



AN ICONOGRAPHY OF STIGMATIZED EXISTENCE: EFFECTS OF PANDEMIC COVID-19 AND LOCKDOWN ON MENTAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

The focal point of this paper is to highlight the psychological reasons of loneliness of the people who are suffering from the fear of joblessness, homelessness and both physically and mentally ill. The present crises of Covid-19 have created an atmosphere of imprisonment where people try to appease their mind and manage to confine themselves from going outside. The immediate jobless crisis and financial insecurity of the marginal community are the major reasons behind having psychological stress and loneliness. This lockdown session due to covid-19 has enhanced an intolerable and miserable situation where people face the emergency problems of the unavailability of vehicles, ambulance services and doctors in the hospitals. Loneliness and lockdown are closely interrelated because both of these force us to the ground of confinement and social isolation. Loneliness is the state of being disconnected with the society. This confining and darkened state embeds a zone of irremediable singularity that brings a deep psychological impact upon all human beings. By following the qualitative method, this paper also focuses on the probable ways through which people can get some remedy from the suffocating state of stress, stigma and loneliness. Another important thing is that without making any physical communication with friends and outside relatives, we all human beings need to be accompanying ourselves through our hobbies, creative work like singing, dancing, writing stories or diaries etc. Lockdown is supposed to be a battling ground where we all are fighting together with the pain of aloneness against the pandemic disease Covid-19. We should remind this that we feel alone therefore we exist.

KEYWORDS: - Pandemic Covid-19, Psychological Stress, Stigma, Loneliness, Isolation, Lockdown and Well-being.

INTRODUCTION

The natural flow of human civilization is determined by the position of man as a social being. The greatest and most emblematic acts of human civilization are human generosity and mankind. Said Nadeem has provided a good opinion that "Mankind has observed various pandemics throughout the history where some of them were more disastrous than the others to the humans. We are observing a very tough time once again fighting an invisible enemy; the novel COVID-19 corona virus." (Nadeem, 2020) Man as a social being possesses to keep himself in a homo-social bonding and always prefers to stay in a social connection with the busy working life. This busy working life motivates human beings to go forward with the powerful ambition to achieve the goal. This motivation harvests an energetic mind inside us so that we can contribute our energy over the desired things with our deepest passion and complete dedication. All these things get collapsed when any outside factor comes to break off the chain of human ambition and dream

and the progressive process of human civilization. According to Said Nadeem "Human history is observing a very strange time fighting an invisible enemy the novel Covid-19 Coronavirus." (Nadeem, 2020) This natural flow of human civilization has been collapsed by the pandemic disease Covid-19 and its violent impact. It has already devoured the entire world with its rapid and wide spreading speed. We, human beings always stay in a social contact but this time we need to break off this physical communication by maintaining social distancing for our well-being. For this reason, the Government of India has announced lockdown from month to month consecutively and also has taken all the fundamental and necessary steps to face the challenges and threatened atmosphere caused by the impacts of Covid-19. The situation can only be overcome, with the support of the people, from the rapid and wide spread of the Corona virus.

The given word "stigmatized existence" in title is used to refer to the unwanted disgrace attached to something that is socially unacceptable. We all



have the pressure or disturbance of the impacts of covid-19 that have changed our normal social living communication system. This present condition of our "stigmatized existence" pushes us into a critical crisis of global economic downfall, social communication and other social activities. The patients who are infected by corona virus and who are sent to the isolation are the most victimized ones of stigmatized existence because of their excessive fear, nervousness and their detachment from their family members and society. Due to the lockdown and self-safety from getting affected by the pandemic disease, we are compelling ourselves to be confined at home. We all are deeply concerned about the horrible effects of the present condition because of the huge crises of joblessness, homelessness (due to natural hazards like flood, violent storm) and unemployment. All these things have brought a psychological threat that fills our mind with stress, stigma and loneliness. Lockdown and loneliness have a very close connection because loneliness creates due to the daily pressure of financial insecurity, global economic downfall which grasps our mind during the lockdown session. This corona virus outbreak has not only destroyed the chain of human civilization but also disrupted the global economy. A research study has analyzed a content on the mental health of rural and urban students: "With the unanimous response of increased awareness about mental health, the responses to reaching out to a mental health professional vary. Rural students seem to be less agreeable to reach out to a mental health professional as compared to the urban population, which may be attributed to the lack of awareness about mental health." (Moghe, Kotecha, & Patil, 2020) We all are humans and it is natural to get stressed and stigmatized because of the fear of present condition, pressure of study and examinations, job crisis, unemployment and financial insecurity etc. The unavailability of the provided patient beds, doctors, ambulances in the hospitals and the emergency vehicles has enhanced the present situation more problematic and dangerous. Many NGOs and social workers have come forward with their humanistic responsibility to assist the poor, needy, migrated and working-class people and the marginal community by providing food and water since the situation becomes more critical and dangerous. These all kinds of people are going through a huge psychological stress because of their victimization to the present condition and the fear of losing jobs. Most of the people of marginal community are daily workers who earn money by doing their daily jobs. We all have stress and pressure. When we worked at any industry, private company, any private school or anywhere, we had both stress and pressure. But now we all are confined and engaged with the pressure of job crisis and psychological suffering because we are bored enough to continue the prison lifestyle. This complete

binary engagement or belongingness has created the stress between the employment and unemployment, association and dissociation, attachment and detachment. Though we all should keep hope to beat the present circumstances and achieve a new world.

REVIEW ON EXISTING LITERATURE

It is known to all that covid-19 has dwindled all the expectations of human civilization. Millions of people have faced a huge loss in their economic grown up condition. A lot of researchers have been done on this topic. But this paper is highlighting a new emphasis on the stigmatized existence and this is caused by the effects of Covid-19. A thesis paper written by Vasiliki Tzouvara "Self-Stigma Loneliness and Culture among Older Adults with Mental Illness Residing in Nursing Homes" is about the inter-relationships Self-Stigma and loneliness and culture among the older adults and their mental distress. Another important paper by Sabine Rohrmann is "Loneliness is adversely associated with physical and mental health and lifestyle factors: Results from a Swiss national survey" which manifests a clear concept on loneliness. To analyze the present condition about the mental illness and present crises, the paper seeks some information from WHO website via internet.

METHODOLOGY

A research method is a systematic method by which a research is conducted. There are two types of researches-- qualitative and quantitative. This research paper is based on qualitative research because it is done through content analysis. This research carefully finds out the descriptive responses to each question. Research methodology is the specific way or technique used to identify which process has been followed to analyze information of a topic. To demonstrate this topic a descriptive method has been used because to emphasize on the written analysis of this paper is more important rather than judging the argument.

OVERALL VIEW ON COVID-19 AND HEALTH DISORDER

The pandemic caused by covid-19 has triggered a global crisis and changed the ways of our living and forced in an atrocious condition. This unmitigated and measurable condition has put us in a state of home imprisonment from where we become aware of the effects of covid-19 and also get the news of the misery of the marginal communities. The forceful home confinement and the downfall of global economy have brought a long mental stress over us and made our existence more stigmatized. It is true that "Lockdown stressors include separation from family and friends, loss of independence, doubts about the virus's spread, lockdown length,



resentment, monotonous lifestyle, potential scarcity of essential goods, lack of accurate information, monetary loss, and stigma” (Sundarasan, Chinna, Nurunnabi, Baloch, & Sukayt, 2020) We all are prepared to take any necessary step to assist our neighbors and relatives and others in the times of need. Besides having the deep pain of home confinement and social isolation we all have the mental pressure of financial insecurity and joblessness and other possible dangers of getting affected by so many diseases. As we are social being, it is our duty to hold mankind and we should stay beside the needy people by maintaining our temporary and necessary physical distances. This social contagion has created a profound and pervasive impact on every aspect of our existence; though this unavoidable thinking of danger is a treat that revolves in our mind all the time. Consequently, psychological tensions gather in our mind in the form of stress and stigma and put us in the state of depression loneliness and frustration (due to the remembrance of the past). In this time, we give up hope because certain particular wishes, hope and pleasurable moments are no longer able to come true and heal our mind with love and charity. We all look for the redemption from the unavoidable crisis created by the pandemic disease. There is every reason to get despaired and depressed under present circumstances and the lack of dignified political leadership that have put us in the state of self-isolation.

LONELINESS AND MENTAL STATE

Loneliness is the belongingness to the self, though a compelling thought that makes us suffer in the midst of all detains our mind with the pain of aloneness. It's the foundation of staying away from true relationship, though it itself seeks for true love in the hope of getting mental satisfaction and true consolation. A darkened state, it is that puts forward an errand of non-confidence, unreliability and mistrust. According to Sabine Rohomann "Loneliness is a common, emotionally distressing experience and is associated with adverse physical and mental health and an unhealthy lifestyle." (Rohrmann, 2017) Loneliness is inescapable but necessary; it transfigures into a defenseless longing. It can be a prison from where we imagine the previous outer world but we can't inhabit there. Our present confined situation makes us feel like a prisoner who is incarnated in a prison. It's a bodily and heartfelt ache that fathoms our ability to tolerate aloneness; it is possible to human beings because of our capability to imagine the past events but no other creature does have this ability. During this lockdown session we spend time at home and make our home an imagined world where we can memorize our old happy moments with our closest ones. Animals may also feel alone when they're instructed to follow a

particular way, move affectionately with them who are of their kind but human beings demand only that specific life that they may be missing.

Loneliness is the gravitational field that grasps and keeps us to put in the essence of its isolation. At this moment our soul gets dissected and we need someone to solace and relieve us by magnifying those memorable moments. An invitation to the vulnerable and helpless imprisoned world is made to us that gradually fill the ground of our mind with the sense of impossibility over any work. Loneliness can also give birth to courage that helps us create an identity to ourselves. Each one must feel the pain of loneliness that may give birth to any creative work. Sometimes we want to be loner (one who avoids company) to listen the voice of our own and give real attention to the voice of our hearts. To allow ourselves to be alone is an attempt to face the truth of our irremediable singularity; as if we are made to belong in this state. We feel alone, therefore we exist.

STRESS AND MENTAL DISORDER

Stress is a mental pressure or disturbance that is caused by some unwanted violent condition. Stress is a mental response to the self-belongingness that grasps one's attention over any pressure. We all have "Stress hormones (cortical, adrenaline and noradrenalin) prepare the body to fight or flee." Our "breath quickens, heart beats faster, senses are sharpened (sight and hearing), the individual become more alert, certain blood vessels constrict, which helps direct blood to the muscles and the brain and away from the skin and other organs." (Christos, 2015) The impact of loneliness stress and self-isolation imposed by pandemic situation puts an emphasis on the mental and physical health. A person whether a student, teacher, worker, man, woman, everyone has faced stress and is still facing stress in his or her own way because we all have different kinds of problems. The major reason of having stress is our excessive pressure to achieve the target or aim and for this we come in a pressure of acquiring the aim. What external matter compels our mind to think excessively is called stress and the person who feels stress is called stressor. The rapid growth of industries, population, and pollution are the general reasons for the increase of stress. According to the psychologists, stress originates from any graceful work or event or the situation where we get entrapped. Many people get stressed because of having excessive pressure of unemployment which is a big issue in this pandemic time. Nowadays one of the biggest issues of stress is the fear of touch through which anyone can get affected with corona virus. This kind of stress is a challenge to keep ourselves protective. The life of loneliness and self-isolation imposed by covid-19 puts an emphasis on the mental and physical health.



The crisis through which we are going is unavoidable. It is unexpected that we shall always get a life that goes on in a smooth parallel way. The tidal waveform of crisis generates a new inescapable problem so that we prepare ourselves with our energetic mind to overpower them. We know that the pandemic situation is a curse to us but despite having problems, we should continue to deal with the forthcoming hazards as well as our psychological stress of suffering.

STIGMATIZED EXISTENCE

Stigma is the bodily reflective response of a disgraceful threat. It is an unintended and unwanted fear of infamy or disgrace. The word 'Stigma' is actually used "In ancient Greece stigma was a mark or brand burned or cut into the flesh of people who were criminals or slaves." (Tzouvara, 2015) With this mark, it becomes easy to distinguish them. But nowadays stigma is used to refer to the mental illness that is viewed through our odd behaviors, lack of concentration over many works etc. It can be manifestly recognized through our bodily expression due to loneliness and depression excessive stress on job, study and other things. Stigma can be two types- Social stigma (A prejudiced attitude that creates mental illness) and Self-perceived stigma (Any Internal matter that makes one suffer from mental illness) But the present crisis due to pandemic covid-19 has pushed billions of people into a world of stigmatization. The major reasons of the stigma are financial insecurity, unemployment, family problems and personal problems and lack of understanding in any social matter etc. The consequences of stigma are serious and humiliating. Whoever suffers from the state of mental illness needs the support of someone who can understand the person and treat him properly with love. But in this paper the most notable point is our stigmatized existence that has brought a mental pressure or disturbance. This given image of "stigmatized existence" has created an iconography of our mental illness. As a result of this stigmatization and home confinement, we become surrounded by the mental state stress, loneliness and depression. Despite having all these problems, we are trying to overcome the situation so that we can revive the sense of well-being for mankind.

TOWARDS WELL-BEING

The triggered action of Covid-19 has made all human ambitions and dreams stagnant and has injected the fear of death in our mind. Life is like a stream where water flows rapidly with its own speed but this speed becomes stagnant suddenly, we become motionless. "Prevention" is necessary to maintain social distancing and it is "the best practice in order to reduce the impact of Covid-19 considering the lack of effective treatment". (Fransesco Di

Gennaro, Damiano Pizzol, Claudia Marotta, Mario Antunes, Vincenzo Racalbutto, Nicola Veronese and Lee Smith, 2020) We all are confined in a state of home imprisonment and also going through the pain of Stress, depression and loneliness. To get over from this state we need to accompany ourselves with our hobbies, creative works like singing dancing and writing stories, poems diaries etc. It's hard to believe that we have to take the courageous step of getting close to us so that we can realize 'us' in a new form. We know that we all have different kinds of capabilities and abilities to do anything. It's necessary to think everything in an alternative way. It's an art to be imaginative to recognize our feelings. To eliminate our stress and loneliness we need to understand our mind and should think what kind of capabilities we have and we can highlight properly by staying at home. We all have our own way of remedies by giving importance to our needs and desires. We can meditate and do yoga classes and can enjoy the environment of our neighborhood. Meditation is important to calm down our mind in this crisis and even helps us to concentrate on reading and writing. Another important thing is that we can get a peer supporting group and share our experiences with our closest ones. The most profound form of conversation and deeper understanding with our inner mind can only be possible in this horizontal time of home confinement. It's natural to be lonely and get depressed in this time because we did not ever feel this kind of circumstances before. If we think in a broad minded way, we can see a lot of refugees and workers become homeless and deprived of their natural needs like food and shelter due to the violent natural hazards flood and Storm. In comparison to them our living condition is better than and their living. We as a community need to move on and our oneness with our heart's content of generosity and humanity.

We all have to be courageous enough to struggle against the besieging circumstances of covid-19; though we still did not get any hope to make our living ways better. The doctors, nurses, police and social workers are struggling at their best and put themselves in a horrible hazardous condition by doing their duties to keep us safe in this crucial circumstance. They are the gifts of bliss against all odds things in the greatest and most emblematic act of human generosity; their self-sacrifice and kindness over all human beings encourage us to live happily. We all keep our best wishes for them and also for making this planet safe.

CONCLUSION

This paper highlights and unearths the psychological reasons and the probable remedies of stress, stigma, loneliness and depression. These are natural emotions and have played a crucial role in the journey of human evolution. We all are unique and



different in the way we think. We work for the well-being of the human civilization. The Government of India and the ministry of health and family welfare have been providing new policies and public awareness to influence people with the hope of overcoming the pandemic situation. They are trying their best to tackle different issues and problems imposed by Covid-19. Therefore, as a human being, we all should show our humanity by helping the needy and poor people at this crucial time because it's not possible for any government and NGO to look upon everyone. Another thing is that we need to meditate everyday so that we can calm down our mind and take reliable decisions in this pandemic situation.

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