

Caring for Adolescent Mental Health during the COVID-19 lockdown

'Happy Mind' - A unique initiative by Salaam Bombay Foundation



It is now widely recognized that among the many negative outcomes of COVID-19 is the impact it had or continuing to have on people's mental health. The impact on children has been even more profound given the disruption in schooling, engaging with classmates and friends, and loss of a typical childhood as they knew it before the pandemic.

In this context, the program of Salaam Bombay Foundation that engaged students through what is called as Happy Mind Calls is innovative and impressive. This brief intervention of one phone call supplemented with other activities such as skill-building, playing games or food relief where needed, appears to have had solid and demonstrable positive impact on children's emotional well-being. The evaluation of the program in collaboration with our team at Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health clearly shows that SBF's calls made the students happy and feel connected. They must have communicated to the children that they matter. And, that someone cares for them.

This is an innovative approach that can be done remotely, easily scalable and impactful. This approach offers an illuminating pathway for working with children not just during the pandemic but to engage them during other times too. I congratulate SBF on developing and executing such as an innovative program that is not only impactful but also serves as a model for others.



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Salaam Bombay Foundation was the first NGO in India to roll-out such timely intervention

Impact of the short term multi-layered interventions by Salaam Bombay Foundation during the COVID-19 pandemic on the well-being of adolescents in Mumbai

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Introduction

In April 2020, Salaam Bombay Foundation started a 'Happy Mind Calls' initiative to promote the social and psychological well-being of adolescents during the COVID-19 lockdown in India (between March-June, 2020).

The Foundation was the first NGO in India to roll-out such timely intervention with a focus on adolescent mental well-being. These comprised of calls from facilitators, skill building activities and food relief.

The Happy Mind Calls impact was evaluated in the form of a quantitative telephonic survey and a qualitative analysis of the audio recordings through the Foundation's dedicated research and M&E vertical.

Objective

To assess the impact of the short term multi-layered interventions by Salaam Bombay Foundation, on the social and psychological wellbeing of adolescents in lockdown, during the COVID-19 pandemic in Mumbai.

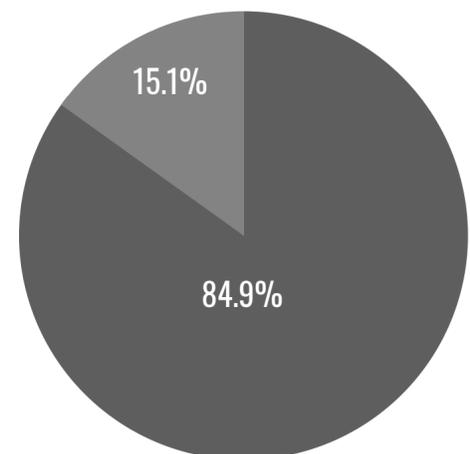
Analysis

Using a survey as an evaluation tool, we assessed the effect of SBF's Happy Mind Calls initiative on the adolescents' social and psychological wellbeing by evaluating their positive emotions, perceived social support, and self-efficacy.

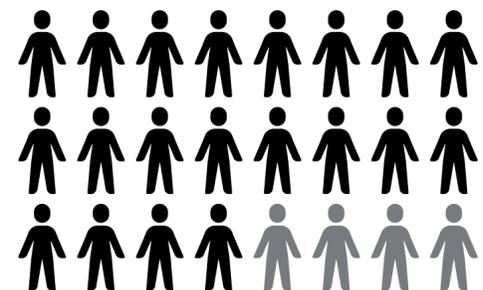
82.5% of the students had a positive response while engaging with the facilitator and 72.1% of the students enjoyed the Happy Mind Call



Majority of students expressed instant willingness to play a game when asked by the facilitator at the start of the call, indicating that they were looking forward to some sort of engagement and entertainment against the backdrop of a lockdown which was isolating for many



94.4% students responded by saying that they enjoyed the activity, and 5.6% students had a neutral response



Conclusion

The study concludes that the Happy Mind Calls were important to bring out the positive emotions and allowed students to express themselves, majority of them being happy to participate. The study also recommended that Happy Minds calls alone may not be enough as the multi-layered interventions of skill-building and food relief along with Happy Minds calls produced the stronger feeling of social support and care. The impact of the overall intervention lasted for almost six months, which speaks of the importance and success of the intervention and that such activities should be carried out in the future as well with a more well planned and holistic approach.

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