



IMPACT OF SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS ON THE ACCEPTANCE LEVEL OF ONLINE MODE OF EDUCATION: A STUDY AMONG UG STUDENTS IN THREE SELECTED DISTRICTS OF ASSAM

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ABSTRACT- The Indian education system has been very popular among the other countries education system due to the evolution from ancient to modern education system. In the Gurukulam system the guru or acharya imparted education to the shishya living near or with the guru in the same house. There has been a complete transition from the ancient Gurukul system to digital learning due to the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. With such a sudden shift from offline to online mode in many parts of the world, the question which lingers in everybody's mind is whether the adoption of online learning will continue to persist post pandemic and how such transition will have an impact on the educational sector worldwide. The present paper tries to highlight the impact of socio-demographic characteristics on the acceptance level of Online mode of Education-A Study among UG students in three selected districts of Assam viz, Kamrup (M), Kamrup and Nagaon. The paper uses both primary sources as well as secondary sources. The primary data is collected through a well framed questionnaire meant for the UG students in the three selected districts. The secondary data is collected from sources like journal, websites etc. The paper also present certain findings of the study and also provide various suggestions to bridge the digital divide so that online learning is promoted in the process of teaching and learning.

Keywords: COVID-19 Online learning, Digital divide, Government initiatives etc

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian education system has been very popular among the other countries' education system due to the evolution from ancient to modern education system. In the Gurukulam system the guru or acharya imparted education to the shishya living near or with the guru in the same house. There has been a complete transition from the ancient Gurukul system to digital learning due to the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. With such a sudden shift from offline to online mode in many parts of the world, the question which lingers in everybody's mind is whether the adoption of online learning will continue to persist post pandemic and how such transition will have an impact on the educational sector worldwide. But such a shift overnight with little preparation, unplanned move to online learning can have a negative impact on the education worldwide. But in the era of globalization, online learning is no more an option, but it is a necessity. Carey (2020) has pointed out that during the tough time of the pandemic the concern is not about whether online teaching-learning methods can provide quality education, it is rather how academic institutions will be able to adopt online learning in such a massive manner. Greater concern is willing the learner be able to cope up with the shift-emotionally, psychologically, economically and socially.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the educational system worldwide. There has been a complete shift from online to offline mode during the time of pandemic. The study is justified on the ground that COVID-19 has been a burning issue and in case of a complete transition from traditional learning to digital learning, online learning has been the need of the hour. Moreover, the success of educational institutions depends on how effectively the learner and the teacher can adapt to modern mode. The study is conducted to know the impact of socio-demographic characteristics on the acceptance level of online mode of education-A Study among UG students in three selected districts of Assam. The study also takes into considerations the various initiatives taken by the government towards online learning. To know whether the initiatives have been successful in bridging the digital divide and also offers effective suggestions in this regard. The pandemic provides opportunities to bring a drastic change in the teaching learning process.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.To study the acceptance level of online mode of education by students.
- 2.To study the availability of infrastructure.
- 3.To assess the government facilities made available.
4. To compare the acceptance level w.r.t different socio-economic demographic characteristics like place of residence, annual income of parents, education of parents, education of parents, possession of mobile phone, laptop pc, internet facility and its cost etc

II. METHODOLOGY

The present study is exploratory in nature. The data is collected from primary as well as secondary sources. The primary data is collected through a well framed questionnaire meant for the 30 UG students in three districts of Assam viz, Kamrup(M), Kamrup and Nagaon, 10 respondents from each district. The respondents are pursuing undergraduate curriculum in government or private sector degree colleges in the respective districts. The secondary sources includes journals, websites etc and convenience sampling technique has been adopted to select the respondents.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR ONLINE EDUCATION

COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the education system worldwide, it was found out that many examinations were cancelled for the health security of the students. It was thus at that time the online education has been the need of the hour in order to bridge the digital divide and accordingly, the government of India has initiated various online platforms in order to promote online learning. Some of the online platforms are briefly outlined below-

DIKSHA-It is one of a unique apps that requires student and teachers to scan the QR code available in the book in order to access prescribed learning material. It equips teachers and students from 1st class to 12th class into the world of e-learning. The books in the portal are available in multiple languages for the student.

e-Pathshala- This digital repository has been made available by NCERT to make sure that students do not miss out any important concept to be taught in class. It is also available in several languages like any other digital platform

SWAYAM-Through this student can access study materials in the form of video lecture, reading material, self-assessment test and doubt clearing session. Here student need not pay any fee as the course is free of cost, however in order to get certificate registration must be done for which minimal fee must be paid.

Swayam Prabha: It is a collection of 32 DTH channels which run 24x7 for the students. Everyday new content of atleast 4 hours is provided on the websites which runs 5 times a day. Here students from class 1st to class 12th and UG and PG level aspirants can have proper access to interactive learning through this platform.

ANALYSIS

TABLE 1: BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

DISTRICT	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
KAMRUP(M)	6	4	10
KAMRUP	3	7	10
NAGAON	8	2	10
TOTAL	17	13	30

INTERPRETATION

The above table reveals that out of the total respondents in the study areas 17 are males and 13 are females.

TABLE 2:ACCEPTANCE LEVEL

DISTRICT	YES	NO	TOTAL
KAMRUP (M)	8	2	10
KAMRUP	1	9	10
NAGAON	6	4	10
TOTAL	15	15	30

INTERPRETATION

The above table shows the acceptance level of the respondents in the three districts under study. It points out that 15 respondents have accepted the online mode of education and 15 have not accepted the mode and there can be various reasons for this.

TABLE 3: AVAILABILITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE.

DISTRICT	INTERNET		PHONE		LAPTOP/PC		CYBER CAFÉ	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
KAMRUP(M)	8	2	5	5	8	2	7	3
KAMRUP	2	8	4	6	1	9	3	7
NAGAON	6	4	7	3	7	3	4	6
TOTAL	16	14	16	14	16	14	14	16

INTERPRETATION

The above table interprets that out of the total respondents in the three districts ,16 respondents have an access to proper internet connection and 14 respondents were not privileged to enjoy that facilities, 16 respondents have a proper access to phone and 14 respondents did not enjoy any such facilities, 16 respondents have their Laptop/PC,14 respondents did not own any such assets, 14 respondents could afford to go to cyber cafe and 16 respondents could not. The availability of infrastructure played a very important role in the time of COVID-19 pandemic in promoting online mode of education.

TABLE 4: AWARENESS REGARDING GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

DISTRICT	YES	NO	TOTAL
KAMRUP(M)	8	2	10
KAMRUP	4	6	10
NAGAON	5	5	10
TOTAL	17	13	30

INTERPRETATION

The above table reveals that out of 30 respondents 17 respondents were aware of the government schemes and 13 respondents were not aware of the schemes.

TABLE 5: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS

DISTRICT	INCOME OF PARENTS			EDUCATION LEVEL OF PARENTS			PLACE OF INHABITANTS		
	LESS THAN 10K	10K-50K	MORE THAN 50K	HSLC	HS	BA AND MORE	RURAL	URBAN	SEMI URBAN
KAMRUP (M)	2	5	3	5	3	2	4	3	3
KAMRUP	5	4	1	5	4	1	3	2	5
NAGAON	3	4	3	3	4	3	2	7	1
TOTAL	10	13	7	13	11	6	9	12	9

INTERPRETATION

The above table interprets that out of the total respondents in the three districts under study 10 respondents answered that their parents earn less than 10k. 13 respondents answered that their parents earned income in between 10k-50k and 7 respondents answered that their parents earn income more than 50k. Regarding the educational level of parents, 13 respondents answered that their parents have only HSLC Degree, 11 of them responded that their parents have HS degree and 6 of them responded that their parents have BA degree and more. Regarding the place of inhabitants, out of the total respondents in the study area in the three districts responded in the following manner: 9 respondents lived in the rural areas, 12 respondents lived in the urban area and 9 respondents lived in the semi-urban areas.

III. FINDINGS

1. It is found out that out of the total respondents in the three districts 17 are males and 13 are females.
2. 15 respondents have accepted the online mode of education and 15 respondents have not.
3. 16 respondents have access to internet and 14 do not have. 16 respondents have an access to phone and 14 respondents do not have. 16 respondents possess their own Laptop/PC and 14 respondents do not possess any such assets.
4. 17 respondents are aware of the government initiatives and 13 respondents are not aware of the initiatives of the government.
5. In the study area of the three districts, 10 respondents responded that the income of their parents is less than 10K, 13 responded that their parents earn an income in between 10K and 50K, 7 responded that their parents earn an income more than 50K. Regarding the educational level of parents, 13 respondents answered that their parents have only HSLC Degree, 11 of them responded that their parents have HS degree and 6 of them responded that their parents have BA degree and more. Regarding the place of inhabitants, out of the total respondents in the study area in the three districts responded in the following manner: 9 respondents lived in the rural areas, 12 respondents lived in the urban area and 9 respondents lived in the semi-urban areas.

IV. SUGGESTIONS

It is seen that despite the fact that government of India has taken up a large number of initiatives to improve the educational sector but the efforts are not successfully implemented and the rural children are the worst sufferers as they do not have proper access to smart phones, reliable internet connection etc. Thus, it is the responsibility of the government to take proper steps in order to bridge the digital divide by giving smart phones, laptops, computers etc to each household so that children can have access to online learning. The government should also make provisions for free contactless delivery of food grains so that food security of the rural poor is ensured.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The closures of educational institutes have a noticeable impact on the educational sector. The pandemic has posed different challenges to teachers, educationist as well as students but the positive aspect is that each and every agent of the education system has come up to face the challenge. All have turned towards online media and there has been a transition from traditional chalk and talk method towards digital learning. It is interesting to see that all are battling no matter how strong the impact of the pandemic is. Covid-19 being a new pandemic, researchers have augmented their learning by conducting research on it. Digital learning has many advantages in itself like digital learning has no physical boundaries, it has more learning engagement experience as compared to the traditional method. It is also cost effective and students get to learn in the confines of their comfort zone. The educational institution worldwide can use this present adversity as a blessing in disguise and make digital education a major part of the learning process for all the learners in the future and the entire teaching learning process will turn out to be an effective and efficient one. Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in the organization of large number of webinars and many people have shown increased participation in online mode which would otherwise

have not been possible in offline modes. However, it is seen that school closures will aggravate food insecurity. Those students who are living below the poverty line, schools are considered not only place for learning but also eating healthily. Research shows that there is a positive correlation between school lunch and improvement in academic performance. Irregular or unhealthy diet is associated with low educational attainment and substantial risk to the physical health and mental well-being of children. Since majority of the poor children rely on the Mid-Day Meal which is provided by the school and complete closure of school due to the pandemic has adversely deprived the poor children. It has adversely affected the rural children as their economic condition do not permit them to have access to online learning as online learning requires smartphone, laptop, computer, reliable internet connection etc. illiteracy on the part of the parts also reflect the dark side of education as parents are unable to help their wards in their home assignment, Covid-19 pandemic has also adversely affected the state of employment particularly the outgoing batches as the recruitment process has come to a complete halt due to the ongoing situation. The government must take bold steps to effectively implement the various initiatives in order to bridge the digital divide.

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