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Students' Views and Responses to 'Pariksha Pe Charcha': A Survey in Gujarat State

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Introduction

The entire process of education has become centered on the axis of examination. Many education commissions and committees have criticized the exam-based education process in their reports, yet exams have become so influential in our education process that it is becoming difficult to come out of it. The need of the hour is to focus the education process away from examinations and marks towards student development and culture while the National Education Policy has emphasized on overhauling the entire process of examination.

The 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' program is a program implemented as a movement at the national level, which was conceptualized by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi in 2018. The fear of exams wilts the life of students. Instead, if the exam becomes a joyous festival, there can be a radical change in the attitude of the students towards the exam.

Attitudes of individuals or societies change over time. Seven episodes of the program 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' have been aired. Every student, teacher, policy makers and parents are listening to the 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' program through various media. This can gradually have a positive effect on their mind. Hence, in this initiative, an attempt has been made to know how the program has changed in their attitude towards the examination by directly interacting with the students. This is an attempt to examine the effectiveness of a program with such social and educational relevance through a research study.

Research Review

"Pariksha pe Charcha" is a group counseling program. 'Group counselling is a form of therapy where people with similar experiences or issues come together with a professional therapist.' Survey (2012) Anagbogu defined group counseling as a process of interaction which is done between a large group and a counsellor which intends to develop a healthy attitude and behaviors. It aimed to provide new information and orientation to social, vocational and academic problems. (Anagbogu, 2005). As per the definition of Akpama (2013) and Stephen (2019) gives definition; 'Group counselling is a therapy which occurs between a therapist and a group of people who have the same problems or condition. Another definition given by Ncheke indicates that group counseling is a group of ordinary people who have different concerns who are given complete understanding, care, respect and support to help them learn or unlearn certain attitudes or behaviours. Ncheke (2016).

Counseling is very important as it makes students aware of how they are behaving, how they are dealing with their environment. (Blocher, 2015).

There is a concept of solution based or solution focused counselling. This includes "if it is not broken, do not fix it"; (ii) "if something works, continue with it"; (iii) "if something does not work, do something else" (Meydan, 2013; Sklare, 2010)

In the 'Pariksha pe Charcha' program, apart from the academic aspect other aspects of life were also revealed.

Altundağ, & Bulut, S. (2019) conducted research on the effect of counseling on reducing test anxiety. The results showed that four-session individual psychological counseling based on a brief solution-focused approach was effective in reducing students' test anxiety. Charles (2016) also found that counselling reduces test anxiety among the school students. As per Otakpo C. ; Wike, C. & Ihuoma, J. (2020) it provides possibilities to solve their problems. Similar results were found in Turkey. The counselling was effective in reducing test anxiety (İşlek, 2006; Sarıcı-Bulut, 2010). It is also found that it helps collapse of the student (İlbay, 2014).

Group counselling is also effective in school problems like reducing bullying. (Kvarme, Aabø & Sæteren, 2013). Similar results found in the research of Citemel conducted on High school students. (Çitemel, 2014).

Another researcher found that solution-focused counseling is effective on the mental health of children as well as adolescents. (Franklin, Streeter, Kim & Tripodi, 2007; Franklin, Moore & Hopson, 2008; İşlek, 2006; Selekman, 2010). Kim has conducted meta-analysis on the effect of solution-focused counseling. It is revealed that solution-focused counseling is effective in reducing anxiety and depression (Kim et al., 2015). It also reduces risk taking behaviors of students. (Uysal, 2014)

Devi, Devaki, Madhavan, & Saikumar, P. (2013). has conducted study on the effect of counselling on the academic achievement of the students. The study proved that 93% of the students had found the counselling sessions useful. Further more than 50% (43+13%) students showed improvement in academic performance by 10-25%.

Another study conducted by Oguzie, Alphonsus (2019) revealed that there is improvement in reducing exam malpractices due to group counselling. Further reduction in malpractices is shown more in female students than their male students. Not only that, due to counselling self-confidence and academic performance of the student increases (Ameen, M., & Khan, M. A. (2015)).

From the above research it is found that group counseling is effective in reducing test anxiety and other mental problems. It is also effective in school related behavior problems. It is also revealed that group counseling is very effective. No research has been conducted in the state of Gujarat. The present study will fill the gap by reviewing the effect of group counseling in India.

Methodology

The present study was conducted on the effectiveness of 'Pariksha pe Charcha' a Group counseling program. To study the effectiveness survey has been conducted. To know the effectiveness, students' opinions were considered as a measure. To know students' opinion interviews were taken. On the basis of information obtained by the interview effect of 'Pariksha pe Charcha' was derived.

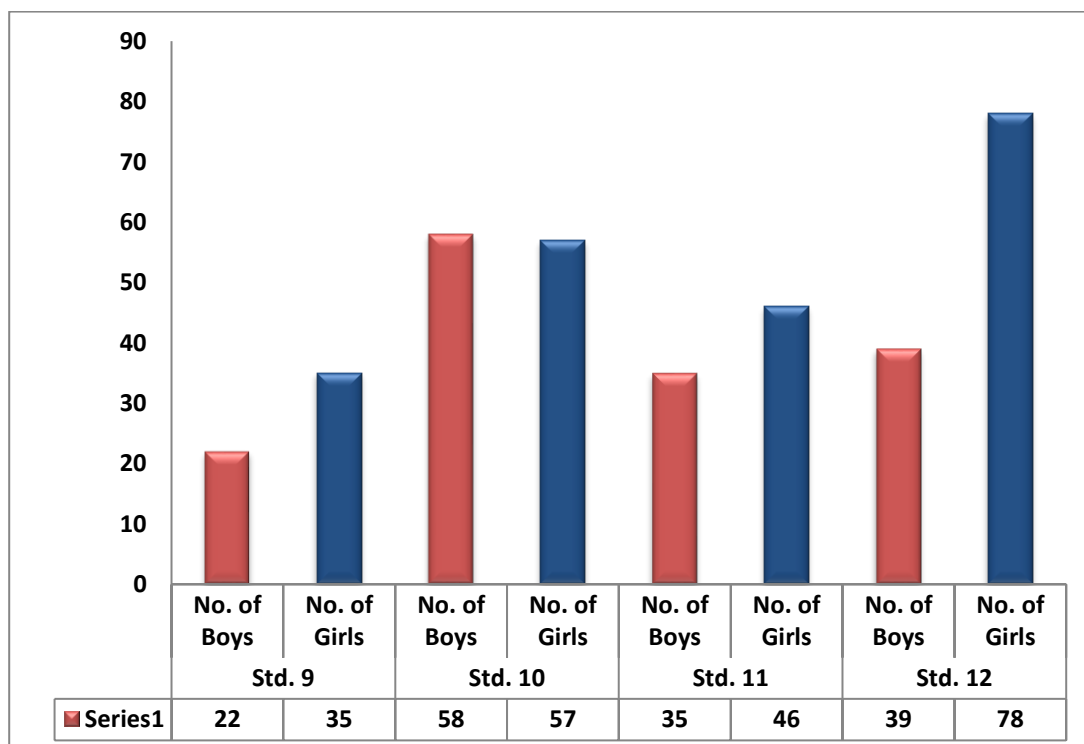
Measure

The researchers used an interview technique for the purpose. To get more detailed and reliable information the researchers have prepared an interview schedule for the data collection. The study involved school students who felt hesitation to give answers so the semi-structured interview was selected. To prepare the interview schedule the researchers have talked with educationists and students to know the background of the study. This formal and informal dialogue with such stakeholders have created conceptual clarity regarding the central theme of the study. Ten questions were included as close-ended questions. There were two questions which sought open-ended answers.

Participants

'Pariksha Pe Charcha' is watched all over India. Students of Gujarat are also watching this program very enthusiastically. The researchers have collected responses from students of secondary schools in every district, corporation and union territory of Gujarat. The selection of these schools was done on a case-by-case basis considering the convenience of viewing the program and the number of students. Most of the schools with higher numbers of students were considered. So that responses of diverse students can be found.

Responses were received from students of a total of 43 schools. A total of 370 students gave their responses in the survey. Below is a graphical presentation of what kind of students is included in these students.



In the sample number of students of class 11 and 12 (198) were more, next was secondary school students (172) were included next. Number of girls was higher (216). Thus, students of class 11 and 12 were more serious regarding exam and among them girls were more alert and serious about the exam.

Data Analysis and interpretation

The researchers have collected responses from the students and calculated descriptive statistics for analysis of the data. The percentage of responses 'yes' and 'no' was calculated. On the basis of the percentage and graph interpretation is carried out.

An analysis of the answers to these total 10 closed-ended and 2 open-ended questions is given below.

A. Analysis and Interpretation of Quantitative Data

Statement wise responses of the students were analyzed. In the response for statement 1 367 (99.19%) students responded positively which shows that students feel stress free after watching the program. Statement No 2 was related to the approach of students towards examination. 359 (97.03%) students responded positively to the statement. It can be said that

the program has created a positive shift in perception to examination which can lead them to stress free examination. Statement No: 3 deals with the confidence of students in the context of examination. 369 (99.73%) students showed an increase in their confidence towards the examination. This is a very important outcome of such group counseling techniques. One question was posed regarding a book written on the examination. The researcher has asked this question to know whether the students are using any means to reduce their stress and build up their confidence for examination? In this regard 236 (63.78 %) students responded that they have not read this book. It can be said that they are not aware of this book. Question No: 6 was a very important one. This question was related with the activities related with holistic development activities or strategies. 360 (97.30 %) students said that they became aware of such activities which can contribute to their development. This shows that the program not only leads students towards stress free examination but also builds their approach towards holistic personality development, which is a very important aspect for student life. Question no: 7 was related to the goal of life. The question framed in such a way that can reveal the approach of students towards examination. 357 (96.49%) students responded that they now understand that examination is not an ultimate goal of life. Examination is just a way or tool and not a destination. The program has created such understanding in the mind of the students which is very fruitful for students' progress. Question No 8 was related to the identity of the self. Without knowing one's own strength and weakness one cannot be successful in life. The program has some dialogues and discussion which has such implications. The program has put emphasis on self-analysis. 365 (98.65%) students showed a positive response and accepted that they have evaluated themselves. Question No 9 was related to the expectation towards the program. This question was asked to know the overall feeling of the students for the program. 359 (97.03%) students responded that they expect that the program will fulfill their expectations to solve their examination related issues. This shows that the students have hope with this program. This also depicts the positive perceptions towards the program. Question 10 deals with the fear of the examination. 361 (97.57%) students convinced that due to the program they can convert their fear into confidence to victory in the examination. The fear of the examination is the key reason for failure in the examination. The program has created such an ecology which can help students to abolish their fear of examinations and it can be said that this is a key achievement of the program.

B. Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data

Benefits of the program as per respondent

Two open-ended questions were asked to the students during the interview about the experiences of the 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' programme. The first question is "Have you benefited from this program in any other way apart from the above?" was asked. Students answered this question in different ways. By analyzing these answers, the feelings, expressions and perceptions of the student about this program have been derived.

To analyze the qualitative data content analysis card has been developed. In the analysis positive words were derived like; positive, encouraging, career, balance, support, warmth. This shows the positive impact of the program. Out of which the most expressed word was 'positive'. Based on this, it can be said that the 'Pariksha pe Charcha' program is positively evaluated by most of the students. From the analysis some other words were also derived like; balance, warmth, help, values, trust, encouragement, health. It also paints a positive picture of the program. Apart from the words, statements were also derived from the answers given by the students. Total 24 sentences were derived. From content analysis the researchers have derived four major components which are the crux of the sentences derived.

The components are pre-exam concerns, during-exam concerns, personal and other life-related matters.

Pre-exam concerns: In the pre exam concerns students learned how to utilize time properly. According to the students, they developed a positive attitude before and during the examination. In today's age of technology, handwriting might seem like it is starting to be marginalized. The guidance about the importance of writing more than that of reading was given. Students understand that continuous reading is not that much important? One should take a break and should do some other activities.

During the exam:- As per the responses of the students, they became aware of; paper writing is like reading the entire paper, writing from easy to difficult, how to choose a pen, how to write, how to maintain courage etc.

Personal Concerns:- In personal matters, physical health related matters and mental health matters were also learned. In mental health, students said that they experienced things like stress relief, warmth, relief from confusion, relief from anxiety, due to the program. Students also said that things like not to be frustrated, not to panic also were effective conversations. Also, the students said that they learned not to be disappointed with the result and the exam is not the ultimate goal of life, which was motivational for them.

Students also learned the importance of health at the time of exam and overall. Apart from this, the students were inspired to develop the habit of working hard. At the same time, the students' minds were strengthened by this program. Special girls said that such a program increases the support that the girls get from the home.

Life related matters:- Students learned a lot about life. The students said that they learn; how to earn the trust of parents, and to consider a friend as a friend and not a competitor. The students also got strength to develop some values like brotherhood, friendship, honesty, hard work, and cooperation from this program. Students also learned the importance of co curricular activities, apart from books, through this program. Students have a lot of anxiety regarding career but after this program their anxiety was reduced. Through this program, they realized that they should develop decision-making power to move forward in their lives.

Nowadays, young people spend a lot of time on social media. According to the students, they were inspired to use social media judiciously, as well as take initiative to use it for education, through the program.

Other expectations of respondent regarding this program

Students were asked whether they expected any other guidance from the program. Some suggestions were found in response to this question which are as follows.

- A program for career guidance
- A program regarding parents' expectations from the children
- Organizing separate programs for parents
- Program on stress relief measures
- Guidance on staying focused while reading
- Method of writing a paper
- What to do during the exam hall
- Guidance regarding exam preparation
- Guidance on Mobile Destruction
- Confidence building program
- Increase the frequency of the program
- To plan that every student can take benefit from this program

The above points are arranged according to their weightage. Most students expected career guidance. Second weightage is given to Parents' expectation regarding guidance. Among the remaining points, students were expected to be guided on each and every aspect of the exam like its preparation, paper writing method and things to keep in mind in the exam hall.

Discussion and Conclusion

A lot of benefits of this program were found by the responses regarding the 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' program. It is found that in this program very important aspects are covered. The students felt a lot of relief in anxiety. Research of Altundağ, & Bulut, S. (2019), Charles (2016), İşlek, 2006; Sarıcı-Bulut, 2010, & Kim et al., 2015)) showed the same result. It is found they get relief in the matter of frustration; a similar result was also found in the research of (İlbay, 2014) in which it is noted that counseling helps in the collapse of the students. Program is also benefited from exam fear, stress, frustration etc. This goes with the results of (Franklin, Streeter, Kim & Tripodi, 2007; Franklin, Moore & Hopson, 2008; İşlek, 2006; Selekman, 2010). The number of positive responses was very high (99 % to 96%). In the research of Devi, Devaki, Madhavan, & Saikumar, P. (2013) a similar percentage (93%) of positive responses was found.

They learn positive things like motivation, self-confidence. Their attitude towards the exam is being gradually changed. The students felt that they should treat the examination as a festival or an opportunity. The students also get guidance regarding exam preparation, strategies for preparation, approach towards competition, friendship and stress management. Not only students but also parents and teachers got guidance.

The program was about exam discussion but also, they got guidance regarding preparation for life. Research of Otakpo et al. (2020) also indicated that counseling gave insight to solve the problems. In which the students got to know things like values education, physical health, overall development and got inspired to implement them. Students feel relaxed by this program on the day before the prelim exam, their minds were enlivened. Overall, the program imparted knowledge along with positivity. The success of this program can be gauged from these things.

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