

Psychosocial impact of COVID-19

Along with its high infectivity and fatality rates, the 2019 Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) has caused universal psychosocial impact by causing mass hysteria, economic burden, and financial losses. Mass fear of COVID-19, termed as “corona phobia”, has generated a plethora of psychiatric manifestations across the different strata of the society. So, this review has been undertaken to define the psychosocial impact of COVID-19.

COVID-19 has required many countries across the globe to implement early quarantine measures as the fundamental disease control tool. Apart from physical sufferings, the consequences of this quarantine on the mental health and well-being at personal and population-levels are many fold. Imposed mass quarantine applied by nationwide lockdown programs can produce mass hysteria, anxiety, and distress, due to factors like sense of getting cornered and loss of control.

PubMed and Google Scholar are searched with the following key terms- “COVID-19”, “SARS-CoV2”, “Pandemic”, “Psychology”, “Psychosocial”, “Psychiatry”, “marginalized”, “telemedicine”, “mental health”, “quarantine”, “infodemic”, “social media” and “internet”. Few newspaper reports related to COVID-19 and psychosocial impacts have also been added as per context.

Disease itself multiplied by forced quarantine to combat COVID-19 applied by nationwide lockdowns can produce acute panic, anxiety, obsessive behaviours, hoarding, paranoia, and depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the long run. These have been fuelled by an “infodemic” spread via different platforms of social media. Outbursts of racism, stigmatization, and xenophobia against particular communities are also being widely reported. Nevertheless, frontline healthcare workers are at higher risk of contracting the disease as well as experiencing adverse psychological outcomes in form of burnout, anxiety, fear of transmitting infection, feeling of incompatibility, depression, increased substance-dependence, and PTSD. Community-based mitigation programs to combat COVID-19 will disrupt children’s usual lifestyle and may cause florid mental distress. The psychosocial aspects of older people, their caregivers, psychiatric patients, and marginalized communities are affected by this pandemic in different ways and need special attention.

For better dealing with these psychosocial issues of different strata of the society, psychosocial crisis prevention and intervention models should be urgently developed by the government, health care personnel, and other stakeholders. Apt application of internet services, technology, and social media to curb both pandemic and infodemic needs to be instigated. Psychosocial preparedness by setting up mental organizations specific for future pandemics is certainly necessary.