

The Impact of Covid-19 on Mental Health: A Comparative Study among State and Central Board Students

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a worldwide mental health crisis. Students are the most affected group, particularly when the teaching-learning process is changed. Many issues, such as lockdown restrictions, an overwhelming amount of COVID-19 cases, financial hardship, and so on, may have an impact on Students mental health.

Objective: The purpose of this research is to determine and assess the personal, social, and psychological effects of COVID-19 on the mental health of students in public and private schools.

Methods: The researchers intend to perform this investigation utilising a survey research method. With the help of a Google Forms questionnaire, data will be collected. The researcher will gather information through sociodemographic data, a mental health questionnaire, and an academic stress questionnaire. The collected data will be analyzed by using descriptive statistics. For statistical analysis, the SPSS software will be used. Purposive sampling will be used to pick 105 school pupils from both state and central board students for this investigation. Parents, teachers, educators, and policymakers will benefit from this research.

Keywords: COVID-19, Mental Health, Lockdown, Students, Academic Stress

1. Introduction

The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has been declared by the World Health Organisation as an international public health emergency. Owing to its high infectivity, countries all over the world implemented nationwide lockdowns with the

hope of flattening the epidemic curve. Around the world, this has led to the closure of schools in over 150 countries affecting the education of nearly 1 billion children (Sahu, 2020).

India faced total lockdown from 24th March 2020 to May 2020 and even though a phased re-opening of public services has since then been attempted, most educational institutions including schools and colleges remain closed without a clear view regarding their re-opening. This decision is affecting the various sectors in the country. The education sector is also affected by the lockdown, which is a critical determinant of the economic future of the country. As per the directives of the government, all school, colleges and universities are closed. Whole education system is disrupted by the pandemic COVID-19.

In spite of these preventive procedures may be considered critical to contain the rapid outbreak of COVID-19, they will undoubtedly have short and long term consequences for the well-being and mental health of school students especially those in primary school. Therefore, great and unprecedented efforts must be immediately made to address the influence of the COVID-19 outbreak on the mental health of the individual level (Cao et al., 2020). For students with mental health needs, school closures mean an absence of access to the necessary needs they often have through schools. As of April 8, 2020, schools have been closed in 188 countries (UNESCO, 2020).

Over 90% of enrolled students worldwide are now out of school. It was reported that the consequences of the outbreak of epidemics or pandemics on mental health were more dangerous than that of the diseases itself (for example, mothers of children with Zika syndrome). The large-scale disasters, whether natural (Earthquakes, volcanoes, or hurricanes), traumatic (eg: mass shootings), or environmental (Oil spills deep in oceans or seas), are always accompanied by increases in anxiety, panic, fear and depression, substance use disorder, psychological distress and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Yang et al., 2020).

In addition, it was also associated with domestic violence, child and women abuse, as well as a broad range of other behavioral and mental disorders. These crises affect mental health in the immediate aftermath of the crisis and then persist over a long period of time. As many universities and schools suspended classroom teaching and switched to online teaching, the lives of students have changed drastically. While social distancing measures may successfully slow down the spread of the infection and relieve the public health systems, they may eventually increase the social isolation of students and affect their psychological well-being and mental health. Being under a lot of pressure to perform academically, students are prone to developing mental health problems. The social networks of students have been argued to be an important factor in buffering stress and helping them to be more effective. Reduced social interactions, a lack of social support, and newly arising stressors associated with the COVID-19 crisis could potentially affect students' mental health negatively.

Stress is a perception of emotional or physical tension. There are number of incidents in a person's life that leads to negative emotions like anger, frustration and nervousness that further develops stress in an individual. Stress is the body's reaction to challenge or demand. It can be positive at times; however, prolonged stress can lead to severe health conditions. Malach, Pines and Keinan (2007) defined stress as the insight of incongruity between environmental burden (stressors) and person's ability to fulfill these demands. Auerbach & Grambling (1998) regarded any situation that can stimulate any kind of threat or danger to the well being can be contemplated as stress. Academic pressure has increased over the past few years; there are examinations, assignments and many other activities that a student has to shuffle through. Not only the design but teachers and parents also burden the students with a lot of pressure of getting good grades. These expectations make the students work relentlessly and end up in creating more stress. With academics, the parents and the institutions want the students to participate in extracurricular activities too, the current expectations from the students is to be an all rounder. Lack of proper channels for counseling leads to more confusion and the students are unable to choose a career for themselves even after rigorous studying patterns. This demanding attitude from parents and teachers leave the students bewildered and builds up stress. Teenage and high school plays fundamental role in shaping a child's personality and outlook towards life. Peer pressure is yet another common term that one hears from the teenagers. This could be pressurizing another to drink, smoke, cheat on test, lying etc., the list is exhaustive. Peer pressure can be harmful and compelling. It can help shape the personalities in a positive way for introvert students or can pose as an obstacle and lead to stress. It is extremely important for the students to have wisdom and surround themselves with positive people to make most of the peer pressures to be positive.

Heavy academic workloads and the feeling that you are constantly racing to meet another deadline can be daunting. Parental pressure on children to shine in their study and perform well in extracurricular activities is at remarkable high. Compelling need to excel in studies, often prone to abuse, does injure the morale and is one of the greatest causes of stress, failure and breakdown.

The race amongst parents to prove that their child is an all rounder makes them end up as victim rather than successful. Lack of support is major reasons for stress amongst students, lack of interaction with parents and teachers keep on building on doubts and confusions that a child might have eventually leading to stress. There is a lot that a child is expected to achieve, but due to lack of proper support, they feel lost at sea and are left directionless.

Prolonged stress can lead to physical and emotional disorders, further resulting in anxiety and depression. It is important to have a channel to relieve the anxiety. Mckean et al. (2000) believed that the stressors are not the sole reason for anxiety, tension or depression, rather synergy between stressors and the person's approach and attitude to these stressors create stress. Though stress is often considered bad, but there is always the other side of the coin. The right kind of stress helps in sharpening the mind and reflexes, thus helping in boosting memory. Mild stress is always

essential for effective and efficient working. It can help one to meet daily challenges and can motivate students to reach their goals.

2. Review of Literature

Saurabh et al., (2020) found a study titled "Compliance and Psychological Impact of Quarantine in Children and Adolescents due to Covid-19 Pandemic". The study seeks to find out the compliance and psychological impact on children and adolescents during quarantine due to covid-19. Mahapatra et al., (2021) conducted a study on "Education in times of COVID-19 pandemic: Academic stress and its psychosocial impact on children and adolescents in India". The study explores the academic stress and psychosocial impact on children and adolescents during covid-19 pandemic. Tarkar, P., (2020) investigated a study on "Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Education System". The study seeks to find the impact of covid-19 on the education system.

Radwan et al., (2020) found a study titled "The Mental Health of School Students and the COVID-19 Pandemic". The study explores the school student's mental health and covid-19. Gupta, R. K. (2020) investigated a study on "Academic stress and mental health among adolescent students". The study seeks to find out the mental health and academic stress among adolescent students. Elmer et al., (2020) conducted a study on "Students under lockdown: Comparisons of students' social networks and mental health before and during the COVID-19 crisis in Switzerland". The study explores the comparison of social networks and mental health before and during covid-19 pandemic among students in Switzerland. Subramani et al., (2017) found a study titled "Academic stress and mental health among high school students". The study seeks to explore the stress level in academics and mental health among high school students.

3. Need and Significance

There are various ways and means that the students can adopt to relieve stress, like imbibing any form of exercise to be done on daily basis, this small change will go a long way and guarantees an environment of sustainable happiness. Meditation and breathing exercises can also be incorporated to relieve stress during exams and students avoid panicking. It is also important to ensure that students receive enough sleep, it would help the students to be more patient and have better learning graph. Music is therapeutic whether played in stress or otherwise. Listening to music can reap many benefits and can subside stress certainly. The way one talks with oneself really makes big difference in the attitude, hence positive self talk is important which will further lead to harmonious surroundings.

Education today became a service-oriented business sector in the hands of private agencies. Students are pressurized to get higher marks by the educational institutions to increase their market value. Parents are under constant pressure to provide their children a better education to get jobs in the global market. As a result, students experience severe stress in their academics. There is a disparity in educational awareness among students in private and government schools which would enhance

their stress further. To excel in the competition and secure seats in higher education, more specifically in professional courses, students were compelled to take additional classes and special coaching. Due to the comparison and competition, parents tend to pressurize children to the core. The students are driven to study for getting job rather than understanding subjects. Hence, the mental health of students get affected.

4. Statement of the Problem

The problem under consideration is "The impact of COVID-19 on mental health: A comparative study among state and central board students"

5. Hypothesis

1. There is a significant difference in impact of covid-19 on mental health among state and central board students based on type of institution.
2. There is a significant difference in impact of covid-19 on mental health among Public and private school students based on gender.
3. There is a significant difference in impact of covid-19 on mental health among Public and private school students based on family type.

6. Method

Quantitative research design was used for the current study. The investigator intend to use survey research method for the purpose of data collection. Survey Research is defined as the process of conducting research using surveys that researchers send to survey respondents. The data collected from surveys is then statistically analyzed to draw meaningful research conclusions. Online survey research is one of the most popular survey research methods today. The cost involved in online survey research is extremely minimal, and the responses gathered are highly accurate. With the help of Google form questionnaire the researchers gathered information from the students. The data were collected from both public and private schools to find out personal, social, and psychological effects of COVID-19 on the mental health of the students. 105 students from both public and private schools participated in the study to explore the the impact of covid-19 on mental health and its relation to the academic stress. Students from both public and private school participated in the study were aged between 9 and 17. Students of both state and central board institution were eligible to take part in the study.

For the present study, 105 students from both State and Central board were participated in the study to determine the impact of COVID 19 on mental health in relation with academic stress. There were total 30 questions in the questionnaire to collect data together from the students. Informed consent was obtained before answering the survey. The online questionnaire was distributed through a Google form link. The link was first disseminated through the WhatsApp messaging platform to the students. These students were encouraged to forward the survey link to their friends. A self-administered anonymous questionnaire based on components of the

personal, Social, psychological effects of COVID-19 on mental health. Responses were made on a five-point Likert scale. All quantitative statistical analyses were performed with SPSS software. Parents, teachers, educators, policy makers will benefit from this research.

7. Result and Discussion

Our study determined the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and its relation to the academic stress: a study among state and central board students. Quantitative statistical analyses were performed with SPSS software. The result of this study has revealed that there is no significant difference among public and private school students on the impact of COVID-19 and academic stress based on gender, type of institution and family type.

Table: 1 Descriptive statistical score and value of independent sample t test based on Gender (Male & Female)

Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	18	102.611	12.1565	0.747	0.457
Female	87	100.207	12.4817		

Table: 2 Descriptive statistical score and value of independent sample t test based on family type(Joint family & nuclear family)

Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Joint family	28	97.893	10.5245	1.364	0.176
nuclear family	77	101.610	12.9383		

Table: 3 Descriptive statistical score and value of independent sample t test based on type of institution (state board & central board)

Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
state board	82	100.488	12.8527	0.204	0.839
central board	23	101.087	10.8917		

Table 1 reveals the descriptive statistical score and value of independent sample t test based on gender (male and female). The first hypothesis was that there is a significance difference in impact of covid-19 on mental health among Public and private school students based on gender. As the table implies the significance value obtained shows that there is no significant difference in impact of covid-19 on mental health among Public and private school students based on gender. The result indicates that among state board and central board students, the covid-19 pandemic didnot affect the mental health of students based on gender. As the significance values obtained is

greater than significance score, there is no significant difference. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2 depicts descriptive statistical score and value of independent sample t test based on family type (joint family and nuclear family). The second hypothesis was that there is a significant difference in impact of covid-19 on mental health among Public and private school students based on family type. The table represents the significance difference in impact of covid-19 on mental health among Public and private school students based on family type. The result indicates that covid-19 did not influence the mental health of state and central board students on the basis of family type. As the significance two-tailed value is greater than the significance score, there is no significance difference among public and private school students in impact of COVID-19 on mental health. As there is no significance difference, the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3 reveals the descriptive statistical score and value of independent sample t test based on type of institution (state board and central board). The third hypothesis was that there is a significant difference in impact of covid-19 on mental health among state and central board students based on type of institution. It is obtained from the table that the significance value obtained shows that there is no significance difference in impact of COVID-19 on mental health among public and private school students aged between 9 and 17 based on type of institution. Based on type of institution, the result indicates that there is no affect on mental health due to covid-19 pandemic. As there is no significance difference, the hypothesis is rejected.

8. Conclusion

The current situation of COVID-19 has not affected the students' mental health, specifically in some aspects. Although students are finding out ways to deal with the uncertain situation for example, creating a schedule for daily activities, getting involved in developing a skill, increasing use of social media for entertainment and also to gain information about safety measures, the repercussions of uncertainty, feelings of depression and differences in male-female students can be seen on various parameters. An increase in mental health awareness, gender-based intervention strategies, and relevant coping mechanisms for the youth from varied backgrounds may be devised to help the students cope with the issues related to mental health, during a pandemic.

The study explored the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and its relation to the academic stress: a study among state and central board students. The results obtained examines that there is no significance difference in impact of covid-19 on mental health among state board and central board based on gender, male and female; types of institution, state board and central board; and family type, joint family and nuclear family.

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