

Covid-19 Impact on College Going Students (17-22 year olds)

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Abstract ~

A student is considered to have just a single role in his life, to learn and grasp as much knowledge one can. But within this very flawed system of learning, the other countenances of a student's life are often overlooked and ignored. These include the mental health of a student and academical stress faced by them. These aspects were even more neglected when a global pandemic struck the entire nation and a lot of chaos and turmoil was reflected on the nation's history. From being jovial and socially bounded to becoming socially withdrawn and the hesitation to meet new people, the pandemic has had its adverse effects on the psychological well-being of a student. This research paper would try to highlight those neglected aspects through the medium of online surveys and gaining insight from a university level counsellor.

Keywords ~Covid-19 Pandemic, Mental health, university students, psychological well-being

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I. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic was a major global scenario faced by each and every one of us with disastrous impacts on all sectors of an individual. Once such impact which was minutely neglected was the impact of it on the young learners of our nation who are the very future of our country. Insights taken from the WHO worldly records, a total of 509,600,360 confirmed cases of the deadly respiratory virus and around 6,243,332 deaths were recorded in 226 countries and territories^[3]. The novel coronavirus disease 2019 which is said to hit its ground zero patient in the Hunan province of China has globally impacted around 507,016,410 and many more counting. (Numbers in adherence to the report launched by WHO on 21 April,2022)^[1]. This family of virus is considered to be a part of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) which was initially found to have its origins from bats^[1].

This virus then spread from the Hunan province to all parts of Asia, Europe, Middle East and all the resulting continents in the world. It is considered to be dangerous due to its high resistance to vaccines and boosters and its quick adaptability to global weather conditions^[2]. Some of the worst hit countries were that of Italy, India, USA, China, France, Brazil, Germany, United Kingdom, Russia and South Korea^[3]. Within a short duration, this virus hit each and every country and continent surrounding to China due to its high transmission rate through air particles. On 16th March, 2020 a majority of universities and schools around India were shut down and all learning was forced to virtual learning platforms. These platforms included Zoom, Blackboard, Google Teams, Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams^[4]. Even though students were made equipped with online education but not enough attention was provided to the mental health and adverse effects of the online learning and the pandemic.

Many students developed mental health disorders in the early and middle stages of the pandemic like that of depression, anxiety, OCD, substance abuse and a rather high impact on the sleeping & eating patterns, mood swings and attention span of a student^[6]. Some major cases where students were subjected to think of suicidal ideation or fall victim to the physical/emotional abuse due to domestic violence within the households^[5]. These might have a long-term effect on the psychology of a student and would also affect their academics and personal life.

II. Background

Pandemics are going to meddle human lives repeatedly in the future since due to an increase in the global travel, change in land use and massive abuse of natural surroundings and ecosystem^[7]. This particular pandemic of 2019 which led each and every human being to the extent of social isolation. As virtual learning platforms were induced in the education curriculum for the betterment of students, the decision makers of our country didn't contemplate about the consequences of this decision. Making a student sit in front of their digital screens for a prevalent time of the day which would make them feel detached and induce a sense of loneliness within them^[8]. With no physical human interaction during the early stages of pandemic, a student's mental well-being was affected due to many various factors. The three major causes on why the students were impacted are:

- Social Isolation: being detached from loved ones or society in a bid to curb the spread of the virus.
- Mobile phones or dependency on digital media: inhibiting too much of screen time which affects the neurological balance in the brain of a student.
- Fear: The fear which was being spread due to the news and government regarding the widespread virus and how it created a sense of fear amongst the students. Also being made to assess their knowledge through the board examination in the midst of a global pandemic.

The common symptoms/how it affected the students are as follows:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Disturbed Sleep Pattern
- Attention span
- Mood swings
- Suicidal Tendencies
- Effect on Interpersonal Relations
- Eating Habits

This research study focuses on elucidating the vital factors and discrete ways on how a students' psychology has been reshaped due to onset of the pandemic in the Indian subcontinent. The cause of the revamping and how it has affected them needs to be addressed on a national level.

This was achieved by using a Five-point Likert scale structured questionnaire which was distributed amongst the students of India through the mode of internet applications based on surfacing of knowledge and information. Apart from this, the inclusion of snowball sampling was used in order to make the surveys reach a widespread audience.

III. Literature Review

According to Harapan, & Itoh, 2020 et al., a coronavirus disease epidemic in 2019 (COVID-19) related to a novel severe acute respiratory syndrome 2 (SARS-CoV-2) was found in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, in early December 2019. The epidemic was declared a public health emergency of international importance by the World Health Organization on January 30, 2020. As of February 14, 2020, there had been 49,053 laboratory-confirmed

The numerous impacts of the pandemic on the mental health and other factors which promoted the stress and anxiety levels in the student during the course of the pandemic. We have carried out a literature review on the information which is made accessible to the mass. All the causes and psychological impacts on a student throughout the pandemic and the influence of it on the day-to-day activities in a learner's lives are discussed in this literature review:

- Due to the sudden wave of the novel coronavirus, many educational institutes opted for an online learning and teaching principle for the passage of the pandemic. Yet due to the low internet bandwidth and access points in the surrounding areas, students were unable to access and utilize digital learning efficiently. The application of online educational tools in the technologically backward generations made it even hard for the teachers to adapt and spread knowledge to their young learners. In order to further enhance the digital learning options in developing countries like that of India, more research and development should be established in a bid to get a creative and organized approach to digital learning. (A Literature Review on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Teaching and Learning by Sumitra Pokhrel and Roshan Chhetri, 2021)

- According to the research paper by the title of "Depression, Anxiety and Stress Among Indians in Times of Covid-19 Lockdown" by Usama Rehman,¹ Mohammad G. Shahnawaz,² Neda H. Khan,² Korsi Kharshiing,² Masrat Khursheed,² Kaveri Gupta,² Drishti Kashyap,² and Ritika Uniyal², it is established that the amount of psychological distress amongst the men and women of India was equally bad. Even though the mean value of the women was slightly more than that of men, there isn't supposed to be much distress difference (stress,

depression and anxiety) between the two genders. Students and teachers were more susceptible to lie in the normal range of stress. The most prominent reason behind this is due to the sudden shutdown of universities which have a limited access to technological support and knowledge which leads to an unpredictable future for the students and teachers.

- A research study which aimed at finding out the impact of depression in university level students was carried out in the year 2022. The methodology of data acquisition was through the medium of cross-section structured questionnaires which was shared with the help of social media. A general contest between students after graduation is the procurement of placement from a respectable firm. But due to the inclusion of the corona virus pandemic, many students were left uncertain and unsure regarding their future in the job sectors in their respective countries. The research study highlighted that around 2.1% of female students were more depressed than that of males due to the harsh conditions faced by them in the pandemic. Students who were susceptible to a delayed graduation which led to a lack of job opportunities were found to be more depressed and stressed than the other university students. (Md. Chowdhury, Md. Ahasan Habib Suvro in “Depression and stress regarding future career among university students during pandemic”, 2022)
- From a research study conducted in Thailand, it signified a prevalent rise in the mood swings of students due to the impact of the pandemic. With the help of structured questionnaires circulated through chatting applications, it was also implied that around 41.9% students experienced extensive amount of time spent only on social media and networking sites. The participants who had reported a rise in social media screen time were led to have increased rates of mood swings (55.9%). A five-level Likert scale was used for the purpose of surveying and the Internet Addict Test (IAT) for the self-assessment of the usage of social media on a daily basis. To test the negative impact of substance abuse like that of Alcohol consumption, Smoking was carried out through the Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST -LITE). (Prevalence and distribution pattern of mood swings in Thai adolescents by Suleemas Angsukiattitavorn, Acharaporm Seeherunwong, 2020, published online)
- Due to the sudden shutdown and closure of universities and schools, it restricted the students to the four walls of their homes. At times, the environment at homes isn't learning-friendly which might impact the student's ability to learn and test. In some cases, the youth might also fall victim to the family violence against the youth and its psychological impact on a child. The victimization varies from physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse and lastly exposure to intimate partner violence. Due to the stress induced from the pandemic situations like that of lack of job opportunities, economic instability, tension and fear spread from the digital media regarding the virus resulted an increase in stress levels of the vulnerable families. In a bid to curb the spread of the virus, students were bounded to their homes and unable to access the resources to tackle domestic violence and other violence related to children. Extreme measures need to be taken in action to overcome child abuse and implant a sense of healthy parenting in the economically weaker and other sections of the society to provide a safe and nurturing homes for the younglings. (“Family Violence against kids due to onset of the COVID-19 pandemic”, Noemi Perada and Diego A. Diaz-Faes, November 2020.)
- As the pandemic pushed the citizens of the nation to complete social isolation, it has also led to the depletion in the access to medical services including the resources to enhance mental well being of an individual. During these turbulent times, university students were confined to think of the negative aspects as lack of mental health resources were present for them. One such major aspect was suicidal ideation during the pandemic. With prevalent risk factors including over-sleeping or lack of proper sleep, past suicidal thoughts, dependency on substance abuse, depression, anxiety and stress. Suicidal ideation was quite widespread in the early stages of the pandemic in the minds of university students. With the data acquisition through from surveying, it concluded that around 12.8% of respondents had suicidal ideation whilst a mere 6.6% reported suicidal attempts during the early or latter stages of the pandemic. (Suicidal ideation among Bangladeshi University students early during the COVID-19 pandemic, Rafia Tasim, Md. Saiful Islam, 2020)
- In research published under the BMC Public Health domain, it has illustrated the “Impacts of COVID-19 and social isolation on academic staff and students at universities” by Walter Leal Filho, Tony Wall and Carla Farinha. The research methodology used was that of on-line surveying and snow-ball sampling for carrying out of convenient surveying of the research study. The study showcased that almost 90% of the respondent's faced difficulty in performing normal work or study related activities for the time period of a week to 2 months. Due to the oncoming of the pandemic, many individuals underwent social isolation which is often referred to as lack of social interaction or social disconnectedness. 68% of the respondents reported for impact

on their work cycle whilst only a 20% of the participants felt there was an actual impact on the work/study due to the pandemic. These statistically were relatively low as it was conducted in the European continent where the access to mental health and medical services is quite readily available as compared to the resources of a developing nation like that of India. India has also had a history of treating mental health as a taboo within the society.

Objective of the study ~

- To anatomize the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on college going students.
- To assess the causes/why were the students impacted mentally due to the pandemic.
- To analyse the psychological well-being of a student who have accessed digital learning during the pandemic.
- To observe the symptoms displayed by students due to erratic social isolation and lack of mental health resources.

IV. Research Methodology

For research data, the data was acquired from students comprising of all states of India. The collection of data was completed in three phases. An informed consent form was attached with the Google form where the entrustment of the knowledge shared by the respondents would be kept confidential amongst the team conducting the research study and no personal information would be used for any personal gains.

The first phase included the surveying of our close friends, relatives and family members who have been impacted by the pandemic and underwent online education through this period. A total of 25 participants were taken for the first phase. The data collection for the phase was from 15th April, 2022 to 17th April 2022.

Under the second phase, we have taken surveys of the students belonging to our educational institute, Chandigarh University. Around 150 participants contributed for the second phase of our surveying where different questions revolving around their mental health and psychological impacts of the pandemic were discussed. The second phase was completed within 17th April 2022 to 20th April 2022.

For the final and third phase of the surveying, we have chosen the data acquisition of around 300 participants from all over India. The target audience for this phase is the youth of India who underwent the different phases of digital learning and were subjected to social isolation due to the pandemic. The research tried to enquire regarding the various psychological disorders/symptoms they might have faced during these turbulent times and were felt neglected due to the drastic condition of our nation. The final phase surveying was completed from 20th April to 28th April 2022.

The researcher has used the method of structured questionnaire for the purpose of surveying through the medium of Likert scale. A scale which is used by researchers to grasp different opinions and attitudes of the respondent in order to establish their idea in the research paper. The surveys were conducted through the medium of Google forms whose links were forwarded through social media applications like that of WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram.

Using the five-point Likert scale, the researchers have put up the questions on the various mental health concerning conditions like that of Depression, Anxiety, Suicidal tendencies, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). The researchers observe the influence of the pandemic on an individual's sleep pattern, eating patterns, mood, interpersonal relationships with the family and their attention span. The scale varies from the options of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Agree and Strongly Agree which allows the respondents with a variety of options to answer a question.

The research will also try to extract the students' opinion on the digitalisation of education and how it was carried out during the pandemic in India.

How do you identify yourself as?
As a student who underwent learning online, was your experience in the initial days of the pandemic good.
Online teaching was better than learning in the offline medium.
You were able to focus properly on studies in the midst of so much negative influence and chaos in the society.
Your sleeping pattern get affected during the period of pandemic.
There a subsequent increase on the dependency of mobile phones for the medium of learning, entertainment or news
You observed a rise in mood swings due to the pandemic.
You underwent depression or depression-like symptoms during the pandemic.
Your interpersonal relationships with your own family members or friend circle been diminished/influenced due to some sort of negative impact.
You underwent anxiety attacks or something similar to that during the Pandemic.
You encountered or were led to think of suicidal tendencies at least once in the pandemic.
Your attention span was greatly affected due to the pandemic.

Table 1:- Questionnaire questions used for the Phase-1 of the surveying

How do you identify yourself as?
As a student who underwent learning online, was your experience in the initial days of the pandemic good.
Online teaching was better than learning in the offline medium.
There was no drastic change in the eating pattern of your lifestyle during the pandemic
Your sleeping pattern got affected during the period of pandemic.
There was a subsequent increase on the dependency of mobile phones for the medium of learning, entertainment or news
You observed a rise in mood swings due to the pandemic.
You underwent depression or depression-like symptoms during the pandemic.
Your interpersonal relationships with your own family members or friend circle been diminished/influenced due to some sort of negative impact.
You underwent anxiety attacks or something similar to that during the Pandemic.
You encountered or were led to think of suicidal tendencies at least once in the pandemic.
Your attention span was greatly affected due to the pandemic.
You felt the urge to seek professional help at least once during the pandemic.

Table 2:- Questionnaire questions used for the Phase-2 and 3 of the surveying

The local Chief-Counsellor of the university, Mrs. Navneet who has been working at Chandigarh University was interviewed for the purpose of this research study. When asked regarding the shift from online learning to physical on-campus studying, “it’s been a major shift from online to offline learning. Students were moreover glued to their screens and that has made them socially withdrawn from socialising and talking to new people. Many students who have approached us for counselling were undergoing depression and anxiety like symptoms but didn’t realise so during the pandemic. Even social media has contributed to this introversion as many students are connected through the medium of the internet but won’t approach that person face-to-face.”

V. Conclusion

For the phase 1 of surveying in which 25 students were surveyed who were the researcher’s close friends, family members and relatives, around 52% of them were males whilst 48% were females. 60-80% of the participants agreed to the fact that their sleeping pattern was affected due to the pandemic. 72-96% of the participants agreed on to an increase on the dependency on mobile phones since the pandemic. Whilst 84% observed to an increase in mood swings and 52% of the respondents agreed to have undergone depression or depression like symptoms due to the global pandemic.

Your sleeping pattern get affected during the period of pandemic.

25 responses

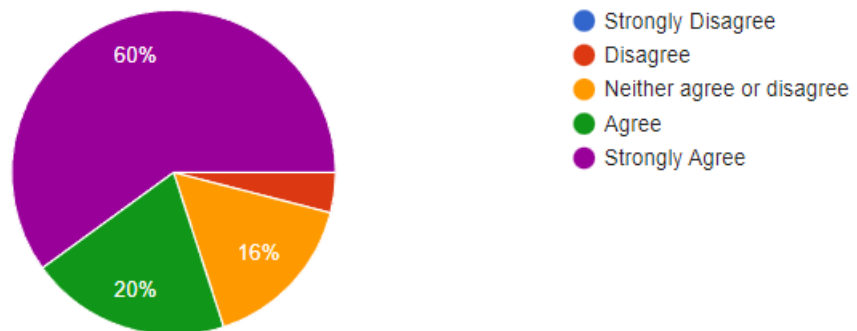


Chart 1:- Pie chart for the responses regarding the disruption in sleeping pattern

There a subsequent increase on the dependency of mobile phones for the medium of learning, entertainment or news

25 responses

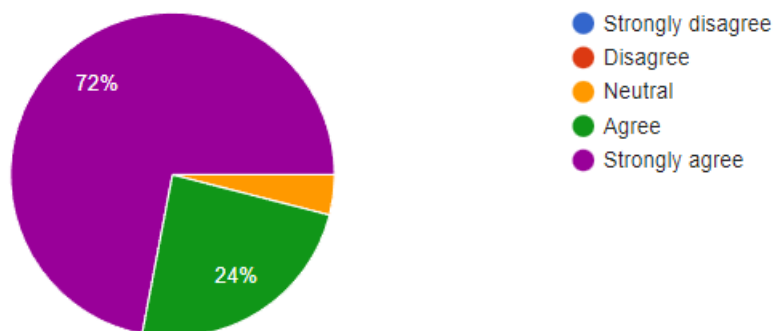


Chart 2:- Pie chart for increase in dependency on mobile phones.

You observed a rise in mood swings due to the pandemic.

25 responses

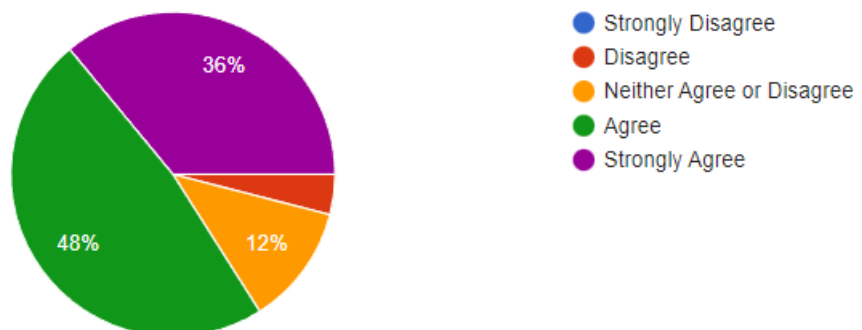


Chart 3:- Pie chart for increase in mood swings

You underwent depression or depression-like symptoms during the pandemic.

25 responses

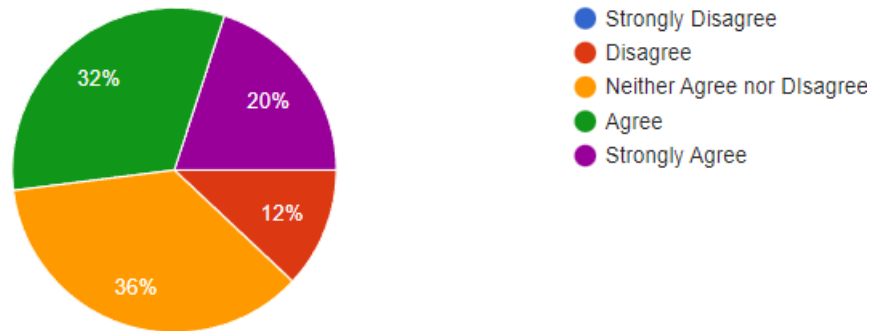


Chart 4:- Pie chart for depression like symptoms during the pandemic

For the phase 2 of surveying, students of all branches and years from our parent institution, Chandigarh University were taken as the target audience. Around 66% of them were males whilst 34% were females. 28.6% of the participants disagreed to the fact that their online learning was good in initial of the pandemic. 20-30% agreed that their eating pattern was affected. 10-25% of the participants agreed that they underwent anxiety attacks during the pandemic and 60% observed great effect in attention span in the pandemic.

As a student who underwent learning online, was your experience in the initial days of the pandemic good.

147 responses

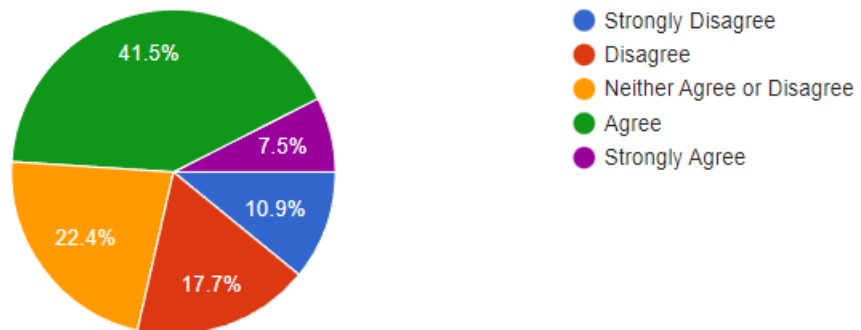


Chart 1:- Pie chart for online learning experience

There was no drastic change in the eating patterns of your lifestyle during the pandemic.

147 responses

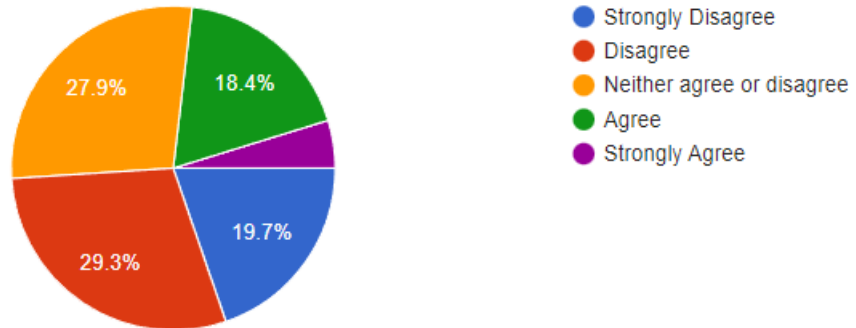


Chart 2:- Pie chart for change in eating pattern

You underwent anxiety attacks or something similar to that during the Pandemic.

149 responses

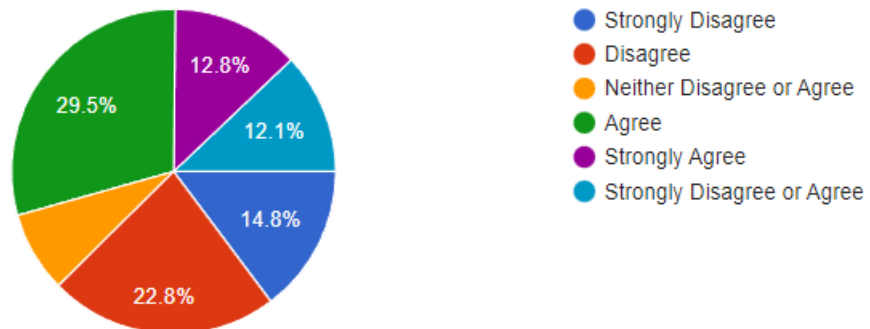


Chart 3:- Pie chart for anxiety attacks during pandemic

Your attention span was greatly affected due to the pandemic.

149 responses

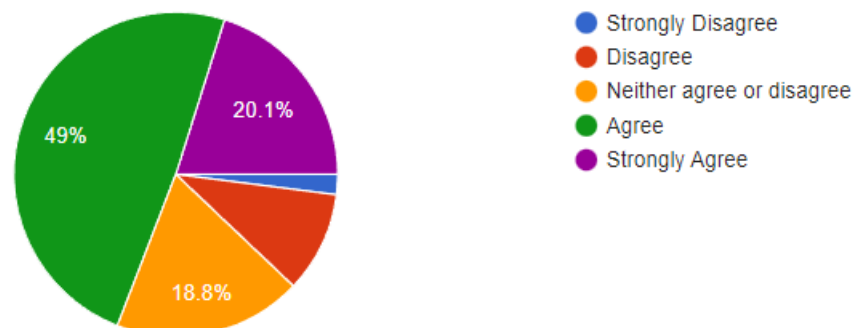


Chart 4:- Pie chart for effect on attention span

For the phase 3 of surveying, students from all over India were subjected to the surveying. 36% of them were males whilst 64% were females. 30-50% of the participants agreed that offline learning is better than online learning. 15-30% agreed that their interpersonal relationships with their families and friends were

affected due to the pandemic. 40-50% of the participants agreed that they got suicidal thoughts at least once during the pandemic and 10-30% observed that they felt the need of professional help in the pandemic.

Online teaching was better than learning in the offline medium.

300 responses es

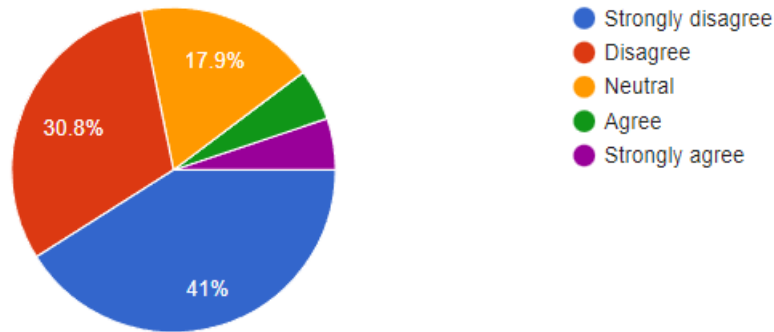


Chart 1:- Pie chart for online vs offline.

Your interpersonal relationships with your own family members or friend circle been diminished/influenced due to some sort of negative impact.

39 responses

300 responses

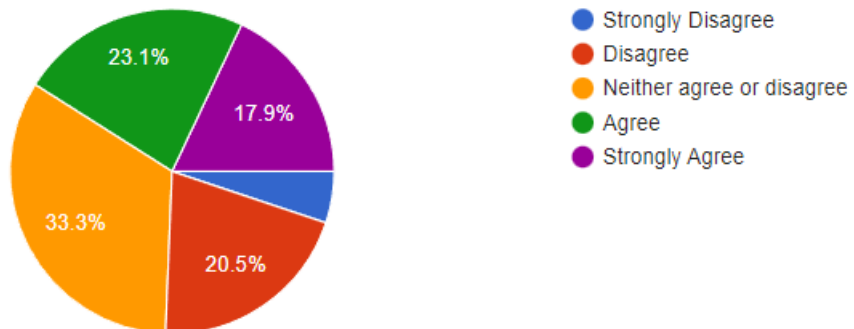
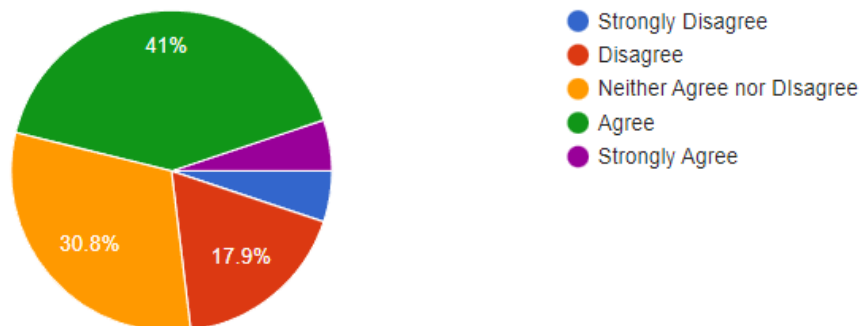


Chart 2:- Pie chart for change in interpersonal relationship

You encountered or were led to think of suicidal tendencies at least once in the pandemic.

300 responses



You felt the need to reach out to a mental health worker or a professional who deals with the well-being of an individual.

300 responses

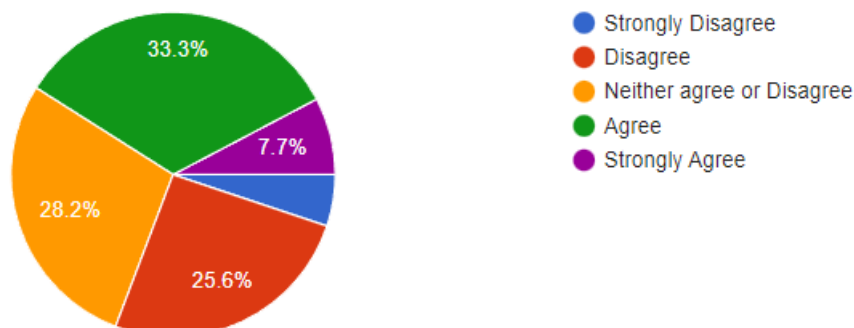


Chart 4:- Pie chart for individual felling to be helped

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