muslims, the CAA-NRC.[19]TablighiJamaat, a Muslim religious congregation that took place in Delhi's NazamuddinMarkaz Mosque in September. The event started prior to the implementation of the lockdown and when the congregants left the gathering to travel back to their home states (a move highly criticised even by the Muslim leaders), their movement was highly reported, with extremely high distortion and exaggeration, resulting in unnecessary panic and Islamophobic attacks.[20]The Jamaat meeting was dubbed a "talibani crime" and "corona terrorism" by government officials.[34, 35] Hashtags like #coronajahid were also used by many officials that fuelled the hate.[36]

Calls for social and economic boycott of Muslims flooded social media and WhatsApp groups.[37] Several physical assaults were reported [38], including one on

volunteers distributing relief materials who were accused of spreading the virus on purpose.[39] Ironically, even after lockdown was announced, mass gatherings hosted by other religious groups, drew little to no attention or hatred anywhere Let's take the on going Kumbh mela 2021 in Uttarakhand.[21] With the rise of second wave of COVID-19, millions of devotees are gathered up in Haridwar without following any COVID precautions and travelling to and fro from all over the country yet receiving little to none backlash. The political leaders of India went as far as to call the Kumbh mela gathering "symbolic" and a symbol of " strength to India's fight against the virus.[22] whereas the Tablighi Jamaat congregation were called "terrorists" and other xenophobic comments.[23] for the very same act.

Impact on medical professionals

Doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals have also been put at risk due to phobia and misinformation arising from COVID-19 pandemic. Health care professionals, like many all over the world, are the front line soldiers, as well as the most helpless and high-risk people. The health-care system in India is failing due to widespread lack of personal protective equipment, bureaucracy, and other infrastructure problems.

As if that wasn't bad enough, medical personnel are being robbed, refused transportation, and threatened when trying to screen the general population [23]while employed as a nurse in a hospital.[24]and when living in their housing neighbourhoods, with landlords often forcibly evicting them.[25] Many cases have come forward where the government and employers are not paying the medical care providers for their services for months at end.[26] Health care providers have become the essential but undervalued part of our society aimed the corona virus pandemic as they are getting the recognition and respect only behind the screens. The combination of increased workload, personal shortage, and risk of transmission and lack of resources have severely affected the physical and mental health of health care providers and placed the health care system under extreme burden.

Rise in scams

Aimed the pandemic, cybercrime is at a all time high as scammers are taking advantage of the fear and panic and fooling the users who spent more time online than ever. Quacks, occultists and cyber- cheats are trying to capitalise on the public.With the scarcity of vaccine, protective gear, medicines and oxygen tank, black market scammers are blooming. People become more susceptible as a result of a combination of financial and health threats, which offer a chance to con artists. Many people are enticed to purchase or use dubious products that claim to be able to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent COVID-19.

Stockpiling and price gouging of essential commodities was at an all-time high at the beginning of the pandemic. Thankfully the government stepped in andimplemented the essential commodities act and disaster management act to discourage hoarding, black marketing and sale of sub- standard hand sanitizer ,

face masks and gloves, thereby taking a step to end the callous exploitation of costumers by trade and industry.[40]

Fake testing is common. Those who want to keep it hidden or avoid government facilities often pay off the authorities to get a fake COVID negative certificate[41]. While the converse is also true: a person who appears to be wealthy and has a decent health insurance card is falsely pronounced COVID positive. Following that, family and friends areenlisted to rule out the viruspresence [42]. Majority of these positive reports are then referred to five star COVID centres with extravagant charges and the chin of exploitation continues.

Consumers have been inundated with a plethora or phoney treatments from a variety or pathies. Herbal tablets, teas, essential oils and only a few among others sold as alternatives or "magic" treatment for the virus. On 19 February 2021, Patanjali Ayurveda, founded by a self styled Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev, announced that his self made "Coronil", a medicine claimed to treat the corona viruswas approved by the world health organisation as the first evidence based medicine to cure COVID-19.This was later disproved by many medical professionals and WHO. [43] The shameful actturned out to be just a ploy to exploit people who were at their most vulnerable state.

On 27th March 2020, following the corona virus pandemic in Indian, PM CARES Fund was started to raise charity for those in need. Soon followed varied other fake website to dupe gullible citizens .[44]

The vaccines were off the shelves as soon as it hit the market. Due to the immense demand, and the confusion on how to get it, the black market for it bloomed. Social media were flooded with scam messages and false promises. [45] Reports of multimillion dollar fake COVID vaccine scamwas also brought to attention where saline and mineral water was sold to millions as COVID vaccine. [46] With rise in demand of oxygen cylinders and COVID medicines, the black markets are busy making profit off the desperation of the public. Ramdesiver is being sold for as much as rs 40,000 and oxygen cylinders for 35,000. The refilling of oxygen cylinders and general medical supplies are also costing an arm and a leg for the general public. [47]

Conclusion

Mental health issues and suicides are at an all time high during the lockdown. During the lockdown, mental health disorders like depression, anxiety and stress are prevalent. The vulnerable section of society; women and children, are more at risk of mental health issues and domestic violence.

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