

A descriptive study to assess the knowledge and anxiety related to re-opening of educational institutes during Covid-19 pandemic in India.

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I. Introduction

Schools and universities across the country have been closed since March 16, 2020 when the central government announced a countrywide classroom shutdown as one of the public measures to prevent the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19

Expert around the world suggested that widespread closures of educational institutes present an unprecedented risk to children's education and well being. Around 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries are affected by Covid -19 pandemic lockdown. Shutting down of schools and other learning spaces have impacted 94 per cent of the world's student population, up to 99 per cent in low and lower-middle income countries.¹

The UN agencies have issued the guidelines for reopening of schools that have been closed around the world due to the COVID-19 outbreak. They have suggested that the nations have to work in the best interests of children and overall public health considerations, based on an assessment of the associated benefit.²

According to UNICEF not attending school can have severe impact on a child's ability to learn. The longer underprivileged children are out of school, the less likely they are to return. It also increases the risk of teenage pregnancy, sexual exploitation, child marriage, violence and other threats. Further, prolonged shut down of schools hampers essential school-based services such as immunization, school feeding, and mental health and psychosocial support, and can cause stress and anxiety due to the loss of peer interaction and disrupted routines. School reopenings must be safe and according to individual country's overall COVID-19 health response, with all protective measures.³

In countries like India re-opening of school is also being considered because of the inaccessibility of many students from underprivileged backgrounds to the online classes. Government of India is following a phase-wise unlocking of activities. It includes partial resumption of activities in schools for students of classes 9th to 12th on a voluntary basis, for taking guidance from their teachers. This was allowed from 21st September 2020.⁴

According to the new guidelines issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) that come into effect from October 1, 2020, States and Union Territories will decide on reopening schools and educational institutions after October 15. As per the MHA Guidelines, students will be permitted to attend schools or institutions with the written consent of their parents and attendance must not be enforced. The states and the union territories will prepare their own SOPs regarding the health and safety of all the students and teachers. Schools which are allowed to open shall have to mandatorily follow the SOP to be issued by Education Departments of States/UTs.⁵

Schools can follow states/UT's standard operating procedures regarding student strength in a class, maintaining physical distancing, wearing of masks, training teachers in picking up early signs of respiratory distress, and keeping gadgets such as pulse oxymeters handy. Those students already suffering from any of the chronic respiratory illnesses should avoid attending.

The discussion on re-opening of schools comes when there is a surge in Covid-19 cases. India crossed the 66 lakhs in terms of number of cases as of on 05.10.2020. The issue of reopening of school is very complicated everywhere in the world. The Australian state of Victoria, has re shut schools for six weeks after a resurgence of the pandemic. In May, Israel was forced to re shut the schools after the second wave of infections which were directly related to the schools. In the United States of America, many states have shut down again following Covid-19 infections re-surge.⁶

This decision brought a lot of anxiety among students and their parents. Parents are extremely concerned about the safety of their children. Their area of concerns are regarding the arrangements for prevention of corona virus in the educational institutes, maintenance of hand hygiene and sanitization, travelling to the institutes etc. Children will be moving in closed spaces and could get infected and be carriers of the infection. They can bring infection to home, and many will have older aged people and other vulnerable people at home who will be at risk.

The investigators has observed various concerns among parents of children's and thought to explore this particular area of concern.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To assess the knowledge related to Covid-19 infection
2. To assess the anxiety related to re-opening of educational institutes during Covid-19 pandemic.

Background:

As the educational institutes were closed from the last few months in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, they have adopted the system of online teaching through, Google meet, Zoom and other mobile applications. But regular classroom experience can not be replaced by online teaching.

That is why UN agencies have issued the guidelines for reopening of schools around the world. Reopening of school has been started in many part of the world where the benefit outweigh the risk.

Researches and case studies are coming around the world showing impact of large gatherings during this covid-19 Pandemic.

An online survey conducted by the Education Department of Haryana participated by parents of 76,019 students revealed that parents of 85 per cent students of Class 10 and 12 are ready to send their childrens to the schools.⁷

Local Circles, a community social media platform conducted a survey in August 2020 in 217 districts of India to find out if the parents want to send their children to the school revealed that 71 percent of respondents are not willing to send their kids to attend school as coronavirus cases are increasing day by day. It shows that the Of the total, only 28% parents are in favour of schools reopening in 2020, while 34% feel they should reopen only in the next academic year.⁸

Lu X, Zhang L, Du H, et al; done a study on 1391 children infected with SARS-CoV-2 and treated at the Wuhan Children's Hospital in China. They have found that. Children are susceptible to infection with severe acute respi-ratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) but generally present with mild symptoms compared with adults.⁹

Heald-Sargent T, Muller WJ et.al in a cohort study which included 145 patients with mild to moderate illness within a week of symptom onset found that children younger than 5 years with mild to moderate COVID-19 have high viral loads of SARS-CoV-2 viral RNA in their nasopharynx compared with older children and adults and they can spread infection among general population.¹⁰

A study done by Park, Y., Choe, Y., Park, O et al in south korea suggest that children aged between 10 and 19 years have potential to spread the Covid -19 infection at the same rate that adults do.¹¹

Zhang J, Litvinova M, Liang Y, done a contact survey in Wuhan and Shanghai, China to see the impact of social distancing and school closure on transmission. They concluded that maintaining social distancing alone, is enough to control COVID-19 infections and they have suggested that school closures can decrease the peak incidence by 40 to 60% and delay the epidemic.¹²

Pelaez M, Novak G suggests that some parents and their children might face anxiety problems when school reopens after the COVID-19 lockdown. Many parents are not sure about ways to handle anxiety or fear as their children return to educational institutes or have to visit other environments outside their homes.¹³

II. Materials and Method

The quantitative approach was adopted for the study with a descriptive survey design. Research variables were knowledge and anxiety of community regarding re-opening of educational institutes during COVID-19 pandemic. The sample comprised of 104 people. An online survey was conducted to collect the data by using a structured questionnaire to assess knowledge and anxiety of community regarding re-opening of educational institutes during COVID-19 pandemic.

Study Design: Descriptive survey design.

Study Location: India

Sample Size: 104

Subjects and Selection Method: The survey included 104 people, selected through purposive sampling technique.

Inclusion Criteria

It included peoples living in different regions of India and those who were having access to internet facility and willing to participate in the study.

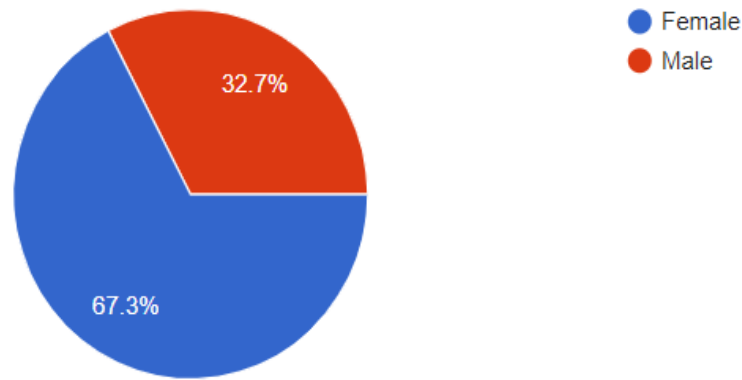
Exclusion criteria: Residents outside of India were not included.

Methodology: Tool comprised of three sections; section I consisted of background data of subject including 5 questions, section II comprised of 10 multiple choice questions regarding assessment of knowledge about COVID 19 and section III consisted of eleven statements about assessment of anxiety. All the items in the knowledge questionnaire were scored and one point was assigned to each item for a correct response. A score 0 was allotted for each wrong response. The anxiety assessment questionnaire consisted of statements against which respondents had to choose agree , disagree or neither agree nor disagree. Subjects were asked to give consent first, after that they were proceed to next section. All the questions were mandatory to answer before submission of the tool as incomplete questionnaire could not be submitted. Average time taken to respond the tool was around 5 minutes.

Once the tool was ready as Google form ,it was sent to parents living in India through internet.104 subjects have responded. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics.

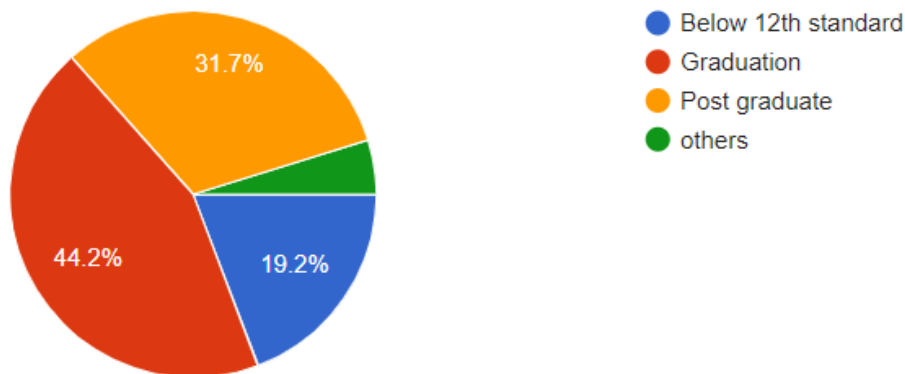
III. Result

Fig 1- Distribution based on gender



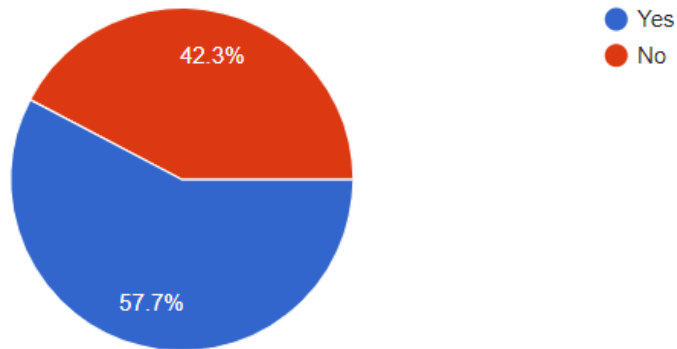
More than half (67.3%) were female while (32.7%) male.

Fig 2- Distribution based on education



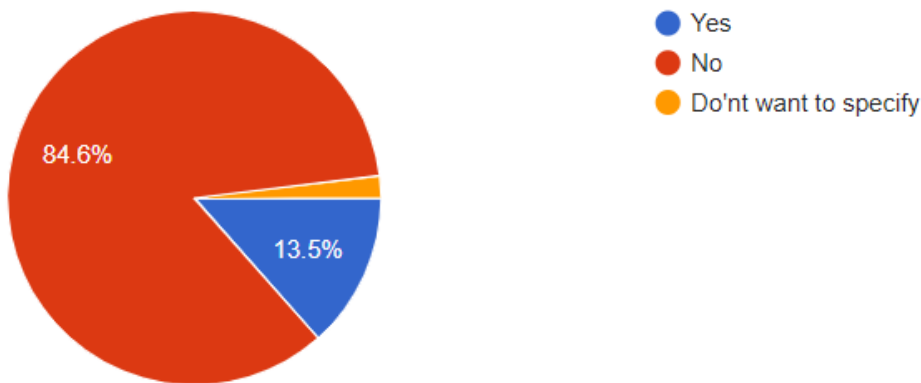
Only (44.2%) were graduate followed by (31.7%) were post graduate, were below 12th standard and (4.8%) were in other category.

Fig 3- Distribution based on attended any session /seminar/webinar related to Covid-19



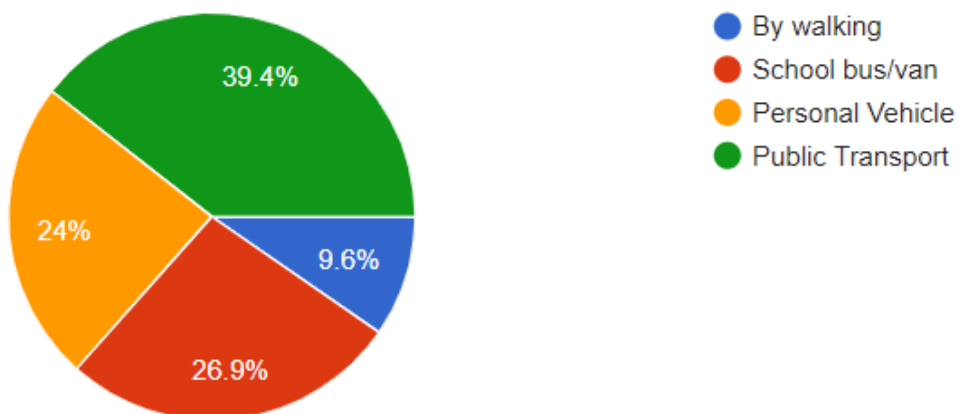
Only (57.7%) have attended any session/ seminar and webinar related to Covid -19 however (42.3%) have not attended.

Fig 4- Distribution based on any one has suffered from covid-19 in their family



Majority (84.6%) have responded no one has suffered from Covid-19 in their family, (13.5%) have experience of Covid -19 sufferer in their, only (1.9%) does not want to specify the same.

Fig 5- Distribution based on Mode of transport used by your child to reach educational institute



Less than half percent (39.4%) samples have responded that mode of transport used by their child to reach the educational institute was public transport followed by (26.9%) through school/ van, (24%) through personal vehicle and (9.6%) through walk.

TABLE – 1 Knowledge score of samples regarding Covid -19

GRADE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Adequate knowledge(Score >80%)	71	68%
Inadequate knowledge(Score <79%)	33	32%

Data presents in table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of knowledge score related to Covid -19.

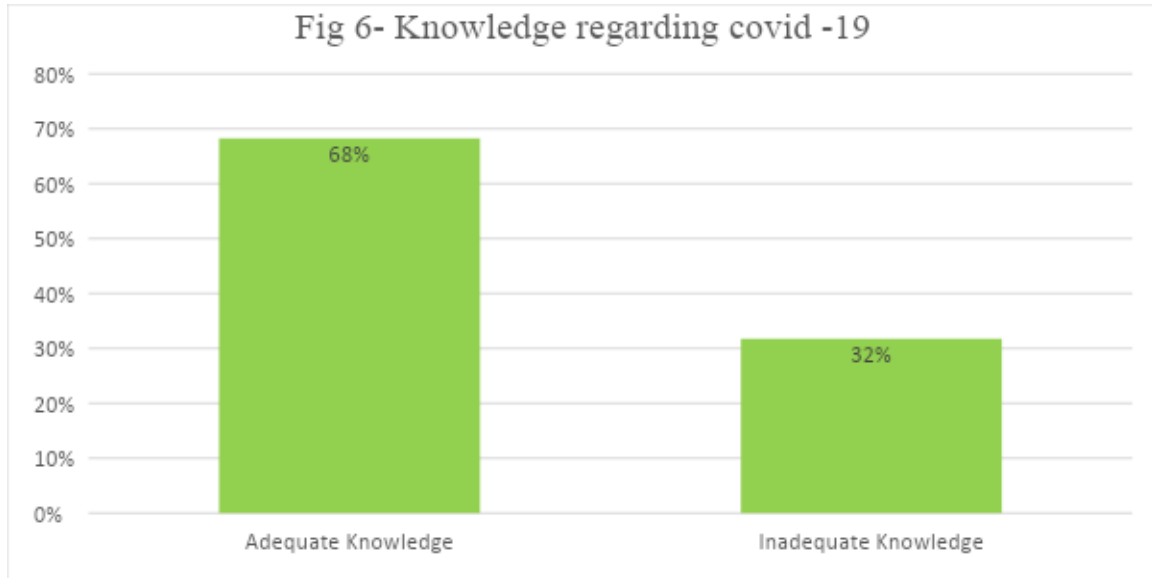


Figure 6 shows that (68%) samples have the adequate knowledge while (32%) samples have inadequate knowledge related to Covid -19.

Fig 7- Anxiety related to covid 19 in re opening of colleges

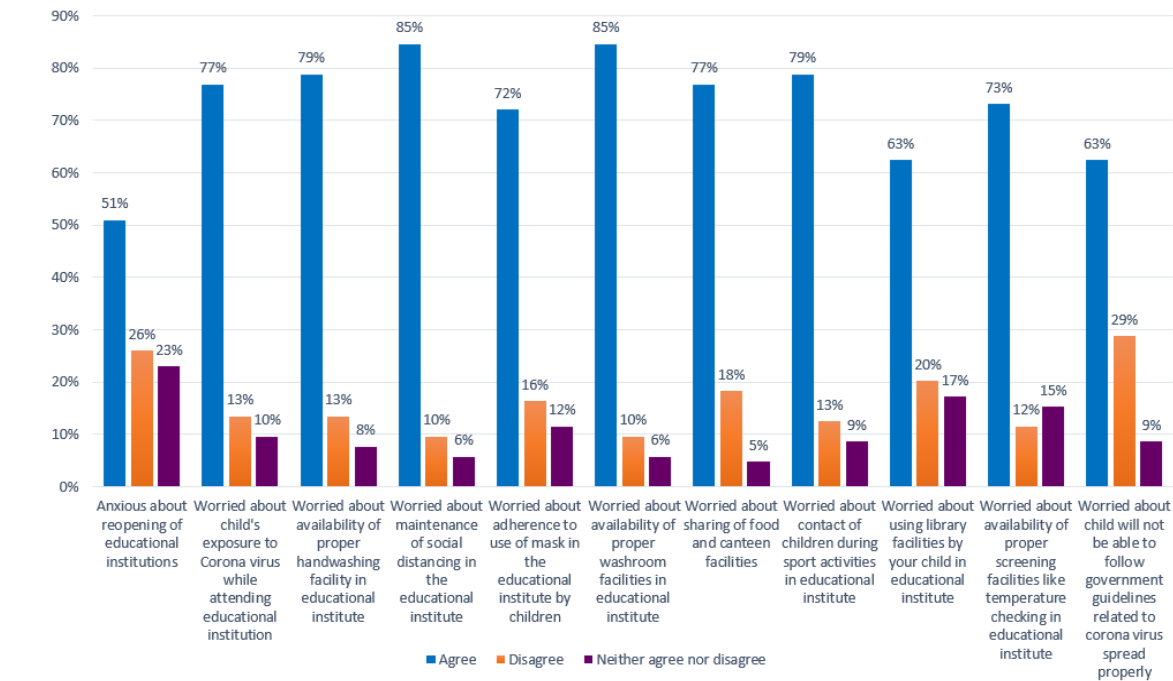


Figure 7 shows the anxiety related to Covid 19 in re opening of colleges in different aspects. Majority of samples (85%) are worried about the maintenance of social distancing in educational institute and (85%) are worried about the availability of proper washroom facilities in educational institute.

IV. Conclusion

On the basis of the findings of the study following conclusions are drawn:

- (32%) participants of the study had inadequate knowledge related to Covid-19.
- We can increase the knowledge of the participants by giving community awareness programme related to covid-19 transmission, prevention and management.
- 50% of the participants are anxious about reopening of educational institutes. In rest of the 50% participants, (26%) participants are not anxious about reopening of educational institute.
- Maintenance of social distancing and washroom facilities in educational institute was the major concern for anxiety in reopening of the educational institute.
- Proper handwashing facility and contact of children during sport activities in educational institute was the second major concern for anxiety in reopening of educational institute.

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