

WELL-BEING, OPTIMISM AND APPREHENSIONS OF SCHOOL STUDENTS DURING COVID-19

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Abstract

Situational changes and physical limitations were observed during lockdowns posed due to COVID-19 which affected everyone in different ways. COVID-19 pandemic led to closure of schools throughout the world including India, widespread sickness and increased cases of misfortune were deemed factors to have direct or indirect effect on the school students. The focus of this paper was to study the well-being, optimism and apprehensions during COVID-19 pandemic outbreak among school going students. The focus of this study was to know the status of knowledge among school students related to COVID-19; their physical, mental or emotional well-being; the level of optimistic feelings and their apprehensions during outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic on a 3-point self-structured Likert scale developed keeping in view the influence of their educational domain. The sample for the present study was school students studying in sixth to eighth standard in the age group 11 to 14 years, and, from ninth to twelfth standard who come under the age group 15 to 18 years, studying in Uttar Pradesh, India through purposive sampling technique. 115 school students were assessed through telephonic conversations. This study provides some insights about perceived well-being, optimism and apprehensions of school students. The paper concludes with suggestions to strengthen the online and blended pedagogy while inculcating the digital skills in them and keeping the well-being of the school students a priority.

Keywords: Well-being, optimism, apprehensions, COVID-19 pandemic, school students.

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Introduction

The sudden outbreak of COVID-19, a global health threat created a fearsome situation all around the globe. And, the subsequent lockdown posed various challenging situations to everyone. It all impacted young and old in some way or the other; and their overall well-being, leaving none behind. Nearly 1.6 billion school students in almost 200 countries were affected by COVID-19 pandemic (United Nations, 2020, p.2; Burke and Arslan, 2020), resulting school closures and the disruption of the whole educational system (United Nations, 2020, p.2). Approximately 94 percent of the total school students all over were severely impacted in relation to the various educational aspects and resources (Hall, et al. (2020) and learning spaces (United Nations, 2020, p.2), out of which it was estimated that around 99 per cent population of school students belong to low and lower-middle income countries (United Nations, 2020, p.2).

Thus, considering the school students, the delicate minds who were too young to face such a difficult situation in which a pandemic and its results impacted them or their families, etc. COVID-19 affected the well-being, it may be physical, mental or emotional; the optimistic feelings of every single individual which led them filled with apprehensions regarding their present and future aspects. Well-being is generally understood as a state of positive feelings, being healthy and happy, and doing everything with full potential. Well-being can be measured subjectively and objectively (Davis, 2019), since it is all about when an individual has a sense of meaningful and purposeful life with relatively high satisfaction while possessing a good mental health and an ability to manage stress (Davis, 2019). It can also be measured in terms of satisfaction and a feeling of completeness, as it is considered to emerge out of the individual's thoughts, actions and experiences (Rehman, 2020). Holistic

well-being can be understood as to have its eight dimensions viz., environmental, emotional, physical, financial, intellectual, social, spiritual and occupational (Don West, 2018). While 'Optimism' means to have a positive and hopeful attitude toward things to be happen in the future, and believing that things would go better in the long run and helps to grow (Azfar and Aranha, 2020) as well as being positive in daily life (Conversano, et al., 2010). Apprehension is commonly understood as fearful expectations or anticipations. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2021) defines apprehensions as the fear that something bad or unpleasant is going to happen; a feeling of being worried about the future. Apprehensions can also be described as fear or anxiety about something e.g., the apprehensions you feel about an upcoming examination¹ or any event.

Therefore, the present paper is an attempt in the direction to know the status of knowledge among school students related to COVID-19; their Physical, mental or emotional well-being; the level of optimistic feelings and their apprehensions during COVID-19 keeping in view the influence of the educational domain of the school students.

Review of Literature

COVID-19 pandemic resulted in immense mental health challenges and a fearsome situation (Murthy, 2020, p.3). for all and everyone around the globe and created uncertainties and feelings of fear, anxiety, stress and depression (Antonio et al., 2020). The current COVID-19 pandemic thus brought numerous challenges with it that modified our lives, psychological aspects and our education also (Burke and Arslan, 2020). According to Burke and Arslan (2020), out of various researches conducted during COVID-19 only a few considers a positive education; and a positive psychological perspective (Burke and Arslan, 2020).

The college students (Ahuja & Garg, 2021) attributed with a negative impact on mental health and well-being were studied and should be provided with assurance for future apprehensions and support or a training program to overcome the distress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and to boost the mental health of the college students. The employees were found feeling apprehensive and insecure during COVID-19 in the workplace (Azfar and Aranha, 2020). In the study conducted by Ahuja & Garg, (2021), a significant difference was observed among the college students of first year and the final year,

¹<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/apprehension>

which may be caused due to that the final year college students have more apprehensions about their employment and further academic opportunities. Various required interventions to boost the mental health can help attaining a positive effect and reducing their stress, anxiety, depression, pessimism and increased their optimism. Optimism is the psychological feeling that impact life's every aspect and helps reducing the anxiety and fear (Eva, et al., 2020) that should be followed by some behaviours of any individual (Eva, et al., 2020). Antonio et al. (2020) found that the university undergraduate students have severe levels of stress, anxiety and depression (Antonio et al., 2020). Bhattacharya, et al. (2021) found that the university students were apprehensive about getting a job in future because COVID-19 pandemic might result in decreasing job opportunities; and getting the admission in any prestigious institution (Bhattacharya, et al. 2021).

Thus, the review of the related literature finds that the three variables that is well-being, optimism and apprehensions considered in this study have not been studied altogether on school students so far and, to the best of the researchers' knowledge and findings. So, it seems imperative to study the well-being, optimism and the apprehensions of school students during COVID-19 pandemic.

Objectives

Thus, the objectives of the present research were -

1. To find out the status of knowledge about COVID-19 pandemic and its preventive measures among school students.
2. To study the well-being of school students during COVID-19 pandemic.
3. To study the optimism among school students during COVID-19 pandemic.
4. To study the apprehensions school students during COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology

The present quantitative study is based on descriptive analysis. The present study attempts to know the status of knowledge among school students related to COVID-19; their physical, mental or emotional well-being; the level of optimistic feelings and their apprehensions during COVID-19 pandemic keeping in view the influence of their educational domain. Thus, to conduct the present study, the data was collected for almost three weeks when the country had witnessed its second lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic and the schools were closed for almost a year. The school students were taken from Moradabad district in state

Uttar Pradesh (U.P.), India due to the limitations of lockdown and, for the reasons of feasibility, convenience and following the COVID-19 pandemic protocols.

A Chi-squared test was also performed on three questions (that is one from each category viz., well-being, optimism and apprehensions); which used a Likert scale by combining all the responses (Agree, Neutral and Disagree) were analysed with respect to the gender (male or female) of the school students, using significance value of 0.05 to study the relationship of gender with well-being, optimism and, apprehensions, considering the null hypotheses viz., there is no significant relationship between (i) gender and well-being; (ii) gender and optimism; and (iii) gender and apprehensions, which were further elaborated in Table 8, Table 10 and Table 12, respectively. However, other than this, no further relationships are made in this study

Variables

Independent variable: COVID-19 pandemic

Dependent variables: Well-being, optimism, apprehensions

Operational Definitions

Well-being: Here, it is considered as the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity (Davis, 2019).

Optimism: Positive expectations about future (Bastianello, Pacico and Hutz, 2014).

Apprehensions: Fear that something bad or unpleasant is going to happen; a feeling of being worried about the future (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2021).

Population and sample

To conduct the present study, the sample for the present study was school students studying in sixth to eighth standard in the age group 11 to 14 years, and, from ninth to twelfth standard who come under the age group 15 to 18 years, studying in Uttar Pradesh, India through purposive sampling technique, from lower or lower-middle socio-economic status. A sample of 115 school students, were taken up through purposive sampling, from four different schools (two government and two private schools), keeping the social distancing norms as per Government guidelines, belonging to both rural and urban background school students of Moradabad district in state Uttar Pradesh (U.P.), India.

Validation of Instrument and Procedure for Data Collection

A questionnaire comprised of 33 questions in each of the following three categories viz., Physical, mental or emotional well-being; the level of optimistic feelings and their apprehensions during COVID-19 on a 3-point self-structured Likert scale developed keeping in view the influence of their educational domain, based on three-point Likert scale. The survey questionnaire had three sections for each of the three above mentioned categories. All the Likert items had three options ranging from disagree (D), neutral (N) and agree (A).

The close-ended questions were categorised into four sections, viz., knowledge of COVID-19 and its preventive measures (5 questions), well-being (11 question); optimism (9 questions) and apprehensions (8 questions). As, the paper covers three variables well-being, optimism and apprehensions; therefore, on the advice of the experts of the subject-area, one direct question seeking the overall well-being (Question no. 16), optimism (Question no. 25) and apprehensions (Question no. 33) were put at the end of each of the respective section, which were further analysed using Chi-squared test in MS-Excel 2019 (Keshminder, 2020), to study the relationship of gender with well-being, optimism and, apprehensions, considering the null hypotheses viz., there is no significant relationship between gender and well-being, optimism and apprehensions, respectively.

Also, 15 questions were formulated in order to collect some socio-demographic data and for rapport development. One open ended question was also added up in the questionnaire on the suggestions of the experts, to know the feelings of the respondents. However, the respondents were not forced to answer this question and it was completely up to their wish to response the questions.

Due to the limitations of COVID-19 pandemic preventive measure inability to meet for collecting the data, or to circulate the questionnaire through online means, finding the fact that almost all the rural students would not have their device/email id that is related digital means to access the Google forms, etc. would not be workable. So, telephonic conversations were made in order to collect data. Approximately 10-15 minutes for given for each student to answer the questionnaire items in a conversational manner. Abiding to the ethical considerations the consents of parents and participants were taken up and they were informed that the information was being surveyed for a short research study based on school students in order to assess their knowledge of COVID-19, their well-

being, optimism and apprehensions; and their anonymity will be maintained. The process of data collection took almost three weeks during March-April, 2021.

The questionnaire was developed in English language, however, telephonic conversations with the students were done in Hindi language to make the students more comfortable to answer the questionnaire. Further, the self-structured questionnaire was evaluated by six subject-area experts to establish the face validity and content validity. Thereafter, for determining the

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reliability of the self-structured questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted on 49 school students, and, the obtained value of Cronbach alpha was found out as 0.85; which signified a good reliability of the questionnaire. Therefore, the questionnaire was considered to administer to collect the data of 115 school students was collected from Uttar Pradesh, India.

The value for Cronbach's Alpha was calculated in MS Excel-2019 for knowing the internal consistency of data (Edifo, 2018), as mentioned below in table 1

Table 1: Calculation of Cronbach's Alpha in MS Excel

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Rows	160.9388	48	3.352891	7.052879	4.35E-40	1.366174
Columns	209.6747	32	6.552335	13.78298	1.97E-63	1.451173
Error	730.2041	1536	0.475393			
Total	1100.818	1616				
Cronbach's Alpha= $1 - (MS_{Error} / MS_{Rows}) = 0.858214$						

Data Analysis

The data generated based on the developed questionnaire was analysed quantitatively through descriptive statistical techniques.

The self-structured Likert type scale consisted of 33 item-statements, in which five questions were formulated to know the status of knowledge among school students related to COVID-19 pandemic and its preventive measures, eleven questions to know the

well-being, nine questions to study about the optimism and eight questions for studying the apprehensions during COVID-19 among school students. To all the questions it was observed that the mean value was observed to be greater than 2, and a smaller value of standard deviation, which indicated that the most of the school students showed their agreement to almost all the Likert-scale item-statements. The value of mean and standard deviation to all the 33-item statements of the self-structured Likert scale are mentioned in the table 2.

Table 2: Mean & Standard deviation of Item-statements

S. No.	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
I- Knowledge about COVID-19 and preventive measures			
1	I understand COVID-19 is a viral disease and its infections can be spread through in direct contact with the infected person/thing	2.7	0.46
2	I understand that following proper hand washing/maintaining hygiene and wearing a mask/using sanitizer helps in controlling its spread of COVID-19 infection	2.81	0.38
3	I understand touching my eyes/nose/mouth with dirty hands can made it contaminated and prone to COVID-19 infections	2.7	0.45
4	I understand that staying at home during COVID-19 pandemic helps in controlling its spread of COVID-19 infection	2.5	0.49
5	I follow the preventive measures for proper hygiene and cover my nose and	2.87	0.32

	mouth while coughing/sneezing, social distancing, etc.		
II- Well-being			
6	I have been exposed to COVID-19	1.1	0.37
7	My family member(s) suffered from COVID-19 infection	1.33	0.53
8	I have seen death of some loved-one that disturb me during COVID-19	1.52	0.75
9	I/ my family face financial problems that troubles me during COVID-19	2.31	0.77
10	I get proper meals/food items for me and my family during COVID-19	2.27	0.66
11	It took me more time to understand the concepts online in comparison to face-to-face which creates difficult situation for me	2.11	0.71
12	I miss going out to meet relatives/friends/picnic etc.	2.32	0.74
13	I continuously miss my school (teachers and peers) during COVID-19 pandemic	2.21	0.78
14	I face problems in handling technological tools so I was uncomfortable	2.41	0.68
15	I face financial constraints in maintaining the set-up/requirements for my online class	1.91	0.86
16	I feel disturbance in my daily routine and negatively impacted due to COVID-19	2.24	0.70
III- Optimism			
17	I feel that COVID-19 was a period of struggle that would bring some positive out of it	2.02	0.76
18	I remained an active learner and motivated towards my future goals	2.11	0.75
19	I feel that online learning helped me staying connected during COVID-19 pandemic	2.43	0.73
20	I am delighted that due to online learning, I would not suffer academic loss	2.25	0.73
21	Studying online gives me a feeling of being self-reliant	2.41	0.79
22	It was a good experience not going to school and staying at home	2.11	0.90
23	I am happy in studying online in comparison to face-to-face classes	2.49	0.82
24	I feel that online learning helped me keeping a positive attitude towards life during COVID-19 pandemic	2.43	0.73
25	I hope that all the crisis will come over soon and everything will be fine again	2.48	0.70
IV- Apprehensions			
26	Listening about the deaths due to COVID-19 scared me	2.28	0.62
27	I feel isolated during COVID-19 as I could not think good/positive	2.45	0.72
28	I feel depressed/sad due to the pandemic situation	2.19	0.70
29	I was anxious during COVID-19 pandemic	2.4	0.78
30	I feel stressed COVID-19 pandemic	2.33	0.81
31	I feel lack of motivation to pursue my study further as I thought it all shattered due to COVID-19	2.45	0.66
32	I fear about my academic loss and future life	2.12	0.73
33	I had negative feelings like fear of death, hopelessness, frustration, etc. during COVID-19 pandemic	2.10	0.77

Findings and Interpretation of Data

The findings of the present study on the basis of the data analysis from the selected sample are mentioned below:

The data collected and represented in table 3 revealed that 76.52% were from standard VI-VIII and under the

age group 11 to 14 years; and 23.48% were from IX-XII standard who come under the age group 15 to 18 years. Out of the total school students included in the study 31.30% were from government schools and majority that is 68.70% were from private schools.

Table 3: Demographic details of the sample

S. No.	Category	Sub-Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Level of Study	VI-VIII	88	76.52%
		IX-XII	27	23.48%
		Total	115	
2	Type of School	Government	36	31.30%
		Private	79	68.70%
		Total	115	
3	Medium of Study	English	44	38.26%
		Hindi	71	61.74%
		Total	115	
4	Gender	Male	38	33.04%
		female	77	66.96%
		Total	115	
5	Age Group	11 to 14	88	76.52%
		15 to 18	27	23.48%
		Total	115	
6	Background	Rural	80	69.57%
		Urban	35	30.43%
		Total	115	

The demographic data tabulated in table 3 is further presented in Figure 1, as the graphical representation showing that 44 respondents that is 38.26% were of English medium and 71 respondents that is 61.74% were found studying through Hindi medium. It was

also observed that 38 respondents (33.04%) were males and 77 respondents (66.96%) were females. However, 80 respondents that is 69.57% were from rural background and 35 respondents that is 30.43% were from urban backgrounds

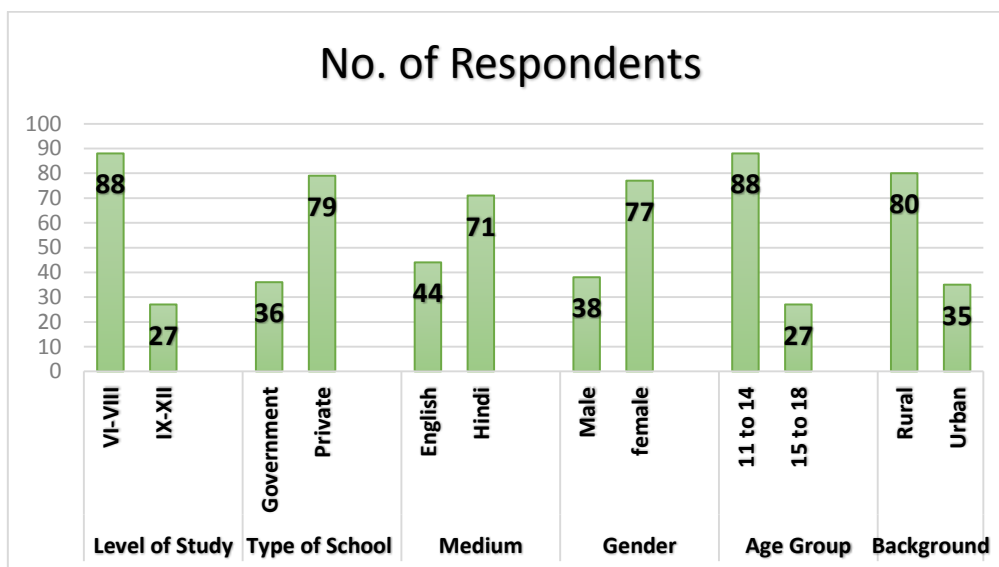


Fig. 1: Demographic details of the sample

The socio-demographic data tabulated in Table 4, and the graphical representation in Figure 2, on the analysis of the educational status of the parents of the selected school students revealed that 41 *that is* 35.65% were un-educated or have an educational level below matric that is high school. 34 *that is* 29.56% respondents recorded that the educational level of their parents is Matric or high school. Only 17 respondents *that is* 14.79% said that their parents are educated up

to Intermediate. And, 23 respondents *that is* 20% said that their parents are graduate.

The socio-economic status of the selected sample school students revealed that the 7 respondents that is 6.09% recorded low, 61 respondents that is 53.04% recorded lower-middle; 47 respondents that is 40.87% responded upper-middle socio-economic status. However, it was observed that no respondent belonged to the category of high socio-economic status.

Table 4: Socio-demographic Data

S. No.	Category	Sub-Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Parents' Educational Status	Uneducated or below Matric	41	35.65%
		Matric	34	29.56%
		Intermediate	17	14.79%
		Graduate or above	23	20.0%
		Total	115	
2	Socio-economic Status	Low	7	6.09%
		Lower middle	61	53.04%
		Upper Middle	47	40.87%
		High	0	00
		Total	115	
3	Nature of Family	Joint	62	53.91%
		Nuclear	53	46.09%
		Total	115	
4	Type of Family	Small	46	40.0%
		Large	69	60.0%
		Total	115	
5	Monthly Income of family	Low	36	31.31%
		Medium	79	68.69%
		High	0	00
		Total	115	

A total of 62 respondents that is 53.91% were found to have joint families, and 53 respondents that is 46.09% have a nuclear family. 46 respondents that is 40.0% have a small family and 69 respondents that is 60.0% belonged to large families. 36 respondents that is 31.31% belonged to the category of low-income group and 79 respondents that is 68.69% belonged to the medium-income group. However, it was observed that no respondent belonged to the category of high-income group.

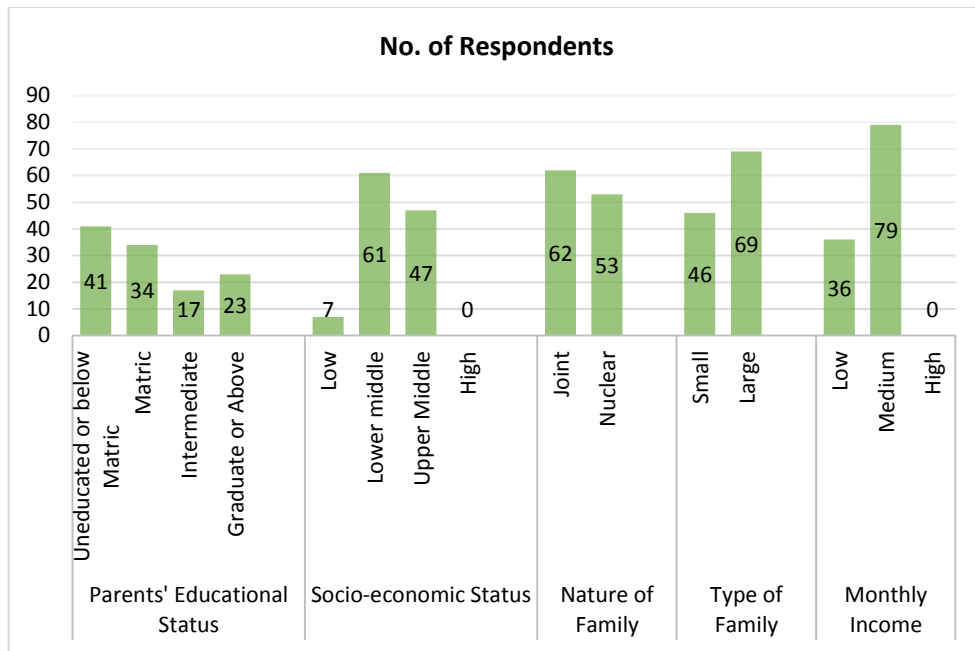


Fig. 2: Socio-demographic Data

The socio-demographic data collected of the selected sample school students are presented descriptively only and to know about the basic characteristics of the selected sample.

Further, the data on the use of digital platforms during COVID-19 is collated in the tabular form and presented in the table 5.

Table 5: Use of digital Platforms during COVID-19

S.No.	Category	Response	Count
1	Status of having digital device	I have my own device	42
		I don't have my own device, so I don't participate in online education	21
		I don't have my own device, so I took help from neighbour/friend, etc. to participate in online education	15
		I studied from TV/Radio Programme	37
		Total	115
2	Preference to use digital device	Computer Desktop	5
		Laptop	32
		Mobile/Tablet	65
		Radio/Television	13
		Total	115
3	Digital Platform used by school	WhatsApp	96
		Others (Zoom, Google meet, etc.)	11
		I don't know	8
		Total	115
4	Source of knowledge for COVID-19 updates	Television (news)	39
		Newspaper	26
		Social media	10
		School	31
		Doctors/ other people around	4
		Don't know	5
		Total	115

And, on the question regarding the status of having digital device 42 respondents that is approx. 37% responded that they have their own device to study, 21 respondents that is approx. 18% responded that since they did not have any access and a digital device, so they did not take part in the online education conducted during COVID-19. Only 15 respondents

said that since they did not have any digital device so they took help from their neighbour/friend, etc. to participate in online education. And, 37 respondents that is 32% responded that they studied from TV/Radio Programme. This data is further presented through a pie chart in the Figure 3.

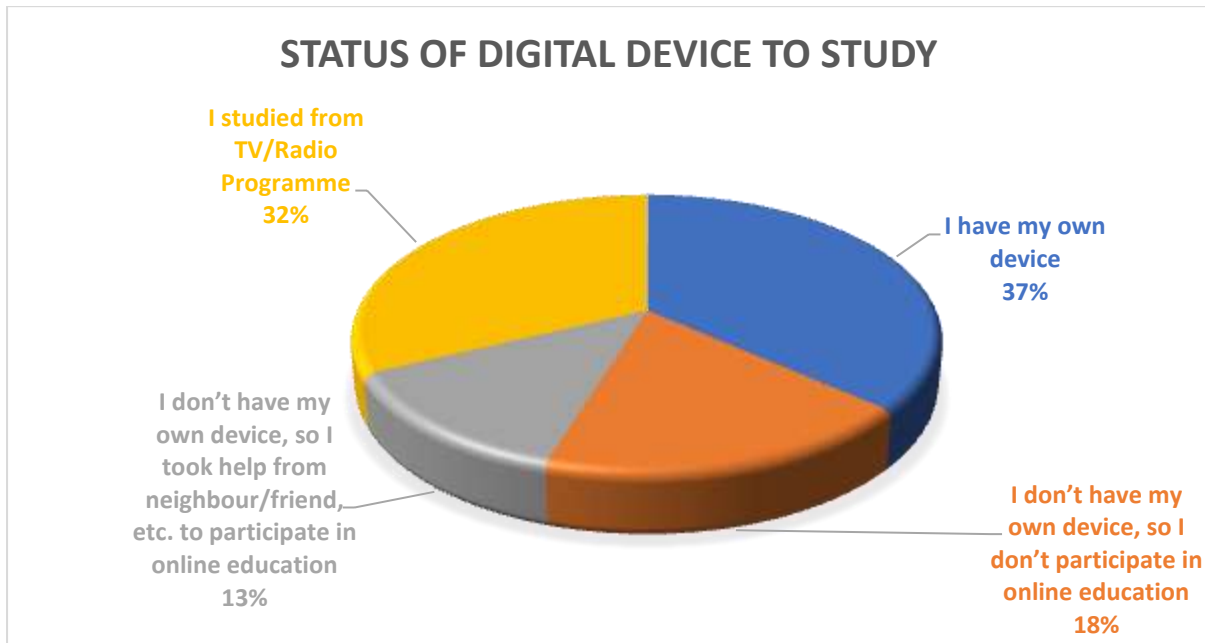


Fig.3: Status of Digital device to study

The present study also attempted to find out the preference or liking of the school students about the use of the digital device. And, it was observed that only 5 respondents that is 4% said that they prefer to use a computer/desktop for their studies. The inclination of the students to use a computer/desktop was very little

may be because of the reason that the students have not experienced the use of a computer/desktop; they said that they don't know how it would work like. Whereas, 32 students that is approx. 28% said for their preference of using a laptop

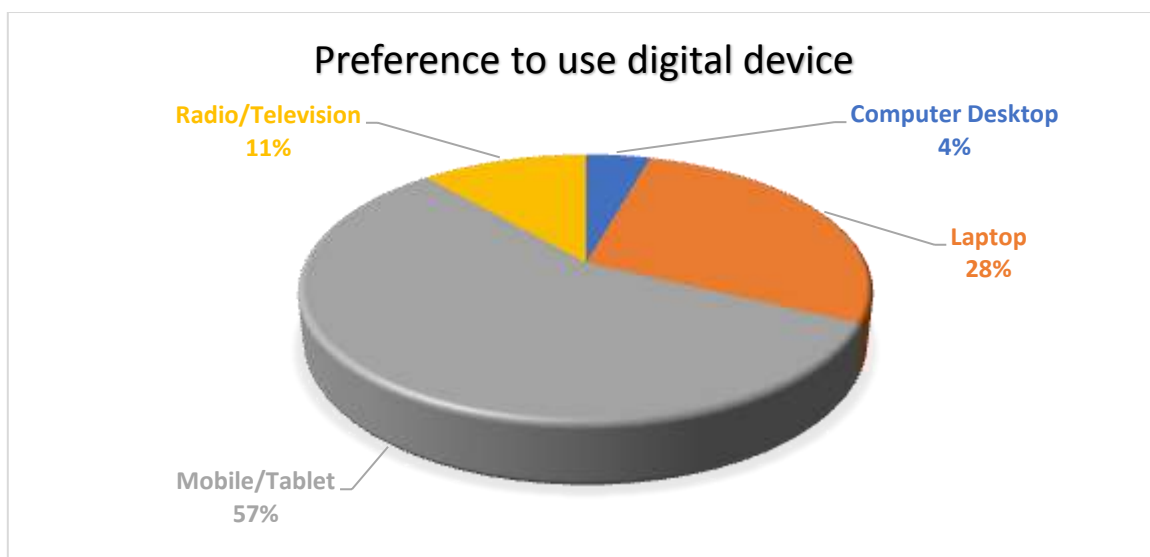


Fig.4: Preference to use Digital device to study

Majority of the respondents that is 65 respondents (approx. 57%) responded their preference to use mobile or a tablet . However, very few that is 13 respondents (approx. 11%) only said that they would

like to study through television programmes telecasted for educational purposes. The data is described in the table 5 and further presented through a pie-chart in Figure 4.

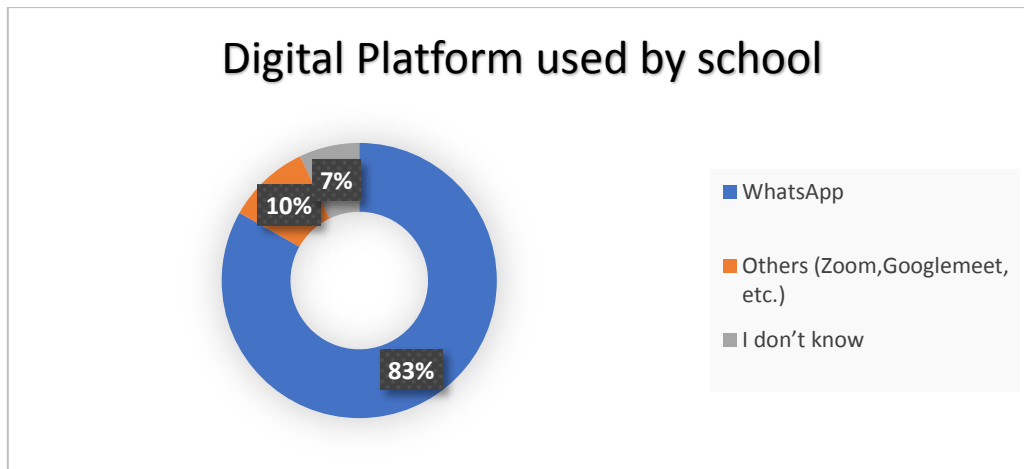


Fig.5: Digital Platform used by school

Also, it was found out from the data collected presented in table 5, that most of the respondent that is 96 (83%) school students said that the digital platform by their school is WhatsApp. 11 respondents that is 10% said that various other digital platforms were used by their schools. However, only 8 respondents that is 7% said that they don't know or don't sure about the digital platforms being used for educational transactions during COVID-19. Further, it is also to be considered here that this is very obvious that the school would use a digital platform which can be easily available and accessible to its students. Further this data is graphically presented in the doughnut (or donut) pie chart in Figure 5.

table 5 and presented through a line graph in Figure 6. It was observed that 39 respondents that is 33.99% responded for television to acquire knowledge about COVID-19. 26 respondents that is 22.61% answered for newspapers and 10 respondents that is 8.7% responded that they social media helped them to acquire knowledge about COVID-19. 31 respondents that is 26.96% said that their teacher passed on the information and knowledge about COVID-19. 4 respondents that is 3.4% said that they were informed and made aware about COVID-19 by their nearby doctors or the people around them. Only 5 respondents that is 4.34% said that they cannot answer exactly whom they get knowledge and awareness about the do's and don'ts of COVID-19.

Further, the data on the use and a source to study or acquire knowledge about COVID-19 is presented in

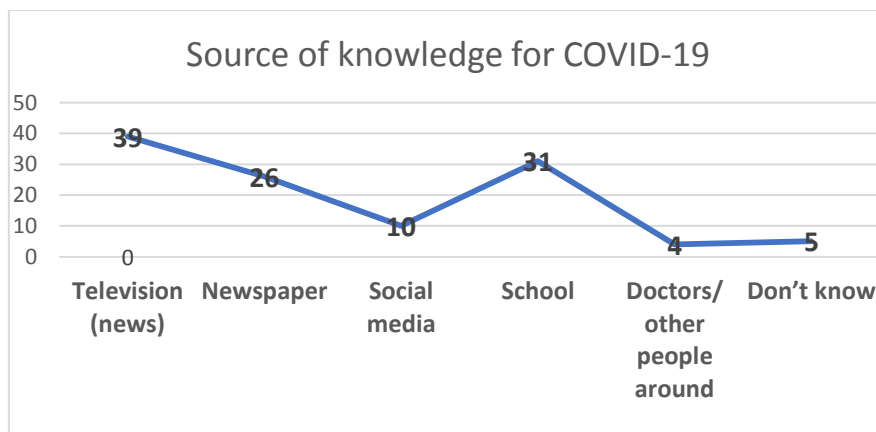


Fig. 6: Sources of knowledge for COVID-19

Knowledge about COVID-19 and preventive measures

The data in the table 6 revealed that majority of the school students have a good knowledge about the COVID-19 and its preventive measures. 69.57%

respondents said that they understand that COVID-19 is a viral disease and its infections can be spread through in direct contact with the infected person/thing. However, only 30.43% respondents were showed a neutral reaction over their acquaintance of COVID-19 being a viral disease and how it spreads.

Table 6: Knowledge about COVID-19 and preventive measures

S. No.	Item Statement	Disagree (1)		Neutral (2)		Agree (3)	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	I understand COVID-19 is a viral disease and its infections can be spread through in direct contact with the infected person/thing	0	0.00%	35	30.43%	80	69.57%
2	I understand that following proper hand washing/maintaining hygiene and wearing a mask/using sanitizer helps in controlling its spread of COVID-19 infection	0	0.00%	21	18.26%	94	81.74%
3	I understand touching my eyes/nose/mouth with dirty hands can made it contaminated and prone to COVID-19 infections	0	0.00%	34	29.57%	81	70.43%
4	I understand that staying at home during COVID-19 pandemic helps in controlling its spread of COVID-19 infection	0	0.00%	48	41.74%	67	58.26%
5	I follow the preventive measures for proper hygiene and cover my nose and mouth while coughing/sneezing, social distancing, etc.	0	0.00%	14	12.17%	101	87.83%

Regarding following proper hand washing and maintaining hygiene and wearing a mask/using sanitizer helps in controlling the spread of COVID-19 infection 81.74% respondents said that they understand and follow proper procedures of maintaining hygiene. And only 18.26% respondents were found to show a neutral reaction over there knowledge about following proper hand washing/maintaining hygiene and wearing a mask/using sanitizer helps in controlling its spread of COVID-19 infection. 70.43% respondents said that they understand touching their eyes/nose/mouth with dirty hands can made it contaminated and prone to COVID-19 infections. However, 29.57% showed neither agreement or disagreement regarding their awareness about touching their eyes/nose/mouth with dirty hands can made it contaminated and prone to COVID-19 infections. 58.26% respondents answered in agreement that they understand that staying at home during COVID-19 pandemic helps in controlling its spread of COVID-19 infection. And, 41.74% respondents showed a neutral response on asking about staying in home during COVID-19 in order to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19 infection.

The positive thing that is found in the study is that 87.83% respondents said that they follow the preventive measures for proper hygiene and cover my nose and mouth while coughing/sneezing, social distancing, etc., despite of their childish wishes to go

out or something else for fun, they understand the severity of the matter to follow the COVID-19 protocols; as no respondent answered in disagreement about their knowledge of COVID-19 and its preventive measures.

Well-being

Well-being is the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity are the important constituents that defines the well-being of an individual (Davis, 2019). The data collected on the questions formulated to know about the well-being of school students during COVID-19 is presented in table 7.

It was observed that no respondent answered of being suffered with COVID-19 infection, which is a good thing to mark. But, 3.48% respondents said that someone in their families got the COVID-19 infection that disturbed them. 70.43% respondents said that nobody in their families were got infected with COVID-19. However, 26.09% were found to show a neutral response or were indecisive on it.

It was also observed that 15.65% respondents said that they were disturbed due to the death of someone they loved or the deaths during COVID-19. However, majority of the respondents that is 63.48% showed their disagreement and 20.87% respondents were neutral over it.

Table 7: Well-being

S. No.	Item Statement	Disagree (1)		Neutral (2)		Agree (3)	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
6	I have been exposed to COVID-19	96	83.48%	19	16.52%	00	0.00%
7	My family member(s) suffered from COVID-19 infection	81	70.43%	30	26.09%	04	3.48%
8	I have seen death of some loved-one that disturb me during COVID-19	73	63.48%	24	20.87%	18	15.65%
9	I/ my family face financial problems that troubles me during COVID-19	22	19.13%	35	30.43%	58	50.43%
10	I get proper meals/food items for me and my family during COVID-19	14	12.17%	55	47.83%	46	40.00%
11	It took me more time to understand the concepts online in comparison to face-to-face which creates difficult situation for me	23	20.00%	56	48.70%	36	31.30%
12	I miss going out to meet relatives/friends/picnic etc.	19	16.52%	40	34.78%	56	48.70%
13	I continuously miss my school (teachers and peers) during COVID-19 pandemic	26	22.61%	39	33.91%	50	43.48%
14	I face problems in handling technological tools so I was uncomfortable	13	11.30%	41	35.65%	61	53.04%
15	I face financial constraints in maintaining the set-up/requirements for my online class	48	41.74%	29	25.22%	38	33.04%
16	I feel disturbance in my daily routine and negatively impacted due to COVID-19	18	15.65%	51	44.35%	46	40.00%

The concern can be fetched here on the point that 50.43% respondents respond in agreement that they or their families faced financial problems that troubles them during COVID-19. Only 19.13% responded in disagreement however 30.43% were found neutral on this statement. 40.00% respondents said that they or their families faced challenges in getting the proper meals during COVID-19. 12.17% showed a response in disagreement, while 47.83% respondents were undecided over it. 48.70% responded that they miss going out to meet relatives/friends/picnic etc. 16.52% showed their disagreement and 34.78% were found to give a neutral response. 43.48% responded that they continuously miss their school (teachers and peers) during COVID-19 pandemic. 22.61% showed a disagreement and 33.91% were found to show a neutral response. 53.04% responded that they face problems in handling technological tools so that they were uncomfortable during COVID-19. 11.30% give a response in disagreement and 35.65% were undecided. 33.04% respondents answered that they face financial constraints in maintaining the set-up/requirements for

their online class. 41.74% responded their disagreement and 25.22% were neutral on it. 31.30% responded that they took more time to understand the concepts online in comparison to face-to-face which creates difficult situation for them. 20.00% responded in disagreement and 48.70% were undecided over it.

Here, in this category, it is to keep in mind that the data for this study included a sample included majority from the category of low socio-economic backgrounds. On the direct question seeking the well-being of the school students 40.00% responded that they feel disturbance in their daily routine and negatively impacted due to COVID-19. 15.65% responded in disagreement; however, 44.35% showed a neutral response over it. This question was further taken up to analyse the relationship of gender and well-being using a Chi-squared test. It was observed that the Chi-square (χ^2) was smaller than the critical value at 0.05 level of significance ($\chi^2 = 0.421413$, $p > 0.05$; Table 8); that revealed that there is no significant relationship between gender and well-being.

Table 8: Relationship of Gender and Well-being (based on question no. 16)

Q 16 (Observed frequency)				
Gender	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Male	7	17	14	38
Female	11	34	32	77
Total	18	51	46	115
Q 25 (expected frequency)				
Gender	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Male	5.947826087	16.85217391	15.2	38
Female	12.05217391	34.14782609	30.8	77
Total	18	51	46	115
				$\chi^2 = 0.421413$
df=2; Critical value at 0.05=5.99				P= 0.810012
(Chi-Square) $\chi^2 = \sum (O_i - E_i)^2/E_i$, where O_i = observed value (actual value) and E_i = expected value.				

This also proved that the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between gender and well-being is being accepted. This suggests that the male and female school students do not differ significantly with respect to their well-being.

Optimism

The data collected on the questions formulated to know about the optimism among school students during COVID-19 is presented in table 9.

On asking the school students that though COVID-19 was a period of struggle that would bring some positive out of it, 30.43% were found agreed to it. 41.74% were neutral over having some positive expectations from a pandemic, however, 27.83% respondents showed their disagreement giving a hint of their pessimistic approach that a pandemic would not result or bring some positive.

Table 9: Optimism

S. No.	Item Statement	Disagree (1)		Neutral (2)		Agree (3)	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
17	I feel that COVID-19 was a period of struggle that would bring some positive out of it	32	27.83%	48	41.74%	35	30.43%
18	I remained an active learner and motivated towards my future goals	27	23.48%	48	41.74%	40	34.78%
19	I feel that online learning helped me staying connected during COVID-19 pandemic	17	14.78%	31	26.96%	67	58.26%
20	I am delighted that due to online learning, I would not suffer academic loss	20	17.39%	46	40.00%	49	42.61%
21	Studying online gives me a feeling of being self-reliant	22	19.13%	23	20.00%	70	60.87%
22	It was a good experience not going to school and staying at home	41	35.65%	20	17.39%	54	46.96%
23	I am happy in studying online in comparison to face-to-face classes	25	21.74%	8	6.96%	82	71.30%
24	I feel that online learning helped me keeping a positive attitude towards life during COVID-19 pandemic	17	14.78%	31	26.96%	67	58.26%
25	I hope that all the crisis will come over soon and everything will be fine again	14	12.17%	31	26.96%	70	60.87%

Since, the whole world of the small-aged school going children revolves around their education and school, therefore when posed a question on being an active learner and motivated towards my future goals during COVID-19; 34.78% responded in agreement, 23.48% in disagreement and 41.74% were undecided. 58.26% respondent school students feel that online learning helped them staying connected during COVID-19 pandemic; 14.78% were found disagreed and somewhat with negative or pessimistic feeling which may be due to their inability of having accessibility to digital learning tools; and 26.96% were found neutral over it.

On further investigation, 42.61% school students responded that they feel delighted that due to online learning, they would not suffer academic loss, only 17.39% were found disagreed which may be again due to their inability of having accessibility or availability of digital learning tools; and thus, resulting in a pessimistic feeling in them. However, 40.00% school students showed a neutral response. 46.96% school students responded that it was a good experience of not going to school and staying at home, which reflects the innocence, fun in everything and optimism in the school students. However, 35.65% more than a quarter population of school students did not think the same way. And, 17.39% were neutral over giving such a statement.

Despite of a lot of challenges of their inability of accessibility to digital tools and digital learning, etc. 71.30% school students responded that they were happy in studying online in comparison to face-to-face

classes. 21.74% were disagreed reflecting their unhappiness on shifting to digital learning, However, 6.96% were neutral on relating to their happiness with digital learning or face-to-face classes. 58.26% school students feel that online learning helped them engaged and keeping a positive attitude towards life during COVID-19 pandemic, while 14.78% were found giving a response in disagreement; and 26.96% were found neutral over it. 60.87% school students responded that studying online gave them a feeling of being self-reliant during COVID-19 and a facility to learn on their pace with flexibility, etc. while 19.13% were disagreed to it as they need support and help of their teachers or some guardian to go well with their studies online, and 20.00% were indecisive on being self-reliant in an online learning environment.

On a direct question, which would reflect their optimism or pessimism 60.87% respondents said that they hope that all the crisis will come over soon and everything will be fine again; only 12.17% did not respond in agreement over having a positive feeling. And, 26.96% respondents were found neutral over it.

This question was further taken up to analyse the relationship of gender and optimism using a Chi-squared test. It was observed that the Chi-square (χ^2) was smaller than the critical value at 0.05 level of significance ($\chi^2 = 0.985921$, $p > 0.05$; Table 10); that revealed that there is no significant relationship between gender and optimism

Table 10: Relationship of Gender and optimism (based on question no. 25)

Q 25 (Observed frequency)				
Gender	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Male	6	11	21	38
Female	8	20	49	77
Total	14	31	70	115
Q 25 (expected frequency)				
Gender	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Male	4.626086957	10.2434783	23.1304348	38
Female	9.373913043	20.7565217	46.8695652	77
Total	14	31	70	115
				$\chi^2 = 0.985921$
df=2; Critical value at 0.05=5.99				P= 0.610815469
(Chi-Square) $\chi^2 = \sum (O_i - E_i)^2 / E_i$, where O_i = observed value (actual value) and E_i = expected value.				

This also proved that the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between gender and optimism is being accepted. This suggests that the male and female school students do not differ significantly with respect to their optimism.

Apprehensions

The data collected on the questions formulated to find the apprehensions among school students during COVID-19 is presented in table 11.

Table 11: Apprehensions

S. No.	Item Statement	Disagree (1)		Neutral (2)		Agree (3)	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
26	Listening about the deaths due to COVID-19 scared me	11	9.57%	60	52.17%	44	38.26%
27	I feel isolated during COVID-19 as I could not think good/positive	16	13.91%	31	26.96%	68	59.13%
28	I feel depressed/sad due to the pandemic situation	20	17.39%	53	46.09%	42	36.52%
29	I was anxious during COVID-19 pandemic	22	19.13%	25	21.74%	68	59.13%
30	I feel stressed during COVID-19 pandemic	25	21.74%	26	22.61%	64	55.65%
31	I feel lack of motivation to pursue my study further as I thought it all shattered due to COVID-19	11	9.57%	41	35.65%	63	54.78%
32	I fear about my academic loss and future life	25	21.74%	51	44.35%	39	33.91%
33	I had negative feelings like fear of death, hopelessness, frustration, etc. during COVID-19 pandemic	29	25.22%	45	39.13%	41	35.65%

COVID-19 lead to many deaths which impacted the school students directly or indirectly. 38.26% respondents said that they got scared when they heard of someone's death due to COVID-19. 52.17% respondents showed a neutral response, however, only 9.57% said that it did not affect them much. 59.13% of school students responded that they feel isolated during COVID-19 as they could not think good/positive and share their feelings with friends and seek the help of their teachers to sort their regular problems, etc. while 13.91% students responded that they did not have such feelings and 26.96 were found indecisive. 36.52% school students said that they feel depressed/sad due to the pandemic situation, while 17.39% were found to give a response in disagreement and 46.09% were neutral or undecided. 59.13% school students responded that they were anxious during COVID-19 pandemic, while 19.13% school students responded in disagreement while 21.74% were found neutral on it. 55.65% school students responded that they feel stressed during COVID-19 pandemic, while 21.74% responded in disagreement and 22.61% were found indecisive. 54.78% respondents said that

they feel lack of motivation to pursue their study further as they thought it all shattered due to COVID-19, while 9.57% were found disagreed and 35.65% couldn't respond agreement or disagreement. 33.91% responded that they fear about their academic loss and future life while 21.74% respondents denied to have such feelings and 44.35% respondents did not show their agreement or disagreement.

On a very direct question about the apprehensions of school going children, 35.65% responded that they had negative feelings like fear of death, hopelessness, frustration, etc. during COVID-19 pandemic, while 25.22% did not agree to it and 39.13% were indecisive and/or neutral over it.

This question was further taken up to analyse the relationship of gender and apprehensions of school students using a Chi-squared test. It was observed that the Chi-square (χ^2) was smaller than the critical value at 0.05 level of significance ($\chi^2 = 0.421413$, $p > 0.05$; Table 8); that revealed that there is no significant relationship between gender and apprehensions of school students.

Table 12: Relationship of Gender and apprehensions (based on question no. 33)

Q 33 (Observed frequency)				
Gender	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Male	10	18	10	38
Female	19	27	31	77
Total	29	45	41	115
Q 33 (expected frequency)				
Gender	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Male	9.5826087	14.8695652	13.5478261	38
Female	19.4173913	30.1304348	27.4521739	77
Total	29	45	41	115
				$\chi^2 = 2.399025$
df=2; Critical value at 0.05=5.99				P= 0.30134115
(Chi-Square) $\chi^2 = \sum (O_i - E_i)^2 / E_i$, where O_i = observed value (actual value) and E_i = expected value.				

This also proved that the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between gender and well-being is being accepted. This suggests that the male and female school students do not differ significantly with respect to their well-being.

Responses on the Open-ended question

Some of the responses given by the respondents to the open-ended question are mentioned below in table 13.

Through an open-ended question the most prominent feelings may it be positive or negative were sought, also the school students were given flexibility to tell anything they were thinking or wanted to express related to the questions being asked to asked to them while the data was being collected. The responses given by them on the open-ended question was thus categorized according to the theme of paper that is Well-being, optimism and apprehensions.

Table 13: Responses of School students to the open-ended question

<i>Open-ended Question: What was most prominent positive or negative feeling during COVID-19 (regarding your health, family, education, etc. or anything that you want to express?)</i>	
Observed Category	Response
Well-being (Psychological/Mental health issues, Unavailability of resources, Lack of skills, etc.)	“.... We have a large family size, getting food is the priority, then health expanses, education comes at a later stage”
	“I feel of inferiority from other counterparts having better facilities.... e.g., educational and economic backgrounds...and they are doing well than me even during COVID-19 lockdown”
	“I like studying online but it took a lot of expanses to get internet connection and mobile or laptop, it is unaffordable and cause stressful situation in my family to allow me to study”
	“There is the unavailability of the digital device and internet connection due to the financial constraints in my family....”
	“We are four siblings studying in various classes and one mobile, which is with my father... so things are not easy to manage....”
	“ I have lack of knowledge about handling the technological tools ...”

	<i>"My parents scolded me to sit too long for the study on mobile as they are not educated and think that there cannot be such 'online study' kind of thing..."</i>
	<i>"Financial problems make me feel depressed, and I cannot help them out to earn for family and in this case my education seems an extra burden on them..."</i>
Optimism	<i>"I am happy that my studies are not discontinued as my school provides online materials"</i>
	<i>I enjoyed staying home...I wish lockdown should last for more time as I want my family staying together</i>
	<i>"Online method of education saves a lot of time. It helped me a lot and I am happy that I also could study like other students studying in big cities"</i>
	<i>"I am very happy about the online classes being held by school so that I can stay at home and needn't to go to school"</i>
Apprehensions	<i>"I was scared of getting infected with COVID-19"</i>
	<i>"I was afraid, if anything happened to my parents, what will I do then?"</i>
	<i>"I was afraid that everything will be locked down forever...."</i>
	<i>"I miss my teachers and friends as I could not ask my questions so many times as in the class, how would I study without my teacher and without chattering with friends"</i>
	<i>"The main cause of my anxiety is my family's health and my studies, moreover I couldn't share my feelings with anyone else..."</i>
	<i>"I am more apprehensive for my academic loss that in future I could not be able to compete my other counterparts in future examinations"</i>
	<i>"I was sad as I cannot go out to play with my friends, and continuously staying at home and studying online is quite boring, I cannot go out to school even, how would I live in future without doing things that I like"</i>

This open-ended question item gave insights on the prominent feelings of school students, and their experiences during COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown. Since, the majority of the population were from the lower-middle class, their experiences was found more towards having numerous challenges and struggle. However, despite of various difficulties and challenges the school students were observed to have somewhat optimistic and have positive attitude towards online studies can be observed among the school students. Also, the school learners reflected upon the various apprehensions about their future life in general and, academic opportunities, which cannot be ignored.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Since, the whole world of the small-aged school going children revolves around their education and school,

and so their well-being and optimistic attitude. The study revealed that an unignorable proportion of the school students have a lot apprehensions and were found depressed/sad, anxious, stressed and lack of motivation and negative feelings like fear of death, hopelessness, frustration, etc. during COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite of such negative impacts on their well-being and lots of apprehensions, school students were found optimistic in their approach; and it is highlighted that online studies helped them in getting engaged and keeping a positive attitude towards their life, education and future goals. Also, it is observed that the majority of the population were from the lower-middle class and a low socio-economic background with limited resources, their experiences was found more towards having numerous challenges and struggle. Since, India has heterogeneity in with respect to its demographics and socio-economic

backgrounds; when the country is going to implement the implications of national education policy (2020), to adopt online and blended learning in the education system, such an unignorable percentage of students who have not experienced or used to the various digital platforms and digital tools or the relevant required resources, may further lead to increase the psychological issues and may result threats to the well-being of the school learners. Therefore, the apprehensions that are being highlighted because of the COVID-19, which otherwise wouldn't be come into considerations should be tackled to enhance the optimism among school learners and bring an equality in the distribution with respect to the facilities and resources on a national level. Thus, the study concludes with the suggestions to strengthen the online and blended pedagogy while inculcating the digital skills in them and keeping the well-being of the school students a priority. And, the study suggests to offer some specific programmes to be designed and implemented that can help school learners to control their anxiety, etc. regarding the pandemic, and the digital resources etc.

Limitations

As sample size is small, generalization of the results needs to be cautiously carried out.

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