

The Impact of Covid 19 Lockdown on School Children of Kerala in India

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ABSTRACT

One aspect of life that the pandemic affected the most is school education. Reports say that Kerala state in India has showed remarkable performance in remote education during the Covid 19 lockdown. A survey based on two questionnaires has been conducted to explore the impact of the lockdown on school education. This article tries to analyze the responses of students and the observations of teachers collected through the survey. Students' lenience toward digital devices and the necessity of strengthening ICT in education are evident in this study.

Key Words: Lockdown, Impact, Students, Teachers, ICT

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has notoriously stamped its impact on almost all aspects of human life. Education, more specifically the school education is of no exception. In India, like in many other countries, the virus outbreak forced the governments to close schools without much time to ponder over alternatives to classroom education (1). Online teaching and learning gained rapid currency, but 'digital divide' was a real challenge. Still a few of the states in India were admirably able to adapt to the situation quickly, thanks to the high rate of connectivity in rural areas. Kerala is one among those states where government-led initiatives like the *Victer* television channel played a commendable role in bridging the gap (2).

Now that the schools have gone back to the earlier fully offline mode, there comes a relevant question that might disturb teachers and parents: Did the pandemic-induced closure create any serious impact on school education? (3). This article tries to find out answers to this question. The researcher has selected Higher Secondary classes (grade 11 and 12) of Kerala state in India to carry out the study.

The Study

Two major components of the system – the teachers and the students were approached by the researcher to explore the issue. A survey, based on two questionnaires, was conducted during July-August 2022 among 100 teachers and 300 students across the state of Kerala. They were randomly selected from four districts – Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Kozhikode and Kasaragod. The rationale of this selection is that these districts may represent the entire state as they are the southernmost, northernmost and the very central of the districts. The following questionnaires were used in carrying out the survey:

Questionnaire 1: Teachers Survey on the Impact of Covid 19 Lockdown on School Children in Kerala

1	Do you feel any visible change in students' attitude toward classroom activities post Covid 19 lockdown?	YES / NO
2	If yes, is it positive or negative?	Positive/Negative
3	Did you feel any difficulty in managing the classroom after long stints of online classes?	YES / NO
4	Do you think that the students have lost their interest and motivation in real classroom activities?	YES / NO
5	Do you think that owning their own gadget has made the students less dependent on teachers?	YES / NO

Questionnaire 2: Students Survey on the Impact of Covid 19 Lockdown on School Children in Kerala

1	Did you feel any difficulty in attending offline sessions after the lockdown?	YES / NO
2	Do you get online sessions at present?	Daily/Weekly/Rarely/Never
3	Do you feel any discomfort in participating classroom activities	YES / NO

	after long periods of online learning?	
4	Do you access to any gadget that can be used for study purpose?	YES / NO
5	If yes, how often do you use it for study purpose?	Daily/Weekly/ Rarely/Never

The enthusiastic participation of the students and the whole-hearted support of the teachers have helped the researcher to complete the study successfully. Before arriving at the answer to the cardinal question of the study – Did the Covid 19 lockdown cause any serious impact on school education? – let us analyze three aspects each which were in fact explored indirectly using the two questionnaires:

A. Teachers’ observations:

1. Negative change in students’ attitude.
2. Classroom management turned difficult.
3. Students became more dependent on gadgets.

B. Students’ responses:

1. Less interested in classroom activities.
2. Access to gadgets.
3. Frequency of gadget use.

Teachers’ Observations: The survey shows that 87.5 per cent of the teachers think that there is negative change in students’ attitude. The reflection of such a change is in the form of non-cooperation in classroom activities, frequent absence without genuine reasons and misbehavior in classrooms.

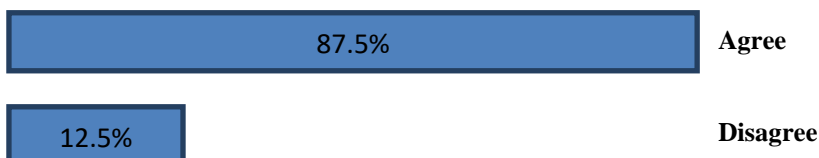


Figure 1: Chart showing negative change in students’ attitude.

Consequently, 80 per cent of the teachers report that they feel difficulty in managing classroom, specifically after the Covid 19 lockdown. As the results show, there is correlation between these two observations.

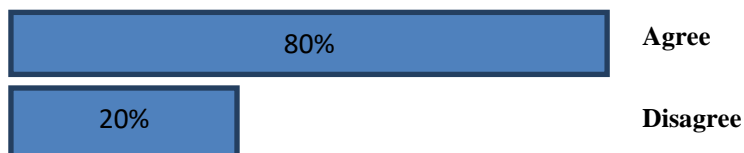


Figure 2: Chart showing difficulty level of classroom management.

Almost half of the teacher-participants believe that their students have become less dependent on teachers as they have access to computers, tablets and cell phones. This, they feel, is an exclusive outcome of the lockdown.

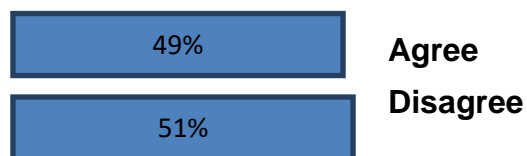
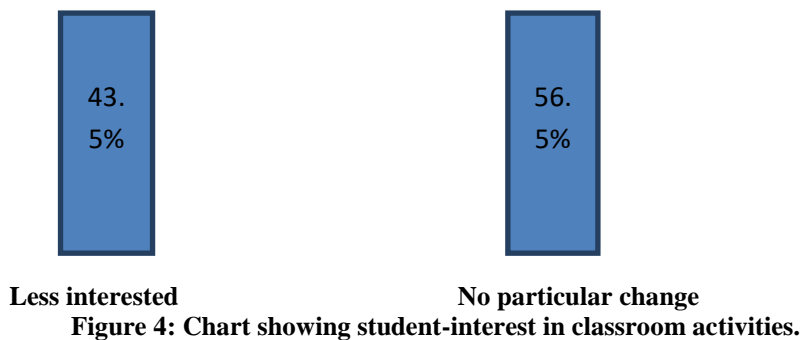


Figure 3: Chart showing students’ dependence on gadgets

Students’ Responses: A surprising finding of the survey is that considerable number of students feels less interested in classroom sessions after the long lockdown break. 43.5 per cent of the students experience some sort of detachment from the regular classroom activities.



A promisingly positive finding of the survey is that 99.5 per cent of the Higher Secondary students in Kerala state have access to gadgets that can be used for study purpose. Many of them obtained their own devices during the lockdown when everything went online. The remaining .50 per cent relied exclusively on the television channel *Victors*, managed by KITE (4).

A significant piece of data received in the survey is regarding the use of gadgets by students for study and non-study purposes. Majority of them use cell phones, tablets or computers daily.

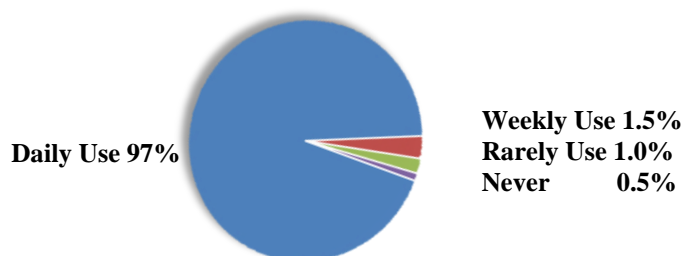


Figure 5: Diagram showing gadget use by students.

CONCLUSION

The survey was an attempt to study how an unexpected interruption affects the normalcy of a system that depends heavily on traditional methods. For many teachers, the lengthy lockdown has created a void. At least for some of them, it has resulted in difficulty in classroom management. Considerable number of students also finds it difficult to adapt themselves with the system, after they had experienced new methods of knowledge sharing and learning. Almost half of the teachers who participated in the survey believed that their students have become less dependent on them. Interestingly, 97 per cent of the students revealed that they use gadgets daily. When we connect these two responses, we can justly arrive at the conclusion that the students prefer to have online sessions too. Instead of switching fully into the olden ways of teaching, the teachers have to make use of digital devices and online resources also.

Surveys conducted by international agencies including UNICEF have found that 68 per cent of the 127 countries were using a combination of digital and non-digital delivery of distant education during the pandemic. Montoya and Barbosa report that even before the Covid 19 related school closures, the use of radio, video and television for remote learning has proven to be strong components of well-designed numeracy, literacy and financial education programmes for children, youth and adults living in remote and rural communities(5). Thus, it can be concluded that improving ICT in education is of prime importance and indispensable in tackling the future crises.

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