A CHANGE IN THE LIFESTYLE OF INDIAN POPULATION, POST PANDEMIC COVID-19

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"Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah"

"(One Who Protects Dharma, Is Protected By Dharma)" (Vyasa, 2000)

ABSTRACT

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, not only did people face a significant impact on physical and psychological health, but also their lifestyles. COVID-19 pandemic has re-raised questions about change in lifestyle, new trends, problems and needs, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of this paper is to study & examine and determine life-style related changes during and post pandemic i.e. Covid -19 and their reflections in the tourism, health, hospitality industry etc.

In terms of lifestyle, the pandemic led to a shift towards remote work and online learning, which provided flexibility and convenience, but also created challenges such as isolation and increased screen time.

During the pandemic Covid-19, the Indian government had implemented its 'intelligent lockdown' in which people were urged not to leave their homes and work from home.

This life changing event caused changes in lifestyle and behavior.

The result of the study indicates that the population's hygiene habits, dining preferences shopping behaviors, transportation habits and frequency of their social contacts all have changed.

Changes to a healthier lifestyle were observed in significant percent of the population both in urban and rural areas , mainly due to a change in diet habits, physical activity and relaxation.

While there were significant economic and social disruptions on a global scale, some examples of statistical data that demonstrate the difference between pre-pandemic and post-pandemic era.

Keywords: Covid-19, Lifestyles, Health & Safety, Infrastructure, Employment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, not only did people face a significant impact on physical and psychological health, but also their lifestyles. More than anything else, the pandemic highlighted the importance of maintaining optimal physical health through exercise, healthy diet, and good hygiene. It also highlighted the importance of taking care of our mental health and seeking professional help as and when necessary.

In terms of lifestyle, the pandemic led to a shift towards remote work and online learning, which provided flexibility and convenience, but also created challenges such as isolation and increased screen time. As society progressed, it became important to strike a balance between benefits and drawbacks of technology, and to prioritize social interaction.

People's welfare and well-being became a priority in post-pandemic society. This included promoting good physical and mental health, providing access to healthcare and education, and creating a sense of community and connection.

Post-Pandemic Changesin Small Cities

Post COVID-19 pandemic, there have been significant changes in small cities, particularly in aspects like economy, lifestyle, and infrastructure. Some changes that manifested gradually pertained to:

Economic - Small cities were hit hard by the pandemic, with many businesses forced to close down. As the economy recovered, there was a shift towards more resilient and diversified local economies, with greater emphasis on technology, healthcare, and online commerce.

Lifestyle - The pandemic caused many people to re-evaluate their priorities and lifestyles. As a result, thetrend shifted towards smaller, more affordable homes, with a greater emphasis on outdoor spaces and community-oriented amenities. People also felt more inclined to shop locally and support small businesses.

Infrastructure -Importance of accessible healthcare, high-speed internet, and reliable transportation became clear, causing small cities to invest in infrastructure improvements to attract and retain businesses and residents.

Remote work opportunities - With many companies adopting remote work policies, small cities became more attractive to professionals looking for a lower cost of living and a better work-life balance. This led to an influx of new residents and an increase in demand for housing, services, and amenities.

Emphasis on health and safety -People became aware of the importance of public health and safety. To this effect, small cities prioritized investments in public health infrastructure, such as hospitals, clinics, and emergency services, as also programs and initiatives aimed at promoting wellness and disease prevention.

Overall, the pandemic created both challenges and opportunities for small cities. What became clear over a period of time is that cities that wereopen to adapting and innovating thrived better in the post-pandemic era.

Comparing Pre Pandemic and Post Pandemic Statistical Data

While there were significant economic and social disruptions on a global scale, some examples of statistical data that demonstrate the difference between pre-pandemic and post-pandemic era are as follows:

Economic–As per the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the global economy grew by 5.5% in 2021, after contracting by 3.5% in 2020. However, the growth rate was lower than pre-pandemic levels, when growth was 2.8% in 2019.

Employment – A significant increase in global unemployment was observed, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimating that 255 million full-time jobs were lost in 2020. In contrast, the global unemployment rate was at a historic low of 5.4% in 2019.

Poverty – There was a significant increase in global poverty, with the World Bank estimating that between 119 and 124 million people were pushed into extreme poverty in 2020. This was a reversal of progress made pre-pandemic, with the number of people living in extreme poverty having declined from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 689 million in 2017.

Education -The pandemic caused severe disruptions to education, with the United Nations estimating that more than 1.6 billion learners were affected by school closures in 2020. This led to concerns about learning loss and a widening of educational inequalities, particularly for low-income and marginalized communities.

Health -Global health suffered an adverse impact, with the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting more than 121 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 2.6 million deaths as of March 2021. This put a strain on health systems worldwide and highlighted the need for investment in public health infrastructure and disease prevention.

Overall, the pandemic caused significant disruptions to global development, with many countries having experienced setbacks. However, the extent of the impact varied widely as per the country, region, and sector.

Post- Pandemic Changes in Metropolitan Areas

Significant changes the occurred in metro cities, particularly in terms of their economy, lifestyle, and infrastructure, were as follows:

Economic- Metro cities were hit hard by the pandemic, with many businesses forced to close their doors. As the economy recovered, there was a concerted effort to create resilient and diversified local economies, with a greater emphasis on technology, healthcare, and online commerce.

Remote work opportunities - With many companies having adopted remote work policies, metro cities witnessed a shift in demand for office space and an increase in the number of residents who chose to work from home. This led to changes in transportation patterns, as well as a shift towards a more flexible work-life balance.

Lifestyle -People re-evaluated their priorities and lifestyles, and there was a preference for smaller, more affordable homes, with a greater emphasis on an outdoor space. Shoppers showed a marked inclination towards local and small businesses.

Infrastructure -Importance of accessible healthcare, high-speed internet, and reliable transportation emerged, causing metro cities to invest in infrastructure improvements to attract and retain businesses and residents. This included upgrades to public transportation, investments in broadband internet, and improvement to public health infrastructure.

Emphasis on health and safety –Because people became more aware of the importance of public health and safety, investments in public health infrastructure, such as hospitals, clinics, and emergency services, as well as programs aimed at promoting disease prevention increased.

Green initiatives–Courtesy of a decrease in air pollution and an increase in public awareness of the importance of environmental sustainability, big cities invested in green initiatives, such as bike lanes, pedestrian walkways, and green spaces. The objective was to promote sustainability and improve quality of life for residents.

While the pandemic did create challenges and opportunities for metro cities, the concept of adaptability gained prominence like never before.

Working Style and Employment after Pandemic

Changes that impacted the way people work and the employment landscape in the post-pandemic era were:

Remote - The pandemic facilitated remote work, and many companies discovered that remote work could be just as effective as working in an office. Employees enjoyed the flexibility and work-life balance, and there was an increase in remote work opportunities, and a shift towards a more flexible work environment.

Hybrid - Some companies adopted a hybrid work model, which combined remote work with in-office work. This model allowed greater flexibility and work-life balance, while still maintaining some of the benefits of working in an office, such as collaboration and teamwork.

Employment opportunities -Significant job losses occurred in industries that relied on in-person interactions. However, industries that experienced growth during the pandemic were healthcare, e-commerce, and technology. Also there was a shift towards more resilient and diversified local economies, which led to new job opportunities in different sectors.

Skills and training - The pandemic highlighted the importance of digital skills, as many companies shifted towards remote work and online commerce. As a result, there was an increased emphasis on up-skilling and reskilling, particularly in digital skills such as coding, data analysis, and digital marketing.

Mental health and well-being –Given the toll that the pandemic took on people's mental health and well-being, particularly due to the stress and isolation of remote work, companies prioritized mental health and well-being initiatives, such as employee assistance programs, mental health days, and wellness benefits.

Thus, the pandemic brought about significant changes in the way people work and the employment landscape.

People's Choice and Preferences after Pandemic

Some potential changes that haveimpacted people's lives, and have shaped their choices and preferences in the post-pandemic era pertain to -

Travel- Having disrupted the travel industry, people have become more cautious about traveling. However, as the pandemic subsided, people were inclined to travel to destinations that offered natural and outdoor activities, in addition to being closer to home.

Shopping- The crisis accelerated the shift towards e-commerce, and people turned to online shopping during lockdown and social distancing measures. People continued to shop online even after the pandemic subsided. However, there was also a greater emphasis on local shopping and supporting small businesses.

Entertainment- Many entertainment venues, such as movie theaters, concert halls, and sports stadiums, remained closed during the pandemic. As a result, people were inclined to enjoy entertainment at home, such as streaming movies and TV shows.

Health and wellness– No other era highlighted the importance of health and wellness like the pandemic did, and people continued to prioritize these in the post-pandemic era. This led to an increase in demand for healthy food options, fitness activities, and mental health services.

Work-life balance - Professionals embraced remote work, and people prioritized work-life balance in the post-pandemic era. This led to a greater emphasis on flexible work arrangements, such as remote work and flexible schedules.

So, there were significant changes in people's lives, and their choices and preferences continued to evolve in the post-pandemic era. While there are no guarantees as to how things will develop going ahead, it is clear that individuals and businesses who are able to adapt will be more successful in the new normal.

Impact on Education System after Pandemic

Given the significant impact on the education system, and disrupting traditional teaching and learning methods, changes that occurred in the post-pandemic era are -

Online learning -Schools and universities were forced to adopt online learning, and this trend continued post-pandemic. Online learning offers greater flexibility and accessibility, and can be particularly beneficial for students who are unable to attend traditional in-person classes.

Hybrid learning - Some schools and universities adopted a hybrid learning model, which combined online learning with in-person classes. This model allowed for greater flexibility and personalization of learning, and accommodated different learning styles and schedules.

Focus on mental health - The pandemic highlighted the importance of mental health, particularly for students who were affected by the stress and isolation of remote learning. As a result, schools and universities prioritized mental health and well-being initiatives, such as counselling services, mental health days, and wellness programs.

Digital skills - Adoption of digital technology in education became the new norm, and digital skills became increasingly important in the post-pandemic era. This led to an increased emphasis on digital literacy and skills, such as coding, data analysis, and digital communication.

Reimagining assessment - With raised questions about traditional forms of assessment, such as standardized testing, schools and universities explored alternative forms of assessment, such as project-based learning and competency-based assessments.

Covid's Disproportionate Impact

Which sections of society were affected by Covid?

Covid-19 affected nearly every aspect of society in one way or another, but certain groups thatwere disproportionately impacted include:

- **Healthcare workers**, including doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals, who have been on the front lines of the pandemic and have been at high risk of contracting the virus;
- **Senior citizens**, who remained susceptible to severe illness and death from Covid-19 than younger people, making them one of the most vulnerable groups;
- **Essential workers**, such as grocery store employees, delivery drivers, and public transportation workers, who continued to work during the pandemic and remained at higher risk of exposure to the virus;
- **People with underlying health conditions**, such as heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory problems, were at higher risk of severe illness and death from Covid-19;
- **Low-income communities** were disproportionately affected by the pandemic due to a lack of access to healthcare, crowded living conditions, and limited access to resources like personal protective equipment and testing;
- **Students** were affected by school closures and disruptions to their education, as well as the mental health impacts of social isolation and uncertainty;
- **Women** were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic due to the increased burden of caregiving responsibilities, job losses, and increased risk of domestic violence during lockdowns;

Which businesses were majorly affected by Covid? How it was solved?

There were many sectors in the economy that were severely affected during Covid include construction, manufacturing, and contact-intensive services (i.e., trade, transport, and hospitality). Let us take examples of certain industries that were particularly hard hit by the pandemic include:

Travel and Tourism – The tourism and allied industry suffered immense losses during the pandemic as tourist inflow dropped 81 per cent year-on-year in 2020. Currently, the tourism industry's potential contribution to the country's economy in 2022 is estimated at **over $15.9 trillion** (about $215 billion USD), a 1% rise from 2019. It contributes 6.23% to the national GDP.

It was one of the hardest-hit industries, with widespread cancellations of flights, hotels, and vacation packages. The industry reacted by working to adapt to the changing circumstances by implementing new health and safety protocols, offering flexible cancellation policies, and promoting domestic travel and outdoor destinations. A significant number of jobs were lost in the tourism sector once the lockdown was implemented. Tourism contributes 8.78% of the total employment in India. Almost 20 million people are now working in the India's tourism industry. However, once the unlock phases started and the economy was opened up, the recovery was fast[8].

When the international borders opened gradually, along with the success of the vaccination drive, the confidence was restored to travel among the public very fast, and the tourism activity soon move towards normalcy[8].

It is expected that the tourism economy, in terms of tourism expenditure, will regain its pre-pandemic level by 2024-25, primarily driven by domestic tourism.

(https://tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-11/Tourism-Corona%20Report_Print%20version.pdf**)**

Hospitality and Restaurants - People, clients, guests, and tourists, these are the main reason behind the existence of the hospitality field, and with the country in lockdown, the industry is losing its hold[9].

The hospitality and restaurant industries were also significantly impacted by the pandemic, with many restaurants closing or struggling to stay afloat due to reduced capacity limits, decreased foot traffic, and increased costs associated with implementing new health and safety measures. Many restaurants survived by offering takeout and delivery options, outdoor seating, and promoting online ordering and payment systems. Soon enough, the millennial generation with disposable income will become the backbone of the hospitality industry.

A. *Post pandemic there is more focus on the switch in customer perceptions, Focus on the shift in consumption patterns & Focus on changes in customer experience. The Indian hospitality industry has particularly accelerated with the government's renewed push to bring attention to the country's underexplored diverse eco-system, vast heritage and culture.*

(https://www.aninews.in/news/national/general-news/indias-hospitality-sector-reviving-steadily-post-covid-1920221018102232/)

Retail- Retail businesses, particularly those without an online presence, were impacted by reduced foot traffic, supply chain disruptions, and increased costs associated with implementing new health and safety measures. Retailers adapted by expanding their online presence, offering curbside pickup options, and promoting contactless payment systems.

Entertainment and Events –Organizations related to conducting of entertainment and events, like concerts, sports, and festivals, were significantly impacted, wherein many events were cancelled or postponed. The industry adapted by switching over to virtual events, outdoor events with limited capacity, and drive-in experiences.

To solve the problems faced by these industries, governments and businesses implemented various measures such as financial assistance programs, stimulus packages, and tax relief. Businesses also implemented new health and safety protocols, such as increased cleaning and sanitization, social distancing measures, and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), to help protect employees and customers from the contagion. Additionally, the swift development and distribution of vaccines provided hope for the situation to normalize.

People Started Food Business, Chai Maska, and Eating Joints

The eating habits of everyone both children and adults is greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with evidence of increases in snacking and emotional eating, including eating to relieve boredom.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, people started food businesses, particularly home-based and online ventures. This was due in part to the closure of traditional brick-and-mortar restaurants, as well as increased demand for food delivery and takeout options as people spent more time at home. Some popular food businesses that emerged during the pandemic were -

Home-based businesses -People started cooking and baking at home and selling home-cooked meals, baked goods, and specialty items like artisanal bread, jams, and sauces online or through social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook.

Pop-up eateries - Also known as "ghost kitchens" or "virtual restaurants," pop-up eateriesbecame popular during the pandemic as a way for chefs and entrepreneurs to start small, low-overhead restaurants without the need for a physical storefront. These outfits often focused on a specific cuisine or food niche, such as pizza, burgers, or vegan food.

Food trucks and outdoor markets - Food trucks and outdoor markets also became popularduring the pandemic, as they allowed for socially distanced outdoor dining and the

ability to move locations based on demand. Cities and municipalities also implemented new regulations to make it easier for food trucks to operate.

Chai Maska and other specialty cafes - In India, Chai Maska, which is a traditional Indian tea and snack combination, became a popular choice for home-based and small-scale cafes. People started selling Chai Maska online, and it became a popular food business during the pandemic.

Overall, the pandemic led to significant changes in the food industry, with many people starting new businesses and finding creative ways to adapt to the changing circumstances.

Doctors, Health Workers, Police Officers -Life Pre and Post Covid

Before Covid-19:

* Doctors, healthcare workers, and police officers were already working in demanding and stressful jobs that required long hours, intense focus, and frequent exposure to illness and danger.

* However, they did not face the same risk of exposure to Covid-19 initially, as the virus had not yet spread widely.

During Covid-19:

* Doctors, healthcare workers, and police officers remained on the front lines of the pandemic response, putting their own health at risk to care for those infected with the virus and enforce public health guidelines.

* They faced shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE), long hours, and emotional stress, as well as increased risk of exposure to the virus.

* Healthcare workers also had to adapt to changes in their work environment, such as shifting to telemedicine appointments and implementing new infection control protocols.

After Covid-19:

* The pandemic left a lasting impact on the healthcare system and law enforcement, with many changes expected to continue going ahead.

* Healthcare workers continue to see increased demand for telemedicine appointments and remote care, as well as ongoing concerns about infection control.

* Police officers face ongoing challenges in enforcing public health guidelines and responding to emergencies while minimizing the risk of exposure to the virus.

* Both healthcare workers and police officers also face ongoing concerns about mental health and emotional stress as they continue to cope with the aftermath of the pandemic.

Overall, the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the vital role that doctors, healthcare workers, and police officers play in protecting public health and safety. It has underscored the need for ongoing support and resources to ensure their well-being and the well-being of the communities they serve.

Role of Political Parties in Fighting Covid

Involvement of political parties in fighting Covid-19 has varied significantly depending on the country and the specific political climate. Here are some ways political parties have been involved in fighting Covid-19:

Setting policy - Political leaders have played a key role in setting policies related to Covid-19, including lockdown measures, mask mandates, and vaccine distribution. In some cases, political divisions have made it difficult to agree on effective policies or to implement them consistently across different regions.

Communication - Political leaders have also been responsible for communicating important information about Covid-19 to the public, including updates on case numbers, vaccine availability, and public health guidelines. Effective communication has been crucial in building

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public trust and encouraging people to follow recommended measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

Funding and resource allocation - Political leaders have been responsible for allocating funding and resources to support the Covid-19 response, including funding for vaccine development and distribution, as well as funding for healthcare infrastructure and support for individuals and businesses affected by the pandemic.

Vaccine hesitancy - In some cases, political parties have been involved in promoting vaccine hesitancy or misinformation about the virus, which hindered efforts to control the spread of Covid-19.

Overall, the involvement of political parties in fighting Covid-19 has been complex and varied. Some political leaders have taken decisive action to protect public health, while others faced hindrances by political divisions, and still others actively worked against public health measures. The effectiveness of the response to the pandemic has often been closely tied to the political climate in each country and the ability of political leaders to work together to address the crisis.

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