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CHANGING FACES OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK: SOME INSIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

The world is facing the COVID-19 pandemic, related not only to a biological threat, but also its upshots are faced by individuals, communities and societies, are being expressed not only in physical but also in social, economic and cultural dimensions. This pandemic has encouraged the indoor stay behaviour and has brought unprecedented efforts in changes in pre-existing behavioural patterns. The study highlights the changing faces of human experiences in forms of disruptions caused due to outbreak. The methodology adopted for this study is the content analysis, based on academic journals of various disciplines, government publications, reports, policy papers, relevant websites, databases, newspaper articles and newsletters etc. This article would give the overall idea of how the social, economic, cultural, and psychological aspects influenced by the pandemic. This article summarises the reports of swiftly implemented policies and its adaptations by the community with its new challenges and concerns.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, outbreak, disruptions, change, human experience

INTRODUCTION

The world is undergoing a process where newly detected disease, novel coronavirus-2019 (SARS-coV-2) has been widely spread worldwide, has given rise to a pandemic threat. The discussion on COVID-19, as a sickness, or the capacity of health systems, has been analysed from the perspective of public health and medical science, from a broader perspective they are the materialization of economically and socially produced risk in time and in space. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a massive spike in uncertainty over the health, economy and wealth as well as livelihood. There is also a dire need for monitoring and counselling for the mankind, during the crisis. There is an intense need of an authenticated single health programme platform for the dissemination of correct and appropriate knowledge and to create awareness among the general public. Alongside, the social, economic and psychological impact of the pandemic is noticeable.

Since the first case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in December 2019, it has swept across the world and galvanized global action. This has brought unprecedented efforts to institute the practice of physical distancing in countries all over the world, resulting in changes in national behavioural patterns and shutdowns of usual day-to-day functioning. Governments around the world, including state and local constituents, are attempting to respond to the pandemic through various measures, such as the implementation of lockdown protocols, initiation of efforts to cover the whole populace in an efficacious COVID-19 vaccine, use of protective gear (e.g., face masks), public health messaging (e.g., how to wash hands properly to remove virus potential), restricting travel, closing borders, and shutting down the major parts of the economic exchange. The physical distancing measure has been accepted as a compulsory defensive technique to deal with coronavirus pandemic whenever there is no other substitute to combat against this lethal disease. The world has compelled to sustain their lives under lockdown system since the end of March, 2020. Amidst the lockdown in the society, multiple issues have been emerged at social, educational, economical, psychological levels and many more have created the devastating upshots on the lives of the people. The crises are global, but their impacts are deeply local.

The high transmission rate of the disease and gap in knowledge regarding the origin, rapidity, adequate treatment measures and preventive actions for the same due to different and multiple strains of this mutant virus, have led to a significant changes in daily life schedules. The Covid-19 pandemic and responses to it have triggered a global crisis that extends beyond health impacts to all aspects of day to day life. The normal rhythm of livelihood of the people exclusively world's economy, socio-cultural compatibility, national and international political waves, academic atmosphere, and moreover people's regular lifestyle has been incredibly disrupted due to the threat of novel coronavirus. The outbreak of catastrophic coronavirus creates the gigantic turmoil particularly in socio-economic-medical backbone of the nations. The pandemic has affected the world in a deep and far reaching manner ranging from personal (e.g., death, developing a COVID-19 illness, elevated poor mental health) to economic (e.g., economic recession, financial insecurity, bankruptcy) to social (e.g., isolation, inability to attend work or school, loss of developmental milestones). People are now confronted with the true uncertainty of human existence and the true vulnerability of human life. The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated socio-economic and health crisis are posing huge challenges, raising many unknowns and imposing wrenching trade-offs. It serves as a broad-based stressor and interacts with diatheses represented at the individual, familial, community and societal level.

COVID –19

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease of humans caused by a newly discovered coronavirus: severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). In February 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) named the disease '(COVID-19) coronavirus disease 2019' (WHO, 2020a) and the International Committee on Virus Taxonomy named the virus 'severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2)' (Gorbalenya, et.al, 2020). On December 29, 2019, this new infectious disease was first identified at Wuhan City, the capital of Hubei Province in China (Huang et. al., 2020). WHO authenticated the fact related with the contagious nature of coronavirus through human globules inhalation during January, 2020 (WHO, 2020b). WHO has declared that the COVID-19 is a sixth Public Health Emergency of International Concern (on January 30, 2020) because of the enormous aftermath of this fatal disease throughout the world (WHO, 2020c). As the COVID-19 disease has been originated from the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, WHO declared as COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020d).

Precautionary Measures Taken by Individual

This article tries to portray the clear understanding of the contemporary pandemic scenario during the steps taken by the government for its better management and prevention of the disease. COVID -19 virus affecting humans for the first time, vaccines is not yet properly reached to the whole populace. Therefore, the emphasis is still on taking extensive precautionary measures such as extensive hygiene protocol (e.g., regularly washing of hands), physical distancing (e.g., avoidance of face to face interaction), and wearing of masks, and so on. These measures also include minimizing contact with infected surfaces while stimulating and sustaining active social connections within households and communities. Tele working, online learning, minimizing and avoiding crowding are some of the measures for the general public. Countries are banning gatherings of people to the spread and break the exponential curve (Huang et.al, 2020). Rampant spread of virus forced the countries to stop international travelling as well as locked up the whole populace. As the only method to control the spread of the pandemic, the lockdown has been recognised and almost every country has adopted this method. Many countries are locking their population and enforcing strict quarantine to control the spread of the havoc of this highly communicable disease (Wang et.al, 2020). To prevent rapid transmission of coronavirus, countrywide lockdown had been enforced through the halting of economic production and restrictions on mobility of the citizens (Gautam and Hens, 2020). Almost half of the population of the world has compelled to sustain their lives under lockdown system since the end of March, 2020 (Tosepu et. al., 2020).

The honourable Prime Minister of India appealed to the citizens for effective implementation of lockdown system. Government promptly took such preventive measures to contain COVID-19 disease by applying Janata Curfew (March 22), Lockdown-1 (March 25-April 14) with complete lockdown except essential commodities, Lockdown-2 (April 15-May3) with conditional relaxation after April 20 in agricultural sector such harvesting operations, dairy, aquaculture, plantations, as well as shops related to agricultural inputs and repairing centres, Lockdown-3 (May 4-May17) with more relaxations in green zone (without any case in last 21 days) and lockdown-4 (May 18-May 31) with some minor amendments in previous orders. Government also have launched the 'Aarogya setu app' for early identification risk of infection.

Objectives

The aim of the study is to document people's experiences of living in this pandemic period, and what social changes are occurring in the COVID-19 world. The purpose of the article is to explore the impact of this unprecedented environment created by this pandemic on overall physical and mental health of individual and communities in its current magnitude. Social research is urgently needed to assess the upshots of COVID-19 pandemic with its socio-economic and health implications. The study presents the existing relevant intervention actions and recommendations to cope efficiently and effectively with the socio-psychological short-term and long-term outcomes in the society. It also tries to put forward policy recommendations toward rapid, comprehensive and more systematic approaches in the short and longer-term in the era of COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology

The literature search has been carried out by using relevant material in the public domain published before 31st December, 2020, including papers in scientific and professional journals, published first person accounts, media articles, and publications by governments, charities and professional associations. In addition, existing guidelines published by several national, international organisations, and articles from several non-academic resources (e.g., news, websites etc.) were accessed.

Literature Review

With such strength and speed of the virus spread, the pandemic has abruptly driven several countries to the collapse of their traditional health systems, social, and economic functioning. Recent studies with data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic suggest that the compulsory self isolation is necessary during the pandemic in different countries, associated with other factors of vulnerability (e.g., feelings of fear, lack of resources and social support, restricted support network) can result in symptoms of post-traumatic stress, mental confusion, and anger; affecting not only the individual's social behaviour but also his metabolic functioning (Brooks et al., 2020). Despite the tremendous advancement of medical sciences and healthcare technology, almost all the nations are struggling to slow down the transmission of the disease and flatten its curve by testing and treating positive patients, quarantining suspected persons through contact tracing, restricting large gatherings, maintaining complete or partial lock down which definitely thwarts the psychological resilience of the public (Chakraborty and Maity, 2020). Apart from its physical impact, COVID-19 pandemic has brought numerous changes to people's lives. Covid-19 pandemic has vigorous and multifaceted responses both in terms of physical as well as social health (Rajkumar, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented levels of economic disruption. On 27 March, the IMF stated that "the world is now in recession" and that the "length and depth of this recession depends on two things: containing the virus, and having an effective, coordinated response to the crisis." IMF chief, Kristalina Georgieva says that the containment will dictate strength of recovery from this recession of the world (Frank, 2020). "This is not only a health crisis but a human crisis, a jobs crisis, a humanitarian crisis and a development crisis. And it is not just about the most vulnerable. This pandemic shows that people are all at risk because they are only as strong as the weakest health system. Its unprecedented scale demands an unprecedented response," said United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, who presented his report on the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 "Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity" in March (United Nations sustainable Development Group, 2020).

Changing Faces of Human Experience

Lockdown and self isolation are the major stressors contributing to widespread changes in people's experiences. It created a scenario of many uncertainties. For example, it is uncertain how to contain, control, treat, or cope with this virus, and predict the duration of the pandemic and its effects, resulting in countless challenges and overloading of personal and social resources. It is certainly a stressful event, with impacts already visible in the daily lives of individuals and institutions, imposing the need to reorganize the social life, the educational system and routines, work environments and work routines, and hygiene activities, changes in the spheres of behaviour of the person, in social, material, and symbolic terms. New goals, orientations, (im) possibilities of action, losses, and gains are to set. These relocations/replacements mobilize new social, cognitive, and specialized forms of knowledge and skills (e.g., learning of new tasks developing with new everyday activities). Also, in these reallocations and encounters with other people and learning, the person is led to engage in new processes of meaning, continuously building meanings and attributing meaning to the phenomena around them, to the events they experience. The pandemic triggered not only the global public health crisis, but also global public crises that penetrated into many fields such as politics, economics, culture, and so on. In such an exceptional situation due to COVID-19 outbreak, people are living in, it is crucial to understand the different dimensions of experience faced by them. In response to this ongoing pandemic, there is the need to focus few insights related to this pandemic.

COVID-19 and Unemployment

During lockdown period and also afterwards many remained in employment but could not go to work or could not work from home. Shops, salons, theatres, hotels, restaurants, airlines, etc. did not retrench workers but the work has stopped. So, workers in these sectors have been reported themselves as employed but they were not working. Many of them did not receive the proper salary or had to take massive cut in salaries. International Monetary Fund's (IMF) chief said that, 'World is faced with extraordinary uncertainty about the depth and duration of this crisis, and it was the worst economic fallout since the Great Depression in the 1930s with over 170 countries likely to experience negative per capita income growth due to the raging coronavirus pandemic (IMF, 2020)'.

As per *Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy's* (CMIE) data, the monthly unemployment rate in April stood at 23.52%, up from March's 8.74% in India. The U.S. has seen a huge spike in unemployment as over 26 million people have claimed for state support because of losing their jobs (PTI, 2020a). The International Labour Organization (ILO) in its report describes the coronavirus pandemic as 'the worst global crisis since World War II'. About 400 million people (76.2% of the total workforce) working in the informal economy in India are at a risk of falling deeper into poverty due to catastrophic consequences of the virus. As half of the world is in lockdown, it is going to be a loss of 195 million full-time jobs or 6.7 per cent of working hours globally. Many are in low-paid, low-skilled jobs where sudden loss of income is catastrophic (PTI, 2020b). The continued sharp decline in working hours globally due to the COVID-19 outbreak means that 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy – that is nearly half of the global workforce – stand in immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed, warns the ILO (ILO, 2020a). Across the globe, 2 billion people work in the informal sector – mostly in emerging and developing economies – and are particularly at risk (Tennant, 2020). As the lockdown was eased, many went back to work, but more than six million people who lost jobs haven't found new employment (Schmall, 2020).

With growing unemployment, more and more people are being pushed into poverty. Millions of workers who over the years had been drawn to India's urban centres for jobs started returning home. Due to social distancing, several households terminated domestic help services – essentially an unorganized monthly-paying job. The informal workers involved in organized sector (unregistered companies) find themselves without a job after the lockdown period is over, many enterprises refused to take them back. Many self-employed persons like street vendors and hawkers are left without the capital to restart their businesses.

COVID-19 and Agriculture

The COVID-19 disease has a great impact on the actions and activities of humanity; agriculture is not outside this impact. Agricultural commodity as 'Essential Commodity' to maintain uninterrupted urban supply chain for milk, vegetables and fruits has brought some changes ensuring smooth agribusiness operations throughout the country due to lockdown regulations. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic has been coinciding with the economic slowdown. In India, the immediate implications of this lockdown on the agricultural front were witnessed in the form of marketing of agricultural crops and commodities. There are disruptions in supply chains because of transportation problem due to the closure of international border. Prices have declined for wheat, vegetables and other crops, yet consumers are often paying more. Media reports show that the closure of hotels, restaurants, sweet shops, and tea shops during the lockdown is already depressing milk sales, poultry farmers have been badly hit due to misinformation, particularly on social media, that chicken are the carriers of COVID-19 (Civildaily, 2020).

The Food and Agriculture Organization reports that COVID-19 impacts agriculture in two critical respects: availability and demand for food. These two things are closely linked to

food health, and thus food protection is also at risk. The situation is different when it comes to goods that are imported or exported; due to the closure of borders, international trade was interrupted (Siche, 2020). World Bank estimates that agricultural production could potentially decrease between 2.6 percent and 7 percent if there are trade blockages. Food imports could decline substantially (between 13 percent and 25 percent) due to a combination of higher transaction costs and reduced domestic demand (World Bank, 2020).

COVID-19 and Small scale industry

Small scale industry sector in India is second largest employment generator after agriculture, and acts as a breeding ground for entrepreneurs. The announcement of country wide lockdown dragged owners, employers and external stakeholders of this sector in unexpected times. The major victims of COVID-19 outbreak are the micro, small & medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) because in comparison to large enterprises, these sectors usually do not possess sufficient resources, especially financial, infrastructural and managerial, and are not prepared for such disruptions likely to go longer than expected. Additionally, these firms are mainly dependent on their routine business transactions and a small number of customers. Extended lockdown keeps negative impact on supply of finished goods, procurement of raw material and availability of employees to work in production and supply processes. During April to June 2020, sectors faced challenges related to debt repayments, wages/salaries, statutory dues, etc. Survey reports have shown that disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic have impacted MSMEs earnings by 20-50 percent, micro and small enterprises faced the maximum heat, mainly due to liquidity crunch (Tripathy, 2020). Rumours regarding transmission of virus through chicken have impacted the sales and prices of poultry items. Sector is facing a loss in range of USD 20 million per day (Ellis, et. al, 2020).

Of the 1,000 companies surveyed from eight countries across four continents, 70 percent have had to shut down operations. Half (50 percent) have temporarily closed their business by following direct instructions from the authorities, while the other 50 percent have closed temporarily due to a reduction in orders, cases of staff COVID-19 infection, or more sadly and permanently (ILO, 2020b).

COVID-19 and Tourism

The tourism sector is currently one of the hardest-hit by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, with its upshots on both travel supply and demand. It is a major source of revenue and employment for many countries. It is a generator for employment, income, tax collections and foreign exchange earnings. The application of classic disease controls in the form of quarantine, reduced mobility and physical isolation have had a dramatic effect on international and domestic tourism alike along with a range of sector specific impacts, including transport, travel and booking agencies, hospitality, restaurants, conventions and events, and attractions. These travel bans, border closures, events cancellations, quarantine requirements and fear of spread of virus, have placed extreme challenges on tourism and hospitality sectors. As many as 100 million direct tourism jobs are at risk. 90 percent of countries have closed World Heritage Sites, with immense socio-economic consequences for communities reliant on tourism. Further, 90 percent of museums closed and 13 percent may never reopen (UNWTO, 2020). Indian association of tour operators has estimated that the hotel, aviation, and travel sector collectively may acquire a loss of about ₹85 billion due to the restrictions imposed on travel and tourism (Dogra, 2020). The potential job loss in tourism and hospitality has been estimated at 38 million, which is 70 percent of the industry workforce (Radhakrishna, 2020). As a direct consequence of COVID-19, the World Travel and Tourism Council has warned that 50 million jobs in the global travel and tourism sector may be at risk (Faus, 2020).

COVID-19 and culture industry

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted the arts and culture sector around the world. Beyond the immediate threat to life, COVID-19 pandemic is also laying waste to the cultural schedule, forcing cancellations and suspensions of some of society's biggest cultural events. Book festivals and fairs have followed the trend and announced suspensions across the world. Oxford Literary Festival has been cancelled, along with the London Book Fair. In India, Kolkata book fair has also been postponed. Meanwhile, different Bookstore has also been shut down. These literary festivals are a vital source of income for authors, publishers and also others across the globe. With museums, cultural institutions, World Heritage Sites, and other historic monuments closed, communities are deprived of culture as well as significant revenues. At the height of the global lockdown, 90 percent of countries had closed their World Heritage properties (Wahba, et.al).

Since COVID-19 hit, many concerts, art events and festivals have been taking place online. However almost one in two people globally cannot access them due to issues such as lack of internet connectivity, according to UNESCO estimates. "The sector, which accounts for 30 million jobs, is struggling to survive and needs our help," UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay said on 22nd December, 2020. The film industry alone could lose about 10 million jobs this year, according to UNESCO, while a third of world's art galleries could cut their staffing by half or more, data collected by the agency shows. Similarly, what has been in effect a six-month closure of concerts and performance could end up costing the music industry more than \$10 billion in lost sponsorships, while the global publishing market could shrink by 7.5 per cent (UN News, 2020).

COVID-19 and Health

The consequences of the Coronavirus are not only physical (e.g., illness, hospitalization); but also psychological (e.g., fear, anxiety and loneliness). This COVID-19 landscape will definitely leads to an increase in physical health crises, including mental such as chronic stress, anxiety, depression, and alcohol dependence and self-harm. Recent evidences in psychosocial sciences also show that similar pandemics increased the prevalence of symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as confusion, feeling of loneliness, boredom and anger during and after quarantine (Brooks et al., 2020).

Ever since COVID-19 invaded this globe and this global health pandemic has touched every person's life in some way or the other, forcing isolation, uncertainty, anger, and hopelessness and this coupled with the economic meltdown is causing huge psychological distress. The COVID-19 pandemic is a threat to human Society, both for risking human life ensuing socio-economic distress, and for its invisible emotional strain. The threat is manifested as sheer anxiety and panic: worry about getting an infection, worry about loved ones getting ill, and worry when related symptoms-even minor-older are present. The anxiety, stress, financial strife, grief, and general uncertainty of this time will undoubtedly lead to behavioural health crises (Coe and Enomoto, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to contribute to these basic levels of trait anxiety, thus creating a "new normal" level of anxiety. It has been widely reported that COVID-19 is causing detrimental impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of society. A global study has already found that since the outbreak, 67 percent of people have increased levels of stress, 57 percent have greater anxiety, 53 percent feel sadness in day to day and 42 percent report overall mental health has declined (Brower, 2020).

COVID-19 and Education

The education from early childhood all the way through to tertiary studies has been significantly disrupted by COVID-19. The reaction to the COVID-19 outbreak, a school closing as an immediate step to avoid infection transmission, was mandated, and the direct homeschooling programme was strictly enforced. The shutdown of schools and educational institutions has also been heralded for distance and online learning across the world.

UNESCO estimates that over 160 countries have implemented nationwide closures, impacting over 87 percent of world's student population (UNESCO, 2020). In India, the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD), through its department of school literacy and education is proactive in ensuring access to education through various online platforms and initiatives like e-Pathshala, National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER), Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA), SWAYAM platforms (including DTH channels), etc. to enable online learning for children.

The education system has undergone substantial changes and today classes from primary to university are being conducted online along with submission of assignments and evaluation of answer scripts. Conferencing apps like Google Meet, Google Classroom, Zoom and Webex are the popular apps used for conducting interactive classes and sessions. There are so many WhatsApp groups of guardians, teachers, students and parents for affective communication through which they are always in touch to share their views and difficulties through this e-medium. An ICT initiative of MHRD (eBroucher- <https://mhrd.gov.in/ict-initiatives>) is a unique platform which combines all digital resources for online education. But it is a hard reality, as many students have limited or no internet access and many students may not be able to afford computer, laptop or supporting mobile phones in their homes, online teaching-learning may create a digital divide among students.

COVID-19 and Domestic Violence against Women

Lockdown protocol in COVID-19 across the world has locked up victims of domestic violence to stay at home with their abusers, leaving them with little options to find adequate shelter or even solace. In abusive households, women face the battle as the male aggressor inside and the virus outside. As they are closely confined within the four walls, living with abusive partners hurts them both physically and emotionally. Lockdown and social distancing measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have heightened fears of increasing levels of domestic violence, which includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse (Kelly and Morgan, 2020). In a recent study, UN agency for sexual and reproductive health (UNFPA) stated that if the lockdown continues for another some months the cases of domestic violence would be more than 31 million worldwide (Prachi and Prakhar, 2020). Taking note of the surge in the number of cases, UN Secretary General expressed serious concerns stating that “Over the past weeks, as the economic and social pressures and fear have grown, we have seen a horrifying surge in domestic violence. Many women under lockdown for COVID-19 face violence where they should be safest: in their own homes.” He appealed “for peace in homes around the world” (UN Women, 2020).

COVID-19 and change in attitude

Society has experienced disruptions in the normal rhythms of everyday life due to mandated physical distancing, with the likelihood of continuing disruptions in work, school, social, and family relationships. In response, the infrastructures of education, health, economy and other social services that depend on interpersonal contact were forced to transform their practices rapidly moving some online, delaying or postponing others, and shutting down altogether. Public messages and appeals encourage the people more self-focused, protective and sometimes antagonistic behaviours and contribute to more altruistic, pro-social behaviours. These behaviours are required to “flatten the curve” of the pandemic, including 1-2 meter physical distancing, depend on the compliance of individuals.

All the organisations across the world have ordered their employees to work from home which has become an unprecedented event or a shift in the working culture. Now the clear boundaries between employees' professional and private lives are blurred. Everyone has shifted to working and learning on online mode. COVID-19 pandemic has changed the experience of being a consumer, an employee, a family person, a citizen and a human. It is being expected the sea change in attitude and behaviour at scale for some time to come.

Societies are in a transition phase of the 'New Normal' era. Being restricted from non-essential travels, avoiding the closed spaces, crowded places and close-contacts also known as 'social distancing', witness fundamental changes to social values and behaviours. These preventive measures to curb the spread of infections have triggered a sudden paradigm shift in everyday life including day to day lifestyle, work style and business style alike. Human beings, in spite of being a social creature, have to embrace and adapt to this 'New normal' of reduced social interaction with their fellow mates. People, all regardless of age, sex, race, caste, class and nationality currently face a 'New Normal', which requires rethinking of values and society as a whole.

The COVID-19 pandemic has coaxed all the people into the secluded confined space of their homes. People have become more disciplined in these days, and this is actually the ideal way in which people are expected to continue to live a healthy life. Now people are habituated as without socialising, finding time to do things leisurely and systematically, spending time with own family and taking care of themselves. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the way people live in interpersonal relationships. The lockdown was characterized daily life, with an incremental of time at home and a reduction of distance through digital devices. But surprisingly, it is being noticed a sea change in attitude all round, with offering home delivery with shops giving the digital concept a big boost by accepting payments through Paytm, Google Pay and bank transfers. Then, the online shopping sites like Amazon, Flipkart etc. also resumed their operations, making things much better. Here, social media apps like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Blogs etc. are already playing a big role. Organisations and even families are already learning and experiencing to do group chats, video calls, and webinars using various platforms. Children and youth also may be engaging in more on-line behaviour in general or due to emotional distress (e.g., loneliness due to social isolation) and be increasing the chance for solicitation from others who prey on their emotional vulnerabilities (Peterman et al., 2020).

As social isolation intensifies, television viewership has jumped. This is mainly due to the closure of multiplexes and other entertainment avenues across the country.

The Covid-19 appears to have sparked start of a cashless society due to the fear that virus is being spread through notes and coins and thus has led to many businesses only accepting cash and contact-less payments. A global cashless society already seemed inevitable through the widespread and increasing use of tap-and-go payment channels and digital transactions.

Now the common man has been introduced to the world of 'Personal Hygiene' habits. It is not to say that earlier that hygiene did not exist, but Covid-19 has certainly brought it to people's top of mind. People put their priority to buy of soaps, hand washes, sanitizers, bathroom cleaners, phenyl, floor cleaners; portfolio of hygiene category has already made entry into many people's houses.

So, the rapid spread of the virus and the fear of getting infected make people search for virtual services to satisfy all their demands and needs. This enforced shift promotes the populace in all aspects of life from doing official work at the safety of their homes to obtaining groceries remotely and also hiring other services through apps. Broadband services and WiFi are becoming indispensable in this pandemic, as people are getting accustomed to this new platform of the virtual world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed the nature of the social intercourses. This virus is highly infectious in nature and the effect on individuals and health services caused many countries to initiate the restriction on social intercourses. Physical distancing performs as a recommended weapon to fight against the spread of the COVID-19. People are encouraged to avoid close physical contact with others and people are choosing to play it as safe and avoid social interaction.

But, Physical interactions are an essential part of human social experience, and they are particularly important for the social development of human being. By shut down of almost all sectors, the pandemic is preventing people from socializing with others. This affects the ability to make quality connections, which impacts human personal growth. Long-term isolation leaves the people basic human needs unsatisfied and ultimately affects the mental health. Socializing is a fundamental human need, and restriction on social intercourses hinders it, which ultimately affects people's mental wellness. While the physical distancing is being enforced in lockdown era, the social aspect of relationships must be strengthened to sustain the social bonds. Social interactions are proposed to be a basic human need, analogous to other fundamental needs such as food consumption or sleep. Indeed, feeling insufficiently connected to others is associated with profound and lasting negative consequences on physical and mental health, even leading to increased mortality (Orben, Tomova, and Blakemore, 2020).

COVID-19 and Environment

Emphasizing working at home, it is being noticed that air pollution levels have come down dramatically. Due to the nationwide lockdown, all transport services – road, air and rail were suspended with exceptions for essential services. Educational institutions, industrial establishments and hospitality services were also suspended. As a result, air quality has been improved in many towns and cities across the world. There are the reports of the Dhauladhar range in Himachal Pradesh being visible from Jalandhar, which is 200 km away. Citizens have also seen Mt. Kanchenjunga from Siliguri and Mt. Everest from parts of Bihar during the lockdown. That this has happened after 30 years highlights just how long people have battled severe air pollution. The CPCB (Central Pollution Control Board) monitored 115 Indian cities between March 16 and April 15, 2020. The air quality index of 78 percent cities was 'good' and 'satisfactory' during lockdown as compared to 44 percent cities in the pre-lockdown phase (CPCB, 2020). Due to restricted vehicle movement, halt on construction activities, less road dust re-suspension and curb on industrial activities, climatic condition has been improved. Take for instance pollution levels in the Ganges have significantly been reduced - achieving in a few weeks what decades of clean-up campaign failed to do. Wild animals are walking freely on vehicle-free roads. Scientists have claimed that water quality has remarkably improved at Haridwar Ghats which is up to drinking standards (News18 Buzz, 2020). People in Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, can enjoy, from more than 200 Kilometres distance, the majestic Himalayan peaks after 30 years. Mandal and Pal (2020) in their studies on air quality of the four selected stone crushing clusters at Dwarka river basin of Eastern India noticed reduction of PM₁₀ concentration from 189–278 µg/m³ to 50–60 µg/m³ after 18 days of commencement of lockdown. The DO levels of river Ganga as per reports has gone above 8 ppm and BOD levels down below 3 ppm at Kanpur and Varanasi (SANDRP, 2020) which ranged around 6.5 ppm and 4 ppm in 2019 respectively (Pathak and Mishra, 2020)

Conclusion

COVID-19 has dramatically changed the way society function and interacts with others. Whether it is through state-sanctioned or self-imposed changes, monitoring individual behaviours is more important than ever to contain the spread of the virus. Combating the coronavirus needs a collective action and coordination; therefore, citizen participation can be used to assist the local authorities to enforce prescribed behaviour. Thus, government response to the spread of a virus is crucially important for guiding its citizens regarding uncertainty about life, livelihood, and the future. This pandemic crisis brings about a unique opportunity to rethink on the path undertaken for the development of a human being, community and society.

The Covid-19 pandemic is a humanitarian disaster, novel in its upshots and spread, requiring immediate and urgent measures to support policy measures and actions. A new normal begins to take shape, planning and policymaking informed by limited evidence is constantly challenging but still can be done through systematic and holistic approach. Only then society can protect the health, livelihoods, employment security and safety of all people, and ensure that the 'new normal' is a better one.

Policy recommendations

It's a time for inclusive social development and monitoring national and global socio-economic trends, identifying emerging issues and assessing their implications for social policy at the national and international levels. Decisive action and going early detection through testing helps to stamp out the worst of virus. Early intervention and aggressive response to combat the Covid-19 pandemic is crucial.

Structured websites and toll free helpline numbers is desperately needed for alleviating psychological distress among the populace. Telemedicine consultations have to be desperately used by the general public.

Addressing violence against women, national news channels, radio channels, and different social media platforms must be strategically used, similar to that way where the government has deployed campaigns advocating for physical distancing and hand washing to combat COVID-19.

For education, at current times, access to technology and internet is an urgent requirement. So, the digital capabilities and the required infrastructure must reach to the remotest and poorest communities to facilitate the students to continue their education and to eradicate the digital divides among the students. There is an urgent need to deploy public funds to fix the internet gap and ensure that students continue to learn digitally. Government must ensure sufficient data network package (i.e., Internet data) with high speed internet access to conduct online sessions for minimum of 4 to 6 hours per day. Various non-governments/private organisations should come up with ideas to address this issue of digital education. In rural areas, Government must provide un-interrupted power supply to facilitate ease of online teaching.

Tourism requires an integrated, inter-sectoral approach and investment from the government to build supporting infrastructure while the industry should focus on innovation, to tell positive communication and news and social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter for the awareness of potential tourists and guests on cleanliness and sanitisation of properties to create confidence and evince interest. Hoteliers will have to focus on innovative marketing communications create confidence among potential travellers that their properties are safe. Different destination needs rebranding, is very much needed in this difficult time of crisis also look into the most affected places with economic support by the government authorities.

In unemployment, the government has the challenges to provide immediate assistance to: first, informal workers who have lost their jobs, and second, to those who are already unemployed and are looking for the jobs. Apart from assisting informal workers, the migrants and their families for whom the person is the sole earner need to be considered needs urgent attention.

Social media is to be used in good and moral sense, to educate people on transmission dynamics, symptoms of disease, and time when exact medical consultations are needed. Adequate awareness about the COVID-19 and regular updates about appropriate precautionary measures is the compulsory need. To protect social media from fake news, social media rumours, disinformation and misinformation, strict government laws and legislation are to be implemented. There is the extreme need of dedicated integrated COVID-19 web portal, national and state wise helpline number, authentic email ID, government

social hub on WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, New Desk Telegram, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

There should be an immediate execution and expansion of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) to ensure compensation payments to farmers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is need of proper implementation of the benefits of various social welfare schemes such as MGNREGA, Jan DhanScheme and Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana.

Poultry and meat sectors need to be encouraged and the government officials need to reduce misinformation by disseminating authentic information. In addition, Government should give some incentives or stimulus to revive the poultry sector. Small scale business industries should be started in convergence mode with various ministries like agriculture, MSME, Rural development, Food and processing ministry and child and women development.

There is the need of support packages, either through the Culture Ministries or specialised culture agencies support funds for music, books, visual arts and regional cultural bodies. Emergency funds should be released for the revival of the arts, crafts, music and literature.

Last but not the least is that a positive mindset is always desirable against this type of enemy.

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