



VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Youth & COVID-19



INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has unprecedentedly transformed the lives of many, affecting approximately 1.03 hundred million people and causing 1, 50,336 deaths as of January 08, 2021. India is a young country with more than half of India's population under 25 years of age. COVID-19 has had psychological, social and economic effects on the population of the country, of which youth were the worst affected.

In a country, where the problem of unemployment is rampant; COVID-19 has further worsened it. Apart from employment issues, education has been badly affected due to its transition to the "online mode" and has created accessibility issues among the majority of the population. All these factors have majorly impacted their mental well-being, causing stress, anxiety, career insecurity, hopelessness, suicidal tendencies etc.

For some, it proved to be a boon as well, as it helped develop stronger bonds among the family members. However, the negative impacts of COVID-19 outweighed its benefits among the youth. Being a dynamic segment of the Society, their skills need to be channelized in the right direction and efforts need to be taken to address these challenges effectively. Also,

Youth can play a great role in volunteering and in controlling the spread of COVID-19 related misinformation and disinformation. They can also help spread awareness regarding COVID-19 Appropriate Behaviours (CAB). Such examples can be cited through the examples of YOLO (Youth Online Learning Organisation) which has been working along with community in the rural segments of the country; **IDEA has partnered to build their capacity on "Fake News and Rumour Management"**.

The 'Voices from the Field' Document is a part of the survey conducted on the topic **"BEHAVIOURAL AND ADAPTATION ASPECTS OF YOUTH DURING COVID -19"**. The document comprehensively depicts the experiences of the youth towards COVID-19. Their statements have been captured through telephonic interviews, to gauge the impact of COVID-19 on their lives.



Source: Promotional video for Mann- Darshan (WHO & UNDP)

Impact of COVID-19

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic, everyone was confused and worried since they didn't have any idea how to deal with this transition. Covid-19 has affected our lives deeply and has caused a long term effect on every person's life. However, the pandemic also had some positive impacts. This can be substantiated by the evidence given below.



“During the quarantine months, the contact with my friends obviously decreased drastically. Sure technology has enabled us to talk to people who are miles away from us and has even made visualisation of study concepts much easier, but it still does not hold the same power and impact as actual human interaction and real time school. The lockdown period also invoked spells of unhealthy lifestyle and being less social and lazy”.

Aditri Srivastava, Student

“I used to live in hostel for my studies and I was away from my family for a long time period. Because of COVID-19, I got a chance to live with my family again and I felt the warmth of love and care. It helped develop better understanding among us. All these things and feelings make me think that life goes on, no matter what happens, so we have to learn how to live happily amidst adverse times”.

Ms Aarzoo Lohan, Student



“Lockdown period turned out to be kind of a boon for me. I had enough time for my studies, got to spend a huge amount of time with my family after so long and definitely learned a thing or two about a healthy lifestyle. But the most important thing being that though we were earlier also were well aware of the health and hygiene, but COVID-19 made it sure that “people make health our priority”.”

Ms Ridhi Sharma, Student

“Because of COVID-19, I have to miss my workouts at gyms and parks and it is like a mental torture for me that I cannot go out. But one good thing that happened due to COVID-19 is that pollution has decreased and has improved in my area and I think that’s a great thing”

Mr. Ashwani kumar, Accountant



“ There are positive and negative impact of COVID-19 on my life. If I talk about the positive impact; I got a chance to spend some quality time with my family and I can work on my skills but there are some negative impacts too. Due to covid-19, my salary got deducted by 50% and many of my friends lost their jobs”

Ms Vandna, Assistant Professor

COVID-19 and Mental Health

Covid-19 has not only affected the physical health of the youth but also the mental health. Since, no one was prepared for this kind of Public Health Emergency, hence it tremendously impacted their mental well-being. As voiced out by the youth that **“several plans made by them have gone in vain due to the COVID-19”** this is a lesson learnt that we need to be adaptive and flexible in our approach, but not all youth are able to respond to the changes positively and thus get in to the vicious circle of sadness and despair.

But despite all the difficulties, several coping strategies have also been used to deal with the stressors of COVID-19. The youth have learnt to work towards mental resilience as we call it and educational institutions are extending support to the youth through counselling services to help adjust their lifestyles to the new schedules. This is substantiated by the evidence given below.

“COVID-19 has affected the mental health of all the people across India and the world but it was not that much mentally pressurizing for me because I am a mental health professional and I knew the importance of being calm and cool in these conditions. My advice to you is to focus on your hobbies like reading, cooking, and even develop new hobbies too.

Ms. Priyanka Kartikay, Counseling psychologist





“For me COVID-19 proved to be mentally and physically challenging as I started having a phobia of being close to unknown people with slightest of symptoms or sneezing coughing when I used to go to the public places. COVID-19 has affected me mentally mostly because I was far from my family and there was no means to go back due to the cancellation of my flight”

Navjeet kaur, Supervisor, Puma Sports India Pvt Ltd

Youth and Volunteering

People have to suffer a lot due to COVID-19 therefore to reduce hardships among the community, lots of youth volunteers across India started helping different sections of the Society in different ways. The disruption of the livelihoods and sources of income resulted in fear of supporting their families.

The youth volunteered by distributing food kits sponsored by various agencies, some of them also volunteered in Youth Online Learning Organization (YOLO) for combatting fake news at a local level.

However, many of them were passionate to volunteer, but could not do it due to the stigma attached to the disease, as their families and friends would warn them against exposing themselves.

These findings can be substantiated by the evidence given below.

“I am working with an NGO for the last 4 years on issues of education, poverty etc. During this pandemic, I saw many migrants and poor households who are facing many problems to fulfill their basic needs. That time, I decided to distribute food packets and ration kits to the needy one. One day, I saw one old person who was crying while eating the food, that day I realized I am doing a great job. From March-August, 2020, our team had distributed the 700 ration kits and 26,000 food packets to the migrant laborers”.

Prasad Kade, Youth for Change, Wardha, Maharashtra





“I wanted to volunteer in the fight against COVID-19 but there are two main reasons that stopped me from doing that. The first reason was that I wanted to do work with my friends in Chandigarh but all of them have a permanent place to stay during this lockdown, but being a hosteller, I couldn't stay there during this time and the second reason is that my family didn't allow me to do this work (volunteering) because they feared that I would get infected with the disease”.

Kajal Thakur, Student

Youth and Online Education

Due to COVID-19, the closure of all the schools and colleges affected the school going and college going students to a great extent. However, the transition from the physical to online mode of education did affect the lifestyle of students.

Students with poor backgrounds were not able to regularly access the online classes due to poor internet connection, lack of resources etc. Those who were able to access the online platforms faced difficulties in understanding the concepts.

This impact can be substantiated by the evidence given below.

“Lockdown meant no college, so it was really very disturbing and even we did not have any online classes that made study even more difficult.

Apart from my college studies I am preparing for competitive exam too and due to COVID-19, all these exams are also postponed which is not very fruitful for me.”

Anshu Tanwar, Student



“Due to this lockdown I am taking online classes but I feel that students learn more practically instead of online classes.

People go outside or on vacation to chill, so that they can give a fresh or new start. But as we are in this lockdown no one is allowed to go outside or go on vacation. So mentally also, COVID-19 is affecting us.”

Rupali Thakur, Student

Youth and Employment

Due to COVID-19, unemployment in India increased by 20% till May 2020. Even now, the situation has not improved much. Freshers have to face a lot of problems to get a job.

Those who have their own businesses are also suffering as client proximity has been lost, most of the business ran on personal relationships and proficiency, therefore the MSME sector has been hugely hit. Fear and career insecurity looms among the Society. This can be substantiated by the evidence given below.

"I am working in a hotel industry and due to COVID-19 our business suffered huge losses; there are no tourists and "no tourist means no business". This lead to deduction in my salary up to 25% and some of my friends even lost their job."

Mr. Mandeep Kumar, House Keeping Executive



"I have just completed my Masters degree but could not get a job amidst this Public Health Emergency. This has not only affected my mental health but also made me anxious and has made me feel hopeless and worth less".

Tarun Gatum, Job Aspirant

References

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