



Beyond the Numbers: Understanding Social Impact of COVID-19 in Indian context in the Shadow of Pandemic

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) due of its rapid spread and other factors. The pandemic's rise has had a significant social impact in India in addition to several socio-economic, psychological, political, and environmental effects around the world. The paper looks at these social effects, which show how intricate relationships exist between changes in interpersonal dynamics, economic factors, and health-related factors. The pandemic has also resulted in modifications to social norms and behaviour, including social isolation, altered work schedules, reliance on technology, disruptions to education, limitations on social gatherings, elevated stress levels, and negative family dynamics. Amidst the negative consequences of pandemic, a number of positive outcomes, like strengthened family and community ties, more family time, and the emergence of new community leaders, drove the globe to consider answers and offered remedies for focused interventions in tackling issues. Understanding these shifts is crucial to comprehending the global social fabric and profound social developments. Developing measures to overcome the problems posed by the pandemic in Indian society requires an understanding of these social implications.

Keywords: *Covid-19, pandemic, social impact, community, socio-economic impact, social intervention.*

Introduction: The year of 2019 saw the global spread of Covid-19, a disease brought on by a new corona virus that originated in Wuhan, China (*Ahmed et al., 2020*). The World Health Organization (WHO) has classified the disease as a pandemic due to its form, causes, and extent of transmission (*United Nations Development Programme, 2020*). The pandemic has significantly impacted many aspects of society, going

beyond simple health issues. As the globe struggles to contain the virus, it is becoming more and more clear that the pandemic's social effects are just as serious as its health effects. Not only has the pandemic highlighted the shortcomings of the global healthcare system, but it has also brought to light the pervasive socio-economic divide that exists in the world. The pandemic has magnified already-existing disparities and brought attention to the weakness of social structures. The poor, migrant labourers, and daily wage earners are among the marginalized groups who have been most affected socio-economically by pandemic. The imposition of lockdown has resulted into loss of employment opportunities and financial strain among vulnerable communities (*Department of Economic and Social Welfare, United Nations*).

The pandemic has resulted into notable alterations to society norms and behaviours. The focus on personal hygiene and social isolation has changed how individuals interact and go about their daily lives. Traditional work and learning practices have been put to the test by the growth of remote employment and online education, which has forced a review of current systems (*Odone et al., 2020*). Given these difficulties, it is essential to have a thorough understanding of pandemic's social effects in India.

Significance: The study's connection with the social effects of pandemic in Indian context gives this paper enormous value. It covers a variety of topics, including changes in social order, personality disorders, and failure in both personal and professional life. Addressing these issues is essential since doing so will boost performance, motivation, and general life satisfaction.

Literature Review: The pandemic has altered our life in numerous ways. Nowadays, more and more people rely on the internet for online shopping and education. This entails doing more online research, working from home, and shopping. Because of these changes in our social lives, students are now thinking differently about their future employment. Many people have experienced great tension, anxiety, and other psychological disorders as consequences of pandemic. Because people now work from home, and youngsters are learning at home, our daily routines have changed. All of this is having an impact on the global healthcare system, the economy, mental and physical health (*Torales et al., 2000*).

College students are more prone than other groups to experience worry, anxiety, stress and psychological disorders amid pandemic, according to an online survey done on China's general population (Li et al., 2020). The research highlighted significance of taking care and supporting young people's mental health in order to lessen the detrimental effects of quarantine (Li et al., 2020).

The second-largest mass move in India since the 1947 partition, was resultant of the pandemic induced reverse migration. The rural economy has been greatly impacted by return migration, which is mostly motivated by health issues, financial restrictions, fear of future crises, and a lack of work possibilities. The successful implementation of government schemes has significantly hampered by rampant corruption (Singh, 2020). It is anticipated that the pandemic's effects on rural economies and agriculture will last, possibly causing more people to fall into poverty (Mukhra, Krishan, & Kanchan, 2020).

A number of population subgroups are more vulnerable to mental health issues due to their greater openness and inability to recognize the social, political, and environmental factors. There is currently a substantial body of research that emphasizes the need for a daily survival plan as a means of coping with mental and physical health issues (Brooks et al. 2020).

Social Impact: The pandemic has negatively impacted Indian society's communities and made a number of social issues worse. The summary of a few of these effects is presented below.

- **Social distance and Isolation:** Face-to-face encounters have decreased during pandemic as a result of public health measures including lockdowns and social distance. Social ties, communal cohesiveness, and general social well-being have all been impacted by the restrictions. Extended durations of seclusion have exacerbated emotions of desolation, anxiety, and loneliness, particularly in susceptible demographics.
- **Family Problems and Psychological Concerns:** A troubling trend of divorces has been seen during the pandemic, highlighting the stress that extended periods of lockdown and social limitations can place on relationships. Relationship dissolutions were on the rise as a result of couples, who are already struggling to navigate these unpredictable times, facing increased stressors (Rajkumar, 2020). India has

the highest suicide rate in the world, with 381 reported cases per day in 2019, according to the National Crime Records Bureau of India in 2020. The report represented an increase of 3.4 percentage from 2018, suggested that the global mental health issue is spreading (*NCRB Report*). The smaller living quarters and changed schedules have increased interpersonal stress, which has resulted in an increase in family arguments. Arguments have been sparked by a combination of health-related worries and future uncertainty with financial distress. Domestic assault cases against women increased by 45 percentage over the first 25 days of the lockdown, according to report published by National Commission for Women (NCW). Such instances doubled in states like Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Punjab when compared to the time before the shutdown. The actual situation, however, can be much more concerning because many rural women choose not to file lawsuits because of fear and cultural norms (*Kundu & Bhowmik, 2020*).

- **Modifications to Work Patterns:** As resultant of pandemic, traditional work patterns have changed to remote and online spheres. Although this offers flexibility, it also presents issues with work-life balance and the blending of personal and professional spheres.
- **Restrictions on Cultural and Social Events:** Events such as festivals, weddings, and get-togethers have been cancelled or rescheduled. This has thrown off social customs and impacted neighbourhood festivals. Social cohesion has suffered as resultant of lack of communal gatherings. Social behaviours and cultural standards have changed in reaction to the pandemic.

As result, the pandemic has negatively impacted numerous social factors, including work-life balance, social structure, interpersonal relationships, and psychological well-being. The pandemic also had a positive effect on other numerous factors, including new community leaders, family & community bonds, and many more. The summary of a few of these effects is presented below.

- **Strengthening of Family Bonds:** The lockdown has made it possible for families to spend additional time together. The women in particular spent time with family members, which strengthened emotional ties and familial relationships. The elderly and children have spent additional moments together during

lockdown. Social relationships and emotional well-being benefited from this increased companionship (*Bradbury-Jones C, Isham L., 2020*).

- **Sense of Community:** The pandemic has sparked a profound change in environment of friendships, families, and communities, promoting stronger bonds and solidarity. The common experience of overcoming extraordinary obstacles has strengthened ties within families. During lockdowns, spending time together has facilitated deeper conversations, fostering solidarity and support for community. Families have worked mutually to overcome adversity, drawing power from their innate resilience. The collective reaction to the crisis has strengthened bonds between friends and neighbours.
- **Community Saviours:** During pandemic's hardships, people and groups stepped out in their communities to begin free meal projects for those in need. These unsung heroes were crucial in helping vulnerable populations in coping up pandemic's social and economic effects by giving them food. These newly discovered saviours showed a profound comprehension of the interdependence of communal well-being, highlighting the shared obligation to support people going through hardship.

Conclusion: In India, the pandemic has affected various aspects of social-life beyond just healthcare, leading to far-reaching social consequences. The deadly disease has brought to light long-standing social inequalities and weaknesses in the healthcare system. The poor, migrant labourers, and daily wage earners are among the marginalized groups that have been most affected by the social effects, including loss of close member and other financial difficulties.

Significant shifts in societal norms and behaviour have also been brought about by the pandemic, including the rise suicidal cases, increase in stress level, restrictions of social gatherings apart from shift to online learning and distant work. Comprehensive solutions to address the underlying disparities and challenges made worse by the pandemic are necessary to address these social repercussions and create resilience in Indian society.

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