Social Impact of Covid-19 on the Present Society

Dr. Pankajkumar Kantibhai Patel

Principal

S. B. Patel Arts & R. N. Amin Commerce College VASO

ABSTRACT

The recent pandemic of Covid-19 has had major social impacts on the population. The relationship between individuals and their perception of empathy towards others have been affected by social distance and security measures. There are many faces and reasons for social stress caused by lockdown resulting from travel constraints and disruption of cultural celebrations, limited health care facilities and interruption of regular immunizations in hospitals leading to population anxiety and fear. The society was affected by social distance with friends and family, closure of entertainment and leisure places, unplanned closure of schools etc. The present paper aims to analyse the social impact on the present society. It has pros and cons both which will be discussed.

Key Words: Covid-19, Pandemic, Society, Human Life, Quarantine

Introduction
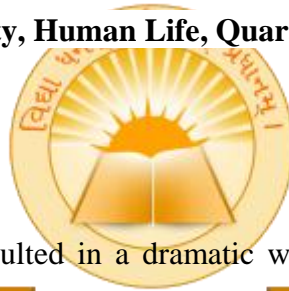
The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a dramatic worldwide loss of human life and poses an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems and the world of work. The economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic is devastating: tens of millions of people are at risk of extreme poverty, whereas by the end of the year the number of undernourished people, currently estimated at almost 690 million, could rise by as much as 132 million.

An existential threat faces millions of businesses. Almost half of the world's 3.3 billion employees are in danger of losing their livelihoods. Workers in the informal economy are particularly vulnerable because the majority lack access to quality health care and social protection and have lost access to productive assets. Many are unable to feed themselves and their families without the means to earn an income during lockdowns. No income implies no food for most, or, at best, less food and less nutritious

---

food.

Social Impact of Covid-19

The pandemic has affected the whole social system and changed the social life of the people. Border closures, trade restrictions and containment measures have prevented farmers from accessing markets, including the purchase and sale of inputs and the harvesting of crops by farm workers, thereby disrupting domestic and international food supply chains and reducing access to healthy, safe and diverse diets. The pandemic has decimated jobs and put at risk millions of livelihoods. The food security and nutrition of millions of women and men are under threat as breadwinners lose jobs, fall ill and die, with those in low-income countries, particularly the most marginalised populations, which include small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples, being the hardest hit.

Millions of waged and self-employed agricultural workers face high levels of labour poverty, malnutrition and poor health on a regular basis while feeding the world, and suffer from a lack of safety and labour protection as well as other forms of abuse. Many of them are spurred to continue working, often in unsafe conditions, with low and irregular incomes and a lack of social support, thus exposing themselves and their families to additional risks. In addition, they may resort to adverse coping strategies, such as distress sales of assets, predatory loans or child labour, when experiencing revenue losses. Migrant farm workers are particularly vulnerable because they face risks in terms of transport, working and living conditions, and because they struggle to access government-implemented support measures. To save lives and protect public health, people's livelihoods and food security, it will be crucial to ensure the safety and health of all agri-food workers, from primary producers to those involved in food processing, transportation and retail, including street food vendors, as well as better incomes and protection.


The COVID-19 crisis brings together food security, public health and employment and labour issues, particularly the health and safety of workers. In addressing the human dimension of the crisis, adhering to workplace safety and health practises and ensuring access to decent work and the protection of labour rights in all industries will be crucial. Immediate and deliberate measures to save lives and livelihoods should include the extension of social protection to universal health coverage and the promotion of income for the most affected. These include workers working in the informal economy and in low-paid and poorly protected jobs, including young people, older workers and migrants. The situation of women who are over-represented in low-paid jobs and care positions must be given particular attention. Including cash transfers, child allowances and healthy school meals, shelter and food relief initiatives, job retention and recovery support and financial relief for businesses, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, various forms of support are key. It is essential for governments to work closely with employers and workers when designing and implementing such measures.
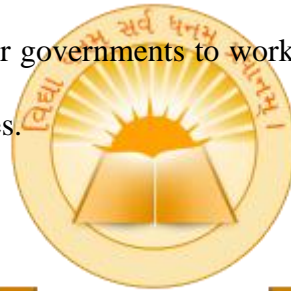
Social Impact of Quarantine

Over time, studies of pandemics such as SARS, Ebola, H1N1, equine flu and the current COVID-19 indicate that the effects of infection and quarantine are not limited to the fear of contracting the virus (Barbisch et al., 2015). Some elements related to the pandemic affect the population more, such as separation from loved ones, loss of freedom, uncertainty about the disease's progress, and the feeling of helplessness (Li and Wang, 2020; Cao et al., 2020). Such factors could have dramatic consequences (Weir, 2020), such as the rise in suicides (Kawohl and Nordt, 2020). Suicidal behaviours are often associated with the feeling of anger associated with the stressful condition commonly spread among individuals living/living in the areas most affected. With these implications in mind, a careful assessment of the potential benefits of the quarantine is necessary, taking into account the high psychological costs (Day et al., 2006; Mazza et al.,

----

2020).

Kids and young adults are particularly at risk of developing anxious symptoms, as reported in a recent survey administered during the Covid-19 pandemic (Orgilés et al., 2020). In general, during the quarantine, parents observed emotional and behavioural changes in their children: symptoms related to difficulty concentrating (76.6%), boredom (52%), irritability (39%), restlessness (38.8%), nervousness (38%), sense of loneliness (31.3%), uneasiness (30.4%), and worries (30.1%)

One of the most cruel and highlighted issues in this pandemic was the problem of migrant workers, where millions were rendered unemployed and stranded without money, food and shelter, crossing the highways of the country to return to their villages, and several encounters with accidents and fatalities on their way. Unemployment has rendered a large portion undirected, leaving both social health and the economy in shambles.

Social Sufferings and Empathy

The significance for people to feel an integral part of society emerged in analysing the psychological impact of the quarantine, an aspect often undervalued in psychological well-being. Public health experts believe that the better solution to prevent the spread of the virus is social distancing. However, although the duration of the pandemic cannot be predicted, we are well aware of the serious impact of these measures on society, relationships and interactions, particularly the empathy process. In the early 90s, empathy was described in the psychological and physiological states of others as a form of identification. This definition led to a debate between the disciplines of psychological philosophy and mind philosophy (Franks, 2010). Willard Van Orman Quine (1908-2000), with a thesis on the development of language and mind in analytical philosophy, renewed attention to the debate on empathy.

The attribution of the so-called intentional states, through which psychology frequently describes

---

human behaviour, is based on empathy (Treccani, 2020), according to Quine, and leads people to attribute beliefs, desires, and perceptions (Quine, 1990, 1992, Pursuit of Truth: Revised Edition, 1992). In the recent pandemic situation, an increase in antithetical positions and attitudes could be noticed by analysing this aspect. On the one hand, people identify with those who suffer (neighbours, friends, relatives who are experiencing stressful events), promoting activities such as the so-called "suspended expenses." For example, for people who cannot go to the supermarket, solidarity and humanitarian activities, food, and medicine delivery. On the other hand, there is a part of the population that experiences a feeling of "forced empathy." The use of technological devices that could lead to a depersonalization of relationships, forcing the sense of closeness, at least virtually, could also emphasise this aspect. The hyper-connection of emotions is a way of reducing self-isolation and its consequences, which is contrary to Durkheim's (1858-1917) idea of society as a particular entity based on social facts (Durkheim, 1922). After the emergency, the sensation of "being forced to feel" could lead people to distance themselves from others, increasing social phobias.

Human communication is also changing, too. For instance, the relationship between the employee and the manager is different, leading to more responsibilities during the video call to listen and understand feelings, generating a forced reciprocity. "Therefore, in this period, the aforementioned "forced empathy" may be common because the social distance and the situation of emergency make people want to be heard and appreciated, and the simple question "how are you? Becomes an anchor for expressing fears and feelings (Pasetti, 2020).

Conclusion

It is critical to respond swiftly to the pandemic while ensuring that humanitarian and recovery aid reaches those most in need. To address the challenges facing the health and agri-food sectors, we need to

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

---

develop long-term, sustainable strategies. Priority should be given to addressing the underlying challenges of food security and malnutrition, tackling rural poverty, in particular through increasing and improving employment in the rural economy, extending social protection to all, facilitating safe migration routes and promoting the formalisation of the informal economy. We must rethink the future of our environment and, with ambition and urgency, address climate change and environmental degradation. Only then can we protect all people's health, livelihoods, food safety and nutrition, and make sure our 'new normal' is a better one.

References

Alvarez, F., Argente, D., and Lippi, F. (2020). A simple planning problem for Covid-19 lockdown. *Covid Econ.* 14, 1–33. doi: 10.3386/w26981

Decety, J., and Ickes, W. (eds) (2009). *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Singer, T., and Lamm, C. (2009). The Social Neuroscience of Empathy. *Ann. N. Y. Acad. Sci.* 2009, 81–96. doi: 10.1111/j.1749-6632.2009. 04418.x.

https://www.who.int/news/item/13-10-2020-impact-of-covid-19-on-people's-livelihoods-their-health-and-our-food-systems