

ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENTS OF COLLEGE FACULTY MEMBERS DURING THE NATION'S LOCK DOWN DUE TO COVID-19

Dr. P Jayakumar & Dr. Jobi Babu

Assistant Professors

P.G and Research Department of Social Work

Madurai Institute of Social Sciences (Autonomous), Madurai-Tamil Nadu

jayakumarokm@gmail.com, jobi.misscollege@gmail.com

Abstract:

COVID19, which is named as CORONA has largely affected the people all over the world. The WHO has announced it as an pandemic, efforts were taken by the Government to prevent the spread of the virus by locking down the entire nation i.,e curfew were announced. During the announcement of the Lockdown and prior to closing the educational institutions, UGC had issued guidelines to all the higher educational institutions to carry out academic related activity and also to create awareness among the COVID19. Based on these aspects, an attempt is made to understand the academic activities carried out by the faculty and the responses of the students. Totally data were collected from 50 faculty members working in higher educational institutions in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It has been found that majority of the respondents were conducting classes, Assignment were given to the students. It is also found that students were anxious about COVID19.

Key Words: COVID19, UGC, Academic Activity, Online Classes

Introduction:

Corona Virus (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a new virus. spreads primarily through contact with an infected person when they cough or sneeze. It also spreads when a person touches a surface or object that has the virus on it, then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth. It was first reported in Wuhan, China on 31 December 2019, the outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020. As a Zoonotic disease, from the source of origin, the virus has spread to all over the world. As on 1st April, 2020 a total

of 213 countries all over the world was reported COVID-19 cases. A total of 1699545 confirmed cases and a total of 106138 fatalities were reported (WHO, 2020).

The first case of COVID-19 in India was reported in the state of Kerala on and declared it as the state level disaster and immediately started a campaign titled 'break the chain'. When the COVID-19 cases reported in other states of India, the central Government was announced it as a 'Notified Disaster' in the nation. The Prime Minister of India, Shri. Naredra Modi requested the entire citizen of the nation to participate in the 'People's Curfew' to break the spreading of Corona Virus on 22nd March, 2020. In continuation with that effort a 21 days National Lockdown was announced by the Prime Minister from 24th March, 2020 to 14th April, 2020.

The Socio-Economic-Educational systems of the nation were lockdown to fight against the fast spreading virus. Different Government systems and bodies came with alternative solutions to overcome the difficulties. The exams of Secondary and Higher Secondary were postponed; full pass was given for classes up to 9th standard by many Indian States. The University and College examinations were postponed indefinitely etc were major efforts by the state and central authorities of education.

Academic Engagement Suggestions by University Grants Commission (UGC)

In order to keep the academic momentum of the colleges and universities of the nation, UGC, the apex body of higher education in India came up with different alternatives and suggestion. Orders and notices were given to the affiliated universities and colleges for effectively engage the teachers and students in academic activities. Some of those suggestions are listed below

As per the notice by the Secretary of Higher Education (MHRD) on 21.03.2020 the following suggestions were given for the faculty members/Teachers/Researchers to utilize this lockdown period for various academic activities including, (a) development of on-line content, Online teaching and online evaluation, (b) prepare lesson plan and develop instructional materials, (c) carry on research-write articles and prepare innovative questions for question bank etc.

As per the notice by the Secretary of the UGC on 25.03.2020, suggested that the teachers and students need to effectively utilize the UGC 's e-learning platforms like, SWAYAM, Inflibnet, E-PG Pathasala, UG/PG MOOCs, Swayamprabha, UGC CEC, CEC-UGC Youtube channel, National Digital Library, Shodhganga, E-Shodhsindhu, Vidwan etc for e-learning through the ICT initiatives of the UGC.

In this context, in order to understand the academic engagement of the college faculties during the lockdown period due to the COVID-19, a study was undertaken among the college faculties.

Methodology:

The main objective of the study was to understand the academic engagement of the college faculties during the national lockdown due to the COVID-19. Descriptive research design was adopted and Convenience sampling techniques was used in the study. For the present study the college faculties from Tamil Nadu and Kerala were selected. Data was collected by using online questionnaire (Google form). Totally 50 respondents had participated in the survey. The collected data was analysed with the help of SPSS software.

Findings:

Basic Profile:

It has been found that 48 per cent of the respondents were in the age group 31-40 yrs, 26 per cent were in the age group less than 30 yrs and another 26 per cent were in the age group 41 and above, 52 per cent of the respondents were female and the remaining were male. 34 per cent of the respondents were belonging to social sciences, 22 per cent were from commerce, 20 per cent belongs to science, 12 per cent belongs to humanities and another 12 per cent belongs to management department. 36 per cent of the respondents have 11-15 yrs of experience, 28 per cent have less than 5 yrs and 26 per cent have 6- 10 yrs of experience. 38 per cent of the respondents were working in autonomous institution, 26 per cent were working in self finance, 20 per cent were in Government aided and the remaining were working in Government colleges. Majority of the respondents i.e., 76 per cent were permanent faculty, 14 per cent were guest faculty and 10 per cent were temporary. 56 per cent of the respondents were from the state of Tamil Nadu and the remaining were from Kerala.

Table No 1

Profile of the Respondents (N=50)

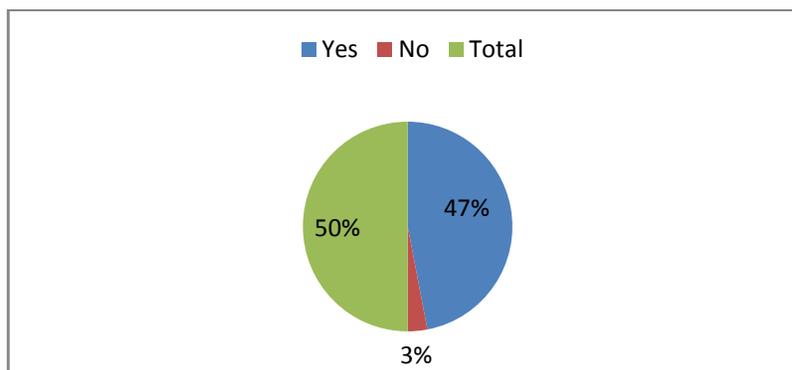
Personal Profile	Classification	Frequency	Percent
Age	Less than 30	13	26
	31-40	24	48
	41 and above	13	26

Gender	Male	24	48
	Female	26	52
Department	Social Sciences	17	34
	Commerce	11	22
	Science	10	20
	Humanities	6	12
	Management	6	12
Years of Experience	0-5	14	28
	6-10	13	26
	11-15	18	36
	16 and above	5	10
Type of Institution	Government	8	16
	Government Aided	10	20
	Autonomous	19	38
Type of Employment	Permanent	38	76
	Guest Lecture	7	14
	Temporary	5	10
State of Domicile	Tamil Nadu	28	56
	Kerala	22	44
	Total	50	100

COVID Awareness:

The analysis of the data reveals that 94 per cent of the respondents were in regular contact with the students and creating awareness about COVID 19 (Graph 1). 76 per cent of the students were anxious about the COVID 19.

Graph No 1
Creating Awareness to Students



Academic Activity:

During the lockdown period, 80 per cent of the respondents have stated that their institution has given specific academic activity and the remaining were not given any specific task. 46 per cent of the respondents were spending 6 and above hrs, 30 per cent were spending 4-6 hrs, 10 per cent were spending 2-4 hrs and the remaining 0-2 hrs for the academic activity. 48 per cent of the respondents were involved in E-content, online classes, Assignments, PPT, Question Bank, Minor / Major Projects, Article preparation, 26 per cent were involved in Syllabus updating, Question Bank, PPT preparation, 22 per cent involved in Evaluation of Assignments and 4 per cent were E-content, online classes, Assignments, PPT, Question Bank, Minor / Major Projects, Article preparation, Writing book.

Table No 2
Engagement in Academic Activities

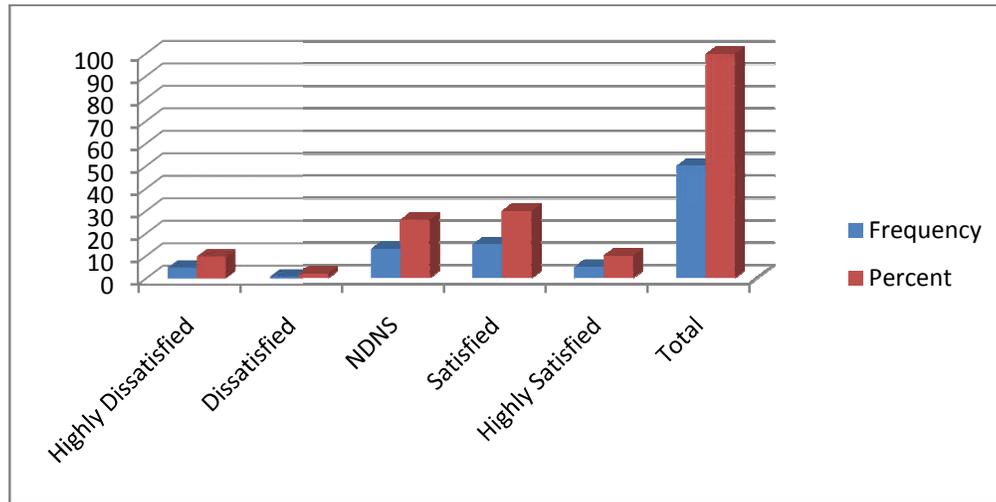
Academic Activity		Frequency	Percent
Institution has given specific task	Yes	40	80.0
	No	10	20.0
Time spend on academic activity	0-2	7	14.0
	2-4	5	10.0
	4-6	15	30.0
	6 and above	23	46.0
Specific activities carried out	Evaluation of Assignments	11	22.0
	Syllabus updating, Question	13	26.0

	Bank, PPT		
	E-content, online classes, Assignments, PPT, Question Bank, Minor / Major Projects, Article preparation	24	48.0
	E-content, online classes, Assignments, PPT, Question Bank, Minor / Major Projects, Article preparation, writing book	02	4.0
online classes	Not conducted	11	22.0
	1	13	26.0
	2-3	15	30.0
	4 and above	11	22.0

Students Response to Online Classes and Assignments:

It is found that 30 per cent were satisfied, 10 per cent were highly satisfied and 123 per cent were dissatisfied with the student's response. 22 per cent of the faculty were not conducting online classes. 46 per cent of the respondents were moderately satisfied on the assignments, 36 per cent were highly satisfied on the assignments and the remaining were not satisfied on the assignments submitted by the students through online

Graph No 2
Students Response to Online Classes



Platform Used for Conducting Online Classes:

It has been found that 28 per cent were using Google Classroom, 16 per cent were using moodle, 12 per cent were using Digital Class, 8 per cent were using Whats app, 4 per cent were using zoom, MS Team and Ample and 2 per cent were using skype for conducting online classes Table no 2). 76 per cent of the respondents were using Whats App, 16 per cent were using e-mail, 2 per cent were using customised app and the remaining 2 per cent were using other methods to communicate the students.

Table No 3.

Platform Used for Conducting Online Classes (N=50)

Platform Used	Frequency	Per cent
Not conducted classes	11	22.0
Digital class	6	12.0
Google class room	14	28.0
Whats App	4	8.0
Zoom	2	4.0
Moodle	8	16.0
ample	2	4.0
MS Team	2	4.0
Skype	1	2.0

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ample	2	4.0
MS Team	2	4.0
Skype	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

Short term Course and Knowledge Updation:

It is found that 64 per cent of the respondents had enrolled for short term courses. Among the 32 respondents, 26 per cent had registered in SWAYAM, 10 Per cent were registered in NPTEL and 26 per cent had registered for short term courses through other modes. During the lockdown period 20 per cent had attended Webinar session to update their knowledge.

Problems encountered in the academic engagement activity

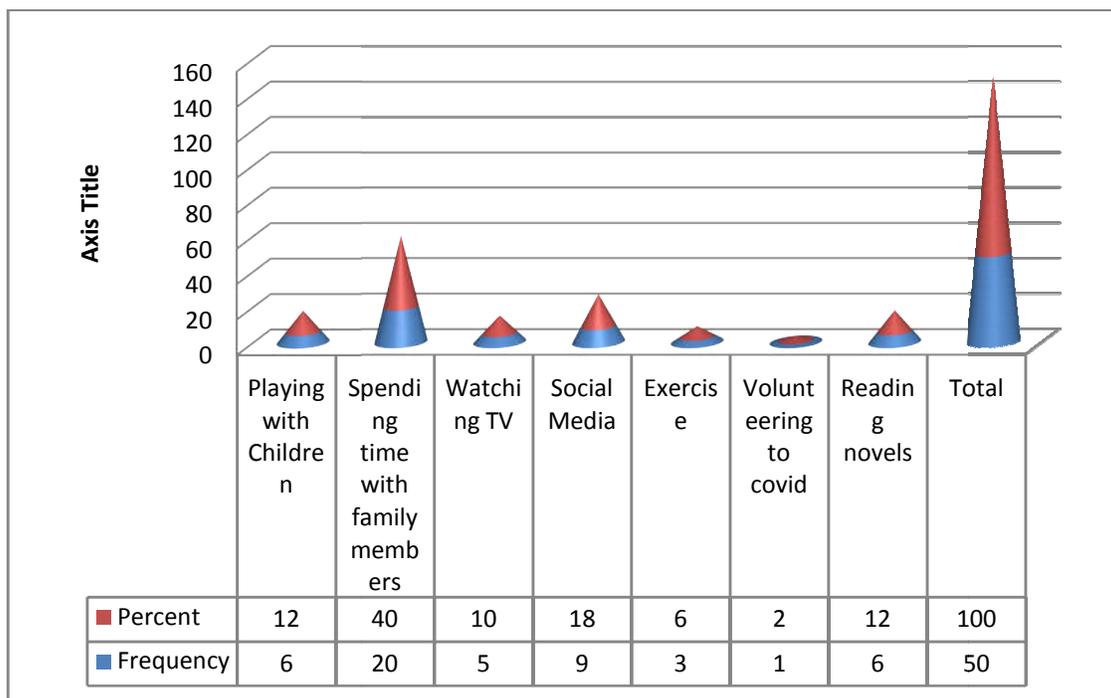
Among the total respondents 60 per had stated technology related issues, 22 per cent had stated lack support from students, 18 per cent lack of motivation were the problems of the faculties in carrying out the academic activity. (Graph 3)

Time Spend other academic activity:

The analysis shows that 40 per cent were spending their time with their family members, 18 per cent were in Social media, 12 per cent were playing with children, 12 per cent were reading novel, 10 per cent were watching television and 2 per cent were involved in volunteering activity during the lockdown period..

Graph No 3

Problems Encountered in the Academic Engagement Activity



Suggestions:

- Online classes were new to majority of the students. So the students should be oriented about the online classes and its usage.
- Feedback on the online classes shall be collected by the faculty and areas of improvement can be identified so as to reduce the lack of motivation among the students.
- Apart from online classes, online quiz and test can be conducted to increase the involvement of the students.
- Faculties can organise webinar classes by involving experts in their respective subjects
- Faculties can prepare materials, PPT and can be shared to the students through online / college website.
- Students were also anxious about the COVID19. So the faculties can provide online counselling to solve their Psycho social problems.

Conclusion

Since, the Nation's Lockdown is affected the entire areas of normal life, the education sector was also adversely affected in ensuring the teaching-learning activities. However, the online platforms, e-materials, e-sources etc could be effectively used by the faculty members in delivering academic inputs to their students. The study throws the positive as well as negative aspects related with the academic engagement of the college faculty. The support from the students and faculty side could be effectively ensured for achievement the academic objectives during this toughest period of the nation. A better orientation and understanding about the possibilities of academic engagement can benefit both the students and faculty members in the colleges.

"It's only after you've stepped outside your comfort zone that you begin to change, grow, and transform."

THIS TOO SHALL PASS & WE SHALL OVERCOME!

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