It is well known that “no industry runs in isolation.” In the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, while the requirement for the greater good has led to self- and government-imposed isolation, the industrial sector, in the past, would never have dreamt of seeing this metaphor turn into a grim reality.

Industry has been a backbone of society, which gave its members a sense of purpose, cohesiveness, concept of progress, satisfaction of finished product, prosperity, and social stature. It was not only the source of livelihood but also a microecosystem for many, which nurtured its members and their families. It gave the members a sense of involvement and belonging of involvement and belonging. These norms and value systems helped contribute to keeping the psychosocial milieu of workers in a harmonious balance. However, the currently imposed shutdown, which is deemed necessary to curb the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, has significantly and adversely affected all industrial sectors.

The economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will impact straight away the chain of demand and supply, which implies fewer consumers, goods, and services in the global economy. Most importantly, industries that may see the direct impacts are the service industries of hospitality, travel and tourism, entertainment, etc., which are immediately affected by travel shutdown. This might provide a slight indirect benefit to some sectors such as ecommerce, food retail, healthcare industry, etc.[1]. In consumer goods, the steep drop in consumer demand is likely to persist. This has implications for the many consumer companies (and their suppliers) that operate on thin working-capital margins. A global slowdown would affect small- and mid-size companies more acutely, and less developed economies would possibly be more impacted than advanced economies. In this background, the mental health of industrial employees is likely to be negatively affected.

The most impacted are likely to be unskilled migrant labors who are daily-wage earners. As construction, transportation, retail, etc., come to a grinding halt, their food security, stay, and very livelihood are impacted. With travel shut down, many of them now with no earnings can no longer afford to stay at their place of work. Braving uncertainty, they then begin a long walk of many hundred kilometers to their villages, with their meager possessions on their backs. On the way, they are obstructed and harassed by law enforcement agencies, wracked by uncertainty, and assailed by hunger and fatigue, all of which negatively impact their well-being.

**IMPACT ON INDUSTRIAL SYSTEMS**

The current crisis has affected all the components of industrial system, from the input or procurement of raw material, process of manufacture, and output or production. The procurement process has significantly been impaired by shutting down of processes dealing with raw materials/making component parts, sourcing of, lack of adequate transportation service, etc., The process of manufacture cannot be imagined without workforce, most of whom are in lockdown and some in quarantine or even ill. Even automated processes require workforce for monitoring and quality control, etc.

**DIVERSITY OF IMPACT**

The pandemic has led to some parts of industrial sector getting overstressed, while most of the rest is underutilized. The health care sector, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment manufacturers, essential safety commodity manufacturers, law enforcement agencies, emergency service maintenance (water, electricity, etc.), sanitation workers, home delivery personnel, etc., are overwhelmed due to sudden increase in demand in a constrained environment of functioning. On the other hand, manufacturing, travel and tourism, hospitality, entertainment, malls, and retail, etc., have taken a downward plunge due to preventive measures of social distancing and lockdown.

**PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES IN OVERSTRESSED INDUSTRY**

a. Prolonged working hours leading to fatigue, diminished performance, carelessness, poor concentration, and impaired decision-making
b. Churning out of products with less time or emphasis on quality check/assurance
c. Fear of infection and transmission – These people
are at increased risk of interaction with potentially infected people, at times, compromising their social distance, and safety. This increases the fear of getting infected and apprehensions about being the source of transmission.

d. Anxiety and concern about the safety of family members – Due to the very nature of duty, there are increased chances of not getting enough time to look after their family or of bringing home infection. All these may lead to constant anxiety and fear.

PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES OF THE UNDERUTILIZED INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

- Fear and uncertainty about employment, in workers of such industries which have less chances of warding prolonged closure/loss
- Loss of livelihood and sustenance in daily wagers and casual workers leading to consequent anxiety
- Anxiety about the continuity of payment/full payment while working from home
- Loss of trust and belonging with the organization
- Lack of sense of purpose and role in the society
- Sense of despair and lack of a sense of control over the situation
- Social isolation by itself is known to cause anxiety, depression, and even cognitive disturbances
- Excessive free time and increased vulnerability to rumors in social media leading to escalation of anxiety and uncertainty.

Given the growing nature of pandemic, uncertainty about the duration of the requirement of lockdown and adverse impact of the same on industry and employment, there is a need to sensitize the affected population about these psychosocial issues and address these at the outset to prevent undue morbidity or burden to the already overwhelmed healthcare system. Some universal steps for psychosocial wellbeing which can be taken are as under:

- Structuring routine while at home or working from home
  a. Build upon hobbies or interests
  b. Take up e-courses or related activity which further enhances resume/capability
  c. Practice of relaxation and exercise to improve mental and physical well-being
  d. Invest in family (parenting, teaching, quality time, etc.)
  e. Declutter bookshelf, wardrobe, computer, mobile phone, personal space, etc.
  f. Picking up pending work and taking this opportunity to finish them

Reducing elements of uncertainty – this requires the active involvement of related regulatory bodies.

- Ensuring minimum wage to employees while at home or working from home
- Ensuring sustenance amount to daily wagers and casual workers
- Regulating the reliability of information in social media, television, and print media
- Preventing and addressing burnout in the overwhelmed part of industry.

Creating a sense of purpose requires effective communication regarding:

- Contribution to the purpose of larger organizations like “Nation” and humanity
- Contribution to society by adhering to restrictions and reducing the spread of infection
- Finally, a focus on the availability of time and opportunity to do so many things of personal importance to individuals.

To summarize, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the industry, including on psychosocial issues related to employers and employees. These psychosocial issues are varying in nature and impact people differently. A proactive approach in identifying and addressing these issues early will go a long way. There is a need to organize the methods to mitigate the distress of affected sectors during the epidemic crisis and thereafter. The COVID-19 pandemic will have long-term consequences on the mental health of employees of various industries.

Jyoti Prakash, Kaushik Chatterjee, Kalpana Srivastava

Department of Psychiatry, Armed Forces Medical College, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Jyoti Prakash,
Armed Forces Medical College, Pune - 411 040, Maharashtra, India.
E-mail: drjyotiprakashpsy@yahoo.com

Received: 31 March 2020
Revised: 04 April 2020
Accepted: 05 April 2020
Published: 30 April 2020

REFERENCES

1. Srivastava K. Mental health and industry: Dynamics and perspectives. Ind Psychiatry J 2009;18:1-2.
2. Oberoi A. Seven industries most affected by Coronavirus (COVID-19). India; 2020. Available from: https://insights.daffodils.com. [Last updated on 2020 Mar 18; Last accessed on 2020 Mar 26].
3. Mental Health Considerations During COVID-19 Outbreak. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020. Available from: https://www.who.int. [Last accessed on 2020 Mar 26].
4. Staglin G. When Home Becomes the Workplace: Mental
Prakash, et al.: Industrial impact of COVID 19

Health and Remote Work. New Jersey: Forbes; 2020. Available from: https://www.forbes.com. [Last updated on 2020 Mar 07; Last accessed on 2020 Mar 27].

5. Taking Care of Your Behavioural Health: Tips for Social Distancing, Quarantine and Isolation During an Infectious Disease Outbreak. Maryland. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA); 2020. Available from: https://www.samhsa.gov. [Last accessed on 2020 Mar 27].

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

Access this article online

Quick Response Code:

Website: www.industrialpsychiatry.org

DOI: 10.4103/ipj.ipj_39_20

How to cite this article: Prakash J, Chatterjee K, Srivastava K. Industrial impact of COVID-19 pandemic: Mental health perspective. Ind Psychiatry J 2020;29:9-11.