

Psychological Impacts of COVID-19: Stress & Rigidity

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Editorial

COVID-19 came on lime lights in the month of Dec 2019 and the new year geared with the official declaration of it becoming a pandemic. Now that people have rediscovered the Spanish Flu of 1918 that engulfed 50 million and 100 million people across the world. Comparisons are being made because pandemics spook people. The viruses that cause flu and COVID-19 belong to two different families. Sars-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19 belongs to the coronavirus family and have greater similarities with SARS which originated in China in 2002 and MERS, which began in Saudi Arabia in 2012. Containment measures were effectively futile in many countries. Flattening the COVID-19 curve was achieved by locking down public spaces & transport, closing schools, cancelling conferences, sporting event & social events and on an individual level washing hands with soap regularly, disinfection and avoids gatherings, among other measures. First COVID-19 case can be traced back to November last year in China's Hubei province which became its epicentre as it rapidly spread at home and abroad before Chinese health officials could identify virus. COVID-19 arrived in the last teen year, but began 2020 with a bang and bans. Hopefully pandemic will end with a whimper. In this war too, truth is the first casualty. Facts are now scarier than sanitizers, and panic is spreading faster than virus. The outbreak of COVID-19 puts the international community in front of an unprecedented global challenge, one that knows no boundaries. With limited time at hand we need to prepare both for crisis and recovery. As of 30 March 2020, Indian Govt. has registered a total of 1250 cases (1117 active cases, 101 cured or discharged and 32 deaths) due to COVID-19 infection. With the surge in the cases day by day, many countries worldwide enforced restrictions to curb the contagion. Prime Minister of India observed a one-day Janata curfew on 22 Mar 2020 and declared nationwide 21 days lockdown on 25 March 2020 midnight to break the spread of the infection cycle with the essential supplies available. But with some of the most crowded cities on the planet, there were fears that numbers could skyrocket and overwhelm shaky healthcare systems. Then began the extended locking of the nation with certain relaxations region wise. According to a survey conducted by Indian Psychiatry Society, within a week of enforced lockdown the reported cases of

mental illness in India raised by 20%. Indians may suffer from massive mental health crisis due to economic hardship, domestic violence, unemployment, substance abuse and the vulnerable&marginalized group will be the most affected ones. Third phase of nationwide lockdown began with considerable relaxation from 3 May 2020 considering the pros & cons of the containment thus balancing the economy and the health & safety as per the geographic risk profiles. As on 26 May 2020, India accounts for 144,950 cases and 4,172 deaths Worldwide total number of confirmed cases were 5,588,356 and deaths accounted to 347,873 as on 26 May 2020, out of which 53,167 cases were critical. Continuance with the fourth phase, India has entered into phase five of lockdown from 01 June in containment zones and issuing guidelines for resuming restricted activities in other areas. A total confirmed case in India were 381,000 as on 18 June 2020 with 12,881 new cases and worldwide 8,609,451 cases with 3,592,838 currently infected patients around the world. As the Coronavirus infection continues to spread across the globe, people are getting increasingly worried of getting exposed to the virus as they go about their daily routine. Experts say that the chances of getting infected this way is rather slim, and the best bet to avoid infection is WHO recommended social distancing & hygiene measures. As people become wary of touching suspect surfaces, from door handles to currencies, disinfecting surfaces frequently and washing hands regularly but the fact is the difficulty immobilizing yourself out of fear. Much of the fear that has gripped the world, stems from the fear of unknown, and the fact that there is no cure yet for the contagion. Moreover, the lockdown put everything into a standstill including schools, colleges, board exams, travel, religious congregations to halt, majority of people adopted work from home policy, bank, Défense services, police & medical professionals had half of the attendees on list, vacations were locked up and social events were either postponed or ended with a silent family affair with the permission of the legalities, event registers were wiped clean except disruption in the supply of essentials. In some states the leave of the health professionals was cancelled in the spurt of contagion, to serve the public. Pay of the Govt employees were cut off at state & centre jurisdictions. More extreme forms of social distancing were practised physically though the science & technology at its best, kept the international world interconnected as never before.

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