



SARS-CoV-2 - Health Education through Virtual Awareness Programme (VAP) for School Children

**Sreeshyla Huchanahalli Sheshanna^a, Sushma Rudraswamy^{b*}
and Seema Deshmukh^c**

^a Department of Oral Pathology and Microbiology, JSS Dental College & Hospital, JSS AHER, Mysuru, 570015, India.

^b Department of Public Health Dentistry, JSS Dental College & Hospital, JSS AHER, Mysuru, India.

^c Department of Pedodontics, JSS Dental College & Hospital, JSS AHER, Mysuru, 570015, India.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Authors SHS and SD managed the literature searches and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors SHS and SR prepared the manuscript. Author SHS performed conception of ideas. Author SR edited the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

Open Peer Review History:

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/90237>

Short Communication

**Received 10 June 2022
Accepted 12 August 2022
Published 20 October 2022**

ABSTRACT

SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has created havoc globally and negatively influenced the lives of children, particularly. Lockdowns and social distancing have brought down the closure of the institutions providing educational facilities. However, technological advances have been utilized extensively to bridge the gaps in the education system during this pandemic. It is also essential to impart knowledge to the children regarding the present pandemic and the etiquette to be followed to control the rapid outburst of the disease. The technology can be used to impart this knowledge to the children using the proposed Virtual Awareness Program (VAP). This program would be aimed at creating awareness among the children regarding the present pandemic so that they would be well equipped to manage to anticipate changes.

Keywords: SARS-CoV-2; virtual awareness programme (VAP); health education; school children.

1. INTRODUCTION

SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has created a distressing situation worldwide. Despite the extensive research, advancements in the medical and pharmaceutical fields, vaccination, and a wide array of treatment modalities, it has become a significant challenge to curb this menace. The rapid genetic mutations in the virus are the real challenge. However, the brighter side of this threat is the availability of Covid-appropriate behavior protocols such as wearing the mask, adequate sanitization, social distancing, and avoiding touching face, mouth, and eyes. A good follow-up of this basic etiquette can reduce the spread and acquisition of this disease.

One of the worst affected sections of the population of this pandemic is the children, who are at the crucial age of their physical and mental development [1]. Their education and all the recreational activities are affected. Currently, the debate is on the role of children in the transmission of disease and its implication for school closures/openings. Newly found mutated genomic sequence of Delta Plus variant may affect children [2]. In fact, delay in children's immunization is a worldwide fear due to a lack of vaccine trial approvals. With the next wave being anticipated to affect the children, coupled with the unknown vaccination status among them, it pushes them into a real danger zone [3]. It is time to be extra precarious regarding this section.

The current situation urges an emergency action plan to prevent the spread of disease. Much information is available on Covid-19 and is communicated through social media, with most of it being non-authenticated [4]. Government authorities and several organizations are educating the public through numerous platforms. However, most of this health education is targeted toward the general population — not children specifically. Frequently, there is a lack in providing comprehensive and educational materials suitable for children. Even though there is a lot of alertness about COVID-19, we do not have sufficient child-friendly resources to help children comprehend the circumstances. Though children copy behavior from parents, they are not prepared with a genuine thoughtfulness of changes required for the present scenario, possibly resulting in misperception, anxiety, and gaps in sanitation or public etiquette [5]. To enhance adult communications effectively and

increase child acquiescence, it is urgently necessary to create a suitable and engaging health and public safety instruction aimed at youngsters.

Virtual platforms are now essential for all forms of communication, and they have also opened up opportunities for the development of more adaptable learning strategies that make greater use of online courses and digital explanations. Present-day education has become virtual, with all the teachers and school children adapting well to this new mode of teaching and learning. "Concerning virtual learning, studies reflect that the internet can be an essential pedagogical means for students, especially underserved students, to provide unavailable resources and sources of information in developing countries" [6]. Additionally, according to a study by Karakara and Osabouhien (2019), "ICTs Access gap in wealth could also impair the probability of children obtaining a fully satisfying education." To continue learning from home, Online platforms have often been the first to enable children; indeed, they are usually the most active learning modality in getting some form of knowledge [7].

Hence Virtual Awareness Programme (VAP) can be an excellent stage to educate young minds with good assimilative capabilities regarding the present SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. (Table 1) Educating them will be easier. They will apply all the essential preventive protocols upon learning, which may bring a drastic socio-behavioral change. Creating awareness will help children to protect themselves in the current pandemic. They can be thought regarding the preventive measures to be followed, sanitization etiquette, healthy habits, nature of the disease, social responsibilities, and social responsibility of their elders. Basic details on the symptoms, consequences, mode of transmission, and prevention of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Reliable sources of information on COVID-19 include advice from the national health ministry, WHO, and UNICEF. Through VAP awareness can be created regarding fake information/myths that may circulate by word-of-mouth or online [8].

Additionally, knowledgeable children can be change representatives for their family, community, and beyond. With the world going digital due to the current pandemic, the virtual model is the best mode for bringing this positive change.

Table 1. VAP can be used for orienting the children with the following topics

Modes of transmission and risks of infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sneezing, Coughing, Talking, ▪ Touching the infected surfaces ▪ Contacting the infected person
Preventive Protocols for SARS Co V -2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clean your hands often with soap and water or a hand rub. ▪ Maintain a safe distance from anyone who is coughing or sneezing. ▪ Wear a mask always. ▪ Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. ▪ Cover your nose and mouth with your bent elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing. ▪ Stay home if you feel unwell. ▪ If you have a fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention.
Protocols to be followed by a sick individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you feel sick, you should rest, drink plenty of fluid, and eat nutritious food. • Stay in a separate room from other family members, and use a dedicated bathroom if possible. • Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. • Everyone should keep a healthy lifestyle at home. Maintain a nutritious diet, sleep, stay active, and make social contact with loved ones through the phone or internet. • Keep to regular routines and schedules as much as possible. • Feeling sad, stressed, or confused during a crisis is normal. • Talking to people you trust, such as friends and family, can help. • If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counselor
Importance of vaccination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance of vaccination in prevention against disease acquisition and progression

Cartoons and animation can be made to teach kids how to stay safe and protect their loved ones by utilising creative and innovative problem-solving techniques. Short information videos encourage students to become agents of change by helping alter attitudes and behavior and putting measures to protect themselves, their friends, and their community into practice. Information pamphlets could come in handy for the teachers to sensitize children.

Precautions constructed in an acronym, interestingly the name of the place from where it was originated: WUHAN [9] –

- W - Washing hands often,
- U - Use masks properly,
- H - Have temperature checked regularly,
- A - Avoid large crowds,
- N - Never touch face without washing hands

“At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO estimates that 91.3% of the world’s students were learning remotely, with 194 governments ordering country-wide closures of

their schools and more than 1.3 billion students learning in online classrooms” [10].

2. CONCLUSION

VAP can be an accessible and effective program that not only provides an opportunity for children to learn from their houses but also helps chase away their fear regarding SARS CoV-2. It is time to evolve numerous such programs for children including in local languages, to educate and eradicate the current SARS-CoV-19 pandemic.

CONSENT

It is not applicable.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES

1. Araújo LA, Veloso CF, Souza MC, Azevedo JM, Tarro G. The potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on child growth and development: A systematic review. *J Pediatr (Rio J)*; 2020.
DOI: 10.1016/j.jped.2020.08.008.
2. Verd S, López-García M. Debates Around the Role of School Closures in the Coronavirus 2019 Pandemic. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2021;175(1):106-107.
3. Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19: Annex to considerations in adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID19; 14 September 2020.
Available:WHO/2019nCoV/Adjusting_PH_measures/Schools/2020.2
4. Rahul De', Pandey N, Pal A. Impact of digital surge during Covid-19 pandemic: A viewpoint on research and practice. *Int J Inf Manage.* 2020;55:
DOI: 10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102171.
5. Gray DJ., Kurscheid J., Mationg ML, Williams GM, Gordon C, Kelly M, et al. Health-education to prevent COVID-19 in schoolchildren: a call to action. *Infect Dis Poverty.* 2020;9:81.
6. Levin D, Arafeh S. The Digital Disconnect: The Widening Gap between Internet-Savvy Students and Their Schools. *USDLA Journal,* 2002;16(10).
7. Karakara, Osabouhien. Households ICT access and educational vulnerability of children in Ghana. *Cogent Social Science;* 2019.
8. Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools March 2020 ,WHO Publications.
Available:https://who.int
9. Awareness Campaign on COVID-19: Coronavirus website.
Accessed on 1st Nov 2021.
Available:https://srmap.edu.in/awareness-campaign-covid-19-coronavirus.
10. Six Online Activities to Help Students Cope with COVID-19 website.
Accessed on 4th August 2022.
Available:https://greatergood.berkeley.edu

© 2022 Sheshanna et al.; This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Peer-review history:

*The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
<https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/90237>*