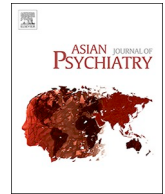




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Letter to the Editor

Covid-19 lock down: People psychology due to law enforcement



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In December 2019, an unknown Virus starts affecting the human being from Wuhan seafood market, China due to trade of various animals and birds viz bats, snakes, birds etc. Though exactly the source of virus is unknown, the Wuhan Institute of Virology declared that it is 96 % identical to Corona Virus found in bats (Anon, 2020g). Initially, it was believed that this virus was not a communal spread virus. A lot of people migrated to Wuhan to celebrate their annual Chunyun festival. This large get together for the festival, cause the virus to spread among them. Without knowing this, they started to travelled back to their places. Due to this, the virus starts affecting more than 200 countries across the globe.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the virus as Covid – 19. The initial symptoms include fever, cough, breathing difficulties and when it is severe, results in pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome and at last result in loss of life (Anon, 2020h). The stage of spread of virus include 4 stages. In stage 1, the people are affected when they are travelling to affected countries. In stage 2, the people who are very closely interacting with the affected people in stage 1 (Anon, 2020e). In stage 3, community spreads occur and still the disease can be controlled. In stage 4, the massive number of people are affected and it is very difficult to control.

In India, though the first case of Corona was reported on 29th January 2020, the virus starts spreading from 1st week of March 2020. The Government has taken lot of preventive measure to control the spread of the virus (Anon, 2020a). As the virus spreads due to the closer interaction of the people the Government asked their citizens to maintain Social Distancing. In March 22nd a one-day Janata Curfew, a voluntary self-quarantine activity was observed nationwide. In March 24th, to stop the pandemic and for the welfare of the people, the Honourable Prime Minister announced the 21 days Lockdown period and imposed Section 144 of Cr.P.C. throughout the country (Anon, 2020f). By imposing this lockdown, the pandemic can be controlled adversely without any further consequences. Also, the Government can disinfect the public areas and allow the hospitals to prepare themselves to handle this situation. Accordingly, any person who disobeys the rules would be definitely punished.

1. Enforcement of law

The Constitution of India is considered to be the back bone of the

Government and all other laws laid down by the Government must not be ultra vires with the constitution (Anon, 2020b). In case any law that has been laid is ultra vires then it is considered to be unconstitutional and not valid.

Article 19 of the Constitution of India states about the fundamental rights of the Citizen, which include freedom of speech, freedom to go anywhere in the country, form association or unions, gather at a public place for a cause without any armour etc. but under certain emergency and critical time there are certain exceptions to the fundamental rights that are being exercised by the citizens of India, which are stated in Article 19(2) to Article 19(6). Under this sub clause it is stated that the state can impose any law for the welfare of the people in emergency situation for example natural disaster etc. so it is our duty to follow the rules and restrictions and restrictions that has been imposed.

There is a special act named Epidemic Disease Act 1897. This act was specifically laid down for such emergency purposes. According to this act the centre and state has the discretionary powers to take the control in their hands to stop further spread of the disease or epidemic or pandemic. Based on this act the centre and state have the power to quarantine the people affected with any contagious disease or the people who are suspected to have the symptoms of the contagious disease. Or even healthy people to protect them from further spread of the disease.

When the rules imposed by the government in reference to the epidemic disease act are not followed properly then the Section 188 of IPC comes into action. According to this section anyone who disobeys the law imposed (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) is subjected to one month of imprisonment or fine of INR200 or both on general conditions. If the person was the reason for the spread of the disease to a healthy person or death of a person then he is subjected to imprisonment up to 6 months or fine of INR100 or both.

Disaster Management Act 2005 is another act that is related to the current situation. Under this act Section 51 states the punishment for the obstruction caused. According to this any person who disobeys the rule imposed will be given one year of simple imprisonment and if the person was responsible for any spread of disease or death then is subjected to imprisonment up to 2 years. Section 54 of the same act states that if any person creates panic situation due to the spreading of false information by any means e.g.; sharing any information in Social media is subjected to imprisonment up to 1 year.

According to the Section 270 of IPC which applies for a “malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life”. A violator can be jailed for up to two years or could be fined or both without bail.

Under Section 271 of IPC if a person is tested positive or suspected to be affected by the disease and are prescribed to be kept in quarantine and any person who violates the quarantine rule are booked under this section and imprisonment up to 2 years which is non cognizable.

According to the Essential Commodities Act, the essential commodities that are said to be the basic needs during the emergency and disaster time must be sold at the price of MRP or at a reasonable cost based on demand and requirement but selling the essential things at unreasonable prices is said to be a crime and is subjected to imprisonment up to 7 years.

2. Psychological aspects of people during lockdown period

Due to lockdown, the psychological aspects of people are affected as follows:

When the Government announces the India is going to be under Lockdown in the next 4 h, the general public become panic. There was an ambiguity among the common public whether the essential items will be available and they started to buy items that are more than required and tried to store the commodities.

To reduce the fear of the Doctors, Nurses and other Healthcare Workers the Government has declared Insurance for them. In order to enhance Healthcare to the Nation, the service of the private Hospitals is also leveraged. The Government is providing permission to setup more testing facility to identify the infected people and for providing treatment. The MSME ministry has invited the manufacturer and supplier to produce Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Ventilators, Medical Equipment for the benefit of Healthcare Professionals and Public. Also, various training programmes were organised for the healthcare professionals to handle the situation.

For the middle-class people, salaried people, organised sector etc., the RBI has reduced the repo rate which results in reduction in loan interest rate. Also, for the term loans, the customer can opt out 3 months EMI. Also, ATM withdraw fee are waived off. Free LPG cylinders, Free rice / wheat, pulses are provided to the beneficiaries. The deadlines for income tax returns has been extended. For the Small and Medium Entrepreneurs, collateral free loans will be provided. The GST filling dates has been extended.

During this lockdown period, the Migrant Workers were not able to travel to their native place. To Leverage their fear, the Government has instructed the Employers has to take care of the employees and to provide them with food and shelter. The Government has instructed to pay wages during the lockdown period for their employees. However, three fourths of Indian population are working in unorganised sectors and this lockdown may results in financial insecurity for them. Also, the farmers got mentally stressed for the reason where there are no people for harvesting their goods. The cultivated products like vegetables, fruits, flowers, species etc cannot be exported to the foreign national which will affect their economy.

UGC has issued some guidelines to Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), to take care of the Mental Health, Psychosocial concerns & Well-Being of Students Community during and after COVID-19 outbreak (Anon, 2020c). To address this challenge, the Teachers undertook the Socially responsibility. To improvise the quality of teaching, ICT based teaching-learning were adopted (Anon, 2020d). In order to keep the

Mental Wellness of the people, the National Institute of Mental Healthness and Neuro Science has launched a toll-free telephone to counsel the mental illness of people.

3. Conclusion

The corona outbreak is considered to be a pandemic. The Central and State Government are taking many precautionary measures and relief measures for the welfare of people. However, there are people without unaware of the impact of Corona Virus, unnecessarily moving around the streets. People become panic with the situation and buying commodities needed without maintaining Social Distancing as advised by Government. Without the public cooperation the spread of the virus cannot be controlled. When the Government orders are violated, then the Government has to strictly enforce the law. Thus, all are advised to act wisely and cooperate with the Government to safe guard our lives and the lives of other people.

Present situation conveys that “Law is the only Medicine (Sec.144 of Cr.P.C.)”

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None

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