Impact of Online Education on The Pupils of Rural Areas Due to COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown: An Analytical Study.

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ABSTRACT

The Coronavirus illness (COVID-19) is a highly contagious viral infection that appeared in Wuhan City, China and spread worldwide within a very short span of time. The covid-19 pandemic brought a nationwide lockdown due to which online classes and e-learning have come to limelight in India along with other countries. Under this tough situation; it has become quite inevitable for all educational institutions from elementary schools to colleges and colleges to universities to adopt a virtual teaching and learning model. It was a new challenge for students' fraternity and teachers to access online Education through the internet using smartphones, laptops, and other social media. But in the case of the background of poor family students, the picture was different and quite pathetic as compared to the students of urban areas because of the lack of knowledge of internet access and other electronic gadgets. However, administrations from a higher level to grassroots level tried their best to enhance technologies through online mode of teaching-learning for both teachers and the students' community. Although online teaching has offered teachers and students more time for preparing assignments, research works and other professional and developmental activities and still, there are some drawbacks clearly observed in it. Here, an attempt has been made to understand the impact of the corona crisis on the teaching-learning process through online mode during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, especially on the students of rural areas.

Keywords: Covid19-Pandemic, Lockdown, Administration, Technologies, Online classroom.

INTRODUCTION

The covid-19 pandemic is a serious issue and a huge challenge to the whole world. In the Hubei Province, in China on 31st December 2019, the first COVID-19 patient was reported by the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission. Like a thunder sparkling, very soon it took 213 countries and territories

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in its clutches and in the world about 30,086,319 of the total cases, 21,833,645 total recovered ad 945,962 total deaths were recorded until September 17, 2020. And the W.H.O. (The World Health Organization) on 11th March 2020, officially declared that CoVID-19 is a pandemic**. (Seble Tadesse1, Worku Muluye2, 2020)**. It has made life more difficult for all people around the world. Gradually, from Wuhan, a city in China, the coronavirus spread all over the world through human contact and communication and created enormous havoc in life, and ruined careers and professions across the world. It has made its target for prey all nations altogether. From China to Italy, Italy to the U.S.A. an uncountable number of people died of it. In March 2020, Coruna surged its first wave on a large scale in India. The first sparkling fangs of Coruna Virus were first noticed on the 8th of May 2020, in India and 56,342 active cases had been reported overnight. **(S. Udhaya Kumar 1, D. Thirumal Kumar 1, B. Prabhu Christopher 2 and C.G priya Doss, 2020**). India is the second largest populated country in the world where a population of more than 1.34 billion and the infection threat is quite alarming because of the fear of quick infection. As a result of it, the Indian government decided to close all sorts of educational as well as professional courses in no time. On 19th March 2020, the **First Janata Curfew** is announced by the honorable PM of India, Narendra Modi in his 29-minute short speech and it is followed by consecutive lockdown periods in India. The **First Lockdown began on the 24th of March 2020** and lasted for 21 days across the country when there were roughly 500 instances. Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi ordered a 3-week total lockdown and appealed to the people of India to fight against Coruna Virus through the **MAAN KI BAAT** episode (March –June 2020), especially for sending messages to fight back against the Covid-19 virus and he wanted to urge all the Indians to join hands together and help the government of India to fight back against the unknown virus. (**Gurjeet Kaur&Ashutosh Mishra, 2020**).The Virus being highly infectious and speedy spreadable and a vulnerable state like India posed a serious threat to crowded areas such as public spaces, markets, academic institutions, traveling and tourism destinations, and workplaces. The consequences of the Lockdown pandemic on the students' community were the worst because it directly affected their education system. The system that had been going on for centuries, and suddenly get collapsed and students were stuck at home. According to a report by **UNESCO** with the end of the physical mood of teaching, at least 1.725 billion students were affected and as a result, 99.9 % students of in the 192 countries of the whole world suffered a setback. (**Kiran L. Maney1*, S. R. Saritha2, Sukanya Hegde3, 2021**). It can infect people at an alarming rate and its power of spreading from one to another is very rapid. Although it is basically an air-borne disease, still it tends to be spread to another person through sneezing, coughing, and zoon tic droplets. It became urgent to deploy online teaching and learning in schools and other educational institutions in order to avoid the corona infection chain. To maintain the quality of students' learning and teachers' teaching, governments took multifarious activities related to social media and online teaching. Different online platform plays different roles. For example, Google Meet, ZOOM, YouTube, etc. social online media, besides the introduction of a good number of educational facilities for the students like the starting of Alternative Academic, PRAGYATA guidelines, DIKSHA, Mano Darpan program, etc. Despite all the efforts of the central and state government of India, the majority of the student community in rural India, could not have access to the benefit of online education due to several causes viz, lack of internet facility, shortage of smartphones, and lack of knowledge about internet use. It has been observed that even the old teachers in rural areas are neither well acquainted with online Education, nor are interested to know and practice the deliberation of their teaching online during lockdown for the students' sake.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY: -

The present paper has imbibed the following research objectives:-

- To highlight the different initiatives adopted by governments for online education during the COVID-19 pandemic period.
- To show how the pupils of rural areas were deprived of having access to the benefit of online Education comparatively to the students of Urban areas.
- Some suggestions for the re-introduction of offline Education.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY: -

A survey-based descriptive research method has been adopted for the purpose of carrying out this research methodology. And in order to show the impact of Online Education on the pupils of both rural and urban areas due to the Covid-19 pandemic Lockdown period, the quantitative approach has been taken into consideration. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, it was not possible for the researchers to go through the physical mood of interviews, feedback, and questionnaires. Hence, online Google forms have been circulated in order to get the required responses from the target groups after several attempts. The survey method is actually the self-administered survey method and an online questionnaire was prepared based on Google Forms and was properly supplied to both students and teachers at two different time intervals in order to know the impact of Online Education on both rural areas and on the urban areas. Both structured and unstructured questions are also set in interviewing the students and teachers using online platforms. The first survey was conducted on the 10th of April 2020 and the last survey was conducted on the 10th of May 2021, keeping a long distance of 11 months to observe the result of the difference of the impact of online education in the rural areas and on the urban areas. **(Shukla, 2022).** The graphical representation technique has been used in order to show the comparative study of the impact on both rural and urban areas. The equally selected candidates from both rural and urban areas have been taken as a participant in the sample of the population for the study. Then the population is further categorized into two rural areas of pupils and urban areas of pupils. Collected data is analyzed and explained in a graphical representation with minute details. Besides various sources of information on COVId-19 as research data, different journals from different authentic websites, a survey report, and e-contents related to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Education, etc. have been used as part of the research methodology for this paper. Furthermore, the government initiatives of both state and central have been counted as part of the source of materials for the present study. For example, the union government declared a country-wide lockdown on 16th March 2020 and the Central Board of Secondary Education postponed all examinations of both secondary and higher secondary on 18th March 2020 in India. The simple random technique will be followed while collecting data for conducting a survey on the students of rural and urban areas in order to show the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic Lockdown and the access to the benefit of Online Education initiated by the Governments. Nevertheless, as a part of the research methodology, a graphical representation of the survey report, results, government order, etc., has been shown along with other data. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods will be adopted for the study.

GOVERNMENT'S DECLARATION OF LOCKDOWN AND RESTRICTIONS ON COVID-19:-

The government of India takes an immediate initiative and declared restrictions to all educational, vocational, and professional institutions gradually. (**Anubha Goel1,2*, Pallavi Saxena3, Saurabh**

Sonwani4, Shubham Rathi1,, 2021.).The details of the major restrictions due to Covid-19 are given in the below-given table in a detailed manner.

Name of the phases	Dates	Restrictions
Phase-0	1-24th March2020	No Major restrictions by the government.
Phase-1	25th March to 14th April 2020.	All transport, industrial, commercial, and private are closed.
Phase-2	15th April-3rd May2020	Allowed farming, some industries, and movement of the Cargo.
Phase-3	4th April- 17th May 2020	Cities are classified into three zones- RED-ORANGE-GREEN
Phase-4	18th May-31st May2020	Allowed movements of vehicles without any special conditions and restrictions.

During the initial lockdown periods, the teaching-learning process got badly affected because of a lack of knowledge in using online platforms. Not only the students, but even the teachers were a bit confused about adopting the new platform of teaching-learning. Nobody was ready to be accustomed to using it. The teaching-learning process came to a halt due to the unexpected hit of the corona in the country. The imposition of a countrywide lockdown on schools, colleges, etc., educational institutions had affected more than 500 million students' education. MHRD did not sit idly and took some alternative teaching-learning processes. Soon the physical mood of teaching is shifted to the online mode of teaching. But it brought a lot of challenges along with it besides its multiple facilities.

ROLE OF ADMINISTRATION FOR CONTINUATION OF TEACHING-LEARNING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: -

It does not mean that the government of India sits idly and keeps mum during the covid-19 pandemic, rather the government of India was very active and energetic and it would not be wrong to say that the government of India was students' friendly and in order to continue the quality education, the government of India launched several students' – teacher friendly educational channel and apps so that knowledge of quality Education can be maintained and be reached to each and every student sitting in the corner of the country. With that mission, the government introduced PM-e-VIDYA as a part of AtmaNirbhar Bharat on 17th May 2020. DIKSHA, SWAYAM PRABHA TV channel, MANODARPAN, etc. Moreover, PRAGYATA guidelines on Digital Education-2020, L E G C L (learning Enhancement Guidelines for Continuous Learning, C A P S E (Covid-19 Action Plan for School Education), and other facilities were also introduced there. To avoid the impact of the corona, the final examination of class X and class XII were cancelled, instead of it, an alternative marking system was introduced by the order of the MHRD, Government of India. Free online resources were made available for all. Students were provided with some of the best-leading learning applications viz, Biju's,

Meritnation, Vedantu, Khan Research Centre, Doubtnut, Vidyakaul, etc. For the higher study pursuers UGC, the highest apex body of Education in India introduced several learning consortiums so that the pursuit of acquiring knowledge can go on continuously in order to fulfill this mission, e-shod Shindu, the consortium for higher Education Electronics based on IFLIBNET CENTRE is made functional and all study materials that provide access to e-resources for college and university students. **(Snigdha Jindal1, Chaitali Chandwani2*, Devanshi Sharma3, 2022).**

IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE CLASSES &ITS DRAWBACKS IN RURAL INDIA:
Covid-19 had a very bad effect on India's economy but did not stop there. It directly affected the educational system of the country. Schools, colleges, and universities are forced to be closed due to the fear of the Covid-19 virus. Hence, only online education becomes essential to all. Due to the closure of the educational institutions, teachers, students, parents, guardians, etc., everyone fell into great trouble. In this situation, only Distance Learning through the online mood is the only solution to the problem. But due to the lack of network infrastructure, computers, internet access, etc., rural students suffered a lot more in India than urban area pupils. According to a report by UNESCO, the Covid-19 pandemic has interrupted the face-to-face classes for at least 9 students out of 10 across the globe. There are approximately 195 countries that have closed completely their educational institutions and it resulting in the miserable condition of 1.5 billion students from primary to higher education. It is estimated that 50 % (826 million) of students have no computers and 43% (706 million) of students have no access to the internet, and even 56 million students do not know how to use mobile because they are not covered by mobile networks. **(Seble Tadesse1, Worku Muluye2, 2020).**Thousands of students in every nook and corner of the different states across the country are stuck at home. They neither could go outside to play even nor could study at home at all. As an alternative platform for the continuation of their studies, online classes are born in India to help students and teachers for maintaining the Teaching -Learning process. According to the report of UNESCO, 137 billion pupils in almost 138 countries have suffered a lot and their studies have been hampered because of Covid-19 since its outbreak in 2019. It is also estimated that almost 60.2 % of teachers of both schools and colleges were forced to remain absent. Under these critical circumstances, e-education becomes the only and sole means of communication between the student fraternity and teachers. Keeping in view of this situation different online platforms like ZOOM, SKYPE, GOOGLE CLASS MEET, etc. are extensively used to engage more and more students.

There are many drawbacks observed in online teaching. The main cause of such drawbacks is the socio-economic division of the country. People who live in rural areas must struggle almost every day to meet their daily needs. And there are many villages that still exist in India where even electricity could not reach and smartphone, the internet, etc. is like a dream for them. Under these circumstances, implementing online classes through technology, in a country like India is a mockery to those pupils who do not yet possess the blessings of technology. According to the report of the Financial Express, even less than 30 % of the rural population of India could access the Internet facility. Further studies show that old and aged teachers were struggling to teach the students using high and sophisticated software for teaching students online. As per the report of The Hindu, only 8% of pupils in the rural area of the country got actually the benefit of online Education whereas the total population of India according to the report of the micro trends of the year 2020 was 898,024,053. **(BHADRA, 2022).**

IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC ON EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS: -

The English word "technology" has been derived from two Greek words. One is "techne" and the other is "logos". "Techne" means an art or skill or any means by which a thing is gained. And "Logos" means words or utterances expressing inward thought. So, literally, the English word technology means words or discourse about the way things are gained. **(Tulley, 2014.)** Technological logistic support saved lives astonishingly with the help of Technology. It is the only medium of communication that is not affected by the Covid-19 contagious virus. Human society had to maintain a social and physical distance but in the case of technology and social media, there are no such rules and regulations that need to be maintained. It requires a smartphone and internet access only. With the declaration of the Coruna Lockdown on 24th March 2020, almost every sector of the country gets disconnected and disturbed, especially the physical mood of the teaching-learning process in rural areas. The effort of the government to spread online education is quite praiseworthy but it could not make any good results in the villages, due to the lack of internet, smartphones, and trained teachers, rural pupils got a major setback. Rather a digital India Mission created a digital divide between the Rich and the Poor. The rural area pupils were more victims and sufferers than the urban area pupils. As soon as the lockdown is sparkled, shops, factories, and offices in the urban areas are closed as a result, poor people from the urban areas are forced to return home, they become homeless, jobless, and under the odd situation, it is not easy to buy a new set of Android mobile for their children and recharge net pack to use for attending online classes. Sometimes, it has been noticed that there are many children who used to go to schools in the village in a rural family and there is only a set of smartphones for the whole family members, on such a situation how do learn different lessons for different classes, how to manage with a single android mobile. Not only that, if anyone of such a big family member wishes to go out of his /her home for a neighbor's home to have a share of the android phone for attending online classes, then due to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, police would not allow them to do so. Thus, it is obviously affecting the online education of the rural school child rather than urban areas, and poor economy, infrastructure, etc. responsible for it. It has been found that less than 18% of rural people had internet access compared to 42% of the urban areas of people. **(Atulkar, 2021).**

A SURVEY REPORT ON THE EFFECT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN ON THE RURAL AND URBAN AREAS: -

As a part of the research methodology, a simple random sampling technique has been applied to 250 students of both urban and rural areas out of the population of 1000 students, using online questionnaires, feedback, interviews, etc. in the Dhalai District of Tripura, India. The researchers have chosen 5(five) schools from urban areas and another 5 (five) schools from rural areas where the total population constitutes 1000. The research findings have been generalized to the other districts of the state of Tripura and thus confirmed the hypothesis that rural pupils suffered a lot more than urban students due to covid-19 lockdown pandemic despite the government's effort to reach the benefits of online Education. The following chart has been shown as the details of the survey report by Dr. Babudhan Tripura and Ratan Sarkar for educational purposes only.

Bar Graph: The Graph shows the impact of online education on the students of Urban and Rural areas during the Covid-19 pandemic in the Dhalai District of Tripura.
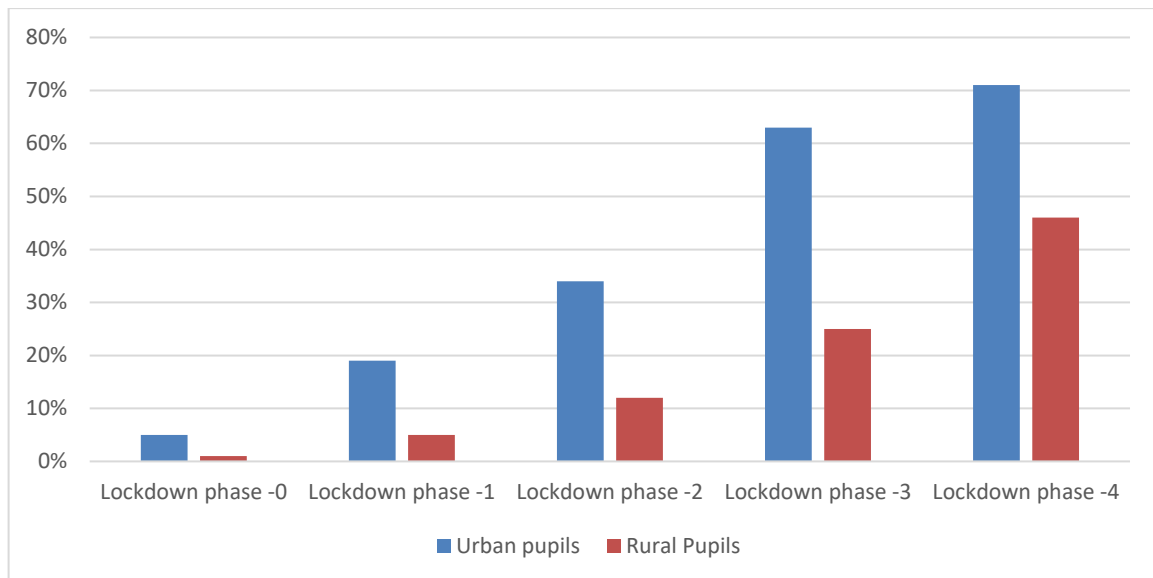
In the 0 phase of the lockdown, there is not much effect of the covid19 on the rural and urban areas of pupils although in the case of using the internet and other technology-related matters, the urban area students are having always upper hand. In Phase 1 of the covid-19 lockdown, it has been seen that only 5% of rural pupils got to use the benefits of technology as compared to the 19% of urban area pupils. In the 2nd phase of the covid-19 pandemic lockdown, 34% of urban area students were able to use the internet for attending online classes as compared to 12% of rural pupils. Again, in the 3rd phase of the covid-19 pandemic lockdown, it has been seen that 25% of rural area children got to use of internet facility for attending online classes as compared to 63% of urban area pupils, whereas in the 4rth phase of the lockdown, there is a little bit of improvement in case of the use of internet facility even in the rural area also but still the number is less as compared to the pupils of the urban area. A total of 46% of rural area pupils were seen to use the internet compared to 71% of internet and smartphone users in the urban area. Hence, from the above Bar chart, it is estimated that in the case of the use of smartphones, the internet, and online classes using them, the urban area pupils always prevailed over the rural pupils. Further, it has also been observed that many rural students have no internet access, and no single-handed smartphones, and sometimes, it is seen that even they have no idea how to use them.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

It has been observed that rural pupils are fewer users of the internet, smartphones, and online classes, and even their parents and guardians are also ignorant of the use of it. Hence, they have apathy regarding the use of the internet, and parents or guardians have negative thought about the use of mobile phones by their children. They think that if their children use mobile especially girls, then they will go astray, they will fall in love, and elope with someone. Hence, they don't like to see the mobile phone in the hands of their issues. Moreover, reading at the time of reading, touching mobile, or using mobile is one sort of ban in the homes of rural areas. Besides, covid19 pandemic and consecutive lockdowns made the maximum number of rural people jobless, they lost their income and were not in a position to feed their children twice a meal and buy a smartphone and recharge it alternatively after some time, was a dream for a poor, uneducated, and ignorant family. On the mther hand, in the urban area, people generally have different sources of income besides jobs and they had enough money to buy and save food and other essential things for their family members. They have well-built infrastructures and as the guardians more

or less have an idea of the use of the Internet and online classes, they could help and encourage their children to use smartphones for attending online classes.

RESEARCH GAP SUGGESTIONS: -

Due to several reasons, the researcher has been bound to leave his study up to here. Further studies and investigations into this area are left open. Among the major obstacles to going ahead for details into the area are lack of infrastructures, lack of well roads and communications, even the village people have a faith that use of the mobile phone is one of the root causes of failure in the examination. So, they have a vigilant eye over their children so that they cannot touch any smart phone. Hence, it has been suggested that the government should campaign a mass campaign for the utility and multiple applicability of the use of the internet and smartphones. Not only this, but in order to boost up the e-net connection, and e-education in rural areas, the government should come forward with a package of economic boosters, and invest to the rural economy for the spread of knowledge of modern education and inspire the rural people with a hefty amount of economic booster for changing the overall society for a better future. Education policy for the upliftment of rural people if required, after a good survey should be adopted for the betterment of society. Many technical institutions should be started for the enrollment of more rural pupils. At the same time, it should be ensured by the government that well-trained teachers in the respective areas should be appointed soon in order to mitigate the burning problems in society. one can go for a further study into the sector of investigating the root causes of the digital divide between rural and urban areas and highlight some logical solutions to it. One can again, go for a further study looking into the apathy of the government regarding the development of internet connection in the rural areas as compared to the urban areas. It is also seen that even the private sectors are more interested to develop internet infrastructures in urban areas compared to rural ones. One can further investigate it for suggesting some logical solution to the area. With the impact of the corona lockdown on rural as well as urban areas, the concept of the teaching-learning process is also changed thoroughly, that is there is a great scope for a virtual approach to pedagogy in the near future. One can look into it for further study and find out some suggestions for more adaptability and acceptability of the virtual mood of teaching in both rural and urban areas in the country.

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