



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 HIGHER EDUCATION AND INDIAN SOCIETY: CHALLENGES.

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ABSTRACT

The influence of the COVID-19 epidemic on students' learning in higher education and the teaching-learning connection are significantly related. All physical events and activities were canceled due to the pandemic, thus this "sudden" shift in strategy inevitably affects all aspects of the higher education industry. Since conventional classroom instruction was replaced by virtual e-learning through online web platforms, this revolutionary development had a significant influence on higher education in India. Lackluster student placements, internships, training, apprenticeships, and admissions were a problem for the universities. At last, based on the challenges faced by the students and teachers, some solutions, fruitful suggestions, and recommendations are provided in this chapter to minimize and overcome the difficulties.

Keywords: Higher Education, e-Learning, impact, pandemic, COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

The worldwide spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching effects on many areas of people's lives, including but not limited to the following: the economy; commerce; research; education; health; sport; transportation; place of worship; social ties; politics; governance; and entertainment. Among these the education sector of India has been facing tremendous challenge and terribly affected due to sudden closures, lockdowns and quarantines (Jain and Agarwal, 2020). According to Pareek and Soni (2020), education is one of the main foundations of our social structure and the foundation of any country. A further shift from the traditional era of face-to-face education to the era of online learning has had a negative impact on the education of university students. The government has stopped all physical activities,

shut down all educational institutions, sealed off the cities, and prohibited people from moving from one city to another in an effort to stop the spread of COVID-19. This "sudden" change in strategy inevitably affects all the factors leading to the creation of a "new normality" in higher education. This paradigm shift has led to re-orientation of the teaching-learning curriculum globally (Hayashi *et al.*, 2020; Khan and Naeem, 2021).

Despite having less resources and technological infrastructure than other countries, the Ministry of Higher Education positively responded to the situation and took immediate action overnight to transform and evolve teaching and learning strategies from in-person lectures to e-Learning platforms in order to maintain the continuity of teaching-

learning, research, and service to the community (Dhoot, 2020).

Educational institutions have turned to using online learning platforms to keep students safe from viral exposures and to maintain academic activities. This has caused educational institutions to quickly seek innovative ideas. The abrupt conclusion of the COVID-19 epidemic has disrupted society worldwide and profoundly altered higher education, in addition to changing the global architecture.

The lockdown drastically disrupted education system worldwide which has threatened their future education rights. Since the conventional position of teaching and learning had to be quickly altered due to the crisis, virtual education became the most popular and generally approved form of instruction. For the sake of the students' safety and security, the government ordered the temporary closure of all educational institutions, which has had a significant effect on their ability to study. To reduce the disruption and adverse impact, educational institutes adopted some emergency alternative new ways of education system to teach students (Jena, 2020).

OBJECTIVES OF COVID-19

The goal of this study is to determine how the COVID-19 epidemic has impacted higher education in India and to provide recommendations on how to best mitigate its impacts. The primary purpose of this paper is to investigate the role of technological factors in online learning platform diffusion in higher education. The main objective of this analysis is to review the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on higher education and the difficulties raised by the sudden shift from traditional classroom teaching to online learning. This article highlights on how different higher education systems can be affected by the current global health crisis. The study's primary goal is to provide insight into the issues, challenges, opportunities, positive and negative impacts, and strategies that can be taken to manage the corona crisis and build a resilient education system by drawing on data gathered from a wide range of reputable websites, journals, e-contents, government agency reports, books, magazines, literature

reviews, newspapers, and research from a variety of academic disciplines. This chapter provides a general overview of the several approaches educators and educational institutions in India have used to transition from conventional education to the online digital world. The results of the study will aid higher education leaders in reviewing and understanding how various policies were adopted for teaching and learning as well as what various measures were taken to lessen the negative effects and overcome challenges in emergency situations of the Indian higher education system. A number of important businesses, including education, have been negatively affected by the worldwide lockdowns caused by the recent epidemic.

Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Higher Education:

1. Because of the pandemic, many educational facilities had to shut unexpectedly, forcing students to turn to online courses.
2. The education of young people in low-income communities throughout the world was severely impacted when digital learning was introduced to schools around the time of the epidemic. Those families that could not afford smartphones, Wi-Fi, laptops, or PCs felt the impact of the disadvantage very away.
3. Many parents were unprepared to take on the position of home educator and found themselves thrust into the role overnight.
4. Poor internet connectivity, data limits, and a lack of resources are the three largest hurdles to online learning for schools.
5. The biggest worry is that students aren't gaining any real knowledge from the transition to online education and virtual classrooms.
6. Because of this change, we are now able to adapt and acquire exposure to methods of learning that have never been employed before.
7. Because it encourages self-learning, provides opportunities to study from a range of resources, and can be personalised to each student's needs,

open and distance learning was popular among students even in the midst of the pandemic.

8. Attempts to attract new members were severely hampered by the pandemic. It also had an effect on where students were placed.
9. As a result of the pandemic, many students and professionals had to abruptly return home from overseas, causing many graduates to lose potential work opportunities.

It has been noted that Covid-19 has both good and bad effects on the status of online learning in higher education as well as in research and professional development (Dhoot, 2020; Ramakrishna, 2021). Every calamity has its bright and dark sides. Teachers and students who work in the education sector encounter a variety of difficulties and possibilities (Kaur, 2020).

POSITIVE IMPACT:

Pandemic is acting as a catalyst in this revolutionary massive transition of the current Higher Educational practices (Khan and Naeem, 2021). This crisis paved the way for a new hybrid education model to deal with the pandemic by introducing e-learning culture and practices which reduced the huge educational gap in the higher education institutions. Virtual education creates many new trends, new perspectives and new models for learning which is only the option to bridge the gap in higher education in the pandemic situation (Kaur, 2020). If properly constructed, it has been shown that online courses are just as successful as conventional ones, which implies that e-learning could be the ideal alternative to traditional classroom instruction. Because online learning was efficient and most admirable to them during lockdown, recent research have indicated that students were happy and reacted favourably to it (Muthuprasad et al., 2021). If we consider the positive side, it encouraged all teachers and students for collaborative and joint teaching-learning and research-work which enriched one another in this difficult time by sharing the knowledge between institutions globally. E-

conferences and webinars are becoming commonplace ways for people all over the world to share their knowledge and experience. Academics and students had more technological proficiency as a consequence, and they had more time and opportunity to focus on their professional growth and to advance and strengthen their technical competence (Ramakrishna, 2021). e-learning stage decidedly affects students by conducting online examination, viva through video conferencing, online meeting, attending any lecture or course curriculum without any geographical boundaries, by changing the curriculum, 24x7 -time table with no time restriction, by reducing travel cost, print cost etc. (Mur Salim, 2021). Many higher education institutions instructed their labs and involved themselves to research on COVID-19 for searching the vaccine and drugs, which could be considered as another positive side as many innovative approaches came out to treat the disease (Marinoni and Land, 2020). Now- a-days it has been observed that, students are using their mobile and computers mostly to learn the new things, to attend their classes, to submit their assignments which make them smart and more conscious for tomorrow and prepare themselves for competitions globally; which also could be considered as advantage and positive side of using e-learning platforms in higher education (Yaseen and Joshi, 2021).

NEGATIVE IMPACT:

Students and educators have experienced many negative effects of online learning although online learning has been treated as a remedy for solving different problems of higher education during pandemic situation (Hayashi et al., 2020). As a result of the significant changes brought about by COVID-19, which caused classes to be cancelled for many days, students' performance and interest in their studies were severely harmed. It also had been noticed that the quality of education reduced where the resources were limited. Due to frequent engagement in online learning students and teachers were facing eye strain causing negative impacts on their health (Yu, 2021). The educational assessment system was severely affected as most of the internal assessments cancelled and external examinations postponed causing negative

impact and uncertainty for the future of the students. The researchers endured a great deal of hardship, had challenges when trying to collaborate with others locally, nationally, and worldwide, and were unable to access laboratories, libraries, archives, museum collections, etc. and funding opportunities for other areas of research have not increased; which is also a dark side of the lockdown (Ramakrishna, 2021).

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INDIA:

India has also suffered significantly as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, which has engulfed the whole planet. The World Health Organisation (WHO) was forced to label the outbreak a pandemic because of the enormous spread of the disease. This massive epidemic could only be contained and defeated by instilling social distance in individuals and preventing them from migrating away from social interactions. The whole nation had to be shut down, and all activity had to come to a complete halt with little to no human contact in order to accomplish this goal. Thus, a lockdown had to be implemented throughout the nation. Towards the middle of March, the Indian government began acting decisively to stop this pandemic onslaught. India has blocked all of its borders by the final week of March. The lockdown period, which began on March 22 and now lasts until May 3, 2020, is now in effect over the whole nation. During this lockdown, the people have supported the administration, and the nation as a whole has shown a tremendous reaction. It may be difficult, nevertheless, to deal with certain outliers. While roughly 95% of the populace is cooperative, the remaining 5% pose a danger to the efforts and precautions being taken to control this epidemic and are to blame for the systemic breakdown as a whole. Jared Diamond's book "Collapse," which is mentioned in this context, must be mentioned. In this book, five causes for the dissolution of complex civilizations are listed. As these:

- Environmental change
- Opposing neighbours
- Problems with the environment
- The fallout from key trade partners

The reaction of society to the four causes mentioned above. The author makes reference to cultures from the past that were far less complicated than the intricate international structure of states that exists now. The first three elements are real risks to our country in the current environment. The fourth element of failed commerce because of a weakening economy may be brought on by the COVID-19 cry. When we take a closer look at these hypothetical danger indicators presented in the book, we will see that societal behaviours, attitudes, and methods are consistent with these indications. To emphasise the book's argument about "Hostile Neighbours," let's concentrate on the animosity that everyday people experience from their neighbours. The fundamental causes of this antagonism may be traced back to people's comparable actions or attitudes in many tiny contexts, such as when buying groceries in little quantities, buying vegetables, buying gas or obtaining official authorization to leave the house for life-or-death emergencies. Housing communities have reported incidents of hostility against people who had recently been abroad. When their other neighbours in the community asked them to be tested for COVID-19 or to go into isolation, these people reacted negatively. As a result, these people misinterpreted, misbehaved, and even responded violently by fighting with their neighbours. As a result of their concern of being expelled from their homes and communities, some residents, however, have not even told government authorities about their travel past. In wealthy class or upper middle class civilizations, these situations have been seen. Unexpectedly, similar anger has been seen directed against Corona Warriors including doctors, nurses, health professionals, police, and other residents of housing societies or neighbourhoods. A few of these COVID fighters are being ignored by others out of concern that they may get sick. Because of this unwarranted dread in their thoughts, society members do not assist them or their families, instead treating them with distrust and lack of respect. In addition to the possibility of losing their residences, they may also face broad rejection. In order to avoid increasing their risk of contracting COVID-19, several physicians and other healthcare professionals have been requested to leave their rental residences by their landlords. It has been noted

that most patients of private societies and flats do not allow the majority of physicians who operate private clinics to open them. Police and medical professionals have also reportedly been attacked on many occasions. There have even been allegations of misbehaviour and harassment against medical professionals. For the protection and security of its members, medical organisations have asked the government for assistance.

Looking at the bigger picture inside the nation, a small number of individuals are putting the whole nation into a serious problem by refusing to cooperate and by breaking the rules set out by the government.

Such incidents eloquently demonstrate that civilizations are complex, with socioeconomic institutions that are prone to disintegration because complexity increases vulnerability. Normal social and economic life is inevitably impacted when big or small regions are shut down, or when individuals are quarantined or held in isolation. Except for a few basic commodities and services, there is limited human mobility along with decreased consumption of all products and services. In addition, it has slowed down the small proprietorship and partnership firms, travel and tourism, and other service industries. Because they lack cash in hand, daily wage labourers, street vendors, small-time dealers, etc. face a major danger to their ability to survive in such a circumstance.

The typical work or activities of people cannot continue. The current state of unemployment becomes worse. Incomes decrease or stop. People who are financially better situated cope with varied degrees of hardship, while others from lower economic strata nearly do without. People are on the edge of starvation because they have very little or no money. They are more vulnerable to illness because of their reduced physical state. Many individuals who lose their source of income face the possibility of experiencing lasting poverty as a result of the socioeconomic system's deterioration. Instead of merely a promise of a brighter future, they will want immediate, practical assistance in the form of food and cash. The time is here, and we must all behave in a more socially responsible manner and uphold our

societal obligations. To address the dangers and reduce the potential of socio-economic collapse beyond the point of restoration, society, acting via elected governments, must take appropriate, adequate, and timely actions. The federal and state governments have a strict responsibility to provide this assistance in the form of social, financial and economic assistance with a corruption-free objective. The Indian government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has taken several measures to minimize the possibility of a social and economic fallout, in addition to current efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Prime Minister Modi asked citizens to behave as if there was a 'Lakshmana Rekha' outside their homes, i.e. not to step there. In his second address to the nation on the spread of COVID-19, PM Modi observed that many people used the three-day lockdown to make artistic banners. He was referencing a sign that said that "" stood for "Koi Road Par Na Nickle" in phonetic form. At the behest of the Prime Minister, the whole country came together in a show of solidarity and gratitude for the police, medical professionals, sanitation and health workers, and everyone else who has dedicated themselves to the fight against corona. Millions of people in India also went dark. On Sunday, April 5, people across India lit up their balconies and doorways with lamps, candles and lamps in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to "defy the darkness" caused by the coronavirus pandemic. As a result, it helped create a new sense of national harmony. Many world leaders, including US President Trump and British Prime Minister Johnson, have praised Narendra Modi's wise and independent approach to leadership. They lauded his dedication to improving the lives of his people and the quality of his service.

WHO has expressed confidence that India can contain the coronavirus and has commended PM Modi's efforts in this regard. Thus, PM Narendra Modi has laboured mightily to instill in the hearts of the people of our nation a sense of both patriotism and humanity. Humanity wants rich sectors of civil society and non-profit organizations to donate goods and money for free to reduce the impact on poorer sectors. Humanity must constantly monitor borders in order to combat such infections. Every person has a boundary within

their body that divides the virus-sphere from the human world. This border might become compromised by a terrible virus, endangering the whole human race. Therefore, rather than defending boundaries between nations, mankind must do so between the human realm and the virus-sphere.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES:

The COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges to higher education system in terms of teaching, learning, research collaborations and institutional governance (Hayashi *et al.*, 2020). The crisis impacted various processes like new admissions, classes, examinations, student internships, seminars, fairs, exhibitions, placements student mobility etc. in Indian higher education institutions. As many teachers were not computer savvy; the paucity of technically advanced faculty and lack of proper technological support, the paradigm shift and the commencement of online classes was highly challenging (Khan and Naeem, 2021). During the pandemic for coping with the perilous situation, the higher educational institutes have reacted positively and adopted various strategies to face the crisis and to maintain the quality of education (Ramakrishna, 2021).

During the epidemic, several parents lost their jobs and were unable to pay for their children's online education. The research found that since the instructors and kids were confined to isolated locations during lockdown, they were having issues with their Internet connections and technical equipment. Unreliable internet, technical difficulties, lack of electronic equipment, lack of technical infrastructure, lack of reliable power, lack of adequate resources, internet costs, lack of awareness, lack of language proficiency and preparation issues are all barriers to online teaching and learning in higher education during the pandemic. The COVID-19 epidemic had a severe effect on students' learning since many of them failed to sign into the online learning system and were thus unable to access the resources that their professors provided. These restrictions and a dearth of resources have made it difficult for students to participate and significantly affected learning in higher education (Ramakrishna, 2021).

The lack of student engagement and integration in online education, as compared to face-to-face learning, and some limitations, such as insufficient resources, issues with upholding academic integrity, problems with policy, a lack of students' self-discipline, technical problems, and a lack of confidence, were also identified as the primary difficulties of online teaching that negatively impacted student outcomes. Many students were unable to complete their assignments properly as they don't

have their own computers, mobiles or internet connection and were facing difficulties to communicate with their teachers to solve their queries and problems. Despite all such challenges, constraints and problems, the policy makers made every possible endeavor in formulating the new policy to maintain the continuity of education (Khan and Naeem, 2021). Sometimes the educators are finding it is very difficult to judge the involvement of students on a virtual platform (Dhoot, 2020). To keep the weaker students engaged require enough patience and skills, which is another big challenge for online education system (Bhowmick, 2022). Educators were facing difficulties to design good e-learning contents (Dhivakar, 2021). The biggest challenges were faced in conducting practical courses and training (Indira, 2020). The process of Ph.D. registration including new international research collaborations were also hampered due to the impasse created by COVID-19 (Anonymous, 2020). As the working time and work-load of the teachers has dramatically increased, making it difficult for them to concentrate on their other works. This re-designing classes and transforming education methods in digital formats requires proper training and more funding for higher education institutes to get adequate equipment and to increase the capability and communication skill of the teaching staffs.

Lack of coordination and systemic approach among all academics and staffs was a big challenge to maintain and proper handling of e-learning stage and overseeing understudies to go to classes. In view of the suppositions and answers collected during various survey, some of the major challenges are highlighted faced by higher education faculties which are

as follows-- fear and hesitation of utilizing innovation, absence of specialized information, issue in understudy commitment, non-accessibility of permitting programming, work life imbalance, family disturbance in work from home, lack of material benefits by educational institutions, hectic daily online schedules, disturbance after working hours, lots of communication and coordination issues, difficulties to teach practical subjects, unable to measure students' understanding of concept, cheating in daily classroom assessment, challenges in redeveloping content, sometimes students feel boring in online classes (Kaur, 2020) etc.

CYBER-CRIME:

Cyber-crime, which is increasing day by day is another big challenge for online teaching and learning which has also exposed many higher

education institutions in danger (Salmi, 2020). The institutes should take the initiative to train and educate the teachers and students about various tips and tricks to prevent the hackers to hack and manage the cyber-crime.

MENTAL IMPACT:

Studies revealed that stakeholders of higher education were psychologically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been observed that most of the students were facing anxiety, stress and depression which negatively impacted their learning outcome and academic achievement. Anxiety, depression, worries, sadness, and frustration, as well as feelings of isolation and loneliness, have been linked to negative outcomes for both students and teachers' physical and mental health (Radu et al., 2020; Chaturvedi et al., 2021). Colleges and universities should provide students access to psychiatric and therapeutic services to assist them cope with these issues and succeed academically.

IMPACT ON JOB AND EMPLOYMENT MARKET:

Due to the economic losses in the employment market and education sectors, which are raising the unemployment rate, young professionals and recent graduates are

encountering barriers and challenges in their search for jobs, internships, training opportunities, apprenticeships, on-campus and off-campus interviews, and placements. Job withdrawal and sharp decrease in the career prospectations of recent graduates has been observed in recent studies in India (Jena, 2020; Hayashi *et al.*, 2020; Kaushal and Kaushal, 2021). Fight against this negative impact is a great challenge in the life of a student of higher education and skill-based education amongst the youth is the only way to beat the dark phase of unemployment during this critical period (Jain and Agarwal, 2020).

OPPORTUNITIES:

The pandemic has brought many challenges in terms of teaching, learning, research collaborations and institutional governance, but at the same time offered an excellent and unique opportunity to re-think, re-consider, re-design, to develop and implement effective teaching-learning strategies in the higher education for various stakeholders which ultimately will increase the sustainability and resilience in future (Hayashi *et al.*, 2020; Karakose, 2021).

One of the main advantages of online learning is the flexibility of scheduling, which allows students to study at their own speed and at a time that suits them (Muthuprasad et al., 2021). Despite a lot of negative worries, virtual learning emerged as a solution to higher education issues for both students and instructors about contact and learning effectiveness during the epidemic. The new trends, technologies and the new ways of teaching learning and the opportunities created by the pandemic will enhance the skills and self-development which ultimately will lead towards a better tomorrow (Jena, 2020; Aslam *et al.*, 2021).

Researchers have noticed that some of the opportunities has created after the pandemic which are as follows-- Students can attend the world class teacher's lecture and any online course at their convenient time and appear the exams from home only by using different online platforms. There is little question that this alternative educational model has hastened the adoption of technology, aiding in the long-

term strengthening of the nation's digital learning infrastructure (Dhoot, 2020).

CONCLUSION:

In the field of higher education, a silent revolution was going on during pandemic which opened up new strategies and avenues for transforming the fortune of the society as a whole. Stakeholders in India need to be trained and need to take quick steps for establishing a good infrastructure for online education by the Govt. of India as it will help in the advancement of our country. Uninterrupted internet facility is the pre-requisite for digital learning. Several initiatives need to take to minimize the adverse impact of COVID- 19 in higher education such as -- national and international webinars, online faculty development training for online teaching, leadership talks and online workshops on themes such as assessment and evaluation. In view of current technological developments, universities and colleges should make an effort to offer sufficient resources for online teaching and learning. For this reason, it is imperative that the Indian Ministry of Higher Education create and release a functional online platform that is accessible to and free of cost for all Indian people.

The bulk of the course material must be prepared for e-learning platforms, and all educational institutions must adjust the course structure and curriculum appropriately. Life after the COVID-19 epidemic will not be the same as it was before, and online learning is here to stay as an essential component of the higher education system, along with regular offline courses in a mixed manner. For the conduction of effective and productive classes, some interactive sessions with quizzes and assignments need to be included at the end of each class to optimize the learning experience. Educational institutes should be very careful for any cyber-crime and they can arrange some licensed software to prevent the hackers. For the smooth conduction and uninterrupted online classes every higher educational institute must provide trainings to all the faculty members so that they can operate the online platforms easily. Institutions must place a strong emphasis on teaching, and educators must work to increase student involvement by

educating both students and staff about the value of using online teaching-learning resources. This will help to promote student-centered learning and quality education. The only way to combat unemployment is for skill development to be a part of the curriculum since it will assist to foster future entrepreneurs. The educators need to influence and encourage the learners to go forward and utilize all the advantages and facilities available online to improve and enhance their skill to cope up with the 'new normal' and can easily compete with the competitors at global level.

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