

# Covid -19: Psychiatric Fallout

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## Abstract

The fallout of the COVID 19 explosion has been somewhat overwhelming in terms of the damage done to the psychiatric well-being of a great many people all over the world. Anxiety, sleeplessness, depression, and fear-psychosis are some of the problems which may manifest due to the breakout of the COVID pandemic. Fear of infection, loneliness, and economic uncertainty can produce acute stress in some people which may lead to the development of minor to major mental disorders ranging from depression, anxiety, drug abuse and alcoholism, and other psychological disorders in vulnerable sections of the society. Those who have pre-existing psychiatric disorders, and those who reside in high COVID-19 affected areas are particularly at risk of developing these psychiatric disorders. It is a big challenge to devise means and strategies to help people cope with these issues.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Psychological, mental, disorders, Anxiety, depression.

### Introduction

Coronaviruses are a group of viruses known as coronaviridae, which can infect animals as well as humans. These viruses cause potentially fatal infections, flu, body ache, cough, sore throat, fever, breathlessness in humans. COVID-19 is the name given to one of these viruses detected in 2019. The global breakout of this strain is a pandemic as also declared by the WHO.

COVID-19 has taken a big toll by causing a stupendous amount of long lasting social, financial and psychological distress. It led to one of the biggest crashes in the financial markets, created massive joblessness and unemployment, and brought about unprecedented fear, depression, confusion, anxiety and a host of psychiatric ailments. All these issues were a direct outcome of frequent Lock-downs and quarantines, fear of contagion, social isolation, closure of businesses and institutions, and financial uncertainty.

### Aim of the Study

The objective of this study is to catalogue qualitatively and quantitatively, the detrimental psychological effects of COVID-19 on people globally.

### Review of Literature

Stress-related psychiatric conditions including mood swings and substance use disorders are associated with suicidal behavior. Some COVID-19 survivors may be at elevated suicide risk. It is imperative the Government and healthcare administration in particular, and the society in general take concerted measures to alleviate Covid related stress in order to reduce the incidence of suicides related to the pandemic. Traditional electronic media and social media can be harnessed to launch drives to promote psychological health and mitigate stress, and a lot of contribution in this regard is already being made by these channels. COVID-19 survivors, senior adults, and people with psychiatric disease history and healthcare staff are the most vulnerable sections of society which need greater attention on priority basis.

The covid-19 pandemic has also led to an increased number of reported cases of domestic violence and child abuse, as was witnessed during (2013-15) during Ebola pandemic of 2013-15.

### Impact on Kids and teenagers

Main sufferers of this pandemic are kids and teenagers. The most vulnerable problem with children during covid-19 are irritability, distraction, fear and suicidal tendency. According to a UN report, Children, especially in developing nations are at more risk getting negatively impacted by this pandemic.

The United Nation has estimated that 42 to 66 million kids may suffer extreme financially disadvantageous situations in the long term. The psychological impact of covid-19 is likely to last for a long time for the young generation. Social economic parameters like increase in the divorce rate, a decline in marriage rates and a decline in the size of family.

In a study, poor mental health at the age of 21 to 25 was due to unemployment. Around 1.2 billion learners, that contribute to 68.5% of the total student globally, have been affected. Cancellation of Admissions and



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examinations, various competitive tests in the universities, colleges, professional institutes are the main cause of uncertainty, anxiety and depression among students. School going children and teenagers are facing complex issues compounding their mental health needs. More than half of students responding to a global survey say that COVID has left them struggling with mental health issues.

International students are a group at high risk of distress due to loneliness and limited or no family contact. A well established and well managed support system for this group of students is critically required to be put in place for now and for future.

As per a survey of students in 21 countries. Over 50% reported that their mental health suffered as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. This survey, by Chegg, studied responses from 16839 students in the 18 to 21 years age group during October and November of 2020.

Students in Western countries were observed to be affected psychologically in greater numbers as compared to other parts of the globe. In the USA, Britain, and Canada, approximately 70% of the surveyed students responded that they have had psychological issues due to the pandemic. Over 75% of students surveyed in Brazil were found to have had psychiatric problems due to COVID-19. However, the incidence of these issues was comparatively much less in Italy (25%), Russia (29%), China (38%), and South Korea (39%).

A significant decline in physical activity and sleep time was detected in the surveyed students. The survey found that reduced physical activity contributed as a leading risk factor for depression.

Research suggests that exercising lowered the risk of depression while physical inactivity spiked the chances of it. Reduced physical activity amid Covid impacts mental health adversely.

It is therefore extremely important that the host countries ramp up their psychiatric support systems and infrastructure for international students. These measures will become key to student retention and new enrolments as well as to recruitment in these countries as the pandemic progresses.

### **The psychological impact of COVID-19**

A lot of research has been done by individuals and organizations to study the effect of the COVID-19 crisis on the mental health of the people, health care professionals, and individuals who already have psychiatric disorders. Wang et al. conducted a study during the initial stage of the COVID-19 among the general population in China. Of the 1210 respondents, 16.5% were afflicted by depression, while 28.8% of them suffered anxiety disorders of varying intensity. Qiu et al., surveyed a total of 52730 people in China during the COVID-19 epidemic. They observed that about 35% of the participants had psychological distress. A study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that 45% of US respondents experienced a negative impact of the pandemic on their psychological health.

Li et al. analyzed online posts of 17865 social media users in China pre and post declaration of COVID-19 in on 20 January 2020. The study indicated that negative emotions including anxiety, depression and anger rose, whereas positive emotions and life satisfaction diminished. Anxiety was associated with stress and reduced sleep quality, and the combination of anxiety and stress reduced the positive effects of social interactions on sleep quality. Isolation and loneliness resulted in a lot of stress, anxiety and significantly diminished quality of sleep in people.

Elevated rates of anxiety, depression, detrimental alcoholism and decrease in mental wellbeing were observed in China. Onset of anxiety and depression was more pronounced among younger population of 21–40 years in comparison to other age groups. Huang and Zhao conducted a web-based survey of 7236 individuals in China which revealed that anxiety disorder was present in 35.1%, depressive symptoms in 20.1% and sleep abnormalities were present in 18.2% of these people. This study also revealed that health care professionals were more likely to have poor sleep quality in comparison to other occupational groups.

Lai et al.<sup>13</sup> examined the state of mental health of 1257 healthcare professionals in China. Depression was observed in 50.4%, anxiety in 44.6%, insomnia in 34.0% of these people. 71.5% had a higher risk of having symptoms of depression, anxiety, insomnia and distress in comparison to other medical professionals. Ahmed et al. conducted an online study on dentists in March 2020. An overwhelming majority of the 669 dental health professionals surveyed in 30 nations reported anxiety and fear of contagion. Some of them even closed their practices for an indefinite period of time.

### **Suicides during Covid-19**

Numerous cases of COVID-19 related suicides have been reported all over the world. A significant rise in number of calls to suicide prevention hotlines in the USA has been reported during the COVID-19 epidemic.

Suicidal tendencies in people during epidemic may be due to Social isolation, loneliness, anxiety, fear of contagion, uncertainty, chronic stress and economic distress. People with weak personality, those with pre-existing psychiatric ailments, people who live in high COVID-19 incidence localities and people who have lost a family member or a friend due to COVID-19 were the most likely to exhibit suicidal tendencies.

Social isolation contributes to the pathophysiology of psychiatric disorders and suicidal behavior due to major depression and generalized anxiety disorder. Social isolation as well as the sense of being lonely alone are associated with suicidal tendencies and behavior. From a suicide prevention perspective, it is an irony that the most important public health approach for the COVID-19 epidemic is social distancing.

Economic uncertainty and distress borne out of Covid lockdowns and restrictions is also a major contributing factor to increased suicidal tendencies among effected individuals.

The impact of economic distress on mental health may be severe. COVID related restrictions made crores of people lose jobs, factories were shut down, sports and recreational activity came to a standstill, and all this led to massive financial hardships for huge numbers of people. History and numerous studies bear testimony that every economic crisis was associated with increased mental disorders and suicides.

COVID-19 survivors are also a high-risk group prone to suicidal tendencies. Their traumatic experience itself may act as a trigger in conjunction with the fear of spreading the virus to family and friends, the agonizing symptoms of the infection, financial stress due to hospital expenses and loss of employment etc. COVID disease also causes Ataxia, seizures, ischemic stroke, dizziness and acute headache in the patients. These factors may drive the patient to develop thoughts of committing suicide due to the onset of extreme anxiety, fear, depression and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).

### **Conclusion**

People need more support than ever during this pandemic crisis. A revamping and strengthening of psychiatric healthcare services infrastructure on national and international levels is the need of the hour to effectively help patients cope with the mental health problems and challenges caused by the pandemic.

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