

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Sanchaita Nath

M.Ed. student

Department of Teacher Education,
The West Bengal University of Teachers' Training,
Education Planning and Administration, West Bengal

Mobile No. 9432108637/967443107

Email id: sanchaitanath2@gmail.com

Abstract:

It is very difficult to maintain a proper healthy lifestyle when we all are in the middle of a crisis like pandemic COVID-19. The uncertainty and worries related to education, finances, childcare, elderly parents, and job security crumble up our daily routines, our lifestyles and mental health. The education sector has very much affected in Indian scenario. The impact of pandemic COVID-19 has affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the near total closures of schools, universities and colleges. So far as due to the pandemic situation mostly all of the institutions are going to adapt the online learning over traditional learning. Therefore, we notice that there is a paradigm shift in educational sector. Moreover, we also look out that all students and teachers cannot come under the online learning for various kinds of reasons. As a result, stress is increasing among them day by day. The students have to cope up the new normal situation and try to overcome their stressful situation.

Key Words: Stress, Mental health, online learning, New Normal

INTRODUCTION:

Stress is a very common physical and mental reaction to life experiences. Everyone expresses his or her stress from time to time. Anything from everyday responsibilities like work and family to serious life events such as epidemic, a new diagnosis, or the death of a loved one can responsible for stress (Drake R.E., Whitley



R. (2014). Recovery and severe mental illness: description and analysis). Due to pandemic COVID-19 there is a massive change in the whole scenario of Indian Education System. There is a robust education system in India from the ancient time period. Now the paradigm of education system has shifted from actuality to virtuality on basically focusing on education. Virtual system has influenced in every aspect of our life in one way or other (Zhai, Y. & Du, X. (2020). Addressing collegiate mental health amid COVID-19 pandemic). During COVID-19 virtual education has played a more important role in India. The teachers of several schools have reported that students have become more restrained in class and the energy level is much less than the previous situation. Months of being on the gadget screen has made the students so much fatigued and demotivated. As a result, education has drastically changed with the distinctive emergence of e-learning on digital platforms. It will help reduce the number of spread among students. At the same, it has resulted in stress, lack of interest, adverse health effects in students. Only teachers, the builders of our nation must take the noble responsibility and help the students to cope up the new normal situation and also help to come out and manage the stresses which are related with the life and education (Bergmann, J. & Sams, A. (2012). Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day).

CAUSES OF STRESS AND DEMOTIVATION IN ONLINE CLASS DURING THE SITUATION OF COVID-19:

People all over the world are facing increasing the several mental health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. People at risk of abuse, employees facing job uncertainty and education of children are among those most at risk. So, the causes of stress and demotivation in students are:

- 1) **Social Distancing:** It is creating one of the very important challenges within students. It is because they have to maintain so many rules and regulations to prevent the pandemic.
- 2) **Upcoming Tests and too much Homework:** Stress about getting a good grade and frustration of too much homework creates stress and demotivation in students.



- 3) **Lack of Organization and Poor Sleep Schedule:** Students with poor organizational skills and sleeplessness face huge stress and lack of motivation in any situation.
- 4) **Gaps in Institutional support:** These are creating a very extensive problem in front of the students.
- 5) **Lack of Support and Hormonal Changes:** It has been observed that lack of support from family, friends and teachers can affect the mental health of the students. Moreover, continuous hormonal changes make the condition worse.
- 6) **Lack of Motivation Level:** When we experience a positive reward, the level of dopamine rises and we are motivated. When the level of dopamine levels is low, we do not feel like doing anything (Brock, M. P. (2016). Unpacking the Problem of Unmotivated Online Students).
- 7) **Lack of Verbal Communication:** If schools have closed as part of necessary measures, then children may no longer have that sense of structure and stimulation that is provided by that environment, and now they have less opportunity to be with their friends and get that social support that is essential for good mental well-being.
- 8) **Quiet and Subdued:** Even the students who are academically strong have not been responding like they used to. The mischievous students who would always be up to something in their classrooms have become quiet and subdued during online classes.
- 9) **Lack of Motivation in interaction:** The students are asking very few questions in classes now. It cannot be that all of them are following the lecture and have no doubts at all (Torales, J., Higgins, M. O., Castaldelli-Maia, J. M., & Ventriglio, A. (2020). The outbreak of COVID-19 coronavirus and its impact on global mental health). Even when the devices are not on mute, there is hardly any conversation or noise. The students are quiet during class time (Brock, M. P. (2016). Unpacking the Problem of Unmotivated Online Students).
- 10) **Felling Monotonous:** Teachers are trying but online classes are not the same as what school was for children. No wonder they are feeling demotivated and fatigued. They have to attend continuous classes on the screen, at times not on



laptops but on phones. All this while there is monotony of the same environment. It's difficult to maintain a sense of well-being.

- 11) **Lack of Interest of giving answer:** In several classes, most children answer in monosyllables. In a physical classroom, I would discuss things not related to academics and they would eagerly share their experiences, but now, they hardly respond. Maybe they do not have anything to share because they are not going out, or they are not interested.
- 12) **Lack of Involvement:** In the online classes, teachers tend to address questions to the same group of students, which makes others feel less involved of students.
- 13) **Conflict of interest:** It is creating a very big issue inside the mind of the students. The allegation has been there even in classrooms but the impact can be far more negative in online classes where personal contact or a more regular communication is absent, according to the heads of some schools.

IMPACT OF ONLINE LEARNING ON STUDENTS:

- 1) **Lack of Sleep:** Students in different time zones than their institutions are now sacrificing sleep to wake up for classes on various video conferencing platform.
- 2) **Screen Space:** Virtual learning has inevitably increased the amount of time students spend on digital devices every day.
- 3) **Distraction:** Lack of interaction and engagement in the online discussions has been observed due to sleeplessness and eye pain.
- 4) **Lack of Teamwork:** normally students learn how to work together in schools through various projects. Online learning deprives the students from learning the art of teamwork.
- 5) **Impact on Health:** Several health issues are there during online classes. Such as:
 - i) **Laziness:** Students have been observed missing due dates and having incomplete work due to laziness after online classes.
 - ii) **Irritation:** Sticking to a particular place for the whole day in front of screen makes the students irritable.
 - iii) **Weight Gain and Obesity:** Due to lack of adequate physical activities, students are tending to gain weight than usual resulting in obesity.



iv) **Weakness of Eyesight:** Due to maximum screen space. Dryness occurs in the eyes, which can adversely affect the vision of a child as well as an adult.

IMPACT OF ONLINE LEARNING ON TEACHERS:

A teacher when teaches through online teaching, lectures are completely different than face-to-face mode of learning environments. Unfortunately, all too often, online courses are still imagined as in-class courses without the in-class part, with an archive of PowerPoint presentations and a list of recommended readings as the core part of the teaching experience.

In online learning environments, it is important to help students engage with course material in a way that makes sense for them. Providing them with ample flexible opportunities to reinforce course concepts will ensure that learning material sticks with them, even after they have completed their final assessment. Especially when students are learning remotely, educators must recognize that students will only engage with course materials if they see them as valuable. With digital courseware, online teachers can adopt or create a customizable interactive textbook to extend active learning outside of class meetings. With in-line interactive questions, it is easy to track completion and comprehension of course content. These questions can be used to introduce new concepts, reinforce students' understanding of topics and assess learning. Instructors can also easily export grades and participation data to their learning management system.

ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS:

Online learning has revolutionized the educational sector, and it has changed the way knowledge and skill acquisition is viewed. Because of modern educational technology, online learning tools and techniques just keep getting bigger and better. Today, they are providing learners with a more impressive, and effective educational experience to the students (Everett, D.R. (2015). Adding Value: Online Student Engagement). The major challenge of online learning is disparity in access from electricity and internet connections to devices like computer or smartphones. Access



to electricity is crucial for digital education, both for powering devices as well as for connecting to the internet (Eryilmaz, E., Thoms, B., Mary, J., Kim R. & Pol, J. V. (2014). Attention Guidance in Online Learning Conversations).

The ruling government has launched various types of programs under the initiatives such as “Digital India” and “Skill India” to spread digital literacy, create a knowledge-based society in India, and implement three principles “access, equity and quality” of the Education Policy. The government of India has launched so many programs, such as:

- i) **e- Basta:** The books of the schools are available in digital form.
- ii) **e- Education:** All schools connected with broadband and free Wi-Fi in all schools and develop MOOCs develop pilot Massive Online Open Courses.
- iii) **SWAYAM:** MOOCs based on curriculum taught in classrooms from 9th class till post-graduation.
- iv) **India Skills Online:** Learning portal for skill training.

The other platforms of providing online classes are:

- v) **Zoom:** It is a platform of taking online meeting. It is temporarily lifting the 40 minutes time limit on free basic accounts for schools affected by the COVID-19.
- vi) **Google Meet:** It is again a platform of taking real-time online meetings by Google. Everyone is using the browser, share videos, desktop and presentations with teammates and customers.
- vii) **Google Classroom:** It is a free web service developed by Google for schools that aims to simplify creating, distributing, and grading assignments. The primary purpose of Google Classroom is to streamline the process of sharing files between teachers and students.
- viii) **Skype:** It is just like stay in touch. Free online calls, messaging, affordable international calling to mobiles or landlines and instant online meetings on Skype.
- ix) **Microsoft Teams:** It is another hub for teamwork, which brings together everything a team needs: chat and threaded conversations, meetings & video conferencing, calling, content collaboration with the power of Microsoft



365 applications, and the ability to create and integrate apps and workflows that your business relies on. It is also using as a platform of online education.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Some recommendations are there for improving the students' stress and motivation level during online classes. Such as:

- 1) **Be in control of what student do:** Elders should help their children for what they do during the quarantine period. All people are stressed because of this pandemic situation. Teachers have the ability to understand and control the stressful situation, so they can take care of themselves but students do not have the ability (Torales, J., Higgins, M. O., Castaldelli-Maia, J. M., & Ventriglio, A. (2020). The outbreak of COVID-19 coronavirus and its impact on global mental health). For that reason, teachers and parents should help the students.
- 2) **Be in control of what student think:** There are many good and bad thoughts coming in the minds of students for the pandemic COVID-19 (Brock, M. P. (2016). Unpacking the Problem of Unmotivated Online Students). So, teachers and parents remove all those worries and move them on the right path and help them their education.
- 3) **Be in control of what student cannot change:** Student cannot transform this pandemic situation. So, they have to take care of their mind properly. They can monitor their mental health and follow some religious and spiritual practices. Check the various resources online (Bergmann, J. & Sams, A. (2012). Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day). If they feel their mental health declining, reach out for help. They can also contact mental health professional for seeking help.
- 4) **Be in control of what student can:** They can engage such activities they enjoy. They should attempt to maintain a proper routine. They also try to achieve new goals. They must pace themselves between stressful activities and does something fun after completing a hard task.



- 5) **Take care of information gathering:** They should limit their media exposure. They do not inflate the risk and do not dwell on statistics. They should stay informed with accurate, reliable information through trusted resources and only read factual, science-based resources. They should avoid the herd mentality and stay away from social media posts about COVID-19.
- 6) **Learning through online mode:** Online learning is very different from traditional classroom learning. There is no face-to-face interaction with the learners, you don't get to see or hear them in real-time, and hence you don't even get to know their reaction to what you deliver. But to successfully attain the learning objectives, it is essential that learners engage well with the course (Keeping Kids Motivated for Online Learning (2020). The course developer needs to figure out ways that help catch their attention and engage them to the course. So, we can see a paradigm shift in the education sectors all over the world (Eryilmaz, E., Thoms, B., Mary, J., Kim R. & Pol, J. V. (2014). Attention Guidance in Online Learning Conversations).
- 7) **Accept the new Normal situation:** Faced with new realities of working from home, temporary unemployment, home-schooling of children, and lack of physical contact with other family members, friends and colleagues, it is important that we look after our mental, as well as our physical, health.
- 8) **Duty of the parents:** Simple strategies that can address this can include giving young people the love and attention that they need to resolve their fears, and being honest with children, explaining what is happening in a way that they can understand, even if they are young. Children are very perceptive and will model how to respond from their careers. Parents also need to be supported in managing their own stressors so that they can be models for their children. Of helping the children to find ways to express themselves through creative activities, and providing structure in the day if that is possible through establishing routines, particularly if they are not going to school anymore, can be beneficial.
- 9) **Duty of the students:** During this difficult time, it's important to continue looking after their physical and mental health. This will not only help them in the long-



term, it will also help them fight COVID-19 if you get it. At first, eat a health and nutritious diet, which helps their immune system to function properly. Second, limit their alcohol consumption, and avoid sugary drinks. Third, don't smoke. Smoking can increase the risk of developing severe disease if you become infected with COVID-19. Fourth, they should do exercise regularly.

- 10) **Follow relaxation technique:** Take up a relaxation practice. When stressors throw your nervous system out of balance, relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, and yoga can bring you back into a state of equilibrium. Regular practice delivers the greatest benefits, so see if you can set aside even a little time every day.
- 11) **Establish structure and routine:** Sticking to a schedule provides the stability kids need to keep plugging away. In addition, it minimizes their instincts to go rogue. When expectations are set, it is more likely they will be met. Teacher can try digital tools like to-do lists, site blockers, and screen-limit settings when kids need help staying on task.
- 12) **Let them see progress:** Some kids respond well to visual cues. So, use a calendar or another visual aid to mark time, so they can see how much they have accomplished and how much more there is to go.

CONCLUSION:

Pandemic COVID-19 and its accompanying effects like stress and demotivation will continue impacting our mental health and wellbeing profoundly. Meanwhile, mental health serves a crucial role in combating the epidemic. It is thus imperative for schools to build awareness of students' mental health needs and concerns, and to empower their students to seek help and support during this biological disaster (Drake R.E., Whitley R. (2014). Recovery and severe mental illness: description and analysis). Considerable efforts made by schools should be dedicated to helping students thrive in this crisis. The schools will be well positioned to help students stay well in mind, body, and spirit during other challenging times (Zhai, Y. & Du, X. (2020). Addressing collegiate mental health amid COVID-19



pandemic). Due to pandemic COVID-19 pupil spend more time in online education in compare to offline education. Now the government of India also promoting the online class in the way of digital India mission, skill India mission. Therefore, we can see a paradigm shift from conventional teaching process to online teaching process. World Health Organization, together with partners, is providing guidance and advice during the COVID-19 pandemic for health workers, managers of health facilities, people who are looking after children, older adults' persons are in isolation and members of the public more generally, to help us look after our mental health. Students are also trying to cope with the new normal situation.



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16. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK (8255) <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> 17. Substance Abuse and Mental health



Services Administration (SAMHSA's) free 24-hour Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990: <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4894.pdf>

17. Center for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html>
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DETAILS OF THE AUTHOR:

NAME-Sanchaita Nath

M.Ed. student

Department of Teacher Education, The West Bengal University of Teachers' Training,
Education Planning and Administration, West Bengal

Mobile No. 9432108637/967443107

Email id: sanchaitanath2@gmail.com

POSTAL ADDRESS-43, CHARU CHANDRA SINGHA LANE, HOWRAH- 711101

