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PERCEIVED STRESS AND ANXIETY AMONG SCHOOL STUDENTS DUE TO VIRTUAL LEARNING

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Abstract:

Due to the lockdown imposed during the pandemic, there was a shift from traditional classroom methods to virtual learning mode. The stress and anxiety level in students, the impact on their physical as well as mental health due to this virtual learning were some of the major concerns. The purpose of the research was to study the perceived stress and anxiety among students of standard IX due to virtual learning based on gender. Descriptive and survey method was used for this study. A 3-point rating scale prepared by the researcher was used to quantify the response. The findings of the study revealed that 42.1% of the students from the total sample have never felt nervous and stressed due to online mode of Instructions. Majority of the students were able to handle technology well without getting stressed. Most of them got the required emotional support from their parents and teachers during this virtual learning. The study shows that with time students were getting accustomed to this new normal.

Key Words: *Perceived Stress, Anxiety, virtual Learning.*

Introduction:

"We need technology in every classroom and in every student and teacher's hand, because it is the pen and paper of our time, and it is the lens through which we experience much of our world." – David Warlick

Virtual learning is an online learning environment that allows the teachers and students to communicate, interact, collaborate and explain ideas. Not everyone fits into the traditional school model and the online learning comes with the opportunities to meet the diverse needs of the students. In 2020, majority of the schools switched to online learning and that has had an impact on student's Academic growth. Virtual learning has made the students as well as the teachers more proficient with technology which is the need of the hour. As they continue to learn and study in an online world, they are bound to become confident and highly productive in using interactive online tools such as online tests, tools for homework; LMS, e-mail communications to teachers and fellow classmates, video and PowerPoint presentations by teachers. At the same time, this virtual experience can also have a profound impact on the physical as well as the mental health of the students. Increase in the screen times, an increase dependence on gadgets, decrease in physical activity, isolation, less physical communication is some of the negative aspects of virtual learning. For some of them, learning new virtual tools can be intimidating and stressful.

One of the major consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a sudden disruption to the traditional

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Original Research Article

classroom learning. The schools had to make a transition from offline to virtual learning. It is necessary to embrace and adapt to this new way of teaching and to keep the focus on enhancing the learning achievements of the students. Virtual learning does not depend on the location and it opens innovative and new possibilities which can be incorporated into any educational format when students and teachers are fully resourced with 21st century technology. Amidst all this it is also important to assess the impact of virtual learning on the mental health of students. The stress and anxiety level in students due to distance mode was one of the major concerns.

Statement of the Problem:

A study of the Perceived Stress and Anxiety Among Students of Standard IX due to Virtual

Learning.

Objectives of the Study:

To study the Perceived Stress and Anxiety among students of Standard IX due to Virtual Learning.

Methodology of the Study:

The researcher has used Descriptive and Survey Method to carry out the research.

Sample:

The sample for the present study included 83 students from Std IX of Our Lady of Health, Sahar. Data was collected by Ms. Aswini Nair.

Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling technique was used.

Tool:

The researcher prepared a three-point Rating scale containing 14 item having - Never, Sometimes and Always as options.

Analysis of Data:

The researcher has used the Descriptive Analysis. Bar graphs and pie charts were used to represent the data.

Findings and Discussion:

Sr. No.	Question	Never	Sometimes	Always
1	Due to online mode of instruction, I have felt nervous and stressed.	42.1%	52.6 %	5.3 %
2	I am unable to manage time which makes me anxious about my performance.	60.5 %	36.8 %	2.7 %
3	I am worried about the cost involved in online mode of instruction.	52.6 %	36.8 %	10.5 %
4	Due to online mode of instruction, I often feel emotionally exhausted	57.9 %	34.2 %	7.9 %
5	My sleeping pattern has changed due to a change in school timings and that makes me irritable and annoyed.	52.6 %	36.8 %	10.5 %
6	Due to online mode of instruction, I have had very less time for Relaxation.	55.3 %	31.6 %	13.2 %
7	I am not very good with technology and that makes me feel inferior.	47.4 %	44.7 %	7.9 %

Original Research Article

8	I often feel upset that online learning has distanced me from my classmates.	34.2 %	26.3 %	39.5%
9	I feel like my opinions are not heard out during a lecture due to online mode and that makes me disinterested.	68.4 %	28.9 %	2.7 %
10	I get enough emotional support from my parents during online learning	21.1 %	26.3 %	52.6 %
11	I get enough emotional support from my teachers during online teaching.	21.1 %	31.6 %	47.4 %
12	I find it stressful to learn new online tools and virtual platforms.	44.7 %	47.4 %	7.9 %
13	I feel restless and find it difficult to sit still for the online classes	50 %	39.5 %	10.5 %
14	I feel lonely and I worry about my future	44.7 %	28.9 %	26.3 %

This study was conducted with the sole purpose of understanding how this Virtual learning can have an impact on the students in terms of the perceived levels of stress and anxiety. When it comes to virtual learning, technology is an irreplaceable and a major component of virtual learning. It was assumed that many students had a low digital literacy level, considering that they were more accustomed to traditional teaching methods which primarily focused on physical resources. But the results shows that majority were able to cope up with this emerging need for enhanced use of technology. The lectures were conducted through online mode, but the students eventually got familiar with the basic use of the virtual platforms. The younger generation were more habituated with using mobile phones and laptops from a very young age, which might be the prime reason that they were comfortable with using technology for their everyday lectures.

The fact that many schools have been considerate and supportive as the children were new to this mode of learning has also helped them in many ways. The schools are providing G suite ID which gives unlimited storage and other benefits which can be highly useful to the students. Majority of the students agreed to the fact that they had got an emotional support from their teachers. The school had made provisions and accommodated the school timings, lecture schedules, duration of lectures, frequency of lectures considering the new mode of learning. If the school timings would have been like the regular physical classroom timings, it would have been very tiring for the students as virtual learning debars them from any form of physical activities. Students hardly felt restless or disinterested in the lectures despite the use of virtual mode. But many have felt distanced from their classmates and this has often made them feel upset. To make sure that the students interact with their classmates, more group projects, collaborative learning can be encouraged to keep them engaged in learning with their peers and feel less distanced. There have been studies conducted on how the home environment can have an impact on the virtual learning as a conducive environment is needed to stay focused during the lectures.

The results of this study shows that the parents were emotionally supportive throughout. Majority of the students seem to have a sound financial background as they were not very worried about the cost involved in virtual learning. Education should not be considered as a privilege instead a right that every child should have, irrespective of their financial status, background, disabilities, gender, etc. The needs of the children from marginalized society should not be overlooked upon as even during the pandemic there were articles about the

children of migrant workers who were deprived of basic Education. Such issues should not be ignored instead it needs to be addressed and special provisions should be made for them. The Education policies should focus on bridging this gap and making Education accessible to each and every child.

Conclusion:

"Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world." - Nelson Mandela. The power of Education cannot be overlooked upon but at the same time each and every child has the right to Education. The unfortunate COVID-19 situation had brought the physical classroom teaching to a complete standstill. Distance Education, Open learning has all been a part of this Education system in the recent years, but in the year 2020, the regular mainstream schools switched to Virtual learning.

Virtual learning has its own pros and cons. At the time of need it was the only alternative that could help the schools to continue teaching. Fortunately, the virtual learning has not had a profound impact on the stress and anxiety level of majority of the students but the ones who are facing mental exhaustion should be given a helping hand. The schools should implement and conduct various stress buster activities and stress management workshops, easily approachable counsellors should be appointed and there should be provisions for an early detection of stress and anxiety among the young students so as to avoid any hinderance in their learning achievements. Virtual learning has made learning together possible even when we are miles apart!

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