

IMPACT OF LOCKDOWN ON LEARNING STATUS OF UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN WEST BENGAL, INDIA

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Abstract

To assess the impact of lockdown amidst COVID-19 on undergraduate and postgraduate learners of various colleges and universities of West Bengal. An online survey was conducted from 1 May to 8 May 2020 to collect the information. A structural questionnaire link using 'Google form' was sent to students' through WhatsApp and E-mail. A total of 232 students provided complete information regarding the survey. The simple percentage distribution was used to assess the learning status of the study participants. During the lockdown period, around 70% of learners were involved in e-learning. Most of the learners were used android mobile for attending e-learning. Students have been facing various problems related to depression anxiety, poor internet connectivity, and unfavorable study environment at home. Students from remote areas and marginalized sections mainly face enormous challenges for the study during this pandemic. This study suggests targeted interventions to create a positive space for study among students from the vulnerable section of society. Strategies are urgently needed to build a resilient education system in the state that will ensure to develop the skill for employability and the productivity of the young minds.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown, vulnerable, environment, participants , undergraduate learners , postgraduate learners etc.

HIGHLIGHTS

- We assess the learning status of undergraduate and postgraduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- About 70% of learners reported that they were involved in e-learning during the lockdown.
- Students have been facing several challenges related to the study during this crisis period.
- Strategies are urgently needed to build a resilient education system that will ensure to develop the skill of the young minds.

1. INTRODUCTION

The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) first appeared in Wuhan city of China at the end of last year. Rapid worldwide spreading of COVID-19 prompted the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare it as 'pandemic' on 11 March 2020 (WHO Timeline - COVID-19, 2020, Pelmin, 2020). Most of the governments around the world have initiated a common goal to curb the spread of this highly contagious disease by imposing lockdown, social/physical distancing, avoiding face-to-face teaching-learning, and restrictions on immigration (Gonzalez et al. 2020). Around 600 million school-going learners are affected across the world due to the closing down of educational institutions (Goyal, 2020). UNESCO (2020) has reported that around 320 million learners are affected in India, of which about 34 million belonged to the tertiary level of education.

The first COVID-19 positive case has been reported in India (Kerala) on 30 January 2020. Currently, India has been experiencing sparkled growth in COVID-19 cases. As of 18 June 2020, India has reported 160,384 active cases, 194,324 recovered cases, and 12,237 death cases (MoHFW, 2020). The government of India along with various state governments have initiated several strategies to control the spread of the disease. Since 25 March, India has observed four phases of nationwide lockdown, which was extended up to 31 May 2020. The on-going lockdown (fifth phase) is further extended till 30 June 2020 only in containment zones along with essential services are resuming in a planned manner starting from 8 June 2020.

The closures of the educational institution due to the outbreak of COVID-19 lead to an unprecedented impact on education. During the lockdown, teachers are instructed to teach through online learning platforms (Abidah, Hidaayatullaah, Simamora, Fehabutar, & Mutakinati, 2020). Raju (2020) argued that there is a need to adopt innovative teaching for continuing education and to overcome mental stress and anxieties during the

lockdown. The outbreak of COVID-19 results in the digital revolution in the higher education system through online lectures, teleconferencing, digital open books, online examination, and interaction at virtual environments (Strielkowski, 2020,, Kumar, 2020). A significant positive impact of COVID-19 also reported learning efficiency and performances by adopting online learning strategies (Gonzalez et al. 2020). The online mode of the teaching-learning process is often discriminatory to poor and marginalized students. It is identified that hearing-impaired students face challenges in online learning (Manzoor, 2020). During this lockdown period, the closing of educational institutions hampered the education system and the teaching-learning process. Understanding the teaching-learning process in this crisis period is imperative to design effective interventions for the smooth running of teaching and learning (India Today, 2020). With this backdrop, the present study aims to identify the learning status, mode of learning, and problems related to study during this lockdown amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. DATA AND METHODS

2.1. Subjects

This is an online survey-based study of the 232 undergraduate and postgraduate students studying in various colleges and universities of West Bengal.

2.2. Data collection and procedure

An online survey was conducted from 1 May to 8 May 2020 to collect the information. A structural questionnaire link using 'Google form' was sent to students' through WhatsApp and E-mail. Participants were provided full consent before participation in the online survey. A total of 232 students provided complete information regarding the survey.

2.3. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were carried out to understand the distribution of study participants. Simple percentage distribution was estimated to assess the learning status, mode of learning, and opinion on educational decisions, and problems related to study due to the lockdown. All the analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS Version: 25).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Participant's characteristics

Table 1 displays the profile of the study participants. Of 232 students, almost two-thirds of them were aged below 22 years with a median age of 21 years. The number of male and female students was equal in the sample. Over one-third of the students (35.8%) belonged to the 'general' social group. The majority of them were affiliated to the Hindu religion (84.1%), resided in rural areas (70.7%), and had a family income of less than INR 20,000 (65.1%). Most of the students were from the Arts academic background (73.3%). The educational movement of students across different districts of West Bengal is depicted in Table 2. The highest proportion of students was from the Maldah district (34.5%), followed by Darjeeling (12.9%) and Dakshin Dinajpur (11.2%). Moreover, the highest concentration of students was found in Maldah as an institutional district (42.2%), followed by Darjeeling (32.8%) and Nadia (8.6%). Maldah and Darjeeling districts are considered as educational hubs in North Bengal. A large number of colleges and the existence of universities in these two districts constitute a concentration of a substantial proportion of students in this region.

Table :1 Attributes of the examination members (n-232).

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age of students (median age)	21	
21 years and below	147	63.4
22 years and Above	85	36.6
Sex		
Female	116	50.0
Male	116	50.0
Social groups		

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
General	83	35.8
Other Backward Classes	63	27.2
Scheduled Caste	72	31.0
Scheduled Tribe	14	6.0
Religion		
Buddhist	6	2.6
Christian	4	1.7
Hindu	195	84.1
Muslim	25	10.8
Other	2	0.9
Residential area		
Rural	164	70.7
Urban	68	29.3
Monthly income of the family (Rs.)		
Below 20,000	151	65.1
20,000–40,000	53	22.8
Above 40,000	28	12.1
Presently studying		
B.A./B.Sc./B.Com.	141	60.8
M.A./M.Sc./M.Com.	91	39.2
Stream of Study		
Arts	170	73.3
Commerce	3	1.3
Science	59	25.4

Table 2. Movement of students for the study.

Home Districts	Students (%)	Institutional District	Students studying (%)
Alipurduar	5(2.2)	Alipurduar	1(0.4)
Cooch Behar	10(4.3)	Jalpaiguri	2(0.9)
Jalpaiguri	23(9.9)	Darjeeling	76(32.8)
Kalimpong	3(1.3)	Uttar Dinajpur	16(6.9)
Darjeeling	30(12.9)	Dakshin Dinajpur	7(3.0)
Uttar Dinajpur	25(10.8)	Malda	98(42.2)
Dakshin Dinajpur	26(11.2)	Murshidabad	1(0.4)

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Home Districts	Students (%)	Institutional District	Students studying (%)
Malda	80(34.5)	Bhirbhum	3(1.3)
Purba Bardhaman	1(0.4)	Nadia	20(8.6)
Bankura	1(0.4)	Kolkata	7(3.0)
Nadia	21(9.1)	South 24 Pargana	1(0.4)
Howrah	2(0.9)		
Kolkata	3(1.3)		
South 24 Pargana	2(0.9)		

3.2. Information and mentalities with respect to Coronavirus

Table 3 shows the information and mentalities of understudies about this current general wellbeing crisis. Of 232 members, 98 understudies (42.2%) caught wind of this sickness in January 2020. Over portion of the understudies (57.8%) were got data about Coronavirus from online media, which demonstrates their familiarity with different realities about the ailment. Most of the understudies (81.5%) revealed that they were dwelling in their own homes during the lockdown time frame. The understudies who were not inhabiting their own home (remaining in relative's home, leased house, jumble, and as a paying visitor) were confronting a few troubles identified with budgetary (26.5%), food (51%), and wellbeing (22.5%).

Table 3. Information and mentalities with respect to Coronavirus.

Knowledge and attitudes	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Time when heard about COVID-19		
January 2020	98	42.2
February 2020	69	29.7
March 2020	65	28.1
Source of information about COVID-19		
Newspaper	28	12.1
Personal interaction	12	5.2
Social media	134	57.8
Television	58	25.0
Place residing during the lockdown		
At own home	189	81.5
Other places (i.e. relative home, mess, or rented house)	43	18.5
Difficulties facing during lockdown (who are not at home)		
Financial	13	26.5
Food	25	51.0
Health	11	22.5

3.3. Learning status and scholarly circle during the lockdown

A few inquiries were posed to follow out the learning status during lockdown that incorporates methods of learning, inclusion of schedule, time spending for study, and separate perusing room at home (Table 4). In this lockdown period, 88 (37.9%) understudies were proceeding with their examination through course book perusing and advanced e-learning, while 71 (30.6%) understudies were concentrating through perusing

reading material by own exertion and not took an interest in e-learning. Since students concentrating under different colleges, their investigation residency of the scholastic meeting somewhat changes. Just 27 (11.6%) understudies announced that over half of their schedule was secured. Around 66% of understudies (66.8%) were not following the e-pathshala for study materials. Over portion of the understudies (54.3%) detailed that they were investing less energy than the typical circumstance for study. Out of 232 understudies, 103 (44.4%) had no different perusing space for the investigation.

Table 4. Learning status and scholarly circle during the lockdown. .

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Mode of learning		
Both textbook and online	88	37.9
Online studying	73	31.5
Reading textbook with own effort	71	30.6
Syllabus covered (%)		
<30	91	39.2
30-50	57	24.6
>50	27	11.6
Just exam completed	32	13.8
Not yet completed exam	25	10.8
Following e-pathshala for study materials		
Yes	49	21.1
No	155	66.8
Don't know	28	12.1
Time spending for study during the lockdown		
Less than normal situation	126	54.3
More than a normal situation	39	16.8
Same like a normal situation	67	28.9
Separate reading room for study		
Yes	129	55.6
No	103	44.4

3.4. Data about online classes

Among the studied understudies who were going to online classes (n = 185), just 26 (14.1%) understudies were going to online classes day by day, while 54% of them were going to online classes under 3 days out of every week. A large portion of the respondents (85.8%) utilized android versatile for going to e-learning and another 14.2% of understudies utilized their workstations or PC for e-learning purposes. Albeit 73.7% of understudies utilized their android versatile for e-learning and 5.3% of understudies employed contraptions from relatives to go to classes at the hour of their learning. Less (0.9%) understudies had enhanced the emotional information by recruiting e-taking in contraptions from neighbors. The inception or leading computerized instructing by instructors utilizing different advanced stages during this lockdown period due to Coronavirus demonstrates the continuation of the educating learning measure in this basic circumstance. College Award Commission (UGC) and the Advanced education Division of West Bengal trained to the scholastic foundations to proceed with the instructing learning measure through computerized stages. In such

a circumstance, instructors are illuminating their understudies to partake in computerized classes. In the current investigation, about 13.4% of understudies announced that their home mentors reached them for computerized learning. Another 15.5% of understudies are intrigued to include in computerized learning by a discussion with their companions. It is additionally detailed that the greater part of the students (73.7%) were not associated with any computerized stages for the investigation before the Coronavirus episode (Table 5).

Table 5. Data about online classes.

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Online classes attended per week		
Above 3 days per week	59	31.9
Below 3 days per week	100	54.0
Daily	26	14.1
Gadgets for attending online classes		
Android mobile	182	85.8
Laptop or Computer	30	14.2
Possess of Gadgets for online classes		
Own	171	73.7
Hired from neighbor	2	0.9
Hired from family members	12	5.3
Persons conducted online classes at lockdown		
Institution's teachers	155	64.9
Conversation with friends	37	15.5
Home tutors	32	13.4
Others (family members, relatives)	15	6.2
Attended online classes before the outbreak of COVID-19		
Yes	61	26.3
No	171	73.7

3.5. Stages for online classes, materials sharing, and assessment

It is discovered that the understudies were utilizing different stages for e-addresses, study material sharing and learning assessment, for example, the Zoom application, Group interface, YouTube live, Skype, Google meets/home base, Google homeroom, WhatsApp, and so on. (Table 6). The outcomes additionally show that the vast majority of the respondents (34.2%) utilized the Zoom application for going to online classes or e-addresses, trailed by Google study hall (33.4%) and YouTube live (14.7%). The students likewise followed numerous stages for getting study materials during this lockdown period. It is seen that understudies were bound to concentrate through shared investigation materials than going to online talks primarily because of helpless web network. Most of the respondents (39.4%) utilized the WhatsApp bunch for getting study the materials from instructors and just as companions and 31.8% of understudies utilized Google Homeroom for this reason. Be that as it may, less students followed foundations/instructors' site and YouTube lives for study materials. Instructors utilized numerous stages for advanced educating and learning as well as for learning-assessment rapidly through WhatsApp gathering, Google homeroom, Google structure, Microsoft Kaizala, etc. The learning of the respondents generally assessed through the WhatsApp gathering (40.5%), trailed by Google homeroom (24.9%). Furthermore, understudies learning status was additionally assessed through Google structure (8.0%). It merits referencing to report that more than one-fourth (25.7%) of understudies' learning status was at this point to be assessed.

Table 6. Stages for online classes, materials sharing, and assessment.

Various platforms	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Platforms of online classes		
Mobile-conversation (for Audio materials)	20	7.4
Google classroom	91	33.4
Team Link	16	5.9
YouTube live	40	14.7
Zoom app	93	34.2
Skype	6	2.2
Google meet	3	1.1
You tube	3	1.1
Platforms of Materials sharing		
WhatsApp group	115	39.4
Google classroom	93	31.8
Zoom app	30	10.3
Institution/teachers website	11	3.7
YouTube live	13	4.5
Youtube video upload	30	10.3
Evaluation of online platforms		
WhatsApp group	91	40.5
Google classroom	56	24.9
Google form	18	8.0
Microsoft Kaizala	2	0.9
Not yet evaluated online platforms	58	25.7

3.6. Sentiment with respect to scholastic choices and UGC proposals

Table 7 shows the assessment of understudies with respect to scholarly choices and UGC suggestions during lockdown stages. Out of 232 understudies, 123 understudies conceded to the administration's choice for the kickoff of scholastic foundations on June 10, 2020. More than 33% of the understudies (36.2%) didn't think about the UGC panel report with respect to scholastic circles, though 148 (63.8%) understudies had thought about UGC report towards scholarly organizations. The majority of the examination members (58.2%) detailed a positive reaction on proposals of UGC's proposed scholastic schedule though close around one-fourth understudies (27.6%) didn't think about it. The greater part of the understudies (52.6%) communicated their concurrence on UGC proposal with respect to the assessment framework, assessment example, examination, and field study, though right around 33% of the understudies (31.0%) didn't think about this UGC suggestion.

Table 7. Conclusion with respect to scholastic choices and UGC proposals.

Academic decisions and UGC recommendations	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Do you agree on GoWB's decision for the opening of academic institutions after June 10, 2020?		
Yes	123	53.00

Academic decisions and UGC recommendations	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
No	38	16.40
Don't know	71	30.60
Do you know about the 'Report of the UGC Committee on Examinations and Academic Calendar'?		
Yes	148	63.8
No	84	36.2
Do you agree on recommendations of UGC's proposed academic calendar?		
Yes	135	58.20
No	33	14.20
Don't know	64	27.60
Do you agree on UGC's recommendation about the examination system, evaluation pattern, research, and field study allied?		
Yes	122	52.60
No	38	16.40
Don't know	72	31.00

3.7. Effect of COVID-19 on financial condition and instructive participation

Out of 232, 181 understudies detailed that their monetary condition will be influenced by the Coronavirus pandemic and 178 understudies announced that low family salary in the midst of Coronavirus would negatively affect their instruction. Moreover, 176 understudies believed that the current pandemic may cause their instructive end (Table 8).

Table 8. Effect of COVID-19 on monetary condition and instructive participation.

Opinions	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Do you think that the economic condition of your family will be affected by COVID 19 pandemic?		
Yes	181	78.00
No	51	22.00
Do you think that low family income would affect your education?		
Yes	178	76.70
No	54	23.30
Do you think the COVID-19 pandemic may cause of educational discontinuation?		
Yes	176	75.90
No	19	8.20
Don't know	37	15.90

3.8. Issues identified with concentrate during the lockdown

In this lockdown period, it was accounted for that students were generally experiencing pressure, despondency, and nervousness (42.0%). The understudies were additionally confronting issues identified with

helpless web network (32.4%), trailed by the nonattendance of a good situation to learn at home (12.6%). Understudies dwelling in rustic and distant territories may confront helpless web availability. Also, poor monetary conditions may be a purpose behind the ominous condition and absence of independent space for their investigation (Table 9).

Table 9. Issues identified with the examination during the lockdown.

Various problems	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Feeling of stress, depression, and anxieties	126	42.0
Do not have gadgets for online study	27	9.0
Do not have a favorable environment to study at home	38	12.6
Problems related to Internet connectivity	97	32.4
Teachers not interested in teaching	12	4.0

It ought to be referenced that the web based learning measure is regularly prejudicial. Our examination likewise found that numerous understudies face tremendous difficulties in e-learning and a considerable extent of understudies couldn't go to online classes. Understudies from distant regions and underestimated segments primarily denied web based learning because of the absence of power and helpless web network. Neediness further worsens the issue of the computerized learning measure in this undesirable emergency period.

CONCLUSION

The lockdown in the midst of Coronavirus has made critical interruptions in scholastic exercises. The current investigation evaluated the learning status of undergrad and postgraduate understudies during this pandemic. Albeit a generous extent of understudies are utilizing advanced stages for learning, a large number of them face tremendous difficulties in online investigation. Our examination has proposed the accompanying suggestion to the administration, policymakers, and institutional specialists:

There ought to be made a uniform scholastic arrangement for the colleges and universities and furthermore start legitimate Training Congruity Plan (ECP) to proceed with the learning cycle during this pandemic. The infrastructural offices ought to be benefited to the instruction foundations which can manage the computerized learning measure during future wellbeing crises. There is a need to guarantee sufficient subsidizing for the improvement of the instruction framework and to give limit advancement preparing to the partners of advanced education organizations. Mediations ought to be started through a focused on way to deal with make a positive space for concentrate among the understudies from the weak part of society.

At this basic period, the open-source advanced learning and learning the board framework could be embraced by the institutional educators to direct internet learning. At last, the imperative multi-delayed methodologies are direly expected to assemble versatile training framework in the express that will guarantee to build up the aptitude for employability and the efficiency of the youthful personalities.

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