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“Impact and approach to pandemic covid-19 on various sectors”

Social workers' perspectives on children's education during the Covid19 pandemic: A lesson for India's pandemic second-waves

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Abstract

Face-to-face school educational interaction has been cut off across countries due to the Corona Virus outbreak. Faced with such a confluence of circumstances, social workers go to the front lines to provide support and digital guidance to everyone, especially those who are truly at risk of pandemic consequences. Internet-based education has become an academic process that involves studying virtually. Because of the Covid19 pandemic, information and communication technology (ICT) played an important role in the academic platform, though debates continue about whether it is reasonable for children to be associated with high levels of it, as well as a quest to increase how much it is equally accessible and available for all and what to do to reach education to all. This descriptive research describes professional social workers' perspectives and support in integrating student-families-teachers in order to reduce teaching-learning inequalities in the Covid19 catastrophe. This study outlines the viewpoints of social workers working with children, families, and teachers during the Corona Virus outbreak in the context of educational settings in India. The social workers' tasks/strategies ensured that children, as well as their families and teachers, had a chance to connect, and they facilitated dialogue about how to better strengthen to serve children's education during the Covid19 crisis by promoting multi-professional interaction and various tools.

Keywords: Covid19, children, education, pandemic second-waves, social work

Introduction

In light of the recent crisis triggered by Covid19, the entire globe and people have had their destinies drastically altered. Even when a threat is anticipated to be an immediate danger to a well-defined society, the assistance of professionals is crucial. Due to the ambiguity and varying depth of social issues, social workers can perform a variety of tasks. Their initiatives and governmental efforts are centered on the problem-solving of societal issues, including a lot of cooperation and support (Cifuentes-Faura, 2020) [3]. The Corona Virus outbreak has caused a dramatic uptick in the human population emergency to focus on the social requirements of others, and those social workers fulfill a wide range of roles in all settings, ranging from education to recovery (Austin et al., 2016; Cifuentes-Faura, 2020; Ferguson, 2017; Jani et al., 2016) [1, 3, 4, 6]. Moreover, Covid19 has shut down schools in almost every nation, causing people to retreat into their homes. Consequently, it is the priority of social workers to provide services and serve those who are school age, to extend their parents' and communities' support via telemetric. The demands of pupils in scenarios of danger or disadvantage require prompt and continual attention to monitoring, engagement, along with the support of educational and social services. Disadvantaged children and groups need attention, including those who face a great deal of prejudice or learners who are kept from fully participating in education because of factors like socioeconomic identity, gender, fake news, or unique attributes that must be removed from these constraints.

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Indeed, this descriptive study elucidates experienced social workers' insights and strategies for incorporating student-families-teachers in order to reduce teaching-learning disparities during the Covid19 emergency. This research summarizes the perspectives of social workers who work with children, families, and teachers in the Covid19 waves in educational settings across India. The social workers' tasks/strategies ensured that children, as well as their families and teachers, had a chance to communicate, and encouraged conversation on how to better serve children's education during the Covid19 catastrophe through the promotion of different tools and multi professionals' interaction.

Methods

The study utilized a combination of methods to describe the social worker's perspectives in the field of education and working with children affected by the Covid19 pandemic in India. Firstly, a brief analysis of the literature is conducted in efforts to identify children amongst the most vulnerable groups facing an educational downturn due to the pandemic. Secondly, a descriptive approach was used to demonstrate the educational needs of learners and the prevailing offshoot of disadvantaged children in India. Thirdly, a thematic analysis approach has been adopted (Braun et al., 2018) to disperse themes regarding the perspectives of social workers in strengthening children, families, and teachers during the pandemic.

Results and Discussions

A Snippet of Indian Children's Education during the Covid19 Pandemic

The Covid19 pandemic has so drastically affected learning environments that it has disrupted the education sector in over 190 nations. School and other learning institutions shutdowns have affected 94% of the nation's learners, rising to 99% in low-and lower-middle-income nations (United Nations, 2020) ^[10]. In India, 320 million learners have been impacted by school shutdowns (UNESCO, 2020a) ^[11]. Nevertheless, only 37.6 million students in sixteen states are pursuing learning in virtual classes and television programming, and so on (UNICEF, 2020a). Also, Save the Children conducted a recent poll during the pandemic and discovered that 62% of surveyed households had discontinued their children's schooling, with 67% in rural regions and 55% in urban locations meanwhile (Save the Children, 2020). Rampant poverty and lost earnings would weaken families' capacity to repay for educational attainment. This effect would be magnified for poor families that could perhaps be experiencing financial pressures. This will result in children dropping out of school and being pulled towards occupational tasks to help families raise income. As per the NSS 75 Rounded Survey Data 2017-2018, approximately 3.22 crore children between the ages of 6 to 17 are out of school, with 31% having never undergone any school (NSO, 2019). A geometrical expansion in the population had a more pronounced effect on rural areas as opposed to city ones. The primary reasons for choosing not to attend school are to do chores at home and to engage in financial activities (NSO, 2019). Additionally, UNESCO reports that worldwide, 23.8 million teenagers, adolescents, and young people are in danger of dropping out and not back to the education system, including schools, colleges, and universities (UNESCO, 2020b) ^[12].

Evidence shows that education has a huge impact on every stage of a child's life, and now the Corona Virus has disrupted that. Corona's consequences are visible throughout the globe, and the same is true for children's schooling (United Nations, 2020) ^[10]. The number of students with smartphones has increased in the digital era, but time spent on educational applications has different issues; most of them haven't yet applied the full potential of their devices to learning rather than gaming. Though students may have difficulty using Smartphones for study and class assignments, understanding (information) of their educational value may prevent them from using them for studies. Still, many of them have not learned regarding classes that they can meet online, and the government has not intervened for the most part. Learners are required to use tools like Zoom, Google Meet, etc. to do the online classes. Worldwide, educational institutions have been suspended as a result of the Covid19 catastrophe, endangering academic timelines. To maintain academic programmes, the majority of educational institutions have transferred to online platforms. However, the questions around e-suitability, learning designing, and training frameworks, especially in developing countries like India, still aren't well-defined and put into serious constraints (Muthuprasad et al., 2021). Nonetheless, many students choose to return to school not only for the sake of their studies but also for the opportunity to socialize with their peers. Co-curricular activities and sports have also played important roles in getting them there. Many of the educators had helped with the e-learning when they realized that many of the students were struggling with anxiety problems, and provided extra support by encouraging their pupils to be involved. The only reputable resource for students to keep learning was technology (Goldschmidt, 2020). From the beginning of the invisible Corona Virus, technologies have increasingly been used to learn, work, and remain linked.

Social Workers' Perspectives on Children's Education during the Covid19 Pandemic

Education is a constitutional right, central to our civilization. All other human rights can be realized with it. It is the basis of all 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, and essential to advance change as a shared, inclusive global success. Once education systems crumble, stability, growth, wealth, and future generations are placed in jeopardy (United Nations, 2020) ^[10]. It is absolutely imperative that social policies and plans be planned along with education. Social workers in education settings allow for routine interventions in cases of social vulnerability and help to overcome issues of inequality. In light of the Covid19 scenario, it becomes more important for social workers to intervene:



Diagram: Social workers' perspectives on facilitating education during the Covid19

Social workers with the children/students during the Covid19 pandemic

- Assisting to meet different learning needs, for instance, radio, paper-based learning, television, virtual classes, e-learning, help with TV/radio-based education, phone calls for monitoring and telephonic counseling;
- In a globalised world, technology alone cannot ensure that all students, especially the most disadvantaged, receive an equal education. As children become more technologically savvy, greater parental supervision and material accessibility will be required to ensure the best possible advantage.
- Giving regular advice to students who face entry barriers, retention, or advancement in the educational system due to social, economic, cultural, or ethnic factors;
- Supporting in the psycho-pedagogical evaluation of children with particular behavioral and learning goals;
- Children with minimal accessibility to technologies, low-tech or no-tech options must not be underestimated. Furthermore, governments must be prepared to confirm that children from low-income families are not being dropped.

Social workers with family/parents during the Covid19 pandemic

- School children from disadvantaged families should be tracked by telephone, videoconferencing calls with their relatives, guardians, and referring representatives to ascertain their requirements or if additional guidance or intervention is expected;
- In extraordinary circumstances, social workers and school personnel should visit the families/homes, in particular, taking all requisite precautions against both safety and infection;
- Establishing contacts with families to remind them of the social work interventions and welfare services that have been implemented, as well as offering advice on perspectives of the parenting pattern that can help children develop and learn better;
- Educating and linking families with social institutions, health and mental health facilities, and public service agencies to promote improved social conditions, to support health, personal hygiene, and time management, and should suggest integrated safety protocols.

Social workers with the school/teachers during the Covid19 pandemic

- Social workers also must continue to collaborate their efforts with teachers, multi-professional and educational guidance teams, determining the priority and most effective mode of approach in any circumstance for the betterment of e-learning;
- Coordinating with non-government agencies, governments, legal, and medical stakeholders to address the different social challenges of learners in school settings;
- Organizing and introducing, in collaboration with educational teams, initiatives, and services aimed at detecting instances of violence or insecurity and removing obstacles to learners' social and academic inclusion;
- Persuading government officials to ensure that students who used the school canteen or Mid Day Meal (MDM) received enough nutritious meals by providing healthier

options so that their health and wellbeing are not jeopardized;

- To ensure inclusive and equal learning, teaching must be undertaken in all parts of the school. Teachers and communities need to be better educated and facilitated. Technology never ensures effective academic environments on its own. Rather, crucial to training teachers in ICT skills is guaranteeing evaluation and pedagogical knowledge necessary to reach learners where they are and to adopt the accelerated curriculum and integrated learning practices that are likely to arise upon their come back to education.
- School social workers must make all efforts with educational leaders and teachers to make e-learning services easily available, accessible, affordable, and equitable and to encourage learners, educators, and families in need, using a variety of network/internet-based communication methods.

Monitoring the educational challenge in the situation specified above involves constant data tracking at the child, families, educator, and school levels. This tracking will require a combination of existing data and evaluation frameworks, as well as possibly new techniques adapted to these particular circumstances. Additionally, specialized supervision would be required for learners who stay in violent environments, disabled students, and children who lack the technological and educational tools needed to manage the crisis effectively at residence. The collaboration of social workers with socio-educational networks, including children, families, schools, community engagement, justice, health, and welfare agencies, is critical in the Covid19 crisis. In the sudden Corona outbreak, many students are in isolation from peer support, and academic resources have been threatened. As a result, the social worker should monitor the child's condition and safeguard his or her well-being on an individualized level. Throughout the practices, all non-presentable activities of children, families, and educators must conform to confidentiality and keep to data security standards. At all levels, professional conduct, a set of ethics, values, law, and professionalism should be upheld.

The Way Ahead

Social workers in collaboration with education leaders, students, educators, parents, caregivers, and families exercised a vital presence in responding to the Covid19 challenge and assumed new roles in an unexplored zone. By involving these shareholders, the educational platform's effectiveness can really be strengthened. Discussion and coordination with all academic leaders and partners – especially educators, students, as well as the already disadvantaged are crucial to the successful integration of strategies and interventions, addressing the expectations of individual students and strengthening the educational platform's sustainability. The Covid19 catastrophe has seen an unimaginable effect on academic milestones. It has slowed progression against academic targets and adversely harmed the poorest and most disadvantaged. The education sector has shown persistence, building the foundations for a revival. There could appear a danger of bearish educational failure and hostility. Nonetheless, each damaging trajectory of worsening socioeconomic status has a lesson for humanity and each pandemic can be overcome with proper plans, policy, collective efforts, and investments.

There is indeed an infinite effort and abundant available resources that can be used for the reconstruction of academia's core expectations, not just its basic services. Government agencies and the global communities must commit to values and implement changes to ensure that not only students and adolescents rebuild their pledged futures and that those educational leaders understand their part in realizing this work. The social catastrophe we are currently facing, as well as the repeated stages of this pandemic, will actually need multi-professional teams to build a specific progressive policy to promote social and educational rebuilding. Thus, social work efforts would be critical in defending human rights, strengthening academic inclusion, and equal opportunity for left-behind school-age children.

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