

Impact of covid 19 on India and how India responded.

Asif Iqbal Bhat

Research Scholar

Department of Humanities And Social Science RIMT University Punjab India

Abstract: COVID 19 is the first most potential pandemic of 21st century originating from Wuhan, China. The geographical spread, world economic recession and fatalities being caused by it are unprecedented in the present century. Like many other countries the virus invaded India in late January 2020, raising the bang of alarm demanding prompt response. It led to suspension of all socio-economic activities in India and created panic situation in social system. India took no time in initiating all possible and pervasive responsive actions to keep the graph from taking a steep.

This study attempted to access the cumulative impact of pandemic on various sectors through literature and data analysis, made available so far (April 17, 2020). The Systematic Exploration of Quantitative and Qualitative data gives a somewhat encouraging picture of India's relative position which has been hailed by WHO as well. The study highlights that besides being biological phenomena, pandemics operates in a social framework cutting across borders, the dimension which needs through specialised study. A need to upgrade and boost the preparedness and response mechanisms by way of extensive institutionalisation is felt by the present study.

Key words: COVID 19, Impact of Pandemic, India, Preparedness.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Noval corona virus referred to as 2019-nCoV, started in Wuhan city of china in december 2019. Since it's beginning it has crossed the borders and affected all human populations of the globe, thereby attracting the title of pandemic. Its devastating impact can be gauged from the fact that it has infected 2034802 Persons globally and inflicted mortality of 135163 (as on April 16 2020)(1). Given the public health risk, the WHO has declared an emergency of international concern.(2) If not controlled efficiently, the pandemic has high propensity to even change the world order. It has thus become immediate priority of all nation states including India to mitigate the crises and prevent chain reaction effect as far as possible. All countries across the globe have been implementing all possible measures to contain coronavirus disaster with absolute might. Since it's outbreak in India in late January India has employed a gamut of control measures by strengthening its monitoring and surveillance systems, resultantly keeping the number of infected cases on 11616 and deaths at 452.(3)

A lot of research material in terms of papers is becoming available on the research portals and journals. However as usual most of research has focussed on bio-pathogenicity aspect of the noval corona virus and its impact on patients physiology. There is therefore absolute dearth of research on social and economic dimensions of pandemic especially in Indian academic circles.

This research is intended to bring to light the impact of covid pandemic, in Indian context, on visible parameters by taking into account available data generated so far. Since the pandemic is still rampart, this study interprets the impact of covid 19 and response initiated by India, on the basis of till now data available and may need calibrations with the effective culmination of pandemic.

II. METHODS:

A literature search was performed using Google scholar, Science direct, EBSCO and internet browsing. Search terms included 'covid India', 'covid 19 impact' and 'coronavirus'. An extensive search and review was carried out with focus on Indian situation. Studies focussing on biological aspect of the corona virus were excluded from literature survey and mostly impact related articles and reports were considered for required data.

III. RESULTS

3.1. Economic impact:

Like everywhere else in the world, Covid has taken a huge toll of Indian economy. The GDP growth of India has gone down from 4.5% in pre pandemic period to 2.5% during the pandemic period and estimated losses

to Indian economy are projected to be 8760 billion rupees during 2020.(4).Fearing shortfall in medical supplies , Indian government has banned export of ventilators, surgical masks and textile raw materials. (5).Using the traditional methods of economics we can argue that the loss confronted to Indian economy can be seen in terms of deaths (thus decrease in income), loss of working time due to lockdown and huge expenditures incurred in containing the pandemic. Early evidence indicates that that the health and economic impacts of the virus are being borne disproportionately by poor people(6).The worst hit are daily earners who live hand to mouth. Though much effect has not been observed on job market, the pandemic has certainly put jobs of millions at risk(7)

3.2. Social Impact:

The corona virus pandemic is pushing people to existential crises since this pandemic is much more than a health crisis. It is a human, economic and social crisis. The corona virus disease (COVID-19), which has been characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), is attacking societies at their core.(6)

Sense of insecurity, frustration and isolation is resonating all across. Panic has overcome society on such a large scale that people have been buying masks and sanitizers so voraciously as to leave markets dry of these commodities. Government in response, was forced to bring these commodities under essential commodities act and fix the retail price of masks and sanitizers.(8).The fear of pandemic and misinformation spread over social media has also resulted in stigmatisation of people either infected (even recovered) or dealing with pandemic as frontline workers such as healthcare workers, sanitary workers, police and volunteers. In this connection ministry of health and family welfare has issued an advisory also, advising and educating people regarding the disease.(9–11).Stigmatisation and frustration has manifested itself in escapism leading to suicides(12), though this is not exclusive to india.(13). A unique attribute to Covid 19 in india has been its communalisation, attributing whole spread to a religious organisation- ‘Tablighi Jamaat’- a muslim missionary organisation, the leading role being played by media houses.(14).

3.3. Impact on Education:

Corona virus has affected all educational systems worldwide, with no exceptions. Same stands true for India. Severe educational disruption has resulted in India owing to closure of school, colleges and universities. This move was taken as a preventive measure to interrupt spread of corona virus pandemic. Loss of academic session and mass promotions leads to educational attainment deficiencies, which latter become difficult to compensate. All examinations scheduled in March 2020 and onwards were postponed. Even standardized tests like GMAT, GRE, SATs, ACT remain suspended and the future of many students hangs in balance.(15)

3.4. Health:

With the detection of first case in India, the number of infections has steadily increased. According to world health organisation the number of confirmed cases has risen to 10363 as of 14-April 2020(8 am).(16)

As suggested by data, mortality rate varies across countries and states within countries.

People who are most likely to die of corona virus are elderly people and people with allied diseases like hypertension, cardiac problems, and high blood sugar. This stands true for every country.(17)

Death of people due to other health problems has also increased due to lack of availability of healthcare owing to lockdown situation.

Besides it, the pandemic has also caused severe psychological fallout.In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it appears likely that there will be substantial increases in anxiety and depression, substance use, loneliness, and domestic violence; and with schools closed, there is a very real possibility of an epidemic of child abuse. This concern is so significant that the UK has issued psychological first aid guidance from Mental Health UK.(18)

4. How Indian is responding:

India has taken rigorous measures to combat COVID 19, on all fronts.Given the status of being worlds second most populous country,the covid 19 scenario in india is highly better than other developed countries.(19) Strict implementation of social distancing measures, complete enforced lockdown, mass quarantine, debarring transport from plying on roads, and door to door distribution of essential commodities are some most visible measures taken to keep the graph from rising.Taking clues from early infected nations, government of india took the decision of nationwide lockdown on march 25th for 21 days(20) and latter extend it till may 3.

According to world economic forum report, some credit to contain spread of corona virus goes to, fast action by Indian government to quarantine people and shut borders.(21)

Taking rapid actions to limit travel by suspending visas and quarantining all incoming travelers has helped. All international passengers entering India undergo Universal Health Screening. According to health officials, more than 1 million passengers have been screened at airports, limiting the entry of corona virus.

The response also mirrors India's reaction to previous disease outbreaks, including Ebola in 2014 and Nipah in 2018, when people were quickly put into quarantine or under surveillance. Indian citizens have been advised to avoid all non-essential travel abroad, and citizens have been evacuated from Iran, Italy, China and Japan.(21)

"India is at a crucial juncture in its fight against COVID-19. The country has responded with urgency and determination as reflected in the Prime Minister's bold and decisive leadership. The government has also aggressively stepped up the response measures - find, isolate, test, treat and trace. WHO is supporting the government's endeavor to further strengthen and intensify surveillance and build capacity of the health system. WHO stands together in solidarity with the government in its firm resolve to overcome this unprecedented challenge," says Dr Henk Bekedam, WHO Representative to India.(22)

Government also announced on March 26 , to provide free of cost rice and pulses to people for the coming three months and bear the entire cost of move amounting to Rs. 40,000 cr. This ration was intended to cover 80 cr. people covered under PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana under the umbrella act , the national food security act(NFSA).(23)

Government took certain innovative measures to address the pandemic like lunch of aarogya Setu app to educate and track contagion across populations.

Encouragement of online learning platforms and remission of fee for students studying in private schools has also been announced.

Supreme Court of India while swinging into action asked the central government to provide free testing facilities through both public and private testing labs.(24)

The government also rolled out an investment to the tune of 15000 cr. for India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package, besides granting import of ventilators, face masks, surgical masks, personal protection equipment (PPE), COVID-19 test kits, immunity from custom duty and health cess.(25)

IV. DISCUSSION:

Epidemics and pandemics are not unknown to India .India has witnessed several pandemics throughout history. The plague between 1896-1939 claimed 12 million lives and the Spanish flue in 1918 also claimed 12 million lives in just three months.(26).Even in those days of little scientific advancement India resorted to social distancing measures, suggesting that the tool of social distancing is not new to India. India is currently following a very similar approach--shutting down schools, public spaces, malls, cinema halls and asking the public to practice social distancing or home quarantine.(26).While the social etiology of pandemics has hardly changed over the decades, the community resilience, intensity of response and institutionalized technical and policy support must change. This is born out of the fact that modes of communication, frequency and intensity of social interaction have assumed exponential increase in the present hyperglobalisation era.

The huge tool corona virus is taking of the livelihood in particular and economy in general, necessitates a policy shift and broader institutionalization of disaster response mechanisms .Besides to mitigate the spread of covid 19 and other infectious diseases, personal hygiene such as hand sanitization must be popularized, in Indian context .Healthcare infrastructure must be boosted and PPE(personal protection equipments) must be made increasingly and easily available especially to medical staff of hospitals and surveillance teams. Since no treatment for COVID-19 exists, non pharmaceutical measures like covering the mouth and nose when coughing/sneezing, frequent hand washing and maintaining spatial distance between persons can only retard the spread of the virus, and mitigate the burden of the disease.(27)

Much greater availability and access to virtual classrooms be prioritized to minimize the impact of lockdown on education of students. This in turn would need greater availability of communication technology infrastructure. It would also facilitate virtual social interaction among students and teachers thereby reducing, if not totally eliminating social isolation. This would also help to curb psychological fallout to some extent, since one recent study shows the needed mental healthcare in Indian population due to covid 19.(28)

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