



A Study of the Impact of Lockdown Due to COVID-19 on the Mental Health of Pupil Teachers

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Abstract: Mental health refers to cognitive, behavioral and emotional well-being of an individual. It is mainly concerned with how a person thinks, feels and acts. It also determines how one handles stress, make choice/decisions and relates to others around them. It is important to note that good mental health depends on a delicate balance of a large number of factors that may contribute to the onset of mental disorders of various degrees. The mental health concerns have become more pertinent in today's times due to the unprecedented crisis attributed to COVID 19 pandemic. The effects of Covid-19 can last a long time and shape mental health for many years to come, long past the events that precipitated them. The present study was carried out to study the impact of lockdown due to this pandemic on the mental health of pupil teachers. The research study was conducted on first year batch (2019-2021) of B.Ed pupil-teachers in the month of May to identify the mental health issues and to provide with the range of coping skills to deal with the same. This survey was conducted by the researchers followed by the interventions for improvement in the status of mental well being.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Mental health is not a destination but a process. It's about how you drive and not where you're going.”

Mental health refers to cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being. It is all about how people think, feel, and behave. People sometimes use the term “mental health” to mean the absence of a mental disorder. According to the World Health Organization: “Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. The WHO stress that mental health is “more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities.” Peak mental health is about not only avoiding active conditions but also looking after ongoing wellness and happiness. They also emphasize that preserving and restoring mental health is crucial on an individual basis, as well as throughout different communities and societies the world over. Everyone has some risk of developing a mental health disorder, no matter their age, sex, income, or ethnicity. Social and financial circumstances,

biological factors, and lifestyle choices can all shape a person's mental health. A large proportion of people with a mental health disorder have more than one condition at a time.

It is important to note that good mental health depends on a delicate balance of factors and that several elements of life and the world at large can work together to contribute to disorders. The most common types of mental illness are anxiety disorders, mood disorders, schizophrenia disorders. Mental illnesses are more common than cancer, diabetes, or heart disease. WHO report estimates the global cost of mental illness at nearly \$2.5 trillion (two-thirds in indirect costs) in 2010, with a projected increase to over \$6 trillion by 2030. Evidence from the WHO suggests that nearly half of the world's population is affected by mental illness with an impact on their self-esteem, relationships and ability to function in everyday life. An individual's emotional health can impact their physical health. Poor mental health can lead to problems such as the ability to make adequate decisions and substance abuse. According to 2020 data, mental illnesses are stagnant among adults, but rapidly deteriorated among the youth, categorized as 12 to 17 year old.

The mental health effects of Covid-19 can shape health for many years, long past the events that precipitated them. We have been focusing, correctly, on saving lives and mitigating the short-term consequences of Covid-19, but the long-term consequences may be equally, if not more, important. The following issues have come to light in times of pandemic:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones, your financial situation or job, or loss of support services you rely on.
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns.
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Worsening of mental health conditions.
- Increased use of tobacco, and/or alcohol and other substances.

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In light of the growing need for mental health awareness, mental health awareness week was established in the year 1990 and world mental health day was established on 10 October 1992.

This year Mental Health Awareness Week was celebrated from 18 may to 24 may. The theme was kindness. In light of the mental health awareness week, a survey on the mental health of students in the times of pandemic was conducted by the researchers followed with interventions for improvement in the status.

2. THE SURVEY STUDY

Mental Health influences behavior, thinking and feeling. But Conservative societies, one like India, stigmatize the concept of Mental Health, which needs to be dealt with right now. As a part of the Mental Health Awareness Month, a survey was conducted in the month of May, to understand the mental condition of students. The survey was mainly focused on the impact of COVID19 on the Wellbeing of the Students. It was designed keeping in mind that not only mental health but the financial, emotional and hygiene condition needs to be taken into consideration. The survey was conducted on first year batch (2019-2021) of B.Ed **pupil-teachers** through google forms. Google form questionnaire was divided into five sections, which focused on different aspects namely;

1. How the students were living with current Pandemic situation.
2. The financial and emotional aspect.
3. The Sleep and Hygiene Habits of the students.
4. The mental wellbeing of the students.
5. The fifth section was about Self Care and Mental Health Activities

3. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

There were 88 responses of the **pupil-teachers** received for the survey. The first section was meant to understand how the students were living with current Pandemic situation. It is important to mention that about 61% of students accepted that the lockdown had taken a toll on their mental health. This shows how important it is to take steps to help and guide the students in right direction during a crisis like this.

The second section was regarding the financial and emotional aspect. Mental health is related to other factors, which cannot be ignored. Financial and Emotional wellbeing of a person can talk a lot about their mental wellbeing. About 52.3% reported

that they had observed a financial setback due to the pandemic. Also, 90% of them are taking this opportunity to reflect upon their life, which shows how drastically the environment around them had changed.

The third section of the survey was about the Sleep and Hygiene Habits of the students. When there are mental and emotional problems, it effects the sleep, diet and hygiene of an individual. About 93% students agreed that their eating and sleeping habits had changed. The changes in eating and sleeping habit can cause further health problems. Also, there has been a lethargic behavior observed in students due to lack of motivation.

The fourth section consisted of the mental wellbeing of the students. Now, it is interlinked to the above three sections, but here the questions focused on how the students felt and how they dealt with the feelings. About 77% students were eagerly waiting for the lockdown to end, so that they could go back to their regular life. Feeling of gloominess, irritation, anger shows how difficult it has become for them to live in the current atmosphere. Due to the current situation, 66% students said that they felt exhausted. Because of these changes, some of them also felt withdrawal from family and friends.

The last section was about Self Care and Mental Health Activities that students were engaged in. Students were actively participating in Physical activities like High intensity Cardio, Aerobics, Yoga, Dance and household works. Students were engaged in multiple recreational activities like cooking, baking, handicraft work, listening to podcast/music, mindfulness exercises etc. About 61.4% engaged in regular self-care. The students were aware of the changes around them and were trying their level best to cope up with it.

4. THE INTERVENTION

“What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candor, and more unashamed conversation.” - Glenn Close

It is imperative for us to understand that mental health is not a destination, but a process. It is all about how you drive and not where you are going. Everyone grows at different rates and that is okay. Keeping this in mind, a workshop was conducted with B.Ed pupil teacher to foster awareness about mental health and to generate coping skills to deal with current pandemic situation.

The workshop, titled, **“Grow Through What You Go Through”** was an attempt to understand what is going through the minds of pupil-teachers and give them the necessary advice/suggestions to face the adverse situations. Researchers acted as resource **persons (Dr. Promila Dabas and Dr.**

Vanita Anand (Assistant Professors, Department of Education, MSI). and conducted two focused sessions with pupil teachers. The focused session 1 was the orientation based and introduced the pupil teachers with the theme and perspective of WHO on mental health. The second session was more practice based to resolve issues of mental health of pupil teachers, with practice based activities. The workshop was presided over by **Prof. J.P. Singh** (Senior Professor, MSI) and he shared his life long learning and experiences with the younger generation.

Mental health issues have always been a part of our lives, but were never taken seriously or even talked about. Now with the current pandemic situation, being in lockdown/quarantine is forcing us to think and talk about the issues that we, very easily bury in our minds under all the other pressures. Parents as well as teachers are concerned about the effect this situation will have on the mental well-being of the students. And to work on that, this intervention was organized and conducted as a means of discussion on the various issues the students (pupil teachers) are now facing.

The survey that we conducted prior to the workshop revealed that most of the students were facing mental health issues because of the lockdown. With the situation being this critical, everything is uncertain, our future, job prospects and even the financial situation of our family. This is taking a toll, on the students too. Maximum students revealed that they are facing issues in their eating and sleeping habits. This is bound to lead to other diseases or disorders, and the only way to prevent them is to make sure we are at a better place, mentally. Feeling gloomy, irritated, angry are some of the effects the lockdown is causing.

As discussed, it is important for us to discuss the issues with anyone who we think can help us deal with them, be it our parents, teachers, siblings or friends. Once we share how we are feeling, we can understand how much it is affecting us, because taking it all out is a form of introspection. To take our mind off such things, we can also indulge in physical exercises like yoga, dance, household chores. Free time also gives us an opportunity to pursue our long-lost hobbies like reading, writing, art, cooking, etc. Watching movies, tv series or even having video calls with our friends and family can also help us in coping up with the changing times.

Our mood, thinking and behavior influence our mental health to a great extent and vice-versa. Taking one step at a time is what should be done. We should be vocal about how we feel about various things, situations and people that affect us. Practicing “forgive and forget” will also aid us in becoming peaceful. A happy person will be well rested and a well-rested person will be happy and content. This is the circle of our life.

Rest is as important as exercise for both, physical and mental well-being.

Showing gratitude, coming to terms with the situation, doing self-introspection are some ways of changing our attitude towards life. This will not only help us, but others too.

Taking every situation as an opportunity to learn, improve, or even think about is another way of dealing with such issues.

5. CONCLUSION

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

In these hard times fear, worry and stress has been surrounding all of us. Added to the fear of contracting the virus in a pandemic such as COVID-19 are the significant changes to our daily lives as our movements are restricted in support of efforts to contain and slow down the spread of the virus. Some common emotional outcomes which all of us have been facing includes stress, depression, irritability, insomnia, fear, confusion, anger, frustration, boredom, and stigma associated with quarantine.

This workshop and the survey conducted beforehand helped students in identifying these problems which they are going through and got a platform to talk about these matters as well. Pupil teachers were able to see and understand that they are not alone and others are also facing similar problems and they received support from teachers who assured that they can reach out to them if we want to talk and realised that web of relations around them acts as a support system. The survey helped pupil teachers realize many aspects of life which are affecting their mental health like the financial aspect, the emotional aspect and the future and helped us in seeing how that is affecting our daily routines and our eating and sleeping habits and our general well-being in return.

The pandemic has affected our present lives and our future too and during these uncertain times it was really helpful to get assistance from our teachers who not only helped us in understanding that these issues we are going through are normal and that it is imperative to talk about it and share our thoughts and feelings with others but they also suggested some more things we can do to let go off the stress and feel more relaxed. This helped us in seeing that instead of looking at the bad aspects we should look at some of the positive things which have happened so far like appreciating the time we are spending with our families and finding time to develop new skills and hobbies. The session also encouraged the students to

try out different things like exercises and meditation and forming a routine to help us in being calmer and more relaxed.

This workshop was therefore a really successful attempt to talk about the stigma associated with mental health and to create a good support system with the teachers and students to help us in building our well-being. It helped the pupil teachers in not only understanding the problems and issues which everyone is going through but it also helped in seeing that mental health is not a taboo and rather it is something which needs to be discussed more openly to understand and help those who need assistance.

In the end as **Fred Rogers** said "**Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary.**"

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