

COVID-19 and Its Influence on School Education in Afghanistan

Taiba Karimi,²Dr. Zainab Farhat
Government and Public Administration
School of humanities
Lovely professional University,
Punjab, India.

Abstract

The present study aims to examine the influence of COVID-19 on school education in Afghanistan. In order to achieve this objective, the present study developed a questionnaire and collected data from 200 Afghan students aged between 13-19 years. Total, 20 schools including 10 public and 10 private schools were selected and 10 students from each selected school were selected to be part of the survey that resulted in total 200 students. The study found that Afghan students perceived that it is difficult to focus during online education. Afghan students also agreed that their performance in academics has reduced during online education. It was found that Afghan students found it difficult to learn during online education as online education allowed limited participation in class room discussion. The study found that Afghan students perceive that have limited knowledge to attend online class. Respondents also agreed that Afghan students have shortage of money to purchase computer/smartphone for attending online education.

Keywords: Covid-19, Afghanistan, Impacts, Education.

Introduction

It is well documented that Corona virus started from China and within a few months this highly contagious virus spread across the globe including majority of the countries. Afghanistan was not an exception to the corona virus as the first case was identified in Herat as on 24 February 2020. After one year, as of 15 February 2021, there were about 55000 corona cases in Afghanistan and total 275,559 tests have been conducted so far. The country has recorded about 2500 deaths across all 34 provinces in the country. The two most affected provinces in the countries are: Kabul and Herat as these two provinces confirmed 18,362 and 9,146 positive cases. Afghanistan shares its borders with Iran, one of the most affected countries during Covid-19. Data suggested that in March 2020, at least 150,000 Afghans returned from Iran because there was severe outbreak of Covid-19 in Iran. Herat province in Afghanistan was most affected because this province shares its border with Iran. Moreover, many Afghans came back to their homes from neighboring country Pakistan after losing their job due to lockdown in Pakistan. Due to outbreak of Covid-19 in Afghanistan, province level and central level government announced lockdown in

the country that affected the education system severely. Some of the important points relating to this are as under:

Corona virus destabilized all educational activities in Afghanistan. Outbreak of Covid-19 has forced lockdown in every sector including education. The educational institutions in the country were declared closed by the government. Thereby, the scheduled examinations in the schools/colleges/ universities were postponed by the competent authorities. The Corona lockdown created a new challenge for the administration to continue teaching-learning process amid physical absence of teachers and students in the educational institutions.

Corona virus also created new educational assessment methods in schools and colleges. Most of the external examinations have been postponed and almost all the internal assessments have been cancelled.

Announcement of strict lockdown in the country has reduced employment opportunities. According to the most recent household survey data, close to 15 million Afghans across 2 million households are particularly vulnerable to economic lockdown. These households earn at least half their income from activities such as shop keeping, street or market sales, or daily labour in construction, agriculture, or personal servicesⁱ.

Lockdown also increased poverty in the country. Calculations indicate that poverty may increase from a baseline of 54.5 percent to up to 72 percent. To calculate these impacts, the World Bank constructed three different scenarios. In the first scenario, projected declines in GDP from services (-7.5 percent) and manufacturing (-3.0 percent) translate into proportionate decreases in household incomes generated from those sectors.ⁱⁱ

In the light of above discussion, the present study aims to examine the influence of COVID-19 on school education in Afghanistan.

Review of Literature

Panter, Goodman and Eggerman (2011) conducted a study entitled “Mental Health and Childhood Adversities: A Longitudinal Study in Kabul, Afghanistan” used stratified random-sampling in schools. Findings highlighted that with the exception of posttraumatic stress, one-year trajectories for all mental health outcomes showed significant improvement. Family violence had a striking impact on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire data, raising caregiver-rated scores by 3.14 points.

Jena (2020) undertook a study aiming to examine the impact of Covid-19 on higher education in India. Author argued that some measures taken by HEIs and educational authorities of India to provide seamless educational services during the crisis. Due to implementation of strict lockdown in the country, new methods of learning were found by the authorities that may continue in the future also. Author also gave some suggestions useful for undertaking educational activities during the pandemic situation.

Upoalkpajor and Upoalkpajor (2020) examined the impact of COVID-19 on education in Ghana. Authors of this study used both descriptive and explanatory design. Authors also used questionnaires to collect data. Primary and secondary data sources were used and data was analyzed using various statistical tools at 5% level of significance. The data were analyzed using frequency and percentages. Data were

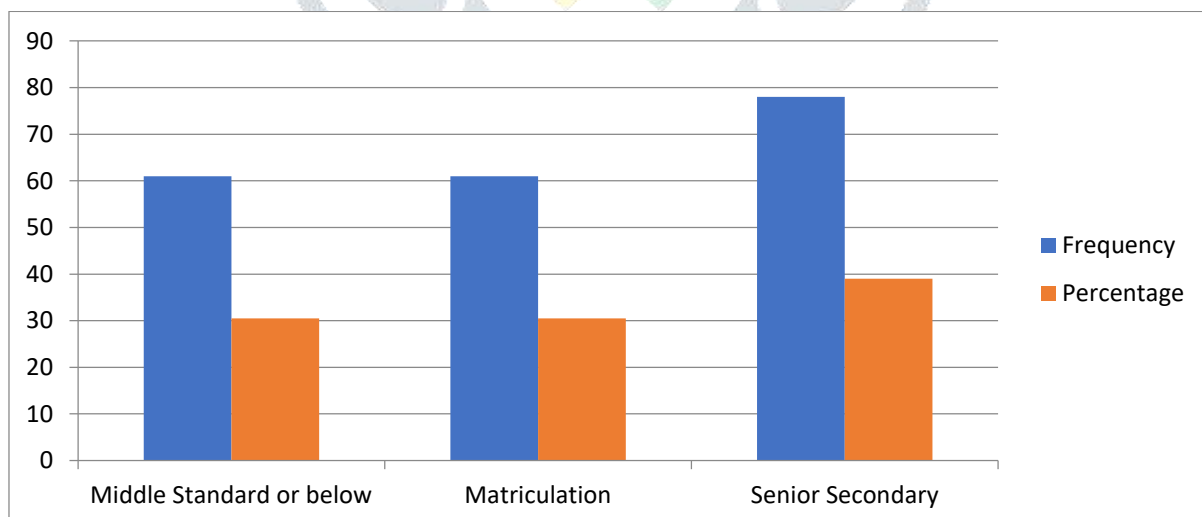
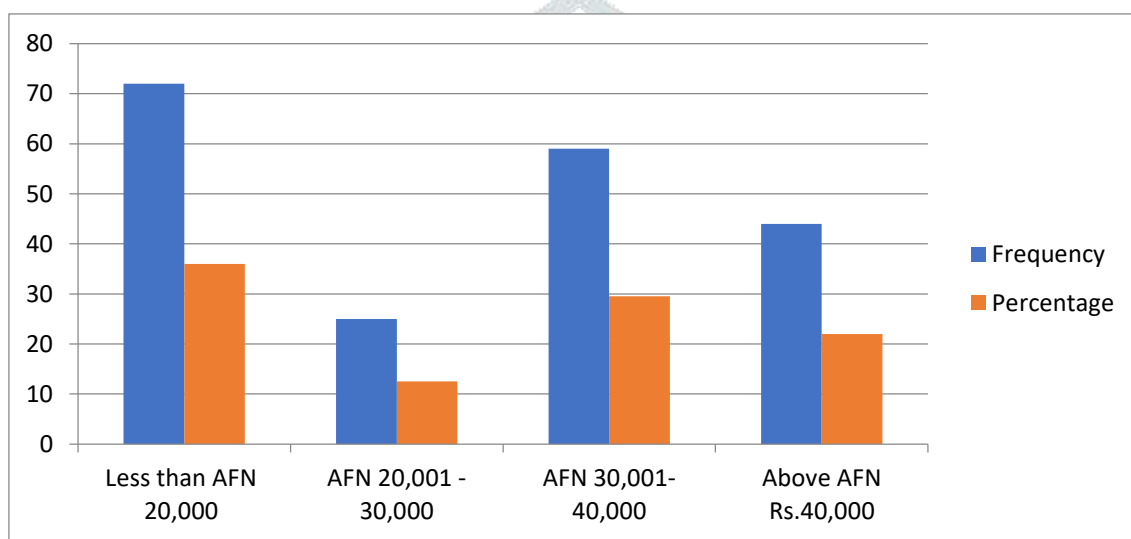
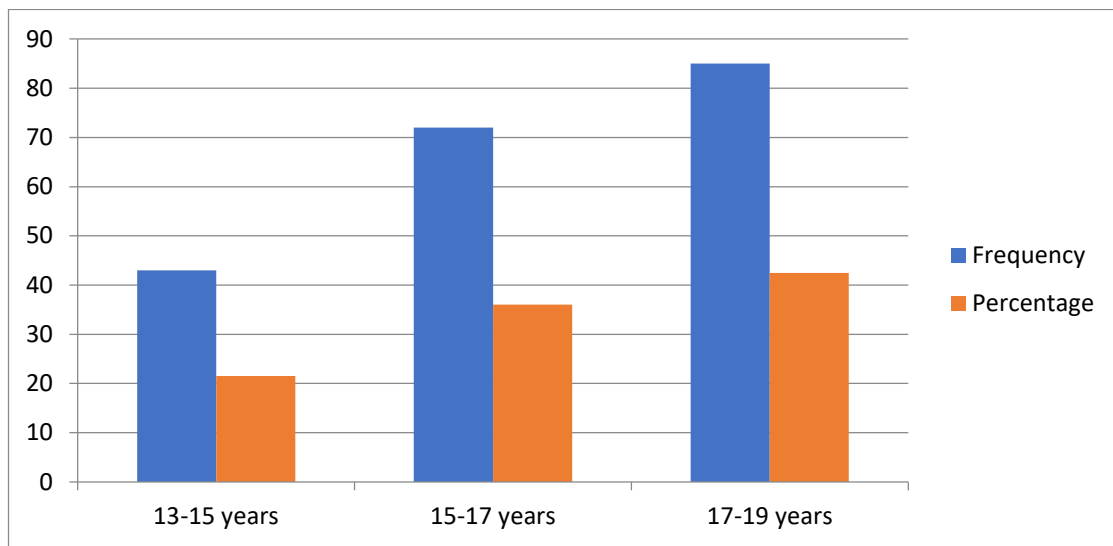
collected from 100 teachers and students of Senior High Schools in Tamale metropolitan area of northern region of Ghana. The study findings revealed that COVID-19 pandemic has significant impact on education in Ghana.

Research Methodology

The present study aims to examine the barriers to women education in Afghanistan. In order to achieve this objective, the present study developed a questionnaire and collected data from 200 Afghan students aged between 13-19 years. The students in the above mentioned age category, were selected from different educational institutions of one of the largest cities of the country- Kabul. The students between the age 13-19 years were selected from both public and private schools of the selected city. Total, 20 schools including 10 public and 10 private schools were selected and 10 students from each selected school were selected to be part of the survey that resulted in total 200 students. The data collected was analyzed using percentage and mean score.

Data analysis and interpretation

Table: Demographic profile		
Age	Frequency	Percentage
13-15 years	43	21.5
15-17 years	72	36
17-19 years	85	42.5
Total	200	100
Monthly family Income	Frequency	Percentage
Less than AFN 20,000	72	36
AFN 20,001 -30,000	25	12.5
AFN 30,001- 40,000	59	29.5
Above AFN Rs.40,000	44	22
Total	200	100
Level of education	Frequency	Percentage
Middle Standard or below	61	30.5
Matriculation	61	30.5
Senior Secondary	78	39
Total	200	100

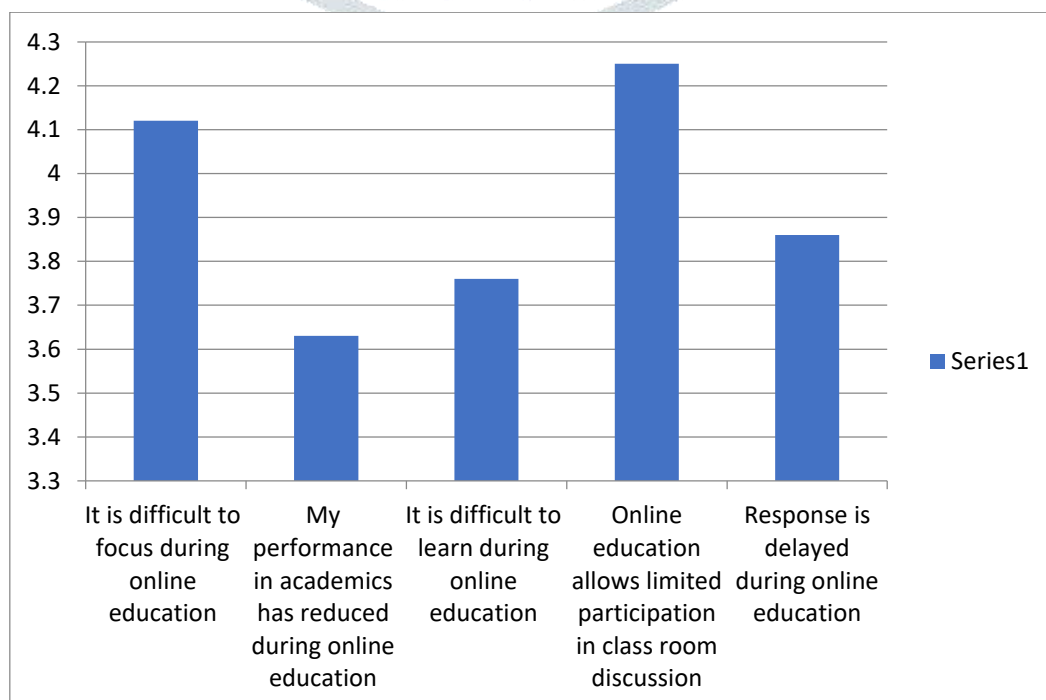


The above table revealed that a maximum of the respondents (42.5 %) were in the age group of 17-19 years. 36% respondents were between 15-17 years. A sizeable proportion of respondents (21.5 %) were found to be in the age group between 13-15 years. Further, the above table revealed that maximum number of the respondents (36 %) were found to have monthly family income less than AFN 20,000 per month; followed by 29.5% were found to have monthly

family income between AFN 30,001-40,000 per month. 22 percent of the respondents were found to have income above AFN Rs.40,000 Further, the above table revealed that maximum number of the respondents (39 %) were found to have education as senior secondary; followed by 30.5% were found to have education as matriculation or middle standard.

Problems Faced during Online Education

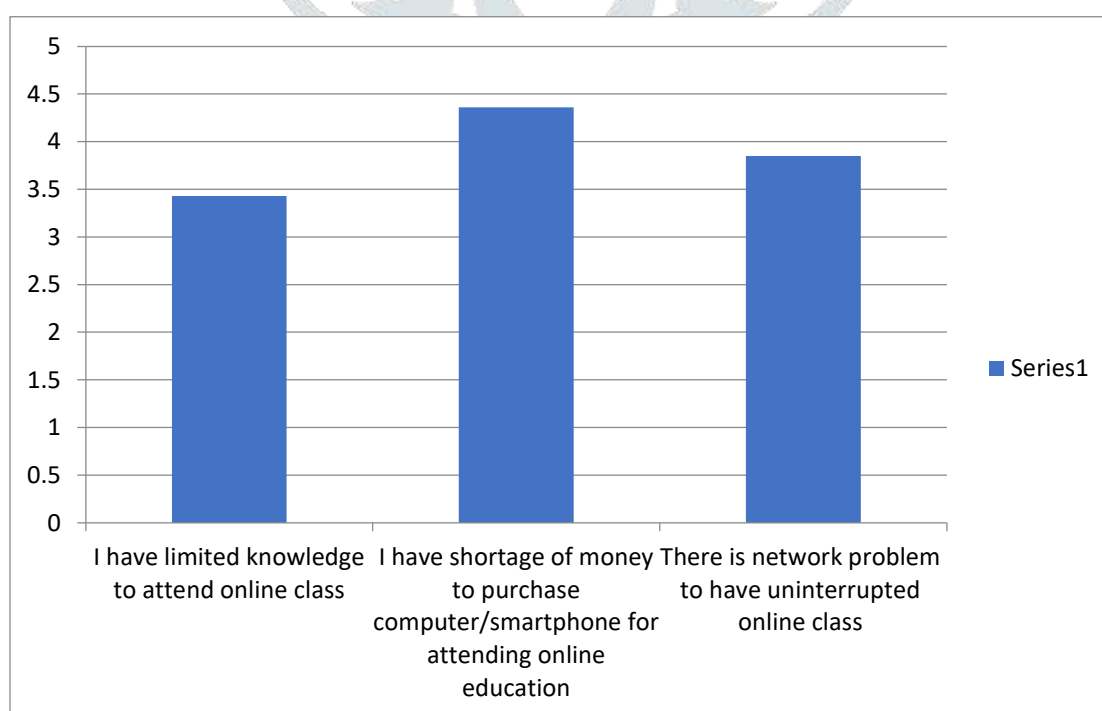
Sr. No.	Statements	Mean
1	It is difficult to focus during online education	4.12
2	My performance in academics has reduced during online education	3.63
3	It is difficult to learn during online education	3.76
4	Online education allows limited participation in class room discussion	4.25
5	Response is delayed during online education	3.86



The above table revealed that Afghan students face many problems during online classes. For instance, the study found that Afghan students perceived that it is difficult to focus during online education (mean score = 4.12). This is a common problem that students across the world faced during closure of educational institutions due to Covid-19. Further, Afghan students also agreed that their performance in academics has reduced during online education (mean score = 3.63). This finding showed that students in Afghanistan have deeper concerns about the way they are being taught in the schools and colleges of the country. Further, it was found that Afghan students found it difficult to learn during online education as online education allowed limited participation in class room discussion (mean score = 4.25). Lastly, students in Afghanistan revealed that their response is delayed during online education as mean score for this statement was found to be greater than the mid value 'three'.

Perceived Barriers to Online Education

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean
1	I have limited knowledge to attend online class	3.43
2	I have shortage of money to purchase computer/smartphone for attending online education	4.36
3	There is network problem to have uninterrupted online class	3.85



The above table revealed that Afghan students face many barriers to attending online classes due to a variety of reasons. For instance, the study found that Afghan students perceive that have limited knowledge to attend online class (mean score = 3.43). Further, respondents also agreed that Afghan students have shortage of money to purchase computer/smartphone for attending online education (mean score = 4.36). This finding showed that students in Afghanistan have deeper concerns of their online education because their family members were unable to afford to buy new devices required for having access to online education. Further, it was found that Afghan students perceived that they have network problem to have uninterrupted online class as mean score for this statement was found to be greater than the 'three'.

Conclusion

The present study aims to examine the influence of COVID-19 on school education in Afghanistan. The study found that Afghan students perceived that it is difficult to focus during online education. Afghan students also agreed that their performance in academics has reduced during online education. It was found that Afghan students found it difficult to learn during online education as online education allowed limited participation in class room discussion. The study found that Afghan students perceive that have limited knowledge to attend online class. Respondents also agreed that Afghan students have shortage of money to purchase computer/smartphone for attending online education

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Questionnaire

Age:

- 13-15 years
- 15-17 years
- 17-19 years

Monthly Family Income:

- Less than AFN 20,000
- AFN 20,001 -30,000
- AFN 30,001- 40,000
- Above AFN 40,000

Level of Education:

Middle Standard or below

Matriculation

Senior Secondary

The following statements relate to Problems Faced during Online Education. You are requested to rate these statements on the given 5-point scale:

Problems Faced during Online Education	SD	D	N	A	SA
It is difficult to focus during online education					
My performance in academics has reduced during online education					
It is difficult to learn during online education					
Online education allows limited participation in class room discussion					
Response is delayed during online education					

The following statements relate to Perceived Barriers to Online Education. You are requested to rate these statements on the given 5-point scale:

Perceived Barriers to Online Education	SD	D	N	A	SA
I have limited knowledge to attend online class					
I have shortage of money to purchase computer/smartphone for attending online education					
There is network problem to have uninterrupted online class					

ⁱ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/mitigating-poverty-implications-covid-19-afghanistan>

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