

Pandemic Crisis Related to the Youth Community (A Case Study to Examine its Causes, Extent and Suggested Recovery Therapeutic Action Plan)

Lavanya Gupta

Abstract: *The pandemic seems to be the perfect storm to embed depression and anxiety. For the youth community, the pandemic crisis poses considerable risks in the fields of education, employment, mental health and disposable income. To contain the spread of the virus, social confinement measures and limitation of individual freedom led to disease-related psychological stress. The pandemic crisis caused the future of the youth society to become extremely precarious and uncertain. This section of our society has low financial strength and limited work experience and represents 65% of India's 1.3 billion populations. A keen student of psychology, I analyzed the causes of mental health issues of the youth related to the pandemic, the extent of its spread globally and suggested simple self-therapeutic steps to solve mental illness during this crisis. This paper also comprises the results of 3 online surveys I conducted to study the impact of the pandemic on the mental health status of the Indian youth namely-Social life & mental status of the youth during the self-lockdown, Unplanned mass homeschooling experiences due to the pandemic and The voice of the youth to discuss the impact of the pandemic on their employment opportunities. This project concludes with interviews I conducted with a psychologist, educationist and economist to attain first-hand information in their respective fields related to the COVID crisis connected to the youth and my learning experiences from the study.*

Keywords: COVID-19, COVID, Coronavirus, Pandemic

The crisis created by the current pandemic has significantly enhanced the risk of mental health degradation among all age groups, globally. Individuals have been facing-unemployment, not receiving salaries during the lockdown period and experiencing reduced work hours, mandatory laws making it compulsory to work from home, internships being canceled, and startup businesses not being able to survive the economic recession, consequently leading to societal financial insecurity. The happiness quotient created by building new and keeping existing social connections intact, possessing employment security, constant educational engagement for students, regular access to physical exercise and an undisruptive daily routine and accessibility to medical facilities reduced drastically in the COVID-19 era.

The most adversely affected by the pandemic within the Indian society is the youth of the nation, who represent 65% of India's 1.3 billion population, whose future has become more precarious and uncertain in terms of social, financial and educational needs. The survey conducted by UNICEF in 2020 stated that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health of the youth, who have limited financial

strength, their employment status is uncertain and their education might have been adversely affected.

Through this pandemic period a common global trend has been depicted that mental distress was highest during periods of intensifying coronavirus deaths and when stringent lockdown measures were implemented to limit transmission of the virus. Also, individuals who have a lower socio-economic status-are less secure of their employment status, have lower educational qualifications and have a lesser income,-experience higher rates of mental distress and lower rates of life satisfaction scores, during the COVID crisis anxiety. During this pandemic, the existing gender differences in the prevalence of anxiety and depression have widened too. Exhibits 1, 2 and 3 explain these trends in greater detail.

Exhibit 1: Human anxiety levels increased significantly in the year 2020

(Source: *Tackling the mental health impact of the COVID-19 crisis: An integrated, whole-of-society response-OECD*)

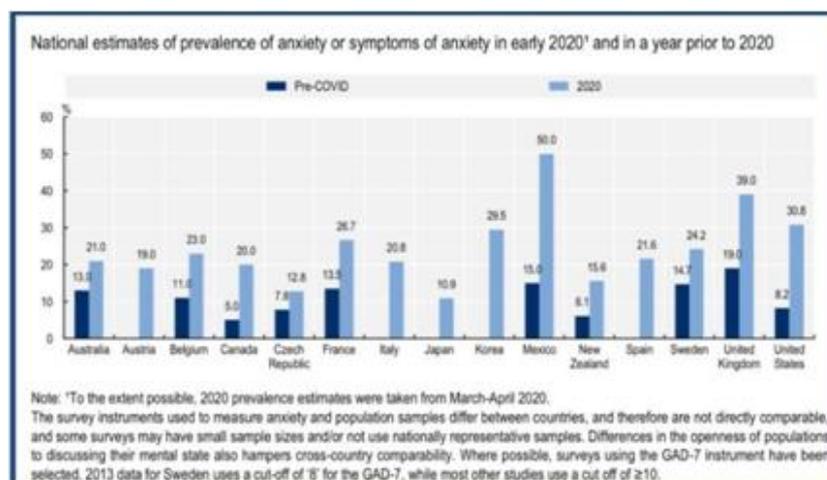


Exhibit 2: Human depression cases increased significantly in the year 2020

Volume 11 Issue 7, July 2022

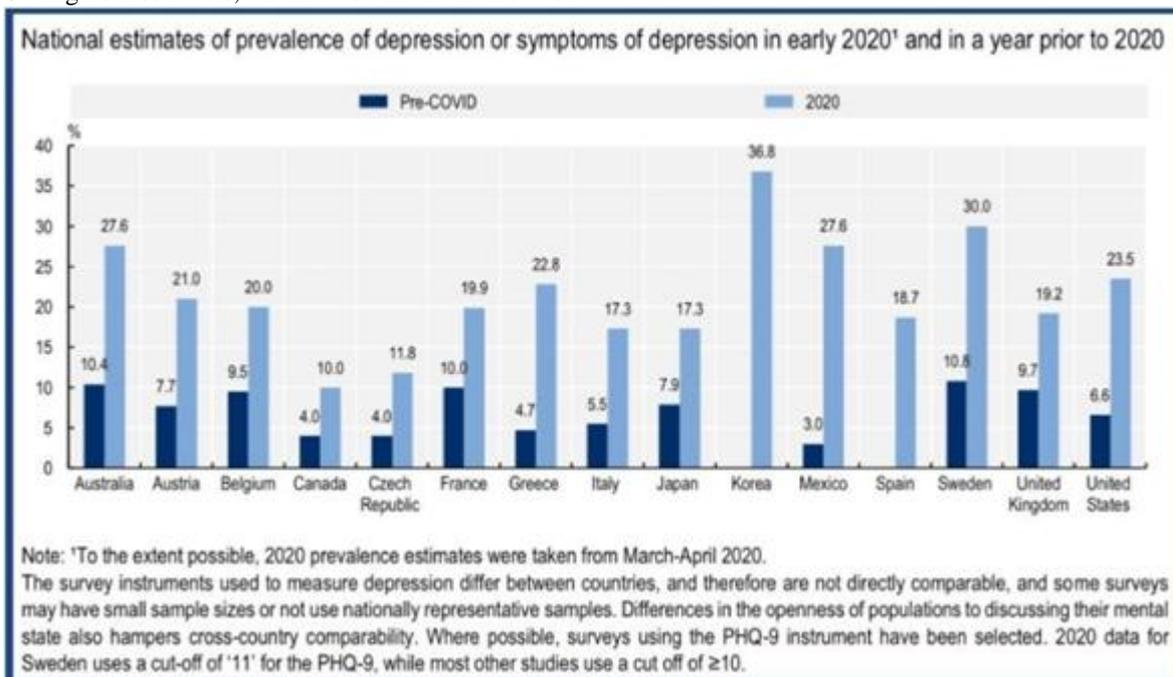
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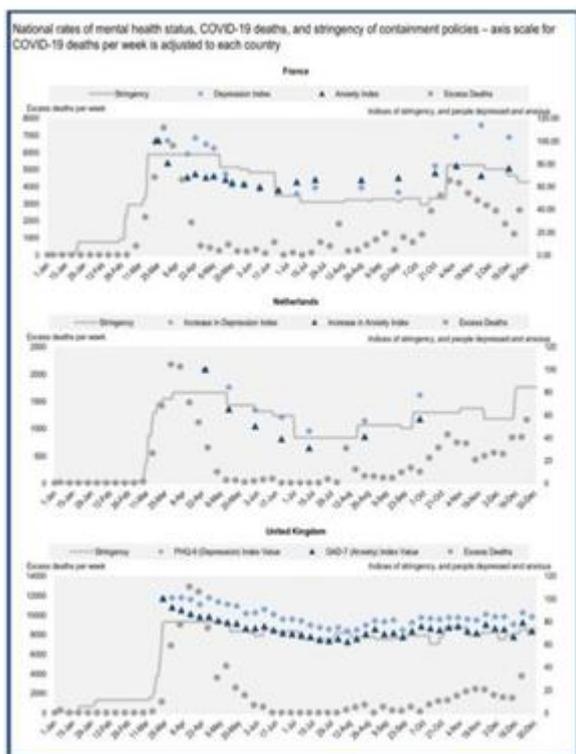
(Source: Tackling the mental health impact of the COVID-19 crisis: An integrated, whole-of-society response-OECD)

deaths and government stringency measures in 2020 across France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom

Exhibit 3: High-stress levels, an increase in the number of



(Source: Tackling the mental health impact of the COVID-19 crisis: An integrated, whole-of-society response-OECD)



Evidence from the first and second waves of the COVID-19 era proves that mental health deteriorated more among working parents compared to those individuals without children, with working women reporting greater declines. A WHO survey conducted in the second quarter of 2020, found that greater than 60% of nations across the globe reported emergency interventions. Worldwide, governments have responded to this crisis, putting sincere efforts to scale-up mental health services take

remedial action to prevent job insecurity and dip in incomes, enhance medical facilities to reduce the number of deaths due to the pandemic, thereby attempting to decrease mental distress. However, the enormous scale of mental stress since the beginning of the pandemic needs a more integrated approach and deep-rooted support for the whole community's mental health issues, to prevent permanent scarring.

Mental Stress of the youth due to the pandemic

The deep impact of the pandemic crisis has an effect on the psycho-social and subjective well-being of the youth community. It depends on the household the youth hails from, the employment placement and income level; the illness or loss of loved ones; the presence of existing medical conditions and vulnerable persons in the household and the disruptions of their educational process.

Impact on employment and disposable income leading to financial stress: Low-paid and temporary employment positions which are held by the youth were the most severely affected by the crisis. Youth who have lower disposable income and lesser financial assets are the ones who faced greater unemployment levels and lower-income due to the pandemic recession. Due to lack of experience they have fewer career development opportunities and lesser prospects for better jobs and also receive lower wages. They are bound to face the long-term economic and social consequences of the pandemic crisis. The negative prospects for international cooperation in terms of work visas and immigration laws, the spread of disinformation and incorrect news through social media sites, increasing levels of public debt and racial discrimination, added to youth anxiety during the pandemic.

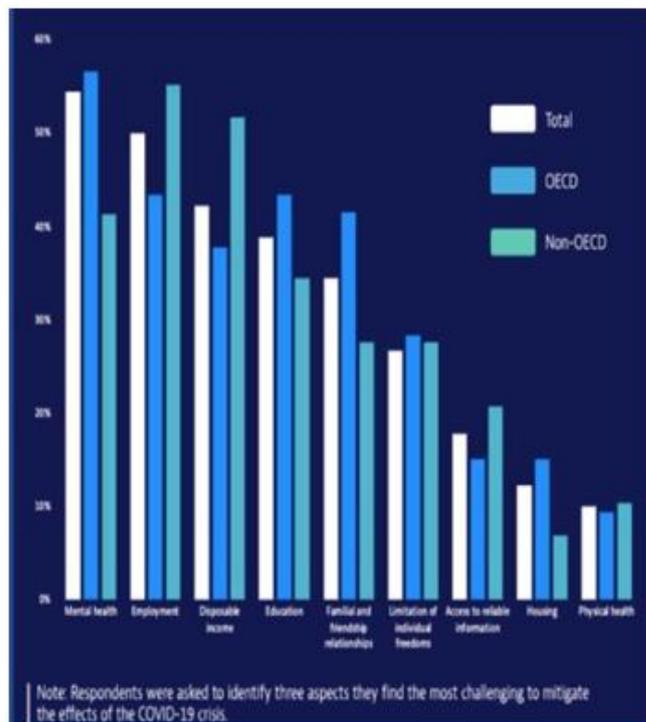
Impact of schools being shut down: The U. N. report of 2020 states that the closure of schools and universities has affected more than 1.5 billion children and youth worldwide. It changed how youth and children live and learn during the pandemic, and this leads to a loss in the development of human capital with long-term economic and social implications. An OECD study across 59 countries claims that although most schools across the globe placed alternative learning opportunities through homeschooling, only 50% of students were able to gain the benefits of the entire curriculum, due to the inaccessibility of students to possess digital devices and data communication facilities, leading to further inequality in the society. During the pandemic period, the closure of schools and universities negatively impacted the mental well-being of students and teachers, also classmates provided each other with social and emotional support. The postponement or cancellation of examinations causes the youth to face uncertainty, anxiety and mental stress. The specially-abled youth face greater challenges with schools being shut, as they depended on these institutions to provide them education, and social, financial and emotional support.

Impact of social distancing & self-isolation norms: The results of the OECD survey conducted in April'20 confirm the occurrence of multiple psychological impacts of social distancing and quarantine measures on the youth community leading to extreme levels of stress, anxiety and loneliness. Evidence from earlier pandemics history proves that domestic violence tendencies seem to enhance during lockdown conditions, and teenagers, children and women are vulnerable to violent behavior by family members.

Impact of fear of contraction of COVID for the elderly community or themselves: When surveys were conducted by youth-led organizations from OECD countries, the youth community expressed that their greatest concern was the well-being of the elderly near and dear ones, the availability of sufficient and effective medical aid for the aged groups in society.

Exhibit 4: The youth community expresses the greatest concern on mental health, employment, disposable income and education due to the impact of COVID-19, April'20
(Source: Youth-and-COVID-19-Response-Recovery-and-Resilience-OECD)

Exhibit 5: Youth trust in government bodies has increased in April 2020



(Source: Youth-and-COVID-19-Response-Recovery-and-Resilience-OECD)

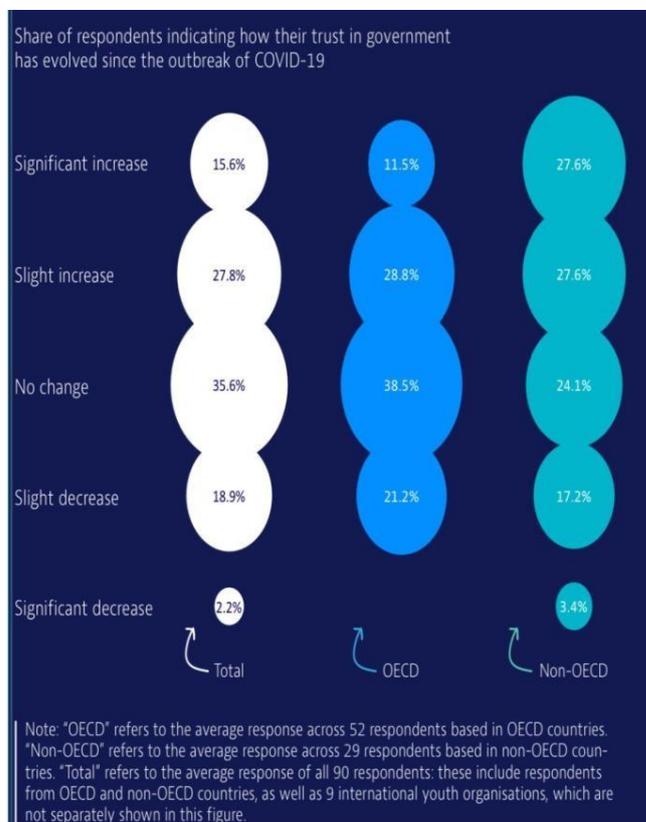


Exhibit 6: Public governance drives changes in trust, April'20
(Source: Youth-and-COVID-19-Response-Recovery-and-Resilience-OECD)



Simple Self Therapeutic Suggestions to Reduce Stress during the Pandemic

During the pandemic depression and grief is a very common feature, as it's a natural response to a significant loss of any kind, namely family separation or the loss of a loved one, the inability to conduct normalcy and daily routines, expected plans and experiences don't seem to happen according to schedule, restricted in-person social interaction, jobs and financial instability. Listed here are some simple self-therapeutic suggestions to reduce stress during the pandemic:

- Try to spend time with friends or family, your loved ones.
- Relax and recharge. Follow a regular sleep schedule and have a busy daily routine.
- Eat a healthy balanced diet.
- Practice yoga regularly, take deep breaths, stretch and meditate.
- Stay active and exercise regularly, even if it's just going for a daily stroll. Physical activity releases chemicals, such as endorphins, in your brain that can help you feel better.
- Reframe your life prospects, think positive. Connect with your community-or faith-based organizations, to build your self-confidence.
- Self-isolation doesn't truly mean to isolate yourself. Help other needy individuals, through online channels, phone calls or video chats, it assists you to forget your own worries. Helping others cope with stress can help you and your loved ones feel less stressed.
- Connect with others and build social networking circles. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and enjoy

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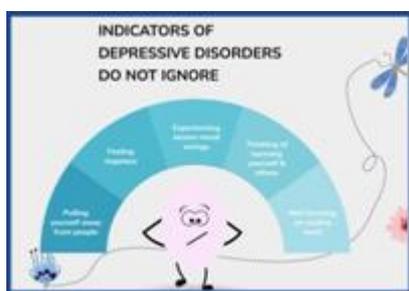
life. Try to do activities you enjoy, unwind and relax.

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- Connect with others and build social networking circles. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and enjoy life. Try to do activities you enjoy, unwind and relax.

Exhibit 7: Symptoms of depression



(Source: Depression treatment | Diagnosis-Symptoms & Causes | TMS)

Exhibit 8: Suggestive therapeutic measures during the pandemic



(Source: Stress and Coping Resources)

Avoid causing or being a symbol of social stigma. Individuals feel isolated, depressed, anxious and even abandoned when others in their community avoid them for fear of getting COVID. Stigmatized communities may often be deprived of the resources, excluded, denied job and educational opportunities, be targets of verbal, emotional and physical abuse, and denied medical care they need for themselves and their families during a pandemic. People who have experienced stigma related to the pandemic maybe, health care workers, people suffering from COVID, the Chinese community and those released from quarantine. You can reduce stigma by:

- Getting to know facts related to the pandemic from reputable sources such as the WHO
- Reaching out to people who feel stigmatized
- Supporting health care workers
- Speaking up if you hear or see inaccurate statements about the pandemic

Conclusion

Mental health services were already over-stretched before the pandemic. In order to respond effectively to the adverse effects of the pandemic on the society's mental health, integrated and cross-sectorial policies to improve mental health support are needed. Through early recognition of distress, broader intervention processes and campaigns can reduce the stigma that surrounds mental health. The youths' mental health issues at the workplace, school and home can be resolved before they grow too big. Also, societal welfare policies, positive social networking opportunities, improved educational and training practices, favorable labor laws and social security systems can solve mental health issues.

Many nations increased mental health funding in their annual budgets, developed new mental health information

centers, informational materials available mostly online, public support online Whatsapp chats, created phone support lines-telemedicine, imparting tips on how to cope up with adversities during the pandemic crisis. These mental health services during the pandemic adapted to digital delivery modes. During 2020, the WHO reported that more than 80% of high-income nations used telemedicine and online therapy to replace in-person mental health consultations, or the use of helplines. These proved to be very effective for the patients, who reported a high level of satisfaction post the therapies.

Since the onset of the pandemic, infinite workers have been jobless, have experienced disruptions in how their work is organized, are on job retention schemes and may not have been at work for a long time. Also, those workers who are employed in essential services, who had to continue to work in person and face an increased risk of exposure to COVID related infections, need to take precautionary steps to protect their health. Many employees needed to suddenly shift to telework, often on a full-time basis, which poses new challenges for the relationship between work and mental health, as managing a work balance and family life can prove to be difficult for working parents, juggling professional responsibilities along with increased childcare and homeschooling burden.

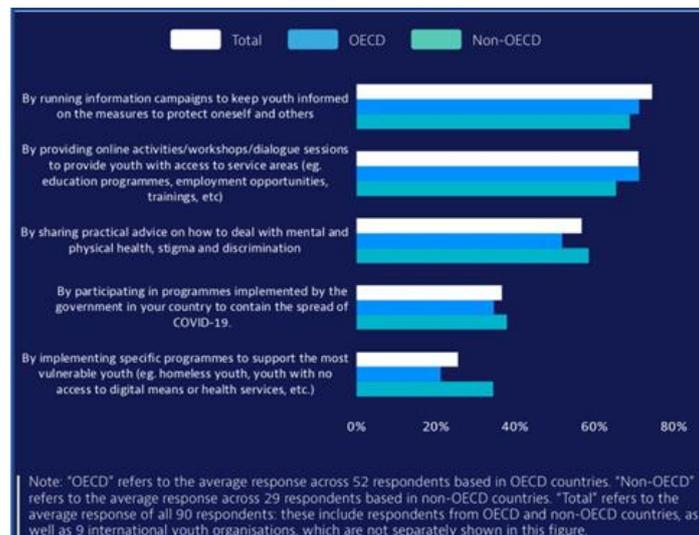
Developed nations have promptly put together measures to protect employment statuses, initiated job retention schemes and income generation strategies, aided in the transition to working from home and assisted in-person essential services employees to undertake precautionary steps to prevent COVID disease infections. Public schemes can contribute to support the mental health of individuals on job retention schemes by reducing work hours, rather than cutting them to zero, and consider amending existing job retention schemes to promote work-sharing and allow partial return to work. Governments should look further at the implications of long-term support for jobseekers through public employment services, counseling and training opportunities remains a significant lever to promote better mental health among the working population. In the private sector, employers are motivated to contribute to support the mental health of employees.

Preventing long-term unemployment should be a priority for all nations, as the longer joblessness lasts, the more detached jobseekers become from the labor market and this proves to be a major challenge for the youth and newly graduated community. The mistakes that occurred during the global financial crisis must not be repeated, when the increase in unemployment far outpaced the rise in spending on active labor market policies. Public participation in active labor market schemes shares some aspects of employment, namely providing a routine structure to daily life, and offering opportunities to network and socialize with new individuals. While supporting job seekers back to work should remain, nations shortly may be looking to scale back elements of their employment services to

Studies prove that mental health treatment alone does not improve employment outcomes for individuals with mental disorders, whereas integrated employment and mental health support has been shown to be effective in improving employment prospects, but implementation of such support schemes still remains lacking on a large scale. Psychiatrists and economists are hopeful that the population burden of mental health conditions returns to the pre-pandemic norm, an all-condition prevalence rate of around 20% of the working-age population and the higher prevalence rate is the „new normal’ only for the short term. Public and private youth organizations are also rebooting campaigns to promote societal resilience.

Globally, youth organizations have collaborated with government bodies to serve as a catalyst to disseminate information among the youth society, help contain the spread of the virus, provide access to educational and learning opportunities, initiate peer-to-peer mental health advice, and promote programs to support adolescents and young adults in quarantine. Such programs also have been significant to mitigate the impact of the closure of schools and support mental health services specifically for the youth, addressing loneliness and anxiety, and promoting social cohesion.

Exhibit 9: Youth organizations are contributing to societal resilience in various ways, April’20



(Source: Youth-and-COVID-19-Response-Recovery-and-Resilience-OECD)

Appendix 1: Surveys to Study The Impact Of The Pandemic On The Mental Health Of The Youth

lockdown, if need be you may tick more than one option

Survey 1: Social Life & Mental Status of the youth during the self lockdown

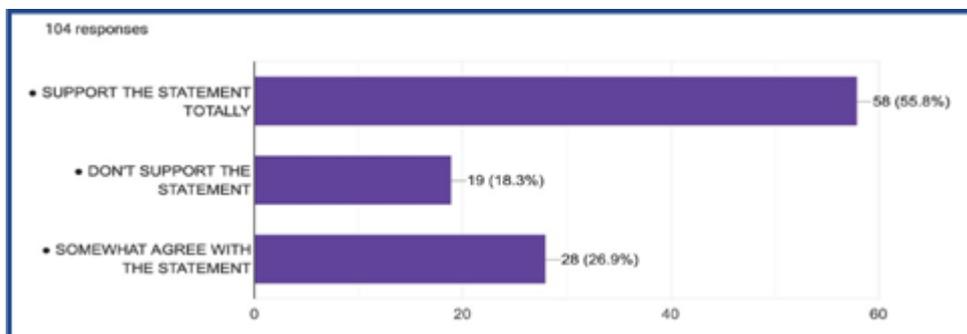
During the COVID era how much do you agree with the statement – “I am confident of the support system of my family & friends”?

Demographics of Survey Respondents

Survey respondents comprise urban Indian youth between the age groups 18-30 years.

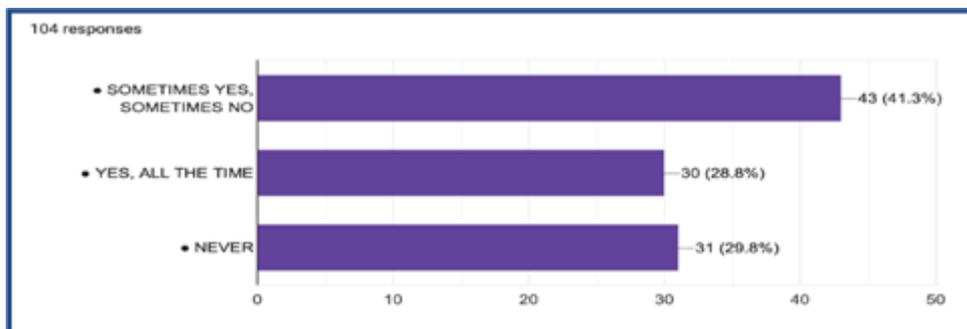
- Support the statement totally
- Don't support the statement
- Somewhat agree with the statement

Tick the answers which you feel describes your life during



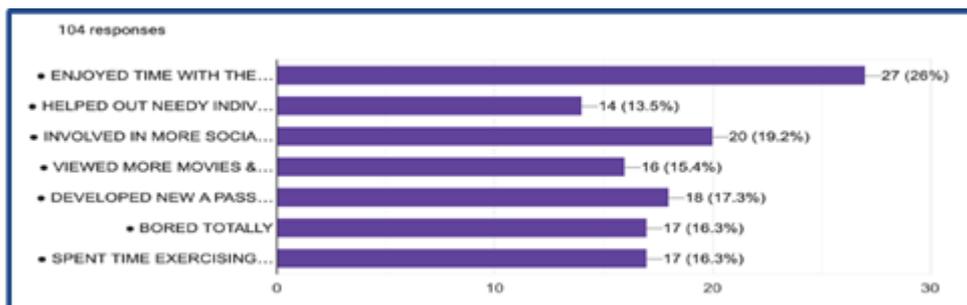
Do you have access to all the necessities that you required during the lockdown period?

- Sometimes yes, sometimes no
- Yes, all the time
- Never



How are you keeping yourself occupied during the COVID- 19 era?

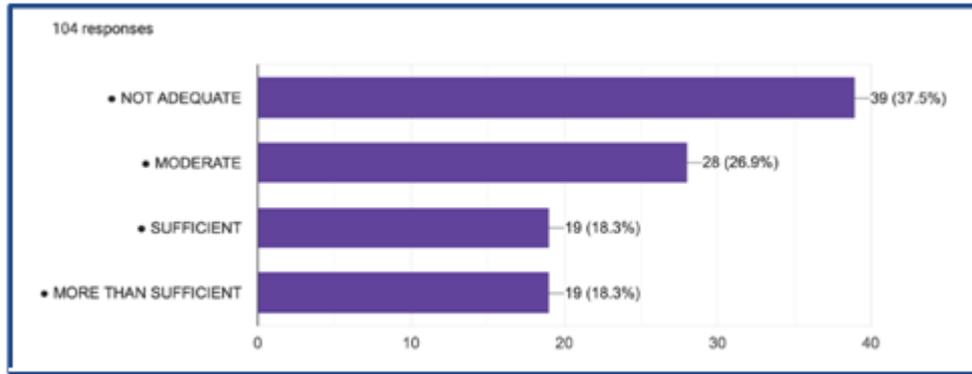
- Enjoyed time with the family
- Helped out needy individuals
- Involved in more social networking activities to remain connected
- Viewed more movies & news channels
- Developed new a pass time
- Bored totally
- Spent time exercising more than regular



How do you perceive the availability of healthcare facilities during the pandemic?

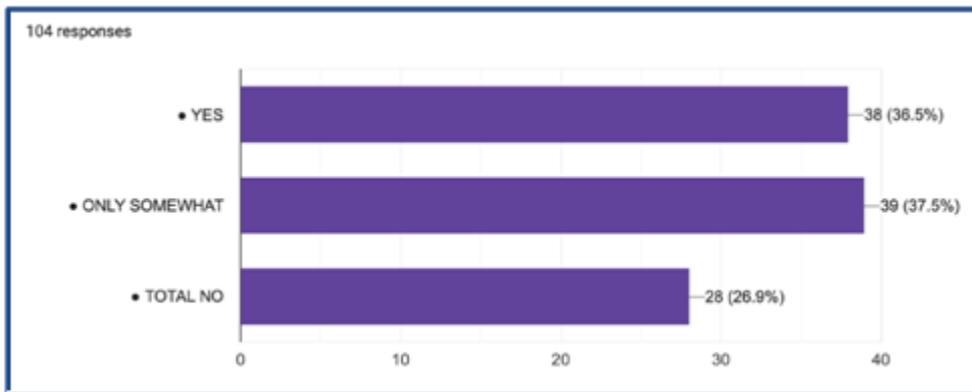
- Not adequate
- Moderate

- Sufficient
- More than sufficient



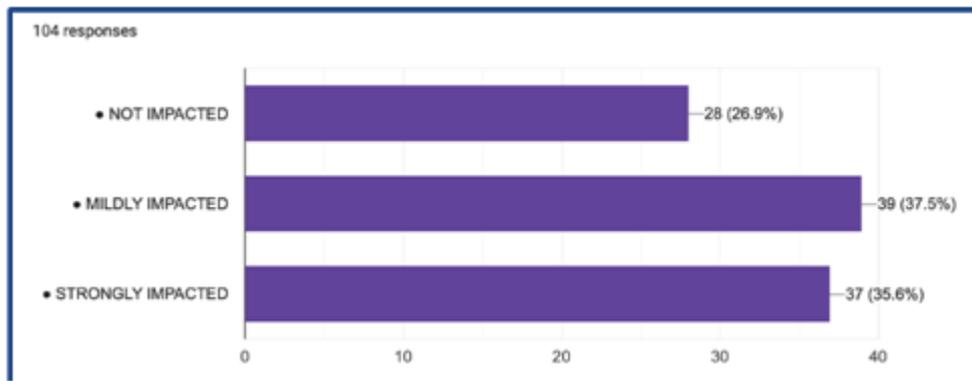
Do you feel safe physically and emotionally under lockdown?

- Yes
- Only somewhat
- Total no



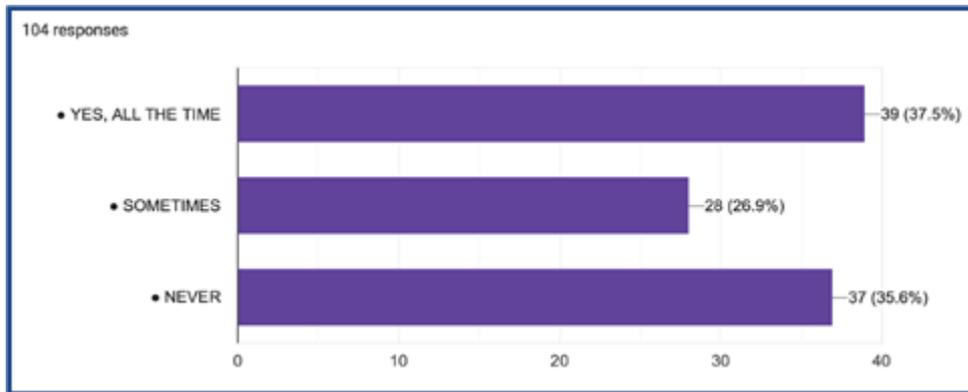
How do you feel your mental health has been impacted during the lockdown?

- Not impacted
- Mildly impacted
- Strongly impacted



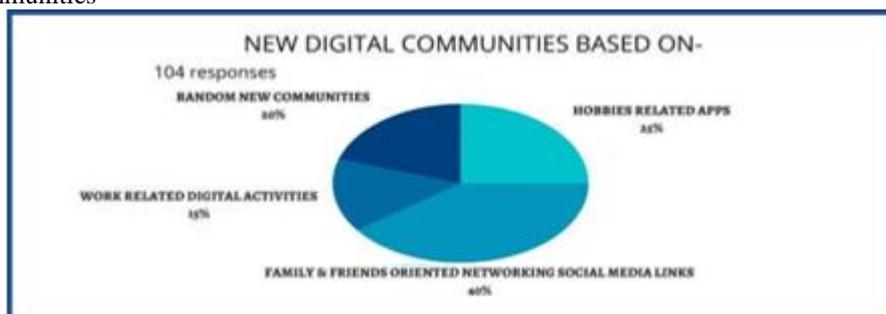
Are you engaged in new digital communities during these difficult times & if yes then what kind of communities?

- Sometimes
- Yes, All The Time
- Never



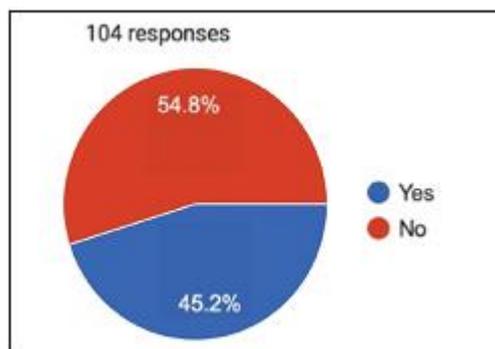
New digital communities based on-

- Hobbies related apps
- Family & friends oriented networking social media links
- Work related digital activities
- Random new communities



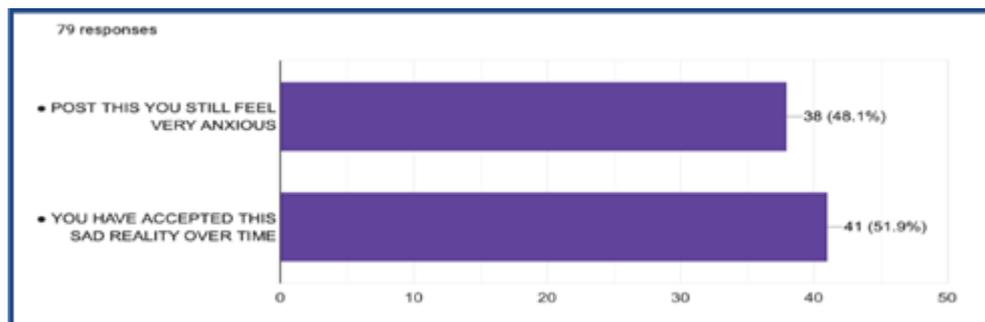
Has the unexpected demise of some close family member or friend due to COVID distributed you thoroughly?

- Yes
- No



If yes please tick the below options-

- Post this you still feel very anxious
- You have accepted this sad reality over time



Survey 2: Unplanned Mass Homeschooling Experiences due to the pandemic

Volume 11 Issue 7, July 2022

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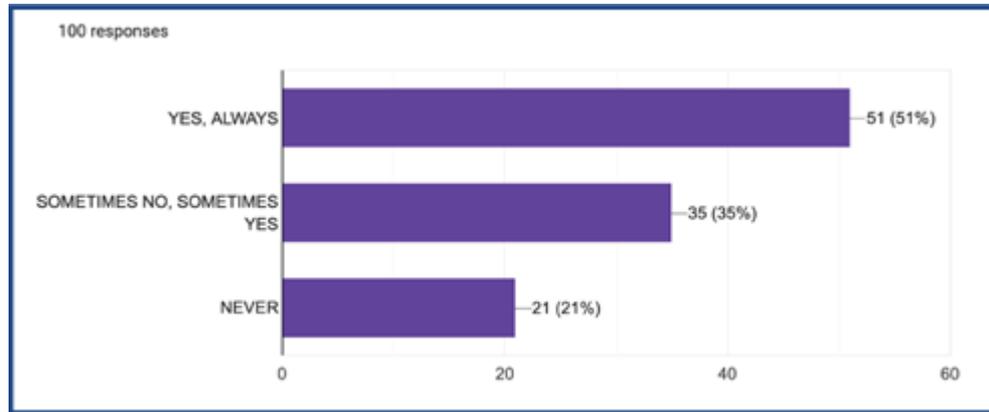
Demographics of Survey Respondents

Survey respondents comprise Indian youth in the age group of 15-25 years, from different educational backgrounds- government schools, private schools, private institutions (Vocational educational Indian & international institutions) and colleges (Indian & foreign colleges).

Tick the answers which you feel are apt for describing your homeschooling experiences, if need be you may tick more than one option

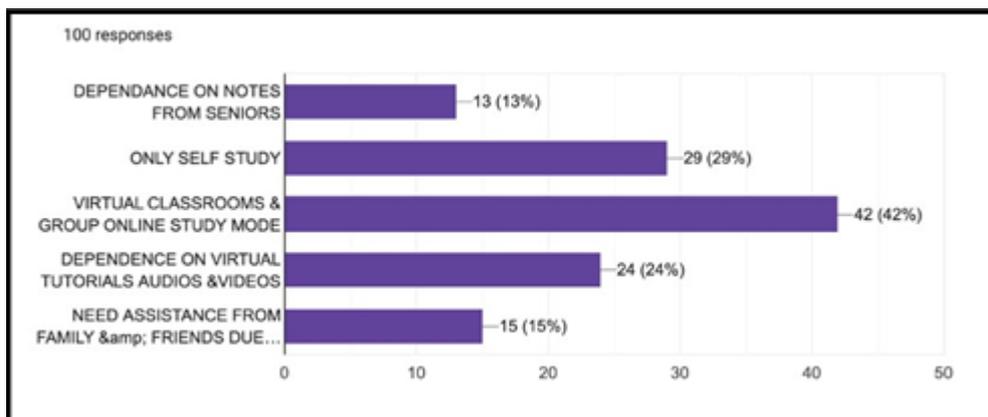
Has your educational institution made provisions for you to continue your studies during the lockdown?

- Yes, always
- Sometimes no, sometimes yes
- Never



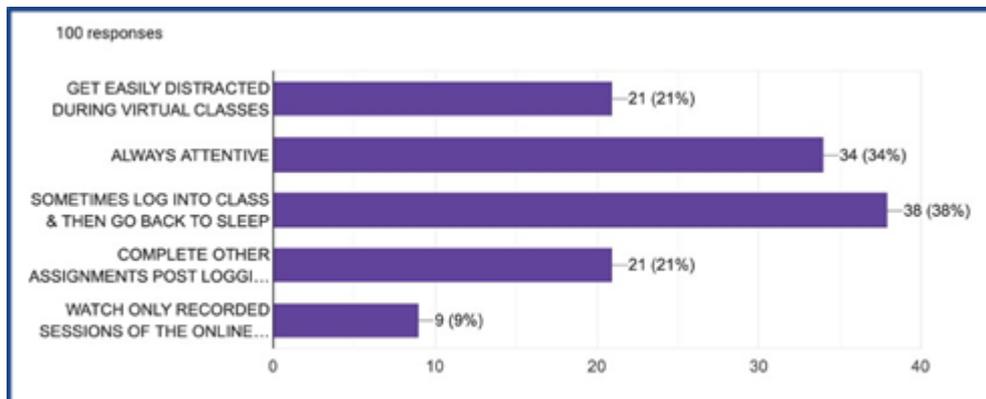
What mode of study do you mostly rely on for homeschooling?

- Dependence on notes from seniors
- Only self study
- Virtual classrooms & group online study mode
- Dependence on virtual tutorials audios & videos
- Need assistance from family & friends due to lack of assistance from School



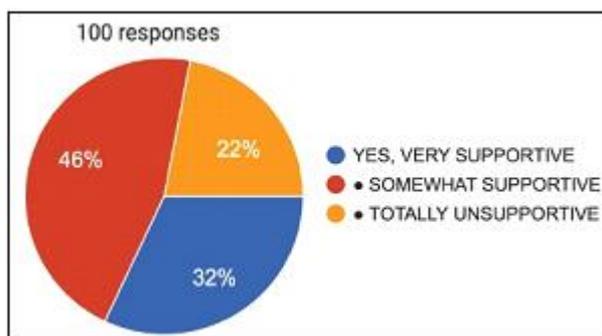
How well are you able to concentrate during virtual lessons?

- Get easily distracted during virtual classes
- Always attentive
- Sometimes log into class & then go back to sleep
- Complete other assignments post logging into class
- Watch only recorded sessions of the online class



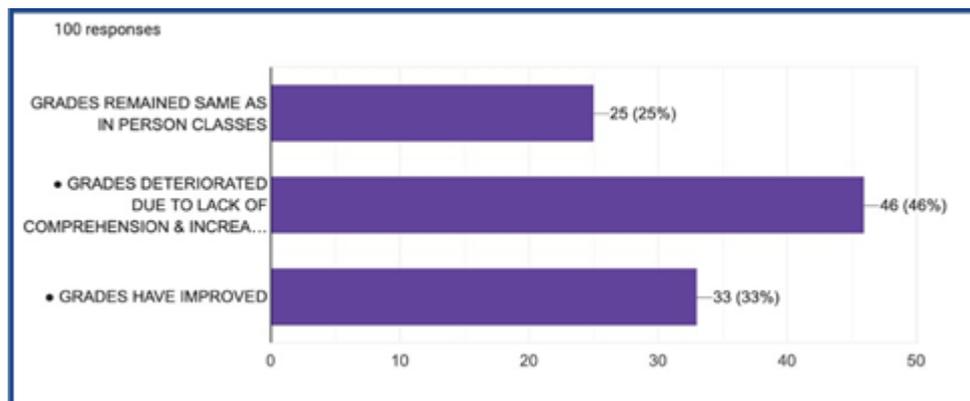
Do you feel that your educational institution has provided you with sufficient support during the lockdown?

- Yes, very supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Totally unsupportive



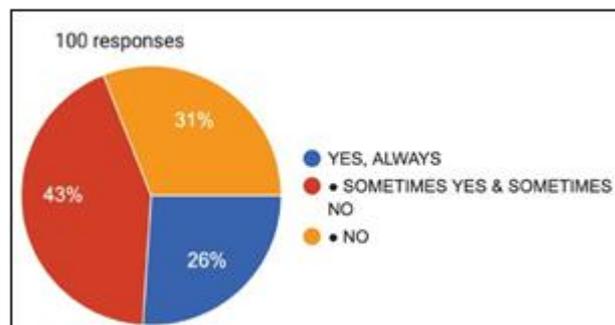
How would you rate your academic performance during the online schooling period?

- Grades during online mode remained constant as compared to in person classes
- Grades deteriorated due to lack of comprehension & increased distractions at home
- Grades have improved



Do you miss having classes with your peers?

- Yes, always
- Sometimes yes & sometimes no
- No



Grade your learning process from home during the

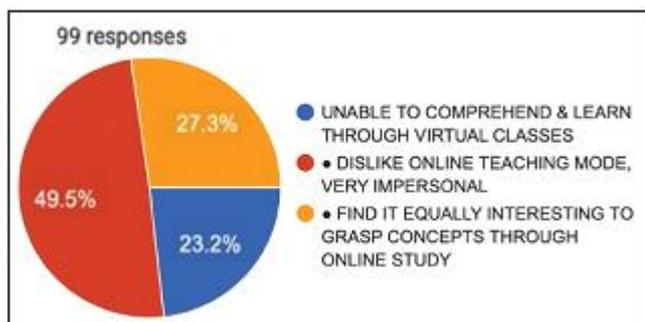
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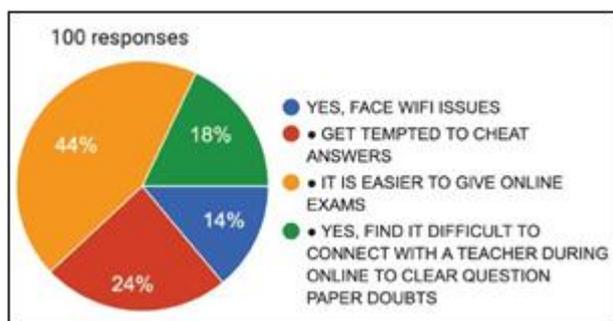
lockdown and compare it to regular classes on school/college campus?

- Unable to comprehend & learn through virtual classes
- Dislike online teaching mode, very impersonal
- Find it equally interesting to grasp concepts through online study



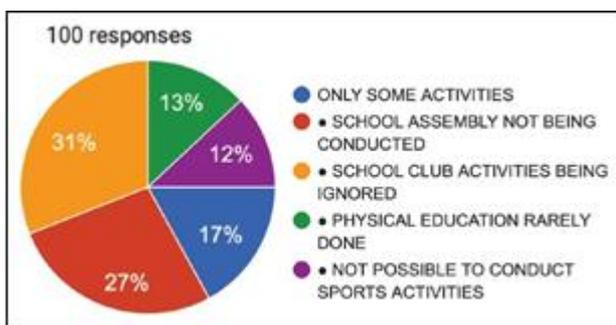
Do you face difficulty giving examinations online?

- Yes, face WiFi issues
- Get tempted to cheat answers
- It's easier to give online exams



Are you enjoying the extracurricular activities during homeschooling sessions?

- Only some activities
- School assembly not being conducted
- School club activities being ignored
- Physical education rarely done
- Not possible to conduct sports activities



Survey 3: The voice of the youth to discuss the impact of the

pandemic on their employment opportunities

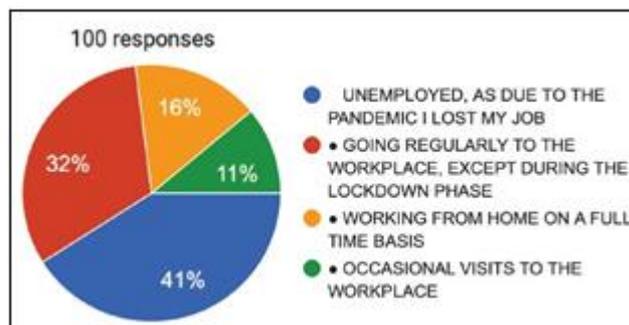
Demographics of Survey Respondents

Survey respondents comprise urban Indian youth between the age group of 21-30 years

Tick the answers which you feel are apt for describing your employment situation impacted due to the pandemic, if need be you may tick more than one option

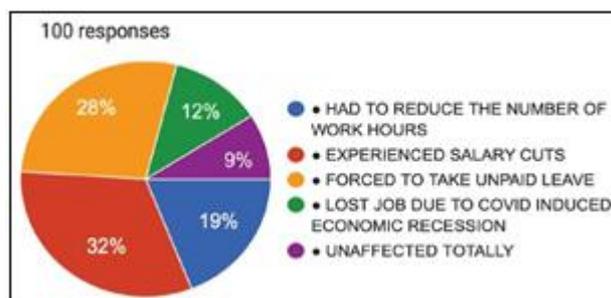
How has the pandemic impacted your employment status?

- Unemployed, as due to the pandemic i lost my job
- Going regularly to the workplace, except during the lockdown phase
- Working from home on a full time basis
- Occasional visits to the workplace



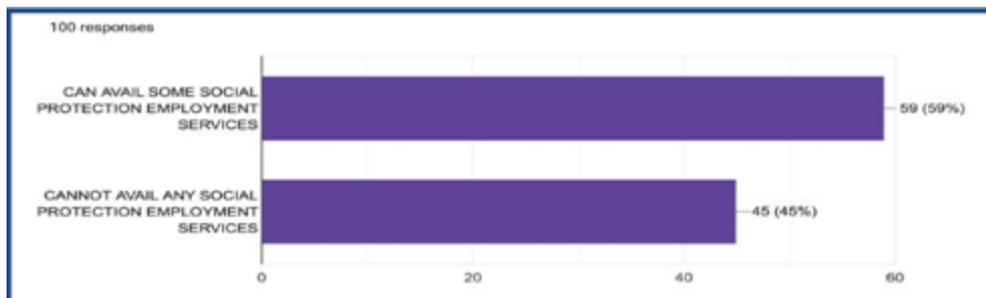
Have you experienced any one or more of the following situations during the pandemic?

- Had to reduce the number of work hours
- Experienced salary cuts
- Forced to take unpaid leave
- Lost job due to COVID induced economic recession
- Unaffected totally



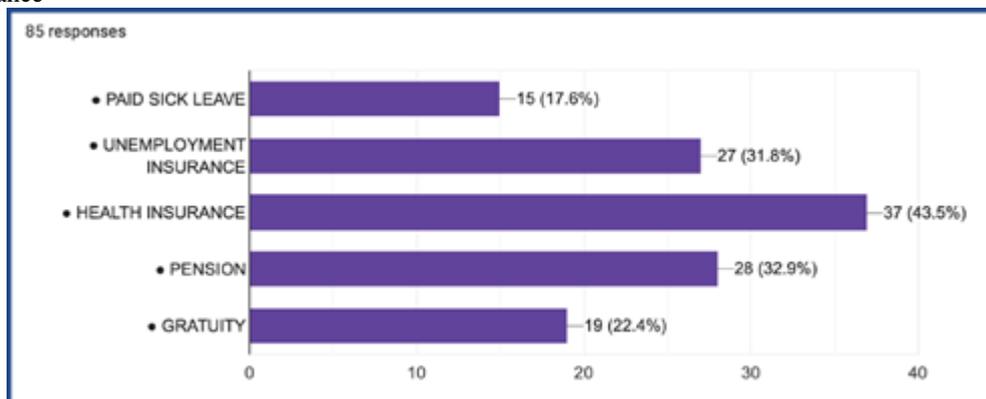
Do you have access to social protection employment services? If yes then tick all the facilities you can avail.

- Can avail some social protection employment services
- Cannot avail any social protection employment services



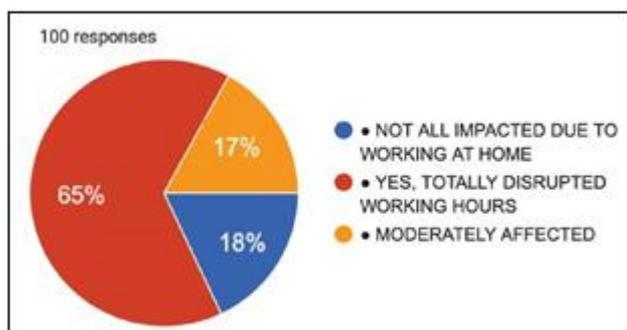
Employment benefits you can avail of-

- Paid sick leave
- Unemployment insurance
- Health insurance
- Pension
- Gratuity



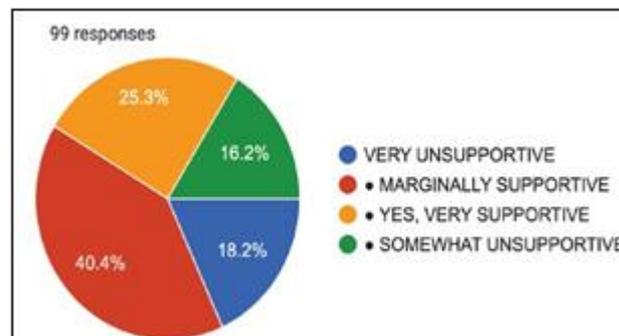
Has your domestic life been impacted by working from home during the lockdown period?

- Not all impacted due to working at home
- Yes, totally disrupted working hours
- Moderately affected



Has your employer provided you with sufficient financial support during the pandemic?

- Very unsupportive
- Marginally supportive
- Yes, very supportive
- Somewhat unsupportive



Appendix 2: Interview Section

Interview with a Psychologist



Mrs. Meenu Kalra

Profession-Psychology Teacher
 Qualifications-B. A. (Hons) in Psychology, M. A. Psychology, Post Graduate Diploma in Educational and Vocational Guidance

Q.1. According to you, what factor made the youth most insecure during the pandemic?

A.1. Since the independence of the youth has been curbed and they are being continuously checked, it has made them insecure during the pandemic. In the past the youth could simply walk out of the house, but now there are restrictions imposed on them. Also, being trapped in the domestic environment for long can lead to negativity and anxiousness. Distanced and disengaged relationships between friends and an alleged partner can prove to be extremely difficult.

Q.2. With the increase in human stress levels during the pandemic, have domestic violence incidents increased among the Indian youth?

A.2. Yes, domestic violence has increased because of increased frustration. This takes place especially between siblings and life partners, as there have been disputes over disagreement of choices and stress levels have been high due to lifestyle changes, financial challenges and constant emotional breakdowns.

Q.3. To what extent does the youth view the lockdown as a necessary precaution? And do they follow the self-lockdown guidelines seriously?

A.3. The youth felt that the lockdown led to distancing relationships, revenue losses, increased unemployment levels, caused unnecessary restrictions and downed productivity and they felt that the lockdown could have been better managed. They thought that the lockdown wasn't necessary for them and they were not following it very seriously. The young individuals used excuses to break lockdown rules and got tempted to go out.

Q.4. What social media sources does the Indian youth rely on to update themselves on significant information regarding their mental well-being during the pandemic? Also, how do you assess the quality of this available information?

A.4. The youth community being digital-friendly depends on social media resources such as Instagram and Facebook, to gain significant information regarding the pandemic and related mental issues. And the quality of the news is more rumors and fake news that is exaggerated than real and true information.

Q.5. What do the Indian youth think is needed most right now during this pandemic in terms of-emotional and mental support, employment security and building of adequate online educational opportunities?

A.5. Many businesses and startups have experienced financial challenges, there have been transformational changes in educational strategies and relationships have been distanced and strained, which has led to mental insecurity and needs immediate remedial action. The youth needs mental and emotional support from friends and family, they should be trained for online jobs and online educational activities should be made more attractive so that students can concentrate.

Q.6. Do you believe that the youth trust the government in responding effectively to the ongoing COVID crisis?

A.6. I don't think the youth trusted the government. They had their own ideas in order to make things better. They believe the mismanagement of the lockdown, the inadequacy of physical and mental healthcare facilities, the low level of economic activities and the unfair treatment of the migrant workers should have been better taken care of by public organizations.

Interview with an Educationalist



Pooja Kapoor

Profession-School Counselor Qualifications – B. Sc. in Zoology, Botany & Chemistry, M. A. in Psychology, M. Ed.

Q.1. The pandemic has caused the traditional education pattern to be edged out by virtual teaching and learning strategies. A majority of students aren't satisfied with online classes and view it as a band aid, a temporary measure to solve impact on education, but by no means is a replacement for an on-campus educational experience. Also some students wish to take a gap year as they aren't satisfied with online teaching trends. Briefly comment on this to advise students on the right path.

A.1. Every aspect of life is now digital-shopping, socializing, entertainment. The future is digital, so education can also be digital too and education should not be kept on a different pedestal. Technology won't negatively impact the future, problems happened because people stayed at home as schools were closed, so they couldn't experience holistic learning patterns. Online helped to cater to many learning styles. Pandemic disrupted the mainstream method of education-the traditional method of teaching and learning, but we should take it positively. If we had not adapted to a new methodology for teaching, then two years of education would have been halted and wiped off the educational system. Online classes helped to carry on education even though it may not be as per expectations of the students and teachers. Students would have lost touch with teachers and education as there would be a very big social gap.

A gap year should not be decided according to trends in education but by personal choices. Online classes were a temporary phase but it was the best thing in the prevailing situation.

Now this online tool is a good thing for even in the future. Online education made education possible in any corner of the world.

Q.2. In a country like India which depended majorly on in person teaching trends, in person individual and group testing techniques based on subjective and not objective methodology, now overnight has taken a three hundred and

sixty degree change with totally online classes and testing techniques. How do you think this will impact the students' future, specifically for those who are in the crucial stages of schooling or universities?

A.2. Changing something overnight is not a good thing, it could have been done slowly but it was the need of the hour. Objective technology is good because all universities in the States as well as other parts of the world have this so it was high time when students came out of the habit of rote learning and spilling. Objective questions are better because they test more application and problem solving skills than the subjective questions. At school level, this thing should gradually be bought.

Q.3. Going abroad to study is the pursuit that begins many years prior to it, reflecting student aspirations, hard work and their family's savings. The global pandemic and the subsequent nationwide lockdowns caused economic downturns and enforced restrictive immigration policies hampering the future of millions of Indian students. Given these long term investments accomplished by students, they are currently feeling disillusioned and disappointed. How can counselors guide students in such a situation? Please state your views on this topic.

A.3. The number of people applying to colleges abroad has decreased a lot. Slowly when vaccines were introduced, the students and their families felt safer. Pandemic has made universities offer scholarships like never before. Due to the pandemic the number of Chinese students being accepted is reduced but now there are better scholarships all over the world. Post pandemic visa rules have also changed and there have been delays in visa stamps. We cannot compare going abroad 5 years later to 5 years before. Like in the present conditions are better. Investment is there but there is a good return in the form of exposure. Bad things were happening to everyone in this pandemic and this is a good time to go out. But focus should be to go where one gets a good course and desired subject.

Interview with an Economist



Mayank Agrawal

Profession: CEO at Gallantt TMT (One of the growing companies in Uttar Pradesh, India, engaged in the manufacturing and marketing of Sponge Iron Mild steel billets Re-Rolled products.)

Qualification: B. B. A. from the Amity Business School, India

Q.1. According to the Bloomberg report analysis in August 2020, the pandemic caused a loss of employment of 4.1 million for the Indian youth. The report also states that the youth also are likely to be hit harder than others in terms of the immediate crisis and have higher risk bearing longer-term economic and social costs. What measures do you suggest for the economy to regain its strength and help the youth to re-bounce back to employment opportunities?

A.1. India is a densely populated country and the sudden emergence of the pandemic hit our nation extremely hard. Our nation's economy is youth based, especially the age group between 18-25 years, who are employed basically in four sectors namely-wholesale, retail, manufacturing and food and hospitality services, which have been impacted the most by the pandemic crises. Hence, the government should take up measures to unlock all the sectors and provide employment opportunities to all the youth as per their capabilities. Also, in the unorganized sectors the government should increase the labor forces to bring the economy back on track by creating more job opportunities, maintaining social distancing norms. Public bodies should provide employment opportunities in the retail trade sectors and in reality sectors by inducing an incentive system and increasing the working hours of laborers, as these two sectors were adversely affected during the pandemic period.

Q.2. Many employees in the unorganized sector cannot avail social benefits such as medical insurance, sick leaves etc. How many such benefits have the Indian youth working in the unorganized sector been deprived of due to the growing pandemic?

A.2. The total lockdown period was more than a month in multiple phases and this means a loss of income of more than a month, for 430 million informal workers. The unorganized sector employees couldn't avail even the basic benefits such as free food grains and pulses, because they don't have necessary documents such as ration cards. On the other hand, the contractual and other precarious workers employed in the organized sector do not have their KYC documents completed and a portable EPF account. Due to this they are not able to get the EPF subvention scheme benefits nor are they able to withdraw their own funds from the EPF accounts. Also, the MSME establishments were forced to shut down due to the absence of liquidity or revenue, and even the well-meaning employers were unable to pay the wages to their workers. The central government didn't announce any immediate credible and comprehensive relief measures to the poor informal workers. The MGNREGA, an economic public welfare scheme which offers support to marginalized groups, due to poor implementation issues is reflected as pending in several areas. So in my view, there are so many other benefits deprived due to the growing pandemic.

Q.3. Social distancing measures have caused employment disruptions in the form of reduced working hours and earnings, and job losses for both paid workers and the self-employed; also limiting transitions between jobs is restricted in an economic recession. What regulations should the government ensure to boost employment specifically for the youth working in the unorganized sector?

A.3. Social distancing creates mass employment disruptions, but this precaution is very necessary to prevent the spread of this pandemic. Globally, all nations have embraced some form of social distancing systems, to curtail the momentum of transmission of the virus and allow the health care systems to design aids for assisting people with severe impacts.

Currently, the Indian government announced an emergency program to provide both short term and long term economic relaxation by giving tax exemption to all citizens who are directly depositing funds in the prime minister emergency relief fund. The objective is to assist the economically vulnerable sections of the nation who were unemployed during the pandemic waves. Also, the Indian government later planned to ensure that all the employees who constitute the unorganized sectors would be enlisted under the Unorganized Workers Society Act, 2008. The Indian government attempted to issue maximum smart portable electronic chip-based registration-cum-identification cards as envisaged under this act. However, this didn't cover the anticipated population and direct benefit transfer to these millions of workers wasn't possible.

Also, labor unions need to employ not merely organizing strategies but also initiate legal battles in the courts to fight for the rights of such workers, lobby with the government and network with like-minded organizations to assist vulnerable groups. In order to boost employment, public bodies should make regulations to open all the sectors with detailed safety measures and enhance the working hours with an incentivized system. In this manner the economy will also come on the track and unorganized laborers and workers will benefit.

Q.4. In India, two-thirds of firm-level apprenticeships and three quarters of internships were completely interrupted during the pandemic. This calls for the Indian government to adopt urgent, large-scale and targeted measures to generate employment opportunities for the youth and keep education and training on track to minimize the future scarring of millions of youth. What are your views on how the youth could continue with training opportunities in their respective fields to make the best of the situation?

A.4. The pandemic put a halt to all the jobs in progress and infinite projects indefinitely, across the globe. The youth community is economically vulnerable as they have limited savings, lesser asset accumulation and scarce work experience. The job disruptions have taken place in the following manner:

- 1) Curtailed working hours and earnings, job opportunity losses for both paid workers and the self-employed.
- 2) Disruptions in education and apprenticeship training programs.
- 3) Difficulties in liaising between jobs in a recession.

So in my view, few crucial, large-scale and targeted ways of tackling the crisis in India are listed below:

- 1) Public bodies must lay down measures to mitigate the

impact on students of the disruption to their education and training.

- 2) Implement youth targeted wage subsidies and public employment programs.
- 3) The government must include youth in the wider labor market and economic recovery measures.
- 4) Prioritizing youth employment in the pandemic recovery process for inclusive and sustainable growth.

Appendix 3: Learning Impact

Examining the unfavorable consequences of the pandemic crisis, it is essential for the targeted program interventions to boost the economy generally and specifically the most vulnerable section of our society in this aspect which is the youth. Below stated are some reforms and suggestions, which I believe will assist in diminishing the mental burden of the youth due to the pandemic.

Social Reforms

- 1) The public health care system needs to take aggressive steps to prevent the spread of the pandemic and provide for adequate medical aid to COVID suffering patients. This would deter the general youth society from being fearful of the fact they wouldn't be given adequate medical care if need be, as the youth are subjected to high levels of exposure related to the pandemic, due to their work obligations.
- 2) Improved Wi-Fi access accessibility should be transmitted to the interior regions of India, so that all residents are eligible to operate these services to mentally engage themselves in de-stressing activities such as yoga, listening to music, watching movies or even using it as an online educational resource.
- 3) Free of expense online mental health clinics and phone help lines need to be connected, so individuals can be relieved of their tensions and mental strain, especially the youth who carry the responsibility to support and fund their families.
- 4) There are reports of increasing domestic violence against young women, due built up financial and work related frustrations for the male genders. The concerned government authorities need to establish centers to deal with young women in distress and needs. The police need to be vigilant and respond to distress calls from women urgently.

Educational Reforms

- 1) Rapid modifications in syllabus need to be executed for virtual methodology, to lessen students' anxiety.
- 2) Virtual extra-curricular activities need to be boosted for the online educational strategy, to formulate the learning experiences further to be diversified and engaging.
- 3) One-on-one doubt tutorials should be delivered to learners using a virtual strategy, as this considerably diminishes the anxiety for students.
- 4) The education ministry should formulate adequate online learning strategies, as frequently during lessons the pupil experiences that the teacher's voice is not audible and the information written on the blackboard isn't readable.
- 5) Multiple exploration and research assignments should be counted towards the educational grading system, as

this enriches students' exposure and knowledge far more than a single textbook and is a practical solution for online study techniques.

Economic Reforms

- 1) The public bodies should provide stimuli such as monetary aid, deduction in power and water charges for businesses and tax relaxation to businesses against retaining their employees. This retention of workers is important for the youth, as it influences their future career prospects and earning potential.
- 2) Massive corporate houses with adequate reserves should acquire their raw materials from regional startups and small firms run by the youth, which have run into losses during the lockdown. This would stimulate the economy at the grass root levels.
- 3) The rising unemployment situation among the Indian youth and the probability of a prolonged economic slump calls for launching employment programs, like the expansion of MGNREGA in urban areas as well. An integrated strategy which would encompass macroeconomic reforms and sectorial programs for employment innovation would be a productive strategy to uphold the development levels.
- 4) The current pandemic, underscores the provision of the universal essential income to provide a safety net for the youth community. Rapid and dependable policy concerns should facilitate government assistance towards providing revenue support to youth daily breadwinners. Such workers in the urban areas have been unemployed due to the pandemic, so cash transfer along with the provision of food essentials through PDS would be a vital effort in mitigating their distress. Also, social protection measures such as unemployment benefits for youth through effective monetary policies would provide consolation to youth impacted by the pandemic.
- 5) Public bodies and configurations of several "Anganwadi" were responsible to provide mid-day school meals to pupils at their respective public schools. However, due to the lockdown and schools being closed for many months, these facilities have been withdrawn from students in the most critical periods of the economic emergency. Hence, the state should resume providing these services to student's homes, during and post lockdown till school closures are continued. There should be the distribution of dry rations, ready-to-eat food packages, fruits and nuts and frequent disbursement of midday meals to such beneficiaries.
- 6) Public bodies and big industrial businesses should engage in taking the responsibility of investing in extensive short-term training and skill progress programs for the youth, along with youth awareness of social protection schemes, which will improve the likelihood of them discovering job opportunities in thriving sectors post the pandemic. This will benefit in restricting the long-term consequences of the pandemic on the youth labor market.

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