

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE WORLD

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ABSTRACT

This paper gives a collective insight about the issues and problems faced by different sectors or organizations and society as a whole from Covid-19. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, public health measures such as wearing face masks, practicing physical distancing, frequent handwashing, and avoiding large gatherings have been recommended. Vaccines have been developed and approved for emergency use in many countries, providing protection against COVID-19 and helping to reduce the severity of the diseases

Keywords: COVID-19, Challenges, Education, Healthcare, Social-distancing

Introduction:

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). The outbreak of this pandemic was in Wuhan, China. By the first week of May, 2020 there were over 3.3 million confirmed cases of covid-19 reported and more than 3 Lakh deaths in 215 countries.¹ This virus spread through close contact, sneeze, cough or even while talking. A complete nationwide lockdown was implemented from first week of August 2020.

The pandemic has devastated lives in many ways, the government across the whole world had to declared lockdown and maintain reasonable distance throughout with the outside world and even their family and the people had to get used to their 'new normal' lives within the covid era. The work-life balance became even tougher than ever. Furthermore, the organisations and different industries faced challenges in terms of adjusting with the new virtual era along with financial matters. Many companies were forced to closed down or faced reduction in their overall output. Dependence in technologies increased

extensively. Countries like India, UK, Australia, China, France launched tracing applications on smartphone apps and indicate the contaminated regions and identify any new infected person. This helped the government associated authorities to immediately isolate such area or a home or a person preventing from further spreading the virus or infecting others. We also see, the widespread use of technologies has increased in cybercrimes and other privacy violations.

Albeit, the pandemic has successfully recovered the environment in different ways but waste from health facilities such as masks, gloves etc and household waste has significantly increased.

Practicing social distancing disturbed the traditional educational practises and it was a challenge to the students as well as teachers to implement and adjust with the virtual teaching practise. Bhutan was the first to close schools and colleges.

Education through Online Mode

Social distancing and lockdown led to closure of schools and colleges and other institutions in many countries. This opened a virtual platform for continuation. The normal physical and face-

¹ World Health Organisation. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak situation. 2020. cited 2020 May 4. Available from: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>.

to-face study was transformed to online study. Studies found that teachers and students found it difficult to adjust with the new learning environment. No one find any best and a fixed method of teach, teaching was demanded to be different for different age groups and different subjects.

Platforms such as google classrooms, Microsoft Teams etc was used for educational purpose. Similarly, apps were created which made it easier for the teachers as well as students to retain the information and evaluate their growth so far. Classes were done live in platforms such as Zoom, google meet etc.

Lack of face-to-face interaction is one of the major challenges of virtual learning. The absence of physical presence and direct interaction between students and teachers makes it difficult for students to ask questions, seek clarifications or engage in discussions leading to a potential loss of interactive learning experience. Virtual learning which relies solely on technology such as computers, mobile gadgets, internet etc. Not all students may have access to personal devices required for such learning. Sharing device among the family members on mobile devices may compromise the learning experience and to fully participate in online activities. This also requires a stable internet connectivity and failure would interrupt their learning process especially when participating in live sessions or even submitting assignments. Some students may also face challenges related to digital literacy, at the same time cybersecurity risks has increased because such learning involves sharing personal information. Prolonged screen time during virtual learning can lead to digital fatigue causing eye stain, exhaustion, decrease concentration. Teachers may also find it difficult to accurately gauge students learning process or provide immediate feedback. This in-turn hinders the effectiveness of the learning process. Some subjects are better grasped when done physically and replicating it in a virtual setting altogether is challenging.

Healthcare Sector

The greatest impact of this pandemic has been on health of the people Millions were affected and thousands of deaths. The hospitals faced immense difficulty due to shortage of beds, medical equipment, healthcare personnel etc. Many patients due to such difficulty could not be treated on time with adequate care.

Many other non-covid diseases was postponed to prioritize covid virus infected patients as the need of the hour. But this led to worsening of health of the non- covid infected persons. Healthcare workers have done a commendable job surpassing all the challenges that came their way such as increase risk factor of exposure to virus, physical and mental fatigue, worked long hours, couldn't meet their family for months, couldn't attend funerals or gatherings. Sometimes even their salaries were deducted.²

Improving the healthcare sector was the utmost importance due to the increase demand of services particularly for testing, treatment and even critical care. Many facilities were expanded their capacity to accommodate the growing number of patients. Several units were set up, number of beds incorporated and spaces for patient care. PPE (Personal protective Equipment) and infection control measures were implemented to protect patients and workers. The hospitals had to deal with staff shortages, and many issues that came their way.

They were responsible for identifying cases, testing, contact tracing and isolating infected individuals to prevent further transmission. Healthcare professionals, researchers and scientists are actively studying the virus and treatments and vaccines. Educating people about preventive measures, proper hygiene and vaccination helps in reducing transmission rates and minimizing the burden on healthcare. Major impact made due to covid was on the mental health. Fear of contracting the virus and anxiety related to the pandemic impact on

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7306959/>

health., livelihood and loved ones have increased stress levels for many individuals. Lockdown, social distancing measures and restrictions have led to increased feeling of isolation and loneliness. Many had experienced loss of any near and dear person due to covid-19 which has led to profound grief and most of the time they are unable to grieve properly due to restrictions on funerals and mourning rituals which further impacted their mental health. Workers have provided constant support and counselling services to those who are affected.

Healthcare providers were practising virtual consultations, remote monitoring and digital platforms to deliver care, reducing the risk of exposure and improving access to healthcare services. Marginalized communities, disadvantaged populations and minority groups have been disproportionately affected by the virus due to factors like limited access to healthcare, crowded living conditions and inequalities. It was also found that there are long term health implications of covid-19 such as fatigue, organ damage, requiring continuous healthcare support.

Waste Management

The quantity of waste has increased due to social-distancing measures. The surge in medical waste due to use of testing kits, masks and other medical supplies has increased³. Staff shortages along with restrictions on recycling facilities and change in waste management protocols have affected the collection and processing of recyclable materials. Failure to manage the waste accelerated the virus. With the rise in online shopping and home deliveries during lockdowns, there has been an increase in packaging waste, including cardboard boxes, plastic wrap, and other packaging materials. Appropriate recycling and waste management practices are important to reduce the environmental impact of packaging waste. COVID-19 restrictions, such as restaurant closures, reduced demand, and disruptions in

the food supply chain, have contributed to food waste. Excess perishable food items that cannot be consumed or redistributed in time can lead to significant waste generation.

It is essential for governments, businesses, and individuals to prioritize proper waste management practices during the pandemic. This includes following guidelines for the safe disposal of medical waste, promoting the use of reusable PPE where appropriate, encouraging recycling and responsible packaging practices, and implementing strategies to reduce food waste. Proper waste management is crucial to minimize environmental pollution, protect public health, and ensure a sustainable future.

Even before the covid pandemic had started, it was a struggle to manage the waste from the industries and household⁴. Proper management of hazardous waste such as from healthcare facilities and covid-19 testing sites has been essential. There is also a need of public awareness and guidance regarding proper waste management practices on safe disposal of PPE, adherence to waste separation and recycling guidelines and raising awareness about the importance of waste reduction and sustainability.

Environmental conditions

In consequence of the covid-19 have to some extent recovered the environment and have set positive impact on global climate change. Lockdowns and travel restrictions controlled the spread of the virus, there has been a reduction in transportation activities, energy consumption, pollution and operation of industries. This led to improvement in air quality in many regions with reductions in air pollutants. There is reduction in human activities such as tourism and recreational travel that has turned into a positive thing for wildlife and ecosystem. Some programs related to recycling and waste management services faced disturbance due to shortages of staffs etc. The decrease in industrial and transportation activities during

³ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10668-020-00956-y>

⁴ UN-Habitat 2020

the pandemic led to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions this contributed to a slowing down of global warming and transitioned to a low-carbon future.

At the same time demand for single-use plastic items, such as masks, gloves, and packaging, has surged during the pandemic due to hygiene concerns. This has led to increased plastic waste generation, exacerbating the global plastic pollution problem.

Improvements

Pandemic has increased public awareness of personal hygiene. People have become more conscious of their own health and well-being of those around leading to healthier behaviours and improved health. People were forced to adopt technology and these advancements have the potential to enhance efficiency, accessibility and convenience in the long run.

The pandemic has brought mental health to the forefront of public discourse. It has shed light on the importance of mental well-being and the need for increased resources and support systems. This greater recognition of mental health challenges may lead to improved access to mental health services and reduced stigma surrounding mental health issues.

Scientific research has also advanced due to the pandemic. Invention of vaccines against the virus has been the major achievement. Scientists and researchers worldwide collaborated to rapidly develop multiple vaccines. Rapid diagnostic tests have been developed and improved to enhance testing capacity and accuracy. This has facilitated early detection, contact tracing, and monitored of the disease. Researchers are studying the different variants of SARS-CoV-2 that have emerged, monitoring their spread, transmissibility, and potential impact on vaccine effectiveness.

Conclusion

It is the responsibility of the government and other sectors authorities and communities to implement strategies for better waste management and waste management and ensure better health and environment. Research has increased and collaboration with multiple companies have developed new inventions.

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