Opinion of Undergraduate Students of Selected Districts of West Bengal about Online Classes During Lockdown

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(Abstract)

The entire world is going through the biggest crisis because of the Corona virus. Most part of the world is locked down. Most people are confined in their home. Corona virus attacked India in January 2020. After Janata Carfew on 22nd March, India officially declared lockdown on 24th March, 2020. To fight against the Corona virus, West Bengal government declared that all educational institutes will remain close from 16th Mach 2020, except the ongoing Higher Secondary Board exam. So, in West Bengal regular teaching learning stopped from that day. Large number of teachers as well as the government became worried. Then many teachers began to take class through different online platforms such as Edmodo, Google classroom, Zoom cloud meeting app etc.

Most of the teachers and students are using such online platform for the first time. The present research article tries to find out the experience and opinion of the under graduate students of West Bengal about these online classes. Are they really getting any benefit from such classes or not is also another topic of this research article.

Key words: *Corona virus, Lockdown, West Bengal, Education, Online Class Under graduate.*

INTRODUCTION

Online class is not a very new concept, but both for the students and many teachers of West Bengal this concept is quite new. The concept of online class is gaining popularity today mainly because of the threat of Corona Virus. India is going through a period of

lockdown. Schools, colleges and many other educational institutes are also closed. In West Bengal Educational institutes were closed from 16th March, 2020. It is a time very crucial for the undergraduate students. In most of the universities CBCS is in its 2nd year. In most of the colleges 2nd semester students have just started their class and 4th semester students were having their full fledged classes. The 3rd year (1+1+1 system) students are at the end of their course. They also seek the help of the teachers at this last moment. Within a month the entire scenario has changed because of Corona virus. This is the present scenario of under graduate education in West Bengal. In such scenario few teachers have started to take online classes. Then UGC as well as Higher Education Department of West Bengal asked the teachers to take online classes. From then maximum students became acquainted with the concept of online classes. No doubt online classes help the teaching learning process, but at the same time there are many problems from the students' side. Financial background in this case matters a lot. At the same time technical part, internet speed, time management, commitment level of the educator also affects online classes. The students are in the centre of the teaching learning process. That is why we must know what the students are feeling about the online classes. What are the problems that they are facing while attending the online classes.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESENT STUDY:

During lockdown period office, industries, educational institutes will remain closed but the stars, the Moon, the Earth will not stop rotating, time will run, so life will move on. The pursuit for education should also go on with life. There is no doubt that in the period of lockdown the online classes are very effective theoretically. But practically are the online classes really helping the students? Can the students afford the internet charge? Are the students mentally ready to attend the class at the time of pandemic? Can the students handle technology properly? Is the internet connection and speed is enough to attend the class?

These are few questions which are very important for online classes. If the answer of any one question is negative then all the investment for online class will go in vein. The teacher and authority must keep all this things in mind for the success of online classes.

As at present the entire education system is largely dependent on online class, so the present study on online class is very much important.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The following questions came in the mind of the present researcher before he began the present research work. Actually these questions inspired the present researcher to engage in this particular research work:

i.   Can the students afford the internet charge?

ii.   Are the students mentally ready to attend the class at the time of pandemic?

iii.   Can the students handle technology properly?

iv.   Is the internet connection and speed is enough to attend the class?

v.   Is online classroom a good substitute of regular classroom?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The present study attempts to describe the opinion of the undergraduate students about the online class. In the present study only the undergraduate students of Kolkata, North 24 Parganas and Nadia have been taken. Therefore the researcher considered the title of the problem as: '**Opinion of Undergraduate Students of Selected Districts of West Bengal about Online Classes During Lockdown'**

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The major objectives of the present research are:

➢ To have a clear idea about the opinion of the undergraduate students of selected districts of West Bengal regarding the online classes.

➢ To find out the problems of the undergraduate students of selected districts of West Bengal while attending online classes.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

'Literature Review' is an inseparable part of any research article. It is a phase where the researcher positions himself/herself and his/her research work among other researches in the similar field.

In the research paper '*Issues and Challenges for Teaching Successful Online Courses in Higher Education: A Literature Review*' (Journal of Educational Technology Systems, September, 2017) by M. Kebritchi, L. Santiague and A. Lipschuetz nicely described different problems of online classes including the student related problem regarding online class in general. In the article the

researchers conducted the research based on 104 articles which were published between 1990 to 2015 in peer-reviewed journals. The researcher also advocates to address the challenges in online education and asked the higher education institutions to 'provide professional development for instructors, trainings for learners, and technical support for content development.'

In the article '*The Effectiveness of Online Learning: Beyond No Significant Difference and Future Horizons*' (MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, June, 2015) the researcher Tuan Nguyen found that 'a large number of studies that find positive statistically significant effects for student learning outcomes in the online or hybrid format compared to the traditional face-to-face format.' The study also pointed some null and negative findings.

The doctoral thesis '*A study of Problems and Prospects of e-Learning in India*'(Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore, 2015) by Ravindra Kumar Soni gave a detail description of e-learning in India. 'The study was intended to investigate problems related to e-Learning in higher education in India along with analysis of prospect of e-Learning in the related area. This study was also aimed to identify critical success factors for implementation of e-Learning in higher education sector in India and identify/recommend a suitable e-Learning Model/Tool for the same.'

'*Impact of Online Education in Indian*' (International Journal of Engineering Science and Computing, July 2017) by Z. A. Lone, the author found that the e-learning market is very big and it is increasing rapidly. At the same time the researcher pointed some challenges that Indian E-learning system is facing. They are: '1. Lack of Infrastructure and hardware facilities which hamper reliability of online learning.

2. Problem in finding willing skilled manpower to training illiterate rural areas of India.

3. No or very less computer based courses/skills taught to students in government primary schools to increase'.

In many other research quite similar tones is echoed. Till date no research has been conducted on student's opinion on online class in West Bengal.

METHODOLOGY:

The present study describes the opinion of the undergraduate students of West Bengal regarding the online classes.

For in-depth study of the opinion of the students the researcher used qualitative approach. To capture the complexity of reality in its original form, 'under real-world conditions' with all its minute and natural details, qualitative approach is the best approach. As Patton (1990) rightly describes, 'It aims at studying real world situations as they unfold naturally without any manipulation and predetermined constraints on outcomes'.
It is a descriptive research.

POPULATION:

The undergraduate students studying in government and government aided colleges in the district of Kolkata, North 24 Parganas and Nadia, West Bengal, in regular mode and are doing online class during this lockdown period are the population for the present study.

SAMPLING PROCEDURE:

Stratified random sampling technique has been adopted in the present study to collect data from the participants. From each district 30 participants are selected on the basis of stratified random sampling technique.

Rural Participant: 45

Urban Participant: 45

Total number of Participant: 90

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUE:

Keeping the objectives in mind the present researcher made a questionnaire with three open ended questions. Expert validity was done.
Then the questionnaire was sent to the students those who are attending online classes via email and different social networking sites. The researcher assured the students that their feedback will be kept secret.

DATA COLLECTION:

Data collected from both Urban and Rural area. The students send their feedback through email, whatsapp and Facebook messenger.

DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS:

After collecting the feedback, the raw data is systematically and intensively analyzed sentence by sentence and open coding is done at first.

After that, the key concepts are classified into different categories. And at last core category is formed.

Interpretation and analysis has been done very carefully, keeping in mind about the objective of the present research.

FINDINGS:

The major findings of the study are:

i.   71.11% urban undergraduate students opined that online class is very effective. They have not faced any problem. The entire classes are very pleasing.

ii.   On the other hand 28.89% undergraduate students of urban area expressed that the online classes are not very helpful at all.

iii.   The rural undergraduate students have a different story. Only 37.78% undergraduate students opined that online class is very effective. They have not faced any problem.

iv.   62.22% undergraduate students of rural area expressed that the online classes are not very helpful at all.

v.   At this point of time when everyone is locked in their home, all the students were at first excited and wanted to attend the online classes. At the same time all the students opined that online classes are good but obviously not better than regular classes.

- From Table 1 it is visible that the urban students are more comfortable with online classes compared to rural students. The major reason behind this is good network connection and good internet speed.
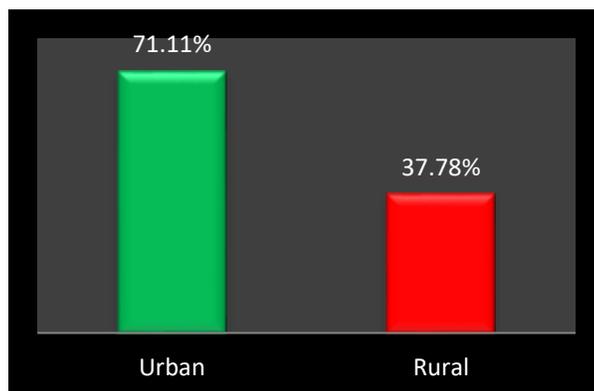

Table 1 (satisfied student data)

- From Table 2 it is visible that rural students are more unsatisfied regarding online class than urban students.
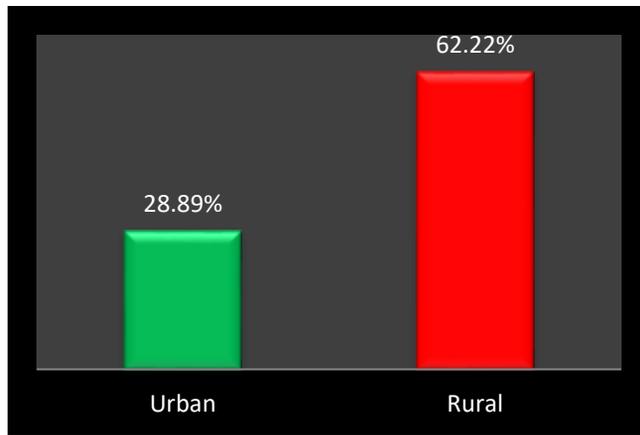
 Table 2 (Unsatisfied student data)

- The researcher pointed out the following reasons behind the bad experience of the students:
- Poor internet connection
- Poor financial condition of the student family
- Limited dada
- Improper time management
- In many cases poor teaching style of the teacher results negative attitude among the students toward online classes.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION:

We are in the time of lockdown. There is a possibility of extending this lockdown. That means in the coming days educational institutes will remain closed for a good number of days. In this situation online classes are the only option left for the teachers and students. If following measures can be adopted properly then the online classes will become more effective:

- The internet service provider must provide internet properly everywhere.
- The internet service provider can provide unlimited data access for online classes and educational purposes.

- If not now but in future government or educational institute must provide e gadget to the students for online learning.

- The students must be informed one or two days before the schedule class.

- For effective online class the teacher can send study material before the class as that the student can go through the study material. It will help them to understand the topic properly.

- Lecture method was not a very good teaching method. This is very true in case of online class. Discussion method should be adopted.

- It is better to ask all the students to keep their microphone in mute mode. Only when they want to say something at that time they can unmute and say and then again mute their microphone. This process will reduce unnecessary noise.

If one can follow these simple tips, online classes will be more effective.

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