

NEXT STAGE OF OUTBREAK- BEHAVIORAL FATIGUE AND COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The entire world is working towards avoiding and taking preventive measures against COVID-19 but its impact on one's mental health has not been given priority. This paper will talk about the recent pandemic, COVID-19 that broke out in Wuhan, affecting the entire world calling it a worldwide emergency of global concern with no anti-virus or drugs and its repercussions on the mental health of people. The pandemic has created a deep impact on the psychological health of the people resulting to identifiable behavioral fatigue among various age groups. Like the severe acute respiratory syndrome, 2003, the COVID-19 is also impacting the mental stability of people resulting in problems ranging from fear of loneliness, depressive symptoms, anxiety, anger, sleeplessness, difficulty in making decisions and concentrating etc. to depression, increase in consumption of alcohol, tobacco and post-traumatic stress. This perspective paper will also discuss about responses people have adapted in order to be in peace with the current situation, also known as Behavioral/Pandemic Fatigue or simply COVID Avoidance Behavioral Syndrome and how the government can take appropriate actions in dealing with it.

Keywords: Pandemic, COVID-19, Stress, Behavioral fatigue, Quarantine, Mental health, Pandemic Fatigue

1. INTRODUCTION

Covid-19, the novel corona virus, which originated in China, shook the whole world in the first trimester of the year 2020 [1]. Currently, there are 18,297,264 active cases across the globe with 36,13,509 in India [2-3]. The message is loud and clear that this disease should not be taken lightly. To draw a finishing line to this global pandemic, the support and mutual aid of the inhabitants of the entire world are very much important. The World Health Organization has affirmed that it is imperative to make known the dangers and unite with several associations to reach out for a constructive plan of action so that we can shelter and strengthen ourselves against the COVID-19 because various researches have investigated that performing inhibitory steps on a human being is productive in restraining the expansion of the virus. The World Health Organization has suggested the common citizens to pursue certain preventive measures such as wearing a face cover, using hand wash and sanitizers after regular intervals of time, keeping social distancing, being confined within the house, and quarantining oneself in case of any symptoms.

In order to tackle with this deadly virus, the Government of India had announced one day Janata Curfew on 22nd March 2020 which was followed by back-to-back lockdowns including the closure of schools, public places and gatherings, workplaces, transit systems etc. in various phases with and without relaxation [4-5]. This measure of prevention was the outcome of lack of medical facilities in the country and aimed at separating the susceptible and infectious people by reducing the contact. The effectiveness of social-distancing interventions clubbed with high compliance level from the citizens can help in combating this disease [6].

It has been observed that lockdown has different impacts on people of different age groups, for example parents are stressed out because engaging children at home has become a difficult task for them, family members are tensed because they are not able to meet elderly members at distant places, adolescents are bogged out because of loss of freedom and boredom [7-8].

This article aims at studying the stages of lockdown in India, its impact on the mental health of citizens, what measures people have been taking in order to maintain the positivity in this current situation and how the authorities can help in dealing with this situation.

2. DISCUSSION

The novel coronavirus has landed the entire world in such a situation that administrative authorities are forced to take such measures which are now having adverse effects on the psyche of the people for example lockdown. Although, lockdown is a significant and effective strategy in combating this infectious disease, but it has psychological impact on the general public which needs close understanding.

The phase wise information of lockdown and unlocks in India for controlling Covid-19 are demonstrated in Table-I. This Table gives an overview of various lockdowns and unlock phases since March 2020 till date. It also demonstrates the kind of restrictions and relaxations offered by the government at different time periods.

Table I: Covid-19: Phases wise information of Lockdown in India [9-11]

Sr. No.	Duration of Phases	Key Features
1	25 March 2020– 14 April 2020	Suspension of non-essential services Led to panic buying
2	15 April 2020– 3 May 2020	Conditional relaxations for areas reporting a decline in number of cases Division of areas as red, orange, and green zones Relaxation to agricultural businesses Inter-state movement allowed for stranded people
3	4 May 2020 – 17 May 2020	Under zone wise distribution, normal movement is permitted in green zones with buses limited to 50 percent capacity. The restrictions were imposed maximum in Red Zone
4	18 May 2020– 31 May 2020	Red zones were further divided into buffer zones and containment zones.
5	1 June 2020 – 30 June 2020	Unlock phase 1 Opening of malls, religious places, restaurants etc were allowed Large gatherings were banned Night curfews in some states

6	1 July 2020 – 31 July 2020	Unlock phase 2 Lockdown measures only in containment zones Continued night curfews Schools, colleges along with other educational institutions remained closed Travel restrictions
7	1 August 2020 – 31 August 2020	Unlock phase 3 Educational institutions remained closed Inter and intra state travel was permitted Relaxation for gyms and other health centers
8	1 September 2020 – 30 September 2020	Unlock phase 4 Restrictions on social gatherings with respect to the number of people allowed.
9	1 October 2020 – 31 October 2020	Unlock phase 5 Containment zones continued with restrictions Educational institutions remain closed
10	1 November 2020 – 30 November 2020	Unlock phase 6 Similar to unlock phase 5
11	January 2021	India started with vaccination for front liners.
12	February 2021	India reports lowest number of deaths in the last nine months of 78 deaths in 24 hours.
13	March -May 2021	Constant increase in the number of corona virus cases leading to lockdown and various other preventive measures

As we can observe from the above table, people have been constrained to their homes for more than a year now which has led to behavioral and pandemic fatigue, which are similar to physical fatigue, attention fatigue and voter fatigue and a part of human nature. People are tired of washing hands again and again and living under restrictions [12].

Behavioral fatigue on COVID-19 has been investigated by different workers throughout the globe. Ketchell [13-14] defined that “*behavioral fatigue is the idea that eventually people get bored of doing one thing and start engaging in other, sometimes undesirable, behaviors*”. The choice of a particular behavior is also explained by nudge theory, as explained by Shanghai and Yashar “*A nudge makes it more likely that an individual will make a particular choice, or behave in a particular way, by altering the environment so that automatic*

cognitive processes are triggered to favor the desired outcome”[15]. As the virus stems up rapidly, extensive attempts are being taken to control its spread, serving the affected people and trying to create vaccines. Along with all this, slight concentration is given to the psychological health and the behavioral impression caused due to the disease which is obvious because of the deficiency of study regarding this virus. According to a report made, it showed that rise in anxiety level in a human, encountering on a scheduled basis in terms of their well- being and the well- being of their coeval, possibly some ignorant attitude which the pandemic has caused, and the state of behavioral fatigue of the inhabitants. Also, it has been found from earlier pandemics that a rise in anxiety level causes more aggravation of a disease. Hence certain steps should be taken by a person to lower the anxiety level and panic in oneself. Ignoring immoderate disclosure to everyday headlines might cause anguish but which can be helpful. Likewise, continuing a robust way of life will not only enhance the immunity power but will also keep the frame of mind uplifted. Conversing with companions, relatives are also another means to brace up sentimentally, psychologically, and stay eased and integrated [16].

Jeronimus, B.F. [17] says that we continue the majority part of our life within a social world having seven parts which evolve during the lifetime. It starts from where we are born which is connected to other people resulting in an enlarged familia considering the ancestors and the upcoming generations. As we grow, we might get into a love relationship with a counterpart which results in having another family of our own. There are people who have close companionships with people that some may get into joint ventures which might be with any age group or field. We all also have a neighborhood with which we have communal relationship and is a part of a large network of relationships. This shows that being socially equipped is an essential part of our life and is one of the pivotal reasons for the well being of ourselves. It has also been reported that people who have a longer lifespan are found to have been in connection with a variety of relationships- socially, personally, romantically, economically, culturally etc. communication with people are significant in unfurling ideas and affecting a person’s behavior. Physical mental behavior elucidates a considerable percentage of the danger of low SES for premature death and N+. Also, the proper working of the immune system of a person is directly proportional to our connection with people and virus epidemics and pandemics create a deep impact on behavior.

According to Behavioral Immune System (BIS) theory, individuals might probably grow pessimistic sentiments within them and pessimistic perspective evaluation for self shielding.

Encountered with a developing malady menace, individuals tend to evolve dissociable deportment i.e. circumvent themselves from being in proximity with people who have pneumonia like manifestations and respect communal conventions stringently. According to stress theory and perceived risk theory, civic welfare crisis activates more pessimistic sentiments and influence perspective evaluation as well. These pessimistic sentiments keep individuals away from prospective bacillus in terms of the virus. Nevertheless, abiding pessimistic sentiments might lessen the resistant power of people and demolish the stability of their mental mechanism. In the meantime, people may exaggerate to any illness in case of less suitable instruction from officials, which may lead to extensively ignorant behaviors and imperceptive norms. Hence, it is necessary to comprehend the possible mental variances caused by COVID- 19 in a scheduled order. As mental variances caused by civic welfare crisis can be mirrored directly in sentiments and perception, we can supervise mental variances in time via sentiments and perceptive measures [18].

Rawcliffe, C. [19] conveys that during this time, the time of crisis, lucidity is needed more than ever. About 600 behavioral scientists gave their views against the UK authorities' quick execution to not allow social distancing. The researchers disregarded this plan of action as they thought that a quick implementation of social distancing might result to disobedience, refusal behavior as people may get weary and return to their early behavior which will threaten the grounds of distancing when we require it. Not only will one feel weary, but the tension and solitude can bring requirements to be taken into consideration.

India Today reports that the lockdown imposed on the citizens of the country can bring serious psychological disturbances. As the ongoing lockdown period is in effect, the panic of getting affected from coronavirus, fear of getting unemployed or monetary instability is threatening the people while quarantining themselves from the public for the betterment of everybody's health. While the lockdown affects the economy in terms of the employers fearing from monetary instability, reduction in salary, employers fearing loss of revenue, psychologists says that lockdown affects the state of the mind too. Since we are not allowed to leave home and on the other hand human beings are socially convivial, this juxtaposition of the two state of life is making a counter attack on the minds of the people. Not only are the elders going through this but also the small children and the young adults who have to put with so many restrictions imposed on them i.e. the restriction of the government, the family members and the of the society too. This is creating a sense of hopelessness and mental inadequacy. However, conversing over the phone can bring some relaxation but the absence

of a closed one brings frustration and cause anger. Anger in return leads to powerlessness, ineffectualness. The lack of will power and weakness of the muscles creeps in [20].

Moukaddam, N., Shah, A. [21] convey that with the rise in COVID- 19, all human beings of Asian origin, especially Chinese are the casualties of social dishonor and racism, bigotry with excessive intensity of politics and dangers in the wires and in social relationships. As with most casualty- loaded communications, the procedures spread out due to restricted reports, swift and one- dimensional judgements and a guarding conventional reaction. At the time of an infectious pandemic, medical distrust has been associated to stratagem hypothesis. According to a study in US, almost fifty percent of the people observed, validates in the belief of minimum one well-being related stratagem hypothesis. At the most, medical mistrust can result in anti- vaccination fashion which will further lead to measles outbreak. Lack of trust in medical can strengthen stratagem and discerned differences and lead to lack of devotion fitness advices.

Food- borne zoonotic maladies are sourced through infections that develop between fauna and human species. Researches show that the brutality of these maladies passing on humans differs from lenient to fatal. These maladies now are becoming the root for universal communal- monitorial unreliability with its continuous epidemics and pandemics, just like the COVID- 19 pandemic. The destructive aggressive risks could be ignored if the zoonotic virus could be recognized in the roots before it upsurges, through improvement of the public health services [22].

Zhang, Y., Feei Ma, Z. [23] says that according to a research made that almost half of the members (52.1%) were frightened and anxious because of the COVID- 19 pandemic. It's not that they felt helpless because of it. Further maximum number of people stated that they were more concentrated about their psychological well- being, utilize most of the time resting, relaxing and doing workouts after the arrival of the pandemic. These optimistic influences on the psychological well- being have helped them in battling the other pessimistic influences on the psychological well- being, as well as the escalated stress. On the other hand, a rise in monitorial and family stress during a pandemic having lockdown could be related to some dodging behaviors which can affect the psychological well- being extensively and result to having a more submissive livelihood.

Thakur and Jain [24] state that lockdown and the restriction of being socially ignorant, instills a lot of worry within many individuals of several countries. Nevertheless, the most

susceptible are the one who are already suffering from psychological disorders, enduring panic attacks, depression and the ones who are staying alone and isolated. These people are way too over thinkers and at times have excessive suicidal thoughts. The forceful quarantine and isolation disturb the usual communal life and imposes a mental anxiety and a feeling of being kidnapped for an unlimited duration of time. It has been reported that the first suicidal case was found in south India, a man who was of 50-year-old was having normal influenza like symptoms which he associated it with COVID- 19. However, he did put himself into quarantine but later committed suicide as he was affected after learning the COVID- 19 related deaths. Another case was reported from Delhi, where a COVID- 19 symptomatic patient committed suicide by jumping off the seventh floor of the hospital. Also the booming unemployment, destitution, monetary loss due to the lockdown will result to rise in suicide rates. US has already stated that the coronavirus crisis has resulted to a hike in unemployment and keeping in mind the nature of the virus the lockdown will extend more and lead to increase in mortality rates. This unpredictability of the time period of lockdown will make people feel valueless, despairing about their life as noted keeping in mind the suicide of the German Finance Minister, Thomas Schaefer. Stress, anxiety and pressure among the medical professionals are also extensively hiked up. Half of the medical employees in the British health centers are ill and are at home, burdening the other staffs with huge workload. In London’s King’s College Hospital, a nurse committed suicide while checking the COVID- 19 patients [25]. Also, the frontlines doctors and policemen who are always in touch with COVID- 19 patients and those that are quarantined are suffering from mental injury because of the continuous fright of getting the infection, stress due to huge workload and other factors, helplessness and anguish seeing the COVID- 19 fighters pass away alone.

Table II lists various views of different researchers on behavioral and pandemic fatigue. Through this table we can get an idea about what and how people have developed ignorance towards this deadly disease in order to keep going in this difficult situation.

Table II Views of different researchers on the COVID-19 lockdown and Behavioral and Pandemic Fatigue

Author/s	Investigation	Opinion/outcome of study	Reference
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Nigel Harvey	Behavioural Fatigue: Real Phenomenon, Naïve Construct, or Policy Contrivance?	Lockdown should be delayed to avoid the risk of behavioral fatigue Behavioral fatigue is a set of factors which reduces the compliance with regulations or psychological mechanism which reduces the ability to behave in a certain way. Argues that there is little evidence to prove that behavioral fatigue has impact on the non-compliance with restrictions	[26]
Rakhi Dandona Rajesh Sagar	COVID-19 offers an opportunity to reform mental health in India	Indians contribute to 26.6% of global suicides in 2016. 1 in 7 Indians is diagnosed with mental disorders. Pandemic has added to the severity of the mental disorders Increase in the number of people searching for suicide and help seeking online	[27]
Bilal Javed Abdullah Sarwer Erik B. Soto Zia-ur-Rehman Mashwani	The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic's impact on mental health	The change in people's behavior will have impact on pandemic's dynamic by amending the disease flow, severity, transmission, and repercussions. Self-isolation and quarantine deteriorate the mental health of people. Various preventive measures like involvement in exercise, sports activities, and spending time with family can improve the mental stability.	[28]
Sandeep Grover, Swapnajeet Sahoo, Aseem Mehra ,Ajit Avasthi, Adarsh Tripathi, Alka Subramanyan, Amrit Pattojoshi, G Prasad Rao , Gautam Saha, KK Mishra, Kaustav Chakraborty, Naren P Rao, Mrugesh Vaishnav, Om Prakash Singh PK Dalal, Rakesh K	Psychological impact of COVID-19 lockdown: An online survey from India	As per their survey results, 18.5% of the population has reported mild depressive symptoms and 3% reported moderate to severe depression. There has been an increase in the negative emotions like anxiety, sadness, irritability, and stress etc.	[29]

Chadda, Ravi Gupta, Shiv Gautam, Siddharth Sarkar, TS Sathyanarayana Rao, Vinay Kumar, YC Janardran Reddy			
World Health Organization	COVID-19 disrupting mental health services in most countries, WHO survey	It is important to invest in mental health. Guidance to maintain the mental health	[30]
Andrew Byrne MB BCh, MMedSc, FRCPsych Robert Barber MBBS, MD, FRCPsych Chee Hwai Lim MBBS, MRes	Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic – a mental health service perspective	Increase in psychiatric illness	[31]
Aneesha Bedi Simrin Sirur	Lockdown fatigue' behind Delhi's third Covid wave, experts call for behavioural change	Collection of incidents which clearly mention the ignorance of people due to behavioral fatigue like not wearing a mask, celebrating festivals with no social distancing, not accepting that coronavirus is dangerous etc.	[32]
Riya Sharma Niharika Lal	COVID Behavioral Fatigue Syndrome: False sense of normalcy, goodbye to social distancing are leading to surge: Doctors	Refusal in following the rules and regulations	[33]

3. CONCLUSION

Hence, we can conclude that pandemic fatigue is an expected and natural reaction to the adversities faced by humans. This demotivates and refrains them from engaging in protective behaviours against this chronic disease including not following the hygiene etiquettes, social distancing, wearing a mask etc. This eventually moulds ones emotions, perceptions and experiences. This change of thoughts in the minds of the people is creating a havoc and disturbing the immunity level of people which is a must need to fight the disease.

The government of the country can play an important in maintaining and stabilizing this situation of increasing psychic disorder amongst the citizens of country. The major strategies in dealing with this situation will include understanding the people, involvement of people as an essential part of the solution, thinking of such ways which would allow people to live the way they want with reduced risks and acknowledging and appreciating the hardships of people. This would improve the transparency, trust, fairness and consistency in the governmental processes, hence having a positive impact on the predictability coordination between citizens and the administrative authorities.

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