



Research Paper

Mental health implications of COVID-19 and harmful effects on the people of India

Atul Kumar Mishra* and Shalini Mishra

Department of Zoology, D.A.V. Post Graduate College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India

Department of Psychology, J.D.V.M. Post Graduate College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India

*Corresponding author email: atulkumarmisra03@gmail.com

Received: 20/01/2022

Revised: 12/02/2022

Accepted: 19/02/2022

Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has created a very critical situation all over the world and has caused a great impact in India. It has undoubtedly disturbed the routine of people and has resulted in many unanticipated changes, leading to severe psychological responses and mental health issues. The purpose of the present study is to identify many psycho-social factors that will help to predict the factors of distress caused among the Indian population during the pandemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared COVID-19 as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). The consequences of COVID-19 have impacted not only the physical health but also the mental health of an individual resulting in their deteriorated overall development. To study the implications of COVID-19 and its harmful effects on the mental health of people of India, an online survey was conducted to assess the predictors of distress. The prediction capability of the model was compared with the random forest classifier. It was concluded that a prevalence of high distress was experienced by the Indians during the time of COVID-19. It also provided pragmatic implications for

psychological health at both macro and micro levels at the time of epidemiological crises.

Keywords: World Health Organization, Mental Health Implications, Predictors of Distress, Macro and Micro Levels, Epidemiological Crisis.

Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the population all over the world and has given alarming signals to protect ourselves against the virus. According to the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) in March 2020, more than 3,34000 were infected due to lack of treatment. Their survival became very difficult and 14256 people died due to the novel corona virus (W.H.O., 2021). In India, 1,251 confirmed COVID cases and 34 death cases were reported when a nationwide lockdown was declared on 23rd March, 2020 for its prevention. 10.5 million Confirmed cases and about 1,50000 death have been reported till now. It was a very critical situation and it was difficult to prevent the virus (Huang et al., 2020).

The spread of disease was restricted with a series of lockdown, and stringent

quarantine measures in various parts of the world, such as closure of educational institutions, offices, commercial activities and travel restrictions, strict quarantine measures were prescribed by the Government of India to reduce the rate of infection. Over the months, the cases of COVID-19 have been under control and a series of un-lockdown were observed in India. A survey by Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) declared that people of India, suffer significant mental health risk (Davis et al., 2010). This risk increases in developing countries, where the risk is further precipitated by sub-optimal socio-economic determinants. The consequences of COVID-19 have impacted not only the physical health but also the mental health (India News, 2020).

Mental health concerns and treatment usually take a backseat when the limited resources are geared for pandemic treatment. Previous history suggests that any infection or pandemic brings with itself a major impact in the mental health. In the case of Ebola outbreak in 2014, symptoms of Post-Traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety-depression were more prevalent even after 01 year of Ebola response (Jalloh et al., 2018). The global HIV pandemic also provides similar observation. It has been recorded that the prevalence of mental illnesses in HIV-affected individuals is higher than in the general population (World Health Organization, 2008). In this condition, the pandemic poses huge challenges on the mental Health System of the country. Since the health care system focuses mainly on emergency services, individuals suffer from psychological disorders as a result of COVID-19 pandemic (Clay and Parker, 2020).

Reason of Mental Health effect due to COVID-19:

There are many reasons to mental status disturbance due to COVID-19, which

show harmful effects on the people of India. The most important reason during the pandemic is the economic fallout and forecasted recession pertaining to "The Great Lockdown". It is feared to be the worst global economic crisis. In many sectors seeing payout and job losses in India and other countries like Europe (16%); America (20%); created worsen situation.

In India, it has been seen that suicide rates among the economically vulnerable COVID-19 patients have increased in Madhya Pradesh. In Greater Noida, another serious report came from front line workers resulting from the flair and depression due to severe spread of COVID-19 in parts of the country. This has resulted in increased mental health illnesses, like anxiety and depression. But in critical situation, Government, Civil Society bodies, professional organizations have come up with various measures in the context of mental health issues. (IMF Blog, 2020; Economic Times, 2020).

Methods:

The current article reviews the existing literature on mental health issues and interventions relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the study purpose an online survey was conducted to observe the predictors of distress. Five hospitals were chosen for this purpose. These hospitals are, LLR Medical College, Kanpur; Regency Hospital; Ursala Hospital, Kanpur and Madhuraj Hospital, Kanpur situated in various parts of the city. There were ten parameters selected in each hospital and total number of patients were fifty (50).

Except the survey, to the conclusion a thorough search of all the published Journal articles, newspaper articles, magazine articles, webpages including world health organization, ministry of health and family welfare, Government of India, State Government and news

channels reports were also included for the better conclusion to express mental stress of patient suffering from the critical situations of COVID-19.

In this study, we have tried to attempt to review the prevailing mental health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic through global experiences and reactive strategies established in mental health case with special reference to the Indian people.

Result and Discussion:

Mental health problems during COVID-19 pandemic:

The major mental health issues that have been reported in the patients, which have been related with the COVID-19 pandemic are anxiety, depression, stress, insomnia anger and fear all over the world (Torales et al, 2020). Stress, depression and anxiety transferred to each other with the COVID-19 pandemic, results from studies done not only in the city but globally. It has shown the increasing prevalence of mental health disorders (Ji et al., 2017; Mohindra et al., 2020). Historically disease pandemics have been associated with grave psychological consequences. A recent article published in JAMA psychiatry suggests that COVID-19 may lead to increased high risk of suicide (Xiang and Cheung, 2020). Not only in India, but in other countries like, Japan, Iran, China, America and Singapore similar impacts of COVID-19 on mental health has also been seen (Rajkumar, 2020). On the basis of some newspaper articles researches have reported deaths during the pandemic apart from the COVID-19 due to mental health disorders, starvation, suicide and accidents etc. (Thejesh, 2020).

Conclusion:

The present study concluded the prevalence of distress experienced by citizens of India during the pandemic and provides implications for stress management at macro and microlevels

during an epidemiological crisis. Several initiatives are currently being taken by the Government such as providing tollfree helpline and telecounselling services for mental health assistance during the COVID-19. Yoga and meditation are very important and effective tools for managing stress during COVID-19. People's perception of seriousness of the disease, which was also identified as major source of distress, is highly influenced by Government and social media communication.

Hence, a positive approach, effective communication strategies and understanding the problem statement, will help in dealing with the mental health issues faced by people in this hour of crises. As reported in the study, social support during crisis, is helpful to cope with stressful situations. The present study recognized positive approaches of resilience, hope, optimism and self efficacy, which are more important that constitute psy-cap as a protective factor during stressful situations.

Hence the Government, and non-governmental organizations should invest in development of positive capacities for sustainable well being in the community.

Acknowledgements:

The authors are very thankful to the Principal, D. A. V. College & J. D. V. M. P .G. College, Kanpur for their great support & encouragement to carry out the study. We express our sincere gratitude to Ananya Misra for her work as an Editor. We are very grateful to Manya Misra for her kind support in completion of the work.

References:

Clay J. M. and Parker M. O. (2020) Alcohol use and misuse during the COVID-19 pandemic : A potential public health crisis 9 The Lancet Public Health, 5 (5), e 259.

- Davis J. R., Wilsons S., Brock-Martin A., Glover S., and Svendsen E. R. (2010) The impact of disasters on populations with health and healthcare disparities. *Disaster medicine and Public Health Preparedness* 4(1), 30-38.
- Huang C., Wang Y., Ren Lix, Zhae J. and HUY. (2020) Clinical features of patients infected with 2019 novel corona virus in Wuhan, China. *The Lancet*, 395, 497-506.
- INDIA, News; (2020), Two Covid-19 patients commit suicide at Chennai hospitals within 24 hrs - INDIA NEWS (2020) July 24, 2020.
- Jalloh M.F., Li W., Bunnell R. E., Ethier K.A., 'O' Leary A., Hageman K. M., Sengeh P., Jalloh M. B., Morgan O., Hersey S., Marston B. J., Dafaie F., Redd J. T. (2018) Impact of Ebola experiences and risk perceptions on Mental Health in Seirra Leone, July 2015. *BMJ Global Health*, 3 (2) e000471.
- Ji D., Ji Y., Duan X. and Duan H.J. (2017): Prevalence of psychological symptoms among Ebola survivors and healthcare workers during the 2014-2015 Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone : A Cross-Sectional Study. *Oncotarget* 8(8), 12784-12791.
- Mohindra R., Ravaki R., Suri V., Bhalla A., Singh S. M. (2020) Issues relevant to mental health promotions in frontline healthcare providers managing quarantined/Isolated COVID-19 patients. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 51, 102084.
- Organization, W. and others COVID-19 : Weekly Epidemiological Update, 25th May, 2021 (World Health Organization, 2021).
- Rajkumar R. P. (2020) Covid-19 and Mental Health : A review of the existing literature. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 52.102066.
- Suicide due to lockdown : Suicide Leading Cause for over 300 lockdown deaths in India, says study (2020). *The Economic times*. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/suicide-leading-cause-study/articleshow/75519279>.
- The Great Lockdown : Worst Economic Down since the Great Depression - IMF Blog. (2020). retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://blogs.imf.org/2020/04/14/the-great-lockdown-turn-worst-economic-downturn-since-the-great-depression>.
- Thejesh G. N. (2020) Non-virus deaths, Retrieved July 24, 2020. from [https://thejeshgn.com/projects /Covid19-india/non-virus-deaths./](https://thejeshgn.com/projects/Covid19-india/non-virus-deaths/).
- World Health Organization (W.H.O.) (2008) HIV / AIDS and Mental Health report by the Secretariat. https://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdffiles/EB124/B124_6-en.pdf.
- Xiang Y.T., Jin Y., Cheung, T. (2020) Joint international collaboration to combat mental health challenges during the corona virus disease (2019) Pandemic. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 10.1001/jamapsychiartry.1057.