

**Psychological Impact of the Pandemic Outbreak and the High Vulnerability:
An Analytical Study**

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Abstract:

COVID-19 has created an unprecedented worldwide health crisis, and the effect on the mental health of children and adolescents is expected to be significant. The present study explores consequences of the pandemic on fueling frustration, loneliness and isolation, psychological effects of students and their educational trajectories. Online education appears to be a permanent part of education systems, potentially marking the start of a new era in learning methods. The present study is also reflects on the economic collapse, employment anxiety and depression, financial worries, families of children with child sexual abuse. The study also addresses the mental condition of street children in India and children of migrant labourers during the pandemic, widening inequity of the impact on children from low-income families and lastly on building of mental health services for young and poor families.

Keywords: *Mental Health, Educational Trajectories, Employment Anxieties and Despair, and Financial Difficulties*

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Introduction:

COVID-19 is a significant public health issue with significant consequences for the population, including morbidity and mortality risks, as well as the impact on student health and the pandemic's impact on their learning trajectories. The mobility restriction and social distancing measures established around the world aimed at stopping the transmission of the virus (WHO, 2020), have produced an important impact on the psychological health of the student and probably the largest alteration of traditional educational practices in human history, affecting millions of students in countries around the world (Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2021). The pandemic has exposed the world's largest known educational and financial crisis, alongside socio-cultural, political, and economic issues. The pandemic has had a major impact on the students and also employment anxiety and depression of general population of worldwide. Despite various countries and organizations like the WHO implementing health policies in educational contexts, the pandemic's impact on students and their educational trajectories is expected to persist globally in the coming years.

Recent studies indicate that younger age groups are becoming more susceptible to stress, depression, and anxiety symptoms during the pandemic. Furthermore students face various risks: individual risks (infection), family risks (infection of relatives, loss of loved ones, decrease in family income, family estrangement, etc.), which have affected them psychosocially (Zhai and Du, 2020), and they also face risks related to the alteration of their educational trajectories rapid implementation online education, little social interaction, lack of teamwork and difficulty in adapting. Numerous studies confirm that the pandemic has generated anxiety problems in students, depression and stress (Odriozola et al., 2020). The pandemic has created uncertainty among students about what will happen in the future, which generates stress, and stress has unfavorable effects on the learning and psychological health of students (Sahu, 2020). Higher perceived stress is associated with more emotional distress, depression, fear, compulsion, anxiety, neurasthenia, and hypochondria (Yang et al., 2021). Students are worried about issues related to their studies and their future professional careers, they feel anxiety and frustration (Aristovnik et al., 2020) and great uncertainty until they are clear about how their courses will be restored after the crisis (Daniel, 2020) In some cases the lack of computer skills and a higher workload have prevented students from performing adequately while adapting to distance education. It can be affirmed that academic and daily difficulties have generated in students high levels of anguish and mental health problems, which are associated with difficulties in concentrating on academic work and sometimes job loss (Kecojevic et al., 2020).

Lockdowns create social distance and mental interaction among students, causing emotional damage and limiting learning. The coronavirus pandemic hinders interaction, which is essential for education and learning, affecting both aspects of student life. Students are experiencing despair due to family issues and distance from friends, leading to irritation, loneliness, and depression. The closure of educational institutions is also affecting students' mental health, causing stress, anxiety, and fear of their studies. This has resulted in dropouts, session delays, and uncertain shutdowns, affecting their overall mental health. Students

worldwide are experiencing increasing mental strain due to constant computer use for online courses, leading to physical disabilities and isolation. UNESCO reports that 1.5 billion students in 190 countries are disconnected from their institutions, highlighting the urgent need for improved education systems. Psychologists and therapists highlight the impact of censorship and social distance on students' mental health. A study was conducted to identify the most significant factors affecting students' mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic, along with the impact of economic, social, and educational issues on their mental health. This research aims to understand the underlying causes of these issues.

Objectives:

The primary goal of this study was to evaluate its psychological effects. Lockdown and dread associated to the disease's potential symptoms and spread had a significant impact on people's lives. The fatal toll and global expansion of COVID-19 are increasing the terror associated with it. Determining the first psychological effects of COVID-19 on students and the general public, as well as its connection to physical symptoms, were the goals of this study. This could aid decision-makers in developing comprehensive responses.

Methodology:

The nature of this paper is quantitative. The study included primary and secondary data, with the former being gathered via personal interviews to provide a more accurate picture of how Covid-19 has affected students' mental health in fact. A structured questionnaire approach was used to gather primary data, which included three variables: economic factor, social component, and educational factor. The study tried to collect data from 180 respondents, including students, working men and women, who are all affected emotionally by the Covid-19 epidemic. The respondents are conveniently selected. The convenience sampling approach (a non-probability sampling methodology) was adopted here because it allows the researchers to restrict costs and save time while also offering a conveniently available facility. This study examines the mental health of students affected by the school shutdown and the mental health of working men and women affected by their financial hardships during the epidemic. A model is used to evaluate how many the respondents mental health is being impacted by COVID-19. It also investigates respondents' mental health and depressive symptoms on a range of levels. Despite the fact that mental health is just as essential as physical health, it is still not adequately addressed. This study contributes fresh empirical information on the present situation of depression and mental health among respondents in an emerging developing country.

Secondary data from various sources was used to create a literature review. The questionnaire included demographic information like gender, age, and education. The remaining sections were connected to economic, social, and educational factors, with mental health as a dependent variable. The data was gathered from various sources, including books, journals, printed materials, and internet.

Disruptions exacerbate loneliness, frustration, and isolation:

Seeing their parents suffer from anxiety may be upsetting for children, who usually rely to their parents for comfort and assistance in coping with the unknown. The combination of hereditary risk factors and acquired behaviours makes children of anxious parents more likely to experience anxiety themselves. Children and adults react to crisis situations quite differently. Children and young people could find it challenging to comprehend the necessity for social isolation and separation, whereas adults can perceive the need for both. Parents may maintain lucid communication, stability, connection, and academic advancement in order to promote resilience in their kids. However, these efforts will not totally alleviate the sense of loneliness and isolation that quarantines and social distance cause in children and young people worldwide. According to the report, 55% of the young people they assisted felt lonely and alone. Loneliness may raise the likelihood of despair and anxiety while also boosting emotions of stress, all of which can damage physical health and lead to unfavourable health behaviours. In the COVID-19 lockdown, many kids have been spending more time on screens for entertainment, social interaction, and education. With inadequate parental supervision, children may spend more time online and be exposed to disturbing information that fuels their fears and anxieties. Spending more time online might raise the risk of being exposed to hazardous information and online bullying. More than a third of survey respondents believe the crisis has a negative impact on their mental health, and more than half say it has a negative impact on their daily life. According to a survey, two-thirds of parents are concerned about the emotional and mental health of their kids as a result of COVID-19. According to this survey, approximately half of those aged 6 to 18 are concerned, with one-third fearing the virus.

The crisis is particularly challenging for underprivileged communities:

The COVID-19 epidemic has adversely impacted all the communities. These communities have long faced health-care disparities and systemic imbalances. They have also come across variations in living situations, employment situations, underlying health concerns, and access to care. The astonishing volume of employment losses has deepened existing disparities. This disparity also affects the educational system. According to the most recent UNESCO report on education, the coronavirus epidemic has touched more than 91percent of students throughout the world. The UNESCO report states that over 157 crore students across 191 countries have been severely impacted by the closure of educational institutions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In India, more than 32 crore students have been affected by the various restrictions and the nationwide lockdown, which was on 25 March (UNESCO, 2020). While schools have swiftly adapted to online learning, not all children have access to the necessary broadband infrastructure to actually participate. Many of these online learning environments demand that the parent participate actively as a home co-teacher. Some low-income parents may be vital workers or without the language and educational abilities to assist their children with their schoolwork.

Educational Trajectories:

The global education community, as well as several international organisations and educational authorities from various nations, recognised the urgent necessity to use an online teaching strategy. However, the growth of distant learning is a difficult topic that has received little attention (Appolloni et al., 2021). In general, both students and teachers are ill-prepared to transition from traditional classroom-based education to online learning (Delafosse, 2021). Due to technological obstacles, restricted internet access, inadequate gadgets for online learning, and a lack of technical understanding among many students, e-learning platforms provide a problem for many of them. A recent research highlighted several issues for pupils as a result of school closures and the advent of online learning; for example, they struggled to study properly from home, and parents struggled to supervise their children's learning process (Owusu et al., 2020). Another study discovered that the pandemic caused a considerable number of students to postpone their graduation and lose their jobs (Aucejo et al., 2020). Furthermore, owing to socio-economic differences, some students must cut their study time, which is why lower income students are more likely to postpone graduation. Delays in academic activities have been positively associated with anxiety symptoms (Cao et al., 2020), and therefore with more difficulties in achieving academic goals. Institutions and educational systems must put extra effort into assisting children whose parents don't support them and whose circumstances don't encourage learning (Daniel, 2020).

Closing of schools and disruption of student life:

According to UNESCO, over 90% (1.5 billion) of the world's student population have been impacted by school cancellations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Children and teenagers have less structure, routine, and peer connection because of the closure of schools. Additionally, it is more difficult for children who need assistance with their mental health issues because school is frequently where they seek it out initially. Students may experience frustration and anxiety over changes to their school's curriculum, evaluations, and promotions. College entrance examinations have been delayed or cancelled in numerous places, which has left students feeling unsure, anxious, and stressed. According to a study conducted in India, more than 20 percent of applicants for university admission exams said that their stress levels were at their highest possible rating of 10, even before the exam was postponed. The survey revealed that children struggle with emotions of worry and dread connected to skipping out on school events, missing their friends, and falling behind in schoolwork. Many students have also missed out on significant occasions and chances due to the crisis, including graduation ceremonies, internship possibilities, and term-break events.

Vulnerable children and emotional stress:

Children who are already suffering from mental health difficulties are more vulnerable to the epidemic. Some children's mental health regimens and therapies have been significantly disturbed by quarantines and social exclusion. While telemedicine and virtual therapy may be solutions, the nature of support for these adolescents and young people has altered radically as a result of the crisis. Without the structure and support that schools offer,

children with special needs and learning disabilities experience more difficulties and may not be able to adjust to online learning. ADHD and autism spectrum condition can provide distinct obstacles for children, their families, and educators. Household problems, such as domestic violence, mental illnesses, and parental substance misuse, may increase the risk of child abuse in a confined environment when families are compelled to take shelter in site. Additionally, a lockdown might prevent students from receiving regular care from teachers, counsellors, and other caregivers, which could mask child abuse. The pandemic has disproportionately affected vulnerable populations, with greater rates of infection and mortality observed in vulnerable communities, perhaps making them and their children more vulnerable to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Hunger, family tensions, and other outbreak-related impacts may increase the risk of PTSD in vulnerable youngsters. All of this can have a long-term influence on their psychological well-being.

Internet accessibility in remote areas:

Even if the nation has been adjusting to new-age learning, there is still a barrier preventing the endeavours from being completely effective. The fact that only 45 crore of the nation's total population have access to the internet and e-learning is still unaffected. Rural residents still suffer a great deal from a lack of access to modern technology, which hurts the cause of online education. Nowadays, virtual classrooms depend on more than just e-lectures; they also need access to e-content, online reading materials, practice questions, etc. And here is where we fail to meet, since India is not completely ready to bring education to all corners of the country through digital platforms or online classrooms. There is no doubting that the existing approach will hold back pupils who don't have the same privileges as the others. However, academic institutions and the Indian government are working nonstop to find a solution to this issue.

Economic collapse and its devastating effects:

This crisis strikes at a time when India's GDP growth is faltering, and unemployment is rising as a result of the country's dismal economic performance in recent years. The unstable state that the economy was in before the shock's impact might exacerbate the shock's effects. This is especially true given that the financial sector, which serves as the brain of the economy, has been dysfunctional and that there is little room for macroeconomic policy to respond to a crisis of this magnitude. Due to COVID-19 disruptions, the job market has deteriorated, with the total unemployment rate rising to 14.7 percent in April. Laborer/worker unemployment rates were significantly higher. The prevalence of mental health issues is higher during recessions, according to research. Children whose parents lose their employment are more likely to feel despair, show psychologic symptoms, and have a worse overall assessment of psychological well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic, like the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, will very probably increase the number of people living in poverty. Extreme poverty can delay or perhaps permanently damage cognitive, emotional, and physical development in certain children. As a result, these developmental problems can hinder upward mobility and exacerbate poverty and unfairness. Adolescents and young adults

preparing to enter the labour force will be particularly severely impacted by a downturn in the economy. Lack of employment options for new graduates, especially those with student debt, will undoubtedly increase stress, and because so many young people work as "gig workers" without job security or health insurance, they may also struggle to make ends meet.

Disasters have enduring psychological effects:

According to information from previous disasters, the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people whose lives have been drastically changed might last for years. Those who survived from previous disasters were considerably more likely to develop emotional disorders than children who did not. Furthermore, the effects were frequently worse for children who were already vulnerable and in distress before to the catastrophe. Numerous studies have shown that children and teenagers who lived in cities had severe PTSD months or even years after the pandemics. People who had lost a parent during the epidemic and those who lived close to ground zero were particularly at risk. Many children and teenagers are experiencing the death of a family member for the first time because of the epidemic. Many physical and mental health issues, such as adult depression, PTSD, and other psychiatric diseases, are at risk due to such early childhood trauma.

Employment anxiety and depression:

Employment anxiety refers to the fear and anxiety people experience about their future employment security, while depression is a mood disorder characterized by a depressed mood, loss of interest, energy, guilt, low self-worth, disturbed sleep, and decreased attentiveness, according to the World Health Organization. These issues can lead to ambiguous fears and spiritual responses towards a particular profession. The disturbing impacts of the epidemic have inspired researchers and psychiatrists to focus on and investigate the impact of unemployment on psychological health and wellness (WHO, 2020). Global pandemics have always had a negative impact on the employment sector by causing job losses and job instability. Similar to the last global crises, the COVID-19 epidemic has significantly curtailed both human life and the world economy. Unfair employment, unstable work, and job losses all contribute to job seekers' anxiety. Furthermore, reports of rising employment losses cause student sadness and negatively impact their mental health. Students are the most susceptible demographic influenced by the rising bad information about employment and the financial crisis, because fresh graduates will confront an uncertain job market with little or no investment in new businesses. A crisis also makes it difficult for families to manage their fundamental demands for survival, as the expense of healthcare and the possibility of job loss both rise quickly. Numerous long-term researches have found a substantial link between depression and unemployment, defining depression as a side effect of unemployment. Depression is connected with job anxiety.

Financial worries and depression:

Financial well-being is described as the sufficiency and degree of economic solvency that shields individuals against financial risks such as abrupt unemployment, health risks, and

poverty after retirement. Financial anxieties are unpleasant sensations experienced by those who are unable to pay their financial obligations. A range of circumstances, including a lack of finances, falling income, debt, and job instability, may contribute to such concerns. Pearlin et al. conclude that the presence of financial anxiety has a substantial impact on depression, self-confidence, and personal life management (Pearlin, L.I. 1981: 337-356). Because of insufficient assistance for education, health care, and household expenses as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, students' depression has worsened. As a result, it is clear that rising financial stress, followed by a dramatic fall in healthy life management, causes depression. Financial anxiety is connected with depression.

Families of children with child sexual abuse:

According to a research conducted by Aarambh India Initiative, Prerana, and ADM Capital Foundation, the Mumbai lockdown has exacerbated the condition of child sexual assault survivors, with 127 families presently involved, largely from deprived socio-economic status segments. The researchers believe that a sudden loss of income and a lack of social support have made it more difficult for many families to cope with the effects of child sexual abuse (Pandharipande N., 2020). A pandemic inside a pandemic exists: the quiet epidemic of child sexual abuse. According to Vikas Puthran of Childline India Foundation (CIF), during the ten days of the lockdown - between March 20 and March 31 - there was a 50percent rise in the number of calls to 3 lakh from 2 lakh (Buckshee D., 2020). Lockdown was shown to be the ideal atmosphere for an upsurge in sexual abuse since many abusers, particularly in situations of incest, engage in situational sexual activity with children as a result of stress in their lives. Furthermore, self-quarantining at home necessitates remaining in constant contact and close quarters with the abuser, which may be quite emotionally exhausting.

Street children in India:

Tens of thousands of people phone assistance lines every day, and many more go to bed hungry as the government shuts down to combat the pandemic. India has millions of children who sell balloons, pens, and other trinkets at traffic signals or pick up trash in cities. These children live in cities on streets, beneath flyovers, or in little alleys and byways. Everyone has been instructed to stay inside during the lockdown. How about the kids who live on the streets? What do they do next? Delhi is thought to have 70,000 or more street kids, while the actual number may be far higher. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR, 2020) has recommended actions to create a database of these children in response to the plight of street children during the coronavirus lockdown in order to link them to various government social programmes and prevent them from returning to the streets.

Children of migrant labourers:

There are serious issues due to the emigration from our cities. Children from migrant families make up a hidden vulnerable population that might include any of the following groups. Children abandoned in the countryside by parents who pursue jobs elsewhere make

up the first category. They depend on money sent back home as remittances. The reduction or loss of parent's pay as a result of the lockdown will have an immediate impact on food consumption and health consequences for these children. Children who move about with their parents who regularly work in the construction, brickmaking, and agricultural industries make up the second type. A study on unofficial labour locations in seven Indian cities found that 90% of accompanying migrant children did not use ICDS services, 30% had never enrolled for school, and 80% did not have access to education. Many youngsters were reportedly living in dangerous and unsanitary conditions. The employment losses migrant workers experience as a result of the current pandemic will worsen their situation. Thousands of these families travelled back to their homes with infants and toddlers in tow, either on foot or in state-provided transportation, subjecting these kids to unforeseen hardships like malnutrition and sickness. The third type consists of kids who relocate because of their jobs. A variety of problems, including salary loss and physical abuse, have been brought up by child rights campaigners. Relief and transit camps at state borders, as well as quarantine facilities, should offer families with safe, child-friendly shelters that provide nutritional food, water, and sanitation (Behera R, DnieIU, Minz R., 2014).

Conclusion:

The study provides novel insights on depression and student mental health difficulties, which have hitherto received little attention. The results show that anxiety about finding work, worry about money, and lack of knowledge about the pandemic all contribute to sadness, which has a negative domino impact on students' mental health. The research's findings therefore highlight the need of using a variety of coping techniques to safeguard students' mental health and maintain their optimism during the crisis. The pandemic will eventually end, but there may be many survivors who are at greater risk of contracting the disease. As a result, practical actions must be taken to enable individuals to accept and adapt to the 'new normal' way of life with ease. The issues that India faces are underlined. As we deal with this pandemic, many more will appear. Better preparation is required for a gloomy future. Budgets for healthcare, infrastructural improvements, better telemedicine capabilities, crisis management drills, and substantial lifestyle and travel habit adjustments must be put into place. It should be the duty of governments and politicians to enhance spending in both the physical and mental healthcare sectors, as well as to commit to resolving the system's main flaws that the crisis has exposed. In addition to reducing the burden of sickness, this may also reduce risks and increase readiness for the next crisis. Investing in mental health services during an economic downturn may also assist decrease societal costs, accumulate human capital, and maintain long-term economic recovery. Supporting children from households who are close or below the poverty line is another way to combat inequality. We also encourage corporations to provide greater mental health services to their employees and families. This might involve providing staff counseling, arranging mental health and parenting discussions, and providing wellness tools, guidelines, and programmes. This assistance may help increase employee well-being and productivity, and it has become an increasingly essential employee value proposition. This paper aims to provide an early

evaluation of possible consequences based on currently available facts, research, and insights from the Alliance and its charitable partners. To quantify the impact on children's mental health and to better guide intervention plans and activities, much more thorough study and statistics are required. We are committed to ensuring the continuation of this study.

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