

VIRTUAL CLASSES: A REALITY WITH IMPLICATIONS ON HEALTH OF ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

Coronavirus and its aftermath are contemporarily being studied by the scholars in the year 2020. In India, from the month of March, nation went into lockdown for the safety of its citizens. This was announced for the students firstly in the month of March. This pandemic is what, was totally unheard by the population. Hence, country's educational institutes were seemed to be unprepared at the earlier phase of lockdown. Later, medical science reports add into the ambiguity of this coronavirus and as a result, unprecedented norms were dictated by the Government of India for its people's behaviour in a certain way, like use of face masks, hand- hygiene, and social distancing for keeping the exposure of virus at bay. For students, this time was seen as traumatised phase of their career as they were about to pass-on to the next level, of their academics because around this time final examinations and several other entrances were lined up to happen. Life became a standstill as such times were never observed in the past by the citizens. As it is rightly proved that, man is only creature on this planet that is adaptive. Technology came into rescue to mankind in this coronavirus induced lockdown. In order to bring the economy back on track, numerous measures had been announced by the Government of India for the economic activities to organise. Organising online classes brought a relief to the educational institutions in this time of crisis. Holding virtual classes and continuing teaching-learning was not less than a challenge before the Heads of Institutions. The Indian economy is not well-equipped and supportive to the latest system of education but parents and children were equally apprehensive. After five-six months on WFH (work-from-home), health related issues are propped up, and addressed tactfully. The focus is on health of adolescents in newly established normal in education i.e. holding classes and similar academic programmes virtually, specifically, in higher education are being considered for study in this paper. The lack of technological skills in teachers as well as parents was handled responsibly by the students. A role reversal is noticed here, that handling of gadgets is being taught by the students to their respective teachers and elders as and when they need. Confining into the homes by the teachers and complete dependence on technology and social media for running their daily chores become new normal. Now it comes into light that students have been facing several physical and mental like depression, health issues during this time after they are stationed at their respective houses and their mobility is prohibited as country is still witnessing lockdown. In this paper, feedback and related details of virtual reality of holding online classes and its implications on the health of adolescents in the age group of sixteen to twenty one years, is assessed. Recommendations are filed up for timely and appropriate action, along with the perspective of several stakeholders in the process.

Keywords: *Virtual reality, Online Classes, Adolescents, Health Issues.*

Introduction

COVID-19 is the world-wide corona crisis, largely named pandemic, in early March,2020. Detailed studies from medical professionals and research scholars have been taking place since then. From March 2020, schools and colleges went off amid lockdown announcement by the Government of India as preventive measures for the safety of its citizens. Considering the career of students who were

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on the verge of completing their academic-session 2019-2020, it was widely decided to continue the teaching-learning and subsequently, conducting examination with online mode. From younger students to elders who are in higher education were compelled to shift on virtual mode for continuing and completing their respective courses. Although, Virtual Reality came into existence in late sixties, but Jaron Lanier, founder of VPL, given the credit in mid eighties. In 1968, Sutherland and Chapel Hill student Bob Sproull revealed together prototype for the virtual and augmented reality.

Virtual mode of conducting educational classes gain prominence amid pandemic, at the time when India went into lockdown for its safety. On the occasion of holding virtual classes, the sincere efforts of students were widely appreciated as they took the driver seat in conducting the classes. The senior generation was seemed to be late learner, anyhow things paced up in later months. The paper looks into the implications of hard work of our youngsters on to their health during their online learning. It is medically proved by several studies that certain health impacts both on physical and mind of adolescents, who are in the age group of 16 to 21 years, needs immediate attention for timely help and guidance.

Research Methodology

The information collected is through secondary sources which include reading preface of the books, articles, journals, newspapers and matter on social media to learn on to the psychology behind the adolescents. Extensive unstructured questions and discussions were held with the youngsters to understand the title of the paper well.

Limitations of the Study

As the work is undertaken during the online classes in India, the confinement into the houses forced to wise use of technology and e-content available on different websites. The study is restricted to the students of sixteen to twenty years of age, mostly in colleges and/or completed their schools in this year in India. Wide use of e-devices and its impact on health is studied, by the author as well as the interviewee is allowed for the study. Only the preface, and the material available free of cost on different websites is used for the study.

Covid-19 Crisis in India and Subsequent Lockdown

Uncertainties and unapproved information dominates after the news of spread of Corona virus around the world and its ill effects on the life and health of citizens world-wide. Later on, medical bulletin were being commenced by the Government of India for appropriate knowledge of the pandemic and mandatory precautions by the people of India. In this regard, lockdown was imposed for maintaining curb on gatherings of people, which later being extended and partially went on to more than nine months. For the safety of citizens advisories and protocols have been issued which are seen as MMM(triple M) – masks on face, maintain safe distance, and measuring healthy and hygienic forms in daily routine with regular hand washes and consuming immunity boosters in daily diet like turmeric, Amala, honey and lemon products.

Satisfactory measures were taken in collaboration with State and Union Governments for people's life and suppress of virus infection in the community. Pandemics occurs once in centuries, hence lot of courage, togetherness and mental exercise is required to face this time.

Higher Education in India

In Indian Education system, which is undergoing cognitive transformation with the implementation of National Education Policy- 2020 (NEP-2020), is seemingly an utterly changeable compare the current education system which is apparently said to be worked during the non-technological era. In late nineties and early twenties, technology is seen as a pleasurable commodity, and mostly advocated with the extensive usage outside the academic life of a student. But this vision is strongly challenged during the coronavirus contagion.

The prospects of Higher education were confined to the employability of the youth. Although moral values, sports, extra-curricular activities, organizing debates and similar workshops during the school hours and vacations are seen as the growth module among youngsters. In various streams like arts, commerce, and science & technology are provided to the young aspirants for their overall growth and development in their respective careers growth. Later, on the insistence of role models and collective efforts of achievers, motivated parents to put their children at an early age of their life in sports, music, dance, painting or any other art form of their interest to learn the nuisances and skills at young age, so as successful career can turn into reality.

Education System in India

- School
 - Pre-Primary Play-Group
Nursery
LKG
UKG
 - Primary
 - Secondary 10th
12th
- Higher Education
 - Vocational Education
 - University Education
 - Distance Education

Source: Educationjam.com

Higher education in India is imparted in colleges and Universities to students, after completing their schooling from various schools. In this paper, it is studied during the research work that adolescents who were completing their schooling in 2020, still left with few papers in the month of March.

Teacher-Teaching-Technology: Virtual Classes

Amid the corona crisis in early March, life came to a standstill in the nation. Students are even not spared out of this prevailed world-wide crisis. Among the new norms, technology becomes the new normal. Students were given the option to attend their classes in online mode somewhere in early April. All the stakeholders in education beginning from the school authorities which includes, Principal, teachers and office-staff were the flag-bearers and then with apprehensive parents came into the picture with their wards. Here comes the role of device and internet connection as well.

Many of our students are coming from far flung areas with little or no connectivity of internet. This challenge is addressed on priority basis by the authorities and corporations across the nation. The support of Government agencies and coordination among several agencies set precedence in this time. Files prepared, signed and execution was done harmoniously in no time for the conduct of classes. Erstwhile Ministry of Human Development renamed as ministry of Education during this time only which equally displayed its commitment and dedication towards conducting the classes on e-mode across the nation in no time. Later, in some of the reported cases, same enthusiasm and haste redresses in the educational grievances were reported in media and news.

Here comes another challenge of handling the technology and organising the higher classes. Teachers were earlier not seen as technology –friendly as their students were. It is really a matter of appreciation that students came as warriors and taught the nuisances of technology to their respective teachers. They took the lead in smooth organising of online classes. Young teachers are seen to learn the technology comparatively fast than older counterparts in some cases. Hence, **concept of mutual learning and role-reversal** is noticed, where youngsters taught operations, and functions of e-devices and gadgets not only to their teachers but also their parents. Some of the youngsters were reportedly seen very cooperative, patience and committed. It is fine to be added here, that in Indian economy the sale of e-devices and gadgets like computers, laptops, smart-phones and e-notebooks would not appeared in the list of bruised business due to the impact of pandemic. It is one of the most-sought after business and open new doors for the youngsters in their career opportunities.

Implications of Virtual Classes on Adolescent's Health

After conducting online classes for more than eight months now, medical complications among adolescents have been reported in journals and social media. Young people are facing mood-swings, and sometimes physical bodily pain in back, neck, headache and shoulders etc are come into reports. Along with it, behavioural issues like depression, anger, impatience, etc have been reportedly coming into fore. Spending long time before screens is medically not advisable, but in lockdown and online classes there is no escapism as well. Lack of hunger, distastefulness, fatigue and unhappiness over the confinement in houses are some of the causes and impact on the soundness of health of adolescents. More adolescents have been visiting to the eye-specialists and number of appointments to neuro-experts, psychologists is registered. Spending more time before the screen is seen as the prime cause of this health issue among the adolescents. Broadly two groups can be formed to study the health issues faced by adolescents during this time of pandemic:

Physical Issues

Eye pain, watering from eyes, headache, bodily pain in shoulders, legs, back-bone, neck etc

Behavioural Issues

Loud voice, anger, depression, impatience, sadness

These issues must be promptly addressed by student' mentors, parents, councillors for their wellness.

Medical Remedies and Life-Style of Adolescents during Virtual Classes

Study shows that the tremendous amount of time is spent by the adolescents on their electronic screen, which is an alarming cause of concern to the medical personnel for skews in their physical and behavioural pattern. Several advisories have been releasing from the time of outbreak of news of national corona crisis.

Apart from the treatment and tests of mild symptoms of infection like, cough, temperature, body ache and similar other, protocols are well in place, which include home-quarantine, and measuring of oxygen level etc. Patients must go to the doctor for their advices and timely treatment.

Ayush

Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddhi and Homeopathy and home-remedies which are also the part of our kitchen and tradition since ancient times, have been revisited on the call of experts, In the name of life-style, physical exercises are the first one to be included in. Light, moderate or heavy home-bound exercises as per availability of time; interest and resources are advised on continuous basis during this time. Sleep deprivation is another serious cause for the physical health among adolescents, timely and sound sleep for around eight-nine hours is suggested by the experts and health personnel. Psychologists, and behavioural Scientists during this period are seen contributing their bit towards the curb of health menace among adolescents.

Nutritious and vegan diet are the apple of everyone eyes and centre of talk in crisis. It is not only during the corona crisis that healthy diet- rich of nutrients like protein, vitamins, carbohydrates and necessary minerals via milk and milk products, fresh fruits, vegetables, cereals and home cooked timely meal is quintessential as adolescents are the future of the nation. And healthy youngsters are significant constituent of healthy nation.

Summary and Findings

The study contributes significantly towards the growth and development of the adolescents as they are the future of the nation. In 2030, the vision of the Government of India to raise economy to five trillion and to place it at third largest economy among the globe. The contribution of health and education sector is significant in order to achieve the targets with the help of young people. Today's adolescent forms the part of tomorrow's prosper India. On the line of this principle, India is moving rapidly to attain the above mentioned goal. The implications of virtual classes on the health of adolescents have been seen in the light of:

Emerging Health note by the school and college authorities immediately is visible by limiting the timings of virtual classes and a-check on spending the screen time is a progressive step.

- **Preventive Measures, and Nutrients:** Inculcate preventive health measures in daily routine in the form of physical exercises, nutritious diet plan, sound sleep and wise use of technology with home made dishes, enhancing culinary skills by extending help to the parents and elders in absence of house-help amid the fearful environment of spread of corona-virus.
- **Emotional Connect and Moral Values:** emotional and moral connection is studied during this time of pandemic. As no one is left behind when it comes to displaying solidarity in terms of distributing food to the needy ones, sharing your belongings, helping parents and elders at home, helping younger ones in their assignments, responsibly holding online classes with not so technologically efficient teachers are all taken as the parallel chapters learnt by the adolescents during their virtual classes amid pandemic. This time is remembered by all of us when we revisit to our traditional roots and revise the chapters of humanity and brotherhood.
- **Digital Mannerisms & Digital Ethics:** Digital mannerism is seen missing, which is still to be learnt. In digital world, on the similar lines of professional code of conduct and professional ethics, digital ethics must be introduced, where morally, the sender, users have their own values while working on digital platform. **Digital literacy**, is emerged in the work of writing this paper. The formal relations in digital world is underlined and guided by digital etiquettes in digital correspondence.

- **Career Growth:** most sought after courses like ML, AI, digital marketing, web-designers, catalogue specialists, content writers, coders, app developers, data analysts, cyber security analysts etc have emerged for the youngsters to be better placed in their future.

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