Impact of Covid 19 on Education: A Spatial Study of Majha Region of Punjab

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ABSTRACT

Corona viruses belong to a group of viruses that is related RNA viruses which cause diseases in mammals and birds. These viruses cause respiratory tract infections that can range from mild to lethal in human. Common cold is included in some cases of mild illnesses while more lethal varieties can cause SARS(Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) and COVID-19. This new virus was first emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and has been declared pandemic globally in March 2020. Government of India observed the seriousness of the pandemic and imposed janta curfew all over the nation and during this lockdown all the educational institutions were closed. As per the data collected during 1st week of June 2020 by the UNESCO nearly 68% of total world's student population has faced the complete shutdown of educational institutions due to Covid 19 and similarly more than 32 crores of Indian students suffered by the restrictions due to nationwide lockdown. But to reduce the negative effect of this various online mode of learning and teaching have been used here again the big obstacle in the way of adapting to the new age learning is that only 1/3 of the country's population has the access to the internet. Despite of all the hurdles the one thing that Covid 19 pandemic has taught to the world is that how necessity is the mother of invention as now the educational institutions are using digital mode to boost the teaching learning process. The present study includes the spatial analysis of the impact of Covid 19 on education in Majha Region of Punjab for which primary data is collected by online mode from Gurdaspur, Tran Taran and Amritsar districts of Punjab.

Key words: Covid 19 Pandemic, Lockdown, Orthocoronavirinae, MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) and SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome)

INTRODUCTION

In mammals and birds RNA related Corona viruses cause diseases. The scientific name for corona virus is Orthocoronavirinae or Coronavirinae. Corona viruses belong to the family of Coronaviridae, order Nidovirales and realm Riboviria. They are divided into alphacoronaviruses and betacoronaviruses which infect mammals and gammacoronaviruses and deltacoronaviruses, which primarily infect birds. In humans, these viruses cause respiratory tract infections that can range from mild to lethal. Mild illnesses include some cases of the common cold (which is also caused by other viruses, predominantly rhinoviruses), while more lethal varieties can cause SARS(Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) and COVID-19 (Meenu 2020) [7].

This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic globally on March 11, 2020 by World Health Organization (WHO) [13]. It has affected more than 4.5 million peoples worldwide and in India, on 30 January 2020 in Kerala a person having a travel history from Wuhan, China has been detected as the first affected case. Just after 40 days on March 12, 2020 first death due to Covid 19 was reported. Government of India observed the seriousness of the disease and on March 22, 2020 declared janta curfew of a day then again on March 24 to combat the pandemic and assess the ability of the people to fight with it 14 hours Janta Curfew was imposed. But after that due to the lethal effects of the virus this short term lockdown has been converted into the 1st phase of lockdown for 21 days on April 30 and then extended in different phases till lockdown 5.0 which was effective from 1st June to 30th June 2020. During this period of lockdown from lockdown1.0 to lockdown 5.0, in the country all the educational institutions have never got any relaxation to start their educational activities. Thus, Covid-19 has significantly impacted the education sector (Dr. Ramakrishna, K. 2021) [3]. As per the data collected during 1st week of June 2020 by the UNESCO (2020) [11] nearly 68% of total world's student population which is about 1.2 billion has faced

the closure of educational institutions due to Covid 19. About more than 32 crores of Indian students have also suffered by the restrictions due to nationwide lockdown and to reduce the negative effect of this various online mode of learning and teaching have been used. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, has conducted a survey on higher education according to which there are 993 universities, 39931 Colleges and 10725 stand- alone institutions, which contribute to education are recorded on their portal. Only 33 percent of the country's population has the access to the internet and in the rural areas the situation is even worst, which is the big hindrance in the way of adapting to the new age learning. But the one thing the Covid 19 pandemic has taught to the world is that how necessity is the mother of invention as now the educational institutions are using digital mode to boost the teaching learning process. During COVID-19 e-GyanKosh, Gyandarshan, Swayam, e-PG Pathshala, Virtual Labs, National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) and mobile apps: e-Yantra and FOSSEE (Free/Libre and Open-Source Software for Education) etc are some example of the digital initiatives taken by UGC & MHRD for higher education along with these online platforms in India most frequently used platforms for the online study are Google meet, Google classroom and zoom cloud meet apps. The most trendy and commonly used online tool in India for educational purpose during the pandemic was Whatsapp Messenger as it is easy to use by most of the Indian population (Vyas, 2020) [12].

Objective

The objective of the present study is to study about the impact of the Covid 19 on the education system of Majha Region (Punjab, India): positive and negative.

Methodology

The present study is based on the primary data collected by the150 students of Majha Region (Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Tarn Taran), data primarily collected by WHO and UNESCO reports and through various research papers and internet. The data is analyzed and illustrated to show the results of the present study through maps, tables and statistical diagram.

DISCUSSION

Till today India is a rural and agrarian country and maximum of its students live in villages with just basic access to the internet. One report of NSS (2019) [9] revealed that in India only 24 percent of the households have internet connection and if we consider rural areas then it's just 15 percent.
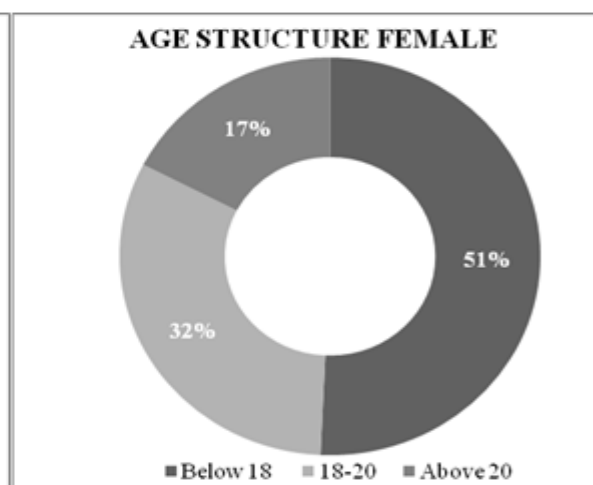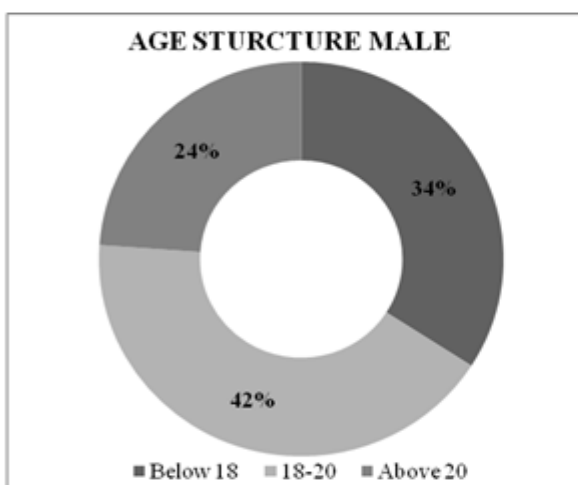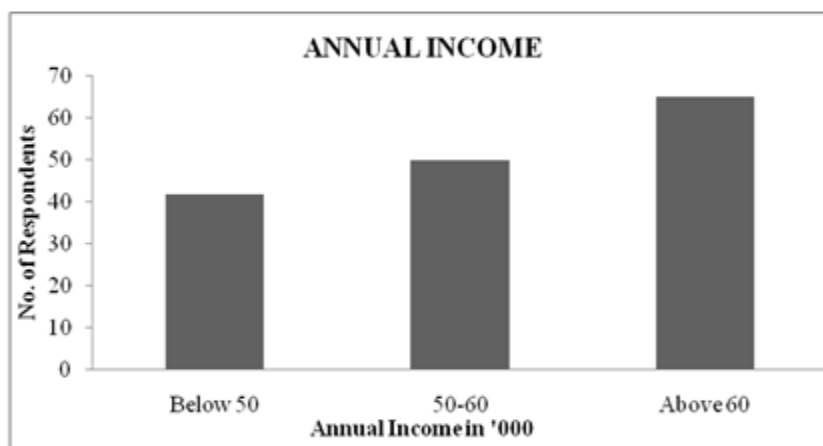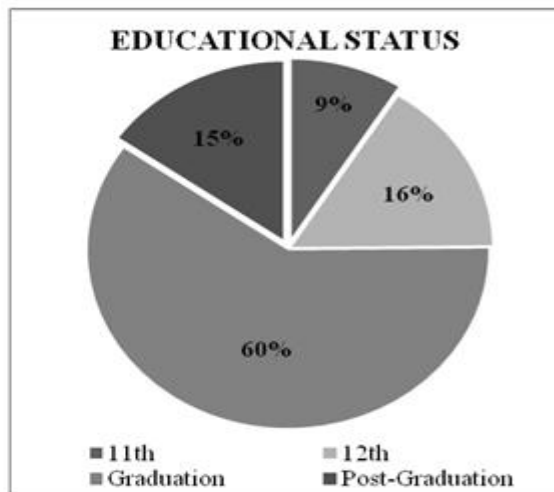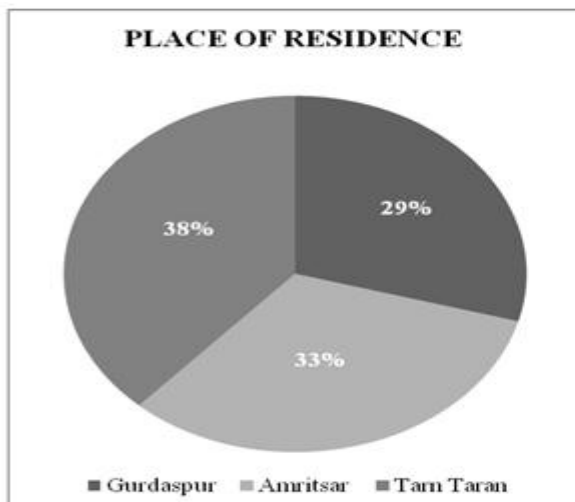

Fig 1

Fig 2

Despite of being a rural country the education network of the country is quite vast which comprises 320 million students across 1.5 million schools, 993 universities and 39931 colleges (AISHE, 2021) [1]. Out of this 320 million more than 80 percent belongs to the rural area and maximum of them attend government schools or colleges (Alvi and Gupta, 2020) [2]. This vast population has been immensely affected by the Covid 19 lockdown as people are told to stay in their homes which put them into such a stressful condition that it resulted into a high risk of anxiety and depression specially among the students (Naser, et al. 2020) [8].

Table 1: Social, Demographic and Economic Characteristics of the Subject under Study (N=157)
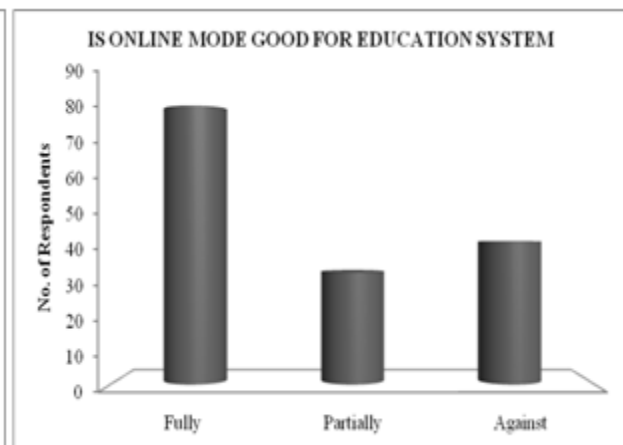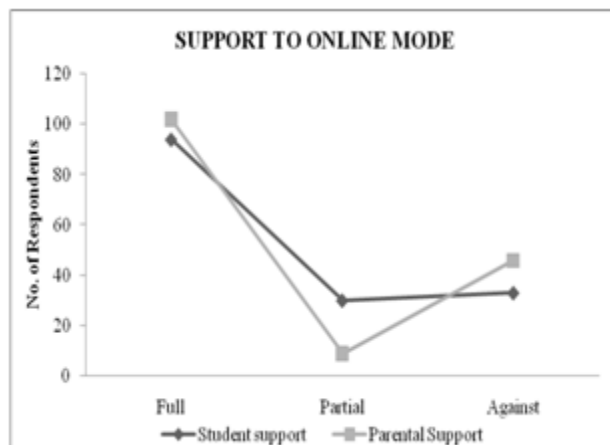
Particulars		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Place of Residence	Gurdaspur	46	29.29
	Amritsar	51	32.48
	Tarn Taran	60	38.21
	Total	157	100
Educational Status	11th	14	8.9
	12th	25	15.9
	Graduation	94	59.87
	Post-Graduation	24	15.28
Annual Income	Below 50000	42	26.75
	50-60000	50	31.84
	Above 60000	65	41.40
		Male	**Female**
Age (in years)	Below 18	30	35
	18-20	37	22
	Above 20	21	12

PLACE OF RESIDENCE

EDUCATIONAL STATUS

ANNUAL INCOME

AGE STURCTURE MALE

AGE STRUCTURE FEMALE

Due to lockdown the exams have been postponed, college admissions have been delayed and lack of proper information all have led to the disruption of the education (Economic Times, India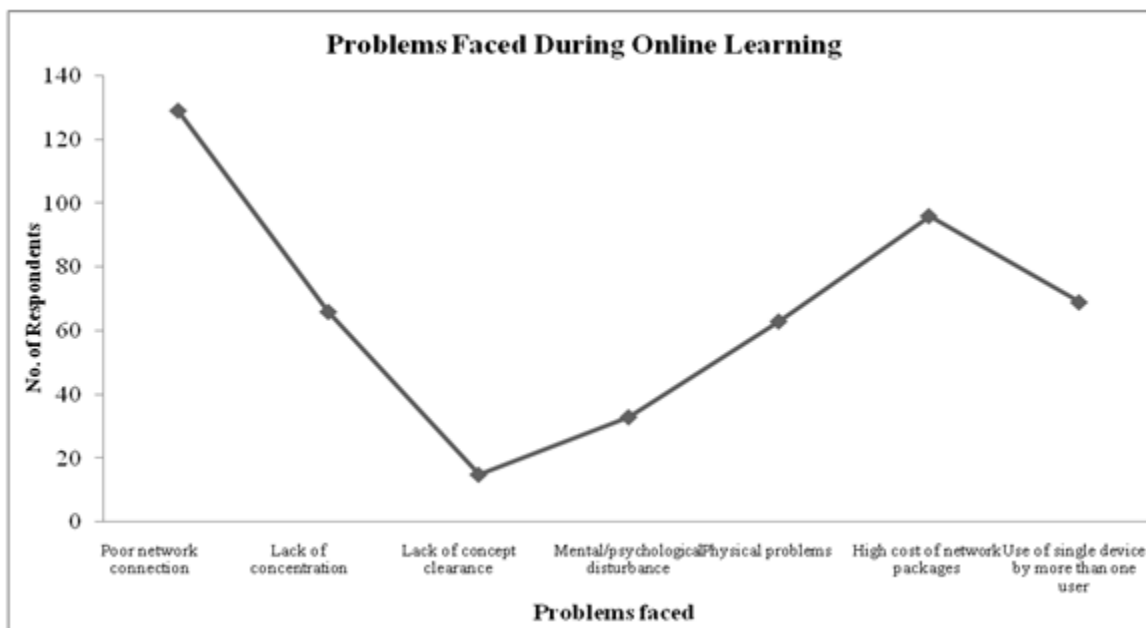 times, 2020) [4]. Thus to know the extent of the effect of pandemic over the education present study has been conducted. For which total157 responses are collected from the Majha region of Punjab (i.e. 46, 51 and 60 from Gurdaspur, Amritsar and Tarn Taran districts respectively). Among these 157 responses 88 are male and 69 are females. Most of the male (37) respondents belong to the age group of 18-20 years while maximum female (35) respondents are below 18 years of age. 59.87 percent response of the study are from the students of the different graduations (94 responses) followed by 12th grade, post-graduation and 11th grade students (25, 24 and 14 responses respectively).

Table 2: Pattern of Online Mode of Education Due to Covid 19

	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Frequency of Classes Attended	Rarely	36	22.92
	3-4 days a week	55	35.03
	Daily	66	42.03
Platform Used for Online Classes	Google Meet	77	49.04
	Zoom	52	33.12
	Other	28	17.8
Parental Support	Full	102	64.96
	Partial	09	5.7
	Against	46	29.29
Student Support	Full	94	59.87
	Partial	30	19.10
	Against	33	21.01
Is Online Mode Good for Education System	Fully	82	52.23
	Partially	33	21.01
	Against	42	26.75
Problems Faced During Online Learning	Poor network connection	129	82.16
	Lack of concentration	66	42.04
	Lack of concept clearance	15	9.55
	Mental/psychological disturbance	33	21.01
	Physical problems	63	40.13
	High cost of network packages	96	61.14
	Use of single device by more than one user	69	43.94

FREQUENCY OF CLASS ATTENDED

PLATFORM USED

SUPPORT TO ONLINE MODE

IS ONLINE MODE GOOD FOR EDUCATION SYSTEM
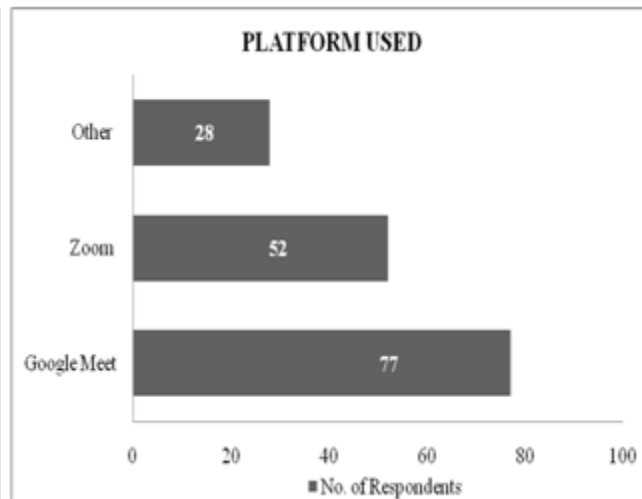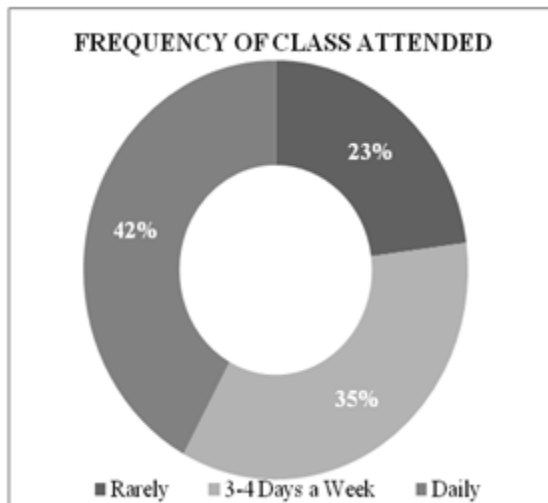
Data collected through the survey depict that almost all the respondents belong to the low income group which is the reason that most of the parents cannot afford internet recharges even in many family may not even own a smart phone for every child and the students have to share their devices with each other.

Although online network is a new possible path available for educational activities but there are so many complications in the way of online mode the biggest among them is the poor network connection. Kundu (2020)[6] in one of his studies stated that more than 50000 villages still don't have mobile network coverage data collected from the study area also strongly support this as 82.16 percent respondents have faced the problem of poor network connection. Second problem which 61.14 percent respondents faced is the high cost of internet packages as IMAI (2019)[5].also revealed that among the 20 percent of the poor families of the country only 9 percent have internet access and only 3 percent have computer. Despite of these two major problems some other which the students have faced are non availability of device for online classes (43.94 percent) as one device is used by more than one user as more than one child in the family have class at the same time, lack of concentration as at home students don't get private space to study properly.

Mental/psychological disturbance as students are isolated within their home due to lockdown which cutoff their physical contact and social interaction with peers in school settings which is essential for their psychosocial development and hence have affected their academic progression and overall development and health (Srivastava et al., 2020)[10]. Physical problems like fatigue, headache, survival, back pain and eyesight defect are also experienced by the students due to excessive use of electronic gadgets for online study (40.13 percent). In the study area about 82 percent of the students used only two platforms (i.e. Google Meet and Zoom app for 49.04 and 33.12 percent respectively), while a few used some other app like Whatsapp, snap homework and Google classroom etc. although it was very tough for the students as well as for the teachers to adjust their selves into this new online teaching learning process but still 64.96 percent of the parents and 59.87 percent of students are fully favors online mode of education as it helped them to stay safe from the pandemic and give them a chance to upgrade their selves to explore the world through a new vision.

What Need To Be Done?
1. Educators and learners should be trained to utilize online teaching learning process using technology.
2. Government/ educational institutions should provide free internet and free digital gadgets to all learners in order to encourage online learning.
3. Quality assurance mechanisms and quality benchmark for online learning programmes must be developed rapid growth of the online learning platforms
4. New approaches for academic assessment should be developed so that the academic assessment can be done efficiently by educational institutions.
5. Traditional Indian knowledge is quite known all over the world for its scientific innovations, values and benefits thus it should be collaborated with a present-day mainstream higher education system so that it can be get benefitted from this (Dr. Ramakrishna, K. 2021)[3].

CONCLUSION

The situation for the education system of India has become very tough during the pandemic but still it tried its best to provide immense support to the students. The digital mode adopted during Covid helped to improve the education system by many ways such as it enabled the students to use soft copies as their learning material, Improve their collaborative work, to interact through online meetings, get digitally literate and global access, share information in a better way by electronic media (through e-mail, SMS, phone calls and using different social medias like Whatsapp or Facebook) and manage time efficiently along with all these benefits it has also increased the demand for open and distance learning. But despite of all these pros it also has some cons such as it hampered all the educational activities by suspension of classes and postponement of various exams. Both teachers and students were unprepared for the sudden transition of traditional to advanced mode to teaching-learning. Parent's economic and educational status also plays great role in this pandemic as all parents are not able to support their wards in the access and use of electronic gadgets and all in all it was creating a huge difference between the rich and poor or urban and rural students.

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