



PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DUE TO PANDEMIC CRISIS IN INDIA

Dr. Rashmi Gupta

Assistant Professor

English Language & Communication Skills, Maharaja Surajmal Institute of Technology

Affiliated to Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University

Dwarka, New Delhi, India

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic in India is part of the worldwide pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 caused by severe respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The first case of COVID-19 in India, which originated from Wuhan, China, was reported on 30 January 2020. but the virus has now established itself in 177 countries and territories around the world in a rapidly expanding form of pandemic. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. On March 11, WHO characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic. On March 13, the outbreak was declared a national emergency (CDC, March 15, 2020).

According to survey, if healthy people get infected with the COVID-19 virus, they will experience mild respiratory illness and recover by using home remedies and staying isolated for 14 days. While people with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. My research paper pictures a brief overview of the new virus and explores mental disorder and psychological trauma due to this crisis. When the life was going on usual and everything was on smooth track, novel disease knocked at the door without letting anyone know its consequences. In second week of March 2020, the government announced social distancing measures, such as working from home, avoiding social gatherings and household isolation. In just couple of days, social distancing measures were extended including closing all schools. Restaurants, cafes, pubs, leisure centres, nightclubs, cinemas, theatres, museums and other businesses were also told to close. Further, a strict lockdown started world- wide stating people to stay at home except to buy essential food and medicines. A gathering of more than two people in public was not allowed and all shops selling non-essential goods, libraries, playgrounds, outdoor gyms and places of worship closed. All social events, including weddings, baptisms and other ceremonies were cancelled. In my paper, I will discuss some psychological issues caused by the infectious virus through graphic presentations.

Keywords: Covid-19, Crisis, Disease, Pandemic, Psychology, Trauma.

Introduction

Pandemics usually happen when new (novel) viruses emerge that can infect people easily and spread from person to person in an efficient and sustained way. A matter of serious concern is that when a virus is new and strange to humans, very few people are aware how to react it and have appropriate immunity to it till the time vaccine is available to everyone. According to the report of health bulletin released by Delhi government collected on 28 May, 2020, the capital registered 792 new covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total to 15,257. Also, 15 more deaths were reported taking to the total to 303. We can measure the high risk of containment from the following data:

Virus Spread in Delhi	
Total number of Covid-19 cases	15,257
Total Deaths	303
New cases in the past 24 hours	792
New Deaths	15

http:// Delhi Government Health Bulletin, The Hindu, May 28, 2020.

The first case of Covid-19 was reported in Delhi on March 2 and 3,515 cases were reported only till April 30. But then 11,742 cases or 76.96% of the total cases were reported in just 27 days in May. As the number of Covid-19 cases was increasing, the number of containment zones has increased. A containment zone has a strict form of the lockdown and people are not allowed to enter or leave the sealed off areas. Here are four stage of corona virus outbreak –

Stage-1

Imported Cases- When the virus has been transmitted by people travelling from abroad. It is the initial stages of the virus.



Stage-2

Local Transmission- people who come in contact with those who travel to the countries affected by corona virus, it is the second stage.

Stage-3

Community transmission- Community transmission happens when the infected person has come in contact with anyone who has a travel history to the countries affected by corona virus. Spread of the virus takes place in this stage at large scale.

Stage-4

Epidemic -This is the last stage of an outbreak. Large number of confirmed cases as well as deaths was reported.

Psychological Trauma caused by the pandemic

Discriminatory practice started all around on the basis of positive testing of Covid-19. People started being prejudiced against someone who got infected with the Covid-19 virus. There was a lot of misinformation and speculation about what to do next. Initial panic of pandemic goes viral with the phone-typed messages. One can imagine of mental stress after reading traumatic messages. There are some examples from WhatsApp messages:

- Community transmission of Covid-19 is properly underway and the epidemic is just about taking off in Delhi.
- There is no evidence that any medicine or therapeutic intervention can prevent or treat COVID-19 infection.
- In the absence of vaccine, most of us are going to get infected over the next few weeks.
- No matter who you are and how old are you, don't step out without a mask.
- Make sure the mask covers your nose and mouth. It is worth-looking that even if you are in the presence of a covid-19 infected individual and they are masked and not coughing and you are yourself masked, the probability of getting the infection is minuscule.
- Learn optimal mask hygiene.
- Treat everybody as an asymptomatic covid-19 carrier.
- Treat every surface you touch as potentially contaminated.
- Frequently sanitize your hands after touching objects.
- Avoid stepping out as much as possible, particularly for non-essential activities.

Preventive Measurements

Preventive measurements are the only option left to survive in this pandemic period. Regulatory bodies posted precautions through advertisement and social media-

1. Clean your hands often. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
2. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
3. Stay home if you feel sick or unwell.
4. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
5. You should wear a facemask when you are around the people.
6. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surface like tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, sinks etc
7. Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth.

Emotional Distress

Imposition of unusual restrictions on personal freedom, financial losses at large level and other misinterpreted messages are among the major stressors that will undoubtedly contribute to widespread emotional distress. The intensity of risk related to Covid-19 created psychiatric illness among the masses. No one except health care providers play a very important role in relieving the emotional stress to some extent. Economic loss, work and school closures, inadequate supply of goods, closure of transport, home confinement altogether cause emotional stigma, confusion, anxiety and insecurity in affected population. It has been examined that after any natural disaster, post-traumatic stress disorder arises from exposure to trauma.

Not only common people but also Health care providers are inclined to emotional distress in the current pandemic; their risk of exposure to the virus, their primary concern for their loved ones, shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE), longer work hours are really commendable. According to a recent review of psychology stay-at-home orders and quarantined period revealed uncountable emotional outcomes, including stress, depression, irritability, insomnia, fear, confusion, anger, frustration, boredom, and stigma associated with quarantine. It persisted even after the quarantine was over. In the light of the economic crisis and many other complexities and uncertainties caused due to this pandemic. Suicidal cases may also emerge and require urgent necessity to motivate the affected and provide proper consultation with a mental health professional time to time.



Conclusion

One should process this pandemic rationally, be stoic about it and trudge along. Suggestions for stress management include daily exercise, meditation, yoga and maintaining routines will help us ease out psychiatric illness. Excess of media reports and pandemic-related news that cause emotional disturbance should be restricted and minimized. The more people watch and listen to Corona virus news, the more they are inclined to get obsessed. Mental health care providers monitor one's stress and seek appropriate assistance by diverting their mind to adjust with the changed situation. Proper education and training regarding psychosocial issues should be provided to health care professionals. Health officials in India and around the world are working to restrict the spread of the virus through public health measures such as social distancing, contact tracing, testing, quarantines and travel restrictions. Scientists are also working to find medications to handle the disease and to develop a vaccine. The Covid-19 pandemic has alarmed every individual to run smooth emotional and social functioning.

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