Impact of Covid-19 on Students' Academic Pursuits

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Anushka Keshari
Research Scholar, Faculty of Commerce, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi
Prof. H. K. Singh
Faculty of Commerce, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

Abstract

The global pandemic COVID-19 has impacted all the fields of whole world and India is also no exception of this impact. The education sector is one of the mostly affected sector in India because of nationwide lockdown for preventing the spread of COVID-19. Due to lockdown offline classes of all the educational institutions was suspended. To keep educational sector functional, the application of technology has been considered the only alternative but India is not fully equipped with all the digital resources required for conducting online classes. Hence this study has conducted to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on the studies of students and for this, data has collected through online questionnaire. According to the findings, 68.8% respondents feel that COVID-19 has impacted their studies negatively and most of the students have not knowledge about the major initiative that government has taken to provide better learning through digital platforms.

Introduction

The first case of COVID-19 was found in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and on 11 February 2020, WHO named this virus as covid-19, which is an acronym for corona virus disease 2019. WHO characterizes COVID-19 as a global pandemic on 11 march 2020 and after observing COVID-19 pandemic scenario, WHO suggested to keep up social distancing as the first prevention step. In India, The first case of COVID-19 was reported on 30 January 2020 (Wikipedia). The impact of COVID-19 can be seen in every field of the whole world and India is also not untouched by its impact, To prevent the COVID-19 from spreading, the government ordered a nationwide lockdown on 24 march 2020, because of which school, colleges and universities were remained closed and this disrupted the traditional education system. Classes suspended and all the examinations of educational institutions including entrance exams were postponed indeterminately. According to UNESCO report, more than 157 crore students across 191 countries strongly impacted by closure of educational institutions and in India more than 32 crore students have been affected by various restrictions and nationwide lockdown. Educational institutions have made strenuous efforts to maintain learning continuity during this period and this efforts of educational institutions shifted traditional education system towards online education system through digital resources. Although the adoption of online education is key to ensure the continuity of education but students are facing many problems in coping up with this situation because every student is not well equipped with all the digital resources to continue education in India. Even several advanced educational institutions are not well equipped with all the digital facilities to sudden change and move towards online education. So this switch from traditional education to online education is likely to impact negatively to the students and also this situation may aggravate existing educational inequalities. Students are facing lots of problems in adapting new learning environment and new way of learning like lack of motivation to study, time management issue, spend more time on screen, uncertainty about future etc. The spread of COVID-19 also caused fear, anxiety and different concern among students. In addition to the circumstances caused by social isolation and different personal factors, parents' concerns are assumed to have been influenced by their unpreparedness to assist their children in online learning, lack of access to the necessary technology and the Internet, or the inadequacy of the technological formats used for children with special educational needs and economic difficulties (UNESCO 2020) In spite of many challenges in execution, some advantages have been recognized in the need to shift to online learning, among which stands out the opportunity

for rapid progress in the field of digital education, which, in other circumstances, would take years (Lurvnik 2020). So this paper is an attempt to shed light on the impact of COVID-19 on the studies of students in their perspective. For this purpose, 160 students of class 9th to graduation were surveyed through online questionnaire. Questions were asked to the students to know the experiences of them regarding the affect of COVID-19 on their studies.

Objectives of the Study

This research paper is focused on the subsequent objectives:-

1. To analyze the impact of COVID-19 on the studies of students in their perspective.
2. To analyze the knowledge of students about the major initiatives taken by government to provide better learning during COVID.
3. To gather the information regarding the experiences of online classes of students.

Review of Literature

There are many research have done related to the impact of COVID-19 on education in India and all over the world, the following are some major literature about this-

Pravat kumar, Impact of pandemic COVID-19 on education in India, concluded that though COVID-19 has created many challenges but several opportunities are also evolved. Even if India is not fully equipped with all the resources required to make education reach all the corners of the nation but the government and educational institutions have discovered the possibility of open and distance learning through different digital technologies to cope up with this COVID pandemic. According to this article, the negative impact of COVID-19 are educational activity hampered, negative impact on employment, unprepared teachers and students for online education etc. There are also some positive impact like education move towards blended learning, enhance the use of soft copy of learning material, improvement in collaborative work etc.

Social isolation and new situation created against the spread of COVID-19, including changes in education, generated a number of problems and concern for children, parents and teacher in Kosovo. In spite of the declared changes and concerns, the early implementation of online learning has been confirmed to have been positively assessed during this period, keeping students engaged and distracting them from the pandemic (Zamira Heseni and Linda Hoxha, 2020).

Di Pietro et al. 2020, The likely impact of COVID-19 on education: Reflections based on the existing literature and recent international datasets, concluded and given four main conclusions, First, students learning is anticipated to suffer a setback on an average, In spite of widespread shift to online teaching, student progress will not be same as if schools were open. Second, the impact of COVID-19 on students' accomplishment is likely to vary according to socio-economic status. Third, during this pandemic period inequality in socio-emotional skills may also increase, and fourth, the widening social gap in both cognitive and socio-emotional skills caused by COVID-19 may have implications in the short-term as well as in the long-term.

Esteban M. Aucejo et al. 2020, The Impact of COVID-19 on Student Experiences and Expectations: Evidence from a Survey, surveyed 1,500 students at Arizona State University and presented quantitative evidence that showing the negative impacts of the pandemic on students' outcomes and expectations. , They found that 13% of students have delayed graduation due to COVID-19 and showed that the impacts of COVID are highly heterogeneous, with lower-income students 55% more likely to delay graduation compared to their higher-income counterparts.
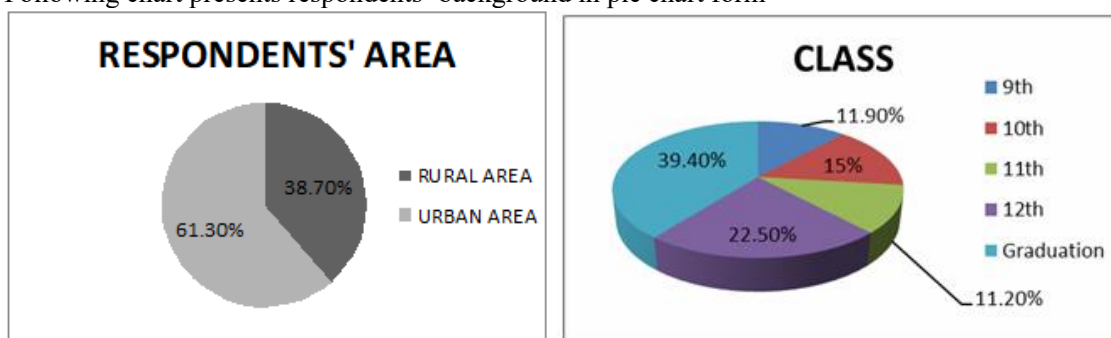
Pravat kumar, Challenges and opportunities created by COVID-19 for ODL (open and distance learning): A case study of IGNOU, though pandemic has created many problems but it has also actuated the educational institutions to explore better opportunities of learning using different technologies. ODL mode used various applications of the internet to deliver classroom materials and support learners and educators to interact with each other. IGNOU has been facing all challenges indited by pandemic and imparting effective support services through online mode for the benefit of stakeholders of ODL at the time of crisis. Government/ educational institutions should also adopt the policy to make available free internet and free digital gadgets to all learners in order to encourage online learning.

Research Methodology

This study is based on primary data and data is collected through online questionnaire which was created through google forms. There were 16 questions in questionnaire which were based upon the objectives of this study. Online Questionnaire was send to the respondents and we got 160 responses for the study. This study is descriptive in nature and data analysis is done according to objectives of the study by using mean, percentage and different types of charts.

Respondents' Background

Out of 160 respondents, 61.30% of respondents belong to urban area and rest of the respondents belong to rural area. In respondents, there are 19, 24, 18, 36 and 63 students from class 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th and graduation respectively and 57.5% are male and 42.5% are female. Following chart presents respondents' background in pie chart form-
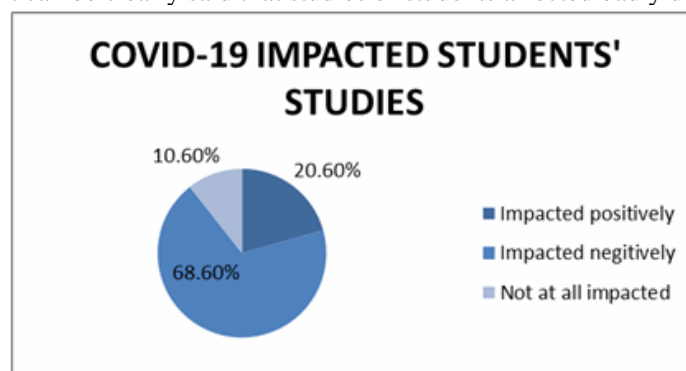

Impact of Covid-19 on the Studies of Students in their Perspective

To find out the impact of COVID-19 on the studies of students, students were asked many questions related to their studies and online classes. Following are the analysis of the responses of students-

- ❖ **Network issue in online classes-** Students were asked that how often they have to face network issues in online classes and 70.6% students responded that they have to face network issues sometimes, 24.4% students responded that they always face network issues and only 5% students said that they never face network issues. The answers of this question represent that there is not proper internet facility in India to conduct online classes till now but due to COVID-19 we didn't have any alternative to continue education so it was our only option but whole country is not equipped with all the digital resources that is necessary for online classes. Hence students are facing many difficulties in online classes.
- ❖ **Learning motivation-** Students were asked that do they feel same level of learning motivation in online classes as offline classes and 74.4% students said No, 15% students said can't say and only 10.6% students said yes, it clearly means that the learning motivation of students has reduced because of online classes due to COVID-19. The reason of this may be problems in adapting new learning environment. Learning motivation also hampered due to uncertainty prevailing in educational field.
- ❖ **Problems due to lack of digital skill of Teacher-** In questionnaire, students were asked that have they ever faced problem in online classes because of lack of digital skill of their teacher and 55% students responded yes and rest of the respondents said no. So from this it can be concluded that teachers are also not ready for online classes and they are lacking digital skills required to conduct online classes properly so there is great need to make teachers acquaint with all the digital skills required for conducting online classes.
- ❖ **Time management issue-** Students were asked that do they face time management issue due to online classes and 63.7% students responded Yes, 7.5% students said can't say and 28.7% students said No. Hence it clearly means that students are not able to manage their time because of online classes and their learning hours also reduced.

❖ **Impact of online classes on students' self study hours-** Through questionnaire, students were asked that how online classes affected their self study hours and 51.9% students answered that their self study hours is reduced, 25.6% students said that their self study hours same as before and only 22.5% students said that their self study hours has increased. So this can be said that due to online classes students' self study hours is also reduced while it should be increased because now they are getting more time to study.

❖ **Quality of online classes-** Students were asked that do they think quality of online classes is same as traditional classes, in questionnaire and 80.6% students responded No. It clearly means that online education is lacking somewhere to meet the quality of classes that should be corrected as soon as possible.

❖ **Convenience and flexibility due to online classes-** through questionnaire, students were asked do they agree that online classes has increased convenience and flexibility and 33.8% students answered No, 26.9% students responded can't say while 39.4% students said Yes. So in this question we get mixed responses.

❖ **COVID-19 impacted studies-** Students were asked that according to them, how COVID-19 impacted their studies and 68.8% students responded that Covid impacted their studies negatively, 10.6% students said that not at all impacted and 20.6% students said that impacted positively. So it can be clearly said that studies of students affected badly due to COVID-19.

Students' knowledge about the major initiatives taken by Government to provide better learning through digital platforms

Following are some initiatives that were taken by government during COVID-19 to help students in learning and teachers to teach. As all these initiative was taken by government to help students and teachers, hence to fulfill the aim of these initiatives this is necessary that students must have proper knowledge of these platforms therefore to analyse the knowledge of students regarding these initiatives, students were asked to tick the initiatives that is known to them, in questionnaire and following is the analysis of the data related to this-

DIKSHA- DIKSHA is a National Digital Infrastructure for students and teachers. It is a customized platform, currently, it is being used by teachers (from both government and private educational institutions) to teach and provide learning to the students. This platform is accessible in many languages so that user can understand easily. Amid the lockdown due to pandemic students were not able to do study in proper manner so the Ministry of human resource development (MHRD) in association with National council for teacher Education had launched this initiative for digital learning. Despite of so much importance of this initiative only 35.63% (57 out of 160) students of the sample have knowledge about this initiative.

e-Pathshala- e-Pathshala is a part of government's initiative to provide education through digital platform. When schools were closed due to Covid pandemic, students had just one alternative to shift towards e- learning then Government's UMANG mobile app offered more than 1 crore of e-books, audios and videos and students can access these study materials by using e-Pathshala of

NCERT which is available on UMANG app. So this platform has lots of benefits but only 21.88% (35 out of 160) students have knowledge about this initiative which is not sartisfactory.

National repository of open educational resources (NROER)- Only 8.8% (14 out of 160) students know regarding this platform while this platform hosts large number of educational materials in many subjects and in different languages for primary, secondary and senior secondary classes and also Study materials are available in different formats such as images, audios, videos and documents.
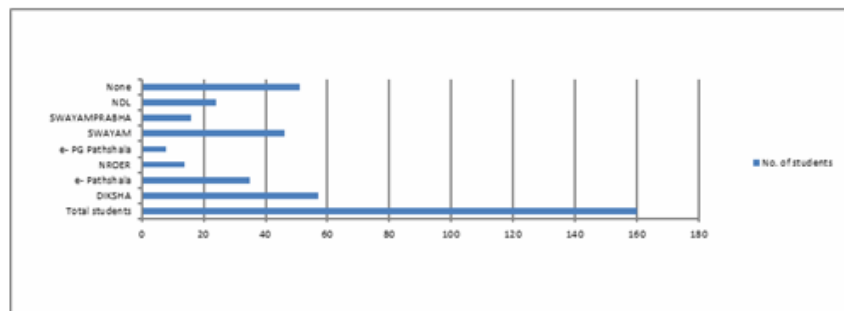
e-PG Pathshala- This initiative has been taken by MHRD (now ministry of education) under National Mission on Education through ICT initiative. Students can excess these courses without having internet for whole day. So this platform is really good and accessible without facing the issue related to network but only 5% (8 out of 160) students are familiar with this initiative.

SWAYAM- SWAYAM (Study webs of active learning for young aspiring minds) is a joint initiative of MHRD (now ministry of education) and AICTE (All India council for technical education) with the help of Microsoft. It is an Indian MOOC (Massive open online course) platform. This platform provides free access to everyone and there are courses from 9 to post- graduation. This platform also has many benefits that can be used by the students to enhance their learning but only 28.75% (46 out of 160) students have knowledge about this.

SWAYAMPRABHA- It is an initiative of MHRD (now ministry of education) which provides 32 high quality educational channels through DTH (direct to home). It has remote area where internet problems exist and through this initiative learning can be reached in remote area easily where internet facility is not available but there is only 10% (16 out of 160) students are familiar with this platform and students are not availing the benefits of this platform.

National Digital Library of India (NDLI)- NDLI is a digital repository which contains articles, audio books, videos, textbooks, lectures, simulations and all other types of learning media. It also gives access free of cost to many books in Indian languages and English as well. Hence this is very good platform developed by government to enhance learning in India still only 15% (24 out of 160) students know about this platform

Chart showing students' knowledge about government's initiative to provide learning through digital platform

From the above chart it can be concluded that students don't have proper knowledge about the initiatives of government that is taken to provide better learning opportunities to them. Only 35.6% students have knowledge about DIKSHA and 21.9% students have knowledge about e-pathsala, 8.8% know about NROER, 5% students have knowledge regarding e-PG Pathshala, 28.7% know about SWAYAM, 10% students know regarding SWAYAMPRABHA and only 15% students familiar with NDLI. These data shows that students don't have knowledge about these initiatives then how can they take advantage of these and 31.9% students are those who don't have knowledge about any of these initiatives. This clearly means that there is a great need to provide information regarding all these platforms so that more and more students can take advantage of these platforms.

Students' Experiences of Studies in Online Classes due to Covid-19

Through questionnaire, Students were asked to share their experiences about studies during the pandemic period of COVID-19 and most of the students have bad experience of studies and

many students feels that due to online classes, they are lacking discipline and started procrastination. They are also facing many problems like lack of study motivation, loosing their interest in studies and teachers are also not teaching in the same way as in traditional classes, so it is difficult for them to understand. According to students, they are becoming more lethargic day by day. But some students also have good experience of studies because they are getting more time for self study and they are able to manage their routine properly.

Conclusion

After the analyzing collected data, it can be concluded that COVID-19 impacted the studies and education of the students badly in students' perspective. Because students are not well equipped with all the digital resources, most of the time they face network issue during online classes and their motivation of study has also reduced. Students are also feeling that teachers are not as interested in teaching as they used to and also teachers are lacking digital skills somewhere to conduct online classes properly because of that quality of online classes is not up to the mark.

Government has taken many initiative to provide better learning through digital platforms but most of the students are not aware of these platforms, which were developed to help them for their studies then how can they avail the advantages of these initiatives. So there is a great need to make students aware regarding these initiatives so that they can enhance their learning and also the aim of these platforms can be fulfilled. Further detailed statistical study can be conducted to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on the studies of students.

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