

**EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK ON THE
INDIVIDUAL'S MENTAL HEALTH***Dr Neelam Kumari***&***Dr. Raino Bhatia***Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly sweeps across the world. This pandemic has led to staged social and economic changes in human's daily life. It has created a substantial degree of fear and worry in the population at large and among certain groups like, older adults, care providers and people with under laying other health conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic and the consequential economic recession have negatively affected many people's physical & mental health and has created new barriers for the peoples who are already suffering from some other medical conditions. Impact of COVID-19 on the health of general population has showing increased levels of anxiety, stress and depression. Additionally, this pandemic has resulted in immense loss of life and has worsened a numerous of mental health issues. Besides this increased instances of domestic violence, anxiety and depression; the lack of reachable and reasonable mental health care across the country has make this difficult to solve for. The aim of the article is to throwing light on how COVID-19 has affected the individual's mental health across the world and how awareness and self care can go a long way in helping people with trauma. It will help individual to manage their day to day life and will make aware them to avoid the unnecessarily anxiety and fear propagated by news and social media as well. With the help of this article our main aim is to bring awareness about the importance of mental health and subjective wellbeing during Pandemic



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Introduction

A pandemic is not just a medical condition; it affects individuals & society and causes disruption on individual's mental & physical wellbeing. Pandemic is defined as, an outbreak of a communicable disease which has spread across a large region, for example multiple continents or worldwide, affecting a substantial number of people. An outbreak is an unexpected rise in the occurrence of a disease and usually is limited to a small area or a particular group of people. If an outbreak becomes more severe, and less generalized, it may be characterized as an epidemic. When it expands still further, and affects a large section of the population, then the disease may be characterized as a pandemic.

There have been a number of pandemics since the beginning of the 20th century, like, the Spanish flu of 1918/19 (not originated in Spain), the flu pandemics in 1957 and 1968, H1N1 pandemic of 2009, and now the COVID-19 pandemic of 2019/20. And one of the well known examples of pandemics is the Black Death, a plague which spread across Asia and Europe in the middle of the 14th century.

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a freshly discovered Corona virus. The majority of people who infected with the corona virus have experienced mild to moderate respiratory infection and are recovering without requiring special treatment except older people and those who are underlying with some medical conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious bad ill effect of corona virus.

The best approach to avoid and slow down the dispersion of this virus is to be well educating about the COVID-19 virus, like what are the causes of transmission and how we can protect ourselves and others from this infectious disease. People should also follow the different measures to stop the transmission of corona virus i.e., repeatedly washing hands or using an alcohol based sanitizers frequently, wearing mask or face shield and avoids unnecessarily touching face. The COVID-19 virus spreads generally through droplets of saliva or nasal discharge while an infected person coughs or sneezes, so it's important that to practice respiratory etiquette (for instance, by coughing into a flexed elbow).

Throughout the world, the community is being informed only about the physical effects of COVID-19 infection and steps to prevent exposure to the corona virus and about symptoms



management of the COVID-19. Though, the effects of this pandemic on one's mental health have been overlooked. While all efforts are focused on paying attention to accepting the epidemiology, clinical features, diffusion patterns, and management of the COVID-19 explosion, and has been very little concern expressed over the effects on one's mental health and on strategies to stop stigmatization. People's behavior may greatly affect the pandemic's dynamic by altering the severity, communication, disease flow, and repercussions. The current condition requires raising understanding and awareness among public, which can be useful to deal with this calamity.

WHO has defined Mental Health 'as a level of Cognitive or emotional wellbeing and absence of any mental disorders,' It is considered as the state of wellbeing where individual recognize their own abilities and can deal with the day to day stressors of their life, and can work effectively and contribute to the society (Kaur & Bashir, 2016.) In public mental health terminology, the main psychological impact yet is high toll of stress or anxiety. But as new measures or impacts are introduced particularly quarantine and its special affects on many people's routines lives. As a result, fear, worry, isolation, sadness, unsafe drinking & drug use, stress, depression and self-harm or suicidal behavior are also expected to increase.

As per the WHO statement (on website) "Fear, worry and stress are normal responses to perceived or real threats, and at times when we are faced with uncertainty or the unknown. So it is normal or understandable that people are experiencing fear in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic". But when constant fear, worry, anxiety & stress continue for a longer period of time, mental health issues are expected to be ensure or intensified. The stress from the pandemic is relatively intense and multifaceted in terms of social isolation, half truths, work from home, job loss, troubled sleep, reduced work output, which can result in poor capacity of coping (Donoven, Doody & Lyons, 2013) and increased psychological suffering (Zandifar, Badrfam,2020).

Public health emergencies have affected the health, safety, and well-being of both individuals and communities. All these effects may transform into an array of emotional reactions (for example Stress, Depression or other psychiatric conditions), risky behaviors (such as misuse of substance), and non-cooperation with public health guidelines (such as home imprisonment and vaccination) in people who deal with the disease and in the general population. Prevalent



research in tragedy mental health has established that emotional distress is omnipresent in affected populations.

Some studies have shown that similar epidemics and pandemics, has serious concerns among patients, such as fear of death, feelings of loneliness and anger can develop among those who are quarantined (Xiang et al., 2020). Moreover, people who are quarantined lose personal connections and usual social interventions, which is a stressful phenomenon (Zhang et al., 2020). It can be concluded from these points that psychological interventions in the face of such crises are most important part of the health care system in the context of public health emergencies (Zhou et al., 2019). Therefore, as part of its public health response, WHO has worked with their associates to develop a set of new resources on the mental health and psychosocial support aspects of COVID-19. Engaging in self care, physical exercise, stay away from rumours and watching limited news, finding support and being concerned to others can be useful in maintaining stress levels throughout the pandemic.

Challenges & Difficulty During Pandemic

The pandemic is not similar to anything we have experienced earlier than. It has caused unbelievable economic losses leading one to compare its effects with that of World Wars I and II. In addition, COVID-19 has profoundly affecting many lives around the globe. Loss of life has been enormous; consequently, the commencement of mental health issues seems to be insignificant and trivial. Another problem, contact restrictions, isolation and financial losses enforce a complete change to the psychosocial surroundings of affected countries. Causal factors of isolation & trauma, millions of people crosswise the worlds have lost their jobs (Restubog, Ocampo, Wang, 2020).

Present circumstances have to affect kids, youth and their parents & families in an incomparable way. Schools and colleges have been closed, social contacts strongly restricted and out-of-home freedom time activities cancelled (Jorg, Benedetto, Paul & Vera, 2020). Outside support from other family members and social support systems has perished away. Parents are supposed to support their children with home schooling (online classes), at the same time working from home.

Beside to above mentioned issues COVID-19, has worsened with high and growing levels of joblessness in all affected countries. This has put a lot of stress on children, teenagers and their



families which could result in worries, anxieties, pain, hostility, and mental health problems. Such shifts center away from dealing with the pandemic emotionally. It is essential to keep in mind that when this pandemic ends the world might be left to deal with another pandemic of deprived mental health across the world. COVID-19 problem is quite complex and has strike civilization in all the possible ways, therefore it is important to focus on maintenance of psychological wellbeing intact. The COVID-19 pandemic has formed a sense of danger, and stress that has hurried worldwide at an alarming rate.

The Growing Impact Of The Pandemic In India

Entire world has suffered massively due to the pandemic, but the condition in India remains unique. India has reported the first confirmed case of the COVID-19 infection a 20 years old female, on 30 January 2020 in the state of Kerala. She had a travel history from Wuhan, China. India is extremely populated country, where social distancing has been particularly become difficult and due to an interdependent culture, social isolation has more detrimental effects as compare to another individualistic culture (Kumar et.,al 2020).

Even the lack of reasonable and handy mental health care and the social taboo regarding availing such type of support makes more difficult to confirm individual's wellbeing. There has been social Stigma towards not just people who are infected with the coronavirus but also towards health practitioners; which was evident in instances of their expulsion (NIMHANS, 2020). Online teaching/learning has been become a big challenge in India as the greater part of students from interiors lack continuous access to internet. This not only deprives them of learning something new or interesting which has to contribute to their growth but also make them more vulnerable to abuse at home or to force into child labor (Gulatua & Kelley, 2020).

Extensive joblessness especially for the low SES workers interns may lead to emotional turbulence, relapse to addiction, lack of basic recourses as seen in the migrant laborer displacement (Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, 2020). Some of those who are still in employment and work in industries or crowded environments where precautions are negligible, in such cases, workers may always have a regular fear of contacting the virus. All of those factors could in turn lead to a much greater mental health crisis as the pandemic ends, but it will not be easy to work on an individual's wellbeing in such circumstances.

Some Steps To Manage Mental Health



Throughout an emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it is universal to experience increased levels of negative stress and anxiety, consequently of social isolation. Doctors and other frontline health care professionals are mainly susceptible to negative mental health effects as they struggle to balance their duties of caring for the patients with concerns about their own well-being and so as to of their family and friends.

A reports published by NIMHAS & The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have given clear guidelines and a few steps to keep in mind during the pandemic, mostly in the context of Indian population, the most important is to understand the lockdown, limitations and their intention by following testimonial issued by authorities. This might help stick to precautions better and diminish the propaganda and fear of the corona-virus. Some other significant steps would be:

❖ **Dealing Efficiently With Social Isolation:**

Socialization is key, to kill isolation. Share your feelings with your near & dear ones. Exchange of thoughts will helps you feel less alone and more supported. This may done by to distance yourself from negative news and indulge oneself in enjoyable activities like watching movies, listening music, reading good books, Have a daily routine, Have a regular wake-up and bedtime, develop new hobby, learning new language, Make time for exercise, yoga and meditation stay online connected with your family & friends.

❖ **Take Care Of Your Emotional Health:**

Better emotional health helps you to perceive the situation positively. Having a positive attitude makes you more energetic, optimistic and helps you think more positively, while deprived emotional health depletes your mental resources and leads to physical as well as psychological exhaustion. When someone experienced feelings of anxiety can take a few minutes to sit silently and do breathing exercise, thinking of something calm relaxing. Share your feelings with someone. Sharing of your feelings can help you stay in good emotional health and it will help you to deal effectively when you feel troubled/ negative. Do something you're good at. Focus on the positive side of every situation, stay away from rumors, ask for help, take a break and keep active.

❖ **Avoid Negative Behaviour:**

You have to spot the situations, people, and actions that will elicit your negative behavior and



try to change your outlook focusing on negative behavior. Avoid taking impulsive decisions to make use of too much alcohol, tobacco or other substances, go out only when it is necessary otherwise stay at home as much as possible. Avoid displacing one's frustration & anger on others and try to take necessary precautions when you have to step out. Last but not least keep updated yourself with current information about symptoms & safety measures to avoid panic & fear.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has certainly reshaped our world and has affected people around world in several ways. Even though the physical effects of this pandemic have been quite obvious, but the mental health condition is not being discussed effectively. Some unique challenges are posed by this pandemic in our country which we have to deal with. Different research has highlights the sensitivity of mental health issues caused by this pandemic in India and efforts have also been made by various Government and Non-government organizations to maintain wellbeing and reduce the half truths by following the recommended guidelines issued by NIMHANS. The researches have also highlights the role of mental health in recovering & surviving from the pandemic. In the absence of adequate psychological support from professionals, individual role in taking care our mental health as practicing simple physical exercise, yoga , meditation, involving in enjoyable activities, staying focused and productive, avoid negative news can be helpful to enhance mental health and face of lingering stress & anxiety. Keep in mind that the emotions you are experiencing are normal reactions to difficult situation. Accept the current Circumstances which are different right now and are facing everyone. Prioritize what is important to you and accept that it is okay to let some things go right now which are not in your control.

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