

A Study on Impact of COVID 19 on Under Graduate Students in Assam, India

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Abstract: The sudden origin of the corona virus has caused panic all over the world and affected the education sector to a lot. The Corona virus has put a terrible danger to human health. As all educational institutions were declared closed to an untimely basis following the lockdown rules, the regular classes of the students were stopped. So, the education sector has been severely damaged due to a very prolonged lockdown. The COVID 19 has troubled the students in various problems. This has had a very negative impact on the student's studies. Present study is about how the students from one level of higher education were influenced during this period. This study covers only undergraduate level of higher education of North Eastern state Assam. It focuses on different educational aspects of the UG students of Assam regarding online learning, study materials, student's mental health, communication with teacher and institutions, economical Status etc during COVID 19 period. With purposive sampling an online based descriptive survey is conducted for collecting primary data and some secondary are collected from e-reports published by different organizations, agencies and e journals. The data obtained has been statistically analyzed. On the basis of findings some possible suggestions are given to apply in the field of education to cope up with this crisis.

Key Words: COVID 19, lockdown, online education, undergraduate students.

Introduction: The COVID 19 affects the whole education system globally. According to UNESCO report 90% of total world student population was affected due to COVID 19 crisis .For the first time Corona virus was identified in Wuhan, China on December 31, 2019. In a very short time it became so dangerous that the WHO declared it as an epidemic on March 11, 2020 and issued a variety of guidelines to make the world's people aware. The immediate spread of Corona virus had also occurred in Assam in the North Eastern India on March 31, 2020. To control the spread of Corona Virus WHO gives advice to maintain social distancing. So, all country started to action of lockdown for maintaining social distance. All educational institutions of Assam have been shut down since March 15, 2020. Various final tests, entrance test of undergraduate level were postponed indefinitely. Due to lockdown students were not attends their regular classes. Both teacher and students were become quite confused and did not understand how to cope up with this new situation. Especially in Assam due to this pandemic students as well as teacher face various problems. Since all the work of education has been based on the technical aspect, it has become a big challenge in terms of communication for a backward state like Assam. The UGC have come up with flexible guidelines to ensure that mobility can be maintained in the educational direction without being stable. Following the guidance provided by UGC, some of the work of the Under Graduate education system of higher education is carried out. But the UGC has also not reached a proper decision in this field. In the first stage, it has a deep impact on the undergraduate level student by always giving new directions of UGC in their examination, assessment and result. This paper attempts to study what are the different problems faced by the UG students of Assam during COVID 19 period and how to overcome and adjust with this crisis.

Objectives: The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- To find out the major challenges faced by the students at undergraduate level during COVID 19 period
- To know the adjustment capacity of undergraduate students with the changing teaching and learning process
- To find out the possible alternative way to overcome the challenges and cope with this crisis
- To know about the support system of students' education during COVID 19 period

Methodology: A descriptive survey method was used for this study. As per the guidelines for lockdown and physical distance an online based survey was conducted for primary data. Including both open as well as close ended questions a questionnaire is used. Moreover, some secondary data are collected regarding the education system shifted into a new pattern and about COVID 19 also from various sources like e-reports published by

different organizations, agencies and e journals etc. Through purposive sampling technique required data are collected from undergraduate students of different colleges of Assam. Total 200 samples are collected all over the state. Statistical analysis is being used for discussion.

Review of related literature:

Pravat Kumar Jena, published a paper (2020) “*Impact of Covid 19 on Higher Education in India*” in the International Journal of Advanced Education and Research. The main objectives of the research is to find out major factor affecting Indian higher education during COVID 19, different new approaches for education and provides some suggestions for post COVID educational activities. The study find out some aspects affected/damaged by the COVID 19 like educational activities (examinations, teaching and learning), academic research and professional development, educational assessment, employment opportunities etc. for proper adjustment with this crisis the study provide some emerging approaches like individual learning, open and distance learning, technology based teaching learning, Blended learning etc. This study recommended virtual education in virtual platforms of online for post COVID period.

Vikram R Jadhav, Tushar D Bagul and Sagar R Aswale conducted a study entitled “*Covid 19 Era – Students’ Role to Look at Problems in Education System during Lockdown Issues in Maharashtra*”. Through this study they found that due to Covid 19 lockdown become as a major barrier for education. Students can’t concentrate in their studies and they have to adjust with a changing teaching learning environment. Whole educational activities become online based which increases the cost of education also.

Nanigopal Kapasia, Pintu Poul and Pradip Chouhan conducted a study on “*Impact of Lockdown in Learning Status of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students during COVID 19 Pandemic in West Bengal*”. This study attempted to create a positive space for students learning. The findings of the study were –Online study is very challenging for most of the students from remote area. Some students used e-learning platform for their study but a huge amount of students were not involved with such changing online learning. Students also suffered from mental stress, depression and anxiety regarding uncertainty of their education. Lastly this study provided some suggestions to create a positive mind of students and help them in their study. They recommended institutional effort like capacity development training for faculty, proper plan for continuous learning and digital teaching.

Data Interpretation Discussion and Analysis:

The whole aspect of the study is being discussed through statistical analysis based on the information that has been collected. Some of the affected elements of the students have been selected for discussion.

Regarding online class:

55% students like to study in online platform. They can learn here with their own pace. They used various platform like Zoom app, Google meet, Google classroom, YouTube etc for online education. But 35% students dislike online classes due to various problems. 15% students are neutral regarding online class.

Adjustment with new learning mode:

47.5% UG students can adjust properly with the changing learning mode and also benefited. On the other hand 30% are unable to cope up with this new online mode of learning. Because they have not habit to learn in online mode, lack of facilities for online class and lack of technical knowledge about online education. 22.5% are neutral.

Study material:

92.5% students are facing shortage of study materials due to lockdown. Students have to move away from educational institutions and remain at home. So, they have lost the library facility, class-note and the company of teachers and peer group for collecting study materials. Most of the students have left their books and other necessary study materials in hostels.

Communication, Guidance and Feedback:

55% students are connected to a smooth communication with their own teacher, classmate via phone call, message, WhatsApp Group, Telegram Group, audio and video conferencing. Only above technical channel helps

both teacher and students to maintain a communication among them. There are 17.5 % deprived students who are unable to communicate via phone call and other networking application.

50% Students receive guidance and appropriate feedback from the college teacher, class friends and other seniors. So it shows that half percentage of students is excluded here. Lack of communication channel is a barrier to keep a communication between them during lockdown. Some students feel hesitate to ask something to teacher also.

Completion of course content:

50% students said that their pending course content has completed through online mode and both teacher and institutions played active role in this matter. 32.5% students said that their course content has not finished. And other 17.5% are neutral. This is a major problem for students as the current session has stopped when it is not completed. The practical part of the course could not be completed through online mode either.

Student's self study:

47.5% UG students thought that their final examination will be held in very future when this pandemic situation becomes normal. Therefore their study and self preparation for upcoming examination is continuously going on well. On the other hand 30% students thought that due to this pandemic examination will not be held for long time and they removed attention and left regular studies. 22.5% students are neutral in this matter. They are quite confused about examination and their study. They are in a dilemma about what to do or what not to do.

Mental disturbance:

Uncertainty of future educational activities and dramatically changing new pattern of education creates mental disturbance among the students. The postponed final examination, unfinished course content of present session, undecided various entrance test for Post Graduation and other courses etc. increases stress among the UG students which has affected the mental health of the students. Total 80% UG students of Assam have been suffering from mental stress.

60% students receive teacher's support to maintain a sound mental health and advice for what will they do or what is not.

Changing guidelines and schedule:

According to collected data 72.5% UG students have affected by ever changing guidelines and schedules provided by higher authority/ UGC which create disturbance in their learning mode.

Economical problems:

72.5% students face some economic problems in their family due to this pandemic. Many families have been badly financially damaged due to lockdown so; they are unable to provide financial support to their children for education. Moreover, education has shifted to online mode which is more costly rather than offline.

Technical problems:

75% students face some technical problems during online class. Lack of technological knowledge for online education, poor network connection, lack of facilities need for online class etc are found in this study. In rural area basically the regular classes are taken in traditional classroom. Most of the teacher has not both knowledge and skills to conduct technology based class like slide presentation, video and audio conferencing etc.

Some Positive Impacts:

1. In this time students identify and utilize their hidden talents and fulfill their hobbies. During the lockdown period 75% students are engaged with some hobby related and creative work. It is annoying that all the day stay at home for long time. Moreover, they felt panic and worry for challenging COVID 19 situation. Therefore, hobby related creative work helped the students to feel relax and also proper utilize their time.
2. It may be considered as positive impact that most of the students are found interested to attend some online awareness programme. Total 65% UG students have participated in some online programme like webinar, conference, awareness programme related to academic aspects and mental health during this COVID 19 period.
3. Self paced learning is another positive impact of this pandemic. During this period the students were seen to be focusing on the way of self learning; which is very important in higher level of education.
4. In this pandemic situation students learn various skills and technological knowledge for E- learning. They have become acquainted with various mode of online educational platform like Zoom App, Google Meet, Google Classroom, YouTube live etc. It helps them to face various challenges in present education.

5. Due to this time students spent their quality time with their family.
6. This pandemic reduces peer comparison and learning pressure among the UG students.
7. In this pandemic students understand the importance of good health.

Suggestions:

1. Teacher, educational institutes and administration must be makes proper plan for online classes. There should be well organized schedule for online class. But online class should not be compulsory. Because some students are unable to attend in online class due to various problems.
2. Teacher should provide learning materials to students through mail, WhatsApp etc.
3. Due to this pandemic students faced various problems. Therefore, teacher and educational institutions should conduct some guidance and counseling programme for UG students.
4. There should be a technology based smooth communication between different group such as –teacher and students, students and students, teacher and teacher, teacher and institution etc.
5. For fruitful online classes teacher should know the technical process of the class. Moreover, they should provide knowledge about technical issues to students.
6. Student should focus on continuous and self learning. It will help them proper adjustment with next session or post COVID education.

Conclusion: This study shows many negative impacts on UG students. Covid 19 has created various problems especially in higher education process in Assam. Both teacher and students faces various challenges due to this pandemic. All educational institutions have been closed. The higher authority recommended continuing educational activities through online mode if possible. But sudden shift of unplanned online activities creates various challenges among UG students. Most of the students have become passive learner in online education; reasons are like technical problem, economical barrier, lack of motivation and communication with the teacher and institutions. Mental disturbance was another mostly affecting factor in student's education. On the other hand some advantages for younger students also found in this like improvement of technological knowledge, learn about distance mode of education, increase awareness towards e- learning, raise knowledge about blended learning and self paced learning, improvement of collaborative work etc. Students have increased their creativity and utilized their talents and fulfill their hobbies. Students became also aware about both physical and mental health. These positive things will very effective for UG students to cope up with post Covid situation. If after this pandemic educational institutions use mixed online and offline learning then it will work better and helpful for all students to face day to day educational challenges. The defective and problematic factor should be deducted with proper ways and plan. Then can a good controlled situation be achieved for the student.

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