



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19: SCENARIO OF ECONOMY, MENTAL HEALTH AND FOOD SECURITY

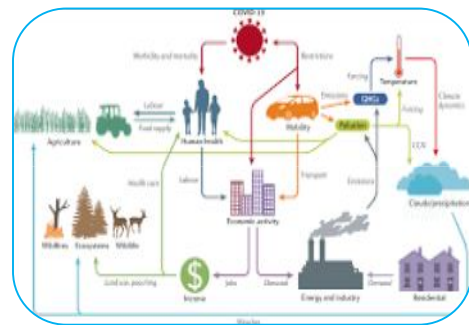
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ABSTRACT:

Identified in December, 2019 Corona virus has made its reach to approximately 222 countries till now. High morbidity and infection, around the world caused great loss of lives and livelihood. With the second largest population and inadequate healthcare facility pandemic pushed India far back in the race of economy, moreover globally reduced demand, lower consumption and Unemployment were some trend that followed the lockdown . The impact on mental health, food security and the economy has been discussed here with respect to the world including India.



KEY WORDS: *Corona virus , inadequate healthcare , economy.*

INTRODUCTION

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS CoV-2) which causes COVID-19, started to spread from the Chinese city of Wuhan. First case of covid-19 was recorded in December 2019. In January, 2020 World Health Organization declared SARS CoV-2 a global emergency of international concern. (Sui-Lee Wee, Donald G. McNeil Jr, Javier C. Hernández, 2020) Now it reached 222 countries across the world (COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic), and caused infections and mortality on a large scale. Consequently 39,88,925 deaths has been recorded worldwide and 4,02,005 in India attributed to this deadly infection, as of July 4, 2021. (COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic) (MoHFW, 2021) Many countries faced unprecedented circumstances including India.

Recently in the April new variant of the virus (virus of interest) B1617 was detected in two states, with its two mutations E484Q and L452R. In other variants around the world which are having these two mutations have been problematic, provided the similarity in these mutations which enable it to augment transmissibility and also result in reduced neutralization, which may have an impact on our countermeasures including the vaccines. (WHO News Updates, 2021) In the world all regions reported declining death toll in the last week of June, 2021, where African region recorded a sharp increase in incidence (33%) and mortality (42%). Furthermore Brazil stood first with 5,21,298 (3% increase) the new number of cases reported, followed by India (3,51,218) (12% increase). (COVID-19 Weekly Epidemiological Update, 2021) The second wave has reached every untouched corner of the country, including villages. Moreover there is also rising a menace of an impending 3rd wave in India. According to the projection third wave is inevitable and expected to start from the month of August. Sadly

historical trends around the world show that peak cases will almost double from the last wave. (Marnal, 2021)

Impact on Economy

In order to control this contagious disease many restrictions have been imposed, from country wide lockdown to social distancing. But in the absence of any proper planning all economic activity has disrupted. Inflexible measures put in place and the amount of cases recorded has a terrible shock on poverty mitigation efforts. Moreover the government's heedlessness to handle the pandemic and the economy was visible in the latest GDP data released by the National Statistical Office. In previous year 2019-20 India's GDP was 4%, shrank by 7.3% percent this year, slightly improved than projected (8%) previously. As a result India was among the worst hit countries that even Bangladesh outperformed India. It is important to mention that after 1997-98, this is the first time India recorded negative growth. However the epidemic cannot alone be blamed for the current situation as the GDP was already falling from the demonetization in 2016. Undoubtedly prolonged and unpredictable lockdown aggravated the impact. In a report released by the World Bank this month, it is mentioned that, till the beginning of this year approximately 12.5 crore people were pushed below the poverty line. It is very likely that Covid-19 will broaden the burden of the economic crisis in upcoming months. According to the study conducted by Azim Premji University, in India 23 crore people went below the poverty line. It is important to mention that from the year 1990 to this Covid-19 pandemic, it took 30 years to pull 30 crore people above the poverty line, however this crisis and mismanagement has ruined the hard gained achievement in such short period of time.

The State of Working India Report revealed that year 2020 witnessed a rapid fall in the income of a majority of labors. This fall was quite significant and steeper in the lower income group of workers. Accordingly in the last 10% of such household's income was decreased by 27%. Pandemic trends had a enormous impact on the levels of anxiety and depression among people. Therefore from August, 2020 to February, 2021 a sharp increase of anxiety and depression was recorded especially in the age group of 18-28 years. (Anjel Vahratian, Stephen J. Blumberg, Emily P. Terlizzi, Jeannine S. Schiller, 2021)

Tourism and its allied sectors, are vital socio economic sector, provides employment on a large scale, around the world. This sector has witnessed unprecedented loss of jobs and livelihood due to its susceptibility to any kind of adversity. By the UN World Tourism Organization this loss is estimated around \$2.4 trillion. (UNCTAD, 2021) During the first wave number of sit-in guest steeply dropped to 0, as countries around the world including India imposed Covid-19 safety measures. The collapse of this sector could cause a loss of \$4trillion to the global GDP, for FY 2020-2021. (UNCTAD, 2021)

Now when India is in between the ending of the second wave and impending third wave, huge increase in the number of tourists in hill stations posed another challenge to concerned authorities. (timesofindia.com, 2021) Seeing that tourism industry reopened, it is crucial to follow safety measures as new norms. Developing nation has lost 60-80% reduction in tourist arrival in 2020. The majority of the European countries and US have already limited their losses by providing immunization up to 60% of their population. Whereas developing nation are still struggling to reach pre-Covid tourist arrival, which is not expected to be achieved before 2023. (UNCTAD, 2021)

According to the World Bank global the economy is about to witness its most forceful post-recession recovery this year. However the rate of recovery will not be even across the globe. The level of this year's GDP is projected 3.2%, regardless of its expected upturn. Stronger economies (US & China) are expected to speed up the global economy by 5.6%. Various Developing economies will continue to bear the Covid-19 epidemic and post-Covid effect for long period of time. According to the Oxford Economics the UK is about to enter in a new phase of constant higher inflation, and Covid-19 pandemic is likely to advance the risk further. (OxfordEconomics, 2021) With the recovery of China, Regionally East Asia can be the on the top, where due to the new waves in Nepal and India South Asia is expected to lag behind. (TheWorldBank, 2021)

Impact on Mental Health

Everyone went through drastic changes in their lifestyles, especially people who had serious health complications due to covid-19. They faced a long period of confinement experienced stress, agitation and grief in the lack of interaction with family members. Even getting infected multiple times is also a very regular scenario. Mainly people with pre-existing mental illness are at more risk than others. (Hao Yao, Jian Hua Chen, Yi-Feng XU, 2020) In year 2020 World Health Organization speculated that quarantine and self isolation would elevate the level of stress and anxiety among people as well as frontline workers. Moreover it presumed that harmful alcohol & drug use, level of depression, suicidal behavior and loneliness are expected to rise with the implications of these measures. (Mental health and COVID-19, 2020)

Around the world during lockdown number of cases of domestic violence, rape attempt and child abuse reportedly rose dramatically. Where victims could not find escape from their abuser. Thus increased violence at home can also foster long term negative impact on mental health and high risk of chronic diseases. (Emma Graham Harrison, Angela Giuffrida, Helena Smith, Liz Ford, 2020) (abramson, 2020) (Chandra, 2020) In India during the first few weeks of lockdown The National Commission of Women recorded two fold rises in the cases of gender based violence. Accordingly ground reality can be far much worse than this. (Chandra, 2020)

Furthermore informal economy was worst effected by Sudden lockdown, loss of jobs, travel ban and no work. Such kind of reduced reach to resources and haunting situation also increase the risk of violence. Workforce engaged in this sector depends on the day to day struggle for their livelihood and subsistence. As a result these people are more at risk for developing severe, acute and chronic mental illness. A good example of such circumstances was of informal migrant labors in India. Due to extended lockdown and no income and food, they were forced to return to their native place, walking thousands of kilometers with their kids and belongings, caused extreme traumatizing situation. (abramson, 2020)

Although everyone experienced certain heedless situation, nevertheless the data show that male members of Indian society were most affected by suicidal tendency. In a study conducted on suicide cases, 91% people were male. A major factor behind most of the cases (30.4 percent) was fear of covid-19 infection, followed by the financial crisis (27.5 percent). (Deena D. Dsouzaa, Shalini Quadrosa, Zainab Juzer Hyderabadwalaa, Mohammed A. Mamun, 2020). Imperceptibly long hours of sensationalized news including conspiracy theories contributed a lot in such condition. (A. Mukherjee, G. Bandhopadhyay, S.S. Chatterjee, 2020) Other important factors were, pressure to be quarantine, loneliness, unavailability of alcohol, work related stress, social boycott and inability to reach home due to lockdown.

In March 2020 in a survey conducted by the Indian Psychiatry Society, every fifth Indian found suffering from mental illness and cases of mental illness spiked by 20% during the lockdown. Moreover it is hard to deny that situation could be inflexible for children and adolescents as well. Excessive screen time, lack of physical activity and no close meetings with friends are making their behavior more intolerant and aggressive. (Surbhi Sharma, Aayushi Kundu, Soumen Basu, Nagaraj P. Shetti, Tejraj M. Aminabhavi, 2020)

Impact on Food Security

There was already a long road to cover to accomplish the targets of sustainable development, although this lingering situation is surely going to prolong the success and make the goal unapproachable for the near future. In inclusion of climate change, poor health care, poverty, conflicts, economic inequality this epidemic now has aggravated the hunger levels. It is assumed by GHI that at least 37 countries out of 132 will not be able to achieve "low hunger" level by 2030.

Approximately 690 million people were suffering from chronic hunger or long term undernourishment as revealed; also 135 million people were experiencing acute food insecurity all over the world. In the year 2020, desert locust invaded horn of Africa as well as South Asian countries caused great harm to not only the food security but livelihoods as well. Moreover frequent flooding, dust storms, drought and cyclones and economic downturn jeopardizing our entire food system, what already started to impact the most vulnerable sections of society. Provided high density of population,

inadequate evidences about the spread mechanism of the virus, lack of specific medicines or vaccines and fragile health care system in addition, makes it more intricate to fight against the virus properly.

Every third person admitted to being hungry 'occasionally' or 'often' at one time in a day, in a survey conducted by 'Hunger Watch'. Not only this, 71% of the people surveyed said that they had to cut nutrients from their daily meals. Deferral of primary school has put disadvantaged kids at risk of being deprived of their midday meal; however the management has tried to concentrate on this matter. Covid-19 pandemic has already impacted various spheres of life. It has increased rates of food commodities by affecting production and trade through work force and logistical constraints. (A. G. Adeeth Cariappa, Kamlesh Kumar Acharya, Chaitanya Ashok Adhav, R. Sendhil, P. Rasundaram, 2021)

CONCLUSION

Italy was one of the first countries to experience rapid growth of infection and morbidity attributed to Covid-19. Incidence of active cases during the second wave was also higher than before, which was linked with the new mutations of the virus, which confer increased transmissibility. (Coccia, 2021) In the UK as well the second wave was more contagious. In India the second wave of Covid-19 peaked in April, 2021, which started in February, 11. Rate of spread was higher and the number of cases doubled than the first wave. Again it was accompanied by two new much infectious mutations E484Q & L452R of B1617 (virus of interest), but the death rate per day was lower. (WHO News Updates, 2021) Comparative analysis and tracing the pattern are helpful tools to elucidate estimation of the dynamics and mitigate infectious diseases in future. Although Geo-spatial, social and economic attributes should not be ignored during the crisis management. (Coccia, 2021)

Covid-19 is likely to remain as an endemic in the future. We are expected to experience repetitive waves but with the slowing intensity of the aggression, unless we are able to enhance the rate of vaccination many times. This pandemic will surely take longer time to resolve. It has become necessary to limit the consumption of news that is laced by rumors and conspiracy especially for the people who are already dealing to the issues of stress, anxiety, insomnia and depression. Along with this company of caring and loving family or friends can be stabilizing factors for kids and minor, who are at greater risk of infection in foreseeable future. India's diversity, a large population and perseverance are a major challenge for policy makers. But proper vigorous immunization, people's involvement and high level of awareness can be of assistance to curb the impending challenges with a gleam of hope.

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