

How COVID-19 Affects People's Lives

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Covid-19 took hold of the world in the early months of 2020, causing panic and confusion around the globe. No one understood the severity of this pandemic, and a lot of misinformation was spread about it. Many people took it seriously, turning to medical professionals for guidance and following all the precautionary measures advised; however, others did not believe that this pandemic was real, and not only did they put themselves at risk, but others did as well. This led to the pandemic getting out of control, leading to the highest number of mortalities recorded in recent years. The impact of this pandemic on everyone's lives has been devastating, and this paper will discuss those effects in detail.

Discussion

Coronavirus spread from Wuhan, China, in late 2019, and by 11th March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Restrictions were placed on air travel, and many countries declared public health emergencies, urging the citizens to stay at home. This was the start of a year-long quarantine, and "work from home" started. People had to adjust to this new norm, which took its toll on them in the coming days. Thousands of small businesses were affected; many people were laid off while the rest lived in fear of losing their jobs. Reports of depression increased as people lost their loved ones to the coronavirus and were unable to meet their families in this time of crisis. Social isolation was also a big contributor to the rise of mental health problems across the United States.

The pandemic rapidly grew across the globe, halting exports, which affected the trading relationships of every country. This also puts a severe strain on the economic situation of the countries, especially third-world countries. Manufacturing slowed down, which led to a shortage of product supplies; this led to hoarding of these products, creating even more lack in the market. Products like masks and sanitisers that were not in demand before the pandemic suddenly became the most sought-after products; this resulted in a decrease in supply as opposed to demand. The chemicals used in the production of the sanitisers became short, which further put a strain on the production. On the one hand, the people were living in fear of losing their jobs, and on the other hand, due to product shortages, prices were climbing as well. This was not an ideal situation to be living in, but this could not be avoided; however, the government tried to provide relief to its citizens in times of need by sending stimulus cheques. Overall, the adverse effects that the pandemic had on the people are economic, social and healthcare-related. These effects are discussed below in detail.

Effects On The Economy

Covid-19 has resulted in many people being laid off from their jobs, and employment rates have declined as well. In the past, the average employment rate was 61.3 per cent; however, in 2020, this percentage took a huge dip, decreasing to 51.5 per cent. This indicated that ten out of a hundred people were unemployed, meaning that fewer people were employed, and the number of unemployed rose with every passing day. This was because many businesses were suffering from customer loss and could no longer afford to keep the employees. Another reason was that most of the work was being handled from homes, so in order to manage the employees remotely, smaller teams were thought to be more manageable. This was a distressful time for both the employees and the employers (Haleem et al., 2020).

Another hit that the employees had to face was reduced compensation, where a percentage of their salary was cut, but the reason behind this was purely because some companies did not want to lay off their employees. This reduction was done as the companies knew that it was better than laying people off in such a tough time; nevertheless, it was still a cause for concern. This was also done in such a way that a higher percentage was cut from top executives, which resulted in a percentage taken from the employees with less income. Unfortunately, some companies could not keep their employees but still did not want to lay them off. Thus, they introduced furloughs. In this, some employees were given a temporary leave or reduced hours of work. This gave the employees some security that they still had a job to return to when the situation would get better.

Another factor that impacted the people was a rise in the prices of the products. This was due to a sudden increase in demand for products as everyone had started to buy the essential products in masses. The biggest example of this was the viral “toilet paper buying” frenzy that occurred in the United States. This also included people hoarding sanitisers and selling them for a huge profit online. However, the government quickly put a stop to this. In some countries, to prevent hoarding, prices were increased if the people were bulk buying. These measures worked as no one wanted to pay more than the actual price of the product. The developed countries did not feel the brunt of the price hike as severely as the third-world countries. The citizens of such countries were already facing inflated prices, but the pandemic left them devastated. None of them could afford to be laid off as the cost of living was already too high, and without their jobs, they were not able to sustain themselves (Maital, 2020).

The increase in demand and the inability to fulfil this demand was due to a slowed supply of raw materials to the manufacturers, as world trade had significantly slowed down due to the virus. Every cargo ship and plane was extensively sanitized and kept in quarantine to make sure the virus was not present. After a thorough inspection, they were allowed to be taken to their final destination. However, trade with high-risk countries was halted in fear of the further spread of the virus. These were the third-world countries that suffered greatly from this loss of revenue. This further led to high losses among businesses on the national and international levels. The economy of third-world

countries became even more unstable, leaving the people struggling to survive. The biggest inconvenience for the first-world countries was the work-from-home order, but the people living in third-world countries were not only battling the looming threat of the virus but also further inflation. This is not to assume that other countries had it easy but to make everyone aware that there are people out there living in the worst conditions. Restrictions on travelling also affected the countries that depended on foreign tourism as one of their revenue streams. Ban on travelling also meant that all travel agencies faced huge losses due to it. Many ship owners sold their ships to be sold for parts as keeping the ship was very expensive, and without any passengers or cargo, they faced a huge amount of loss (Abiad et al., 2020).

After the hold of the coronavirus loosened, a few people were able to return to their jobs, although precautionary steps are still being taken. The prices have not gone down, but there is hope that the economy will recover in a few more years. The pandemic also opened the world of online shopping, so it is hoped that e-commerce will help smaller businesses stabilize. During the lockdown, many individuals turned to make an income online, and this helped many people who had lost their jobs find their true calling as well. Fortunately, freelancing also helped many families in third-world countries to rise above poverty and have a chance at a better life.

Impact On The Social Life

To prevent the spread of the virus, a worldwide lockdown was initiated, and people were encouraged to quarantine themselves. This lockdown lasted for almost a year, which left people feeling socially isolated. They had to conform to a new norm of working from home, which took its toll on everyone. There was a lot of confusion in the first few months as people tried to adjust to work online, and it was a learning curve they had to deal with. Increased reports of anxiety and depression were received. The reports were highest among the students who felt out of their element and struggled to adjust. This became worse when they had to graduate remotely and Start College from home. They felt that the most important moments of their lives had gotten lost in this pandemic (Haleem et al., 2020).

The loss of prime moments in their lives was indeed sad, but it was nothing compared to the pain of the people who had to social distance knowing that their family members had contracted the virus. It was even more devastating as many people could not say their last goodbyes to their loved ones. Reports of rising cases and death rates did not help the mental state of the people. 4 out of every 10 people reported having the symptoms of anxiety or depression; this figure previously was 1 out of every 10 people. Substance use also increased, especially alcohol consumption. Apart from anxiety and depression, other mental health disorders include insomnia, eating disorders and high stress. Social isolation was another huge effect of the pandemic, as people were not allowed to do any physical activity for fear of the virus spreading. Loneliness was the biggest reason behind the increased cases of mental health cases (Loades et al., 2020).

Social isolation leads to chronic loneliness and boredom, which lead to the deterioration of physical

health as well. Many people started to disregard the lockdown, and many outright denied its existence. This, according to medical professionals, was due to high anxiety as it leads to irrational decisions. People started to deny the medical opinion, saying that their religion would protect them. Some went as far as selling holy water to combat the virus. There were strikes against wearing masks, which included slogans like “Protect my right to die” and “My virus, my body, my choice”. This total disregard of the precautions led to a further increase in COVID-19 cases (Banerjee & Rai, 2020).

With the use of social media being prevalent in this age, false news is prone to be circulated on every platform. There was a great amount of false news that disregarded science-based facts, urging people to fight for their rights. This led to an increase in the number of people who refused to wear masks and encouraged others to do this as well, as they were the citizens of a “free country” and could not be oppressed. This led to a great internet divide between the people who were anti-mask and the people who were pro-mask. This back and forth between both groups led the pro-makers to name the anti-mask or anti-vaxxers as “Karens”. This caused widespread viral videos to be shared on the internet where the pro-vaxxers called anti-vaxxers out. This term was initially used to call out the entitled white women but was later used for anyone who acted entitled during the pandemic (Tiffany, 2020).

The employees who were deemed essential workers had to face these people who disregarded the safety measures. When they refused to let anyone in without a mask, it resulted in verbal abuse by the customers. Some businesses outright refused to let anyone in without a mask, making it clear that they would not risk the health of their employees and customers. Anti-mask rallies were another cause for concern as these were also responsible for spreading the virus. These people were not only against the use of masks but also disregarded social distancing and refused to get the COVID-19 vaccination (Taylor & Asmundson, 2021). The government and medical professionals urged these people to adhere to the precautionary measures so that the virus could be contained and everyone could return to their normal lives. However, their pleas were disregarded as well.

Another social impact was that large gatherings were prohibited, and large events such as sports tournaments and concerts were cancelled. People were not allowed to dine in and were encouraged to order home delivery instead. Weddings, birthdays and other celebrations were advised to be postponed. This caused a lot of stress as it meant that people would not be able to see their loved ones on joyous occasions. Everything was taken online, from classes to business dealings and even the church sermons. This meant that people spent most of their time online, and this led to the problem of impulse buying out of sheer boredom as the sources of entertainment became limited. Appointments were cancelled, and many people who enjoyed socializing were thrown out of their element. They could no longer go out on weekends to socialize; they could not eat out or have a spa day. For extroverted people, the lockdown was a punishment; however, introverted people could not be happier to get out of their social obligations. The performance of introverts shot up during the pandemic as the working conditions became ideal for them, but others were not too pleased with it (Wei, 2020).

Impact On The Healthcare

Coronavirus was the biggest challenge that medical professionals had to face as it had spread globally. They were racing against creating a vaccine for a virus that no one knew about; even worse was the fact that this virus kept evolving rapidly, and every time, the variant acted differently. They were also on the frontline of the pandemic as they were treating the infected while putting their lives on the line. Many doctors and caretakers lost their lives to this virus while providing care for the patients. The caretakers reported that they were working around the clock; they were too stressed out to fall asleep. They witnessed the patients' fear as they suffered from this unknown virus and prepared for the worst. Some patients even recorded farewell videos for their families in case they did not make it. They witnessed people losing multiple family members to the pandemic, and they also witnessed their colleagues succumbing to the virus. This was highly stressful for the doctors and caretakers as they had to keep going because the people were depending on them. With the increase in COVID-19 patients, other patients were being neglected, and there was also the concern of keeping them safe from the virus. The workload increased for doctors and other healthcare professionals as cases came in every minute. The medical professionals were also at high risk at all times (Ornell et al., 2020).

Pharmacies were overloaded with a high demand for medicines, sanitisers, masks and other surgical equipment as the doctors and caretakers needed multiple layers of protective equipment as they were in direct contact with the patients infected with the coronavirus. Another challenge that they had to face was the immune-compromised patients who had extremely weak immune systems. These patients were not allowed on the hospital premises as they were at high risk due to their weak immunity. They were advised to completely social distance as any contact could be detrimental to their health (Haleem et al., 2020).

Scientists were working against the clock to produce the vaccine and World Health Organization (WHO), collected data globally to aid in the process of developing a vaccine. Every country used this data along with the data they collected from their citizens to develop a vaccine. After almost a year, several medical research facilities were able to develop vaccines and were hopeful that these would help against the virus. These vaccines were improved and then provided to the public.

Conclusion

Covid-19 brought an unseen and unexpected pandemic that turned everyone's lives upside down. Many people lost their loved ones and did not even get to bid them farewell. Many people lost their jobs and had to find their footing again in these uncertain times. Lockdown was equally difficult for everyone as they were unable to see their loved ones. Now, things are slowly going back to the way they were before the pandemic; however, the effects that it had left on every individual will remain awhile. People will need time to grieve the loss of their loved ones and heal slowly over time.

Although everyone is returning to their normal routine, it does not mean that they will return to their normal mental state any time soon.

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