

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON EDUCATION OF ADOLESCENT CHILDREN IN INDIA: A REALITY CHECK

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ABSTRACT

Global health emergency due to novel Corona Virus has impacted every segment of our life. It has led to worldwide lockdown affecting 80% of the world's student population and throwing around 32 crores of children out of schools in India. This is a study conducted by the authors to evaluate and assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education of adolescent children in India. In specific, the authors have attempted to understand the perception of different stakeholders of education via multi-method approach. The authors have adopted a survey method to collect data on perceptions of students, parents, teachers and experts on the impact of health emergency and the nationwide lockdown on the education sector of the country; the steps taken by the schools and the government in making education accessible to all during the pandemic; the different strategies adopted by the private schools and public sector schools to overcome the threat thrown by Covid-19 outbreak and to identify the best practices adopted by education sector of various countries.

Keywords: Pandemic, Education, Covid-19, India, Private schools, Public schools.

INTRODUCTION INCLUDING CRITICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The global pandemic had not only hindered the health of the people around the globe but it has also shuddered the roots of education too. It has been reported that over 1.5 billion learners in 165 countries are affected by school closures due to lockdown¹. It has had major impacts on the graduating students, students preparing for board exams and also for final year students of various professional courses. The risk factor and uncertainties thrown by this global pandemic became a nightmare for many students, parents and academicians. Studies in this field are depicting that this pandemic and subsequent lockdown has brought various positive and negative impacts on Indian education sector². The positive impacts expounded were improvement in collaborative Socratic teaching methods, improvements in technological literacy, rise in use of Learning Management Systems, enhancement in the use of soft copy of learning material that is environmental friendly whereas the negative effects included reduction in employment opportunities, unprepared teachers/students for online education, increased responsibility of parents to educate their wards, loss of nutrition and unequal access to the digital education. The studies are pointing at India's unpreparedness to make education reach all corners of the nation via digital platforms.

Such unequal access to digital education is further elaborated by another study by³World Bank. The author points that India, the second largest school system in the world, comprising 320

¹UNESCO, 'COVID-19 Impact on Education' (2020) 19 UNESCO Institute for Statistics data.

²Pravat Kumar Jena, 'Impact of Pandemic COVID-19 on Education in India' [2020] International Journal of Current Research (IJCR).

³ Sushma Modi & Ronika Postaria, 'How COVID-19 deepens the digital education divide in India' (*World Economic Forum*, 5 Oct 2020) <<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/how-covid-19-deepens-the-digital-education-divide-in-india/>> accessed 12 February 2021.

million learners⁴ spread across 1.5 million schools⁵ is unable to transition into a virtual learning system. It focused on the nationwide survey of villages conducted by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2017-18 to show that 16% of India's households received one to eight hours of electricity daily⁶, NSSO survey to show that only 24% of Indian households have an internet facility⁷ and only 8% of all households have both a computer and an internet connection.⁸ It further elaborated upon regional disparity in accessing digital education and gender bias in accessing digital education.

The survey conducted by IIM-Ahmedabad (2020) along with UNICEF spread across among 375 low-income parents residing in the urban Ahmedabad between July to September 2020 revealed that 85% of the parents were not able to access anything in lieu of the mid-day meals since March.⁹ Further, 30 per cent of the children had not engaged in any formal learning activities since March 2020 and less than 2 per cent had access to a laptop and a Wi-Fi connection while email was used by less than 12 per cent of the families.¹⁰ Considering the gravity of such situation, the Gujarat High court¹¹ has taken suo motu cognizance of the issue and directed that notice be served on the Gujarat Education department and Commissioner of the State Midday meal schemes.¹²

On national level, the Annual School Education Survey (2020)¹³ revealed that as compared to 4 per cent in 2018, 5.5 per cent of children in 2020 are not enrolled in school.¹⁴ Additionally, only 49.9 per cent have access to a digital device to access online education with great disparity between private and government schools and only 35.3 per cent received any teaching material during lockdown.¹⁵ Further, it revealed that 20 per cent of children did not have any contact with the teacher or school and among those who had such contact, great disparity was witnessed among educated parents and uneducated parents.¹⁶

⁴ Department of School Education & Literacy, MHRD, Government of India, *Catalyzing Transformational Change in School Education* (Performance Grading Index 2017-18 States and UTs).

⁵ Monika Kandhari, 'E-Learning Is Transforming the Face of Education in India' (Business World, 01 December 2018) <<http://www.businessworld.in/article/E-Learning-Is-Transforming-The-Face-Of-Education-In-India/01-12-2018-164717/>> accessed 12 March 2021.

⁶ Protiva Kundu, 'Indian education can't go online – only 8% of homes with young members have computer with net link' (*Scroll.in*, 5 May 2020) <<https://scroll.in/article/960939/indian-education-cant-go-online-only-8-of-homes-with-school-children-have-computer-with-net-link>> accessed 12 March 2021.

⁷ National Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, *Household Social Consumption on Education in India*, (2017-18).

⁸ Ibid. at note. 8

⁹ The Indian Express, 'Survey by IIM-A and UNICEF in Ahmedabad: 85 % parents got nothing in lieu of mid-day meals since March' (18 December 2020) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/survey-by-iim-a-and-unicef-in-ahmedabad-85-parents-got-nothing-in-lieu-of-mid-day-meals-since-march-7109270/>> accessed 12 March 2021

¹⁰ BusinessLine on Campus, 'Remote learning remains a challenge for low-income households: IIMA study' (17 December 2021) <<https://bloncampus.thehindubusinessline.com/b-learn/remote-learning-remains-a-challenge-for-low-income-households-iima-study/article33355348.ece>> accessed 12 March 2021

¹¹ *Suo Motu v. State of Gujarat*, R/ Writ Petition No. 201 of 2020.

¹² Lydia Suzanne Thomas, 'Gujarat High Court registers suo motu PIL over 'serious plight' of school children amid COVID-19 pandemic' (*Bar and Bench*, 22 December 2020) <https://www.barandbench.com/news/litigation/gujarat-high-court-suo-motu-pil-plight-school-children-covid-19-pandemic?fbclid=IwAR1ofAZpyz3RbHw8qvmvGUQpc3bAVLaR_QKckHkeCE1IxV3UBE9hd8jysMI> accessed 12 March 2021

¹³ Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2020 Wave 1 Provisional October 28, 2020

¹⁴ Ibid. at 15.

¹⁵ Ibid. at 17.

¹⁶ Ibid. at 23.

Similarly, Jain (2020)¹⁷ focused on analyzing the impact of school closure caused by COVID-19 in India. By utilizing secondary and primary sources, the authors conclude that though virtual education is the best tool available currently,¹⁸ this tool will result in stark contravention of KPMG prediction of Indian education sector reaching 8X overall growth in 2021 compared to 01 figure of USD 247 million.¹⁹ The impact of such research is reduced when taking into account an international perspective given by Carlsson et al. (2015).²⁰ The authors state that major school closure of around 12 weeks in Sweden implies only a trivial loss of 6 per cent in problem solving skills,²¹ thereby undermining Jain (2020) premise of harsh impacts.

Saha (2020)²² focused upon testing the efficacy of governmental initiatives such as Diksha portal, E-Pathshala & National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER), etc. Although the authors concluded that such initiatives were applaud-able, they found out that such initiatives were supplemented with Ed-tech Providers such as Byjus, particularly in urban areas.²³ The mentioned initiatives are supported by Thomas (2020- I)²⁴ who further stated that despite BARC report revealing a 30 per cent rise in the Indian Edtech market,²⁵ it has faced significant challenges during the pandemic. Though certain growth is evident in the Edtech market, it is still unable to access Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities due to socio-economic challenges, which include lack of infrastructure and deployment of internet facilities, leading to limited or no internet connectivity for learners. Leena Chandran Wadia (2020)²⁶ focused on NGO efforts to tackle the challenge faced by school education sector during the pandemic. The author refers to several initiatives like donation of smartphones, teaching on calls, etc. conducted by teachers on their own initiatives and NGO's that have helped to reduce the unequal access to digital education during such period. The author describes such lockdowns as the "Sputnik moment for EdTech (educational technology) in India" and argues for making the school children important stakeholders in the process of online education rather than adopting a top down approach.²⁷ These findings have been reiterated by Raj (2020).²⁸

Further, the introduction of technology based education comes with its fair share of problems such as assessments through the virtual medium and technologically unexperienced teachers.

¹⁷ S Jain & T S Agarwal, 'The Impact of Corona Crisis on Education Sector in India' (2020) 8(3), 153-160 IJIP <<https://ijip.in/articles/the-impact-of-corona-crisis-on-education-sector-in-india/>> accessed 12 March 2021

¹⁸ Ibid. at 159.

¹⁹ Ibid. at 155.

²⁰ Carlsson, M, G B Dahl, B Öckert and D Rooth, 'The Effect of Schooling on Cognitive Skills' (2015) Review of Economics and Statistics 97(3): 533–547.

²¹ Ibid. at 546.

²² Swarup Saha et al., 'Impact of Covid-19 on Education Sector in India' (2020) Vol. 8, Issue 7 pg. 2731-2740 <<https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2007259.pdf>> accessed 12 March 2021

²³ Ibid. at 2740.

²⁴ Anu Thomas, 'Why Online Education May Not Be A Sustainable Solution In India Despite Free Courses' (*Analytics India Magazine*, 01 June 2020) <<https://analyticsindiamag.com/why-online-education-may-not-be-a-sustainable-solution-in-india-despite-free-courses/>> accessed 12 March 2021

²⁵ V.S.Biswas, 'Ed-tech platforms cash in on pandemic; posts surge in users and time spent' (*Financial Express*, 04 May 2020) <<https://www.financialexpress.com/brandwagon/ed-tech-platforms-cash-in-on-pandemic-posts-surge-in-users-and-time-spent/1947135/>> accessed 12 March 2021

²⁶ Leena Chandran Wadia, 'Online school education in India during and beyond the pandemic' (*Observer Research Foundation*, 07 July 2020) <<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/online-school-education-india-during-beyond-pandemic-69317/>> accessed 12 March 2021

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Raj, Utsav, 'Indian Education System in Fight against COVID-19 Pandemic' (*International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 11 May 2020) <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3597340> accessed 12 March 2021

Thomas (2020- II)²⁹ focuses on this unique issue of conducting virtual exams. The author advocates for AI based proctoring exams that empowers the system to be mindful of candidates' movements and take note of any discrepancies in activities – be it shifty eyes or body movements, recording if they are gazing somewhere repeatedly or interacting with someone, and even documenting how many times they are pushing the Alt+Tab keys to switch to different windows.³⁰

Joshi et al. (2020) focused on the pandemic effect on the Indian education sector from the perspectives of teachers.³¹ This research utilized Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of qualitative research methodology among the teachers working in the government and private universities of Uttarakhand, India. The findings uncovered four classes of hindrances that are looked by teachers during Lockdown and Online teaching. These issues are firstly, the teaching challenges regarding Home as the place of instruction. It includes an absence of fundamental facilities, outside interruption and family interference during instructing and assessments were significant issues detailed. Second, Institutional support obstructions, for example, the restricted budgetary constraints, an absence of training sessions, and an absence of lucidity in direction were additionally revealed. Third, instructors likewise confronted challenges regarding use of technology. The troubles were assembled under an absence of technical support, it incorporated an absence of technical framework, restricted knowledge of internet instructing platforms. Fourth, Instructors' own issues including an absence of specialized information, negative mentality, course combination with innovation and an absence of inspiration damper their commitment in internet education and evaluations. The discoveries of this research are useful to the administrative authorities and higher education institutions who are planning to continue online instructing as a customary action post lockdown. This study was the first of its kind to conduct qualitative analysis research to replenish the gap in literature to document the challenges faced by teachers during the online teaching and assessment. Similar results were also obtained by Arora (2020) that focused on higher education teachers.³²

TISS Report (2020)³³ confirmed such findings and further noted their concerns as teaching–learning resources (63%), creating digital resources for teaching (60%) and evaluation and assessment tools (53%).³⁴ Chandran et al (2020)³⁵ conducted survey of 478 government schools and concluded that the solution to such aforementioned teacher problems is professional development through training that results in additional learning gains.

²⁹ Anu Thomas, 'Opportunities & Challenges Of Conducting Exams Through AI-Based Proctoring In India' (*Analytics India Magazine*, 26 May 2020) <<https://analyticsindiamag.com/opportunities-challenges-of-conducting-exams-through-ai-based-proctoring-in-india/>> accessed 12 March 2021

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Joshi, A., Vinay, M. and Bhaskar, P., 'Impact of coronavirus pandemic on the Indian education sector: perspectives of teachers on online teaching and assessments' (*Emerald Insight*, 24 September 2020) <<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ITSE-06-2020-0087/full/html>> accessed 12 March 2021

³² Amit Kumar Arora & R. Srinivasan, 'Impact of Pandemic COVID-19 on the Teaching – Learning Process : A Study of Higher Education Teachers' (*Prabandhan: Indian Journal of Management*, April 2020) <<http://indianjournalofmanagement.com/index.php/pijom/article/view/151825>> accessed 12 March 2021

³³ Centre for Education Innovation and Action Research, 'Assessment of Ground Preparedness for Use of EdTech During COVID-19 Disruption in School and Teacher Education (Round 3)' (*Tata Institute of Social Sciences*, 24 June 2020) <<https://tiss.edu/view/6/mumbai-campus/centre-for-education-innovation-and-action-research/fieldwork-20/>> accessed 12 March 2021

³⁴ A.K. Singh et al, 'Use of EdTech in Indian School Education during COVID-19: A Reality Check' (31 October 2020) <https://www.epw.in/journal/2020/44/commentary/use-edtech-indian-school-education-during-covid-19.html?0=ip_login_no_cache%3Df8ff38de2e744c5b1e0ce8c9f6085c24> accessed 12 March 2021

³⁵ Chandran, M, Arundhati Roy, Raja Sekhar Satyavada and Padma Sarangapani, *Connected Learning Initiative (CLIX): A Report of Research Findings from Phase-I*, (TISS, Connected Learning Initiative 2020)

METHODS AND PRACTICES

To study our main objective impact of the current pandemic on the education of the adolescent children in India the authors have adopted a multi-method approach. In order to supplement the primary data, secondary data was collected and critically reviewed. The authors have carried out an extensive review of the literatures available in the form of Government reports from Ministry of Human Resource Development and Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, internet sources such as Scroll, Business line, Bar and Bench, articles from journals of repute like Economic and Political Weekly, International Journal of Indian Psychology and reports by think tanks namely Observer Research Foundation etc. to lay down the foundation of the research.

The specific objectives of the study were to understand the steps taken by schools in India to impart education effectively during the global health emergency Covid-19; to understand the steps taken by the government in mitigating the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on school education; to compare the teaching pedagogies adopted by Government Schools and Private Schools during this pandemic; to analyse and understand the best practices adopted by selected countries around the world in imparting education during the current health emergency. To find out answers for all the aforementioned objectives the authors have conducted an online survey using a questionnaire. The target group for the survey were the adolescent students enrolled and teachers working with various schools and other educational Institutions like colleges, universities etc. Data was collected over a period of 2 months. We have received responses from participants representing various states and schools of the country. Later we have adopted a mixed method to analyse and interpret the data using both qualitative and quantitative method.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Figure 1. shows the percentage

wise distribution of gender of respondents as 45 per cent of respondents female and 55 per cent male. It appears from Figure 2. that the majority of the respondents that is 39 per cent are falling under the age group of 16 to 17 years of age while 17 per cent respondents were from the age group of 18 to 19 years. While relating the age of respondents with the gender in Figure 2., it was seen that the number of female respondents was slightly higher than that of male respondents in the age groups of 13 to 15 years and 18 to 19 years and considerable lower in the age group of 10 to 12 years.

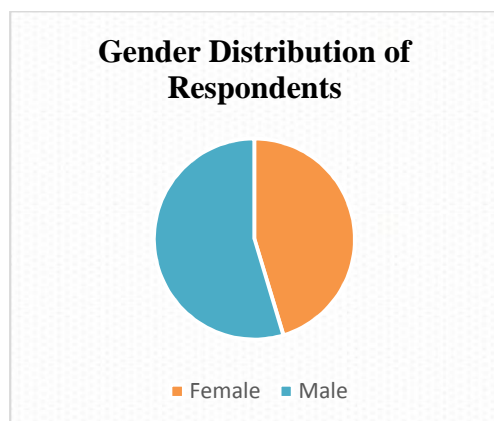


Figure 1

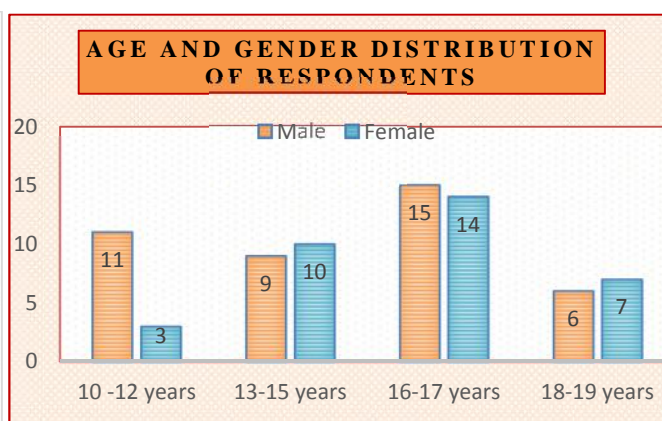


Figure 2

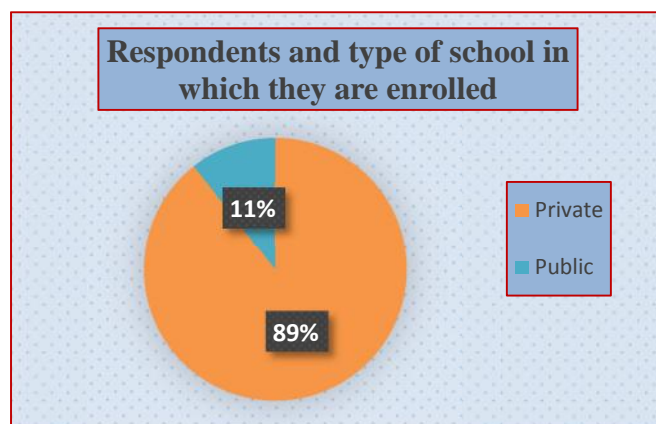


Figure 3

The data collected brought out that 89 per cent of the respondents were enrolled in a private school and a minute 11 per cent respondents were from a public school.

State wise distribution of respondents can be seen elaborately in Figure 4. where majority of the respondents were from the state of Madhya Pradesh followed by Gujarat while lowest from Kerala and Uttar Pradesh.

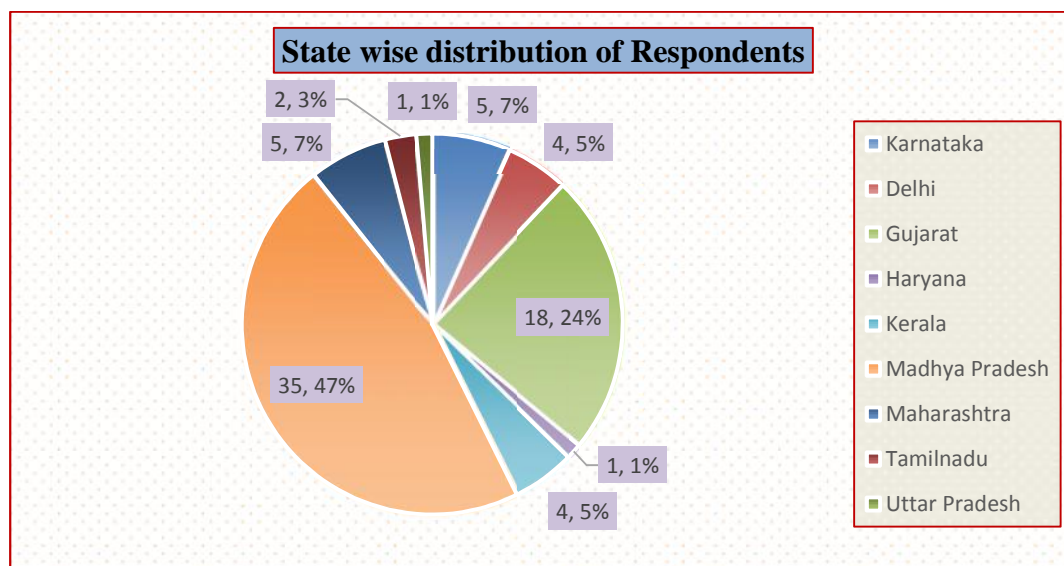


Figure 3

In August 2020, United Nations released a Policy Brief titled, "Education during COVID-19 and beyond" where in it stated that the closure of schools will necessitate and lead to about 23.8 million children worldwide to drop out of schools or may not have access to education from primary to tertiary level of school. Similar effect can be seen in the data collected wherein 15 per cent of the respondents have dropped out of school owing to reasons such as postponed

procedure of admission and delayed declaration of results. Due to non-payment of salaries and pay cuts several respondents could not afford paying school fees. Schools were said to have not given concession in fees even though class schedules were shifted to the online mode.

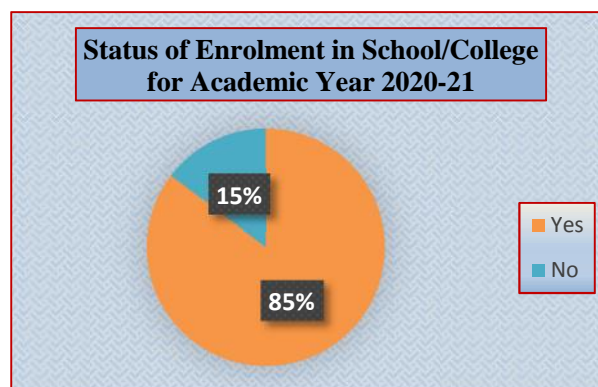


Figure 4

As also seen by the data collected that 80 per cent of the schools adapted to the changed situation and shifted to the online mode of schooling. Schools of 36 per cent of respondents started online classes within a period of 2 to 6 months, followed by 27 per cent of schools starting the classes as per schedule. While, only 2 per cent of schools have either started conducting online lectures after 6 months or not started yet.

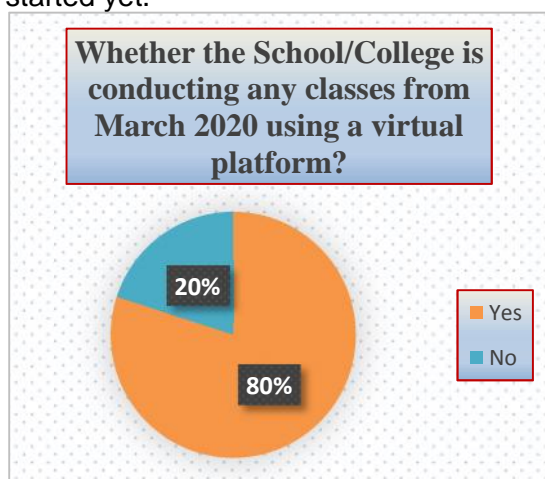


Figure 5

Options given	Percentage
As per Schedule	27
Within 1 Month	11
Within 1-2 Months	17
Within 2-6 Months	36
Above 6 Months	1
Not started yet	1
No Response	7

Table 1

This shifting the mode of school was a challenge from the majorly inexperienced teacher's perspective as they had to blend their evaluation and teaching methods with technology. Respondents complained of non-availability of required technology during the lockdown such as no Wi-Fi connection at home or sufficient number of laptops and mobile phones available to attend classes. A constant problem that both the teachers and parents of the student's face is that of the minimal attention span of students during online classes. 92 per cent of the respondents said to be attending online classes however 8 per cent complained of not being able to attend.

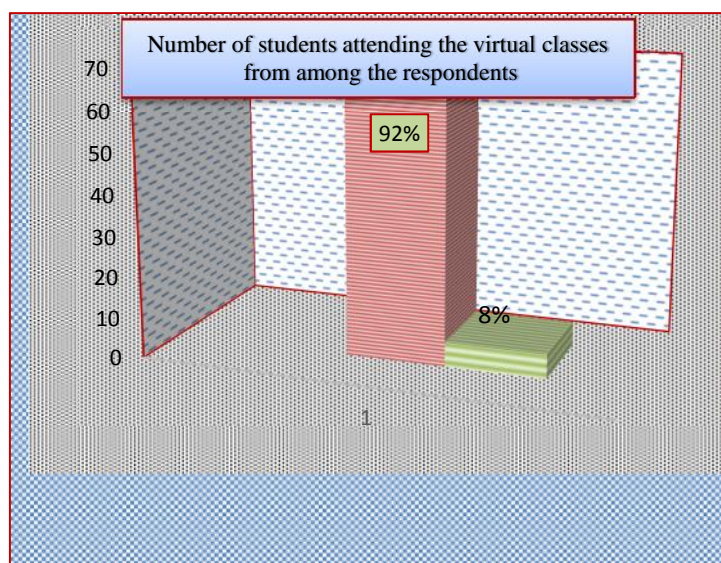


Figure 6

Responses on Status of Access to Devices for Attending Online Classes and How Did They Managed to Get Access to Such Devices?

Did the Government/ School/ College undertake any measures/schemes to provide such electronic gadget?		How did you get access to the device using to attend the classes?	
Yes	4	I already had one	43
		Borrowed from Friend/family	10
		Purchased during Lockdown	15
No	71	Arranged/Purchased with the help of school/college/government	4
		Rented	2
		More than one option	1

Table 2

With the outbreak of Novel Corona Virus 2019 and the subsequent declaration of lockdown by the government, the educational institutions were left with no option other than starting classes online. This has put many of the parents in distress as they were expected to arrange devices which can be used to attend classes by their children. The middle income group and low income group parents with more than one child were had a little hard time as compared to the high income group parents. The above Table 1 and 2 is prepared based on the responses given by the participants on question asked to understand the status of respondents attending

online classes and how did they managed to get access to the device that has been used to attend the session.

Responses on Status of Access to Devices for Attending Online Classes and How Did They Managed to Get Access to Such Devices?

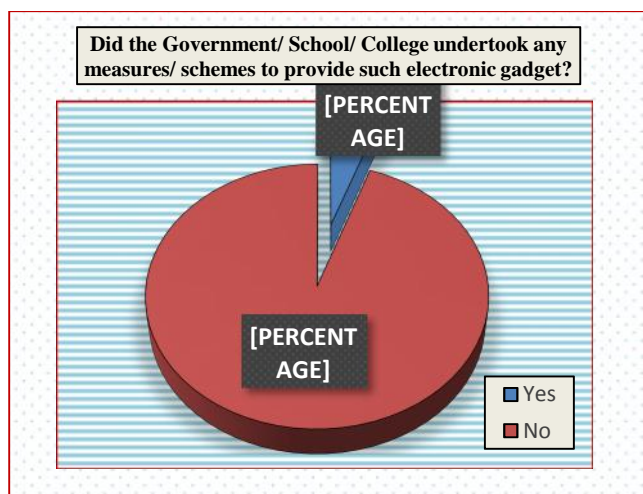


Figure 7

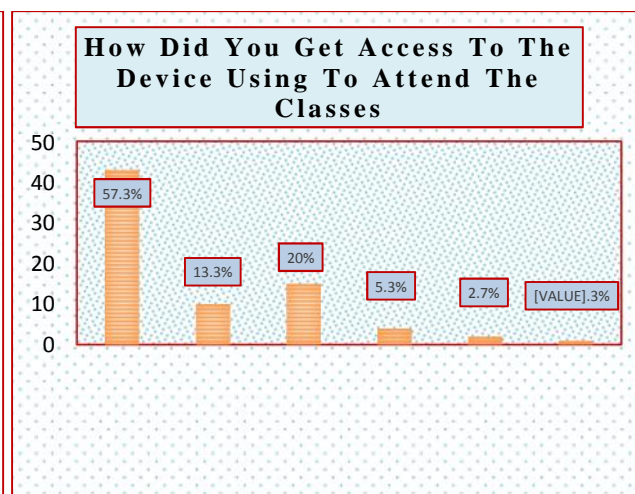


Figure 8

From the above Figure 9, it is clear that out of the participated respondents only 57.3 per cent already had access to device; 20 per cent of the participants had to purchase the device during lockdown; 13.3 per cent borrowed from friend and family; 5.3 per cent arranged the device with the help of educational Institution or Government; 2.7 per cent had to rent it and 1.3 per cent had to depend on more than one discussed options to arrange the device.

The responses from the participants gives us an inference that ultimately arranging devices for attending classes had become a responsibility only of parents. This has become an added difficulty to many of the parents living in low and middle income category.

Responses on Question Asked to understand Status of Access to physical textbook During Lockdown?

Do you have access to a physical textbook for the standard you are enrolled in?		How did you get access to Text Book?	
Yes	63	Bought from Market	35
		Received from an NGO	1
		Borrowed from seniors	12
No	12	Educational Institution/ Government provided it at a cost	16
		Educational Institution/ Government provided it free of cost	3
		No Access to Books	8

Table 3

As mentioned above during lockdown the educational institutions of India like phoenix bird restored their function by switching to online mode. While carrying out the research, one question arose in the mind of the authors were whether the students are having access to text book if yes how did they manage to get it. Table 3. is based on the responses given by the participants on this question. The table above shows that majority of the respondents had to purchase the books from market. Very few of them received it free of cost from Educational Institution or the Government.

Responses on Question Asked to understand Status of Access to physical textbook During Lockdown?

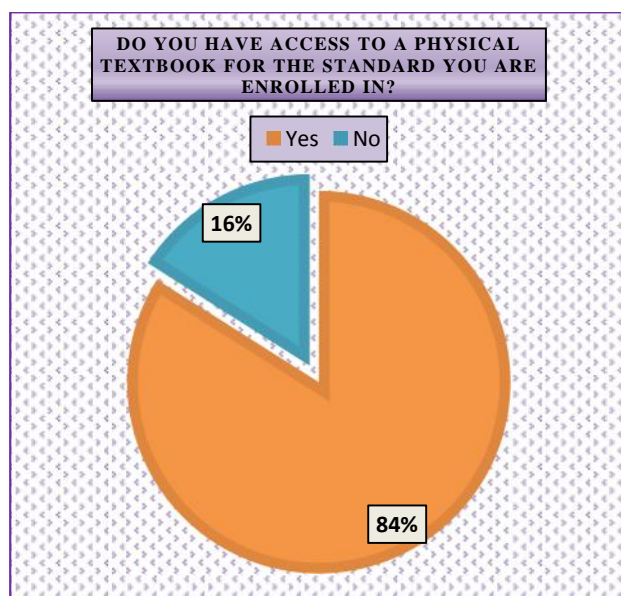


Figure 9

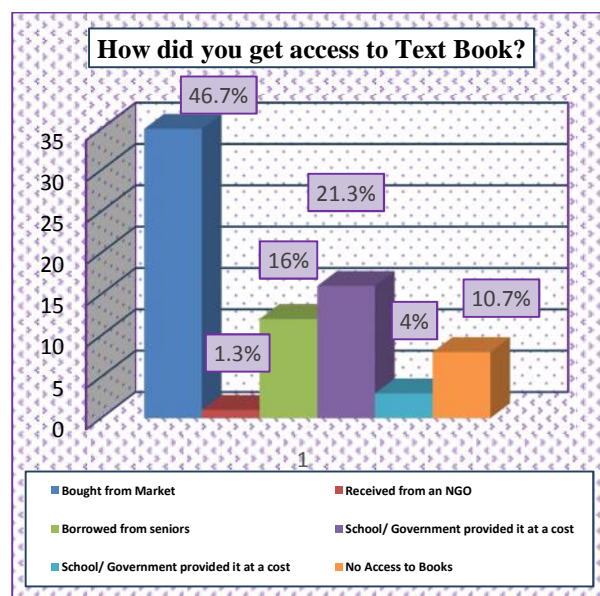


Figure 10

The Figure 10. above is depicting that out of the total participants 84 per cent are having access to hard copy of the text books and 16 per cent are not having access to it. 46.7 per cent of the total participants have purchased it; 1.3 per cent received from NGO; 16 per cent arranged from seniors; 21.3 per cent got it from educational Institution or the Government at a cost and 4 per cent got it free of cost from educational Institution or the Government. The responses make it clear that even during lockdown, majority of the participants were having access to text book but they had to arrange it by their own and there is very limited contribution from the government or the educational Institutions.

Responses on Status Assessment and How well the Respondents Performed in the Assessment

Whether the school/College has conducted any assessment during the duration of lockdown (March 2020-till date)?		How did you perform in the assessment?	
Yes	64	There was no change, I scored same as that of regular class	23
		I did very well and better than my performance in regular school	18
No	11	I scored very less as compared to my percentage in previous years	26
		No Proper Response	8

Table 4

The next question was asked by the authors intending to understand effectiveness of the online classes. For the same the authors have asked certain questions intending to understand the steps taken by the educational institutions to assess the students and how successfully they have concluded them and how well the students have performed.

It was observed that majority of the students believed that there is no considerable change in their performance or they have performed well.

Responses on Status Assessment and How well the Respondents Performed in the Assessment

Figure 12. is demonstrating that out of the total respondents only 84 per cent of the participants have appeared for some kind of assessment conducted by the school during lockdown whereas 16 per cent were not given any assessment. And it is visible from the figure that lockdown has not impacted the performance of the students or there is no significant difference in the result of majority of students as compared to offline regular classes. 29.3 per cent has responded that there were no significant changes in their performance; 20 per cent said they performed well than regular offline mode; 34.7 per cent had admitted that they are not very satisfied with their performance and 16 per cent did not undergo any assessment by the educational organisation.

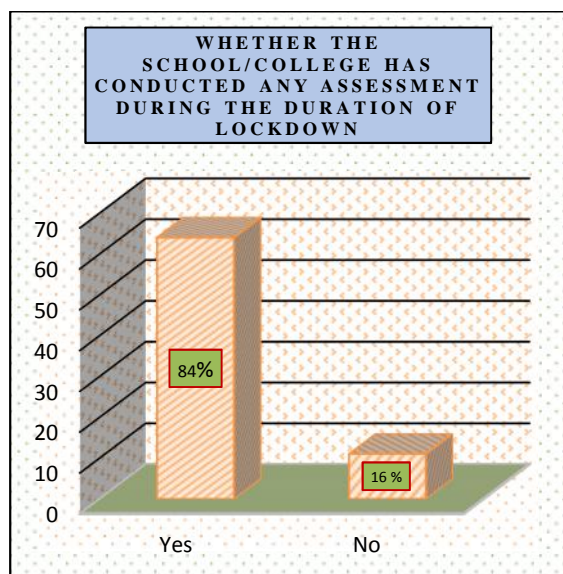


Figure 11

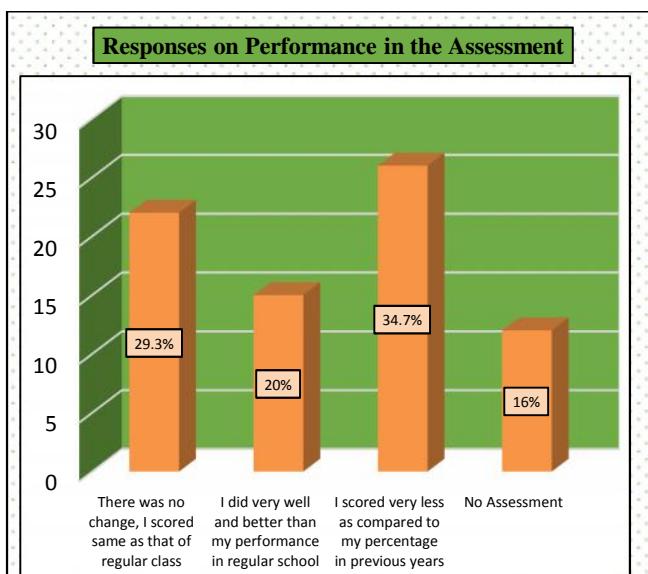


Figure 12

But when we critically look in to the situation we cannot jump in to the conclusion that the students have performed well in assessment means the online mode is more effective, there may be many other external factors influencing their performance. Since the classes and assessment are happening online there are chances that the teachers are designing the question paper easier as compared to previous years or they are assessing it liberally or the students are getting help at home from any elders etc.

Responses on question about Activity Classes conducted by the Educational Institutions

It has been observed that only 36 per cent of the total respondents' schools are conducting activity classes through virtual classes 64 per cent of the schools are not conducting any such activities.

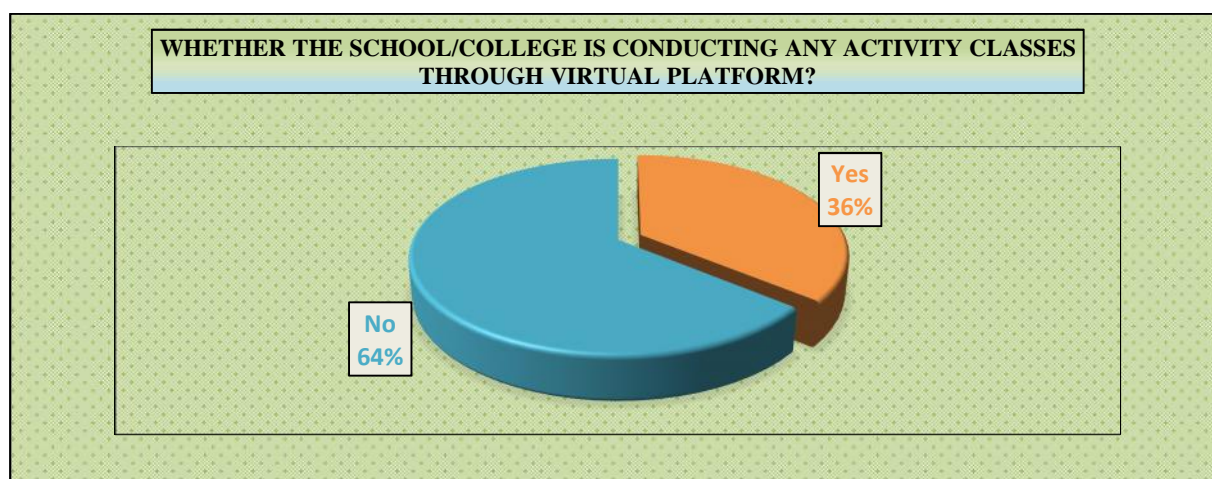


Figure 13

The activities majorly include club activities, drawing and painting classes, music classes and dance classes. Majority of the students had to compromise on the overall development happening in regular schools through co-curricular activities and sports.

Status of Mental Health of students and the support offered by educational Institution to deal with such stress undergone by students due to Isolation

Do you have you undergone any mental health issues like stress, Depression during the lockdown?		Does the school/College tried to deal with the stress caused to students due to social isolation through some sessions?	
Yes	22	Yes	15
No	53	No	60

Table 5

It has been demonstrated by the participants that majority of them have not undergone any mental health issues like stress or depression due to isolation. And only a few schools have tried to support students with some counselling sessions or workshops to deal with stress.

Status of Mental Health of students and the support offered by educational Institution to deal with such stress undergone by students due to Isolation

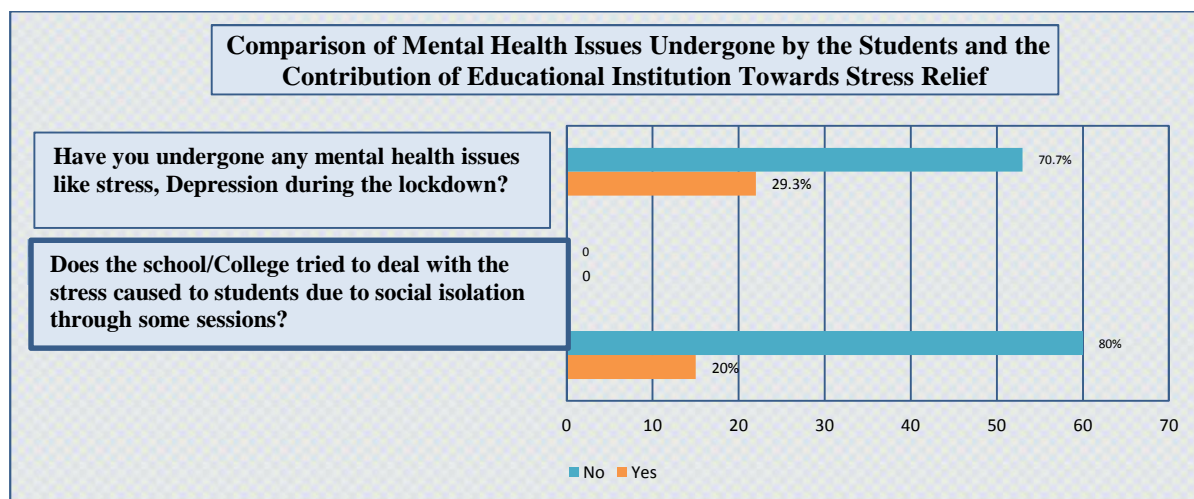


Figure 14

Figure 15. describes 70.7 per cent of the total participants have not undergone any mental health issue but 29.3 per cent faced issues like stress and depression due to isolation. Majority of schools i.e., 80 per cent did not pay any attention towards organising some sessions towards helping their students to deal with the stress and anxiety created by social isolation.

Responses on effectiveness of Virtual Classes and Content Delivery by Teachers

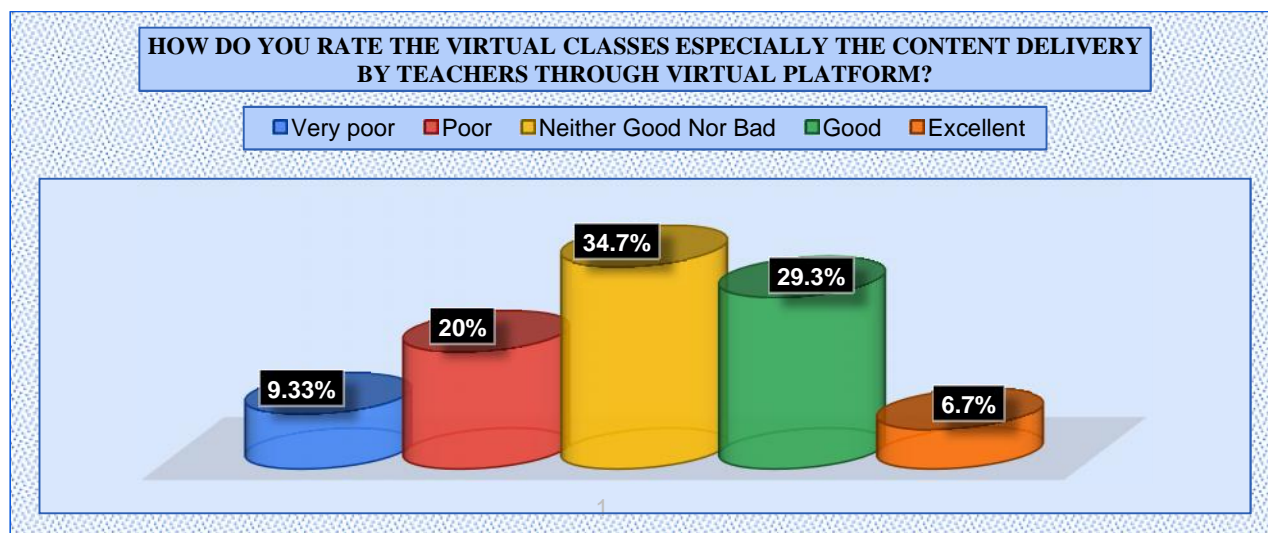


Figure 15

Figure 16 above is giving a mixed opinion expressed by the participants of the survey. 34.7 per cent of the participants are having a neutral opinion about the effectiveness of virtual platform and the content delivery by teachers in virtual platform; 29.3 per cent thinks it as good, 20 per cent rated it as bad, 9.33 per cent as very bad and 6.7 per cent as excellent.

CONCLUSION

After reviewing the existing studies and conducting the primary research, the authors are of the opinion that the Government of India should work towards establishing a good infrastructure for online education. The delay in resuming classes by many of the schools as per the responses shown in Table 1. is pointing at our nation's unpreparedness to deal with emergencies. This is alarming situation for a developing country like India and the government should not overlook the importance of this matter as 'Education' is a fundamental right guaranteed under 21-A of the Constitution.

A change from traditional learning environment was neither anticipated by the teachers nor by the students, hence to make this system more effective the teachers should get some training on handling virtual platforms too. This should not happen only during emergencies but these kind of training can be introduced as one of the mandatory course to be attended by the teachers of all educational Institutions, all private and public.

The educational institutions also should give more importance to IT training of its students. From the personal interaction of the authors with the students enrolled with different schools, it has been noted that many of the parents and children had faced difficulties in handling virtual platforms as they were not technically educated. The government can take note of this and work towards imparting effective IT education to the students.

Another difficulty faced by the students and parents were in arranging the devices. At least for the low income group, the government should provide some assistance in the form of subsidy

in purchasing such devices or should work towards developing inclusive learning solutions for the marginalized group.

The next matter of concern of the participants were about access to internet connectivity and power supply. These are the basic infrastructures the State should work on and make it accessible in all areas of the country. More investment in education in the form of budget allocation and effective utilization of those amount considering the current situation and foreseeing such emergencies in future can be a wise step that the government can adopt.

During the research, it has been noted that many of the international schools and private schools were able to switch to online mode as per their schedule even after the declaration of lockdown, however few private schools and government schools took 2-6 months and above to come up with the solution, many of the schools are not able to conduct classes online and are sharing recorded videos with children, some of them have failed to arrange for text books and reading materials also to the children- all these aforementioned observations forces us to believe that this inconsistency in same system has to be removed by bringing uniformity in the system. The success stories of the International and Private schools can be studied and such approach can be implemented in other schools also.

Next concern is about the mental and physical health of the children. It has been recorded from the study that a very few schools were given importance to these aspects during lockdown. Physical and mental health of the children cannot be disregarded by the schools. Social isolation especially inaccessibility to their peers will create disturbances in children. Many of them have experienced stress, anxiety and depression. This can be taken care of by the schools through some counselling sessions or workshops. Schools should also conduct co-curricular activity classes which may make them feel better.

Finally, we would like to conclude with one statement that more strategized approach with more investment in the education sector to improve the infrastructure and quality only will help the system to deal with any future emergencies.