



A STUDY OF ACTIVITIES THAT UNDERGRADUATE COMMERCE STUDENTS IN MUMBAI SUBURBAN MISS THE MOST DUE TO SOCIAL- ISOLATION DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The Covid 19 pandemic has created a burning platform for educators, academicians, counsellors, hiring managers and the like all over the planet. Though measures have been adopted to align to the new normal, personality development contributors to the 'holistic' development of a student have to be revisited. Social distancing – a mandatory requirement of the novel pandemic has deprived students of personal interaction, a main contributor to personality development. One would assume that this would not be the case of above average students given the premise that they would be able to embrace the circumstances and not let it deter their growth both academically and socially. With this hypothesis the researcher set out to study whether above average students miss out on various contributors to personality development which normally are integrated in a student's life. The survey method was used by circulation of a google form and students were asked to check the activity they feel they are deprived of as a consequence of social distancing. The emergent results of the survey pointed out to the glaring fact that far from adjusting to the situation the above average student does feel a sense of social isolation. With 1332 respondents, more than 80% of students felt that they missed hanging out with their friends, hanging out at the canteen was missed next, followed by classroom study and the rest. The findings show that social interaction is mandatory in a student's life and in the development of his/her personality. And that being an above average student doesn't compensate for the isolation felt during the present crisis propelled by the pandemic Covid 19.

These results throw light that social distancing may result in a feeling of isolation and which in turn may lead to social anxiety and related personality disorders.

INTRODUCTION

Most individuals uphold protective practices and take precautionary actions—such as social distancing—to avoid contagion (Brug et al. [2009](#); Ibuka et al. [2010](#)). In response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, on March 18, 2020, the government of Maharashtra implemented the closures of school and college in order to curtail the spread of the contagion due to social interaction. Consequently, this closure due to the Covid 19 pandemic created a burning platform for educators, academicians, counsellors, hiring managers and the like all over Mumbai. Though measures have been adopted to align to the new normal, personality development contributors to the ‘holistic’ development of a student have to be revisited. Social distancing – a mandatory requirement of the novel pandemic has deprived students of personal interaction, a main contributor to personality development. One would assume that this would not be the case of above average students given the premise that they would be able to embrace the circumstances and not let it deter their growth both academically, emotionally and socially.

Several studies have inquired into the role of social isolation in early psychological development and found that it has a significant negative impact on personality development. Developmental psychology researchers largely founded that learned experiences through environmental factors during childhood nurture the fundamentals for lifetime behaviour and success as it is a crucial phase for cognitive, emotional and psychosocial skill development. According to psychotherapist Emily Roberts, "Isolation is devastating to our moods because we are left stuck with our own thoughts." This pandemic has left no opportunity for community life where students acquire emotional and moral support by leaning on their peers. Qiu et al. ([2020](#)) report that the recommended protective measures against COVID-19, such as self-isolation and home quarantine, have negative effects on individuals' mental health, inducing conditions such as panic disorder, anxiety, and depression. Students tend to become more demanding, having to cope up with these changes, and may exhibit impatience, annoyance and hostility, which in turn may cause them to suffer from physical and mental violence by overly pressurized parents. A study by Wang G et al. implicated that stressors, such as monotony, disappointment, lack of face-to-face contact with classmates, friends and teachers, lack of enough personal space at home, and family financial losses during lockdowns, all can potentially trigger troublesome and even prolonged adverse mental consequences in children. They further stated that the interaction between their daily-routine changes, home confinement, and fear of infection could further intensify these undesirable mental reactions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this small-scale research study was to explore what students miss most about not being able to attend college physically and being confined to their home as a result of the measures of social distancing adopted in times of COVID-19.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research focuses on studying the responses of above average undergraduate students studying in an urban Commerce college affiliated to the University of Mumbai.

METHODOLOGY

This is a survey research focused on finding out what above average academically inclined students miss the most about physically being unable to attend College in Mumbai region. A Google form was created listing out various activities that normally a student engages in when present on campus. This form was circulated on various student class groups of the institution.

The questionnaire listed out activities such as class room study, library study, peer study, hanging out with friends, hanging out in the canteen, following a set routine, using own pocket money, interaction with teachers, participating in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and other activities.

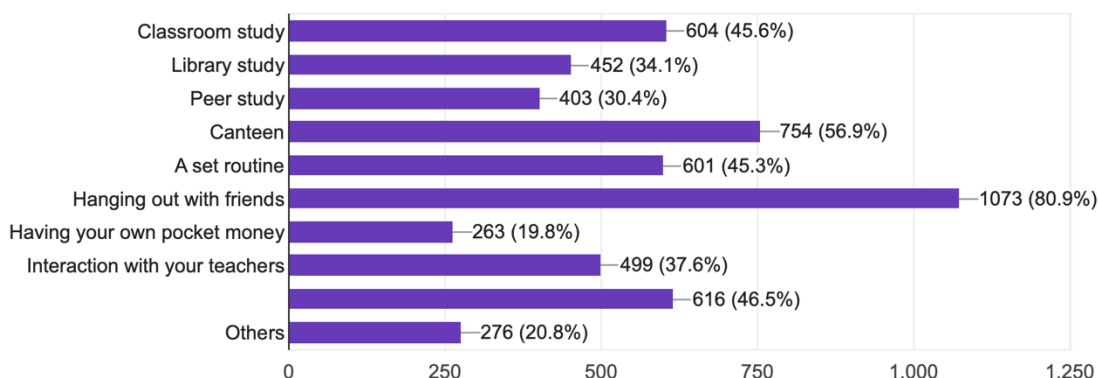
HYPOTHESES

The study would reflect the activity the students miss the most on account of social isolation due to COVID 19.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

What do you miss about going to college ?

1,326 responses



The above graph glares at the most affected aspect of student life and that is their socializing with peers/colleagues. Canteen life was next followed by classroom study. This extended period of socialization experienced by the students may lead to profound long-term impact on their psychological well-being. Table 1 reflects research published in “Beyond Differences” indicating psychological effects caused due to isolation.

TABLE I

Symptom	Description
Anxiety and depression	Just as early loneliness can lead to anxiety in later life, loneliness is also associated with present feelings of sadness and anxiety. ¹⁶
Low self-esteem	Just as strong peer relations correlate positively with self-worth, many isolated students suffer from low self-esteem. ¹⁷
Lack of sleep	Experts link loneliness with sleep disturbances and trouble falling asleep. ¹⁸
Poor perceived physical health	Isolation among adolescents increases the risk of fair or poor self-rated health and is also associated with an increased number of doctor visits. ¹⁹
Somatic symptoms	Loneliness in children and adolescents is strongly associated with stomachaches and headaches. ²⁰
Substance use and abuse	Adolescent substance use (alcohol, cigarettes, illicit drugs, etc.) positively correlates with social isolation, perhaps due to the perceived need to self-medicate or the desire for social acceptance. ²¹
Suicidal tendencies	Suicidal ideation can be closely tied to social isolation, especially in adolescence. ²²

Source: Beyond Differences²³

Library study, Peer study, having own pocket money, interaction with teachers, participating in co-curricular and extra - curricular activities proved to be much lower rated than socializing.

CONCLUSION

The study proves that connectedness and belongingness- essential aspects of socialization are vital for academic success and mental health. Thus, institutions when reopened must re prioritize on community building opportunities and social – emotional learning. This may be the only road ahead which may mitigate the disastrous impact of social isolation on Mumbai city undergraduate commerce students.

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