General Article : Views and Analysis

The impact of covid 19 on students: throgh the eyes of a young adult

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The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated lockdowns, school closures, physical distancing, and loss of familiar environments. Due to this, it has become mandatory for the government to put restrictions on movement that has disrupted routines, diminishing social interactions, and deprivation of traditional learning methods. An estimated 1.5 billion students have been affected by school closures globally as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This represents more than 91 percent of the total student population (UNESCO, 2020).Students from all over India are concerned about their education as a national exam that has been postponed and further on the dates of the exam has become unpredictable. the minds of students have been grappled by the insecurity of isolation and uncertainty. As in any crisis, whether a tsunami or a flood, it triggers strong negative emotional responses such as panic, stress, anxiety, anger, and fear, similar is the case for COVID 19. Fear and Stress have a detrimental impact on health and the ability to learn. For all learners, young and old, learning is affected by stress and insecurity. The stress and anxiety of the pandemic are compounded by the circulation of captivating information both- accurate and false, often fuelled by media reporting. This not only increases anxiety but acts as a fertile ground for the depression for young minds. Only when the brain is socially connected and emotionally secure can it focus on academic content and engage in learning. Everyone's experience of studying at home will be different and thus, the impact that this could have on anyone person might be different for another. Some people will have a support system around them including friends, family, and pets whereas others will be more alone. The latter can make the person very disturbed, as the feelings of loneliness and isolation can be heightened. For such situations, students are an easy target especially now in this pandemic, who are already in the pressure of academics and those living in the shadow of insecurity about their future. Such people are likely to struggle more during this time and feel more isolated than usual. Thus, such people may experience worsened symptoms due to self-isolation but also, it could spark the onset of mental health issues for individuals who haven't encountered them before. All of this can add to lower morale and might also lead to a physical and emotional sense of withdrawal from the world and people around us. The impact that self-isolation and social deprivation can have on mental health shouldn't be disregarded or underestimated. To address and counter the social anxiety, emotional upheaval, and fearful insecurity unleashed by COVID-19, it is urgent and necessary that families and communities build vital coping skills and emotional resilience. Students need to stay healthy and positive and learn to navigate emotions, practice mindful engagements that bring them happiness, exhibit social behaviour, and cope with the daily challenges that they are facing in their lives. In such times of crisis, adults and parents take on the role of teachers for children and young people. Guiding and supporting shouldn't be one's duty, but a responsibility that parents and children must share. Parents/Elders should be the silver lining to their clouds and hold them up in such adverse circumstances. In these situations, it's so important to look after the future generation. No matter how adverse conditions we might find ourselves in, there is a myriad of suggestions that can help. These include, but are not limited to:

- Encourage communication and networking among and with teachers to promote continuous learning, mutual support, and wellbeing.

- Encourage health-promoting activities, mindfulness, and kindness practices– including healthy eating habits, regular exercise, and sleeping hours. Following a flexible but structured daily routine, which includes time to do something fun or relaxing. Fostering mental health is paramount in such a situation.
- Emphasizing the value of arts, culture to promote wellbeing.These help developing creativity, motor skills, and decision-making. It also reduces anxiety and develops emotional resilience. Use of music, dance, painting, etc. to bolster morale and concentration. Parents must allow and encourage such activities.
- Supporting student's social connection and being responsible for their online behavior. Helping students to stay connected with friends via social media networks while maintaining the required safe distance.This can also be seen as an opportunity to educate them about safety in digital spaces and develop their digital skills.
- Encourage games and audio resources that promote learning. Introducing children toonline platforms that promote social, emotional, and academic learning such as unacademy, skillshare, etc.
- Encourage them to enjoy family time. For example, cooking dishes with them, watching movies together, this will help to boost morale. (Sources : UNECO)

Looking after physical and mental health is of extreme importance in general but now has become imperative due to the COVID-19 outbreak – whether that's finding ways to manage stress and anxiety, to staying connected with friends, family, loved ones, and colleagues. It's also important to note that there are many other avenues in which the coronavirus pandemic can impact student's mental health that hasn't been covered in this article

Thus, my key takeaway message to everyone in all situations is to be kind to yourself and others. Look after yourself and those around you by finding and providing support and consider the points above to help. We will get through all of this together.