Psychosocial problems experienced by the children during COVID-19

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Abstract

COVID 19 pandemic has affected every facet of life, challenging the very existence of our species. It has brought big changes in the behavior as well as in the life style of the people. Children, classified as one of the vulnerable category, they had to sit in homes for weeks without any real interaction. Being quarantined in the homes and the shift from offline classes to online classes, children faced many psychological problems like anxiety, stress, loneliness, depression and suicidal tendencies and attempted cases have been reported during the period. The lack of outdoor activities, school closures, lack of family leisure trips and neighbourhoods visits leads to different sociological problems. The main objective of this research paper is to study the different psychosocial problems faced by the children between 13 to 18yrs old during the COVID 19 pandemic period. This study is descriptive in nature and quantitative in approach. 70 samples were collected from Angamaly municipality through convenient sampling. Self- made questionnaire is used to study the sociological problems and DASS scale is used to study the psychological problems. The results were surprising, the parents, teachers and peers helped students in their studies. Due to screen addiction, they were happy to sit in homes with their laptops, ipads and phones. But they feel offline classes are a lot more in better than online classes for social life and peer interaction. The

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data shows that 13% of the children experienced extremely severe stress while 20% and 1% experienced extreme severe anxiety and stress respectively.

Keywords: children, covid 19, psychological problems, sociological problems

Introduction

The Corona virus named COVID 19 outbroke from Wuhan a city in China in December, 2019. Later it spread to different countries and now the entire world is raising a question that whether this pandemic comes to an endemic. This is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered corona virus. This is a transmitting virus which leads to respiratory illness and elderly people are the main victims of the pandemic. The government and health professional are in a run to prevent this disease and developed a vaccine but the second wave of corona virus is in a full swing now. The cases are increasing tremendously. The entry of this virus disturbed the entire economy and the living conditions of people. As per the corona case status report (8th April 2021), there are about 1.15m COVID 19 cases reported and 4,728 people died within one year in Kerala.

COVID 19 pandemic is a Pandora box that affects every person, many got affected with the disease, many families got shattered, many lost their jobs and the parents had to compromise their work time to look after their children. Children are the category who has physically been less affected but there are lot of other impacts happened on the children during this pandemic. Children faced many psychosocial problems during this pandemic period. The shift from offline to online classes leads children who spend most of their time in school earlier have to sit at home, trying to deal with unexpected turns of life. They had to change their routine and learn new technical skills and get acquainted with new online platforms to attend an online class. They have to sit at home with no play time, no extracurricular activities, and no jokes in class. All these lead them to face different psychological as well as sociological problems. According to UNICEF report 333,000 children reached with psychosocial support during the lock down period. Childline assisted children in

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distress through phone calls.

Children of single parents, including medical professionals taking care of COVID 19 patients are likely to suffer from adjustment difficulties if their parent gets quarantined. In addition, transient or prolonged parent- child separation may lead to significant psychosocial impact.

It has been reported that the most common psychosocial and behavioral problems among children and adolescents in the pandemic were inattention, clinginess, distraction and fear of asking question about the pandemic. This risk is greatly increased in those with pre- existing mental health conditions. In the midst of the COVID 19 pandemic, helpline numbers for mental health counseling are seeing a huge surge in calls, with anxiety and adjustment issues topping the list. In addition, domestic violence incidence in India is at a 10 year high during the COVID 19 lockdown. Thus, the COVID 19 disease itself, and its ripple effects of quarantine and nationwide lockdowns have and will induce acute panic, anxiety, obsessive behaviors, paranoia and depression, and may also lead to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the long run.

This study tried to understand and evaluate the impacts of COVID 19 and the psychosocial problems experienced by children between 13 to 18 years during this pandemic. The study tried to evaluate and analyze the psychological problems like depression, anxiety and stress and we dealt with the sociological problems like lack of relationship with parents, teacher and peer group. The shift from offline classes to online classes brought a new life style for the children. This surprising substitution affected them in both positive and negative impacts. Our study focused on negative aspects and how children deal with it.

Children who loved to do mischiefs in outside got confined to home with a screen to study, play and other activities. Many families are still experiencing an ongoing, pervasive sense of loss for example, loss of social networks, jobs, financial security and threatened loss of loved ones. This has impacted the quality of relationships among parents, children and siblings. It poses a

significant risk for the adjustment of more than 37 crore children (0- 14 years) in India, given dependence on positive family processes for a host of developmental outcomes.

Review of literature

This journal focuses on how children are more immune to disease due to their age but more exposed to psychosocial economic factors. It discusses about pressure on children due to school closures, need for mental and social health support by front line workers. It also examines the after effects of pandemic like sedentary life style, less cardiovascular fitness, childhood obesity, more time on networks, irregular sleep pattern, and unfavorable diet plans which increase the risk of physical, psychological problems. (Ghosh etal., 2020).

There are different channels through which COVID 19 affects children and the channels are the first channel is through infection with the virus, the second channel is through the socioeconomic effects of the virus and related measures to suppress transmission and control the pandemic and the third channel is the risk that the virus and its response poses to the longer- term efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals and ensure the realization of the rights of all children. (United Nations, Policy Brief: The impact of COVID 19 on Children, April 2020).

Girls have less admittance to advanced innovation than boys, which may decrease their admittance to and interest in online learning. Children living in casual settlements, camps with restricted framework and no admittance to web are especially affected. The destructive impacts of this pandemic won't be upset similarly. They are required to be generally harming for children in the most unfortunate nations, and in the least fortunate areas, and for those in effectively burdened or weak circumstances. (United Nations, Policy Brief: The impact of COVID 19 on Children, April 2020).

Statement of the Problem

The entry of the pandemic brought various changes in the world. The over spreading of the disease leads to different physical issues, lock down and quarantine periods, school closures and unemployment. Children, classified as one of the vulnerable category, they had to sit in homes for weeks without any real interaction. Being quarantined in the homes and the shift from offline classes to online classes, children faced many psychological problems like anxiety, stress, loneliness, depression and suicidal tendencies and attempted cases have been reported during the period. The lack of outdoor activities, school closures, lack of family leisure trips and neighbourhoods visits leads to different sociological problems. All these issues influenced children tremendously and the impact will last longer than we anticipate.

Significance of the Study

As the world is facing a great pandemic which destroy and disturbed the living condition of people and children is one of the victims of this pandemic situation. Children has to make them familiar with new model of education that is in online and to sit in homes without going outside for games and many children are worried about their future education and life. The significance of this study is to understand and evaluate the impact of COVID 19 and suggest appropriate measures for the future.

Objectives of the study

• To understand the psychosocial problems faced by children during COVID 19

Specific Objectives

• To assess the level of depression experienced by children

• To assess the level of anxiety experienced by children

• To assess the level of stress experienced by children

• To study the relationship of children with parents, teachers and peer groups

Method

This study is descriptive in nature and quantitative in approach. The universe considered for the research is children coming under the age of 13 to 18 of Angamaly municipality in Ernakulam district. Both male and female children were the respondents. The particular region selected according to accessibility of the researcher to collect data. 70 samples were collected from Angamaly municipality through convenient sampling. In that 41 respondents were female and 29 respondents were male. Self- made questionnaire was used to study the sociological problems like lack of relationship with parents, teachers and peer groups and DASS scale was used to study the psychological problems like depression, anxiety and stress. Questions were created in Google forms and shared among children for collecting the data.

Results

Table 1: Age of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
13 yrs	3	4.2%
14 yrs	10	14.2%
15 yrs	12	17.1%
16 yrs	11	15.7%
17 yrs	16	22.8%
18 yrs	18	25.7%
Total	**70**	**100%**

Table 1 represents the age of the respondents. 25.7% of the respondents belong to age category of 18yrs and only 4.2% of respondents belong to age category of 13yrs.

Out of 70 respondents, 58.5% (41) female and 41.4% (29) were male.

Figure 1:

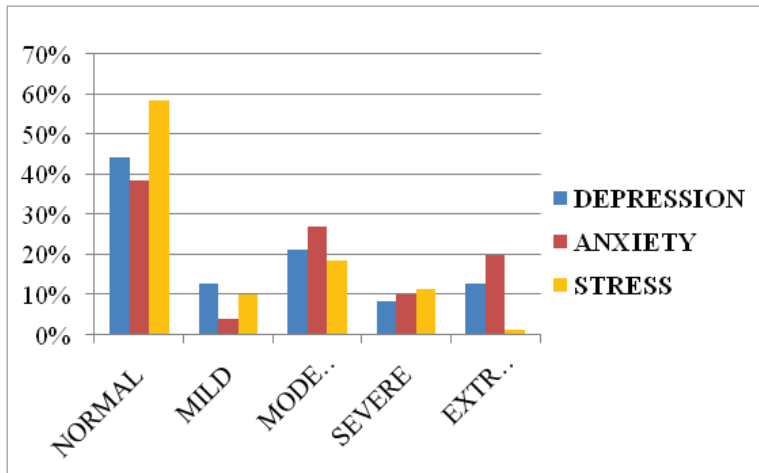*Psychological problems of the respondents*

Figure 1 represents the levels of psychological problems experienced by the respondents.

Figure 1 shows that about 45% of respondents experienced normal depression and 13% experienced extremely severe depression. 38% of respondents had normal and 27% moderate and 20% extremely severe anxiety. And 58% respondents faced normal stress and only 1% of respondents had extremely severe stress.

Figure 2 shows results on the evaluation by children on their online class during COVID-19. About 20% commented as poor, 51.40% as a fair one and lastly 28.5% said online classes were good.

Figure 2

Evaluation children abut online Classes
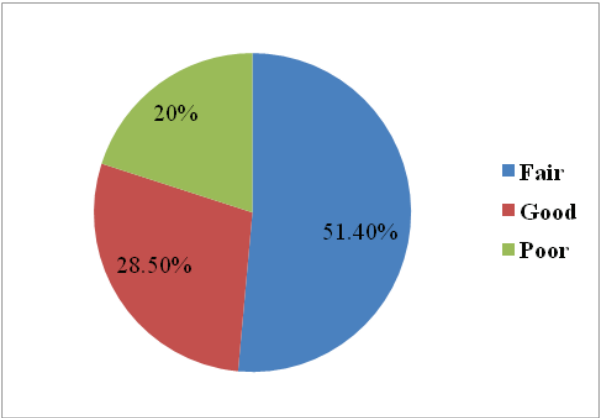
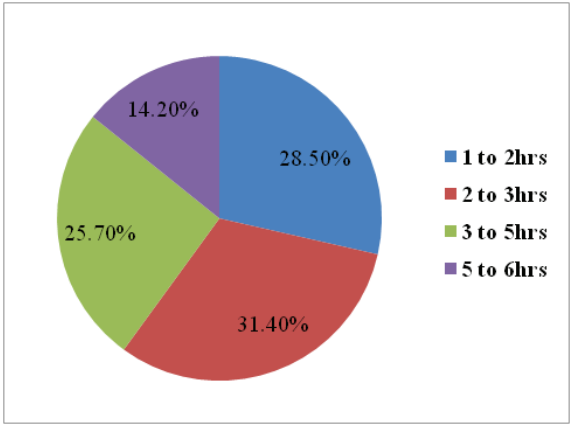
Figure 3

Hours spend for online classes

Figure 3 portrays on the hours spend by children on their online classes. About 28.5% said between 1- 2 hours, 31.4% between 2- 3 hours, 25.7% between 3 to 5 hours and only 14.2% between 5 -6 hours.
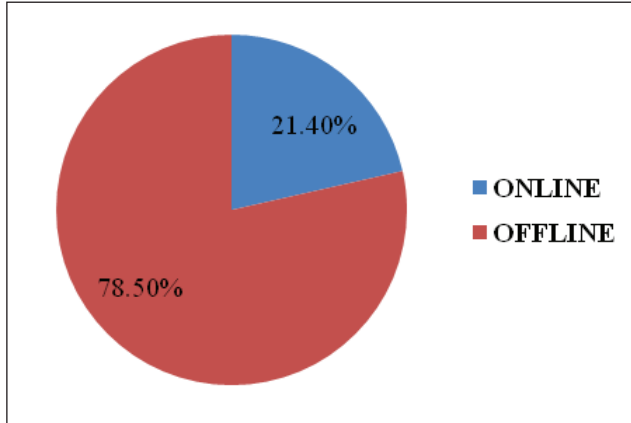
Figure 4: *Preferences of class type*

Figure 4, we could observe a significant percentage of participants, that is about 78.5% consider offline classes as the best option while only 21.4% supporting the online class.
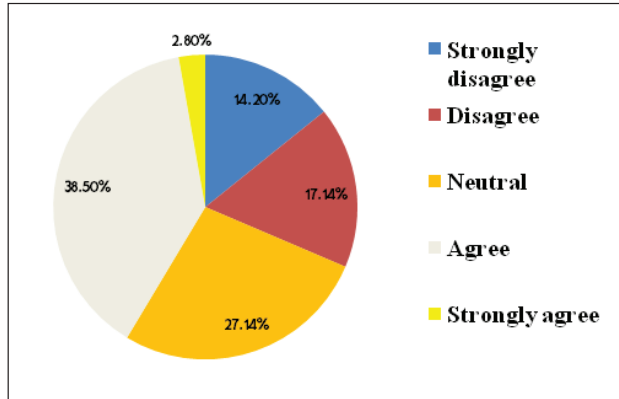
**Figure 5:** *Effectiveness of online class*
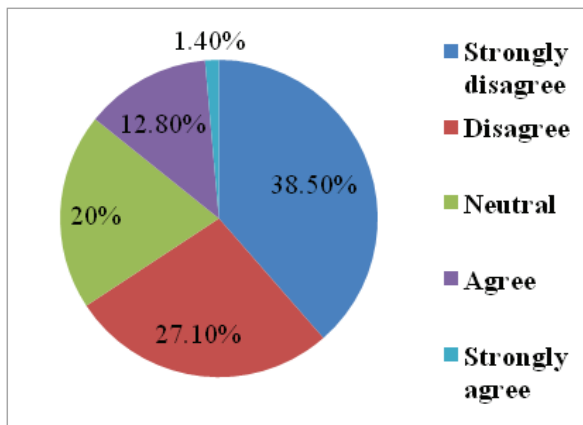
Figure 5 shows the response to the statement 'I think that online classes are more effective than offline classes' and about 38.5% strongly disagreed to the statement, 27.10% disagree, 20% stand neutral, 12.8% agrees the statement and lastly only 1,4% strongly agreed to the statement.

Figure 6: *Social relationship of children*

From above figure, for the statement 'My social relationships decreased during the pandemic', about 14.2% strongly disagreed, 17.14% disagreed, 27.14% stood neutral, while about 38.5% and 2.8% agreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

Figure 7: Family relationship during online classes
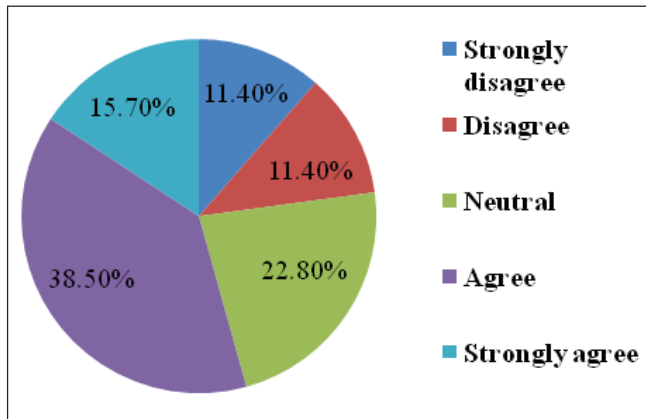
The above figure shows response to the statement 'I am able to spend sufficient time with my family and friends after the online classes, and about 11.4% strongly disagreed, 11.4% disagreed, 22.8% stood neutral, 38.5% agreed while the rest 15.7% strongly disagreed.

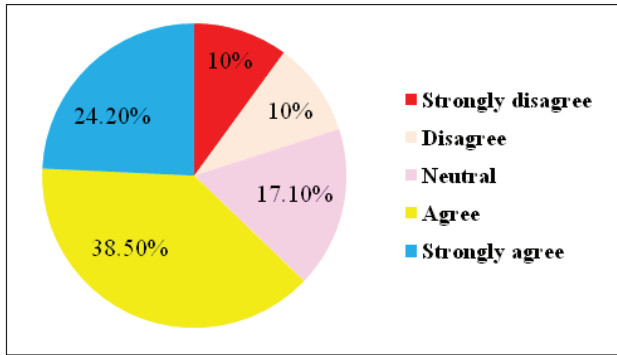**Figure 8:** *Family support during online classes*

Fig. 8 shows children's response to the statement 'My parents support me while being part of online education'. About 10% strongly disagreed, 10% disagreed, and 17.10% stood neutral, while 38.5% agreed and the rest 24.2% strongly disagreed.

Figure 9: Understanding of the topics taught by teachers during online classes
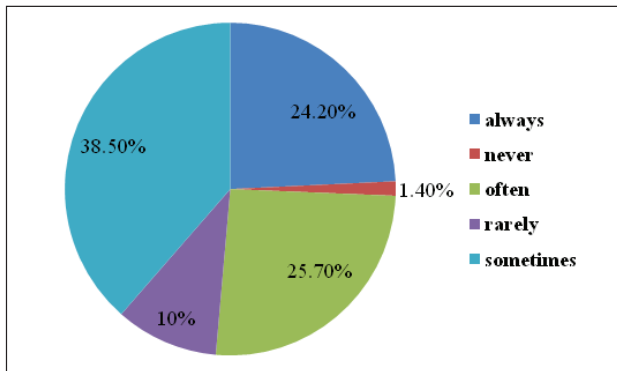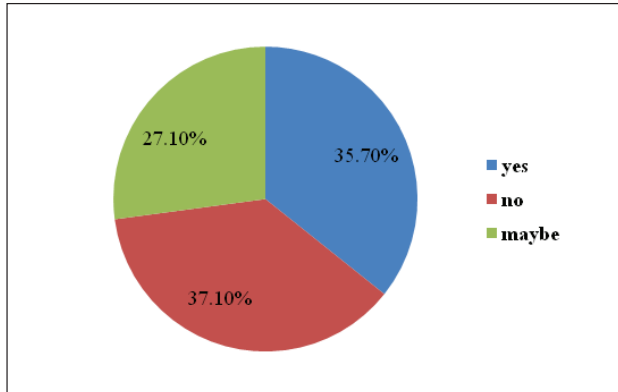

Fig. 9 shows 24.2% said that they always understand the content taught by their teachers while 1.4% said they never understand the topics, 25.7% said that they often understand the topics, 10% stated rarely and the rest 38.5% said that they sometimes understand what it is been taught in the class.
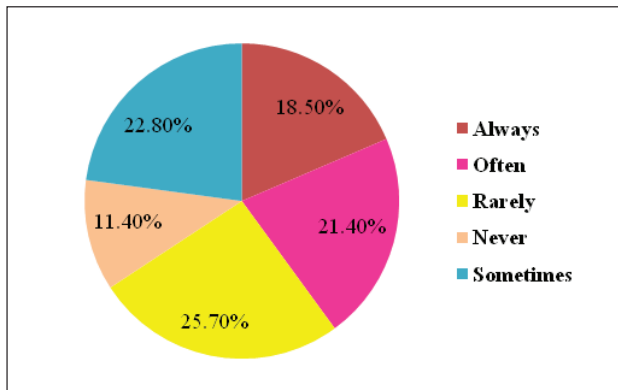
Figure 10

Personal attention provided for the children by teachers

When asked whether your teacher could provide more personal attention to each and every student through online mode, about 35.7% responded positively, while 37.10% responded negatively and about 27.10 % said maybe.
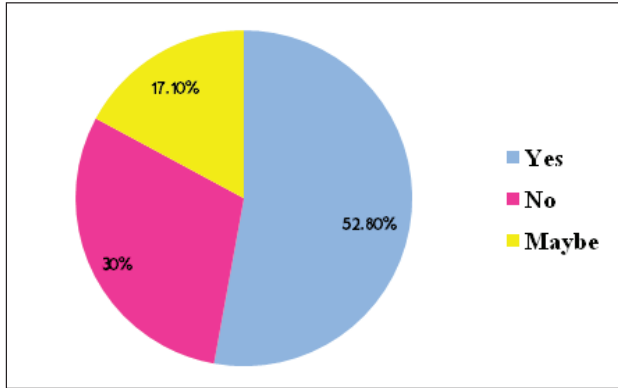
Figure 11

Clarification of doubts in online classes


The above graph shows results to the statement 'During online class I tried to clarify my doubts without any hesitation', about 18.5% said always, 21.4% said often, 25.7% said rarely, and 11.4% and 22.8% said never and sometimes respectively.

Figure 12: Relationship with the peer groups

The above figure shows response on whether children still maintain your relationship with peer groups even though not going to the school, and about 52.8% said yes, 30% said no and 17.1% said maybe.

Figure 13: Outdoor activities
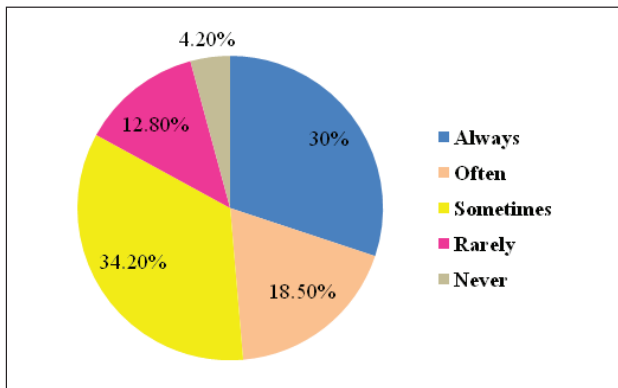
The above figure portraits the results of the statement: 'I miss outdoor games during COVID 19. About 30% confirmed that they always miss outdoor games, while 18.5% said they often do miss outdoor games, 34.2% said sometimes and 12.8% and 4.2% said they rarely and never miss these games respectively.

Table 3: Mode of communication among peer groups

Mode of contact	Frequency	Percentage
Telephonic communication	16	22.8%
Social media	43	61.4%
No contact	3	4.2%
Online classes	8	11.4%
Total	**70**	**100%**

Table 3 illustrates that 61.4% respondents used social media, 22.8% used telephonic communication, 4.2% had no contacts and 11.4% used online classes to maintain contact with their friends.

Discussion

The study comes to an end with a result that there were psychological problems in a moderate level among the children without lead them to the extremely severe situation in the lock down period. But in the case of sociological problems children tried to engage theselves in their homes and make relationship with the peers through more in social media. As per the opinion of children social media helps them to have a relaxation and connect with friends in the pandemic situation.

Majority of the children prefer offline classes for better quality of education. The continuous sitting in front of the gadgets make them boring and leads them to less interest for studies. The data shows that children had good relationship with their parents, teachers and peers during the pandemic period. But there were responses that they had lack of relationship with their parents, teachers and peer groups. Children responded that teachers could provide better personal attention to children through offline mode of education. Children were missing outdoor games and which leads them moderate level of depression, anxiety and stress. As per this study most of the children

were happy with situation. It may because the real interaction was replaced by virtual one which kids were interested, which developed a segmented life. The children's interaction through social media is not very beneficial. It is import- ant for our children to know their surroundings.

Children faced many problems but they are not willing to open themselves through the survey, some were open but others are not willing to disclose their problem. And another reason is that children were addicted to social media and the gadgets, it makes them to be satisfied in their own situation. Before COVID 19, there were game addiction cases but during the lock down times numbers of cases were increased. All these show the reason for this result of the study. Before the pandemic teachers could easily make an assessment of the children by directly approach in the school, but this pandemic brought a severe change for this. Lock down period make the children to sit in their homes and addicted to the social media and gadgets. All those increased the level of depression, anxiety and stress among children. Children were worried about their exams and future education; this is also a reason for the psycho- logical problems.

And in changing circumstances like these, we should evaluate our kid's well- being, quality of education they receive and find an appropriate alterna- tive to improve the lives of our children. They tried to maintain social interac- tion through social media. Our changing life sphere shows that Children with their sedentary life style with almost no physical activities feel they had real interaction but the quality of interaction should be assessed.

Suggestions

The study shows that children face various problems and mostly, there are unaware of their situations. First, we should make them aware and provide support. Government has to make a policy level of intervention to improve the quality of online education by making children access to gadget, high speed data connectivity and so on.

To prevent a sedentary lifestyle, we can create play groups that strictly

follows COVID 19 protocols. Social media is an unavoidable factor, so we can regulate the use by teaching about use and misuse and educating about cybercrimes, informing parents. Stress, anxiety has become a part of existence so various group intervention is to help children to manage them.

There is a great need to listen, understand, reassure children and make them feel loved and safe. Parents and teachers have to make an assessment on the behavior of children and act accordingly. Parents have to spend time with children to make them productive even if they are restricted in homes through online classes. School counselors can contact children to make an assessment from the school side; all these measures help the children to cope up with this present situation and to lead a happy and peaceful life.

Conclusion

The study was conducted to evaluate the impact of COVID 19 on children. In this study researcher tried to analyze the psychosocial problems experienced by children during the pandemic. By analyzing the study, it was understood that there are impacts on children; they faced moderate level of psychological problems and the respondents commented that they had decreased the social relationship during COVID 19 but they tried to make contact with others through social media. On the level of education they prefer offline mode of education for the better studies. The result was also showing that most of the children maintained good relationship with parents, teacher and peer groups.

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