

Psychological Impact of Covid-19 on Adolescents

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has caused upset in the lives of people. Families confined within home for months has caused a lot of problems and children are worst affected. With school closures and some taking online classes from their home have impacted them psychologically. This paper aims to study this psychological impact on the lives of adolescents of age 12-18 during lockdown due to COVID-19 in four aspects- individual, family, social and education.

Methodology: Participants were selected on random basis using snowball sampling technique. Structured questionnaire was formed based on various tools review. Descriptive statistics have been used to analyze data.

Results: Among the sample of 216 adolescents, majority agreed on getting bored during lockdown and to pass their time resort to watching television and using mobile phone increasing their screening time and the positive impact was the reduce in the consumption of junk food. With online classes, a lot of students are facing issue of proper network connection and concentration. As they majority of participants miss going out, there is still a fear of contracting virus. Problems caused during lockdown due to COVID-19 and its psychological impact on adolescents needs utmost attention for their better physical and mental health.

Key words: Psychological impact, COVID-19, Adolescents, Mental health

Introduction

During the winter of 2019, an outbreak of a contagious disease caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2) took place and situation was soon declared as a pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO). Since January various precautionary measures have been taken to curtail the transmission of the COVID-19 and ultimately avoid the community spread. Complete lockdown has been initiated all over the world as a protective measure. Some countries have started recovering whereas in some, the situation is getting worse. One such country is India. As on 12 June 2020, India crossed the 3-lakh mark and is 4th largest in terms of being impacted by coronavirus. The 21-day lockdown was announced in India on 24 March 2020 which was further extended till 31st May 2020. It has almost been 3 months that people have been asked to stay at home except in case of emergency or buying necessities.

Covid-19 has brought psychological impact on people along with the economic effect on the world economies. The precautionary measures have caused detrimental effects on the mental health of human beings. Keeping inside the four walls of the house 24*7 has aroused feelings of anxiety, irritation, fear, sadness, hopelessness, loneliness, boredom, etc. People are left

with no other choice than to work from home. Whole family being at home yet want their own spaces to carry out their routine has called new issues. Balancing personal and professional life has become a daily challenge. And in midst of all of this, children are worst affected. Facing the pandemic situation for the first time, many children are still struggling and finding out ways to keep them going. As a precautionary measure government has ordered school closure, postponement and cancellation of end term examinations to prevent further spread of infection. With nothing to do, many children are resorted to play inside home, help in household chores, study, watch television, sleep, etc. to pass their time. Though some schools have started virtual classes to keep them busy and cover up their syllabus, it has caused many other issues related to their physical and mental health.

This paper aims to fill the research gap and study the impact of lockdown on adolescents of age 12-18 in India to know the major issues they are facing during these unprecedented times and accordingly suggest few suggestions to overcome these problems.

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province of China on 31 December 2019 out of 40 cases some were linked to the Huanan Seafood market (2020). Soon a team from WHO was sent to China to study the new virus with Chinese officials. The virus was named 2019-nCoV acute respiratory disease where n is for novel and CoV represents Coronavirus. On 30 January 2020, WHO declared it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (WHO, 2020) and on the same day India reported its first case of COVID-19 in a student who returned from the city of Wuhan in Kerala (MoHFW, 2020). Over the next few weeks, it was spread in Africa, America, Europe, South East Asia and Western Pacific affecting 114 countries. Seeing the rising numbers, COVID-19 was declared as a pandemic by WHO on 11 March 2020. At the time of writing paper, there were currently 5.9 million active cases and 3.67 lakh deaths globally (1 July 2020) (WHO, 2020).

In the absence of a vaccine, several containment measures like social distancing, shutdowns, identifying and isolating suspected cases, frequent testing, contract tracing, and self-quarantine are being observed around the world to prevent vast spread of disease which has led to disruption in the economy as well as in social lives of individuals, societies, communities at large (WHO, 2020). It has cause imbalance in demand and supply side, shut down of offices, factories and slowly sliding economy into recession and resulting in loss of approximately 10 million jobs around the world (Nicola et al., 2020).

Human beings, also known as social animals, is due to their interactive nature. When this nature is disrupted, the social well-being of humans is affected. COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the social well-being of the people quarantined (Brooks et al., 2020), people isolated at home (Kazmi et al., 2020), frontline workers (Spoorthy et al., 2020) and children too (Jiao et al., 2020). For example, a recent study conducted in the initial stages of the outbreak in 194 cities in China, out of 1210 respondents, 53.8% voted for the severe or moderate psychological impact of COVID-19 and 8.1% had severe stress levels (Wang et al., 2020). Similarly, another study was conducted in India in March in which 662 people participated most of which were highly anxious, 12.5% reported sleeping difficulties and paranoia of contracting virus was found amongst 37.8% (Roy et al., 2020). Even during

Ebola outbreak in 2014, there was a fear of contracting it which was developed in communities because of which they started distancing themselves from others also (Cheung, 2015). It has been proven by research that people tend to develop stress in response to such extraordinary life situations (Johal, 2009).

Amidst all the disruptions caused due to COVID-19, children are worst affected. Lockdown measures have restricted them to stay at home with no social interactions. In fact, social interactions help children to learn about the societal norms and social behaviors (Staub, 1979). In absence of positive social interactions their well-being can be jeopardized. Learnings from past research shows that during isolation, children could show signs of depression (Hawley & Capitano, 2015), loneliness, disruption of sleep cycle [Simon et al., 2018] which leads to eating disorders and obesity (Chaput & Dutil, 2016). Research witness the impact of isolation on their education causing psychological distress in later stages of life (Lacey et al., 2014) and also highlights the negative effect of the absence of social isolation on children's social well-being and how it can hamper their development (Urbina, 2020).

Around 290 million students are at home as schools are close down due to precautionary health measure on which UNESCO Director-General also expressed his views-"While temporary school closures as a result of health and other crises are not new, unfortunately, the global scale and speed of the current educational disruption is paralleled and, if prolonged, could threaten the right to education" (UNESCO, 2020). In some areas schools are likely to remain close for the rest of the year to result in an educational gap while some schools are planning to conduct online classes but lack of proper network connection, study material and personal space at home is acting as a major roadblock (Lancker & Parolin, 2020). There is also a risk of food insecurity among the children living in poverty as before they were supplied free meals by the school but due to closure of schools, job loss of several parents and inability to work from home is resulting in less income and has raised concern on their healthy living (Schwartz & Rothbart, 2020).

The daily routine of children is also severely affected, having limited space to play and move around disturbs their physical and mental health and they often resort to sleeping, staying in bed and avoid eating and taking a bath (Lee, 2020). Many families have stocked up food items including easy to make food as a preparedness measure due to which children are exposed to more junk food than usual resulting in weight gain (Rundle et al., 2020). The physical inactiveness has increased from 21.3% to 65.6% and children are more involved in longer leisure screen time than before points out the impact of confinement measures of COVID-19 on children concerning their lifestyle changes (Xiang et al., 2020). They have become more adamant and demanding and show symptoms of nostalgia, distress, loneliness during this period of the pandemic (Imran et al., 2020). When the surrounding people are tensed, it causes anxiety among children as they quickly sense it (Dalton et al., 2020).

Governments around the world have taken several steps to curb the problem of hunger, living and protecting people from contracting virus. Despite this many are not following the set guidelines as found in a recent study done among US teens where only 30.5% complied with pure social distancing (Oosterhoff & Palmer, 2020). The children in adolescent age are more

socially active and outgoing and in condition of lockdown they are suffering from many mental health issues which needs to be studied.

Methodology

1. Objectives

1. Measure the psychological impact of lockdown on adolescents
2. Identify main problems adolescents are facing in this lockdown period
3. Provide few suggestions for problems identified

2. Study Population and sample

This study includes participants of age 12 to 18 from all over India. Being an online study, students who had internet connection and able to understand English could only participate in this.

3. Study Instrument

A structured questionnaire using google forms. The questionnaire was divided into four sections- individual, family, social and school. Under these sections, various questions were asked to rate on a 5 pointer Likert scale ranging from never, occasionally, sometimes, often and always along with open ended questions.

4. Method

Snow- ball sampling technique is used as done in a similar study, carried out in state of Uttar Pradesh using google forms to know about mental health of people (Kazmi et al., 2020). Amidst maintaining social distance, in person contact was not possible so google forms have been used for survey. Questionnaire was circulated through WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and various other social media platforms and was further encouraged to pass on to other students.

For data analysis descriptive statistics is used to find out the results (Roy et al., 2020).

5. Ethical Considerations

Purpose and objectives of the study were informed to the participants and anonymity of their identity was kept. Questionnaire also included a consent form under which it was mentioned that they could proceed only after they have taken permission from their parents to participate in this study.

Results

An online survey was conducted to measure psychological well-being of adolescents amidst lockdown due to COVID-19. A total of 216 responses were recorded. Respondents were of age 12 to 18 living in India. The study includes participants who understands English and

have internet connection, so it narrows down to only English medium school children. Male to female ratio was 9:11. Descriptive statistics is used to analyze data.

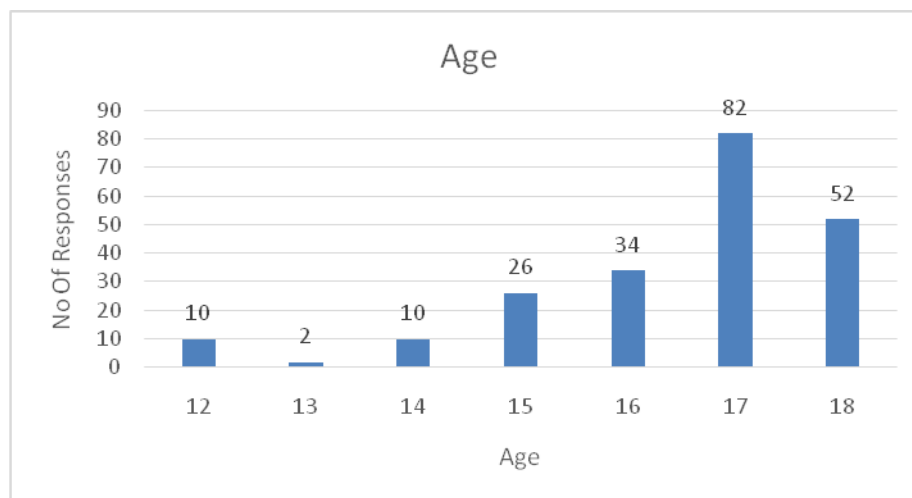


Chart 1 Age distribution of sample

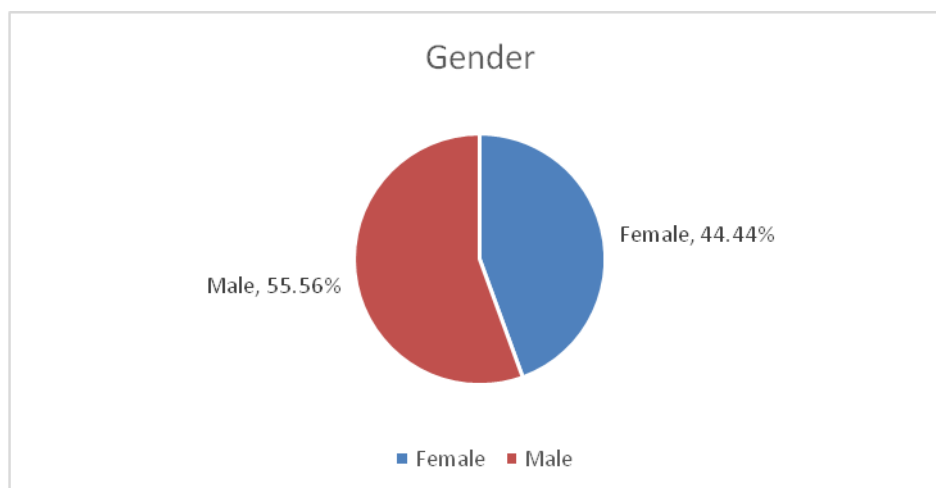


Figure 1: Sample composition

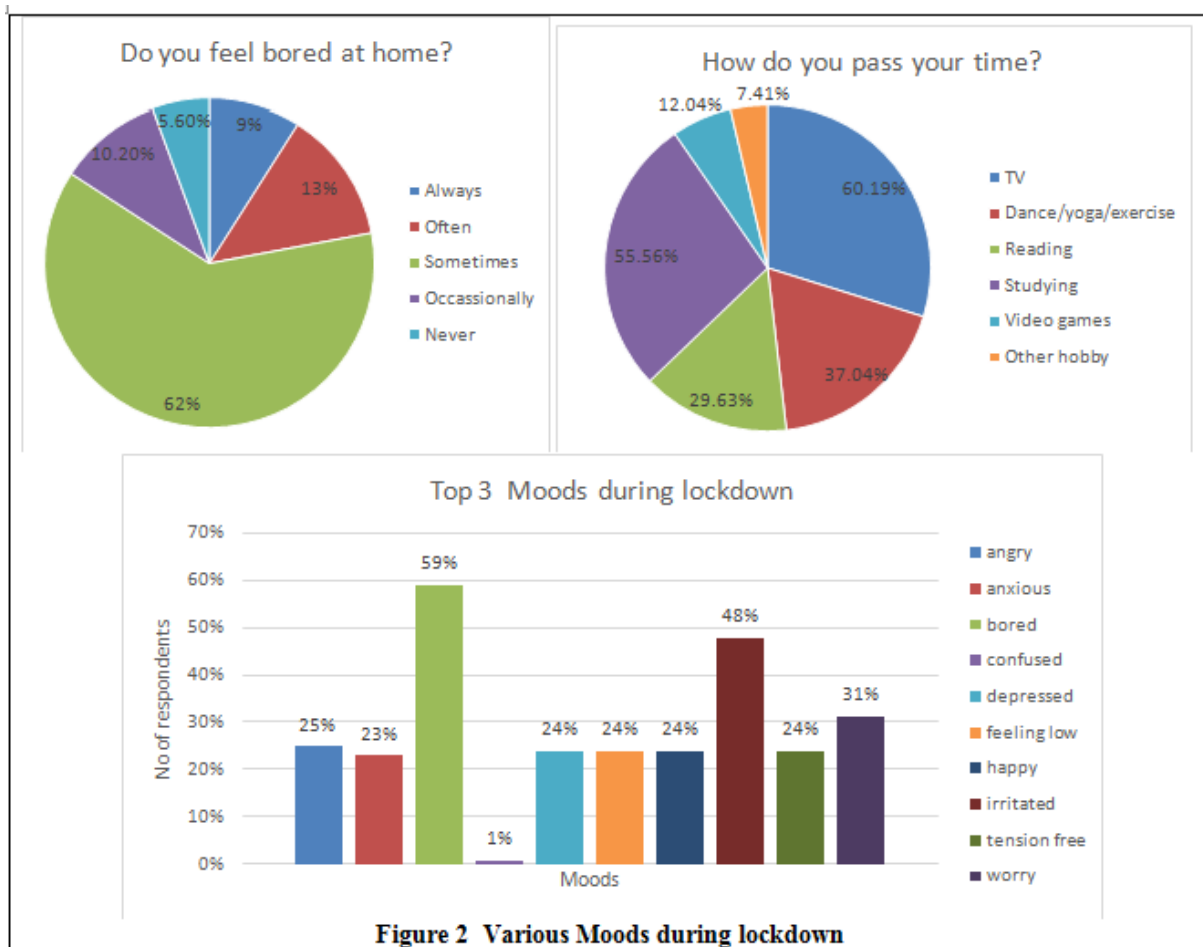
a) As shown in Figure 2 , 62% respondents agreed they feel bored sometimes at home during this lockdown period. It was found that majority of children are resorted to watching television and are still studying as some schools have started taking classes online. When asked about top 3 moods they are having during lockdown, 59% said bored, followed by 48% who feel irritated and 31% are worried. On positive side, 72% of respondents said junk food consumption has decreased during lockdown and 38% said no change in body weight is observed which means they are eating homemade food which is healthy for their growth.

b) Second segment involved questions regarding the school and their studies. Majority of respondents said they miss school always because of their friends, teachers and learning in school environment. Around 75% of the respondents are attending online school classes out of which 76.54% (always and often) responded they are comfortable with online classes whereas 36% responded they are never comfortable with it. When asked about challenges

they are facing in online classes, 62.96% of respondents lack concentration during online classes while 61.11% of respondents suffer from strain on eyes.

c) The third segment involved questions regarding relationship with their family members during lockdown. Majority, 61.1% (always and often) said their family engages with them but when asked about whom they prefer to share things these days, 43.9% took the name of friend followed by 23.4% respondents who like to share things with their parents and 21.5% with their brother or sister.

d) The last segment included questions about their social life where majority said they always miss going out but at the same time are afraid of contracting virus.



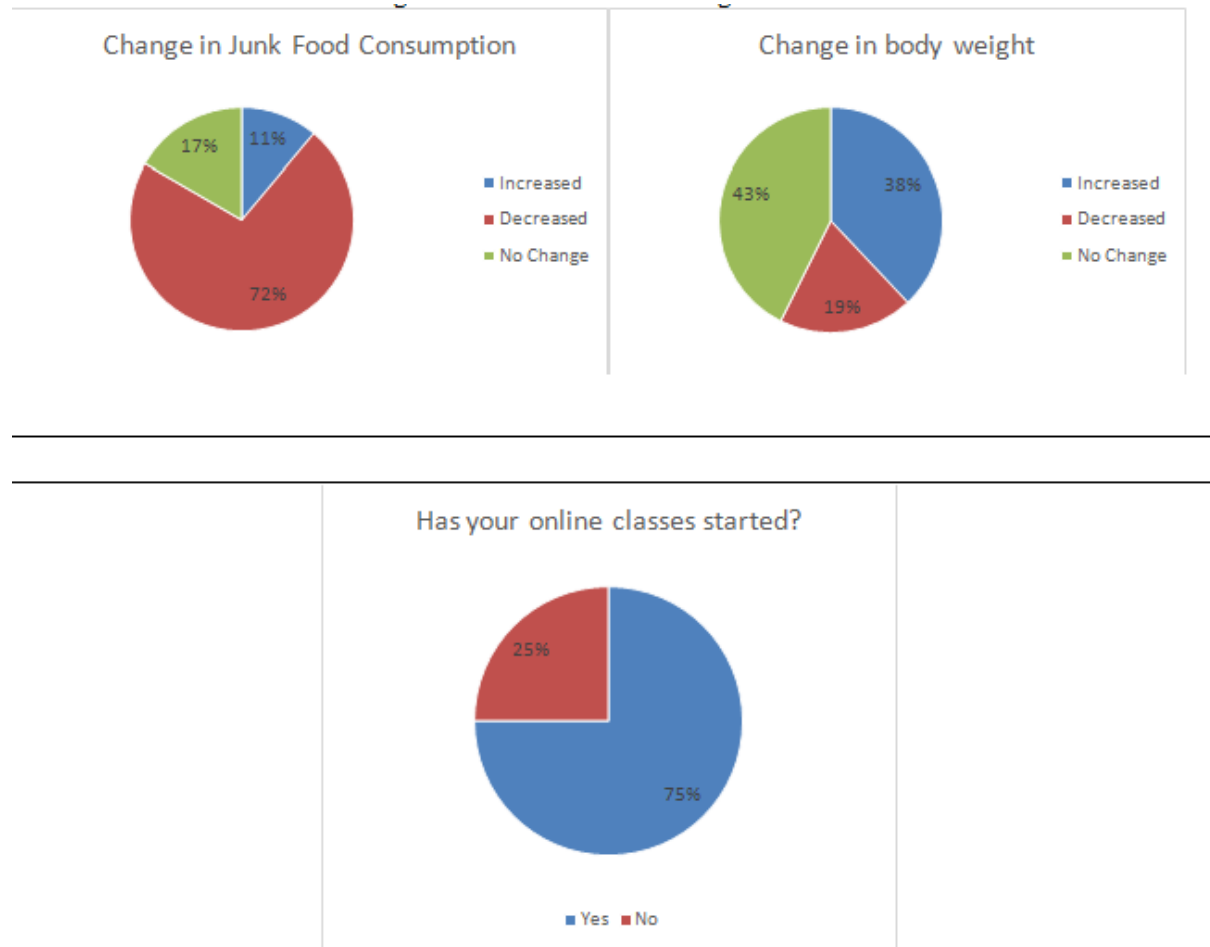


Figure 3 Responds response

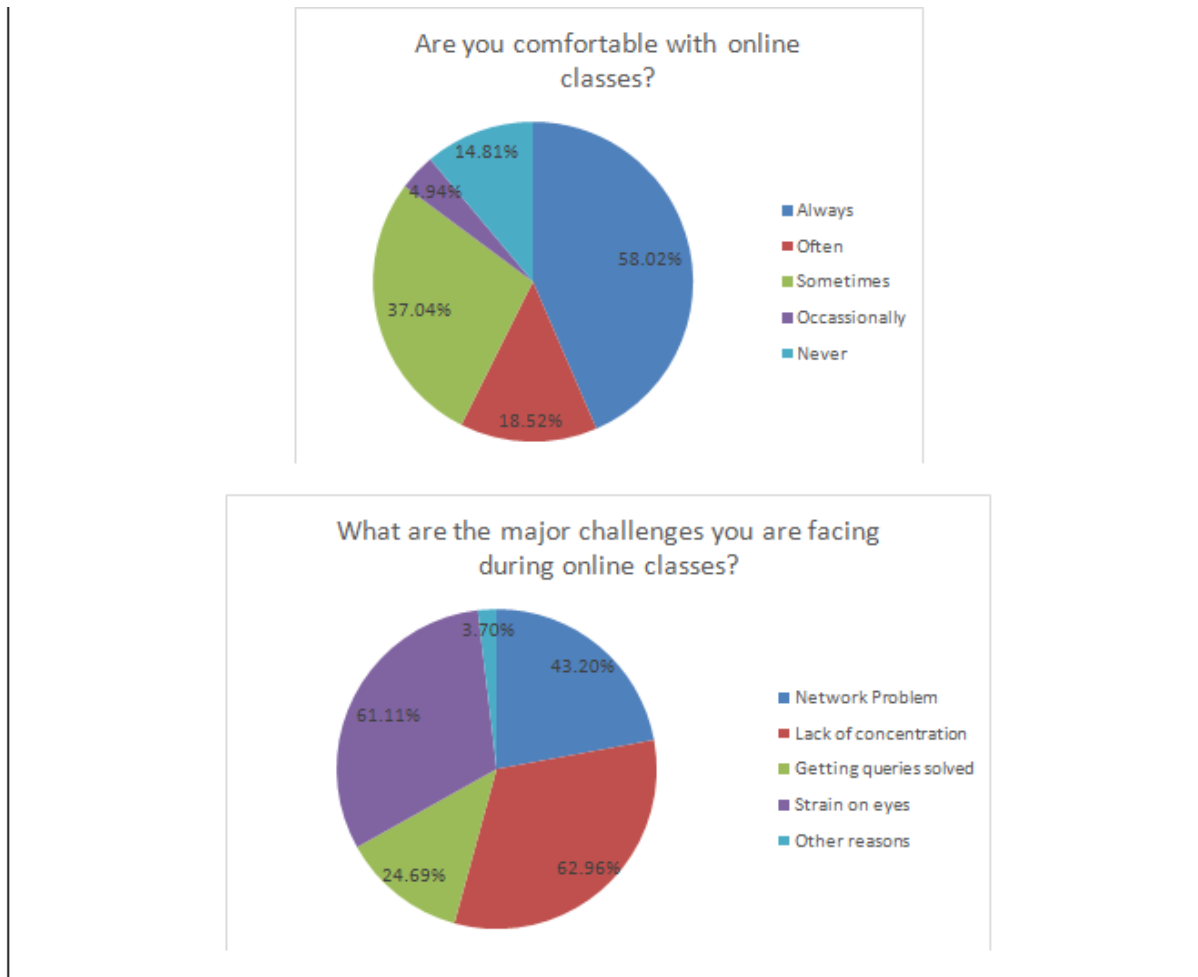


Figure 4 School related responses

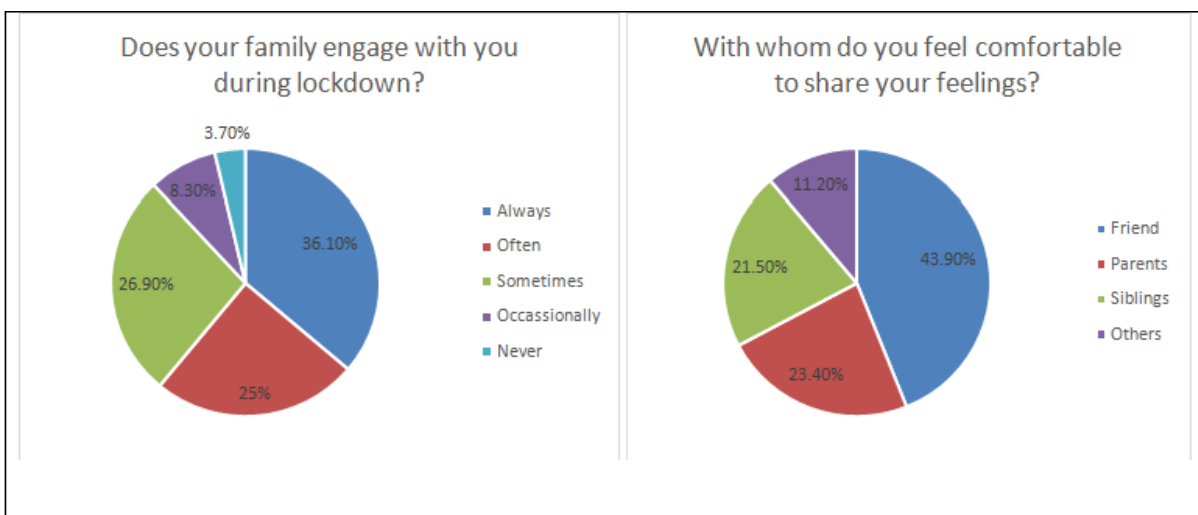


Figure 5 Family related response

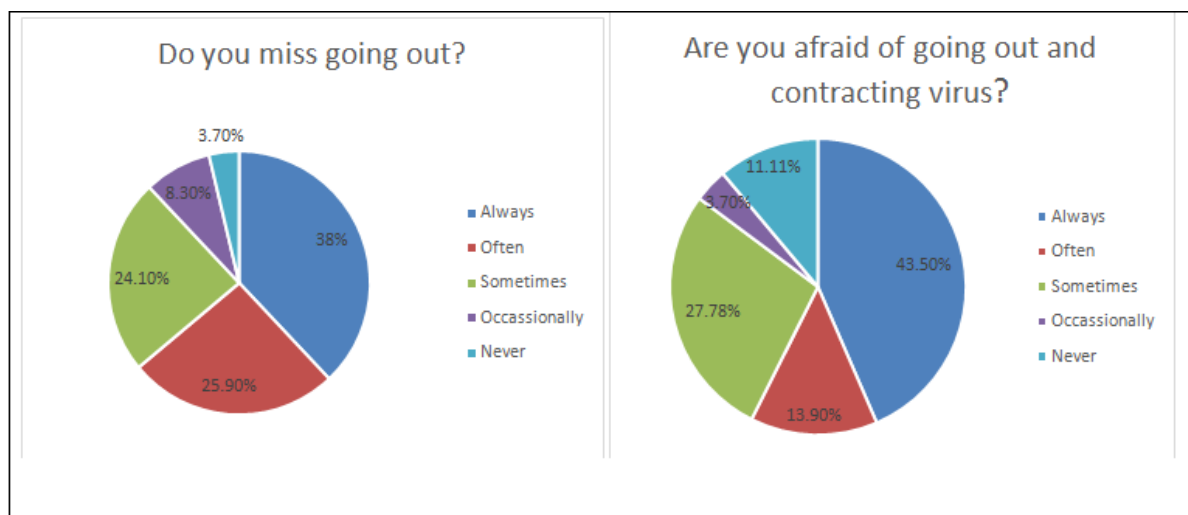


Figure 5 Social related response

Discussion

COVID-19 has forced people to stay inside their homes which has brought allot of challenges and great impact on the mental well-being of the population. Hence, this study aims to identify the psychological impact of lockdown on adolescents during lockdown due to COVID-19. This study focusses on four different segments- individual, family, social and education related to adolescents. A study was conducted in Palestine on 600 adolescents to know the change in their dietary habits and change in body weight. In the study it was reported that 250 out of 600 said their weight has increased due to increased food intake like our study where 82 out of 200 agreed increase in body weight (Allabadi et al., 2020). Another study conducted in China during February 2020, stated that children were afraid showed symptoms of anger, irritation and boredom which is also found in our study (Brooks et al., 2020). Education wise, some schools have started online classes which has raised concern on health of children. As shown in findings, major issues during online classes are concentration problems and strain on eyes. This may be due to lack of proper space for studying as lockdown has forced family to confine in their home where everyone has to work and need their own space. The more exposure to computer and laptop screens causes strain on eyes which is harmful for the eyesight.

Limitations:

- 1) Self-reported outcomes may lead to recall bias
- 2) Self-administered online questionnaire – computer literacy might affect
- 3) Might not be generalize to other populations as it refers to educated children only
- 4) Potential self-selection bias – children interested in survey only took part

Declarations:

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Conflicts of interest/Competing interests: No conflict of interest associated with this research.

Availability of data and material: If needed will be shared.

Code availability: NA

Authors' contributions Both the authors have contributed for this manuscript 1. Ms. Mahima , collection of data, analyzing and drafting, Dr. Mita in guiding and editing.

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