



# Social Consequences of COVID-19 on Indian Society: A Sociological Analysis

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## Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to understand the social consequences of COVID-19 on Indian society. It is based on four-months of observation of the researcher, discussion with common people, telephonic interview, and media report. The main objective of the study is to highlight the issues and problems which Indian society is facing during the pandemic crisis. It was found that in the COVID-19 crisis education system got crippled and the student community is facing chaos, confusion, and mental stress. Every educational institute came up with its own guidelines which have led to creating so many problems among the student community. The study further observed that during this pandemic crisis labor class also faced a lot of socio-economic problems. Due to the misinformation and mismanagement, they got tremendously affected and so many laborers became a victim of COVID-19. The study also highlights many issues and problems which the society is facing during a pandemic crisis such as the impact of COVID-19 on family, elderly people, front liners, and community.

**Keywords:** COVID-19; Indian Society; Issues; Problems

## Introduction

COVID-19 is a deadly pandemic that has engulfed the whole world. It has led to adverse effects on society as a whole. Everywhere there is a lot of chaos and confusion among the people. Lakhs of deaths have taken place all over the world which has created fear and anxiety among people. No one is quite sure when this pandemic will end and as such uncertainty is present in the society. It has also crippled the whole economy of the world. People are forced to live within the four walls of their houses. Fear psychosis has taken place in society due to the COVID-19 virus which has created so many problems among the people.

This pandemic came suddenly and led to the emergence of various social and economic problems that no one was ready to face. Many developed and developing countries are trying their hard to find a vaccine for this deadly disease, but till now nobody has been successful which has further led

to chaos and confusion among people. If we see the position of India during the pandemic crisis, it was observed that the Indian government has handled the COVID-19 crisis very efficiently and tried to control the spreading of virus to some extent despite the fact that the Indian population is the second-largest in the world. The business standard report on 1st July 2020 shows that the India's recovery rate of COVID-19 victims is 59.52 percent which shows improvement in the recovery rate of COVID-19 victims day by day. If we see the death rate of COVID-19 victims, it is just less than five percent.

The study has also observed that many developed countries such as France, Italy, America, UK, Brazil, Mexico, Spain, and other countries have suffered a lot and a large number of COVID-19 victims have died. It is not right to say that their respective government has done nothing for their fellow citizens. However, the respective government has tried too hard to save their fellow citizens whatever the

resources were available. But the virus is so much strong that it kills a large number of people across the globe which is the biggest challenge and worries for the global leaders as well as the scientific community that how to save the life of human beings and how to control the socio-economic loss due to pandemic. There is no guarantee that in future this pandemic would not come again (Table 1).

According to the Deccan Herald report on 1st July 2020, it shows the magnitude of CORONA victims across the globe till 1st July 2020 through Worldometer [1].

Country	Total COVID-19 victims	No. of Death	No. of Recovered
USA	2747634	1303652	1144319
Brazil	1426913	60194	790040
Russia	654405	9536	422931
India	603990	17822	359354
UK	313483	43906	NA
Spain	296351	28355	NA
Peru	285213	9677	174535
Chile	282643	5753	245443
Italy	240760	34788	190717
Iran	230211	10958	191487
Mexico	2226089	27769	134957
Germany	195998	9053	179800

**Table 1:** Magnitude of CORONA victims across the World.

From the above data, it is seen that the CORONA virus has tremendously affected the socio-economic life of people across the world. Both the developed and developing countries have been affected badly which shows how powerful the virus is. People are living under the fear psychosis, mental stress, and anxiety as the virus is spreading very fast into society.

### Research Methodology and Objective of the Study

The present study is based on observation, discussion, telephonic interview and media reports. Paper is based on the personal observation on the present situation by the researcher for the last four months. The researcher also held extensive discussion with the common people to find out their views on the present situation and telephonically interviewed many respondents to know about their personal experiences. All this helped the researcher to arrive at the right conclusion. The study also includes various media reports related to the present pandemic.

In the present paper the main objective of the study is to examine the various issues and problems being faced by the Indian society during the pandemic. This pandemic is so huge and dangerous which the Indian society had never witnessed before.

### Finding of the Study

#### Impact of COVID-19 on Education

It has been observed that the education system with in the country has been crippled due to this pandemic. There is chaos and confusion regarding the education of the students. There is uncertainty as to how the exams are to be conducted and most of the educational institutes have adopted the online mode of education for conducting classes of the students which has further led to chaos and confusion. It has been seen that students living in rural areas do not have the proper internet facilities nor the laptop/smartphone through which they can attend the classes. It is only a limited number of students who have benefited from these classes. As far as schools are concerned, those which are in an urban area they have started online classes but those in rural areas do not have the proper infrastructure to starts these classes. As such the students living in rural areas have suffered a lot as they are without any kind of education from the last four months. The teachers teaching in rural schools are also not well trained to take online classes.

It was further observed that there is a wide communication gap between the student community and the educational authorities regarding various guidelines being issued by the authorities. Even the authorities are not sure about the decisions taken by them. There is no clarity regarding when the educational institutes will open and when the routine work will be resumed. The educational institutes are planning to open the institutes but the parents are reluctant to send their children to their schools and colleges due to pandemic. In the present situation, there is no proper platform where the students can put their grievances for the readdressal. Almost every day the educational authorities are coming up with a new plan for the students without any clarity. As such the students face a lot of mental stress and confusion. It has been observed that the higher educational authorities are still not sure when to finally conduct various competitive exams. They are simply giving dates for these exams on one day and then postponing it after few days. As such the students are under lot of stress for example there is no final date regarding when to conduct NEET, JEE exams etc.

It has been noticed that during this pandemic some of the educational institutes have come up with the idea of mass promotion for the students which may seem as a better option in the present crisis. But there is no uniformity

among the educational institutes regarding mass promotion. Some institutes are in favor and some are against it which has further led to fear and confusion among the student community. The educational authorities do not come up with a clear cut policy for the student community such as conducting exams, reopening schools, colleges/universities. This pandemic has created a lot of chaos and confusion in the education system. However, during this pandemic, some of the educational institutes (IIT and IIM) have started the online classes/ courses, but it may not cover all the students. Because students from rural regions do not have online facilities, so all the students do not get benefits through online classes.

It was further observed that some of the educational institutes have issued guidelines regarding online submission of internal assignment which is creating problems for certain sections of the student community. Those students who are having internet facilities find it very easy to submit their assignments. But it is very difficult for those students who are living in the far-flung region and do not have such facilities. They are in a dilemma of how to submit their assignment and are facing a lot of problems and living in constant fear and anxiety. On the one hand, the educational institutes have to try to come up with a solution in the pandemic but on the other hand, it is creating a lot of problems for the students to adhere to these guidelines especially those living in rural regions. It was seen that in one of the place the students became a victim of COVID while giving their exams. According to News 18 report on 4th July 2020 by Sharath Sharma where he reported that in Karnataka, 32 students tested COVID positive while attending the SSLC exams. This is very difficult for the student community as they are putting their lives at risk while giving exams. The higher authorities should thus deal with such problems seriously and not put the lives of students at risk.

It was further observed that if the situation continues to remain same for five six months, then the student community will be the worst effected and become mentally ill. As such the educational authorities should immediately come up with an effective plan keeping in view the health of the students.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Labor Class**

During the COVID-19 crisis, the labor class is the worst affected one economically as well as socially. The crisis has created a lot of chaos and confusion among the labor class. There is no proper correspondence between the center and state governments regarding the welfare of the labor community. Some of the states even refused to accept their labors during the crisis due to the fear that it might spread the disease more in their respective states. All this has further created a lot of problems among the labor community.

It was further observed that the labor class suffered more due to misinformation and spreading of fake news. They just move from their host state to their native places without any transport and proper arrangements. Some of them even travelled miles on foot to reach their home. Though the respective state governments tried a lot to help these laborers but that was not enough. Large number of laborers walked to their home haphazardly without thinking and had to face serious consequences such as some of them even lost their lives due to accidents caused by trains, buses, and trucks.

Though the host state of labor class tried its best to provide basic necessities such as food, water, and shelter to laborers; it did not reach all the laborers as they were very huge in number. The pandemic was sudden and no state was prepared to deal with such a crisis. As a result of all the chaos and confusion, many laborers had to walk long distances towards their homes without food and water. It was also seen that the labor class is facing tremendous economic problems because they lost their jobs. Nobody knows when the pandemic is going to end. Although some of the states have started providing jobs to labor class under MNERGA to support them economically. But it not sufficient as the labor class is huge in number. It has also been observed that while moving from one place to another place the labor class became victims of COVID-19 as well as a carrier which created additional burden and problems for their respective states. They became a potential risk for the society. Due to such incidents, some states even refused to allow the labor community to enter their state which created a huge problem for the labor community.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Family**

In the pandemic crisis, most of the families are living under depression and anxiety. There is uncertainty and they are worried about the future and education as well as health of their children. The earning member of the family is also under depression regarding the future prospects of his job especially those who are working in private sectors. There is no economic security as the COVID-19 is spreading very fast. The working women within the family are facing overburden of work and also role conflict. Most of the working women stated that after the pandemic their social life got disrupted as they suffer from overburden of work. They are neither able to concentrate on their official work nor pay proper attention to their family. They have to work from their home as well as take care of the family at the same time. Earlier they were going to offices and working there but now sitting at home and doing both office work and the household chore is becoming very difficult for them. This is leading to conflict and misunderstanding within the family.

All this has adversely affected the health of the women within the family. They are suffering from fatigue and mental pressure. The study further observed that due to the pandemic children are the worst sufferers. They are the most vulnerable group within the family as such the parents are very much worried about them. Nobody allows them to go outside and play with their peer groups since the parent worry that they might become the victims of pandemic. Due to this pandemic, they are staying within the house throughout the day and busy watching mobile, laptop, and TV. This all has affected their health tremendously as watching these gadgets has led to many bad side effects such as problems of eyesight, mental stress, etc.

In the pandemic, it was also seen that the family have broken their family norms and values. In some cases, it was observed that the family members of the victims do not accept dead bodies back in their homes due to the fear of being getting infected by this pandemic. It shows the empathetic attitude of the families towards the victims. In some cases, the patient had to be readmitted in the hospitals as their family members refused to take them back. All this has created a bad impression within the society. It was also observed that social stigma has been attached with the family of covid victim and they have been secluded within the society. No one comes to help them even in case of emergency.

In this pandemic it was further seen that the social relations/bond within family got tremendously disrupted. Nobody comes to visit each other during this crisis and all the families are living aloof without any visitors. The kinship bond within the families has weakened as now the families prefer to remain isolated from their relatives and friends. It was also seen that the families are celebrating their social and cultural functions within themselves and in a simple way. They are not inviting their neighbors and their relatives due to the fear of pandemic. Due to this the interpersonal relations has got seriously affected.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Elderly People**

The elderly people are the ones who are a more vulnerable group. The study has observed that the majority of the victims of the pandemic have been the elderly ones. Because their immunity is not strong and they are also physically weak. As such they are living under constant fear and suffer from anxiety. Due to the lockdown, they are not able to go outside for regular health checkup and they are at the greater risks of suffering from various diseases such as diabetes, thyroid, Blood Pressure, joint pain, and heart problems. They are not able to go to the pathological labs for a regular test since last four months. It was also observed that those elderly people who are living alone with no one

to take care of them are badly affected. The elderly people hesitate to take help from the outsiders/ relatives due to the fear of COVID-19.

The pandemic and subsequent lockdown in the country has increased the suffering of the elderly people. The elderly people cannot go out even to buy their medicines. The elderly people further revealed that domestic help such as maids also cannot come to help them due to this pandemic and as such, they are forced to do all their domestic work themselves which is very difficult for them. Throughout the day they are just watching TV and particularly listening news which is again filling their mind with all the negativity regarding COVID-19. All this has resulted in tremendous mental strain and stress among them.

Most of the elderly people reported that from the last four-five months there is a total shutdown of public transport and because of that they are facing a lot of health issues without medicine. In the rural region, the social conditions of elderly people got tremendously affected during the pandemic. Their health status is affecting day by day due to the lack of proper medical facilities. Their family members are unable to get medicine due to continuous lockdown in their respective regions and due to lack of transport facilities. The elderly people are living constantly in fear and anxiety as they know that they are the ones who are being easily targeted by this virus.

The study was further observed that due to the spread of COVID-19 the norms and values within the family have changed tremendously particularly towards elderly people. If the elderly person gets infected in the family, the family shows an empathetic attitude towards them. A social stigma gets attached to infected persons. The family stops accepting the affected person and leaves them alone in the hospitals especially the elderly ones. Even the family members do not receive the dead body of the victims.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Community**

The community plays a dominant role of hegemony in the society whether it is socially or economically. But during the pandemic crisis, it was seen that the community turned hostile towards COVID-19 victims who died due to CORONA. The community did not allow people to perform the last rites of the CORONA victims who died. This is a very strange thing seen in the society that the community showed a hostile attitude towards the dead body. Most of the community members are living in fear that if the dead body of the CORONA victim is buried or cremated near them, the disease might spread to them. So they are constantly living in a fear psychosis and opposed to perform the last rites of the dead body. It is seen that if this pandemic continues

for a longer time, it may have adverse effects on society and the community in particular. One community may start hating the others due to the hostile attitude. In India, it was observed that in many cases the community members were opposed to performing the last rites of the COVID victims.

As far as Indian express report on 17 April 2020 is concerned, it shows that in Meghalaya a 69 years old physician and founder of one of the first big private hospitals of the state was buried at a church cemetery, almost 36 hours after he died. The report further stated that the family wanted to bury him in Nongpoh, where they own a house. But residents and community leaders refused, citing the virus spreading. Another similar kind of incident has been observed in Chennai where a doctor died due to CORONA, and people refused a proper burial and protested at the cemetery where his body was taken. As the mob pelted stones and attacked the ambulance, his colleagues had to dig a grave with bare hands to bury the doctor (India Today, 17 April 2020). In Mangalore, another incident shows the lack of dignity in death for COVID-19 victims. The dead body of 31 years old COVID-19 victims from idya in Surathkal was sent back from a burial ground in Bolar after residents opposed the burial (TOI, 27 June 2020).

It is seen that the community feeling has been lost during this pandemic crisis. Fear has engulfed the people and all are just thinking about themselves. Nobody cares about the welfare of their community members especially those who lost their lives during the pandemic. Their dead bodies are being treated very badly, without any dignity by their community. Community feels and we feeling which was an essential aspect in Indian communities and which was a mark of identification has been totally lost during this crisis.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Front Liners**

In the pandemic crisis, front-liners played a dominant role to serve the nation whether it is medical fraternity, police personnel, paramilitary forces, and others who are directly in contact with covid victims. It was observed that the front liners got tremendously affected due to the COVID-19. The family of front liners suffer from additional fear and anxiety as their family members go outside and are in direct contact with the COVID-19 patients. They reported that the front liners are doing their jobs very efficiently, but they are also facing alienation as they are not able to meet their family members for many days. The health workers stated that they are not able to meet their children for so many days as most of the time they are working inside the hospitals. They further added that if they got affected due to COVID-19 then what will happen to their children and their future life. They always live in fear and mental stress regarding their family members. During this pandemic crisis, it was seen that

many front liners have died while serving the nation such as doctors, police, paramilitary forces. The family member of the front liners stated that they are the worst affected. On the one hand, they are living under stress and fear due to COVID-19, but on the other hand, they have more fear to lose their family members who are working as front liners.

Laxman Singh from India Express on 28 May 2020 reported that 1529 front liners of BMC workers got infected and 25 have died. The Economic Times on 18 April 2020 reported that in Ludhiana ACP from the police department died due to COVID-19. According to the tribune, India report on 7 June 2020, Due to the CORONA virus about 11 paramilitary forces have died. It is seen that in this pandemic crisis the front liners are facing maximum risks and many front-liners have died on the line of duty which is a big setback for their family as well as their respective department.

### **Irresponsibility within Society**

In the pandemic crisis, it was observed that the people were showing irresponsible behavior which led to the spreading virus very fast in society. People were not following their rules/norms which was given by the center and state government. The irresponsible behavior was seen during the migration of laborers, where thousands of migrant laborers came out of their respective places and gathered at one place without thinking about the consequences of the CORONA virus. People were moving from one place to another place without proper precautions due to which many migrant laborers became victims of COVID-19. However, it could be seen that this irresponsible behavior on part of the migrant labors was due to the fact that were hungry and were in panic.

The study has further seen that rural society was not much affected by the COVID-19 due to the geographical structure. But over time rural society also got tremendously affected by the irresponsible behavior by the people. Now the COVID-19 is spreading in the rural region which is going to become the biggest challenge for the center and state government. In rural regions, there is not much health infrastructure and medical facilities. If the virus reaches in rural society very fast, then the people are going to face the biggest threat. It was also observed that during the pandemic crisis, people were celebrating their social, religious, and cultural functions in a grand manner which has resulted to spread of virus very fast in society. The social and religious functions became a spreader of COVID-19. Many people got affected during the social functions which further created a big challenge for the authorities to trace them and put them in quarantine center. People totally broke their norms and rules which were set by the authorities. There are many cases where it is seen that the social and cultural function

became a spread of the CORONA virus.

For Example: (According to News 18 report on 30 June 2020. In Rural Patna there was a wedding ceremony in which the groom died after two days of his wedding due to COVID-19. In this wedding, more than 100 people were tested CORONA positive in Paliganj district. The wedding appears the biggest infection chain in Bihar. There were about 350 people who attended the marriage and the explosion of the CORONA has triggered panic in the area. Although most who test positive were asymptomatic.

Another similar kind of incident was seen in Karnataka where hundreds of people attended the festivals during the COVID-19 crisis (New 18, report- 17 April 2020). People were flouting the norms and social distancing during the festivals. Another incident was also seen in Delhi where thousands of people gathered during the religious congregation which has resulted to spread COVID-19 very fast in the society that has further created lot of panic among the people as well as the state administration. The state administration has taken lot of efforts to trace them and put them in to quarantine center that was the biggest challenges for the administration.

It has seen that due to the irresponsible behavior of common people, the COVID-19 was spreading very fast into the society which has become a great threat to human life. People do not follow the norms which have been given by the state and center government to stop the virus. People were grandly celebrating their social functions despite the fact that COVID-19 virus is an infectious disease and it is spreading from person to person very fast. It is also observed that if the people do not take seriously COVID-19 and did not follow the

rules/norms then the society is going to face a great threat. Because there is uncertainty regarding the COVID-19 virus. How much time it will take and when it is going to end? There is no clarity.

### The Dignity of the Dead People

In the present crisis of COVID-19, it was observed that the dead body of the COVID victims have lost their dignity. Within a society, people are in so much fear that they do not give proper dignity to dead people or do not even perform the last rites properly. In many places it was seen that the dead body of COVID-19 victims was manhandled by the people. It is a big setback for society as well as victims of family members who lost their loved ones. This is a loss of humanity that even after the death of people they do not get proper dignity which the people were getting before the COVID-19.

The study has further observed that during this pandemic crisis the Indians have also most forgotten their traditional customs according to which the dead were to be treated with full dignity and laid to rest with respect. It is very painful to see that during this crisis people are in so much fear they are not giving due respect to the dead people. The dead are being treated in the most undignified manner which was not seen earlier in Indian society.

It was further seen that this pandemic is so dangerous that the people are forced to think about themselves and not the dead people. People do not want to risk their own lives and the lives of their family members. The pandemic has created a situation that even the dead people do not die with dignity (Figures 1 & 2) [2,3].



**Figures 1 & 2:** Photo 1 and 2nd shows the treatment done to the COVID victims.

## Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the pandemic has created so much panic, fear, and anxiety in the society that the people have faced so many problems socially as well as economically. In the pandemic crisis, it is the front-liners who are facing great risk for their life as they are ones who are in direct contact with the COVID-19 victims. Even their family members are at greater risk. There are so many social consequences which have emerged during the pandemic crisis such as the education system got tremendously affected and the student community is suffering a lot. However, the community also turned so hostile that they did not allow to perform the last rites of the COVID-19 victims who died. The labor class also faces a lot of socio-economic problems. It was also seen that the families have also suffered a lot particularly the elderly people who are easily affected by the disease. The irresponsibility within the society led to spread virus very fast such as religious gathering, the celebration of social functions, etc. It was

observed that the pandemic has created such a situation in the society that the dead people do not die with dignity. There is uncertainty in the society regarding when the virus will end due to which the people are living in fear and anxiety. The above social consequences that have emerged due to COVID-19 crisis are unseen by the society before.

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