



COVID-19 Youth Consultation

South India Region (Karnataka)

31 August, 2021

OBJECTIVE

Karnataka Health Promotion Trust, KHPT in collaboration with DASRA and Love Matters India organized an online youth consultation (South India- Karnataka) on 31 August, 2021. The key objective of the Youth Consultation was to hear from young adults about their challenges and coping mechanism during COVID-19. It was also an opportunity to hear their recommendations and demands to the government during this difficult time.

The online session saw participation from 4 organizations and representation from the districts of Kolar, Dakshina Kannada, Bangalore, Chitradurga and Kalburgi. 38 adolescents participated in this webinar (4 from Naz Foundation, 3 from 51AH, 6 from Samvad Baduku organization) and around 25 girls participated from KHPT Koppal. A total of 10 facilitators from KHPT, 1 from Love Matters India and 3 from Dasra India were part of the programme.

A total of 113 participants undertook a pre-consultation survey. Among them 8 were boys and 105 were girls. The participants were asked in the survey to select top 5 feelings which they felt during pandemic.

IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON ADOLESCENTS- 5 KEY FEELINGS



REASONS GIVEN BY ADOLESCENTS

1. "Many people lost their livelihood due to the pandemic and food became a major stressor for their family. Why didn't the government do anything before hand? Many countries were very well prepared but India was not."

2. "We saw many migrants walking several miles to reach homes and some could not even make it because they died on the way. We were unable to do anything and it felt terrible about this."

3. "There was fear all around. COVID had affected everyone and I felt so sad as many girls got married during this time in my village/community. At an age where they should have been getting education, they are married and handling issues like teenage pregnancy thus pushing them again in the same vicious cycle of poverty."

4. "Pressure on adolescents to do household chores, stop studying, work to earn and get married was observed all around."

5. "Several COVID positive patients fell prey to stigma and discrimination. They found it difficult to buy essential items. A person in my village was COVID positive and on knowing this, all their neighbors moved away. We decided to stay but were heavily criticized for doing so and it also became difficult to buy essential items as we were discriminated. Also due to loss of work many families suffered a lot, though we tried distributing dry ration with the limited stock we couldn't reach every family."

6. "We lost contact with our closed ones and were not able to attend any family functions. I missed speaking to them in person."

7. "Many students lost track of their education as they didn't have any devices to attend classes. Many were disappointed thinking about their future and career."

DEALING WITH THE PANDEMIC



Finding courage and sharing coping mechanisms:

"We need to find courage in tough situations and also think that there is a solution for all problems. We don't have any control over any situation but instead of losing hope can move forward with courage and strength. We should stay in touch with our families and friends and share our coping mechanisms with them."



Virtual Learning and Socialising:

"For continuing our education, we can form a WhatsApp group of interested girls and each of the member can take leadership and initiative to teach one subject daily."

"For reducing the communication gap, boredom and sadness, we can connect virtually with friends and share our joys, sorrows and just be there for each other."



Building Skills and Updating Knowledge:

"We should focus more on our studies while being at home and also build our skills. It will keep us engaged in a productive and positive way. We need to talk to different people as it will boost our confidence and increase our general knowledge."



Pursuing Hobbies:

"We need to stop watching TV all the time as it shows negative stories. We need to keep ourselves busy by pursuing our hobbies. Working in the fields feels good as we are surrounded by nature. We need to read books, newspapers and just keep ourselves busy."



Winning Parents' Trust:

"For girls who are facing constant pressure to do household chores and get scolded by parents for reading/talking on phone; they must first try to win the trust of the parents by listening to them. We need to find ways to make them understand that we need to unwind and relax."



Being mentally and physically fit:

"We should focus on health and hygiene and eat properly to build our immune system. Positive thoughts and mind-set are the need of the hour. We need to face the situation bravely and find ways to tide over the problems."

QUESTIONS RAISED BY YOUNG ADULTS



HEALTH

1. Many people especially old are fearing COVID vaccines due to misinformation and many rumors. What we can be done about that specially in a rural context?
2. Is the vaccine effective as most of the people are still getting COVID even after vaccination?
3. Are COVID tests reliable?
4. Is third wave a reality or it is just a rumor to spread fear among masses?



EDUCATION

1. Can there be an alternative to online education? Most of the professors just post a pdf and don't even explain, can it be explained in a more meaningful way?
2. Many children are deprived of gadgets to access education online. Moreover, why the strategies are not designed keeping in mind the socio-economic background of the students?

SUGGESTIONS

HEALTH:

- Fitness should be prioritised. We can use mobile phones to learn dance, Zumba, exercise to keep ourselves fit.
- Yoga instructor has been appointed at PHC (Primary Health centre) level and CHC (Community Health centre) level, they can also help in making people fit.
- Many folk artists/ musicians family children have lost interest in the traditional skills, a good way to spend time is to connect to your roots and learn some of those art and skills during lockdown.
- Although there are counselling centres nothing is working. There should be counselling centre at the district and block level as mental health concerns have amplified for the youth/women/men due to loss of livelihood, violence etc.

LIVELIHOOD:

- Government has provided seeds and fertilizers double the normal rate due to lockdown which upset the farmers and in turn affecting the harvest. It is getting increasingly difficult for families of small and marginal farmers to provide for their family and this will affect their children's education. Poor and vulnerable families should get education free of cost. It gets even more difficult for single parents, children whose parents have died to corona.

EDUCATION:

- Many children are on the verge of drop out due to 2 years of lockdown. The government should make teachers responsible to meet parents of such girls and encourage them to send their kids to schools. This has to be especially done at the high school level. At primary school level, teacher should do house visit as the school are in the same village but high school being only in big villages, sometimes teachers don't do any follow up of students coming from other villages.