

Covid 19 and School Education: Experiences of Teachers and Parents

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Abstract

Schools across world had to close in response to the COVID-19 virus pandemic and move to online teaching. This paper explores the views of teachers and parents/carers from educational institutes of Punjab gathered through survey and interviews. It was found that inspite of technological glitches online schooling was well received by pupils and parents. There was more autonomy, responsibility, collaboration and participation. Parents suggested that schools need to be innovative and make a few changes in their existing academic plans for continuous qualitative education

Keywords: COVID-19, home-schooling, student and teacher voice

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I. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 virus pandemic made schools face unprecedented challenges resulting in the School closures at short notice. Almost every child was out of school for the first time. Educationists world over were concerned about the academic loss that may eventually result. Experts felt this would widen the already existing gap between children from poor homes and those from more affluent backgrounds. The solution that was adopted at this time of crisis was to take school to homes of student through online platform. Research (Cullinane & Montacute, 2020) found that children from the poorest families were the least likely to have access to the devices needed and internet access at home.

This sudden shift had a critical effect on the uses of educational technology in schooling (Patel et al., 2020), requiring quick adaptation by teachers and pupils to the features of the digital platforms thrust upon them. School and teachers that formerly made little use of technology or where pupils did not have devices and the internet at home (Petrie et al., 2020) faced a herculean task. Research on student participation (Jones & Bubb, 2020) found that teachers were finding it difficult to involve pupils fully, particularly in issues impacting on school improvement. Still teachers emerged as unrecognized corona warriors. Gudmundsdottir and Hathaway (2020, p. 244) reported teachers being positive and 'willing to go the extra mile'.

In our research we did not want to project online learning as a deficit alternative but want to seek answers to questions on what has been learnt and imbibed by all.

II. CONTEXT

Methodology

The aim of there search was to find out how parents, teachers and students of all ages in educational institutions of Punjab

experienced home schooling and what they wanted to continue with after educational institutions reopened.

There search questions were there fore based on the following aspects:

- How were the parents, students as well as teachers experience of home teaching learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What did the schools learn from this sudden change caused due to COVID-19 pandemic in the educational system?
- How did technology effect the users during this time?

The approach was to involve as many individuals as possible, rather than to select any sample. It was important to gather views of all key stakeholders with in educational institutions to see how their views were compared and related to each other in a few aspects so such questionnaires were designed which had some common questions. Three questionnaires were designed: one for students, one for parents, one for teachers. As this questionnaire was on a digital platform so it was considered that children from senior secondary and ages above that should participate as young children might be too immature to understand the questions.

Much thought was put into survey construction. The questionnaires were designed to be easy and in English language, to maximize the response rate. A key intention was to produce data which could be compared but also it was kept in mind that every key stake holder has a different point of view for the situation so the questions were designed accordingly.

For instance, pupils, were asked how much stress level they felt during the pandemic period: How do you perceive your academic studying experience during this period of COVID - 19 pandemic? and parents were asked How stressed are you

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about your child's education? In terms of fear of COVID-19 the question common to all questionnaires was How do you perceive the risk of contagion during this period of COVID-19 pandemic? In the abovementioned questions, a five-point Likert scale was used ranging from 'not at all stressful' to 'extremely stressful'.

Furthermore, respondents were given other questions to evaluate their own experience. Questions for students included aspects like their liking of online classes; effect of remote learning on their relationships with peers and professors; access to internet; concentration level during online learning; cooperation of teachers.

Questionnaire designed for teachers included questions that evaluated their own experience as teachers/educators during the COVID-19 pandemic. Questions included aspects like peacefulness of their home environment; number of hours of classes.

The teachers considering their age were expected to answer a few open-ended questions such as What methods did you use while teaching through online mode? Other questions were: How did you engage the students into the online learning process while teaching through online mode?

In addition to these questionnaires, a questionnaire was designed for parents which was kept shorter than the rest of the questionnaires considering that some parents might be reluctant to give out much information as English is not the first language for some parents. Further more, this questionnaire was different than the rest as it was designed to maintain the parents' anonymity and they were assured that their information would be kept completely anonymous.

The questionnaires for students and teachers involved demographics like: names; names of school/college/university that they were part of; city/town that they were inhabitants of; teachers were asked to mention their age as well.

The surveys were completed in the course of 17 days from 24th of June, 2021 to 10th of July, 2021 while the schools reopened only for the teachers after summer vacation on 24th of June 2021. Schools were yet not opened for the students.

III. EXPERIENCE ON HOME LEARNING AS PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS

The questionnaire was designed to evaluate the experience of teachers during the pandemic which included few open-ended questions and some objective questions covering the following areas:

- Technological aspects
- Previous experience
- Cooperation of Children and Parents
- Relationship with students and colleagues
- Risk of contagion

The data collection instrumentation consisted of two sections: demographics and a set of question in which a set of five open ended questions were included as well as questions based on a five-point Likert scale which ranged from 'not at all stressful' to 'extremely stressful'; related to COVID-19 and home learning.

IV. FINDINGS

PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS

Experience of online teaching

The responses of teachers on their experience of online teaching has been depicted below in the figure.

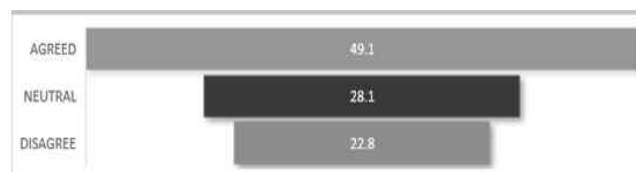


Fig 1: Experience of teachers for online teaching

49.1% of the teachers responded positively saying that they enjoyed teaching through online mode while 22.8% responded in a negative way. The rest were not sure about it. For majority of the teachers the experience of online teaching was pleasant. They felt that though initially shifting to online learning was a herculean task but as the academic transactions progressed, they began to enjoy the experience of taking classes from home. Major contributors to making the experience better were

- Better engagement of students could be ensured using app like kahoot.
- More personalized experiences could be designed for the students
- Students could replay the recorded lessons allowing them to self pace their learning.
- Additional learning resources could be consulted and shared with the students instantly which was not possible in offline classes in the absence of smart class rooms.

However a few teachers felt that the technical glitches and digital divide made the learning experience through online medium a mammoth task.

Technology

Teachers felt that the entire onus of online education was technology driven and dependent. Hence technological support has emerged as the most asked for during this period. Major aspects on which technology failed them.

Crashing of system or application being used :61.4% of the users responded that their apps/system crashed sometimes but only 12.3% confirmed it as often. The rest 26.3% responded that it rarely happened.



Fig 2: Funnel diagram representing the responses of teachers on crashing of system/app in percentage

Technical Support-

Majority of the users responded that they did not receive any technical support from their institution for online teaching and only a 33.3% of users said that they had received technical support.

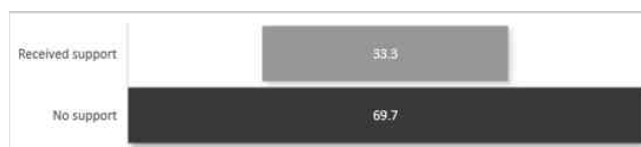


Fig 3 Funnel diagram representing the responses of teachers on technical support in percentage

Reimbursement of cost of data-

A vast majority of the teachers answered that no reimbursement cost was provided by the institutions to their staff members for online classes and a 14% responded that little reimbursement was offered whereas 12.3% did not receive any support.

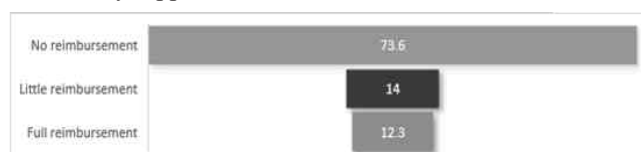


Fig 4 Funnel diagram representing the responses of teachers on reception of reimbursement of cost of data in percentage

V. PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Risk of contagion

Another area covered by the questionnaire was the fear of risk of contagion, relationship with colleagues and with students for which the users chose one of the five options in the five-point Likert scale ranging from “not at all stressful” to “extremely stressful”.



Fig 5 Funnel diagram representing the responses of teachers on fear of risk of contagion in percentage

Perception on effect on student teacher relationship



Fig 5 Funnel diagram representing the Perception of teachers on effect on student teacher relationship

According to 31.6% of the teachers, student teacher relationships have changed for better in these testing times whereas 33.3% believe that it changed for the worse. The rest of 35.1% feel that there has been no significant change.

VI. PARENTS VOICES ON TEACHING LEARNING DURING PANDEMIC

About 40 parents were interviewed to understand their perception on teaching learning during pandemic. A structured questionnaire and Open ended questions were asked to develop a deeper insight into the aspect of study.

Majority of the parents expressed their concern and worriedness over quality of education during the pandemic. Their responses in terms of percentage are being depicted in the pie diagram below (Fig

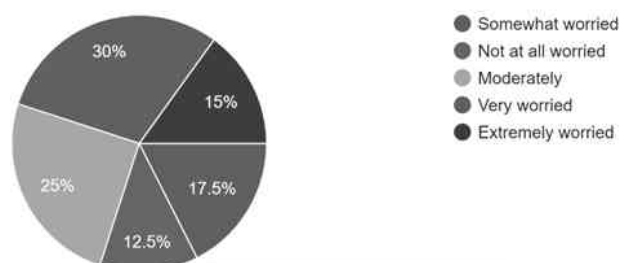


Fig 6: Pie chart depicting the responses of parents concerning their worriedness



Fig 7: Pie chart depicting the stress level of parents during online education

Percentage analysis revealed that only 12.5% of the parents did not feel stressful while majority of the parents felt stressed, though the level of stress was different. The major stressors as identified by the parents were due to lack of technological support, increased screen time and arranging gadgets to ensure academic progress of more than one child.

Participating parents were asked to share the ways adopted by them to avoid distractions of children during online teaching. The summary of the responses given is being depicted in the Fig 8

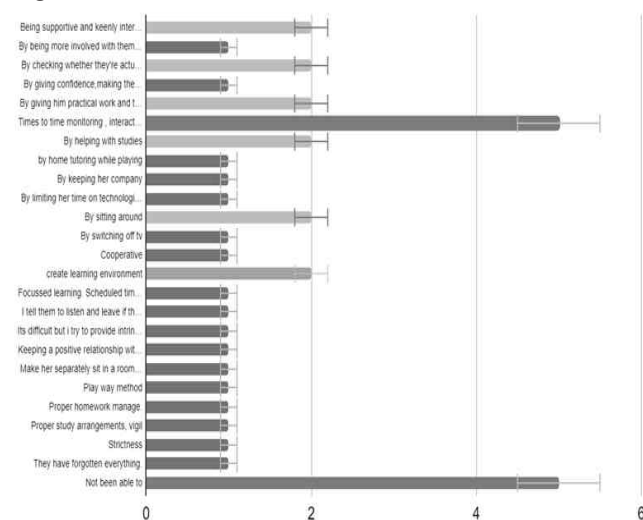


Fig 8: Bar Diagram depicting the ways adopted by teacher to avoid distractions of children during online teaching

Though every parent adopted different strategies but the essence of all strategies lied in creating conducive learning environment at home and devising techniques to maximize engagement with the content. They also felt that there participation and contribution to child's learning increased during this period.

Similar trend has been reflected in the responses to the question 'What strategies did you use to help your child in their studies?'

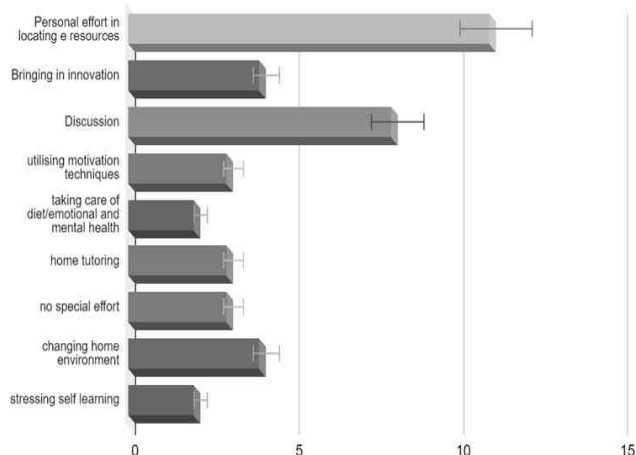


Fig 9 : Bar Diagram depicting the strategies adopted by parents to help children in their studies

Here also maximum of the parents made personal efforts in locating e resources in terms of written and video content so that the students could clear their doubts and develop better understanding. They discussed their daily learning more often than they use to do during offline classes. Other strategies included adopting more motivation techniques, modifying learning environment at home and also hiring home tutor for personalized attention.

When asked about the major problems faced majority of the parents cited technological glitches, internet connectivity, lack of latest /extra gadgets as the major hinderance. Other problems cited by the parents are depicted in form of bar diagram below in fig

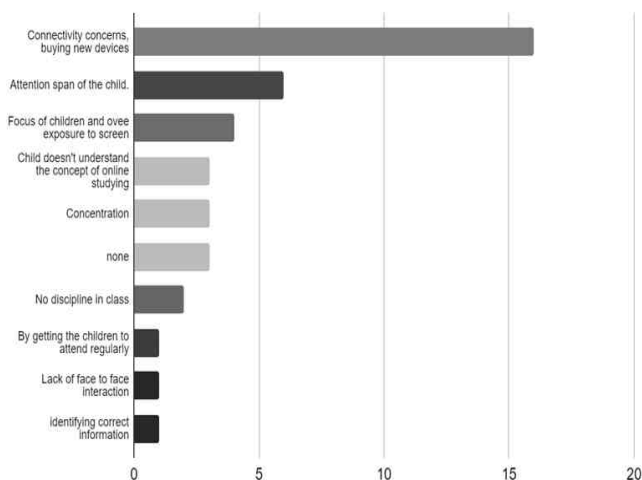


Fig 10 : Bar Diagram depicting the problems faced by parents during online teaching

Parents were very responsive on the aspect of suggesting some measures to improve the online teaching learning process. They suggested that schools should have ensured that some training was given to the teachers before switching over to online mode of lesson delivery so that they could use available digital resources for making the classes more engaging. Further content pacing and delivery could have been more planned and organized. A few parents also suggested that schools should have developed their own learning management system keeping in mind the requirements of the school

VII. UNDERSTANDING THE LEARNING OF SCHOOLS DURING THE PANDEMIC

To develop an understanding of the effects of lockdown or transition of teaching learning on schools an interview was held with senior teachers and principals of internship schools

VIII. EFFECT OF TECHNOLOGY ON USER

Since all stakeholders had to rely on technology for continuing the teaching learning process, technology emerged as the new friend of all.

- i. When asked on the same it was found that all the teachers and parents had to engage themselves into learning the use of various different applications and technological devices so as to keep up with their students and children.
- ii. Teachers had to use various techniques and approaches to make learning effective and better.
- iii. One of the most important aim of the teachers was to break the monotony of lecture methods that have long since been going on in our educational system so using online mode for that era of teachers, it was like a breath of fresh air.
- iv. A few new approaches opted by teachers during the online teaching learning process included cooperative learning, blended learning, flipped learning and many more innovative teaching approaches:
 - Blended Learning- Blended learning combines the best of two training environments—traditional face-to-face classroom training and high-tech elearning. By covering all the bases, you can engage all types of learners—those who learn better in a structured environment that includes face-to-face interaction with an instructor, and independent types who learn better with semi-autonomous, computer-based training.
 - Flipped Learning- Flipped learning is a methodology that helps teachers to prioritize active learning during class time by assigning students lecture materials and presentations to be viewed at home or outside of class.
 - Cooperative Learning- Cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement

IX. DISCUSSION

Though pandemic presented tough times for all stakeholders of education but eventually it gave birth to a new vision of collaboration and cooperation amongst all of them to ensure an engaging and meaningful learning experience for the students.

Our research study revealed that lack of technological support and knowledge was the biggest hurdle to cross for teachers, parents and students. Though during the process, a lot of training programme were organized for the teachers and also a lots of e learning resources were made available both for teachers and students, but in the beginning the shift was vague and directionless. What was most amazing was the pace with which digital advancement was made by teachers and supported by students also. Students took some time but eventually adjusted to the shift from a structured learning environment of a class to unstructured learning environment of home. Here the parents ensured that the students learning environment at home was conducive for the academic progress of child. For the first time parents' participation in their child education was quite obvious and engaging. School systems without advanced digital technology policies have 'left many children without the tools they need to access and benefit from remote learning' (Turvey & Pachler, 2020).

Online home learning experience have opened new paradigms of education. It led to decreased work load for teachers and giving them opportunities of exploring and better integration of technology in curriculum transaction. Students also got a new experience of exploring latest academic resources. Contribution of online learning communities also got strengthen as both students and teachers began to share resources with each other.

X. CONCLUSION

This study makes a distinct contribution to learning. It records the experiences from the separate perspectives of pupils, parents and teachers. In India schools are not well-equipped with digital communications infrastructure, it was still a shock for an entire schooling experience to be taken out of the existing physical infrastructure and delivered remotely using internet technology to a degree that was unprecedented for an entire school.

XI. REFERENCES

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