

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE HEALTH SECTOR IN INDIA

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Abstract:

India declared a nationwide lockdown in March 2020, which extended time to time, considering the increasing number of cases of Covid-19. Covid-19 resulted from the tremendous loss of human lives and assets. As per data, 5, 20,907 deaths were recorded in India till 2022. The Covid-19 pandemic, there was resulted in a 59% loss of Income, 38% lost jobs, and 28% reduced fruit and vegetable consumption. People were facing stress and economic shocks which directly impacted their health, they started health problems like diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, etc. In Covid-19 psychosocial distress due to loss of job or income and had difficulties in accessing the health services by the public. The Covid-19 pandemic created a great challenge for the health sector, due to the paucity of testing kits and services, weak surveillance systems, and above all poor medical care facilities in developing countries like India. A large no of people suffered from mental health issues during the pandemic which included fear of infection, the stigma associated with infection, isolation due to imposed by individual's compliance with lockdown norms, temporary unemployment, home schooling, etc. The pandemic has caused widespread anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms

Keywords: Covid-19, Health, Impacts, Unemployment, Pandemic, Depression, etc.

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Introduction:

World health organization (WHO) in early 2020 declared the novel coronavirus disease (covid-19) across the globe. The world was profoundly affected by the humanitarian virus covid-19. It affected human health in India but also affected the entire health sector in the world economy. Covid-19 was spreading rapidly due to which the government of India declared a nationwide lockdown in March 2020 and has imposed some restrictions like maintaining social distance, quarantine, sanitizing, wearing a mask, etc. to control and prevent the spread of the virus. It was observed that the health sector was most affected by covid-19. People faced many problems as the government-imposed restrictions on their mobility of people during the lockdown. It changed the lives of people considerably, they started facing the problems like social exclusion, stigma, and financial difficulties which indirectly affected their living standards including food consumption. This was an unpredictable and large-scale challenge to the Indian people. As the Covid-19 cases started increasing, a large number of people started reverse migration from the cities to their native places. Resultantly they lost their jobs, and due to this their financial conditions became very poor. During the pandemic of Covid-19, medical and para-medical staff faced the highest burden of work and faced risks to their lives. In addition to the general public, health workers not only faced the risk to their lives but also were suffering from hypertension, depression, anxiety, physical exhaustion, etc. The Covid-19 crisis was drawn attention to the

already overburdened public health system in India and the need was felt of recruiting, deploying, retaining, and protecting sufficient well-trained, supported, and motivated health workers.

Objectives:

This study focuses on the impacts and challenges faced by the Indian health sector during the period of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

- To understand the impact of Covid-19 on people's health.
- To analyze the economic impact of Covid-19 on the health care sector.
- To study the government measures for the improvement of the health sector in India.

Methodology:

The present study is based on secondary data. The researcher collected information from the reports of various national and international bodies like the world health organization (WHO), the International Monetary fund (IMF), and reports of govt. of India, research articles published in journals and newspapers, etc.

Impacts: -

The impact of pandemic Covid-19 was not only observed on people's health but in all sectors around the world. The health sector of India, as well as the industry, agriculture, transport, and tourism sectors badly affected by the outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The foundation of India's health care system both private and the government has been shaken. India's private healthcare sector has contributed significantly accounting for almost about 60%.

1) Impact of Covid-19 on People's health: -

Covid-19 pandemic resulted in many types of psychological consequences because of increased workload, fear of infection, anxiety, inadequate knowledge of Covid-19 appropriate behavior, overburdened health care facilities with lack of hospital beds, higher mortality rate, deaths of family members and relatives, resource constraints due to loss of jobs, unpredictable recovery from the covid-19 pandemic.

a) Impact on Mental Health: Brief summary of the impact on mental health:

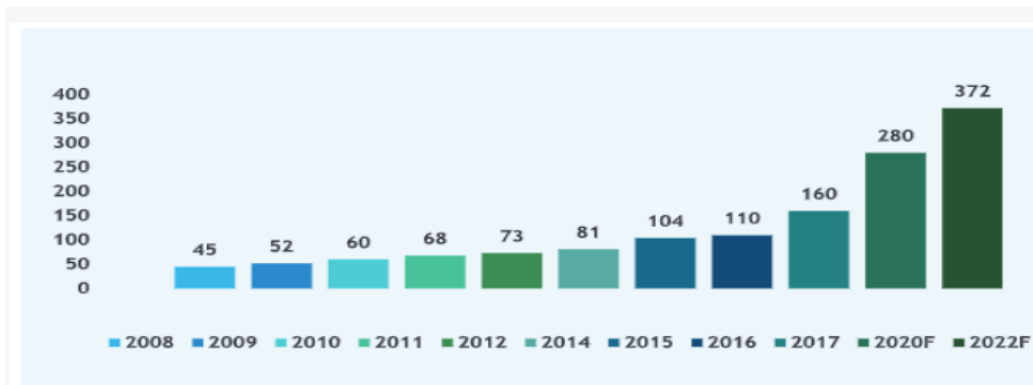
- i. Most instances of stress, mental fatigue, fear, and anxiety
- ii. Frustration and irritation noted
- iii. Emotional state in the second wave due to the high mortality rate
- iv. Isolating experience, leading to feelings of loneliness.

b) Impact on Physical Health: -

- i. Less appetite, dehydration, tiredness, weakness, mask stress of MHWs, etc.
- ii. Exhaustion and burnout.
- iii. MHWs saw headache, throat pain, anxiety, lethargy, poor appetite, and insomnia.
- iv. Generalized nasal discomfort, dry nose, burning sensation in the nose, and mask-related pain in the nose and ears.

2) Economic impact of Covid-19 on the health sector:

As per the report of mint, India ranks 145th among 195 countries in terms of quality and accessibility of healthcare. There is immense scope for enhancing healthcare services penetration in India, thus presenting ample opportunity for the development of the healthcare industry.



In figure 1 Growth Trend of India's Healthcare Sector (USD Billion)
 Source (<https://www.shaan.academy/blog/investment-opportunity-in-the-healthcare-sector-in-india>)

Continuous growth was observed in the health sector. In 2020, where all sector's growth was impacted negatively due to covid-19, but there was positive growth in the health sector. The health sector in India managed quickly the pandemic situation and adapt to the rapid transformation and most of the hospitals shifted to covid-19 hospitals, virtual care, remote medicine, teleconsultations, and remote monitoring.

In the Indian economy healthcare sector has become one of the largest sectors, in terms of revenue and employment. As per NITI AYOOG, it has been growing at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 22% since 2016, employing 4.7 million people directly.

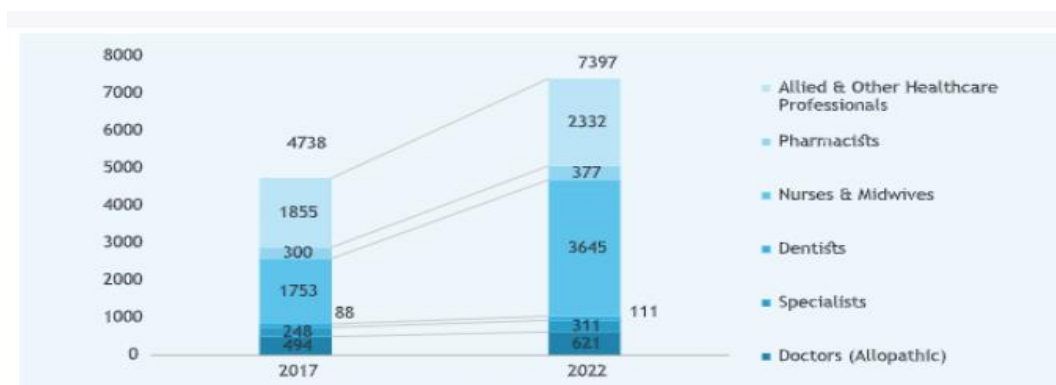


Figure shows Direct Jobs in India's Healthcare Sector in 2017-2022 Expected (In Thousands)

Source (<https://www.shaan.academy>)

In 2017, the Indian healthcare sector was the fourth-largest employer. The sector is expected to generate direct employment for around 7.5 million people by end of 2022.

Impact on the life of Medical Health Workers (MHWs): - COVID-19 cases increased, it impacted the economic and social life of people. The impact of COVID-19 has also been observed like loss of income, delays in salary, increased workload, etc. As per the govt. of India's guidelines, Covid-19 health workers provided additional cash incentives. Although some health workers were not satisfied in respect of their salary and incentives. MHWs faced many problems in the Covid-19 situation like continuous working hours, anxiety, lack of time to spend with family and friends, Increased working, fear of infection from Covid-19, inadequate medical equipment, etc.

3) **Impact on health service delivery:** -

In 2020, the Covid-19 cases increased, due to which services provided to the other than Covid-19 patient has substantially reduced. In the pandemic situation, all the doctor's and nurses' responsibilities increased due to continuous rising Covid-19 cases. All medical health working staff was overburdened with rising patients. Beds were not available, PPE Kit was not available for the doctors and nurses, and other paramedical staff, they were

not receiving proper and timely guidelines regarding the Covid-19, their workload tremendously increased, and routine medical practices were disrupted during both the waves. When the cases were gradually reduced in 2021, there was an improvement in the services provided to the other than Covid-19 patients, including women and children.

4) Impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the health system and SDG 3:- The SDG 3 goal is the immunization = healthy lives and well-being due to cases increased the number of children were affected and died in the covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has caused the suspension of all polio vaccination campaigns worldwide.

Initiatives of the government of India during this covid-19:

1. Arogya setu app was launched by the Ministry of health and family welfare to record details of the people with who you may have come in contact. If anyone of them at a later point is tested positive for covid-19, proactive medical intervention is arranged. Till today, the total figure of citizens who have downloaded the app was 21,55,00,000 and the total sample tested up to April 12, 2022, 79,49,54,525, and sampled tested on April 12, 2022, 4,29,322.
2. A Scheme on “India Covid-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Package - Phase-II” **Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Package** (ECRP-Phase-II) during 2021-22 Scheme is aimed to prevent, detect and respond to the continuing threat posed by Covid-19 and strengthen national health systems for preparedness in India.
3. Health Management Information System (HMIS) 2.0 was developed to organize a number of online and/or virtual training through Webex, zoom, MS-Team, etc. Facilities have been trained on HMIS web application, data entry, reports, and other features
4. Accredited Social Health Workers (ASHA) played a key role in the country’s response to the prevention and management of COVID-19. During the pandemic, in addition to performing tasks related to the pandemic, ASHAs continued to support community members in accessing (Environment, health, safety) EHSs such as (Antenatal care) ANC, Immunization, treatment adherence, and safe delivery for chronic illnesses.
5. India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare developed the COWIN App web portal for COVID-19 (Covid-19 Vaccine Intelligence Network) operated for vaccination registration. As of today (16th April 2022) record, approx. 99 crores have taken 1st dose and 85 crore people fully vaccinated.

Conclusion:

The covid-19 had a negative impact on the physical, psychological and social life of people in general and health workers in particular. The medical treatment for the other diseases reduced considerably like TB, malaria, heart diseases, AIDS, diabetes, and other chronic diseases. In covid-19 patients, beds were not available so there was an impact on other diseases also in the pandemic situations. In the second wave, it was seen the cases were increasing and death also increased, changes in the routine workload and delivery of service are divided into the Covid or non-Covid patients. Economic Growth was observed in the health sector and which has resulted in to increase in job opportunities in the health sector. The government of India has taken many initiatives to control and limit the spread of covid-19. They have also developed some apps to arrange a proactive medical intervention, create awareness, and register for vaccination. In short, the covid-19 pandemic highlighted that there are so many measures like improvement in health infrastructures, higher investment in the medical sector, etc. are still required to strengthen the Indian health sector.

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