

The COVID-19 epidemic! Effect on the Environment and Economy

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Abstract

This study examines the current state of knowledge on coronavirus sickness, policy responses to the disease, and its effect on the Indian population, economy, and environment. People's feelings of anxiety and uncertainty have grown because of the epidemic since many people have lost their jobs and income. In addition, there have been more reports of child abuse and domestic abuse because of the government-imposed statewide lockdown. A huge amount of money is lost as a result of the temporary shutdown of the industrial sectors. Some of the industries that were temporarily closed includes , consumer packaged goods, aviation, agriculture, construction, retail, hospitality industry etc textile, gems and jewellery, , manufacturing, and start-ups.

As such, the employment prospects of a substantial workforce was jeopardized. The lockdown has helped the ecology recover despite the economic downturn since it has resulted in less pollution and reduced discharge spilling into the water. The policy makers ought to take this as a wake-up call and strategically connect the environment, economy, and population.

Keywords: Covid 19, business, economy, environment

Introduction

Since its earlier report in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in late December 2019, the coronavirus ailment (COVID-19, by WHO on 11 February 2020) has spread to more than 220 countries and took the lives of over 2.5 lakh persons.(Zhu & Niu 2020)The medical professionals , scholars, and Professional virologists from all over the world are constantly trying to understand the form of the disease, find likely treatments and develop vaccines. However, since the virus has changed genetically with time, it has been more difficult and challenging for virologists and scientists to provide a concrete result. Moreover, despite advanced healthcare and wellness programs, the incidence of human losses has increased. Additionally, the job of physicians and nurses has become difficult as the chance of getting an infection while treating patients has considerably increased.(Jackson 2020) . The disease has not only hurt people but has also stopped business and many economic and trade related activities.

To create defense mechanisms against the virus, the scientific community and medical experts have given COVID-19 a lot of attention. But the number of fatalities and the speed at which it is spreading have compelled the authorities to intervene and cut off the human-to-human transmission connection. The government imposed a lockdown, which limited the lives of 1.3 billion Indians (Das, 2020). People who disobeyed the rules faced harsh consequences.

To enable people's movement and other operations during the lockdown, all government employees were denied leave and were put on duty. The epidemic stopped business and trade,

forcing breadwinners to stay inside. The ecosystem was able to recover thanks to this shutdown. In order to do this, the research examines the level of knowledge on COVID-19 as of right now and the policy responses to it. Furthermore, the influence of the disease on the general public, economy, and environment—specifically in India—is covered in this paper.

COVID-19, or coronavirus disease

The respiratory virus that causes COVID-19 is one of the largest RNA viruses. In humans, the virus can range in intensity from mild to fatal. More dangerous strains, such as Middle East respiratory syndrome commonly known as (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), were reported within a gap of a decade, in 2003 and 2012 respectively, although most cold cases are regarded as moderate illnesses. Stelzer-Braid et al. (2009) state that coughing, sneezing, touch, and close contact (1-2 m) are the main ways that the sickness is spread. Airborne infection can result from the respiratory secretions during medical procedures.

Additionally, it can spread by skin contact with infected surfaces, by touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. The virus has a 72-hour half-life on surfaces. According to Li, and Hsueh (2020), the disease's typical symptoms include fever, coughing, headaches, shortness of breath, dyspnea, diarrhea, and loss of smell. Asymptomatic cases—those in which a person carries an illness but exhibits no symptoms—have been recognized by medical professionals as being more dangerous (Gao, 2020). Acute respiratory distress syndrome and pneumonia are further consequences.

The first three days following the beginning of symptoms are the most contagious time for the sickness, however, transmission may occur earlier or later in the illness's course. There might be a gap of two to fourteen days between exposure and the start of symptoms. As of right now, there is no scientific proof that a COVID-19 vaccine exists, and the mainstay of treatment consists only of supportive and symptomatic care. Some measures such as repeated hand washing, masking avoiding contact with others and isolating oneself can further help in preventing the disease.

COVID-19-initiated policies and measures

Different governmental agencies have addressed the epidemic in different ways. To control population mobility, it has enforced restrictions like stay-at-home directives, travel limitations, and temporary closure of all possible workplaces. The government has also taken an initiative to create quarantine facilities and specialized COVID hospitals with an aim to help the public recover fast. Additionally, it has established specific clothing guidelines for medical professionals that treat patients regularly, such as nurses and physicians. The government has been cleaning areas that are either contaminated or prone to infection at the state level. To control the infection, the government has rescheduled several activities which even include cultural and political activities. The government has also halted production activities in the manufacturing industries. All educational institutions, research and incubation centers, places of worship, and areas with high potential for large-scale public gatherings were also closed. In addition, the Prime Minister advised everyone to install the "Arogya Setu App" to enable one to become more knowledgeable about the illness and have access to vital medical services

The World Bank) has provided monetary support to the Indian government. The Government has devised strategies to address the issue (Rajagopal, 2020). The states have received Rs. 28,379 crore from the federal government to effectively handle COVID-19. The government has set up shelters for migratory workers, displaced individuals, and those stuck in other states. The individuals living in the shelter houses are consistently given food by the government with assistance from non-governmental organizations and self-help groups. It has also been giving groceries and money to those of poor socioeconomic standing.

In an effort to protect middle-class citizens, the government has extended the last date for tax , urged landlords not to collect rent, and asked businesses to pay salary promptly without reductions and layoffs , measures have been taken to guarantee that agricultural products reach the public, and groceries and essential commodities are readily available in stores to prevent purchasing or hoarding of necessities. The President, Prime Minister, and other members of the cabinet will have their salaries reduced by 30% for a period of one year by the government authorities. Additionally, a lot of large company CEOs and management teams have chosen to take salary reductions in order to relieve some of the strain on their employees. The Chief Minister/Prime Minister has urged the public to donate to the CM Relief Fund or PMCARES. The money raised via donations can be utilized to combat the epidemic as well as to feed and meet the needs of the impoverished, migratory workers, and persons with lower socioeconomic standing.

COVID-19's effects on individuals

COVID-19 has tremendously affected people's lives in diverse ways. In late January ,2020, the news of the coronavirus epidemic in India was released from Kerala district of Thrissur . By April 2020, it had spread to nearly every state in India and killed over 600 people. The government-imposed lockdown made many individuals, even men, to remain at home. The unexpected and unforeseen closure had resulted in no resource production for a longer period of time. As a result, people have gone through periods of anxiety, depression, tension, poor self-esteem, and confusion. Some societies have witnessed a three-fold increase in domestic violence against women and children. Close relationship violence, sometimes known as sexual violence, affects women and can involve both physical and/or sexual abuse (Hoge, et al 2020; WHO, 2020). During the lockdown time, gender-based violence allegations nationwide increased twice, according to reports from India's National Commission for Women (NCW) (Roy, 2020). Injuries and major issues like mental, physical, and reproductive health—including diseases transmitted by sexual contact and unintended pregnancies were sharply reported during coronavirus disease 2019. The caregiving activities mostly depend on women. Because of the lockdown measures, women are now burdened more than males when it comes to providing care for the sick, old, and children in the family. Apart from marital violence, there has been a rise in child abuse and child pornography instances in India during the COVID-19 epidemic and lockdown (Pandit, 2020).

The lockdown had a lasting impact on students as it prevented both college and school students from participating completely in their education. Although, there has been an upsurge in the number of students enrolling in online classes, Several IT firms are supporting colleges and schools to shift to an all online curriculum (Dasgupta & Singh, 2010). Still, there is a problem

for the students who do not have access to computers and Internet. Students appearing in their tenth and twelfth board exams, found themselves at a dead end, uncertain about how to further or advance their careers. Additionally, final-year colleges and universities students will have to face difficulties because, following the epidemic, the economy will enter a slump, making it difficult for students, even those who graduate to find employment.

The migrant labourers from India's numerous cities and villages were also severely impacted. Their jobs and companies were closed, leaving them without a means of subsistence. Television screens showed lengthy line-ups of migrant labourers, many carrying little children on their shoulders, journeying hundreds of miles to return to their villages and hometowns during the first few days of the government imposed lockdown. The migrant workers are even suffering more and their lives have become difficult because of no job, no salary and they are unable to travel to their homes because of restrictions and limitations. People were compelled to stay indoors because of the epidemic, but the job responsibilities of medical professionals—doctors, nurses, police personnel, and cleaners and sweepers—doubled.

They provided more than just job-related services and requirements. The police remained outside to make sure that outside events ran well while the medical staff remained inside the hospitals, sometimes away from their families for a fortnight or a month. During this time, the traditionally underappreciated task of cleaners has gained a lot of respect and admiration. Even though the countrywide lockdown had its critics, no doubt it was most likely one of the best choices made to save and shield ordinary people's lives as the loss of life is irreversible. The reduced transmission and fatality rate in our country, India compared to affluent nations such as US, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and so on might be one of the likely effects of the lockdown. The lockdown made it possible for the government to build shelter houses, quarantine centers, and better healthcare facilities in order to meet the needs of citizens all around the nation. Researchers, scientists, and biomedical engineers had the chance to create affordable and efficient ventilators, masks, testing kits, and personal protection equipment (PPE) outfits. India can anticipate advancements in medical research via COVID-19. The continuing epidemic has taught farmers how to accept orders for vegetables, grains, and pulses over WhatsApp and deliver them to customers.

COVID-19's impact on the economy

The COVID-19 epidemic has caused disturbance to all the economies of the world as consumption and manufacturing declined. Developing nations like India are not exempt from such outside shocks and are probably going to see a pause in economic expansion. Consequently, the Indian economy had been in a slowdown since Demonetization and the authorities were figuring out how to boost the economy (Kapur, 2020). But COVID-19 has made ineffective any expectations of a short-term economic rebound. During the pandemic, several industries that contribute significantly to the jobs creation and the economy have reported significant losses. Some of them are travel, hospitality, , textile, agriculture, and jewelry, and start-ups, reported losses. (Seetharaman, 2020). The tourism sector has estimated a total loss of more than 5 lakh crores and the termination of more than 6 crore jobs for those with direct or indirect ties to the industry. Huge loss is anticipated in the hospitality sector particularly among hotel operators, perhaps leading to the loss of 1.7 million employment.

Both national and international airlines are expected to incur a loss of more than 8000 crores because several flights were cancelled and completely grounded in the initial phase of the corona. Many small, and medium-sized businesses of textile industry that depends on individual capabilities is expected to lose one crore jobs as a result of resource shortages. (Business Standard, 2020).

The nation's lockdown and the disruption of public and private transportation had an immense effect on the manufacturing facilities. Manufacturers of automobiles, cellphones, consumer electronics, and many more have all ordered shutdowns that has severely harmed the manufacturing of essential goods and caused huge loss of revenue. Many startup units have been forced to close because of shortage of funds. The inability to communicate and travel to clients further resulted in complete closure of many units. According to E. pantano (2020) the epidemic is said to have caused an 80% decline in India's retail sales of jewellery and stones. The decrease in patronage of shopping centers and cinema halls has affected the purchase of both necessary and luxury goods. The current situation, characterized by the rapid closure of outlets, puts employee stability at work at risk. Demand for milk, groceries, and hygiene goods has increased in the fast-moving consumer durables (FMCG) industry during the epidemic.

COVID-19's effects on the environment

The lockdown's effects include lower carbon emissions, clearer sky, and better air to breathe. A halt to institutions, industry, and economic activity will inevitably have a good effect on the environment. The air quality and water in India has improved because of the shutdown. India's air pollution levels have significantly decreased in major cities including Lucknow, Bengaluru, Kolkata, and Delhi. The Environment Ministry of India's Central Pollution Control Board has claimed more than 70 percent reduction in nitrogen dioxide levels (Wright, 2020). Likewise, since lockdown was imposed, waterways such as the Yamuna and Ganga have significantly improved. The Ganga has improved in terms of water quality, with an average of 27 points, as pointed out by the statutory organisation, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), making it safe for swimming and the propagation of fish and fauna. To put it briefly, the COVID-19 has helped the ecology recover. The epidemic has led to a rise in the volumes of harmful biomedical waste. In addition, there has been a decline in garbage recycling and a rise in the use of plastics, which may pose problems along the road. In addition, the government now concentrates on people rather than on environmental and economic issues. As a result, the delivery of basics to individuals and other vital areas like healthcare have so received funding. Post-pandemic the government should focus primarily on reducing layoffs and unemployment and encouraging individuals to engage in more economic activities, which might result in a near-term disregard for environmental conservation and sustainability.

LEARNING FROM CORONAVIRUS DISEASE FOR PUBLIC

Because of the potential loss of livelihood, anxiety and insecurity will grow. It may worsen the stigma associated with those who have common flu-like symptoms like a cold, cough, or sneeze. There's a chance that individuals hoard food, medical items like face masks, sanitizers, antibiotics, and analgesics out of need. The journalists, paramedics, volunteers, healthcare professionals, and virologists may be overworked, burned out, and afraid of catching the

illness. People may become afraid to walk on the street, use public transportation, interact with others, or simply go about their normal lives. Higher attention may be paid to medical requirements, fitness, mediclaim, nutritious organic food, health and hygiene goods, education, and financial investments.

People should learn to be watchful and cautious while interacting with others and practice good hygiene as a result of the epidemic. Instead of isolating themselves, people should act philanthropically, strive to form healthy habits, and preserve a work-life balance. People should practice meditation in response to increased job pressure, and they should abstain from harmful activities like drinking and smoking that lower immunity. The World Health Organization (WHO) an agency dedicated to global health and safety, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and many other developed countries including the US, Germany and fast progressing economies like Japan have expressed their appreciation and praise for India for management of COVID-19 pandemic. The world that exists after COVID-19 will not resemble what it does now. In this uncertain period, decision-makers and commercial organizations are working under lot of stress and pressure. To achieve fast growth and recovery India must be quick and creative in their efforts. (Hindustan Times, 2020). The leaders should ensure that every precaution taken during the epidemic is used to its full potential. This will help the country to recover fast and will also reduce the extent of harm done to the economy. Several other proactive measures like giving global investors a suitable stand so that foreign investment may rise.

Companies working in China are more fearful and are assessing moving their corporate headquarters to India. This may be one of India's chances to develop, address unemployment, and facilitate a quicker recovery of the economy after this disease. Nonetheless, India should be prepared to construct the facilities and set-up it needs to run successfully. In addition, the government must offer new businesses several benefits like easy provision of resources, capital, and tax holidays that can increase employment and other advanced economic activities. The present epidemic has prompted academic institutions to embrace a blended learning model, which includes switching over to online as well as offline classes. Some other organizations have also encouraged workers to work from home. For day-to-day operations to run successfully, people and students must maintain access to resources like laptops, internet connections, and other gadgets. (Debata & Mishra 2020). Companies will be constrained by the adverse effect of COVID-19 to intensify their focus on large-scale manufacturing in order to minimize the losses incurred during the lockdown. Additionally, the removal of the lockdown limitation has led to an increase in pollution in the environment because of companies, automobiles, discharge into water bodies, and excessive plastic usage, all of which have the potential to negatively impact the ecosystem. Thus, the present state of matters can serve as a wake up call for the government, legislators, businesspersons, and conservationists to collaborate in order to meet or resolve the concerns related to climate change and create a more sustainable future.

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