Research Paper

Problems and Challenges of Education System during COVID-19 Pandemic in India

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ABSTRACT

The source of the COVID-19 pandemic is the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which is an infectious type of disease. The first known case of coronavirus was identified in Wuhan, in the Hubei province of China, in December 2019. The first case of COVID-19 in India was found on January 31st, 2020 in Kerala. COVID-19 affected various people in different ways. Most infected people develop mild to moderate illnesses and recover without hospitalization. Keeping these things in mind, the focus of this article to explore the different hardships and problems faced by the Indian education sector (teachers & students) in the Covid-19 Pandemic time and to suggest to some preventive measures to overcome the negative effect of this pandemic as well as future pandemic situation. This article is also yielding fruitful insights for children who lost their parents in this pandemic by providing them with free education and financial support, as well as ensuring comprehensive child care and protection. As, it is evident that the education sector is most prone to this pandemic. To fight problem like these, government can set up a number of stress coping centers that may help our students fight this pandemic more effectively and efficiently.

***Keywords:** Psycho-social effect, Pandemic, Educational System*

Swami Vivekanand said, "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man" (Madaan 2019, 1.1). Similarly, John Dewey defines education as "the power by which man is able to control his environment and fulfill his possibilities (Madaan 2019, 1.1). This statement shows the importance of education in our society as well as our development. Due to the spread of the virus, the government decided to close the schools, colleges, and universities nationwide that have remained closed for the last two years. The closing of educational institutions not only affected the students but also indirectly affected parents, society, and intellectual resources as well as the growth of knowledge capital in the country.

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As per the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR), rural literacy grew by about 3.42 per cent in India between the years 2003 and 2014 (IBEF 2022, Blog). Further, the government of India has launched several schemes (Samagra Shiksha, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Sarv Siksha Abhiyan, Jahawar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Sab Padhen Sab Badhen, Mid-day Meal Schemes, Ao School Chale Ham, Digital Initiatives etc.) for increasing literacy and growth rate (IBEF 2022, Blog). The purpose of these initiatives is to increase the enrollment rate and encourage the already enrolled students to attend classes regularly (Indian Brand Equity Foundation 2022, Blog).

Covid-19 pandemic not only affected the physical and mental health of people but it has made adverse effect on the educational sector of India. Sudden shift of offline education to online created difficulty for the Indian people especially in the under developed areas. There were many reasons for this: firstly, we did not have the availability of technical equipment with true students. Secondly, some students had such equipment available but did not know how to use it properly. Third, the lack of technical teachers who could operate the technical equipment perfectly. Fourthly, there was no networking or proper network work in rural areas of India. Ultimately, it has been seen that during the entire COVID-19 pandemic, the sector which has been affected the most is the education sector.

Education and Covid-19
The Covid-19 pandemic has adversely affected the education in India as well as it has adversely impacted the normal development of children in India. The cause of disruption in education is the lack of adequate digital infrastructure support. There is a need to promote rural education in India. There was already a discernible gap between the rural and urban education systems in India for which rural children have faced so many educational difficulties and accumulated developmental problems as well (Rural India: The key to propelling education in India" 2021, News Blog India Today).

As per data of the annual state education report survey (ASER, 2020), during the pandemics two-thirds of rural children's students did not received learning materials and any support (Singh 2021, News Blog India Today). That's why it is necessary to improve the education system in India in under developed areas because education plays an important role in improving economic and social well-being (ASER 2020) (Singh 2021, News Blog India Today).

An article was published in The Wire News by Murali Krishnan (2021) reported that, there are millions of poor families affected by COIVD-19 badly. Millions of children from poor families in India dropped out of school during COVID-19's final two years, as poor families lost their jobs and faced economic hardship. In March 2020, schools were closed by the Indian government to control the COVID-19 virus. Several surveys have been conducted in India during the COVID-19 period. These show the current scenario of the rural education system (Krishnan 2021).

According to the Unified District Information System for Education, approximately 17% of secondary school students drop out and never return to school (News Bureau 2021, ABP Live). Not only did boys face trouble for education after the closing of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also girls faced a lot of problems after the closing of schools in rural as well as urban areas. As per the data of the National Right to Education Forum's policy brief, approximately 10 million girls could leave their secondary school level

education (Trivedi 2021, Magazine Blog). As per UNESCO, India has one of the countries in which the closure of schools is too long (UNESCO 2020).

Although the Indian government had shifted the education system to online mode, children, especially those belonging to poor families, were not able to take advantage of this because they did not have digital devices and the internet as well. Pre-pandemic, poor children were going to school regularly, but the poor families were gradually buying digital devices, although these families weren't capable of buying any digital devices. Although digital devices and the internet have helped enough to make online education easy, eliminate inequality in education, and improve the quality of education. The government of India has taken vows to reduce the dropout rate of children's education. Quality education is one of the goals of sustainable development goals (UNESCO 2021). To achieve this goal, the government of India has already decided to increase by 100% the enrolment of children till 2030 (Pradhan, 2021, ePaper).

An article published by Anviksha Kaul (2021) in ActionAid is an NGO working in India since 1972. 320 million students physically appeared in school for the last time on March 25, 2020. The cause of all education systems' shifting to online mode is the coronavirus outbreak. The COVID-19 pandemic has created havoc all over the world. Another report by UNESCO shows that approximately 73.8% of total enrolled learners were affected very badly by 186 countries (UNESCO 2020).

The shifting of online classes has negatively impacted the university, college, and school students because it had been done for the very first time in India, and the students of each category faced internet problems because the internet was not working properly at that time (Kaul 2021, Blog). Students' mental health has suffered as a result of the shift to online education. They showed some psychological signs like stress, anxiety, depression, and PTSD (Kaul 2021, Blog). But children faced more depression and loneliness. The reason is that after the closing of schools, they did not get any chance to play with their peers and schoolmates (Kaul 2021, Blog).

In this pandemic, teachers as well as students have faced a lot of difficulties because they did not know how to use technology. There have been so many problems that arose during online classes, such as disturbed classroom sessions, interrupted lectures, technical errors, and glitches, as well as students who were taking a long time to make new sets up for connecting to online classes. To solve these problems, they needed to learn new technical skills as well as use various digital devices like smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktops, which were expensive for them (Kaul, 2021). 30,000 enrolments of children in schools have been facilitated by ActionAid, of which 40% are girls, as more than 1,500 schools are monitored by ActionAid and provide basic amenities and school management. ActionAid started a campaign called "A Child's Right to Their Childhood." It worked for children's rights in invisible areas of India with the help of this campaign (Kaul 2021, Blog).

The survey also showed that there are so many schools completely closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of funds and resources. The COVID-19 pandemic helped to discriminate between rich and poor students. Rich students had all the requirements like mobile phones, internet, desktops, etc. for acquiring education, but on the other hand, poor students faced so many problems such as the problem of mobile phones, the problem of the internet, broadband problems, etc. (Kaul 2021, Blog). Online education has dug a digital ditch among economically weak students. Lockdown has caused a lot of distress and crises

among economically deprived students. Various reports and surveys showed that economically weak students were unable to explore online learning. There is a need to provide immediate solutions to make education easy (Kaul 2021).

As per data from UNICEF (2021), it was noted that there were 888 million children all over the world who were continuing to face an interruption of their education due to school closure, either partially or fully. It was also noted that due to the COVID-19 outbreak, there were 14 countries around the world that remained largely closed from March 2020 to February 2021 and in two-thirds of Latin America and Caribbean countries, approximately 98 million school children were badly affected ("Closure of Schools due to COVID impacted 247 million Children in India: UNICEF" 2021).

According to G.S. Hall's (1904) adolescence is a period of heightened "storm and stress," (Madaan 2019, 1.22). School in the COVID-19 pandemic closed partially or fully that binds adolescence in a courtyard that limits their social involvement, educational activities, and cultural programs that affect them psychologically. They are under pressure due to uncertainty in time of closure and opening of school, delay in results, postponement of exams, career pressure, lack of social affiliation that leads to a rise in suicide cases as well as suicidal behavior in our country during a pandemic, especially in students (especially in educational hub cities like Kota, Delhi, Prayagraj, & Varanasi).

The 2020 National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports released on October 28, 2021 confirm that the number of road accidents and associated deaths fell sharply; suicide saw a large surge among those who died by suicide; students and small entrepreneurs saw the biggest jump. The annual accidental death and suicides (ADSI) report, which is released by NCRB (it works under the ministry of home affairs), is the official source of statistics and the number of accidents and deaths by accident or suicide in India. In a pandemic year, NCRB data shows a big jump in deaths by suicide among students (NCRB 2020, 7).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The significance of this article in people's lives will be enormous by studying problems which were faced by the rural population as well as poorer sections of urban society because they are not very efficient in technology as well as in resources. Keeping this view in mind from this research, we can upgrade our technology as well. We can update vulnerable sections of our society with more hands-on experience with technology that will help us to fight further pandemics and progressively help us to go parallel with other countries in terms of online teaching. Research is also yielding fruitful insights for children who lost their parents in this pandemic by providing them with free education and financial support, as well as ensuring comprehensive child care and protection. As we all know, the education sector is most prone to this pandemic. To fight this problem, we can set up a number of stress coping centers, which will help our students fight this pandemic more effectively and efficiently.

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