

Challenges faced in online education of school going children – a parent's perspective

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Abstract:

The pandemic COVID 19 had resulted in the lockdown of the entire world. With different parts of the world indulging in different phases of lockdown, many sectors of the economy suffered a huge setback. One such sector was the education. The schools were the first to close, owing the danger of the spread of the disease. But the boon for the classes came in the form of use of video conferencing apps like Zoom, Google meetings, cisco WebEx etc. Some schools used to

send the videos that they shoot to the parents. This way it was ensured that the pedagogy and learning was not affected in any way. But the entire problem of how effective was the online learning is seen from a parent's perspective as it was their onus. This research article based on a qualitative thematic analysis takes the views of the parents of school going children in the form of semi structures interviews conducted amongst seven parents and the challenges that they are facing due the online classes. The scope for the further studies has also been dealt with.

Objectives of the study:

To examine the stress on the parents due to the online classes of their children

To get an insight of the challenges faced by parents in the online classes

To know about the content and delivery and the issues in the online mode of delivery

Identifying the research gap:

Studies have shown the online information behavior, the growth of the online classes, the challenges faced by teachers etc. due to the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown. But few studies of the bringing in the perspective of a parent and the stress of the parents has not been studied at length. This paper tries to delve on the topic from the parent's perspective.

Introduction

There was a traditional way for students to gain knowledge was schools, colleges, Institutes, Coaching class etc. But the Covid 19. A pandemic situation accrued the Corona virus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered corona virus.

The COVID-19 has resulted in schools and colleges shut all across the world. But life never stops so new distinct learning started a rise of e-learning, known as online education.

There are two problems in online education: first, the effects and efficacy of the online education cannot be established and second, the extent of success of teaching on digital platform depends on the priorities and the learning goals of the instructors (Adnan and Anwar, 2000).

Effects of the online learning:

Online education as a whole reveals plenty of enthusiasm with the statistic showing a massive growth in the year 2020. However the educators worldwide still recognize few major issues plaguing the same. It requires strong self-motivation and time management skills. There are fewer external factors to push the students to perform well. Keeping up with the deadlines would be a challenge for those who lack the ability. Inability to work in team setting could cause in lack of communicational skill development in students. Skills of students will be inevitably lead to many students who excel in theoretical knowledge but who fail to pass their knowledge onto others. Also online education is limited to certain disciplines. Not all study fields can be effective in online education. It would be more suitable for the theory subjects rather than the practical subjects which needs hands on practical experiences.

The inaccessibility of the computers and computer illiterate population is possibly deprived from the availability of online education. Even for those who have accessible, the online student feedback is limited. Personalized feedback has a positive impact on students and increases the motivation levels whereas students completing regular assessments are becoming dissatisfied when they experience lack of personalized feedback. Since there is no face to face conversations and lack of feedback availability it could cause students to feel a lack of pressure, which is a disadvantage since they end up abandoning their studies. This could have a negative impact in the students and their career forward.

Challenges faced by the teachers in online learning: virtual engagement of students, communication, assessment, learning styles, time commitment, getting a feedback, course content and delivery of the assignments, fear of cheating by the students in the exams.

Challenges faced by students in online learning: distraction of the students, self-motivation from the side of the students, adaptability to a different learning style of student to mention a few (team_embibe, 2020).

The role of parent in children's education: Parents play a very important role in the education of their children. Studies have indicated that parents especially in the Indian context in the need for higher achievement of their children often involve in the homework of their children (Thirumurthy, 2014). Another study indicated that parents motivate their children by discussing the school related topics (Ghazi et.al. 2010). Distance learning was adopted as a solution to the

lockdown and children are involved in academic activities and set a routine for their class work and home work (Al-Balushi and Essa, 2020). Now because of the online classes owing to the pandemic, the differentiation between the 'classwork' and 'homework' is getting minimized.

Literature review:

Study by Rasmitadila et.al. (2020) about the perceptions of primary school teachers about the online education taken among the 67 teachers in Indonesia revealed that four basic themes that determined their perception were framed: instructional strategies, challenges, support and motivation. It was found that parent's role is essential for school from home, their level of understanding also matters and there is a need to see education as a collaborative community effort that involves teachers, parents and schools. Thus it was evident from the article that parental involvement in the children's education during the lockdown was very profound and indispensable.

Another article by Levinson et.al. 2020 purports the need and the importance of in-person schooling. While remote learning is the need of the hour, it is very imperative for the children to have in-school environment to have a better understanding of the emotional learning, the formative relationship with their peers and adults and other developmental necessities which otherwise is difficult to get when are at home, the authors conclude.

Iivari et.al. (2020) have opinionated in their study of the digital transformation and how it helped during the pandemic. The study was taken as a case of two teachers from Finland and India and it was opined that though there were technological hiccups in the form of access to the tools, the assessment of the online teaching was not taken seriously and the parents support was vital during the remote learning.

Dong et.al. (2020) , in their study among the Chinese parents beliefs and attitudes about the online learning of their children resolved that parents had negative beliefs and attitudes about their online learning of their children compared to the traditional school settings and they were not trained and not ready to take up online learning . They also recommend that the implementation of online learning during the pandemic should be carefully considered keeping in mind the diversity of families, provide parents the flexibility and convenience and the design of the online program should be made convenient for the parents

Fauzi and Khusuma (2020) in their study with 45 teacher in West Java and Banten about the perspectives of elementary school teachers found that though teachers embraced online

education, the following issues were encountered in implementing the same: availability of facilities, network and internet usage, planning, implementation and evaluation of learning and collaboration with the parents

Garbe et.al. (2020) in their study of experiences of the parents and children with the pandemic involving the thematic analysis of the parental responses inferred that parents were satisfied with the level of support that the school provided but at the same time faced difficulties such as balancing responsibilities, learner motivation, accessibility and learner outcomes

Methodology of the study: the study was taken up during the lockdown phase, i.e. still the children had their classes online. The data was taken from seven parents in the form of semi-structured interviews. Mothers from cities like Chandigarh, Thrissur, Ahmedabad and Bangalore were interviewed and their interviews were recorded as transcripts. The average age of the children under the study was 9.

The transcripts were further coded for themes and a content analysis was done. Themes were taken and the responses were coded for the themes. Transcript coding was performed through an inductive and iterative process, the researcher had to again listen to the respondents replies. Based on the general replies, the themes were framed. According to Given (2008), themes express meaningful patterns, stances of the participants or concerns. Themes may be qualitatively distinct from one another Given, 2008, pg. 463).

Findings from the interviews:

Parent 1; I have a daughter aged 9 I feel that the stress on me becomes very high, I am unable to balance both my job and the work, incidentally I also take classes to the PG students. I always need to be with my daughter.

Parent 1: I strongly feel that the burden on the parent had increased. At least looking at the body language of the student, the teacher would be able to teach, but with the online teaching the feedback to the teacher is missing

Parent 1: the teacher in the first place doesn't know whether the student is concentrating, it becomes very difficult especially for the Science and Math subjects

Parent 1: the school send recorded sessions, because there are many students who cannot afford the online set up, that's why they send the video recordings

Parent 1: in an online class, all the kids might shout out a correct answer, the school has made enough experiments, hence they give these recordings.

Parent 1; the concentration that the child has in the normal settings may not be there in the online classes

Parent 1: by looking at the face of the student, the teacher can know whether the student has understood or not, but here it's not possible

Parent 1: my burden has increased because the classwork and homework are the same, the exams are coming, and at that time she asks mama I didn't understand this

Parent 1: more applicable in Sciences and Mathematics

Parent 1: I face a lot of glitch, but a problem of getting a new device, all these days I was managing in my laptop, of late I got a new tab

Parent1: test and assessments are going on well and on timely basis

Parent 2: I have a 6 year old boy; his favourite subject is English and the teacher explains well with stories and poems.

Parent 2: But he finds Math difficult, right now they have taught numbers, they will be teaching addition and subtraction later

Parent 2: when it comes to Math, I have to personally sit with him and listen to the class, spending around 3-4 hours and then explaining the sums. For me it's very tedious

Parent 2: the only thing that I like in online class is that the studies are not getting affected

Parent 3: My son is in 7th standard. Schools give a video, he has casual attitude, theory is easy, but if he doesn't concentrate on practical subjects like mathematics, how will he pass

Parent 3: how will the mental development take place if the online classes go on? I have kept tuition so that I am confident that he has at least a little bit of concentration

Parent 3: the videos are given, there is no fixed time for studying, and my son has to study

Parent 3: life has to go on, even I don't get satisfied because of the online classes

Parent 4: I have two kids 5 years and 3 years old, my daughter is comfortable with Math

Parent 4: I have to sit along with my children to see to it their studies are being done

Parent 4: I don't have any problems with the content and delivery of the subjects

Parent 5: I have a children aged 5 and 2, my daughter aged 5 is attending UKG.

Parent 5: sometimes she doesn't attend the classes, I have to sit with her to make her listen

Parent 5: I am a housewife, I can't find time to do household work, now that online classes, and I have to play two roles- mother as well as teacher

Parent 5: I have to repeat all that is being taught in the class

Parent 5: but I am happy with the course and the school, they are doing their best that they can

Table: dimensions that emerged from the semi-structured interviews:

Dimension/Themes	Count
Stress level on the mother both housewife and working	7
Time required to sit with children	5
Balancing both house and online teaching	3
The assessment, content delivery	2
Repetition of the video lecture given	2
The handling of the situation by the school in spite of the lockdown	7

Discussion:

From the semi-structured interviews it was found that the stress level was very high for both housewives and working women. The time was required more to sit with children apart from their regular work. Almost all the parents said that the videos were sent to parents and they had to again play it and explain to the children, which led to the repetition of the video lecture given. Quite a few parents mentioned about the content and delivery, and felt that subjects like Science

and Math is very difficult and especially in the higher classes. The parents felt that traditional class room teaching is the most effective compared to the distance and online learning. Added to it, the student had to be motivated by the parent. A parent felt that mental development cannot be done in the online class, which is in concurrence to the work of Zhao, 2020. In a classroom situation, there was a face to face interaction with the teacher and the peer influence also played a role, whereas in online learning, this was missing. However, all the parents were satisfied about the way the schools handled the situation in spite of the lock down. The parents received the online classes well in spite of the challenges that they faced, which was contrary to the work of Dong et.al. 2020.

Conclusion, limitation and scope for the further research: The COVID – 19 made a profound impact on the teaching – learning process across the world. To combat the ongoing process of education, the online teaching was the best alternative strategy for many schools. The point of concern was that given that parents involve in their children’s home work, now the extra burden of teaching also had been put on them. Parents had to face a lot of challenges not only in terms of academic delivery but also in managing time for their household work. The scope the present study was limited to a qualitative study from a specific sample of parents. More in depth interviews and other measures of qualitative techniques can be used to explore further into the other dimensions/ entities of the topic e.g. further studies can be done on the students and teachers viewpoint. A large scale quantitative study can be taken up that delve on the demographic and geographic and technological factors that impend the online learning. Studies pertaining to the future prospects of online learning in the wake of the new normal can be taken up.

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