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Impact of Lockdown due to COVID-19 on Mental Health and Suicidal Risk

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ABSTRACT

COVID -19, a highly contagious disease emerged in Wuhan city of China in Dec.2019 and within a short span of time engulfed the whole world and subsequently it went under lockdown to minimize or slow down the infection. This lockdown has a drastic impact on the social and mental health of the people and how feelings of suicides are amplified by the social disruption and forced social isolation. The threat of economic downturn, losing of jobs by the temporary employees, people which are already psychologically burdened, closer of institution, sudden and drastic changes in the daily routine and the sick and old people in the community particularly without immediate family caregivers due to lockdown are at increased risk of the suicide. Amid this there is a need of urgent research by the psychiatrist and psychologist to ascertain the impact of pandemic on mental health of the people.

Keywords: Covid-19, mental health, lockdown, suicide, psychiatrist and psychologist.

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INTRODUCTION

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Mental health refers to the behavioral, and emotional wellbeing. It is all about how people sometimes uses the term “mental health” to mean the absence of the mental disorder. According to World Health Organization (WHO) “Mental health is a state of well being in which and individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productivity, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (WHO)¹.

According to WHO “mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities”. Peak mental health is about not only avoiding active conditions but also looking after ongoing wellness and happiness. It is being emphasized that preserving and restoring mental health is crucial on an individual basis, as well as throughout the different communities and societies all over the world.

In the United States, the National Alliance on Mental Illness estimates that almost 1 in 5 adults experience mental health problems each year (NAMI-Sept.2019)².

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), in 2017 an estimated 11.2 million adults in the US, or about 4.5% of adult had a severe psychological condition (NIMH 2017)³.

According to the U.K Surgeon Journal (1999), mental health and mental illness are two continuous concepts. People with optimal mental health can also have mental illness, and people who have no mental illness can also have poor mental health ⁴.

Problems which lead to the mental illness:

The problems of mental health arises due to stress, loneliness, death of loved ones, suicidal thoughts, self harm, various mood disorders, addiction, grief, ADHA or other types of various degrees or learning difficulties (Kitchener et al., 2002.)⁵

Early signs of Mental illness:

Of Course, no scan or physical test is available which reliably indicates weather person has developed mental illness. But the following possible symptoms or signs of mental health are observed.

Avoiding activities that they have normally enjoying.

- Sleeping too much or too little.
- Withdrawing from the company of friends, fan, family and colleagues.
- Having consistently low energy and feeling hopeless.
- Eating too much or too little and displaying negative emotions and being confused.
- Using mood altering substances including alcohol and nicotine more frequently.
- Having persistent thoughts or memories that reappear regularly.
- Being unable to complete daily tasks, such as getting to work or cooking a meal.

- Experiencing delusions and hearing voices.
- Thinking of casual physical harm to themselves or others.

The Coronavirus outbreak has caused significant disruption to the people's lives across the globe. The lockdown measures lowered mental health by 0.085 standard deviation (Abi Adams et al., 2020)⁶.

In the time of COVID-19 pandemic, the world is scrambling to build enough health infrastructure to treat the infected ones. But on the other hand there is no formulation of policy or measures for those who are badly effected with this lockdown and are mentally effected this is a great challenge, and it will may be another "psychological pandemic", after the end of this unprecedented lockdown.

Currently an estimated 2.6 billion people i.e one third of the world's population is living under some kind of lockdown or quarantine. (DR. Elke Van Hoof 9th April 2020)⁷. This is perhaps the largest psychological experiment ever conducted.

People who are quarantined are very likely to develop a wide range of symptoms of psychological stress and disorder, including low mood, irritability, emotional exhaustion, depression, insomnia, stress, anxiety are very common the study wrote (Samantha et al., 2020)⁸.

In case, where parents were quarantined with children, the mental health tool became even steeper and it was observed that approximately 28% of quarantined parents warranted a diagnosis of trauma related mental health disorders".

Moreover high depressive symptoms among 10% of quarantined hospital staff were observed and will be there in future for long time. As a result such healthcare workers found a long term risk for alcohol abuse, self-medication, and long lasting "avoidance behaviour". The reasons seems for stress abound in lockdown that there is risk of infection, fear of becoming sick or of losing loved ones as well as prospect of financial hardships.

There is still uncertainty how long it is going to last, and had a significant impact in the mental health of healthcare workers. Due to the fact that hundreds of clinicians across the globe have succumbed to the disease has only increased their worriers. Many of them worry about spreading the disease to other patients and loved ones. There are views of experts that this traumatic effects will linger long after the virus is contained.

Persons effected most:-

The lockdown effects three major areas, i.e Physical movement out of homes, less availability of most of public services and social distancing when outside. This leads to sudden and drastic changes in the daily routine, with millions standard and without work and jobs.

All the institutions throughout the world are closed and academic activity came to halt, the other auxiliary staff like cleaners, gardeners, care takers, security guards etc. suddenly loses work and this sudden loss of the employment, along with financial stress or even distress, could enhance the psychological impact on the working community with symptoms of increased aggressiveness and even takes the extreme step of suicide. The people which are already psychologically burdened, or out of the mainstream at base line are effected most.

Another most impacted group of people includes the old and sick in the community, often without immediate family caregivers in the vicinity, such persons are known to have higher risk of acquiring the infection, because of weaker immune response or secondary morbidities. Another group which is already excluded from most mainstream Indian communities is the sexual minorities. Due to lockdown such individuals can not visit other in their communities, which put their sex lives on hold and encourages online pornography as a means of coping with their sexual needs. Thus there is disruption in their sexual lives, in addition to the stress due to lockdown could lead to the depressive symptoms. This unprecedented pandemic has also a great impact on agricultural economy and as a result effect directly or indirectly on the people (Wani 2020)⁹ and Kumari et al.,(2020)¹⁰.

Suicide in Islam is a major sin. And one who does that is faced with a warning of eternity in the fire of Hell, where Allah will punish him /her with the means that is used to commit suicide. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said whoever throws himself down from a mountain and kills himself will be throwing himself down in the fire of Hell for ever and ever, who so ever drink poison and kill himself will be sipping it in the fire of Hell for ever and ever. Whoever kills himself with a piece of iron in his hand thrusting it into his belly in the fire of Hell for ever and ever (Saheeh Al Bukhari Hadees 5778 and Saheeh Muslim Hadees 300¹¹ ."In Quran Allah says Do not give up nor be depressed ,and indeed u will be superior if you are (truely) believers "(Surah 3:V139)¹²."Put your trust on Allah, Allah loves those that trust Him". (Surah 3:V159)¹³.

CONCLUSION:-

In the present scanerio, when the entire world is under lockdown in some forms due to the COVID-19 as a result psychological stress, anxiety and depression which is engulfing our society. It not only effects the quality of life, but also cause mental illness and even suicides by the vulnurable section of the society. In such time of uncertainty the only way forward is to accept that we do not have control over everything and to have faith on All Mighty (Allah). But the immediate need is of research by the psychiatrist and psychologist to ascertain the impact of pandemic on the mental health and to suggest the remedial measures accordingly.

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