

VULNERABILITY AND POSSIBLE RISKS OF COVID-19 SECOND WAVE IN INDIA: A CRITICAL REFLECTION

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 has become a global health emergency which has affected millions of people around the globe. The pandemic started spreading across the world with severe effect and consequences as soon as it emerged. More than 3.01 million people have died globally, yet the count hasn't stopped. The COVID-19 situation has revealed the status of vulnerability among all the sections of people, and especially the weaker section, inability of the system to manage efficiently. It affected every system of the world starting from medical to environment. Every person, be it the President or Prime Minister or a common human being around the world, got affected by the virus. It also showed the importance of the food and the farmer in our life. Those who produce food and services for the world underwent severe crisis and hunger due to lockdown during this pandemic. This paper is an attempt to give a critical insight from the vulnerability, risk and resilience perspectives. It analyzes the trends of number of confirmed cases and deaths found in India during 2020 and 2021. It also analyzes the existing vulnerability and risk due to COVID-19 in India and estimates the possible risk that is likely occur in the COVID-19 second wave.

Keywords: COVID-19, Vulnerability, Resilience, Pandemic

Introduction

The deadliest global pandemic COVID-19 has killed more than 3.01 million people around the globe; more than 140 million people have been affected out of which 80 million have recovered till now. In India, 14.5 million people have been affected out of which 12.7 million people have successfully recovered and more than 176 thousand people have died. This deadly virus started in Wuhan city, Hubei Province, China and was identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) in December 2019. Later, on January 30, 2020, WHO declared a global health emergency. India as a highly populated country has suffered the most compared to other developing countries in the world. The high density of population, unaware people, carelessness and lack of quality management by authority are the major causes that worsen the COVID-19 situation in India (in 2020). Nevertheless after the severity was identified, several strict steps were taken to handle the COVID-19 situation. The government released strict rules such as lockdown of cities and villages in every corner of the country, institutional quarantine was mandatory for migrant people, the

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social distance was followed and sanitization of every individual, things and places was made mandatory.

Various challenges occurred during the first wave of COVID-19 in India. Apart from thousands of death, millions of migrant workers faced severe challenges due to imposition of sudden lockdown. Some people walked back home thousands of kilometers by road. Many of them found death instead of home on the way to their homes. All the small and medium enterprises, business and farmers lost their livelihood. Students faced many problems due to shut down of schools, colleges and universities. Online classes were imposed but it was not accessible to every child residing in remote areas. People lost their loved ones but couldn't see them even for the last time. Many unbelievable stories came to focus during the lockdown such as 15 years old girl Jyoti Kumari rode a bicycle for 1200 km to bring her father from Gurugram to Bihar. Another heart-breaking story was to see 16 migrant workers who were sleeping on the train tracks were run over by a goods train in Aurangabad. Doctors were the saviours who worked day and night to cure people and recovered the positive cases. Police and armed forces strictly handled the law and order during the emergency situation, Government authorities, social workers and local leaders continuously supplied food and necessary goods to needy people. All the people responsibly fought together with the COVID-19 situation in 2020. After some sort of relaxation from the deadliest COVID-19 in the year 2020, we are again in a similar kind of situation due to the second wave of COVID-19.

The second wave of the virus has been seen from March 2021 and it has been spreading faster than the previous one. 234692 new positive cases were found on 16 April 2021 which was 28903 on 16 March 2021. The maximum cases were seen in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi Chhattisgarh and Karnataka . The complete lockdown was imposed for 15 days from 15 April to 30 April 2021 by the Maharashtra Government, earlier it was night curfew and weekend lockdown in Mumbai. Several other states have also imposed night curfew in their respective states. Such states are Odisha, Gujarat, U.P., Punjab, West Bengal, Karnataka and Delhi. Keeping the rapid increase cases of COVID-19 in the second wave, it is clearly visible that there will be another severe health crisis situation. Let us talk about the risk, vulnerability and resilience status of the people, communities and states in India.

Objectives

The objectives of the paper are:

- To give a critical reflection of the COVID-19 pandemic in India.
- To study trends of the confirmed cases and number of deaths found in India.
- To give a critical reflection of the vulnerability and risk of COVID-19 and the probability of possible risk of Covid-19 second wave.

Research Method

The paper is completely based on secondary data analysis and review of different news articles. MS Excel has been used to analyze the trend of confirmed cases and death due to COVID-19 in India. The study follows quantitative and descriptive research methods. The data have been used from the data base of World Health Organization and Government of India.

Trends of COVID-19 confirmed cases

The table-1 shows that the first COVID-19 confirmed was noted on January 27, 2020. It is noted that 6 confirmed cases were identified in the first phase of the pandemic. The cases rapidly increased up to 244% within a month and it reached from 6 to 3374 confirmed cases. The active cases increased up to the month of September. Despite the lockdown imposed in India, the number of confirmed cases were increasing. However, the decreasing trend was seen from the month of October 2020. The decreasing cases in the first phase of the pandemic was seen from November 2020 to February 2021. The second wave of the pandemic started in March 2021. The confirmed cases increased from 1% to 10% of the total confirmed cases in India. The confirmed cases 15616130 were noted on April 19. There is a possibility of increase in new active cases in coming days.

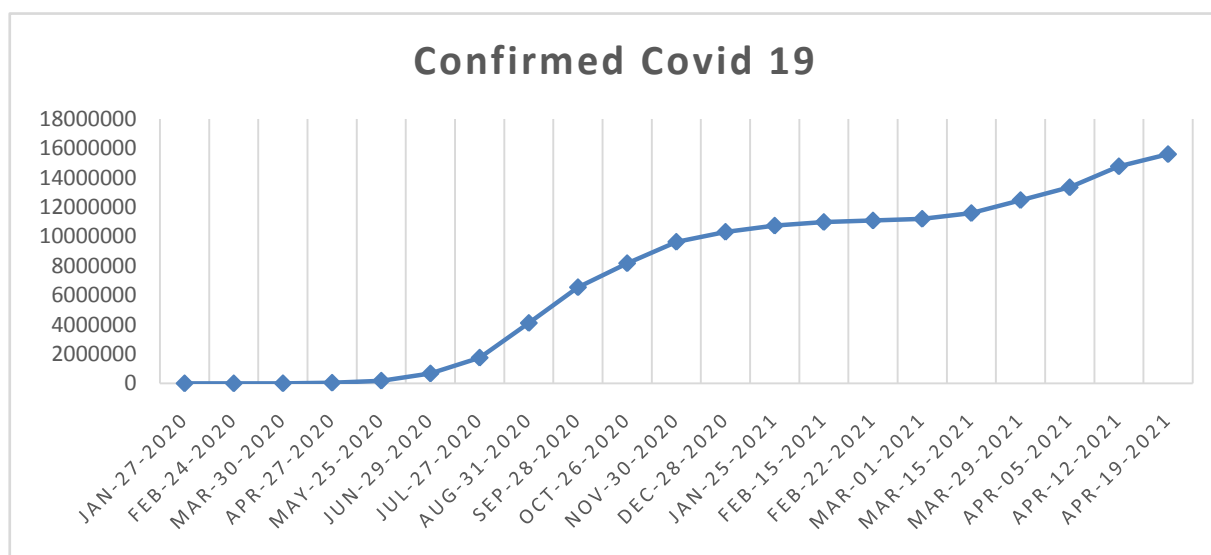
Table-1. Trends of Confirmed Cases

Date	Confirmed Cases	Monthly increase (Percentage)
Jan-27	6	
Feb-24	7	
Mar-30	3374	244.64
Apr-27	39980	50.89
May-25	182143	38.13
Jun-29	673165	27.29
Jul-27	1750723	26.36
Aug-31	4113811	16.12
Sep-28	6549373	9.29
Oct-26	8184082	4.06
Nov-30	9644222	2.68
Dec-28	10323965	1.34
Jan-25	10746183	0.86
Feb-15	10991651	0.8

Feb-22	11096731	0.96
Mar-01	11210799	1.03
Mar-15	11599130	2.11
Mar-29	12485509	4.29
Apr-05	13358805	6.99
Apr-12	14788109	10.7
Apr-19	15616130	

Source: World Health Organization, 2021

Figure-1:



Source: World Health Organization, 2021

The probability of increase in confirmed new cases can be estimated by seeing the trends of the graph. It shows that the cases rapidly increased in the initial phase of the pandemic and the trend continued for almost 6 months in 2020. Later it decreased up to 0.7 percent in the month of February 2021. Thereafter, the second wave was seen to have increased the new cases. It is now increasing rapidly as the graph shows. There will be more increased active cases in coming days and it is estimated to reach the mark of 20 crores confirmed cases by the end of this year.

Trends of Death

Increasing in number of death due to COVID-19 disturbed everyone around the world. According to the recent data by WHO, India accounts for 182553 numbers of deaths till date. Table-2 shows the number of deaths found in India and its percentage in different phase of the year 2020 and 2021. A rapid increase of deaths found in the initial phase of the pandemic. The number of deaths increased up to the month of September 2020 later it decreased in the month of February 2021. The second wave of COVID-19 has also witnessed increase of death due to COVID-19 and as per the trend the number of death is increasing and it will increase further. In this case, it can be estimated that the number of deaths will increase and reach up to 2 lakhs by the end of this year.

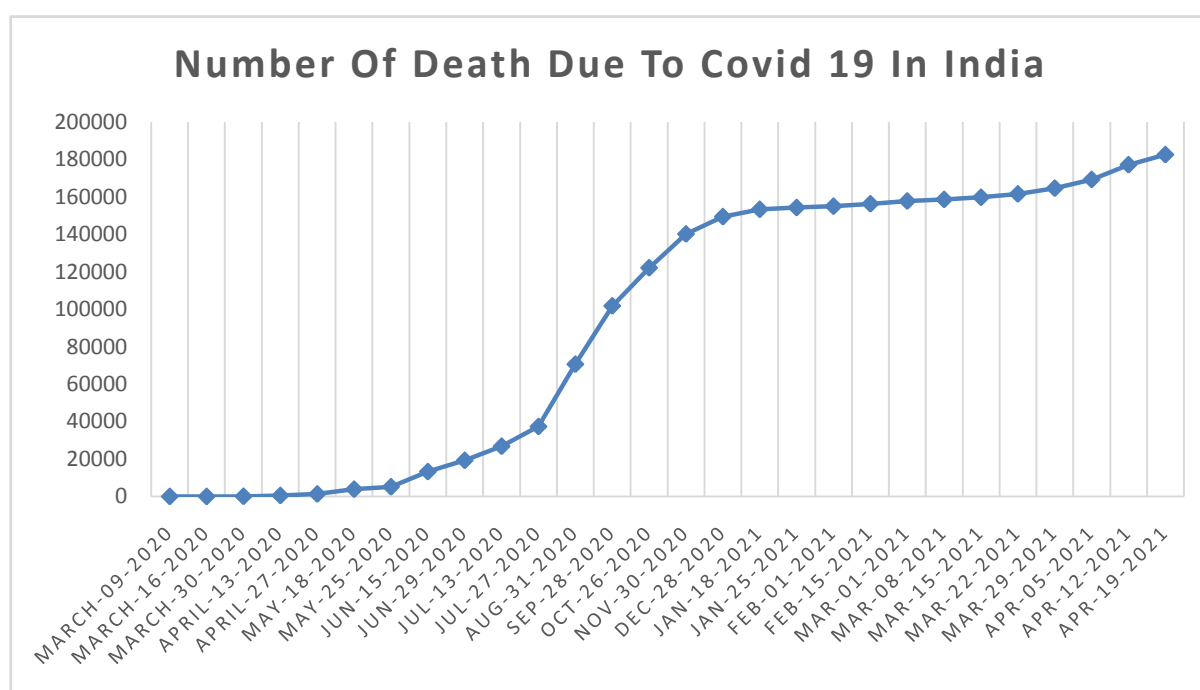
Table-2. Trends of Death

Date	Number of deaths in India	Percentage
March-09-2020	2	100.00
March-16-2020	5	150.00
March-30-2020	77	208.00
April-13-2020	507	85.71
April-27-2020	1301	57.8
May-18-2020	3867	34.4
May-25-2020	5164	33.54
Jun-15-2020	13254	44.14
Jun-29-2020	19268	19.71
Jul-13-2020	26816	18.27
Jul-27-2020	37364	16.53
Aug-31-2020	70626	11.23
Sep-28-2020	101782	7.70
Oct-26-2020	122111	3.02
Nov-30-2020	140182	2.55
Dec-28-2020	149435	1.23
Jan-18-2021	153339	0.70
Jan-25-2021	154274	0.61
Feb-01-2021	154996	0.47
Feb-15-2021	156302	0.42
Mar-01-2021	157756	0.45

Mar-08-2021	158607	0.54
Mar-15-2021	159755	0.72
Mar-22-2021	161552	1.12
Mar-29-2021	164623	1.90
Apr-05-2021	169275	2.83
Apr-12-2021	177150	4.65
Apr-19-2021	182553	

Source: World Health Organization, 2020

Figure-2:



Source: World Health Organization, 2021

Reflection of Vulnerability in India

When we talk about vulnerability, migrant workers are the most vulnerable during the pandemic. They live far away from their family to earn and feed. Their safety and security should be the primary concern of the authority, be it the private company or government. Small enterprises, businessmen and farmers are suffering from food and capital shortage due to massive lockdown.

They lost their livelihood during the lockdown for a period of 6-8 months in 2020. In the emergence of the second wave, they are in a vulnerable condition and it is clearly visible that the lockdown will be affect their livelihood. Most populated cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Pune can be the worst affected in the second wave of the pandemic. Hence, a strict and sustainable risk management approach needs to be followed to tackle the situation. Hospital's infrastructure needs to be taken care of for the worst. Hospital staffs are to be treated as the warrior and saviour. It has been seen that various private hospitals imposed their authoritarian attitudes upon the hospital staff to work during pandemic. There is a need to come up with a concrete solution for the students because more than one year has already been spoiled due to this pandemic and they can't afford to spoil another year of their career.

Risk is the probability of occurrence of an event and its consequences. Hence, it has been seen during the initial phase of the second wave of COVID-19 that political gathering and religious gathering are still going on however school, colleges and universities are shut down. Such biased act should come to an end for the sake of everyone . The negligence of authority, law and order and carelessness among citizens can be a foolish act to invite the catastrophic situation once again. Monitoring and accountability of activities, rules to be followed and precautions for COVID-19 must be taken strictly. Otherwise, the situation will be even more hazardous than it was before. It is the moral responsibility of all the sincere citizens to follow all the COVID-19 rules such as wearing a face mask, maintain social distancing, use of sanitizer and quarantines. It is a national duty of every citizen to follow the COVID-19 rules and create awareness among those people who don't follow. Ask them to wear a mask, keep social distancing and take necessary precautions. To become resilient, one should increase their immunity system by daily physical work, eating healthy food, avoiding smoking, consumption of alcohol and following all the necessary precautions. The state and community should also work towards becoming resilient to fight with the worst situation.

Conclusions

The pandemic caught everyone unawares, and affected millions of people around the globe. It is believed that when an emergency comes, we start action to protect us. However, there is a need to take proactive action which will work for the betterment of the mankind. Increasing cases of COVID-19 second wave are a warning to be proactive and build resilience among people and our system for the uncertainties yet to come. Otherwise, massive casualties will occur in coming days and it will be difficult to handle it. Nevertheless, Government authority, non-government

organization and leaders are doing their part to handle the pandemic situation in a good way. It is the moral responsibility of all sincere citizens to follow all the COVID-19 rules.

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