Covid-19 Pandemic Effects and New Perspectives in Human Life

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Abstract -*The inception of Covid-19 and its influence over mankind and environment had been immense. The human race worked together to cope with the unprecedented situation effortlessly to accommodate themselves to the new normal. The transition from pre-pandemic to new normal was an arduous journey. During this journey mankind persevered to life and emerged strong. Due to the pandemic not only people lost their lives, but the economy and education were also hampered. Health sector was under tremendous pressure. Long exposure to screen, usage of digital media was at its peak. People were distanced socially but not emotionally. Physical and mental stress, loneliness and confinement at home were some serious implications that people dealt with. It's said that every cloud has a silver lining, so is the case with the pandemic. Many skills and opportunities were developed and people got some me time due to confinement at home. Workplaces were redefined. This research tries to discuss the various aspects that were impacted during the pandemic in India and the evolution of new perspectives in human life. The paper highlights the aspects both positive and negative that had a serious impact and how lives have adapted to the new changes that came into existence due to the pandemic.*

Key Words: *aspects, Covid-19 pandemic, human life, perspectives*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic was one of the deadliest threats that happened to mankind. There was a lot of impact on human life due to the outset of Covid-19 from December 2019 which has completely changed the perception of human behaviour and in the way life is looked upon. In India, in the month of March 2020 a nationwide lockdown was imposed by the government to gain control on the spread of coronavirus. Severe restrictions were imposed on the movement of people which made people stay indoors with no contact with the outside world. All aspects of life were seriously disrupted on a large scale and impacted every segment of life. The pandemic has drastically changed the way we live, the way we perceive life, the overall working of the human race and all the aspects related to it. Having said this, the pandemic had both positive and negative impacts on everyone. The impact was not only limited to human health but other aspects related to humans like social, economical, cultural, educational, environmental and emotional wellbeing as well were impacted. The world was working together to cope with the unpredictable situation caused by the virus and was trying to adapt to the new normal. The research tries to discuss and analyze how the lives had adapted to the new changes since the first surge of Covid-19 pandemic and tries to highlight the various aspects of the new normal that came into existence due to the pandemic and the approach of humans towards life.

2. WHAT IS COVID -19 PANDEMIC ?

COVID-19 was one of the biggest challenges to the healthcare sector as well as to mankind at large*. It was caused by a new strain of coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2 (Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2).* (Gupta, Gupta, & Patil, 2020) The virus travels through air and it spreads when the infected person coughs, sneezes or breathes without covering his/her face in the close vicinity of others which is dangerous.. Wearing masks, personal hygiene, physical distancing, avoiding crowded places and enclosed spaces are needed to stop the spread of Covid-19. The virus leads to several problems such as respiratory failure, heart problems, liver problems and pneumonia. The symptoms shown by a person infected by the virus varies from individual to individual. When an uninfected person was in close proximity of 1m from an infected person then the chances of transmission of the virus were the greatest. Vaccination, social distancing, self quarantine and isolation were the new normal ways of leading life to be safe and sound. *The word "Pandemic" comes from the Greek pan meaning "all" and demos "the people"., and The word is commonly taken to refer to a widespread epidemic of contagious disease throughout the whole of a country or one or more continents at the same time.(Honigsbaum, 2009) The internationally accepted definition of a pandemic as it appears in the Dictionary of Epidemiology is straightforward and well-known: "an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people" (Harris, 2000)* (Qui, Rutherford, & Chu, 2016-17)

3. ASPECTS ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Covid-19 pandemic had affected many aspects of human lives and was one of the biggest challenges to the entire world. The human viewpoint about life has completely changed after the pandemic. The pandemic made people stay indoors as there were restrictions on public gatherings, meeting people and travel which was stressful to many. Large impact was on the health sector, financial sector, economical sector, educational sector, etc. To stop the spread of virus there were closure of educational institutions, entertainment and leisure activities as well. The environment had certain impacts in terms of pollution, medical waste generation, etc.

Connecting with outside nature was restricted hence quality and quantity time spent indoors were enhanced, revisiting hobbies were some ways in which people were spending time during lockdown to keep them stress-free. People from all walks of life were influenced in one way or the other. Women were the most vulnerable gender in terms of domestic violence; workload at home which in turn impacted their physical and mental well being. Children's social and physical growths were impacted to a large extent which led to their emotional imbalance.

3.1 Overall development of children

The pandemic surely was a drawback to the overall development of the children in terms of their education, socializing, outdoor physical activities and much more. The sudden transition from traditional schooling to on screen learning detached them from their physical activities and school environment, although facilitated nonstop education but has taken away the crucial years of development. Long hours of screen exposure, less physical activity due to outdoor restrictions, no socializing with friends and relatives, leading to obesity, strain on the eyes, boredom, lack of interest in doing anything was seen majorly in children due to lockdown and online education. School environment helps in the foster development of children which was replaced by isolated learning which had a negative impact on them. Children showed a tendency to get annoyed, get angry suddenly, get upset, offended easily along with anxiety and depression. *Children's loss of social interaction might compromise their peer relationships. Early research findings indicate that the pandemic increases youth's anxiety, depression (Huang, & Zhao, 2020) and abuse (Taub, 2020), which might increase their physical inactivity even further* (Papaioannou et al., 2020)

Students felt demotivated since a few were dependent on teachers and peers for motivation and encouragement as academics is better learnt among peers with interaction and not in isolation. Children of all age groups found it difficult to sit in front of the screen for 6-8 hours of the day. Some were not able to adapt to the new way of teaching learning experience. They missed one-on-one teaching, meeting friends, classmates, teachers, the school atmosphere, the fun and playing with one another in the school. Due to confinement within the house, children felt restricted at one place which in some cases increased stress in children. It was also seen that students having intellectual disabilities were facing lots of problems and challenges in understanding and grasping the curriculum by online learning. Pandemic can negatively effect students with special educational needs. It might occur that the changes could negatively influence their ability to scope the learning challenges. (Magomedov, Khaliev, & Khubolov, 2020)

The lockdown not only had negative aspects but positive as well like children were getting quality time with parents. Parents' physical presence was giving children a sense of security and comfort. Parents were available for children when they needed them. Children were a helping hand to elders in household chores like cooking, cleaning and many others to reduce the workload as maids were not available due to movement restriction.

3.2 Work from home, the new normal

To meet the sudden challenges the workforce from all professions opted to work from home. Although this sudden transition had to be the immediate response for the hour, the prolonged nature of work made it monotonous. As per the psychiatry study, the professions which retained the work from home due to their work profile underwent serious health implications. Work from home reduced physical activity and sedentary work lead to obesity and other health problems. Mental health experts warned that resuming the physical offices is the only solution for emotional wellbeing of the employees and will increase the productivity of that workforce who has been affected by the pandemic. Workplaces were redefined and homes became the new office place which was disturbing the house atmosphere. There is a fine line between personal and professional life for work life balance but this was at a toss during the pandemic. *The wellbeing of employees working from home is compromised as the gap between their professional and personal lives has reduced (Pratt and Frost,2020)* (Keshky, Basyouni, & Sabban, 2020)

3.3 Temporary loss of jobs and partial income

The economy was hit by the pandemic like never before and had caused disruption. Most of the breadwinners of

the family lost their jobs temporarily due to complete shutdown, which in turn led to financial crisis among families and they were not able to afford the basic necessities. Some others experienced a partial income, making it worse for them to meet the commitments. This had a larger impact on the mindset of the people leading to fear and anxiety among adults. *Some of them have completely stopped their work, and in brief, they will have to face their future with uncertainty; others have found their work hours increased and have managed risky situations (e.g., health and social workers, or product suppliers).* (Aperribai et al., 2020) Lockdown made most of the physical businesses inaccessible to the general public, due to which the consumers were not able to purchase and there was no flow of money in the market affecting all types of businesses. All of this had a serious impact on the economy of the country.

3.4 Personal space and self growth

The lockdown gave an opportunity for many to learn something new and grow as individuals. Some learnt a new language, musical instrument, yoga, cooking, gardening, etc. which helped them to relax and revive themselves. Many adopted a healthy lifestyle. Workplace commuting time for many was saved which gave them time for some personal work. People enjoyed their life in the way they wanted at home which was not possible in the pre pandemic times.

3.5 Family time/ ties

Every family was trying to make good use of the forced to stay at home norm. To overcome boredom, people practiced yoga, exercised together, watched movies, cooked food, played games, spent quality time with family and had food together.

Families were isolated from one another but the relationships within the family were strengthened by spending more time together with family members. Life had slowed its pace but family bonding was strengthened. People were getting closer to relatives and friends virtually by video chat. Family time inside the house was possible due to restrictions on socializing outside. The negative aspects were that due to continuous confinement at home for a long period there was an increased stress and panic among the family members. It was also stressful for the ones who were staying away from the family alone in a distant city for occupational purposes. *Capsized travel plans, indefinite isolation, panic over scarce resources and information overload could be a recipe for unchecked stress, anxiety and feelings of isolation. Along with the lockdown, a feeling of uncertainty and panic has also taken over the country. Especially for those who live away from their*

families. People who are working in different cities and live away from their families, all alone, are now stuck at home for this given time period. While this sudden arrangement is not long-lasting, it has caused anxiety to many people. (Nandkar, 2020)

3.6 Widend gender gap

There was an increase in the cases of violence against women at home. Women were at high risk of exploitation. They underwent physical, mental and sexual abuse. Violence on women increased as no support was received from others due to movement restrictions and due to cramped houses as everyone was trapped indoors. There was no access to other health services related to women. *In some of the regions women were not able to access medical help at the time of their pregnancy and this has increased the number of maternity deaths.* (Ghatge & Parasar, 2023) Women were heavily loaded with household work as well as looking after children and elderly as all of them were at home. *The COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in women as the main care provider alongside and to some extent created by working from home as an employee (Wang and Inoue, 2020). This included women as the main provider of childcare, including the provision of home-schooling in real-time adding to the burden. Women primarily undertake domestic chores, such as cooking and cleaning, tasks which are more intense during the lockdown period due to increased occupancy in the home (Aldossari and Chaudhry, 2021).* (Augustus, 2021) School closures had put an extra burden on women. They had to maintain the work life balance as along with schools other supports like crèche facilities, coaching classes and tuitions were also closed. *Working mothers were reported to work an increasing number of hours in order to meet the demands of childcare and the workplace during the lockdown phase of the COVID-19 pandemic (Jessen and Waights, 2020).* (Augustus, 2021) *As formal and informal supply of childcare declines, the demand for unpaid childcare provision is falling more heavily on women, not only because of the existing structure of the workforce, but also because of social norms. This will constrain their ability to work, particularly when jobs cannot be carried out remotely.* (Nations, 2020)*.*

In some cases access to girl education was hampered, as parents gave preference to boys education rather than girls. Child marriages were also on surge during this period. More girls dropped out of schools, especially the poor and vulnerable. *School closures do not just mean that girls are taking on more chores at home, it could also lead to millions more girls dropping out of school before they complete their education, especially girls living in poverty, girls with disabilities or living in rural, isolated locations.* (Nations, 2020)

3.7 Rejuvenation of nature

The inaccessibility to the physical environment made the natural ecosystem relax and rejuvenate. During lockdown, industries, transportation, human and vehicular traffic, tourism, etc. were paused which had a very good impact on the natural ecosystem giving it a new life and benefited on a large scale. Biodiversity was restored and there was a drop in outdoor pollution because there was less human intervention with the natural ecosystem. There was less air, noise and water pollution and also less consumption of natural resources. Birds of various species were seen around due to the pollution free environment, clean water was seen in water bodies and clean air was seen in the environment. There was a reduction in mortality rate due to less road traffic and air pollution. A notable positive change had appeared at many tourist places including beaches which were marked by cleaner and crystal clear waters but at the cost of the economy of the tourism industry. *Because of social distancing and lockdown, a notable positive change has appeared at many tourist places including beaches which are marked by cleaner and crystal clear waters but at the cost of economy of the tourist place* (Gupta, Gupta, & Patil, 2020) *The pandemic has shown us that if we want our ecosystems to take care of us, we need to take care of the ecosystems (Paital 2020)* (Morgan, Awafo, & Quartey, 2021)

3.8 COVID waste

The type of waste generated had changed and brought with it a lot of medical waste. Waste included face masks, sanitizer bottles, self protective devices, waste generated from hospitals and quarantine centers. A new waste management system had to be adopted by the government to tackle the issue of new medical waste during Covid-19 pandemic.

3.9 Influence on the culture

The cultural aspects like celebrating festivals, office work culture and staying at home had changed drastically. Festivals and cultural activities are an integral part of Indian society. Celebrations are with an exhaustive list of ceremonies, relatives and friends. The pandemic had curbed all of these and had given a new approach to celebrate family gatherings, weddings, social gatherings with a concise list of guests. Most of the office rented spaces were shut down post pandemic due to employees working from home. After the resumption of work post pandemic the work culture changed, the work force is less and so co-working spaces in India found their popularity. Post pandemic there was a rebirth of office workspaces which are more human centric workspaces with flexibility in design and dynamic design approach to make it more

relevant to the post pandemic design times. Construction industry changed the stereotype design with new inclusions in residential design. Due to the new normal of work from home, the residential projects started to accommodate this facility onto the design parameter. Inclusion of work spaces like office areas, physical work out areas, hobby rooms were a part of the new residential design paradigm. Flexibility in home design is now a new concept where areas could be converted according to the needs. More amenities were included which added to the price hike of homes making it unreachable to a few.

3.10 Birth of entrepreneurs

The pandemic ideally gave rise to new entrepreneurs. Most of the basic needs were met through virtual platforms because of the absence of physical business. Home makers had a makeover to set up a new small business. This era also converted the old street shopping into virtual shopping. Dependency of people over virtual applications increased in every aspect of life be it cooking, exercising, shopping, entertainment, socializing, etc. *Moreover, people worldwide have found themselves coping with new professional scopes (Zhang et al., 2020).* (Aperriba et al., 2020)

3.11 Loss of life

Much of the social and emotional wellbeing was at risk all throughout the pandemic. The delta variant during the second wave in India was the most dreadful, making life miserable for many and especially to those who lost their loved ones. It was pain striking to those who lost the bread earner of the house which led to stopping of education and new responsibilities onto the eldest siblings, who have become the caretakers of the family. Some of the children have lost either of their parents or both. The pandemic has orphaned children with no support left to meet the basic needs. Although some of the state governments had started schemes for such children.

3.12 Redefined work

Frontline workers were gaining importance and their work was being recognized due to the service they were providing during the pandemic. The service rendered to the society by health care workers, teachers, home delivery staff, armed forces and police was immense. Going to work during this COVID-19 pandemic had placed frontline workers under unprecedented pressure, putting their physical, mental and social well-being at risk. Exposure to excessive stress for prolonged periods had many harmful consequences on the emotional and mental well-being of frontline workers. The whole of the society depended on them and they had to put their lives at risk for the welfare of the nation.

3.13 Future at stake

On the verge of an education system adapting to the new normal, most of the other important aspects were at stake. The most common being the prolonged date of competitive examinations, delay in results leading to delayed admissions to professional courses, consecutive batches running simultaneously, non relieving of the final year batches, delayed recruitments, cancellation of exams, loss of exams authenticity and much more. Postponement of competitive exams led to confusion and stress among students and parents.

3.14 Facet of health

People experienced pandemic fatigue after spending a lot of time at home and so were restless. Due to the high load on the existing medical system there was confusion and chaos. Sleep patterns had changed and stress levels had increased manifold. Due to restrictions on physical activities people were facing problems of weight gain and other health issues. There was psychological distress. People of all age groups were finding it difficult to deal with isolation and experienced an overall disturbed lifestyle. Increased screen time led to vision problems in all age groups. People were losing their mental balance so there were increase in divorce cases, suicides and domestic violence. Access to women's health services had been affected due to forced stay indoors. Children had to use electronic gadgets for non-stop education and due to this there was over usage of mobiles which had a bad impact on children's health experiencing adverse psychological and behavioral effects. As stated in Times of India dated 5th July 2022, Lockdowns and economic stresses of the pandemic lead to an increase in mental health disorders. In just a year after the pandemic, depressive and anxiety disorders increased by 28% and 26% respectively. Countries that reported the most Covid 19 cases and deaths also reported the highest increase in cases of mental illness. *Indeed, it was predicted that the mental health fallout from COVID-19 would include high levels of psychological distress arising from health concerns, social isolation or relationship friction, and long-term financial insecurity (Anderson, 2020). Research undertaken during the lockdown period in New Zealand (e.g., Every-Palmer et al., 2020) and globally (e.g., Roma et al., 2020; Vindegaard and Benros, 2020) supported these predictions providing evidence of increased depression, anxiety, and psychological distress.* (Jenkins et al., 2021) The pandemic affected people's general health along with others such as anxiety, fear, depression, worry, mood swings and many more. *The lockdowns due to the current COVID-19 pandemic most likely have increased youth online gaming even further (Wilde,2020), sedentariness and physical inactivity, particularly in countries prohibiting PA outside*

home during lockdowns and for youth living in small apartments in densely built urban areas. Screen time is positively related to snacking and youth obesity (Marsh et al., 2013), and the latter predicts obesity in later adulthood (Rundle et al., 2020). (Papaioannou et al., 2020)

3.15 Plight of migrant workers

The production and supply of goods and services were stopped immediately due to unprecedented lockdown. Daily wagers and migrant workers were the worst affected section of the society and were finding it difficult to tackle the issue of their daily livelihood. In India due to sudden lockdown the daily wagers and migrants including old people, women and children were forced to go to their native place but the public transport facilities were at halt. Due to this they were stranded in various parts of the country as their daily income had stopped and no means of transport was available for them to reach their native places. To reach their destination some started on foot, some on cycles, etc. without anything to eat to cover the long and risky journeys of thousands of kilometres. *With no work, no salary, and unable to reach their villages owing to the restrictions the life of the migrant workers have become miserable.* (Debata, Patnaik, & Mishra, 2020)

3.16 Pedagogy

Overnight schools shifted to virtual education. Students' education was hampered due to the new norm of virtual learning completely replacing the traditional learning method. The pandemic had negatively affected the educational scenario for the students who were left out of the mainstream of learning as there were some sections of the society that were not able to afford the access to internet and digital devices. There were some problems faced by students such as availability of infrastructure needed to take on online classes, expenses, accessibility and resources. The internet had to be shared among the entire family as everyone was working from home be it school, college or office. It was hard for people to tackle this situation, mainly the poor or in places with no internet access or a small crowded house. *The poor and digitally-illiterate families with lower educational levels children with poor learning motivation are more suffering in this situation and this increases inequality.* (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020) . This widened the existing disparities and gaps in terms of access and opportunities giving rise to massive interruption to impart and gain education.

The pandemic had a positive aspect wherein the technology was integrated with education at a new height. It was a forced transformation with the available digital resources to have undisturbed education. Students and teachers got equipped with new technology and gadgets.

3.17 Technology usage

Technology played an important role in all aspects of human life during the pandemic. For contactless transactions, mobiles proved very effective. Overuse of mobile phones was being done by people of all age groups. For uninterrupted education, online education was the only means available. Dependency on the digital world prevailed in every aspect of human life.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The lockdown was beneficial to some but for some it was like a nightmare which impacted their life. There were lots of changes in life, pre pandemic and post pandemic.

India had been hit hard by the pandemic and experienced economic damage because of a halt in businesses, industries and the hospitality sector, overload on the healthcare sector, etc. The pandemic pushed millions into poverty. Loss of life had a major impact on people who lost their near and dear ones.

Due to the pandemic there was a delay in examinations which kept the future of students at risk but at the same time the pandemic showed that education need not stop as virtual learning was an option for undisrupted and uninterrupted education. Use of technology changed the old pedagogy of the classroom teaching learning.

Stress was a major issue to be dealt with during the pandemic. Women were the most vulnerable sector of the society whose health and security was always at stake throughout the pandemic.

Staying at home was beneficial for many as the activities they did during lockdown would not have been possible if outdoor activities were not restricted. The pandemic helped people to develop their skills and upgrade themselves as individuals. People also found new occupations as entrepreneurs through virtual media. It was not only the human beings who were rejuvenated but also the ecosystem got a new life. The digital media was a lifeline for everyone to sail the pandemic.

The lockdown had given the caretakers of children an additional responsibility to give more attention in upbringing of children because after long usage of electronic gadgets, prolonged stay at home and social isolation children are addicted to mobiles and were facing stress, fear, depression and anxiety.

Pandemic has shown that every aspect in nature has its own challenge to overcome which should be given due importance and planned properly for the future. The educational institutes must now integrate technology with the face to face education system as technology will definitely give an overall development of the students. The new normal forced the education system to go hybrid. The education system needs to look upon framing new policies to run the system efficiently in the time of an unprecedented situation in the near future. Blended learning can be adopted only after understanding the nature of each course where it is to be implemented.

The government policies should be put in place to accommodate any crises in the near future and should include provisions for better and early monitoring. The policies and actions must target women as the pandemic has long term consequences with regards to women's economic and health factors.

The pandemic showed that humanity still exists in the world as everyone tried to help each other in their own way. The pandemic gave a glimpse for people to come together to save the earth and leave a better place for the future generations.

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BIOGRAPHIES

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