

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY

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Abstract

The Corona Virus, also known as COVID-19, was classified as a disease by the World Health Organization (WHO) on February 11th, 2020. The health of an individual as a whole is affected by respiratory disease. In December 2019, China received its initial report of COVID-19 cases. The new Corona Virus was identified by the WHO as a pandemic disease in March 2020, indicating that it is dispersing quickly over the world's nations. The largest challenge of the twenty-first century is climate change. The COVID-19 Pandemic's effects during the past few years have effectively recovered the environment to a significant extent, which should have a positive impact on global climate change. Of course, it alters both the local ecological system and human behavior on a regular basis. The COVID-19 causes and effects, including the beneficial benefits of lockdown on the environment and society, are covered in the current review papers.

Keywords: COVID-19, Environment, Pollution, Impact, Society, Government.

Introduction

Since the dawn of civilization, people have been gradually changing nature for their own gain. As a result, the environmental crisis is a worldwide issue that can only be solved by global action. Our environmental

problems have emerged as one of the most popular subjects in recent decades. The planet has overpopulated and is severely polluted as a result of this. People are contaminating the environment with dangerous produced compounds by utilizing natural resources¹.

Every nation on earth has been severely impacted by the virus. Countries used a combination of social isolation, self-hygiene practices, and movement restrictions to stop the spread of Covid-19. Despite all of the government's efforts, the epidemic had a significant impact on society and the environment. The World Health Organization designated COVID-19 as the name of a novel respiratory infection disease that first appeared in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. It is brought on by a new class of corona viruses. When Corona instances began to emerge in several countries throughout the world in February 2020. The WHO classified COVID-19 as a pandemic due to the brief duration of transmission. By the end of March, various forms of lockdown were in place for half the population. By 118,000 people, this communicable disease spread to 114 nations. The unique Corona Virus includes four stages of transmission, including stage 1 (significant cases), stage 2, local transmission, stage 3, and stage 4 (out-of-control transmission).

When referring to the spread of disease among people, the phrase "transmission" refers to the movement of microorganisms

from one sick person to another who is not diseased, either directly through contact, indirectly through contact such as surface contamination, or by droplets³. Researchers, physicians, and virologists are continuously attempting to understand the illness pattern, pinpoint new remedies, and create vaccinations. The difficulty for scientists to get a tangible outcome has increased due to the virus' genetic mutation over time. Additionally, the number of deaths has increased despite the availability of cutting-edge healthcare services. Additionally, as the likelihood of contracting an infection while caring for patients has increased, the position of doctors and nurses has become riskier.

Not only has the COVID-19 harmed humans, but it has also altered our environment. The pandemic in India has led to an improvement in the water and air quality. In all Indian cities, air pollution levels significantly decreased. According to the Central Pollution Control Board of India's Environment Ministry, nitrogen dioxide levels have decreased by 71%. Similar to this, waterways like the Yamuna and Ganga rivers have significantly improved since lockdown was implemented⁴. The average water quality in Ganga has increased to 27% points, making it appropriate

for bathing, the growth of fisheries, and the preservation of animals. To put it briefly, the COVID-19 has been a blessing for the environment's recovery. On the other hand, the pandemic has led to an increase in the volume of hazardous and biomedical waste. Additionally, the recycling of waste has decreased and plastics are being used more frequently, which may cause problems in the future. Even once the pandemic is ended, the government may concentrate on lowering unemployment and getting more people involved in the economy, which may lead to a near-term neglect of the Go-Green concept, climate change, and environmental development in the future⁵.

Environment Concern in India

In recent decades, environmental worries have raised to the top of people's favorite topics lists. In just a few months, the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed our way of life. Due to this illness, our way of life has been completely upended. For the first time, the epidemic has caused a terrible considerable number of human deaths⁶. The majority of the nations had already created suitable social quarantine rules to prevent pandemics; the

entire world was put on high alert. The lockdown's effects on our life have already started to change our surroundings in a variety of way⁷. There has been a considerable influence on both the economic and societal well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic may have an effect on people's mental health. Due to the potential loss of means of support, worry and insecurity will grow. It could make people feel more stigmatized if they have common cold, flu-like symptoms, or cough and sneeze. People could become apprehensive about using public transport or approaching strangers. Health and hygiene goods, organic foods, medical requirements, fitness, education, and financial investments may all receive more attention⁸.

With financial assistance from the World Bank, the Indian government has determined what steps need to be taken to address the issue. For an efficient administration of COVID-19, the federal government has released Rs. 28,379 crores to the states. The Indian government has established residences for refugees, migrant workers, and others stuck in several states. The government continuously provides meals to the residents of the shelter homes with the aid of NGOs and self-help organizations⁹. Additionally, it has

been giving poor socioeconomic level individuals groceries and cash. The government has taken necessary steps to ensure that agricultural outputs reach people, has requested businesses and business entities to refrain from salary cuts and retrenchments, extended the income tax deadlines in order to protect middle-class citizens, appealed to landlords not to take outrages, and has ensured that grocery and necessary items are available in stores to prevent panic buying or hoarding of necessities.

The President, Prime Minister, and Parliamentarians would all get wage reductions of 30% for a period of one year, according to the government officials¹⁰. In order to prevent their workers from being under pressure, several CEOs and management teams from large corporations have chosen to take wage cuts. The money raised through contributions can be utilized to feed the underprivileged, migratory workers, and persons with lower socioeconomic standing, as well as to battle the pandemic¹¹.

Negative impact of COVID-19 on the Environment

The indirect effects of COVID-19 on the environment and climate change are both favorable and unfavorable. Humans began to devastate nature in many ways through manmade activities without regard for sustainable development out of a desire to manipulate it to suit their own whims and desires¹². Environmental contamination is now a major problem in the modern era as a result of inevitable repercussions. Environmental pollution will undoubtedly alter the prevalence and distribution of many vector-borne infectious diseases, such as bacterial and viral illnesses. But because of the unique COVID-19 epidemic, practically all towns, cities, and villages in the affected countries have been placed under partial or entire lockdown for a number of weeks or even months¹³. Many industries are not operating, and all forms of transportation, including buses, trains, airplanes, and private vehicles, are halted or limited. The COVID-19 outbreak continues to have an impact on populations, including those who are living in poverty, and is particularly harmful to those members of social groups who are most at risk. Lockdowns intended to combat the COVID-19 outbreak have been blamed for an increase in domestic and intimate partner violence in numerous nations.

Stress, anxiety, and financial uncertainty have contributed to an upsurge in domestic violence¹⁴. The global economy and the sources of supply have both been impacted by COVID-19. Travelling from one country to another is subject to restrictions. The identification of the COVID-19-affected cases is a continual emphasis for all governments, health organizations, and other authorities.

Currently, COVID-19 has a significant and far-reaching impact on day-to-day living. These fall into a number of categories^{15,16}.

Healthcare

- Difficulties in identifying, isolating, and treating suspected or proven patients.
- Heavy pressure on the current healthcare system to function.
- Patients with additional illnesses and medical issues are ignored.
- Overburdening physicians and other healthcare workers, who are already at very high risk.
- The need for strong defense.

Economic

- Disrupt the production chain's supply chain
- Losses in both domestic and foreign business.
- The market's poor cash flow.
- Considerable slowing of revenue growth.
- A decrease in the production of things that is necessary.

Social

- The service industry is unable to deliver quality services.
- The Immediate cancellation of events and also with restricted rules.
- Interruption of religious, cultural, and celebratory gatherings.
- Unnecessary stress among the populace.
- Examination postponements, etc.

Positive impact of COVID-19 on the Environment

Mother Earth provides the natural resources necessary for the survival of living forms, including air, water, soil, minerals, fossil fuels, forests, oceans, flora, and wildlife. To meet the ever-increasing demands of mankind, these resources are continuously exploited. The

overuse of resources for industrialization, urbanization, and other human endeavors frequently results in natural disasters and disease outbreaks¹⁷. The recent COVID-19 epidemic has shaken the world, infected millions and killing over 760,000 people within a few months of its emergence. It could also spread to millions of additional people. Large cars are hardly ever seen on the highways, which results in nearly zero emission of greenhouse gases and hazardous microscopic suspended particles to the environment due to the non-operation and closure of companies, which has cut industrial waste pollution. The air quality is improving with little activity from industries, industrial sites and the building industry. According to numerous reports, tight corona virus lockdown orders caused a significant improvement in the air quality indices of the world's greatest cities¹⁸. Even NASA's satellites in orbit demonstrate the huge drops in air pollutants, supporting Eco Watch's claim that the unique corona virus pandemic has resulted in a silver lining of reduced air pollution. Numerous species of birds can be seen in the area because of the COVID-19 lockdown. The amount of pollution in popular tourist destinations

including forests, seashores, hilly regions, etc. is also declining. Most likely, the ozone layer is also repairing¹⁹.

The COVID-19 lock down means that only a small number of resources are being used. People have come to realize that they need very little for survival, yet they were squandering resources in order to gain social standing. According to me, the COVID-19 lockdown is imparting to us the practical lessons necessary to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS). The family has become closer as a result of having to work from home. They are compelled to interact, eat, and play together every day, which was previously impractical for most families due to obligations at work and elsewhere. When people work from home, they always sleep fully, which is essential for excellent health and stress-free productivity²⁰.

Impact on Society

The corona has demonstrated that, despite the fact that humans are superpowers with weapons that can wipe out the entire planet, if they mess with nature, nature is still capable of wiping out humans with a small virus that has symptoms like a cold and a cough. The COVID-19 has demonstrated that nature has

given us all we need to have a lovely life and has nurtured us like a mother. Man is a sociable species, and social interactions are essential to human civilization. However, this web of relationships was badly disrupted by the virus's rapid pandemic spread and the rise in social distancing practices. These interpersonal relationships and social ties have been a part of human existence for a very long time. Therefore, the absence of such profoundly important relationships causes unpleasant anxiety states that affect the body and mind. Loneliness, anxiety that causes melancholy or panic attacks, mental illnesses, potential health risks, and several other problems have an impact on both an individual's life and society as a whole²¹. Therefore, the corona virus pandemic is adversely affecting people's lives as a whole. The various effects of this disease are being felt by everyone in the world, both directly and indirectly. The government has closed down all of the following: schools, According to Economic Times, as the corona virus affects the nation's overall economic activity, which has an impact on our society either directly or indirectly, India is experiencing a significant reduction in government

revenues and growth of the income for at least two quarters²². The adage that "crises give birth to changes that were pending for many years" is undoubtedly true, and this is what transpired during COVID-19. The administration has been working hard for many years to adopt changes that would better serve the interests of society. Whether it is online education or the judiciary, COVID-19 has enabled these significant changes in both.

COVID-19 and Biodiversity

The terms "biodiversity" and "biological diversity" describe the existence of several different plant and animal species in their natural habitats or the diversity of plant and animal life in a specific habit. Three levels are typically used to describe biodiversity:

1. Genetic variation
2. Diversity of species
3. Diversity of ecosystems

By providing each creature with an appropriate environment, nature continuously favors and encourages the diversity and coexistence of all living things. Since humans are a highly evolved species, they have always strived to control their surroundings and own society to

create a favorable environment. But because of overuse of natural resources, an increase in anthropogenic activity, and a human-centered environmental approach, we are now confronting unprecedented risks from COVID-19 and global warming²³. These international threats are causing academics, decision-makers, and other stakeholders to reflect on their goals and deeds. Although it is legal for humans to take their needs from the environment, this must never be done to the point that it endangers other species and living things. It is understood that a healthy environment is necessary for a healthy economy. Due to the use of information and communication technology, the globe is now a global village where we live and profit from nature in all its forms. We must assume some obligations in order to receive the rewards. To use the natural resources in a way that will enable the coexistence of all other kinds of animals on the planet and achieve inclusive and sustainable development, we must establish an environment-centric strategy²⁴. Beyond the immediate effects of COVID-19, there is rising discussion about the structure of global and national policy for the post-pandemic future. Even if a large portion of

the conservation industry is fighting for its life in the midst of the crisis, it is crucial to look ahead and consider the effects of various post-COVID-19 economic scenarios on conservation. We are part of the solution for nature, as the topic for the 2021 International Day of Biodiversity stated, and nature itself contains all the answers. Without a question, protecting people and halting the spread of the pandemic should be our top priorities in the short term, but our long-term plan must focus on combating deforestation, biodiversity loss, and the illegal trafficking in animals. There are countless advantages to planning and funding natural solutions for the overall welfare of the planet. We must comprehend the obvious truth that while humans depend on nature, nature depends on people.

Both the environment and society have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding the effects, consider these ideas:

- As a result of the lockdowns and travel restrictions implemented during the pandemic, the amount of air and water pollution has significantly decreased.
- The air quality in many cities has greatly improved as a result of decreased industrial

activity, fewer vehicles on the road, and minimal travel.

- The epidemic has had a significant impact on the global economy, causing job losses, business closures, and financial suffering for many people and families. In addition, there have been instances of species reemerging in previously polluted places.

- Strengthen relationships between agricultural organizations, farmers, and academics to advance a more ethical approach to agriculture.

- Change your eating habits.

- Encourage the one health strategy across all pertinent spheres.

Methodology

This paper is a reviewed article that is based on secondary data gathered from a variety of sources, including books, reports from various governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and commissions, as well as published and unpublished journal articles, newspaper articles, books, and reports. In this peer-reviewed essay, I attempted to analyze the

COVID-19's effects on the environment and on society.

Concluding thoughts from COVID-19 for the future generation

There may be effects on people's mental health because to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the likely loss of livelihood, it will raise anxiety and insecurity. It could make patients feel more stigmatized if they have common flu-like symptoms like a cough, sneeze, or cold. Utilizing public transportation, interacting with others, crossing the street, even going about their daily routines, can all cause fear in certain people. Because of the epidemic, we now know that people need to be cautious and vigilant when interacting with others and practice good hygiene. The World Health Organization (WHO) has given India high marks for its handling of the COVID-19 outbreak, and in the wake of the outbreak, businesses will be forced to intensify their efforts to ramp up production and reduce the loss that resulted from the lockdown. Additionally, if the lockdown restriction is lifted, the environment may experience an increase in pollutants brought on by cars, factories, the flow of effluent into waterways, and an undue reliance on plastic, all of which

may have negative effects on the ecosystem. Therefore, the current state of affairs can serve as a wake-up call for politicians, businesspeople, and environmentalists to work together to address ongoing climate change challenges and create a cleaner, greener future for future generations. Due to the use of information and communication technologies, the globe is now a "global

village," where we live and profit from nature in its whole. We must assume the same obligations when we are receiving the advantages. In order to use the natural resources sustainably and attain inclusion and coexistence with all other kinds of animals on the planet, we must establish an environment-centric strategy.

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