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# Domino Effect of Pandemic on Students

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## ABSTRACT

*During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools suspended face-to-face learning, raising worries about the impact on students' learning. There has been a scarcity of data to examine this subject so far. In my research, I have tried to examine and explain through this paper the impact of school closures on student performance in elementary and secondary schools. The effect is the same as one-fifth of a school year, which is the time when schools were shut down. Losses are up to 60% higher among students from low-income families, underscoring concerns about the pandemic's uneven impact on children and families. The data suggest that students made little or no progress while learning at home, and that losses are likely to be substantially worse in nations with less developed infrastructure or longer school closures.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

When the deadly COVID-19 virus struck India in March 2020, the entire country was put under lockdown to assist and flatten the curve and to eliminate the virus. Doctors, nurses, police and all front line workers put up their best efforts, and the epidemic was halted by the beginning of 2021. Just as everyone thought the virus had died out and everything was getting back to normal, the country was hit by a second wave, this one estimated to be nearly four times deadlier than the first wave.

No one had predicted that a virus like Covid-19 would emerge so large and will transform people's lifestyle without distinguishing, transform people's lifestyles. Many changes occurred as a result of Covid-19, and it took some time for everyone to accept the new normal. The impact of Covid-19 was felt all over, resulting in the closure of schools and other educational institutions. Students have been disproportionately affected by the current volatility and uncertainty, as they had been under lockdown for more than a year. They're fighting the tides of doom as their future appears to be jeopardised.

## II. IMPACT IN BRIEF

To mitigate the impact of Covid-19, most state governments first agreed to temporarily shut schools. Some later re-opened schools for higher grades, which resulted in the rise of infection

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rates. On the other hand, many are seeking for other ways to support their families. Educated parents were helping their children throughout the pandemic, but we must recognise that some illiterate or uneducated parents felt helpless to support their children with education in absence of adequate computers and other IT devices.

In India, there are some students who only attend class to receive lunch. The fantastic noon meal program has helped a lot of kids who couldn't carry food from home. So many school going children who were dependant on the midday meals programme suffered from hunger and malnutrition due to school closures.

Many pupils were suffering from a lack of food as a result of the school closures. The lockdown has had a significant impact on their physical and emotional health, leading to psychological issues such as frustration, stress, and sadness. Routines, sleeping patterns, and study regimens have all been severely disrupted. Exam cancellations and passing students based on internals may have an impact on their future careers.

Examinations were delayed/cancelled with confusions over online or onsite exams, students hadn't completed the curriculum hence many batches of even boards cleared and declared passed based upon the internal exam results. This is going to impact the higher education results of students.

Exams were frequently delayed or cancelled, causing confusion among pupils and leaving no place for curriculum. The vast majority of school-age children work as children to support their families. This pandemic has harmed not only students, but also low-budget institutions and schools, forcing them to close.

Furthermore, because all students are from different geographical regions and have different socioeconomic backgrounds, they had difficulty accessing the internet and setting up a learning environment, which had a significant impact on their performance and results.

With the shifting work landscape, technological disruptions, demand for quality education, and the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, India's education industry, which had previously been hesitant to modernise, has seen a significant transition. By compelling schools to close during the period of lockdown and forcing students and teachers to transition to online teaching-learning, the pandemic increased the system's shocks. Lockdown brought on by COVID-19 caused school closures that had an impact on almost 250 million children in India. The National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR) and the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat) are two subsequent government initiatives that are anticipated to lay the groundwork for this

transformation. The CII School Summit 2021, which brings together politicians, business titans, and service providers to talk about how to help schools recover from the pandemic, produced the document. It looks at the pandemic's effects across five categories and all of the initiatives government agencies and civil society organisations have taken to address the issues :

1. Reducing dropouts during and after the pandemic
2. Reduction in learning outcomes and well-being
3. Integration of digital-based learning
4. Teachers' role and capabilities
5. Private school sustainability

### **III. INTEGRATION OF ONLINE LEARNING**

The pandemic brought a number of issues in public and private schools, including an increase in dropouts, learning losses, and the digital divide. The epidemic also called into question the systems' readiness, especially instructors', to deal with such a catastrophe, as well as the long-term viability of private schools. COVID-19, on the other hand, served as a catalyst for digital adoption in classroom settings.

The widespread acceptance of online learning at all levels of school has changed the way we learn. It initially put an end to extracurricular activities and had a significant impact on student performance and accomplishment, posing a significant issue for educators.

When a student learns in a physical environment, the learning period is less than when they learn in a virtual or online atmosphere. Furthermore, the acceptance rate for online programmes is around 50-60%, whereas the rate for classroom learning is around 80-90%.

Students continue to attend classes even while schools are closed thanks to various educational initiatives including online courses and radio shows. On the other hand, while this is a good thing, numerous students who cannot afford to take online programs suffer severely. Many students are having difficulty obtaining the necessary equipment for online education.

Teachers who are professionals in using blackboard, Chalk, Books, and classroom teaching are new to digital teaching, but they are quickly adapting and handling it to help students in their current situation.

In the midst of the Covid-19, there are both positive and negative events taking place.

Technology helps in education by, among other things, enabling distant connections between students and professors through virtual classrooms, webinars, and digital evaluations. But the

painful reality is that not many kids in the nation have access to it. Every effort is being made to assure the students' safety at home so they don't contract the potentially fatal disease. Following the epidemic, the change to online education delivery presented its own set of issues. Many students, particularly those from marginalised groups, lacked access to digital devices and hence were unable to participate in these online classes. Even among students who were able to take online classes, some found it to be a difficult and time-consuming experience.

Only 11% of families have access to a computer or other digital device.

According to the NSSO 2017-18, only over 15% of rural Indian households have access to the internet, compared to 42% of urban Indian households<sup>55</sup>. According to the ASER 2020 Wave 1 (rural) study, which included 59,251 pupils from 26 states and four UTs, the percentage of enrolled children with smartphone access has increased from 36.5 percent in 2018 to 61.8 percent in 2020. It's worth noting, however, that this smartphone is largely in the hands of the father, restricting its usage for instructional purposes.

Only about 18% of rural kids, largely in grades higher than class 8 and from private schools, attended online lessons, according to the survey.

During COVID-19, approximately 10-20% of stakeholders felt teaching and learning to be a challenging experience.

According to an NCERT survey of students, teachers, parents, and school principals in Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodaya Vidyalayas, and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) schools, 10- 20% of stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, and school principals) felt that teaching and learning during COVID-19 was difficult and burdensome. Poor internet connectivity and the difficulties of distributing content via mobile phones were emphasised in the poll.

As well as a lack of expertise about digital pedagogy as some of the variables that hampered learning. Approximately half of the students said they didn't have school textbooks, despite the fact that electronic versions were available on the CERT website and the Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA). Math and physics were recognised as the subjects that were the most challenging to study via the internet. Only a third of the pupils were comfortable taking tests online<sup>57</sup>. Another poll conducted by Learning Spiral, a company that manages application and assessment/examination processes, found that 84% of teachers have issues while delivering education online, with availability to gadgets and the internet being a major worry.

Students' socio-emotional abilities and physical health have been found to be significantly impacted by online classes.

Peer-to-peer engagement and social learning are absent from the new digital learning paradigm. Students do not have pals with whom to converse, and forming new friendships in digital classes appears to be challenging. School education's digital learning pathway has been discovered to raise concerns of socio-emotional development. This new form of learning has exacerbated physical health concerns in addition to mental health issues.

Increased vision problems, frequent headaches, and sleep disturbances are just a few of the significant physical health issues linked to excessive screen time.

During the early stages of school shutdown, some governments expressed similar worries.

For instance, the Karnataka government initially prohibited online lessons for preschool and primary school children. However, due to protracted school closures, the government had no choice but to overturn this decree.

#### **IV. DECLINE IN LEARNING OUTCOMES AND WELL-BEING**

Long-term school closures, according to studies undertaken by several authorities, may result in pupils losing their ability to study. According to current research, students in grades 1-12 who are affected by school closures should expect a 3% drop in future wages, while countries can expect a 1.5 percent drop in GDP for the rest of the century.

The usage of remedial instruction is lowest at the preprimary level<sup>39</sup>, according to a survey conducted by UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2021. The regression will result in a cumulative learning loss over time, affecting pupils' current and future academic performance. This may lead to a disconnect in subsequent learning processes, peers, and schooling, as well as dropouts.

In addition to academic learning deficits, reduced access to socialisation, play, and physical touch will have an impact on children's psychological well-being and development. Students have undoubtedly experienced fear, worry, rage, and despair as a result of the school shutdown. They have become more vulnerable as a result of their distance and alienation from classmates, as well as their adjustment to new learning methods. This has ramifications for students' mental health, which should have been addressed through curriculum and pedagogical adjustments.

- The learning, nutrition, mental health, and overall development of children have all been compromised by school closures. Some students, particularly girls, are on the point of abandoning the formal education system<sup>51</sup>. As a result of these issues, schools must give specialised psycho-social support to their pupils, which must be integrated into the learning process. This can be accomplished by either establishing in-house counselling

centres in schools or ensuring that professional counsellors are available to handle the emotional and mental health needs of kids. Tamil Nadu reopened schools with greater emphasis on learners' mental and emotional well-being.

- With the reopening of schools following the pandemic, the Tamil Nadu government has urged all of its schools and institutions to focus primarily on the emotional and mental health of their students. The School Education Department has instructed the school administration to hire professional counsellors to address the pupils' emotional needs. The School Education Department has instructed school administrators to work with professional counsellors to address children' emotional needs.

Enabling the education of people with disabilities using technology-enabled inclusive learning materials, with a particular focus on content based on Indian Sign Language.

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) strives to meet the educational requirements of people with disabilities, primarily deaf and hard-of-hearing students, as well as other minority groups, through its programmes. The initiative emphasised the use of digital tools and local language to enable learners with disabilities to access content written in Indian Sign Language (ISL).

The programme created movies in Indian sign language for around seven distinct disciplines taught in secondary and senior secondary schools. It also created an ISL dictionary, which may be found on the NIOS webpage. The program's effective integration with ICT resources increased the number of people with disabilities enrolled in academic programmes.

Inability of households to pay school fees also resulted in learning discontinuity. During the pandemic period, it is estimated that roughly 84 percent of households lost income<sup>5</sup>. Due to the loss of income, many parents have fallen behind on their school fees, causing their children's studies to be halted.

The pandemic's impact is intensified for marginalised groups and girls.

According to a research by ChildFund India, "delayed school openings will result in a 47 percent increase in girl student dropout rates <sup>6</sup>, thereby leading to an increase in child marriages, early pregnancy, gender-based violence, and trafficking." Furthermore, the impact is predicted to be amplified for children of migrant labourers who are projected to drop out of school to help support their families financially or have returned to their hometowns.

Approximately 18% of migrant children accompanied their parents to worksite during the first wave of the epidemic, but the ratio reached closer to 100% during the second wave. Continuity

of education for children who lost one or both parents as a result of the epidemic is also an issue. This figure is believed to be roughly 0.12 million lakhs in India, with around 90,000 children losing their fathers.

## **V. INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN**

- During the school closure time, many state governments used technology to deliver learning and evaluations. Some of these efforts were carried out in collaboration with other ecosystem participants, such as educational technology companies and civil society organisations. Some states concentrated on the socio-emotional well-being of children in addition to academic learning. To keep students motivated and engaged, gamification and activity-based learning were investigated. Governments have also realised the value of formative assessments in identifying learning needs prior to school reopening.
- Multiple alternative approaches for imparting education to students have been explored by the Ministry of Education and State education agencies to address learning losses strategically and systemically. The programmes included textbook distribution to students' homes, teacher help over the phone, and access to internet and digital content via television and radio. Furthermore, the Alternative Academic Calendar was released, which included a week-by-week learning plan for students with a variety of engaging activities and challenges, as well as a reference to chapter/theme from the textbook mapped to the National Council of Educational Research and Training's defined learning outcomes (NCERT).
- Pre-assessments as a tool assisted in identifying children's learning levels, allowing teachers to create instruction at the appropriate level, since it is also necessary to focus on children's socio-emotional and mental well-being as they return to school.
- Many jurisdictions employed technology to track youngsters on the verge of dropping out and track their academic progress. To prevent students from dropping out and to bridge their learning gaps, initiatives were also launched to make learning engaging and enjoyable for them. To ensure that all students have access to online classrooms, multimodal access to classes was offered.
- Out-of-school children would receive non-residential training from volunteers, local teachers, and communities, while children with special needs would receive home-based instruction from volunteers and special educators, according to the Ministry. In addition, the Ministry authorised states and union territories to conduct door-to-door surveys in

order to identify out-of-school youth aged 6 to 18 years and conduct school enrolment efforts subsequently.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on educational systems around the world, with schools, universities, and institutions all but shut down. To reach students remotely and reduce disruptions in education in the wake of school closures, UNESCO urged schools and instructors to use open educational resources like platforms and tools as well as distant learning programs.

As a result of the lack of student-teacher connection, students have become less worried about the integrity of their work. As a result of COVID-19, children are obliged to send in half-completed homework, receive answers from classmates, or turn in nothing at all. As one of the most difficult academic years comes to a close, it's time to take stock of the situation.

As one of the most difficult school years draws to a close, it's time to evaluate the pandemic's impact on student learning and well-being. Despite the fact that the 2020–21 academic year ended on a positive note, with rising immunisation rates, outdoor in-person graduations, and 98 percent of students having access to some in-person learning, it was one of the most demanding year for students in general.

India's education system, which had previously been slow to adapt, has recently undergone a huge shift. With schools reopening in many places, it's critical that a plan be put in place to ease children's return to school after more than 15 months of home-based learning.

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