Challenges of Education during Pandemic and its impact on students.

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Abstract:

Pandemic has greatly disruption on the normal lifestyles, including education. This led to the closure of educational institutions affecting millions of children worldwide. This crisis has accelerated the shift towards a digital world, significantly altering the traditional classroom environment. In this transition, the students in particular, have been affected most by the closure of the educational institutions. The transformation also brought about many challenges in providing appropriate remote learning to all students. The present paper addresses the various challenges faced in its transition and its impact on the students.

Index terms: **Challenges of education, Pandemic, Impact on student.**

Introduction:

The recent pandemic has caused severe disruption to every aspect of society, including education. The outbreak of the virus has impacted the education system in the world (UNESCO,2020b), and one of the most affected sectors. Education is the main pillar of growth and development of every nation; with the wide spread of the diseases the educational system has been affected by several challenges with changes in the curriculum to closing of the education system (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2015). This, has dramatically changed the perspective of the educational systems, shifting the education paradigm from traditional way of teaching learning to e-learning or digital platform.

Across the globe, with the closure of educational institutions approximately 1.72 billion learners are out of the classroom, and around 32 crores in India alone. As a result, transition to online platforms and distance learning was the only feasible alternative. Therefore, institutions were enforced to employed e-learning as the substitute for face-to-face learning. It made everyone, irrespective of their exposure to learning online, have had to adapt and learn the new trend.

With this sudden change, many challenges arose that requires quick solution and changes to policy and in providing equitable and relevant remote learning to all students. The use of technology in teaching learners at a distance is indispensable in times of emergency, such as natural disasters, (Hinson et al.,2007; Rush et al., 2014). Even during the pandemic, the advances in educational technology was immensely useful (Dhawan,2020),

however, teachers, students, parents, and other relevant educators faced many challenges that they were not ready to overcome (Chakraborty et al.,2020). In these transition to online schooling, there are many challenges that needs careful planning in addressing teachers' preparation, and training needs, strategies to foster student achievement, and communication with students and families.

To have a better understanding of the challenges encountered during remote instruction, some of the issues are:

1. **Teachers struggles:** Many teachers have their own struggles in the transition to the online platforms. Many teachers having little time to prepare, becoming both as instructional designer and pedagogical facilitators using tools which few had fluently mastered. This teaching requires many different skills and competencies than traditional teaching (Pulham & Graham,2018), Moreover, they must have technological expertise, and needs to develop strategies for building relationships with students and attending to their social, emotional, and academic needs (Borup& Evmenova,2019; Rice&Cater,2015).

2. **Digital divide:** The inaccessibility to physical classrooms led to learning through digital means. The closure of schools led students continue to learn at home through distance learning (UNSECO,2020a). In providing distance learning, there is lack of ICT infrastructures, computers, radio, and television. Access to these resources is key to successful distance learning (Zhang,2020). However, all student does not have equal access to digital technology and educational materials Students from less advantage background do not have necessary equipment to access learning from home (Di Pietro et al.,2020), further it has deepened the existing social inequalities for the most vulnerable with no access to computer, lack internet, unable to use mobile owing to limited coverage of mobile network (UNESCO, 2020b), leading to digital divide in learners.

3. **Unequal access to educational resources in rural areas:** The closure of school, it was challenging for students in the rural areas to learn with limited or no access to radio, television (Tiruneh,2020). Children in their learning process are depended on their parents for guidance, internet access and usage of digital devices and applications (Tzifopoulos,2020), however, children from poor and digitally-illiterate families with no access to these resources are the suffers (Tiruneh,2020). Further, with the closure of school increased the accessibility of quality education between students in urban and rural areas (Owusu-Fordjour et al.,2015).

4. **Assessment and evaluation:** Due to the closure of educational institutions and shifting to online classes, it effected the teaching and assessment methodologies. This created a serious issue on assessment and evaluation, for both instructors and students in teaching practicum, technical competencies, and assessment of practical skills (Osman,2020). It requires the teacher to change the assessment types to fit the online mode. It is also becomes difficult to monitor, the student learning and ensure that they are not cheating during online exams (Basilaia & Kvavadze,2020).

   Moreover, laboratory test, practical tests, and performance test are not feasible to conduct through online mode. Unviability of internet services also hampers the student to take assessment and evaluations (Sahu,2020). Though, even if online teaching and learning are a good opportunity to continue education during the pandemic it is challenging for developing countries (Sun et al., 2020)

5. **Effect on mental and Physical health:** The global disruption in education has a negative effect on the mental and physical health of children, students, parents, and teachers, especially in developing countries (UNESCO, 2020b). With the closure of the school most of the children in the rural areas, work in herding cattle and farming to support their families. There is also a high risk of sexual abuse, forced labor and early marriage of girls' student from low-income families and rural areas. The pandemic has a serious influence on the careers and stress, fear, and anxiety of people dying affect the mental, physical health of students (Niranjan,2020).

The pandemic has had far-reaching effects, particularly the students. Many educators and researchers have raised concern about the impact of school closure on student academic and learning inequalities. UNICEF and UNESCO, also acknowledged its negative impact on child education (Gustafsson 2021; UNESCO 2021). The inadequacy of online teaching infrastructures, instructors' lack of familiarity with new technologies, knowledge gap, complex home environment, etc. (Ali,2018) are some of problems that demotivates students while learning online. These factors have a significant influence on academic performance, social relationships, mental health, and well-being of the students. This will not only have a short-term impact on the continuity of learning but, it will also have an overall well-being of the students. The change came with a variety of effects.

1. **Academic performance/ Student achievement**: The outbreak of covid-19 and the closure of the schools have adversely affected the education and learning of students, and has significant impact on students' academic performance (Aucejo et al., 2020; Pakhrel & chhetri,2021; Hammerstein et al.,2021). Several factors such as anxiety, social problems, and internet connection, also contributes to their academic performance having an inverse effect on their motivation (Elhadary et al.,2020).

   The solution of learning from online learning platform was not an effective in their academic achievements, moreover, parents are unable to assist their children in accessing online platform and supervising their studies (Owusu-fordjour et al., (2020). Further, e-learning could not accommodate all students simultaneously due to poor internet connectivity, power outages, lack of digital skills, insufficient infrastructures, inaccessibility, and unavailability all hampers students' academic performance (Henaku 2020, Bono et al.,2020).

2. **Social Interaction/relationship**: Social relationships are important in a person's life and it has a great impact on the health, affecting their behavioural, psychosocial, and physiological states (Umberson&Montez,2010). Any factors associated with adverse health out-comes are linked to poor quality of social relationships, low level of involvement, and a low level of quantity of social connections (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 2002; Robles & Kiecolt-Glaser,2003).

   The pandemic has drastically changed the nature of the social interactions towards digital world, altering the traditional classroom environment. This has a significant impact on students' social development and, individual's well-being (Baumeiter & Leary, 1995). These situations can lead to boredom and loneliness which increases tension (Al-Tammemi,2020).

3. **Mental health**: Mental health is a key element of overall wellbeing. However, mental health issues of students during the pandemic have amplified with the closure of schools. It significantly impairs academic success and social interactions thus affecting their career and personal opportunities (Hendriksen et at.,2021) Being isolated from friends, especially in schools and colleges had led to a profound impact on the well-being of the students. Students during prolonged periods of isolation exhibited feeling detached from friends and family (Meo et al., 2020; Karki,2020), and was afflicted with acute stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms (Ma Z et al.,2020). The impact of the pandemic, has its effect across the world with over 90% of students having negative mental health with its common effects were social isolation, lack of focus and anxiety (Population Fund of India, 2020).

Conclusion:

The impact of Covid-19 on education has been profound and far reaching having an adverse effect on students' achievement, social relation, and mental health. However, it has led to innovative approaches in teaching learning, and also exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities. The experiences of the pandemic, it gives us insight in addressing to the challenges and with the knowledge gained, build a more resilient and inclusive education. It also provided with an opportunity to enhanced digital preparedness, capacity development and innovation in education institutions. Hence, it is crucial to have policies, infrastructures, and resources to build a more robust educational system.

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