4 PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF QUARANTINE DURING PANDEMIC

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on public mental health. Therefore, monitoring and oversight of the population mental health during crises such as a pandemic is an immediate priority. Symptoms of the Coronavirus infection include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, myalgia, nausea and vomiting, and diarrhoea. In addition to the physical impacts, COVID-19 can have serious effects on people's mental health. At the individual level, people are more likely to experience fear of getting sick or dying, feeling helpless, and being stereotyped by others. Nervousness and anxiety in a society affect everyone to a large extent. Recent evidence suggests that people who are kept in isolation and quarantine experience significant levels of anxiety, anger, confusion, and stress. Due to the pathogenicity of the virus, the rate of spread, the resulting high mortality rate, COVID-19 may affect the mental health of individuals at several layers of society, ranging from the infected patients, and health care workers, to families, children, students, patients with mental illness, and even workers in other sectors. Such conditions are even more significant for populations with poorer health conditions. In the under-developed and developing countries the epidemic conditions of COVID-19 impose greater psychological effects on the population, given that these countries are also affected by many other infectious diseases. This contagious virus has not only raised concerns over general public health, but has also caused a number of psychological and mental disorders. According to our analysis, it can be concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic can affect mental health in individuals and different communities. However, psychological states change with the passage of time and with the alterations in one's surrounding environment. Therefore, it is necessary to portray the psychological impacts of the COVID-19 catastrophe over a longer and more forward-looking period. This paper throws its light on the psychological effect during quarantine, coping up strategies etc.

Key words: COVID-19, Virus, Quarantine, Stress, Isolation

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 which is said to have emerged from Wuhan (China) has caused a serious impact on almost every society of the earth. Due to the problems caused by this particular health crisis all over the world, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared it as a global pandemic. Not only that but because of its rampant spread countries were forced to stop international travelling as well as locked up them. Also, the lockdown has been recognised as the only method to control the spread of the pandemic and almost every country has adopted this method. Amidst the lockdown in Indian society, multiple issues related to social, educational, economical, political, agricultural, psychological levels and many more have been noticed which has created the devastating impact on the lives of the people. The lockdown was placed when the number of confirmed positive coronavirus cases in India was approximately 500 (Gettleman, et.al., 2020). The direct outcomes of the various lockdown phases were that the mortality rate of COVID-19 and its cases were significantly controlled. However, there have been various indirect effects of these phases as such lockdowns on the mass level have not been implemented in the world for a long time. The severe contagious nature of COVID-19 has led to an unhealthy situation across the world. The worldwide population is 7.6 billion, and the major part of the population, approximately 3.9 billion people, has been under lockdown and quarantined in their homes at some point. The lockdown and quarantine policies have been implemented by many nations to minimize the spread of this disease and bring it under control. The lockdown includes isolation at homes, travel restrictions, and termination of all public events. Modern lockdown strategies have been enforced all over the world in order to prevent the COVID-19 infection from spreading even further (Usha, Bhullar, et.al. 2020). To tackle this global pandemic, the extent of spread and the time taken by the epidemic to reach its peak and other details must be well predicted so that the state can plan accordingly and fight against it. To facilitate physical distancing, most countries adopted either full or partial lockdown measures to prevent transmission. The mitigation measures taken by the countries have resulted in huge financial loses in almost every industry, in every country and have also resulted in enormous psychological consequences (Brooks, 2020; Matias et al, 2020; Tull et al.2020). As other public health emergencies, COVID-19 pandemic affect one's psychological state in the short-term and mental health in the long-term (Liang L, 2020). Quarantine is often an unpleasant experience for those who undergo it. Separation from loved ones, the loss of freedom, uncertainty over disease status, and boredom can, on occasion, create dramatic effects. Successful use of quarantine as a public health measure requires us to reduce, as far as possible, the negative effects associated with it.

METHODOLOGY

In order to accomplish the objective of this research, researcher searched the literatures in the scholar sites including Scopus and Web of Science. The search keywords are 'Psychological impact of quarantine', 'Psychological stress associated with the quarantine', 'Experiencing job loss', 'COVID-19', 'pandemic' and 'mitigate the mental health risk'. Obtained literatures were further screened with respect to the languages and only articles in English language were selected for this research. Finally, the selected articles were analysed in relation to the selected key words.

Psychological impact of quarantine

In this nationwide survey study, 34.1% of participants with an experience of quarantine during COVID-19 outbreak reported having at least one of the psychological symptoms including anxiety,

depression, insomnia, and acute stress, which is higher than those who were not quarantined (27.3%), indicating that the pandemic and quarantine measures related to COVID-19 are having adverse effects on mental health. Quarantine measures were associated with increased risk of experiencing mental health burden, especially for vulnerable groups including people with pre-existing mental or physical illnesses. Quarantine or social isolation disrupts people's jobs and lives immensely, and hence it may have important implications for their health and well-being. These necessary measures lead the general population to a high level of stress and psychological problems, producing uncertainty, fear of contagion, and illness in themselves and their loved ones, and a fear of financial loss. Quarantine often is an unpleasant experience. On one hand for those who earn their living on daily wages, it is a question of their survival. On the other hand, the loss of freedom, separation from the loved ones, and the uncertainty over the disease status, may pose immense psychological turbulence, even in the more affluent population. Complying with quarantine, being able to take part in usual work, and having adequate understanding of information related to the outbreak were associated with less mental health issues. Quarantine measures were associated with increased risk of experiencing mental health burden, especially for vulnerable groups including people with pre-existing mental or physical illnesses, frontline workers, those who are infected or at risk of infection, those who are less financially well-off, and those who experienced fear of infection.

Psychological stressors associated with quarantine

The quarantine-related symptoms of stress have been reported to be associated with several negative psychological outcomes such as low mood, irritability, insomnia, anger, and emotional exhaustion. People stressed due to longer quarantine duration as well as infection fears, frustration, boredom, inadequate supplies, inadequate information, financial loss, stigma as well as anxiety, which may turn into depression and high perceived stress. The reason behind the high prevalence of anxiety among Indians could be because it is the first encounter of this type of lockdown. Besides, this pandemic is impacting a population already facing challenges in their lives like unemployment, family issues and various other changes like lifestyle, which is included as a significant reason for anxiety (Devis N, 2020). In addition to increased anxiety and depression, job loss may lead to other adverse mental health outcomes, such as substance use disorder. During the previous recession, the high unemployment rate was also associated with increases in suicides. Not surprisingly, hospital isolation was more depressing than home isolation. The opposite, however, was true for stigmatization. Fear of infecting others or becoming infected, potentially exacerbated by ignorance of infection transmission, may have resulted in avoidance within the home beyond required social distancing measures. Such experiences of avoidance from family members, as opposed to trained health-care professionals, may have led to feelings of great hurt and shame, increasing the burden of stigma. Other contributing factors were losing one's job, experiencing social conflict or breakup, transmitting the infection to others, or knowing someone who had died due to the disease.

Experiencing Job Loss or Income Insecurity

Throughout the pandemic, many people across the country have experienced job or income loss, which has generally affected their mental health. People are experiencing household job loss during the pandemic have consistently reported higher rates of symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorder compared to adults not experiencing household job loss.

Essential Workers

Essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as health care providers, grocery store employees, and mail and package delivery personnel, have shown high rates of poor mental health outcomes. These workers are generally required to work outside of their home and may be unable to practice social distancing. Consequently, they are at increased risk of contracting coronavirus and exposing other members of their household. During the pandemic, frontline health care workers have reported feelings of anxiety and depression and thoughts of suicide.

What can be done to mitigate the mental health risk?

Although isolation and quarantine have distinct meanings in practice, they both involve the separation of an individual from their loved ones, normal activities, and routines for the purpose of infection prevention. The psychological impact of quarantine and isolation was exacerbated by the harmful effect of limited physical activity and changes in dietary practices. During the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns about mental health and substance use have grown, including concerns about suicidal ideation. Suicide rates have long been on the rise and may worsen due to the pandemic. Mental distress during the pandemic is occurring against a backdrop of high rates of mental illness and substance use that existed prior to the current crisis. There are a variety of ways the pandemic has likely affected mental health, particularly with widespread social isolation resulting from necessary safety measures. A broad body of research links social isolation and loneliness to both poor mental and physical health. The widespread experience of loneliness became a public health concern even before the pandemic, given its association with reduced lifespan and greater risk of both mental and physical illnesses. Some prior epidemics have induced general stress and led to new mental health and substance use issues. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, different populations are at increased risk to experience poor mental health and may face challenges accessing needed care.

Quarantine is associated with long term psychological consequences. A risk-benefit analysis weighing up the need for quarantine to prevent the spread of disease vs. the psychological consequences is imperative. Individuals should be informed about the need for quarantine and should be well supported during this period. Depriving people of their liberty for longer than is necessarily has long term detrimental consequences and requires careful handling by health authorities and governments.

Supporting mental and psychosocial well-being in different target groups during the outbreak, Public should be empathetic to all those COVID-19 affected people by not attaching the disease to any particular ethnicity or nationality, since they have not done anything wrong and also, they deserve support, compassion and kindness. People should try to minimise watching, reading listening to news that causes anxious or distressed instead they should try to get information only through trusted sources which helps them to take practical steps to plan and safeguard their loved ones through the updates. Working together as one community can help to create solidarity in addressing COVID-19 together. Should also take care of oneself at this time. Try and use helpful coping strategies such as ensuring sufficient rest and respite during work or between shifts, eat sufficient and healthy food, engage in physical activity, and stay in contact with family and friends. Avoid using unhelpful coping strategies such as use of tobacco, alcohol or other drugs. In the long term, these

can worsen your mental and physical well-being. Older adults, especially in isolation and those with cognitive decline/dementia may become more anxious, angry, stressed, agitated and withdrawn during the outbreak or while in quarantine. Provide practical and emotional support through informal networks (families) and health professionals. In all this regard, everyone should learn simple daily physical exercises to perform at home, in quarantine or isolation so you can maintain mobility and reduce boredom. It is important for the people who are in quarantine to stay connected and maintain your social networks. Try as much as possible to keep your personal daily routines or create new routines if circumstances change. If health authorities have recommended limiting your physical social contact to contain the outbreak, you can stay connected via telephone, e-mail, social media or video conference. During times of stress, pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly, keep regular sleep routines and eat healthy food. Keep things in perspective. Public health agencies and experts in all countries are working on the outbreak to ensure the availability of the best care to those affected.

CONCLUSION

Pandemics are often associated with a state of stress and panic. Accordingly, strain resulting from telecommunication can accumulate with other stressors to lead to exhaustion, anxiety, and burnout. During the COVID-19 outbreak, imposed lockdowns and compulsory quarantines increased levels of tension. The inability to socialize, attend gatherings and interact with others enhanced separation anxiety, boredom, and suicidal thoughts, and as such, these emotions were reported more often. The elderly, teens, healthcare providers, and individuals with pre-existing mental health problems became more susceptible to stress and burnout. Symptoms in elderly manifested as changes in eating habits, disturbed sleep cycles, increased intake of tobacco and alcohol, and difficulty in concentrating. The closing of schools and educational institutions and the shift in learning to online methods disrupted the lives of students. Exams were postponed or cancelled, graduation ceremonies were halted, and learning objectives were shifted. This took a heavy toll on the psychological well-being of students worldwide. The lockdown negatively affected many sectors through delaying promotions, cutting wages, and/or job termination. Many institutions were forced to limit their working capacity or stop working completely, and this had a negative socioeconomic impact on employees, employers, and national economies. Subsequently, pressure and anxiety levels increased among affected individuals, who had to worry about both the pandemic and the burden of providing for themselves and their families during challenging times. Adopting coping strategies that are practical and applicable during online sessions can decrease the risk of psychological distress and preserve health and well-being. Several measures must be taken to increase public mindfulness regarding the psychological repercussions of telecommunication. In addition, health strategies need to be adopted to help the public cope with rising stress and burnout levels during pandemics. Therefore, in the current crisis, it is vital to identify individuals prone to psychological disorders from different groups and at different layers of populations, so that with appropriate psychological strategies, techniques and interventions, the general population mental health is preserved and improved.

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