



IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON ANXIETY OF THE SECONDARY LEARNERS: ISSUES AND WAYS TO ADDRESS IT IN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE.

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Abstract: Covid19 is one of the greatest challenge defining health crises throughout the globe. Throughout the world billions of students were not able to attend schools, higher education institutions. It is also predicted that it might have a devastating effect on the global education. The lockdown has also resulted to drastic change in the daily life of the individuals in the social psychological behaviour. Anxiety means a mental health disorder of worries; fear, panic, restlessness etc that strongly and negatively affect the daily activities of life. The study focused on to find out whether pandemic lock down has any effect on the anxiety of the secondary learners. The descriptive study used about thirty participants from different secondary schools and through an interview the data were collected. The data were then thematically analysed. The study found that the pandemic initially had affected higher anxiety level in learners and along with the time the anxiety of the learners are significantly affected. The findings also showed that using online web2.0 technology based virtual classrooms led to minimising the pandemic effect on the anxiety of secondary learners. The web2.0 based learning strategies like YouTube based instruction and whatsapp based instruction not only helped them to cope up with studies but also the learners explored the awareness measures of digital practices that could be used in their daily life. The future implications recommended that more use of online virtual interactions is necessary to minimise the effect of pandemic or any disaster on the anxiety level of secondary learners.

Index Terms – Covid health issue, anxiety, web2.0 technology learning, secondary learners

I. INTRODUCTION

The lock down has changed the lifestyle of the individuals by putting them in a uncertain situation for everything. The social distancing, isolated living life style, socio economic problem, worries of surviving the infection etc has affected the mental well being of most of the individuals. As it is rapidly sweeping huge population across the country and world the learners are also affected with a considerable degree of stress, fear, anxiety about that will happen to their academic program. The most important impact of pandemic on the psychological characters of the learners is extreme stress and anxiety levels. The learners of different zones i.e. red, orange and green are still in locked down and it has affected their well being and mental health. All these lockdown of educational institutions have shifted their learning process in the online virtual mode. Even in virtual mode the learners are exposed to various applications and talks about awareness programs of covid19. They are also getting aware about the preventive measures to be followed strictly to be safe during the pandemic situation. The paper tried to explore whether these pandemic situation are creating the stress and anxiety on the secondary level learners. The paper tried to also explore some ways to address the anxiety level of the secondary learners and make them feel stress free while combating the pandemic situation.

II. EDUCATIONAL ISSUES IN PANDEMIC

The University Grants has also put forwarded use of several web technologies incorporation in educational practices at all levels. The use of online interactive virtual platforms like YouTube videos, YouTube live sessions, whatsapp based instruction, uploading materials in the institutional website etc. are some of the measures taken up for continuing education during the pandemic lockdown of educational institutions. Since the learners as well as their parents are not so aware and equipped with such instruction it took some time to install and continue with the learning instruction. The availability of smart devices and internet services are some of the major challenges to smoothly continuing the educational instruction in the online virtual mode. The alternative method of online virtual class interaction and sharing of materials could be possible route to solve the losses of education to some extent. Again in reality many places in our country face challenges of virtual classroom. So this pandemic is also exploring the challenges and trying to device further measures for solution of the problem arising in the virtual class.

Anxiety of learners In psychological terms the anxiety refers to an emotion that is characterised by feeling of worries, tension and also elevated or extremely lower blood pressure levels. When an individual faces potentially harmful or worrying triggers, feelings of anxiety are not only normal but necessary for survival (Medical News Today, 2020). The anxiety of the learners also may vary while dealing with the national and international disaster covid19 pandemic situation. The different characteristics of

elevated anxiety levels are mainly- anxious mood, tension, fears, insomnia, intellectual, depressed mood, somatic muscular, somatic sensory, cardio vascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, autonomic symptoms and aspects of behavioural changes respectively. Here in this study the research focuses to explore the effect of covid 19 on the anxiety of the secondary learners. This study used the Hamilton rating scale based standardised tool to assess the anxiety level in learners (Hamilton, 1959).

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

After reviewing the researcher try to mention the following research question as the gaps of the research works but there is linkage between present research works with the ongoing pandemic situation. The research questions are:

1. whether the pandemic has any effect on the anxiety of the secondary learners in educational perspective
2. How can these anxiety levels be decreased significantly among secondary learners in educational perspectives?

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study used thematic analysis of the qualitative research to explore the effect of pandemic on the anxiety level of the learners. It also tried to address ways to lowering of anxiety in the secondary learners with reference to educational perspective. The research used snowball sampling procedures to select the sample. After the collection of data coding was done in relation to the whole text, the patterns in the themes were found and a narrative was created that include the response of the interviewees. The findings of the study could be applied to other similar situations in respect to its external validity and generalisability. The study also tried to find out the potential effects and also recognised its short comings. A total of thirty participants of secondary level were selected for the interview with the researcher. The delimitation of the study is Silchar, Cachar district, Assam, India. The participants were selected using non-probability sampling procedure because here the learners added other learners whom they know well. A questionnaire was used for the interview of the participants with twenty open ended items which focused on the research questions mentioned. The questionnaire was constructed based on the Hamilton anxiety rating scale (HAM-A). The questionnaire addressed on basically two aspects - psychic anxiety and somatic anxiety. The questionnaire consisted of fourteen items. The item numbers 1 to 14 consisted of one items related to anxious mood, tension, fears, insomnia, intellectual, depressed mood, somatic muscular, somatic sensory, cardio vascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, autonomic symptoms and two item for aspects of behavioural changes respectively. The tool took maximum twenty five minutes to conduct the interview for each participant of secondary level. After selection of the participants the researcher called the participants for an open interview according to the convenience of the participants. At the time of the interview the learners expressed and shared their experience about their feeling of anxiety and the ways they are trying to deal with the pandemic. The web2.0 based whatsapp, YouTube, Power Points, online interaction through zoom, webex etc on the effective learning practices during the pandemic. The participants also shared and their personal feeling with the researchers on the context of virtual learning platform. The participant learners provided their maximum time discussed openly and put forwarded suggestions.

V. ANALYSIS

The study used thematic analytic strategies to describe the effectiveness of web2.0 learning strategies for secondary learners in the covid 19 pandemic. The data was collected using an unstructured interview and it was analysed using thematic approaches satisfying the dependability, credibility, conformability, transferability as well as trustworthiness. The researcher produced a logical, Consistent and possible explanation of the study investigated where the participants were interviewed and the participants responded after examining the situation relevant to the research questions. The data triangulation technique used the multiple sources of data to provide understanding and making the comprehensive, robust and well developed. These could describe learners' perception and interpretation analysis (denzin 1978; patton, 1999). The learners were interviewed to explore their anxiety levels during pandemic and the measures they are dealing with pandemic situation in the educational perspective. The participants were from ninth standard of five schools which were coded as 10 students School I, ten students of School II, ten students of School III, and ten students of School IV. All the schools are located in the Silchar, Cachar district of Assam.

VI. FINDINGS

The data were analysed and interpreted according to the research questions.

A. First research question: whether the pandemic has any effect on the anxiety of the secondary learners in educational perspective.

The secondary learners participated in the study responded on their experience about their feeling of anxiety in this Covid pandemic situation. More than 80% of the learners expressed that they were feeling moderate anxiety levels in pandemic along with also faced severe anxiety levels. The scores collected from these four schools showed that in overall participants, ten students were found to have moderate anxiety levels, but other twenty students were found with severe anxiety levels. If we look at item wise thematic analysis: then all the students were experiencing anxious, irritation, tension in mind, lowering intellectual features and fear of uncertainty. They also expressed that they felt not only anxious by watching news but also from some wrong information amongst localities. Again twenty students of all the four schools experienced moderate physical weakness. Again among ten students : two from school I, three from school II, three from school III and two from school IV experienced gastro intestinal disorders like stomach fullness, problems of excretion etc. Moreover twenty five students of all the schools experienced tension, headache and restlessness. Thus the findings show that all the students faced anxiety due to covid19 pandemic situation. The result found that eighty percent of the secondary learners faced severe anxiety levels due to a sudden covid19 pandemic situation and twenty percent of the secondary learners experienced moderate anxiety levels in this covid19 situation.

B. Second research question: how can this anxiety level be decreased significantly among secondary learners in educational perspectives.

This research question tried to find out ways through which anxiety level in secondary learners could be decreased in this pandemic situation with special reference to their educational concerns. The participants from all of the groups: school I, school II, school III and school IV expressed their experience on the ways by which the virtual learning environment through television (Swayam, Doordarshan channels etc) and also via web2.0 technology mediated learning instruction using YouTube, whatsapp, zoom, Google tools, webex etc are helping them to minimise their anxieties in educational perspective. They also opined that these tools are helping them to be more aware about the hygienic practices to be safe during the pandemic. Some of the learners like eight students from school I, five students of school II, three students of school III and four students of school IV also experienced that some simple health exercise practices like meditation and simple yoga practices helped them a lot in lowering anxiety levels of secondary learners. Again fifteen participants also expressed that along with taking online classes, online peer group discussion also helped them reducing anxiety to a lot of extent. Thus the findings show that using web2.0 technology platform of online education resources may lower down the anxiety levels in education. Along with it the findings also show that online peer group interactions are also helpful in lowering anxiety among secondary learners. The web2.0 technology based instruction using YouTube and Whatsapp to be very effective learning especially in times of a pandemic situation. They also put forwarded that such online based web2.0 tools learning strategy could be continued along with the traditional classes.

VII. WAYS TO ADDRESS IN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

This study would like to put forward some strategies for ways to lower the anxiety levels of the secondary learners in the educational perspective. Firstly, the study suggests adopting web2.0 technology based education and learning instructions for the secondary learners. The web2.0 tools youtube, whatsapp, powerpoint etc are being very much utilised by the teachers for providing instructions in the secondary level. This is definitely a step toward a digital classroom during a pandemic lockdown situation. Web 2.0 has important role in evaluation, assessment, creating content, individual and group learning experience etc. the implementation of Web 2.0 in university website tries to produce fruitful and ideal environment for teachers and students by sharing and uploading lectures and information's (Khalid, 2010). Web 2.0 users usually involve themselves in the virtual learning environment which focuses on social media skills. Through this tool students can communicate their views, ideas, and findings with their peers and teachers. Web2.0 technologies are the recent trends in the instructional process. It is very important for the teachers and the students to know about how to teach, learn, communicate and create knowledge using this technology. Web2.0 also makes the learning participatory (Mc Loughlin and Lee ,2007; Albion ,2008). Again it is found that mobile based web2.0 as a source of creation and sharing of content enhancing the constructivist teaching environment. (Cochrane and Bateman, 2008). Thus the pedagogy using web2.0 should be promoted as it is a fruitful platform for sharing and collaborating learning materials. A study by Malhiwsky in 2010 found positive effects of web2.0 in enhancement of student's knowledge, achievement and communication abilities. Secondly, the study suggests the secondary learners to adopt simple health practices like meditation and simple physical exercises for the learners well being (Onem, 2015; Leemay, Hoolahan and Buchanan, 2019). The study also suggests another way of lowering anxiety by initiating online virtual peer discussion practices. The collaborative web2.0 based platform sharing of ideas and information enhances the different psychological characteristics of learners. (Alrahmi, Othman & Musa, 2014 ; Galy,Downey & Johnson, 2011 ; Huang, Hood & Yoo, 2014 ; Lambert, Kalyuga & Capan, 2009; Sejzi, Aris, Ahmad & Rosli, 2015; Malwisky,2010; Yang, Guo & Yu, 2016). So it is important that such practices should be promoted to lower stress and anxiety level in secondary learners.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In the present study we can conclude that this pandemic has affected the secondary learners by elevating their anxiety levels. This has led to higher psychological stress and also physical problems among secondary learners. Again the study also concludes that use of web2.0 technology based learning instruction could lower the anxiety level in the educational perspective of secondary learners. The YouTube, Whatsapp, PowerPoint and other interaction application like webex, zoom were effective in virtual mode of instruction at secondary level. It was concluded that web2.0 technology tools based learning strategies would be very effective over the secondary learners and could be used widely during the pandemic situation or ant barrier in traditional classroom instruction. The regular practice of simple meditation and yoga practices are also found to lower the anxiety level of the secondary learners. Even peer group online discussion would be also an effective way to lower the anxiety and stress among the secondary learners. In this view it is important also that the family members should provide the learner to access the Smartphone for one to two hours.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were put forwarded to the world of Educationists, parents, teachers and stakeholders.

1. Encouraging self learning and more opportunity should be provided to use web2.0 technology based learning platform.
2. Promoting the meditations and simple yoga health exercises in the pandemic locked down situation
3. Avoiding and ignoring any fake rumour news that disturb mental wellness.
4. Encouraging and initiating more collaborative peer online virtual discussions by sharing educational information over times.
5. The parents should provide at least one to two hours in using their smart phone for web2.0 technology based learning to their children.

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