

**“Learning in times of lockdown: Effects of corona virus (covid-19) on
Rural Education & Health in India”**

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ABSTRACT

In the months following India’s national blockade, most of the announced relief and rehabilitation plans focused on economic recovery. However, including the US\$250 billion stimulus plan of the Indian Central Government, the education sector has still not taken such measures. In this article, we discussed the impact of the closure of schools and rural childcare centers caused by the lockdown on the education and health of the urban and rural poor. We pay special attention to food and nutrition safety for children who rely on school meals and supplementary nutrition programs. We believe that the effects on girls and children from already backward ethnic and caste backgrounds could be more severe. We also discussed ways in which existing social security programs can be used and strengthened to improve these effects.

Keywords: Impact of Covid-19 ,Education,School feeding programs Child health
Gender rural area.

INTRODUCTION

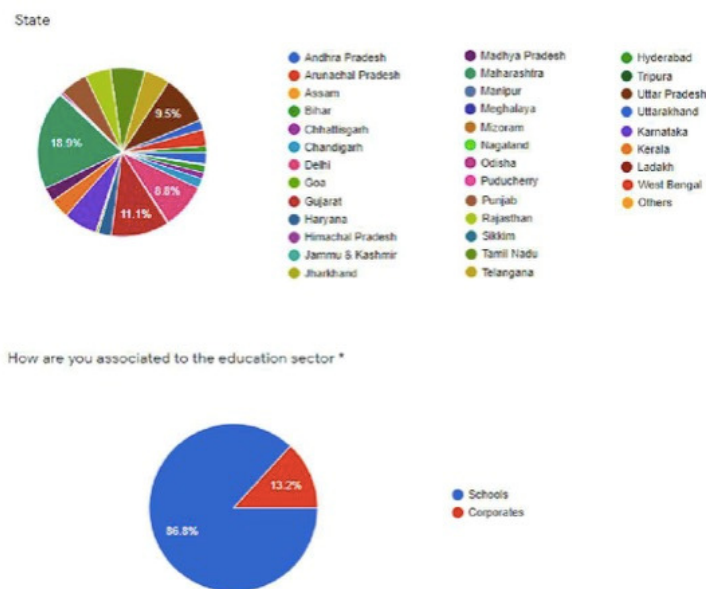
This is a crucial time for the education sector—board examinations, nursery school admissions, entrance tests of various universities and competitive examinations, among others, are all held during this period. As the days pass by with no immediate solution to stop the outbreak of Covid-19, school and university closures will not only have a short-term impact on the continuity of learning for more than 285 million young learners in India but also engender far-reaching economic and societal consequences. The structure of schooling and learning, including teaching and assessment methodologies, was the first to be affected by these closures. Only a handful of private schools could adopt online teaching methods. Their low-income private and government school counterparts, on the other hand, have completely shut down for not having access to e-learning solutions. The students, in addition to the missed opportunities for learning, no longer have access to healthy meals during this time and are subject to economic and social stress.

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic has hit almost every sector of the world, but the education sector has suffered the most. Where many trades and productions were halted, brave teachers from all over the world decided to take the whole classroom home and do their best to train themselves in online courses, most of which have

never been done before. Did not The numbers are staggering. for example, about 83% of schools admit to providing training to teachers on how to conduct online courses. On the other hand, about 90% of businesses in the education sector estimate that their income will decline by the end of this year.

After India's month-long Covid-19 lockdown across the country, India slowly began to open up its economy, and now schools and universities across the country have been closed for more than three months. Even if the lock-up expires, educational institutions are unlikely to reopen for several months. This is an important moment in the educational journey of India, including final school examinations, drop-out examinations and entrance examinations for undergraduate and graduate courses. What does this barrier mean for students in this socio-economic field, in terms of learning outcomes, food and economic security?

COVID-19 Impact on Educational Sector



How can policymakers mitigate these effects? In this article, we discuss some of the consequences of blockades in the education sector, and the steps taken by states and central agencies to address these issues. Finally, we suggested ways to strengthen existing social safety nets and regulations to help young people and school-going children affected by lockdown.

Overview of the education sector amidst the global pandemic.

Initiatives taken by the Indian government and private bodies to boost online education.

Significance of technology and online education portals going forward.

- As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to spread its wrath globally, the education sector is one amongst the many severely hit. While governments worldwide continue to shut schools and colleges in the attempt to contain the spread of the virus, millions of people are getting affected against getting proper mode of education. As per UNESCO, over one and a half billion school & college students were stuck at home in the midst of the ongoing pandemic, representing close to 90% of the global student population (c. 1.38 bn students) at a point in March 2020.

Given the government mandated lockdown, below mentioned are some of the measures undertaken to minimize the impact of the lockdown on its students:

- Like many institutes around the world, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, India, has launched various digital learning initiatives and platforms to promote learning through digital platforms. One of the renowned digital platforms is Diksha that has more than 80,000 e-Books for classes I to XII created by CBSE, NCERT, States and Union Territory. The platform can also be accessed through the mobile app through which students could access books from any place. Another such platform is E-Pathshala, which boasts of a collection of around 1,886 audios, 2,000 videos, 696 e-Books and over 504 Flip Books for classes I to XII in various languages.
- PM E-Vidya programme has been scheduled to be launched immediately as part of the Central Governments initiatives to promote online classes wherein each classroom from standard I to XII will have one TV channel.
- Several educational institutions have resorted to various social media platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, e-mail, etc., to provide live and recorded classes to the students. These platforms are facilitating interaction between students and teachers allowing for flow of information between the two parties.

1) Impact on dropout rates

According to UNESCO data, about 320 million students in India have been affected by the closure of schools due to the Cove 19 epidemic (UNESCO 2020). Of these, about 84.84% live in rural areas, while 70% attend government schools. As of 2015, the average dropout rate in secondary schools in India was 17.06%, and the dropout rate in rural areas was even higher. One reason is the loss of parental jobs, and child labor can replace parental jobs. Preventing the inevitable economic downturn could reduce the income potential of many poor families and increase the cost of sending their children to school, especially in rural India. As a result, children may be forced to enter the labor market (Bhardwaj Atsal, 2019). Past evidence suggests that short-term school interventions often lead to permanent drop-outs for the poor (Reddy and Sinha, 2010).

For girls who are often excluded from household resource allocation decisions, the dropout rate can be more severe (Revelation). As parents increase their working hours to cope with financial difficulties, girls may also be asked to take on more family responsibilities. Similarly, these economic shocks may have a greater impact on children in communities that are backward by caste, tribe, and religion and have high dropout rates (NEUPA 2016).

In contrast, dropping out of school can increase child marriage, domestic violence, early pregnancy, and many developmental problems (Birchal 2018). If tuition fees are not waived at this time, the dropout rate may increase further as many people cannot afford education. Although some state governments in Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Himalayas and Jharkhand have tried to waive tuition and other school fees during the lock-up period, private schools have been reluctant to implement the measures.

2) Impact on inequality and disparity

Some educational institutions have taken an important step to ensure continuity of courses. This course is to transfer the Internet, which requires both students and teachers to use a personal home computer and reliable Internet. If school and university exams are held as planned and there is no make-up class, this could result in students not being able to access these computer and network resources. However, postponing exams can delay students from entering the job market. The main conversation focuses on learning online or on TV. In fact, the only education mentioned in the USD 260 billion financial stimulus plan of the Government of India is in the context of online and digital learning platforms. As the Ministry of Human Resource Development (Education) collaborates with TV service providers, specific channels have been set aside for this purpose, and several Indian states, including Mizoram, West Bengal and Kashmir, have implemented daily TV lectures. Have done.

However, these measures exclude the rural and urban poor who do not have access to electricity and network resources. In addition, students studying in urban private schools are being provided with online classrooms, and this has surpassed public school students in most learning indicators ("Education Status Report 2018"). - Increasing the use of online learning platforms by private schools will further widen this gap.

3) Impact on nutrition and food security

One of the most significant consequences of the lockdown and subsequent school closures has been the temporary suspension of Chinese food and supplementary nutrition programs, which has had a far-reaching and significant impact on children's nutrition and food security throughout the country. India's Chinese Food (MDM) program is the world's largest school feeding program (World Food Program 2013), which can meet the needs of approximately 144 million children, and approximately 80% of elementary school students (Chowdhury 2019) Covers. The flagship program aims to provide cooked food to all public elementary school children to meet their minimum calorie and protein needs. However, regardless of her weight or height in terms of age, almost half of children in India are malnourished, and girls are particularly affected (IIPS and ICF 2017). Despite regional disparities in outreach and food quality, MDMs have been found to significantly improve enrolment, attendance, retention, learning outcomes, gender and social equity and most importantly nutrition (Afridi 2011; Sarma et al. 1995; Singh et al. 2014; Aurino et al. 2019). In addition to quenching hunger in the classroom, the MDM program also addresses health issues such as micronutrient deficiencies and large-scale pesticides. For economically disadvantaged families, MDM school meals can replace meals instead of supplements, thus suppressing the local family's local hunger. Several months of blockades in India have disrupted the agricultural supply chain, leading to food shortages (Reardon et al. 2020).

Therefore, disruption to school feeding programs promotes food insecurity, especially for

those who are already malnourished, especially girls, as older women than boys and men. Eat less and eat less at home.

Similarly, disruption to the supplementary nutrition program implemented under the Comprehensive Child Development Services Program could affect more than 100 million pregnant and nursing mothers who rely on Anganwadi Centers (Rural Child Care Centers) and children under 6 years of age. - It can also be used for cooking meals and household rations to meet basic nutritional needs. Lack of access to school meals and additional nutrition programs could threaten the already uncertain food security of the urban and rural poor, with long-term effects on health and the economy.

4) What is the way forward?

Policymakers and educators in other countries have responded differently to mitigating the effects of barriers on students at all levels of education. In China, compared to India, India often finds itself in a country that provides mobile data and computer subsidies to economically disadvantaged students to get them out of trouble. The Global Education Partnership recently announced \$ 250 million fund to help developing and developing countries (other than India) tackle the immediate and long-term educational barriers posed by epidemics (GPE 2020). The fund will be used specifically for girls and poor children, with the aim of encouraging investment in learning resources that will cover those who resume learning after the school reopens. In India, local solutions of several state governments have also been implemented, but there is more scope.

In some Maharashtra and Southern states (Kerala, Telangana, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh), hundreds of home delivery / dry meals for school and Anganwadi children have been made. Ten thousand children have benefited and are already mothers. Other initiatives are currently being taken, including providing students with a data package, a TV broadcast course and regular SMS / IVR with parents, and daily activities with children.

Looking to the future, what is urgently needed is to provide as much nutritious food as possible to children eligible for school feeding programs across the country. In addition, redirecting locally grown horticultural crops to families under the umbrella of MDM and ICDS can help improve children's nutrient and nutritional diversity, and help farmers. Temporary relief can be obtained through local purchase succeeded (Singh and Fernandes 2018). In addition to interventions in the education sector, there is a need to reduce the economic impact on poor families, discourage the use of child labor and establish a monitoring mechanism to ensure that children reopen school whenever possible. Stay in Due to the hardships of incarceration and the financial pressures caused by the family, young children can also experience stress and trauma, which is still not reflected in the current debate. In such a situation, cooperative efforts between the public sector, private sector and civil society are essential for the education and social rehabilitation of the affected children. As health and the economy occupy a central position, concerns about education and nutrition should not be forgotten so that the tremendous achievements in these areas over the past few decades cannot be met.

Data Availability Not applicable. Code Availability Not applicable.

Compliance with ethical standards Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. The new corona virus spread so fast that it changed the rhythm of the earth. The strength of international relations has been tested, whether from a national perspective or a multilateral one. The most obvious consequences include the economic downturn, the global governance crisis, trade protectionism and increasingly isolated sentiment. People-to-people, cultural and travel exchanges are all limited. However, this is just the tip of the iceberg.

After overcoming the inevitable epidemic, we must take a comprehensive look at the world's ability to withstand similar challenges in the future. We must also take steps to address these challenges jointly. But perhaps at this point, we can already draw some conclusions.

Conclusions:

The current period is crucial for the education sector in India as school admissions, board examinations, entrance tests of various universities etc. together with competitive examinations are majorly held between March-Jun. While the sector, as a whole, is still trying to grapple with the disruption, cancellation/postponement of exams and changes in the schedule for admission could not only have a short-term consequential impact on learning for a large number of students but also have a detrimental impact on economic and societal aspects. Going forward, the Central and state governments, schools, colleges, and other premier education institutes in India must endeavor to innovatively explore alternative digital and technological ways to bring students and teachers together which would be paramount in deciding the uninterrupted flow of learning. While many of the private schools in India have already transitioned to online teaching methods, the country's low income private and government schools are still deprived of access to e-learning rendering, many, incapable of pursuing their studies further. While India has known to be struggling to reform for its education sector thus far, we are yet to see whether Covid-19 will finally result in the paradigm shift in the sector.

A pandemic is not new in human history. But what makes the COVID-19 pandemic special is that it takes place in an unprecedented backdrop when the interconnectivity and interdependence between people, between countries and between continents are so deep. The achievements people have made in technology, intelligence, and transportation make them both physically and psychologically globalized.

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