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Opinion of Parents Towards Online Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 disease became a serious challenge worldwide and impacted all sectors, including education. Amidst the pandemic crisis, the Government of India announced a nationwide lockdown. The education sector faced challenges in adopting new pedagogies during the lockdown. The present study captures the point of view of parents towards online education that took place during the lockdown in the Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh. The investigator adopted the survey method for data collection, and data frequency count and content analysis were used for analysis. Data analysis indicated that online education was an alternative mode of education during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it had some limitations.

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic turned out to be a serious challenge worldwide, affecting everything, including education (Ding et al., 2020). Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, all affected countries, including India, announced a lockdown. Then, technology and the Internet became the means to counter the impact of the pandemic, particularly in the field of education. Mishra, Gupta and Shree (2020) found that a multiplicity of digital applications, such as Telegram, WhatsApp, e-mail, Google Meet, Zoom, Jitsi Meet and Google Classroom played a significant role in enabling educational interactions and submissions of assignments.

Meanwhile, for all the stakeholders—teachers, students and parents, it was a challenge to adapt to the new gadgets, new

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platforms and new pedagogy during the lockdown. Online education proved to be a good alternative to the traditional teaching–learning process. It ensured that students didn't face any interruption in their education.

During the pandemic, the Government of Arunachal Pradesh also adopted the online mode of education for students from primary to university level. Initially, many teachers faced problems in adapting to the virtual mode of teaching (Shenoy, Mahendra and Vijay, 2020). The union government instructed the state governments to provide training for a couple of days to teachers at all levels. After some time, the teachers got comfortable with the idea of online teaching and started teaching smoothly through various platforms like WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom, etc.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, online education was not a common practice in India. During this time, students were with their parents, so the parents were able to closely observe the process of online teaching–learning. Their experience with and opinion about online education would be very helpful in understanding the dynamics of online education during the pandemic. Upon reviewing related literature, it was found that there are some research works on the experiences of parents with regard to online education, but no such research was carried out in Arunachal Pradesh. The present study gathered and analysed parents' opinions on online education during the pandemic in the Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To study the opinions of parents on online education during the COVID-19 pandemic

METHODOLOGY

The investigator surveyed the parents of the Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh to know their opinion on online education during the pandemic. For the study, 500 parents with school-going children (from Classes I to V), who have received online education during the pandemic, were selected from the Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh. The Papum Pare district is quite near to the state capital, Itanagar and enjoys better connectivity and infrastructural facilities than other districts of the state. For data collection, a questionnaire having 10 questions was given to the parents. Data were collected and then analysed by using content analysis and frequency count. The research was conducted between September 2021 and October 2021.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

Based on the objective of the study, the researcher collected data from 500 parents. It was found that 416 parents were literate and 84 were illiterate. Data analysis and interpretation of

the present study have been presented according to the themes of different questions.

Table 1
Mode of Education

Teaching Mode	Frequency	Per cent
Online	500	100

The data presented in Table 1 shows that the online mode of education was adopted during the pandemic in the Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh. All parents have responded that their wards have experienced online education during the pandemic lockdown.

Table 2
Experience with Online Education

Experience of Online Education	Frequency	Per cent
Bad	177	35.4
Moderate	259	51.8
Good	64	12.8
Total	500	100.0

The data presented in Table 2 shows the experience of parents with online education. Among 500 parents, 35.4 per cent of parents had a bad experience, 51.8 per cent of parents had a moderate experience and 12.8 per cent of parents had a good experience.

Table 3
Performance of Students

Performance of Students	Frequency	Per cent
Poor	174	34.8
Moderate	241	48.2
Good	85	17.0
Total	500	100.0

The data presented in Table 3 shows the performance of students. When it came to performance, 34.8 per cent of parents felt their child did poorly, 48.2 per cent of parents felt their child was average, and 17.0 per cent of parents felt that their child did well.

Table 4
Network Connectivity in Locality

Network Connectivity	Frequency	Per cent
Poor	199	39.8
Average	19	3.8
Good	282	56.4
Total	500	100.0

The data presented in Table 4 shows the network connectivity in the locality. Among 500 parents, 39.8 per cent of parents responded 'poor network connectivity' 3.8 per cent of parents responded 'average network connectivity' and 56.4 per cent of parents responded 'good network connectivity'.

Table 5
Preference of Mode of Education

Preference	Frequency	Per cent
Offline	371	74.2
Online	2	25.4
Both	127	0.4
Total	500	100.0

The data presented in Table 5 shows the preferred mode of education. Among 500 parents, 74.2 per cent of parents preferred the offline mode of education, 25.4 per cent of parents preferred both offline and online modes of education and 0.4 per cent of parents preferred the online mode of education.

Table 6
Misuse of Mobile Phones

Misuse of Mobile Phone	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	299	59.8
No	189	37.8
No Response	12	2.4
Total	488	97.6

The data presented in Table 6 confirms the misuse of mobile phones. Among 500 parents, 59.8 per cent of parents responded with yes, 37.8 per cent of parents responded with no, and 2.4 per cent did not respond at all.

Types of Misuse of Mobile Phones

As per the analysed data, the students misused the mobile phones by using them for entertainment purposes. It was found that apart from educational purposes, 8 per cent of students used the phone to access platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram; 16 per cent of students used it to watch YouTube; 11.8 per cent of students used it to listen to music and watch movies, and 24 per cent of students used it to play offline and online games.

Advantages of Online Education

Out of 500 respondents, only 292 responded to the question about advantages of online education. Among them, 9.6 per cent of parents opined that teachers and students were updated about the current technical skills and digital world, 7.6 per cent of parents stated that online education enhanced students' self-paced learning ability, 31.2 per cent of parents stated that online education was the best alternative mode of education during the COVID-19 pandemic, 7.2 per cent of parents stated that online education prevented the spread of COVID-19 and kept both students and teachers safe, and 1.2 per cent of parents stated that online education enabled easy access to learning resources and materials.

Disadvantages of Online Education

Only 379 parents responded to the question regarding the disadvantages of online education. Among them, 15.6 per cent of parents stated that students misused mobile phones and internet facilities by playing offline and online games instead of attending online classes, 17.6 per cent of parents stated that the network problem hampered online classes, 9.6 per cent of parents stated that the teachers and students showed disinterest and less enthusiasm in online classes, 19.6 per cent of parents stated that there was a lack of physical interaction between teachers and students, 7.8 per cent of parents stated that students were

unable to stay focused on the digital screen for long periods and 5.6 per cent stated that the teachers did not pay attention and could not provide proper motivation to the students.

Experiences with Online Education

Out of 500 parents, only 335 gave their response on how they saw online education during the pandemic. It was found that 7 per cent of parents saw online education as a good option during the pandemic and 17.8 per cent of parents saw online education as a new venture. There were negative opinions as well. About 14.6 per cent of parents had bad experiences due to network connectivity issues in their locality and 3.2 per cent of parents stated that their children became addicted to mobile phones due to online education. Such parents see online education as the worst mode of education.

Suggestions of Parents on Online Education

Three hundred and fifty-five respondents gave suggestions for the betterment of online education. As per 36.2 per cent of respondents, the state government should provide gadgets to the needy students and also improve internet connectivity, 5 per cent of respondents stated that proper training should be given to the teachers and students to ensure effective teaching and learning, 18 per cent of respondents feel that the teachers should motivate and encourage their students while taking online classes, and 9.8 per cent of respondents feel that teachers should provide the essential and relevant learning materials to their students. Parents have also suggested that more interaction should be ensured in online classes. One of the parents said, "Online education is the best alternative mode of education, and it was easily accessible during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it should not be continued after the pandemic."

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As per the analysis of the study, online mode of education was the only suitable mode that existed during the pandemic in the Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh. In the study of Muthuprasad et al. (2020), the result found that 70 per cent of respondents were ready to opt for online classes during the pandemic. So, online education was the only alternative mode of education during the pandemic. The reason behind this might be the compulsion of adopting online education as an alternative mode of education during the nationwide lockdown. Vajpeyi (2020) also found that technology was significant and suitable for education during the pandemic.

Regarding the experience of online education, parents have both positive and negative experiences and made some suggestions for improvement. In a similar study, Peimani and Kamalipour (2021) found that the students performed well in academics and online mode of education was a

good alternative to offline education during the pandemic.

Most homes in Papum Pare received good network connectivity. Regarding the preferred mode of education, parents were in favour of the offline and blended modes of education. This could be because the pedagogy used at the primary level is more appropriate for the offline mode of education. Oyedotun (2020) found that the teachers and students were competent in finding the teaching and learning materials online, as they were easy to access. One of the advantages of online education is that students are more interested in using the e-learning resources compared to the offline resources (Radha et al., 2020).

A few disadvantages found by the study were misuse of smartphones for exploring social media sites and watching online videos instead of studying. Further, students misused their mobile phones and internet facility by accessing social media platforms, like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, watching Youtube videos, listening to music and watching movies, and playing online games rather than attending or focusing on online classes. Moreover, students tended to become addicted to mobile phones. In a similar study, Tindell and Bohlander (2011) also obtained similar results.

Regarding the overall experience, some parents see online education as a new venture for parents, teachers and students, and a good alternative during the pandemic. Whereas, some stated that they could not give attention to their children and that online education is only suitable for higher education, some faced problems due to the bad network connectivity in their locality. Therefore, some parents have suggested that the state government should provide the necessary gadgets to the needy students and also improve the internet connectivity in the state. They also feel that teachers and students should be given proper training so that the process of teaching and learning becomes more efficient.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study revealed that online education was an alternative mode of education during the pandemic. It was found that students and parents became more familiar with contemporary technical skills and the digital world. Although online education improved students' self-paced learning, there were numerous challenges associated with it at the elementary level, specifically for Classes I–V. The findings of the study will be useful to the state government and educational administrators for educational planning.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The present study is delimited to the Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh. The study gathered the opinions of parents of primary school students (Classes I–V) on online education during the pandemic.

Conclusion

The present study focuses on parents' opinions towards online education. The experience of parents with online education during the pandemic was satisfactory, and the performance of learners was at a moderate level. The network connectivity in the locality was good enough in the Papum Pare district, but the parents still preferred the offline mode of education over the online one. They found online education as a good alternative mode of education. The disadvantages of online education were that the students misused their mobile phones by surfing on social media and playing offline and online games, rather than using the phone to study; the students became more addicted to mobile phones.

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