



Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Mental Health

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Since December 2019, the global population is constantly being exposed to the enormous stress of cohabitating with a highly contagious new virus. In addition, constant media coverage of people fighting for their breath, death, and funeral adds further insult to the emotional injury. The covid-19 pandemic posed a serious threat to physical health and had a large impact on mental health. Jianyin Qiu et al. has conducted a nationwide survey of psychological distress among Chinese people in the COVID-19 epidemic in early 2020. They noted that covid-19 triggered various psychological problems, such as panic disorder, anxiety, and depression.¹ The younger group of people obtains a lot of information and misinformation from social media and thus became highly stressed.

This ongoing pandemic has at least seven different effects on mental health.

The first impact of covid-19 on mental health is the sudden, unexpected arrival of an unknown virus for which there is no effective therapy. Initially, people did not even know all the possible routes and modes of transmission. Acute stress reaction and the feeling of helplessness had spread like hellfire.

The second impact on mental health is the need for quarantine. Most people understood the importance of quarantine in the containment of the pandemic. Still, the sudden changes in daily routine, homeschooling of children, boredom, financial uncertainty, emotional conflict with the family members resulted in a massive surge of emotional stress and its sequelae. The divorce rate

of the newly married couple, married for five months or less, nearly doubled in the USA in 2020.^{2,3}

The third impact of covid-19 on mental health is the isolation of the patients infected with SARS CoV-2, the increasing number of deaths, and the restriction imposed on funerals. The isolated patients suddenly find themselves deserted by the family members; living in a separate room for two weeks without any close contact with their loved ones is a traumatic experience. In addition, the inability of the family members to take care of the covid-affected patients, the failure to stay at their bedside at their time of death, and restrictions on the usual burial ritual also increase the risk of complicated grief, depression, and suicide.⁴

The fourth impact is related to the covid-19 survivors admitted in the hospitals in critical condition. Constant fighting for breath, the beeping of the instruments, people dying in the nearby beds give them a near-death experience which may cause post-traumatic stress disorder and depression, and other psychiatric disorders after recovery.⁵

The fifth impact relates to economic losses, unemployment, food security, and uncertainty about the future. A considerable number of people relying on daily earning lost their livelihood because of quarantine. The decline in national and international trade resulted in the loss of many jobs and prevented new recruitment. The resultant chronic stress increased the risk of various mental disorders.⁶

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The sixth impact of the covid-19 pandemic is on the healthcare workers (HCW). A large number of deaths of HCW due to covid-19, deaths of a lot of patients, massive workload, lack of adequate personal protective equipment, lack of effective therapy, and feelings of inadequate support all can contribute to the increased incidence of mental disorders among HCW.⁷

The seventh impact on mental health is related to the covid-19 vaccine. Vaccine shortage in the poorer countries and hoarding of the vaccines by the more affluent countries, and vaccine politics have resulted in despair and the feeling of injustice. In addition, conspiracy theories about the vaccine resulted in emotional stress, vaccine hesitancy, and eroded trust in authorities.

The death, destruction, and emotional turmoil caused by the Covid-19 pandemic are enormous, and its' after-effects are likely to be long-lasting. People long to return to their 'normal' life, but they have failed to notice that their 'normal' way of life has brought this pandemic. In a pandemic situation, nobody is safe until everyone is safe; therefore, we must ensure global cooperation to fight this pandemic. Albert Camus had put it nicely in 'The Plague' - his masterpiece novel: "No longer were there individual destinies; only a collective destiny, made of plague and emotions shared by all."

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