

Assessment of Knowledge, Attitude, Awareness and Impact of Blue Whale Challenge: A Psychosocial Study from Odisha

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Abstract: The World Health Organisation in its new global health estimates on depression for 2015 said over five crore Indians suffered from depression, a major contributor to global suicides. Now a new paradigm of depression is self-destructive online game so called Blue Whale challenge. Recently, Supreme Court (SC) of India ordered to maximise awareness programmes, as it is impossible to stop online deadly games, because it is not based on any application. To addressing this issue, it is vital for both children and their parents to aware of the lethal games. In the present study a modest attempt has been made to examine knowledge, attitude, awareness and impact of self-destructive online games like Blue Whale challenge among the people of Odisha. A qualitative case study approach has been employed among six victims of Blue Whale challenge from different parts of Odisha for an intensive study. Subsequently, a survey was conducted among school students and households to ascertain the attitude, awareness and its impacts. Results reveal that because of curiosity, many students are trying to goggle out the game even after implementing awareness programmes.

Keywords- Attitude, Awareness, Blue Whale, Game, Knowledge

Date of Submission: 05-12-2017

Date of acceptance: 19-12-2017

I. INTRODUCTION

With advent of progress in internet communication and online gaming, the use of internet has increased considerably amongst adolescents^[1]. The utilization has risen to such an extent that it has become pathological and 'Internet Gaming Disorder' has been included in the latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) as a condition meriting further research^[2]. Though there is ample evidence stating the psychological consequences of playing online games and getting 'hooked to them', taking one's life or committing suicide presents the extreme behaviour of an adolescent perplexed with the online challenge. The online and WhatsApp game market is flourishing rapidly. Games on death or dying are available for children such as Dumb ways to Die, Die in 100 ways, 1000 ways to die in a circle, Kill yourself, etc. Some may be for fun but title of games sound threatening^[3]. There is whole lot of deadly games (like choking game, huffing, car surfing etc.) that the teens are playing today. The latest addition to this list is a game known as "Blue Whale Challenge". This sinister online game, brainwashes the players particularly young children, into committing suicide. In other words the scopes of the present study not only sticks to Blue Whale challenge but also every suicidal game. A Google Trends report of the last 12 months shows that India has seen the highest number of searches related to the Blue Whale Challenge in the world^[4]. Recently central government of India also reported to SC that removing all the links of online deadly games from internet is impossible and judging by this issue, SC suggest extending the awareness among schools. Also, many institutes have come forward to create awareness, but still it seems uncontrolled.

There is no definitive supporting literature related to my study. And no researchers have been conducted regarding online lethal games like Blue Whale challenge in Odisha. The vital purpose of the study is to examine knowledge, attitude, awareness and impact of self-destructive online games among people of Odisha.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study involved the utilization of various tools for information assimilation. Major data were collected through primary sources with the help of discussion, observation, schedules and interview method. All the schedules are developed and extensive field work was conducted in the different parts of Odisha for collection of data. Additional information was collected from secondary sources through discussion, newspapers, internet and websites. Analyses of data were done by using SPSS and Microsoft Excel software.

A survey was conducted among school students (n=356) and household members (n=44) to ascertain the attitude, awareness and its impacts. The students were selected randomly and the households were selected

purposefully accordingly the availability of Blue Whale challenge victims. Subsequently, a qualitative case study approach has been employed among six victims of Blue Whale challenge from different parts of Odisha for an intensive study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Awareness of Blue Whale Game

To verify the awareness of Blue Whale challenge 406 subjects were included. Among them 6 individuals are victims of Blue Whale game and 44 subjects are parents and remaining 356 are students. Numerically, over all 349 (85.96%) of the subjects were aware of the game where as 57 (14.04%) of them are not heard about the game.

Table-1: Frequency and Distribution of Awareness of Blue Whale Game.

Have you ever heard of Blue Whale game?	Yes		No		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Victims (n=6)	6	100	0	0	6	100
Parents (n=44)	32	72.73	12	27.27	44	100
Students (n=356)	311	87.36	45	12.64	356	100
Total (n=406)	349	85.96	57	14.04	406	100

Table-2, explores the awareness of other self-destructive games apart from Blue Whale challenge. As comparing to Blue Whale challenge other online killer games are very less known to people. It was found that only 5.17% of the samples were aware about other deadly games.

Table-2: Frequency and Distribution of Awareness of lethal online games other than Blue Whale Game.

Have you ever heard any name of deadly online games other than Blue Whale challenge?	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
Victims (n=6)	2	33.33	4	66.67
Parents (n=44)	3	6.82	41	93.18
Students (n=356)	16	4.49	340	95.51
Total (n=406)	21	5.17	385	94.83

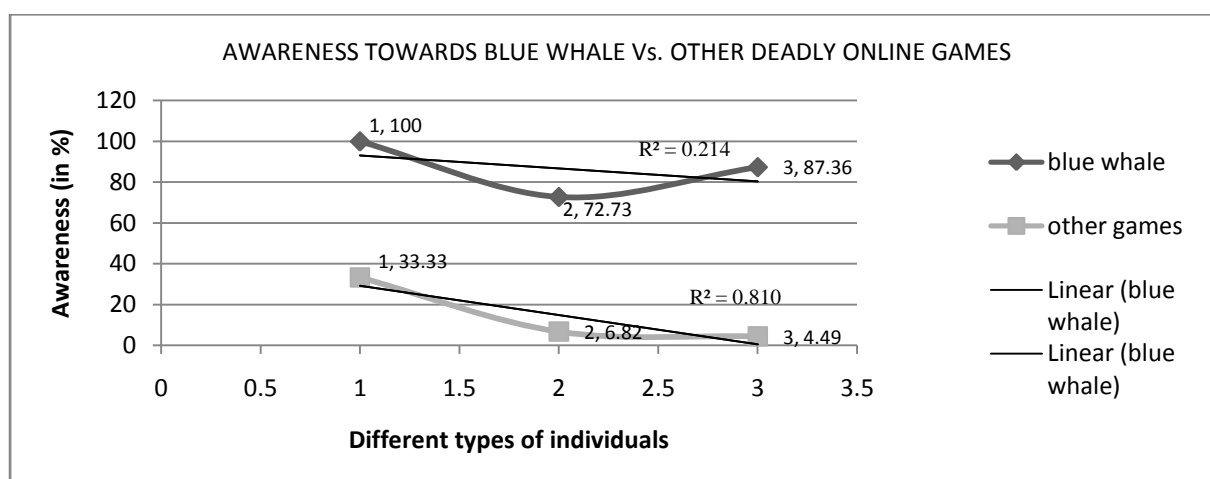


Fig-1: Awareness of Blue Whale as compare to other games.

By analysing the above graph (Fig-1), it is clear that understanding level of both Blue Whale and other harmful games are higher in victims than other individuals. R^2 value is very less in case of Blue Whale game, which implies awareness level is not uniformly distributed among different individuals i.e. it deviates individuals to individuals in a large extent. When R^2 value is as closer to 1, there is a better fit of the regression line.

The onset of awareness of Blue Whale game among the subjects in the sample is presented in Table-3. By analysing the data it explores that most of the individuals i.e. 50.49% of the total subjects had known about Blue Whale game before 1 to 2 months.

Table-3: Frequency and Distribution of Extent of Blue Whale Game.

Time period (t)	Frequency	Percentage
t ≤ 15 days ago	46	13.18
15 days < t < 1 month	91	26.07
1 month ≤ t < 2 months	205	51.58
2 months and above	32	9.17
Total	349	100.00

Several sources were generally indicated by the subjects in relating the original source of awareness of Blue Whale game. It was found that a large number of the subjects learned of Blue Whale online game from television news channels. Awareness programmes implemented in school level also show satisfactory results. The source of awareness about the game was described in table-4.

Table-4: Frequency and Distribution of Sources of Awareness of Blue Whale Game

Source of learning	Frequency	Percentage
Television	124	35.52
News paper	17	4.87
Internet and social media	10	2.87
Friend	48	13.75
Parents	35	10.03
School awareness programme	108	30.95
Others	7	2.01
Total	349	100.00

Knowledge, Attitude and Resultant Impact of Online Games

To assess the knowledge and attitude among people this section was categorised in two parts. In the first part the survey was conducted among the students of several schools and colleges randomly, and in the second part a survey was carried out among households and taken the opinions of the parents in a non-probable sampling method, which described in table-5 and table-6 respectively. The impact factors of Blue Whale game are described partially through case studies.

Table-5: Frequency and Distribution of Knowledge and Attitude towards Blue Whale Game among students.

Sl. No.	Questions and statements (n=356)	Yes		No	
		Number	%	Number	%
1.	Have you tried to download the Blue Whale game?	128	35.96	228	64.04
2.	Have you tried to download the game after the awareness programme in your school?	78	21.91	278	78.09
3.	Have you tried to download the game before the awareness programme?	50	14.04	306	85.96
4.	Have you got any link to download the game?	8	2.25	348	97.75
5.	Should not play killer games like Blue Whale etc.	356	100.00	0	0
6.	Don't want to play any mobile games	154	43.26	202	56.74
7.	Should not use internet without any knowledge.	333	93.54	23	6.46
8.	Students should create awareness among their friends as well as others.	356	100	0	0

Table-5: Frequency and Distribution of Knowledge and Attitude towards Blue Whale Game among parents.

Sl. No.	Statement (n=44)	Strongly Agree=1		Slightly Agree=2		Slightly Disagree=3		Strongly Disagree=4	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1.	Creating awareness among children about Blue Whale and any other lethal games is the duty of parents.	44	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
2.	Creating awareness among children about Blue Whale and any other lethal games is the duty of mothers.	0	0	24	54.54	10	22.73	10	22.73

3.	Father should give information regarding the online game to their offspring.	3	6.82	25	56.82	9	20.45	7	15.91
4.	Any depression observed among your Childs	5	11.36	7	15.91	8	18.18	24	54.55
5.	Smart phones should not be provided to school going children.	41	93.18	0	0	3	6.82	0	0
6.	Parents should spend times with their children.	44	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
7.	Strict parenting should require to solve this issue	2	4.55	4	9.09	11	25.00	27	61.36
8.	If depression found among the offspring, then should be consult with psychiatrist.	44	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
9.	Awareness programmes made by government is enough	3	6.82	22	50.00	12	27.27	7	15.91

IV. CASE STUDIES

The 1st case study was carried out on an engineering student. He is a 20 year old boy from Cuttack. He is pursuing his B. Tech in a private engineering college in Cuttack. One of his friend tweets in social media that his friend playing ‘Blue Whale challenge’ over nights, as a result of which his family member able to rescue him from his hostel room. He was completed up to 10th level of the game. The victim told that he was instructed to play the game over night, stay awake and paint the body etc. I found many scratches all over his body. During my conversation I felt that he is psychologically depressed.

In the 2nd case study a 15 year old boy was taken. He is in class-X from Binjharpur, Jajpur district of Odisha. This boy has been playing ‘Blue Whale challenge’ since last one month. As he reported, after signs up for the game, he was instructed to harm himself in many ways until he was caught by his school teacher. His hand was scratched with a Blue Whale figure. According to his parents, he was instructed to cut his neck the day before he was exposed.

The 3rd case study was very astonished; here the victim is a 10 year old boy in class-IV from Baleswar district. He was just able to download the game and caught by his parents at his initial level of the game. It is found that he was playing along with his two more friends.

The 4th case study was carried out on a student of an Industrial Training Institute (ITI) was admitted to hospital for his alleged involvement with the deadly online Blue Whale Challenge game. On getting information from the principal of the government-run institution about the abnormal behaviour of the student, police rescued the student. The youth, who hailed from Jaleswar, was staying in a private accommodation. Some of his friends observed sudden changes in his behaviour for a couple of days and informed the principal about it.

The 5th case study was carried out on a 14 year girl from Jeypore, who is in 9th standard. She told that after watching about the Blue Whale game on TV, he tried to down load the game from a link. She was also caught in her initial level of the game by her school teachers. Some scratches were found on her stomach portion.

The 6th case study was carried on a 36 year’s old married male from Mangalpur village of Kendrapara district. He was married before 8 years ago and his qualification is 8th class. Initially, he was instructed to consume alcohol and take his own blood. Then the victim was tried to commit suicide by cutting his stomach by a kitchen knife and eating organic materials. He was rescued by his family members and admitted in headquarter hospital, Kendrapara.

By analysing the case studies and the data given in above tables it is clear that instructions given by the admin were different for different individuals. First of all the admin may be tried to examine the players’ mind then accordingly provide instruction regarding the game. And it is clear that normal and matured individuals’ have very little chance to influence by the game. The interesting fact is that all most all the victims had played the game after knowing its consequences from TV, newspapers or school awareness programmes. Where, the awareness programmes were made by different institutes with an aim to protect and get away from the lethal games, but simultaneously it creates curiosity among the teenage individuals, which lead them to play the self-destructive games. In other words, sometimes awareness programmes are putting negative impact on adolescents’ psychology.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The "Blue Whale" suicide challenge is a national problem, Supreme Court^[5]. The court also said state-run broadcaster Doordarshan and private TV channels must use prime time slots to spread awareness about the deadly game. Many organisations have come forward to prevent the Blue Whale challenge. Some initiatives have been taken by the government. The government has directed the internet and social media giants Google, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Microsoft and Yahoo to immediately remove the links of the Blue Whale Challenge game. Guidelines for 'Safe and Effective Use of Internet and Digital Technologies in Schools and School Buses' by Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) have been issued to 18000 schools across the country. Six other initiatives include sensitization of students, teachers and parents regarding the judicious use of internet and social media within the academic realms^[3]. Unfortunately correction actions start late when some casualties have already happened and still so many cases regarding online deadly games are coming on daily basis.

We need to develop mechanism to find out if similarly kind of games are existing or not and what needs to be done to those which are under process of development. As result reveal that people have a very poor awareness of other deadly online games, therefore, more awareness should be spread regarding the self-destructives online games by observing and exploring it's all the dimensions by further research.

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IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) is UGC approved Journal with Sl. No. 5070, Journal no. 49323.

Basanta Kumar Bindhani "Assessment of Knowledge, Attitude, Awareness and Impact of Blue Whale Challenge: A Psychosocial Study from Odisha." *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. vol. 22 no. 12, 2017, pp. 22-26.