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“A Study on the Impact of Covid-19 on UGC – NET Aspirants”

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ABSTRACT

The outbreak of COVID -19 has affected educational system across the world. Most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to reduce the spread of COVID- 19 .The shutting down of the colleges and school in response to the pandemic; approximately 1.077 billion learners have been affected as reported on 30th September 2020. In response to school closure, UNESCO recommended the use of distance learning programmes and open education applications and e- platform, schools and teachers can use to reach learners remotely and limit the disruption of education. The uncertainty in the closing of educational institutions has caused a wide spread anxiety, stress, fear and stigma among the students, as a remedial measures along with medical aid, a sociological changes and awareness are required with strong and friendly counseling. This lock down and the spread of these infected diseases have created an impact on educational sector. The present study makes an attempt to study the Impact of COVID-19 on UGC-NET aspirants.

Key words: Covid 19, education

INTRODUCTION

Covid -19 is a new respiratory disease caused by the Novel Corona Virus and the spread of this deadly disease have disrupted economy as a whole due to the spread of the virus , the state governments across the country decided to shut down the entire activities. Covid -19 has overnight changed our habits. The sudden shutting down the malls, school, college, public sectors and private sector units was to take measures to curtail the spread of the Novel corona virus. In India corona virus case have crossed 78,000 and mark becoming the Second country in the world having one lakh case daily, including 1,18,534 death as on 15th October 2020. The nation is under the fifth extended lockdown. The lock down is pushing the major economic sectors to the brink. The Covid -19 has affected educational system worldwide. Instead of offline classes educational institutions are providing online classes .Sudden change from offline mode to online mode affected the study plans preparation strategies of students which ultimately affected the mental health of students.

On behalf of University Grants Commission (UGC), the National Eligibility Test (NET) is conducted for determining the eligibility of Indian nationals for the Eligibility for Assistant Professor only or Junior Research Fellowship & Assistant Professor Both, in Indian Universities and Colleges. Candidates who have secured at least 55% marks (without rounding off) in Master's Degree OR equivalent examination from universities/ institutions recognized by UGC in Humanities (including languages) and Social Science, Computer Science & Applications, Electronic Science, etc. are eligible for this exam.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the pandemic of the deadly disease the situation of lock down ,which affected the education sector critically as all the important exams are cancelled or postponed, the student faces a lot of mixed emotions ,full of loneliness, anxiety, tension, negative thoughts and depression . It was noted that there was delay in release of admit cards and uncertainty in the date of examination. Many students preparing for the competitive exams for the past two years, due to closure of all educational institutes, coaching institutes, libraries are under panic. Covid -19 is giving a difficult time to the students appearing for examinations. The study tries to explore the responsiveness of the UGC-NET aspirants during the lock down period.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the present study confined to Kerala State. The study makes an attempt to examine the mental state of NET aspirants during lock down period. The study also analyses the Impact of lockdown and postponement of examinations in students who preparing for UGC-NET examination.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A country's development is primarily based on its people and its resources. However, it ultimately depends on the people only, as to what extent they can use the scarce resources efficiently in order to achieve a rapid rate of development and breakthroughs in innovation. As people play the most important role in shaping the status of the country; education is responsible for shaping a person. Therefore, education is the backbone of any country; it plays a crucial role in technological developments and imparts various skills, values, and awareness. Human beings today need to have a specific set of skills to survive in this competitive world Education plays an important role in shaping the students. The present study makes an attempt to analyze the Impact of COVID-19 on UGC-NET aspirants.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the mental state of UGC- NET aspirants
2. To study the effectiveness of online learningresources in Covid-19 period.
3. To study the effect of selected demographic variables on impact of Covid 19 and Lockdown period on UGC -NET aspirants.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is a descriptive one based on the sample survey method. The study basically depends on primary data. The required primary data will be collected by means of structured Questionnaire administrated to the UGC-NET aspirants' .As the population is quite large and spread throughout the state. It is not possible to conduct a population survey. Hence a sample survey will be conducted among randomly students from different district of Kerala. Sample Size was fixed to 200 for this study. Out of 200 primary contacts, 166 were responded and 144 responses were used in the study after eliminating incomplete responses.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study limited to the area of Kerala state only
2. The period of study was limited.
3. The reliability of the study depends upon accuracy of information given by the respondent.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Candidates preparing for the UGC-NET Examination are classified on the basis of their demographic factors such as Gender, age of respondents, occupation of respondents, educational status, area of residence and zone of residence. The classification of the students on the basis of demographic factors is given below.

Table No.1

Profile of the Respondents

Demographic factors		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	24	16.7
	Female	120	83.3
Educational status	PG Pursuing	99	68.8
	PG	38	26.4
	Mphil/Bed	5	3.5
	PhD	2	1.4
Occupational Status	Student	114	79.2
	Not employed	8	5.6
	Employed	22	15.3
Age of respondents	Below 21	28	19.4
	22 to 26	99	68.8
	Above 26	17	11.8
Area of residence	Panchayath	116	80.6
	Municipality	17	11.8
	Corporation	11	7.6
Zone of residence	North	83	57.6
	Central	48	33.3
	South	13	9.0

Source: primary data

From the table 1 it is observed that out of 144 UGC-NET aspirants considered for the study 120 are females, 24 are male. Education status of UGC-NET aspirants are categorized into four, such as students pursuing their post graduation, post graduated, MPhil or Bed and PhD. In which majority of aspirants are students pursuing PG (68.8%) followed by PG completed (26.4%) MPhil or BEd (3.5%) and PhD(1.4%). Area of residence is categorized into Panchayath, Municipality and corporation. Where most of the students belongs to Panchayath (80.6%) followed by Municipality (11.8%) and only few NET aspirants are belong to Corporation (7.6%). Zone of residence is classified in to North, Central and South, Out of which Most of the students belongs to North (57.6%) followed by central (33.3%) and South (9%).

METHOD OF STUDY ADOPTED DURING LOCK DOWN

Different study methods adopted by students during lock down period are identified in order to find the preference of students regarding different modes of study. The different study methods adopted by students are given in the table below

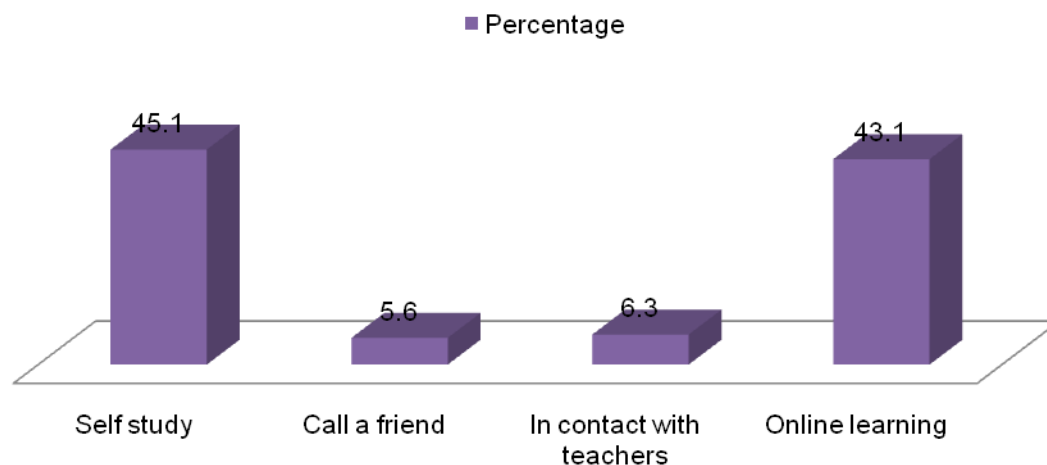
Table No.2

Major method of study during lock down

Mode of study	Frequency	Percentage
Self study	65	45.1
Call a friend	8	5.6
contact with teachers	9	6.3
Online learning	62	43.1
Total	144	100

Source: primary data

Method of study adopted during lockdown



Majority of students prefer self study (45.1%) and online learning (43.1%) followed by contact with teachers (6.3%) and only few percentage students are interested in call a friend method (5.6%).

SUBJECT APPLIED FOR UGC- NET EXAMINATION

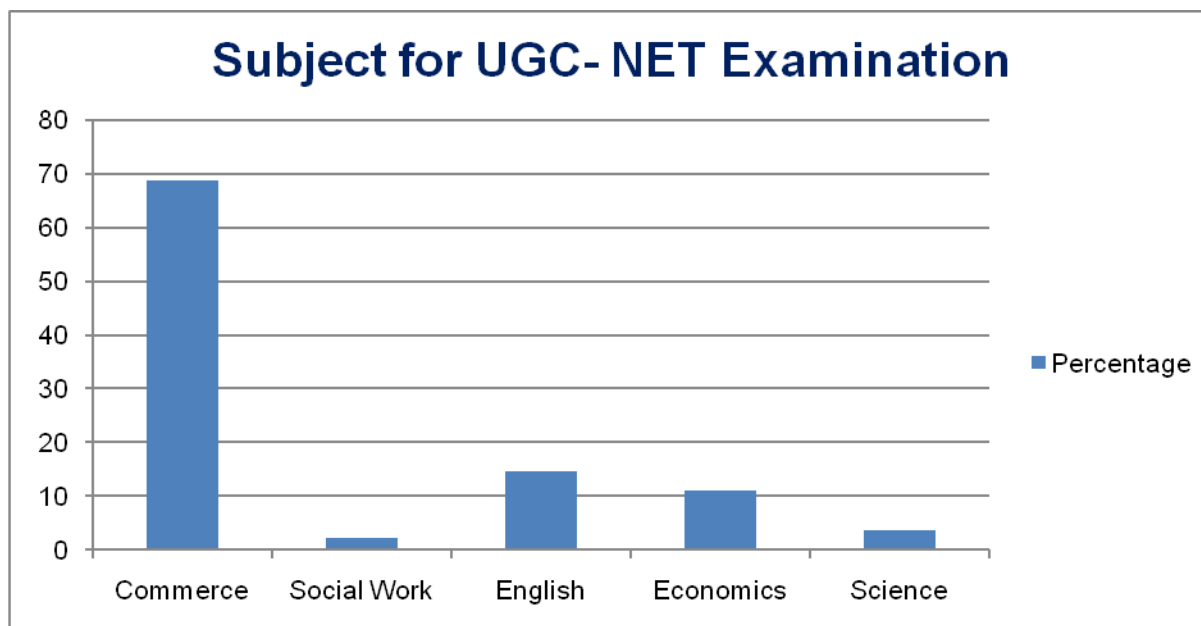
One of the major differences between the CSIR NET Exam and UGC NET Exam is the number of subjects the exam is conducted in. The CSIR NET exam is conducted in 5 subjects whereas the UGC NET is conducted for 84 different subjects other than science stream. Different subjects applied by the respondents for UGC-NET examination are included in this area

Table No.3

Subject for UGC- NET Examination

Subject	Frequency	Percentage
Commerce	99	68.8
Social Work	3	2.1
English	21	14.5
Economics	16	11.1
Others	5	3.5
Total	144	100

Source: primary data



Majority of respondents are commerce stream (68.8%) secondly english (14%), economics (11.1%) and(2.1%) are from social work.Only (3.5%) are from other subjects.

DEVICES USED TO ACCESS ONLINE CLASS PLATFORM DURING LOCK DOWN

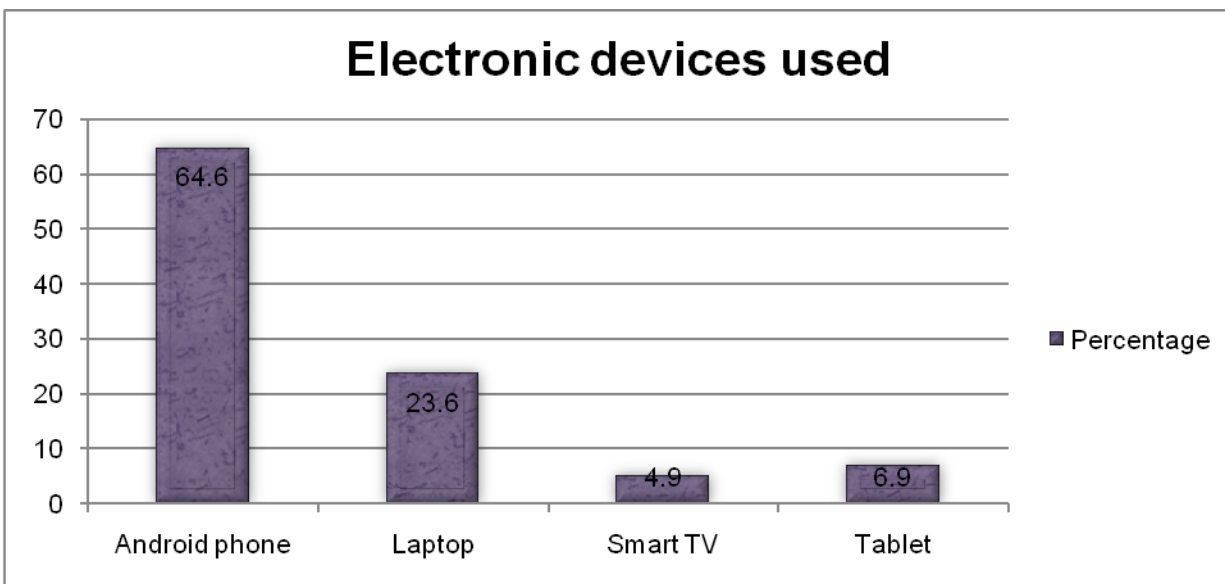
The Covid -19 has affected educational system worldwide. Instead of offline classes educational institutions are providing online classes which are accessible through digital devices such as Smart phone, Lap top and Smart TV (Television with internet facility). The different types of digital devices used by UGC-NET aspirants during online classes are given in the table below

Table No.4

Devices used to access online class platform during lock down

Electronic device used	Frequency	Percentage
Android phone	93	64.6
Laptop	34	23.6
Smart TV	7	4.9
Tablet	10	6.9
Total	144	100

Source: primary data



Majority of students access online classes through smart phone (64.6%). Only few students are using lap top (23.06%) Tablet (6.9%) and Smart T V (4.9%).

MENTAL STATE OF THE STUDENTS DURING COVID-19 PERIOD

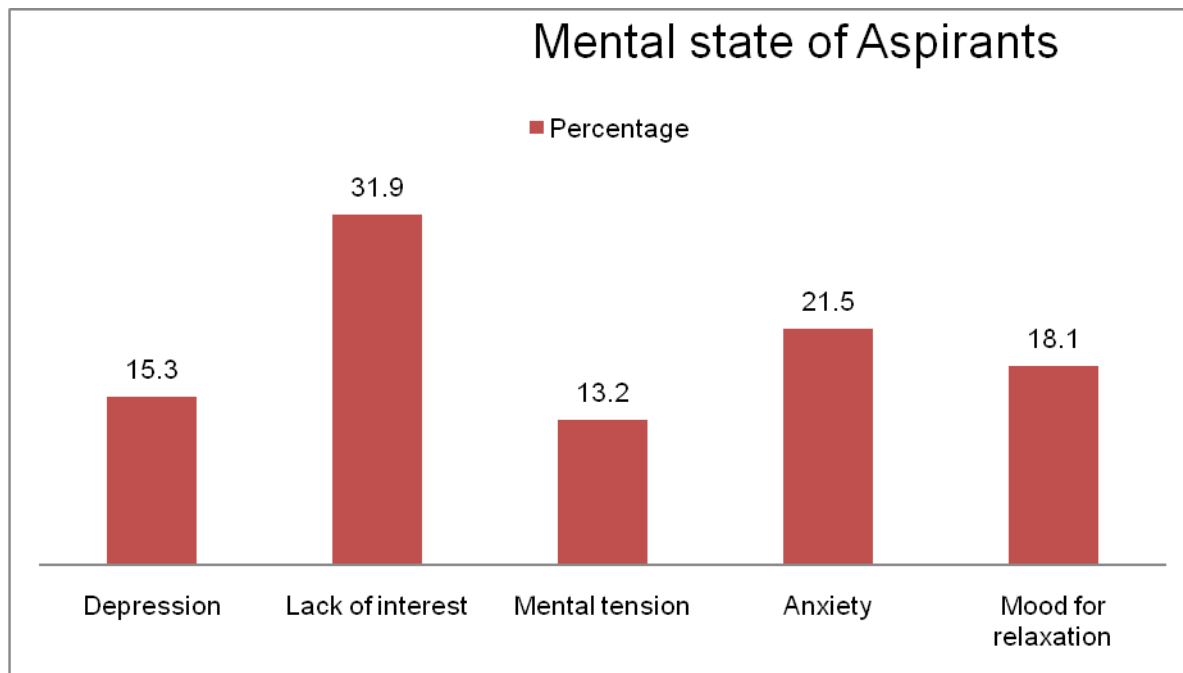
Delay in UGC-NET exam increased the anxiety of students. During this Covid-19 period students are going through different mental states such as Anxiety, Depression, Loss of appetite etc. The responses of NET aspirants about their mental state is given in the table below

Table no.5

Mental state of the respondents

Mental state of Aspirants	Frequency	Percentage
Depression	22	15.3
Lack of interest	46	31.9
Mental tension	19	13.2
Anxiety	31	21.5
Mood for relaxation	26	18.1
Total	144	100

Source: primary data



Majority of NET aspirants(31.9%) felt that they lost interest in their studies due to uncertainty in conducting NET exam.21.5% students get anxious.15.3% students facing depression because of the postponement of examination.18.5% of NET aspirants felt Covid-19 period as a mood of relaxation .13.2% of students facing mental tension during this lock down period.

THE POSTPONEMENT OF UGC-NET EXAM HAVE AFFECTED STUDIES DUE TO COVID-19

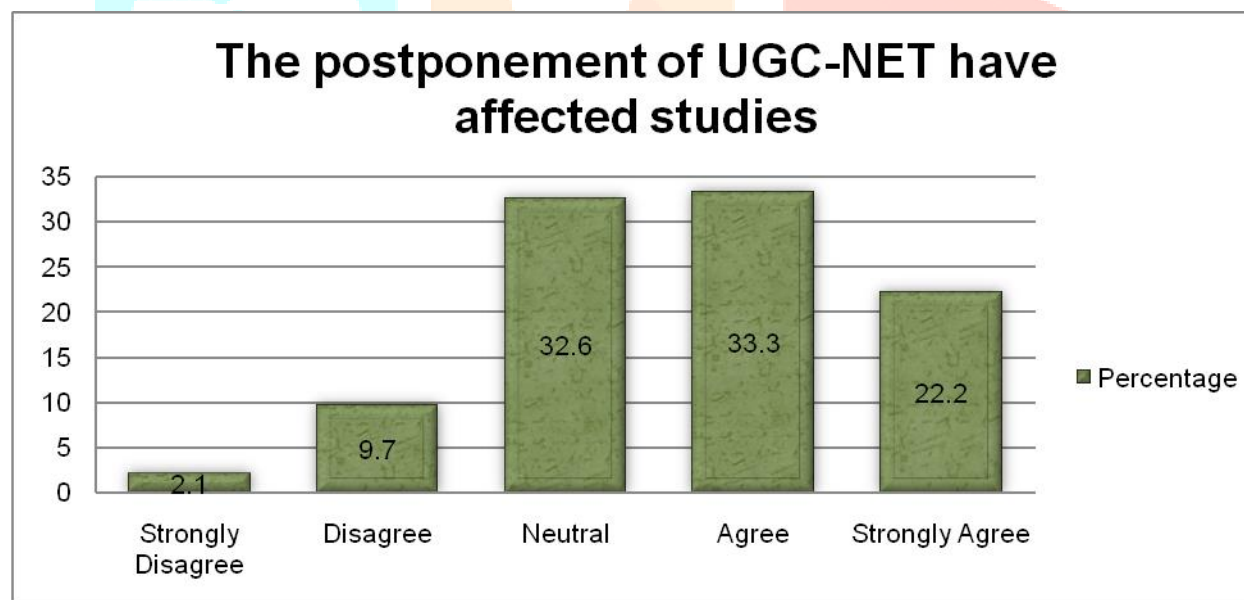
The closure of colleges the coaching centre has a great impact as far as the NET aspirants are concerned. Five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used to assess their opinion. Here maximum value of 5 assigned to strongly agree and minimum value of 1 assigned to strongly disagree.Respondents' opinion with regard to the difficulty in planning the study due to covid-19 period is given in the table below

Table No.6

The postponement of UGC-NET have affected studies

The postponement of UGC-NET have affected studies		Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Disagree	3	2.1
	Disagree	14	9.7
	Neutral	47	32.6
	Agree	48	33.3
	Strongly Agree	32	22.2
Total	Total	144	100

Source: primary data



Majority of UGC-NET aspirants (55.5%) agreed that postponement of UGC-NET exam affected their studies. and 9.7% have disagreement to this view and 2.1 % of respondents are strongly disagreed with this statement.

OPINION ABOUT THE IMPACT OF LOCKDOWN AND POSTPONEMENT OF EXAMINATION

Covid -19 has a great impact on Educational sector. Delay in Exams increased the anxiety and mental pressure of students which ultimately affected the study plans and preparation strategies. Respondents opinion regarding lock down period and postponement of examination is analysed using the ten statements. Five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used to assess their opinion. Here maximum value of 5 assigned to strongly agree and minimum value of 1 assigned to strongly disagree. The summary statistics of the scale is presented in Table 7;

Table No. 7

Respondent's opinion about the impact of lock down and extended exam

Components	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I find sufficient time for my studies	44	1	5	3.50	0.939
I have no sufficient books to refer	44	1	5	3.49	1.333
I feel I miss doubt clearing class	44	1	5	3.77	1.157
It encouraged peer group learning	44	1	5	3.05	1.047
I often listen to offline lectures or classes	44	1	5	3.52	1.044
Provided real time assessment feedback	44	1	5	3.19	1.044
Find problem in network connectivity	44	1	5	3.97	1.115
Lack of sufficient knowledge in use of ICT affected my studies	44	1	5	3.98	1.220
I often face pressure from family	44	1	5	3.91	1.284
I often feel lonely	44	1	5	3.21	1.384
Valid N (listwise)	44			3.36	1.157

Source: primary data

The minimum and maximum values are indicators of lowest and highest level of agreement/disagreement on the statements used for measuring impact of lockdown and postponement of exam. Minimum value of 1 indicates that at least one of the participants had strong disagreement with the statement and maximum score of 5 indicates that at least one of the participants had strong agreement with the statement. Analysis shows that out of ten statements used for assessing the impact eight statements had an average score which is well above the median score of 3.

The effect of demographic factors on the opinion of respondents about the impact of covid-19 and postponements of examination is analysed using independent sample t test and one way ANOVA.

1- Gender of respondents and impact of lockdown and postponement of examination

In order to find whether gender of the respondents has an effect on impact of lockdown and postponement of examination the following hypothesis was proposed:

H₀: There is no significant difference in the mean score on impact of lockdown and postponement of examination based on the gender of the respondents.

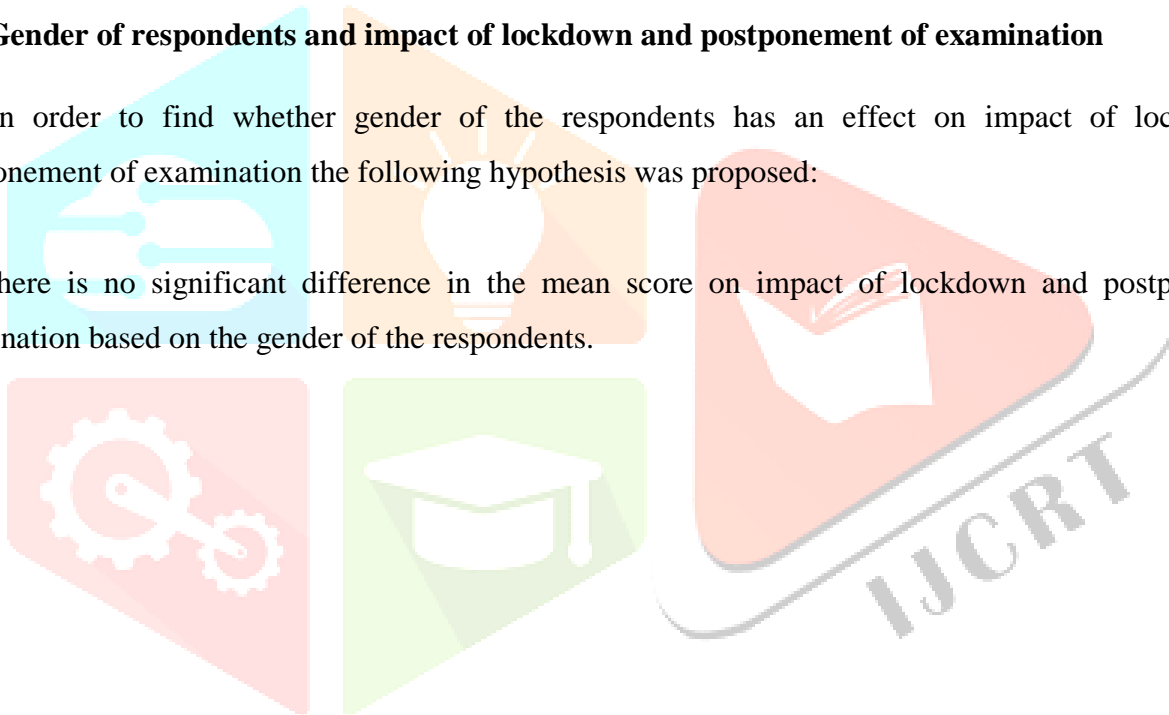


Table no.8

Gender and Mean score on impact of lockdown – independent sample t- test

Opinion	Category	Mean Score	SD	t	p value
I find sufficient time for my studies	Male	3.79	.779	1.678	.096
	Female	3.44	.960		
I have no sufficient books to refer	Male	3.17	1.308	-1.318	.190
	Female	3.56	1.333		
I feel I miss doubt clearing class	Male	3.50	1.103	-1.259	.210
	Female	3.83	1.164		
It encouraged peer group learning	Male	3.04	1.197	-.035	.972
	Female	3.05	1.020		
I often listen to offline lectures or classes	Male	3.50	1.180	-.107	.915
	Female	3.53	1.020		
Provided real time assessment feedback	Male	3.29	1.160	.534	.594
	Female	3.17	1.024		
Find problem in network connectivity	Male	3.50	1.285	-2.306	.023*
	Female	4.07	1.059		
Lack of sufficient knowledge in use of ICT affected my studies	Male	2.67	1.274	-1.379	.170
	Female	3.04	1.205		
I often face pressure from family	Male	2.63	1.313	-1.192	.235
	Female	2.97	1.276		
I often feel lonely	Male	2.92	1.412	-1.132	.259
	Female	3.27	1.376		

Source :primary data

An independent sample t test was conducted to compare mean score on various statements used to measure the impact of lockdown and postponement of examination among male and female respondents. The test revealed that the difference is significant only in respect of mean score for problems related with network connectivity based on the gender of the respondents, as the significance value (.023) is less than 0.05. Hence it can be concluded that, gender of respondents has significant effect on the mean values for problems related with network connectivity and the effect is not significant on the opinion of other factors related with the impact of lockdown and postponement of examination.

3. Zone of residence and impact of lockdown and postponement of examination

UGC-NET aspirants have different opinion regarding peer group learning, network connectivity and lack of sufficient knowledge in ICT when they are classified on the basis of zone of residence. To verify whether the zone of residence has an effect on the mean values of the impact of lock down and postponement of examination, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H₀: There is no significant difference in the mean score on impact of lockdown and postponement of examination based on the zone of residence of the respondents.

To test the hypothesis, one-way ANOVA test was performed and the result is presented in Table 9.

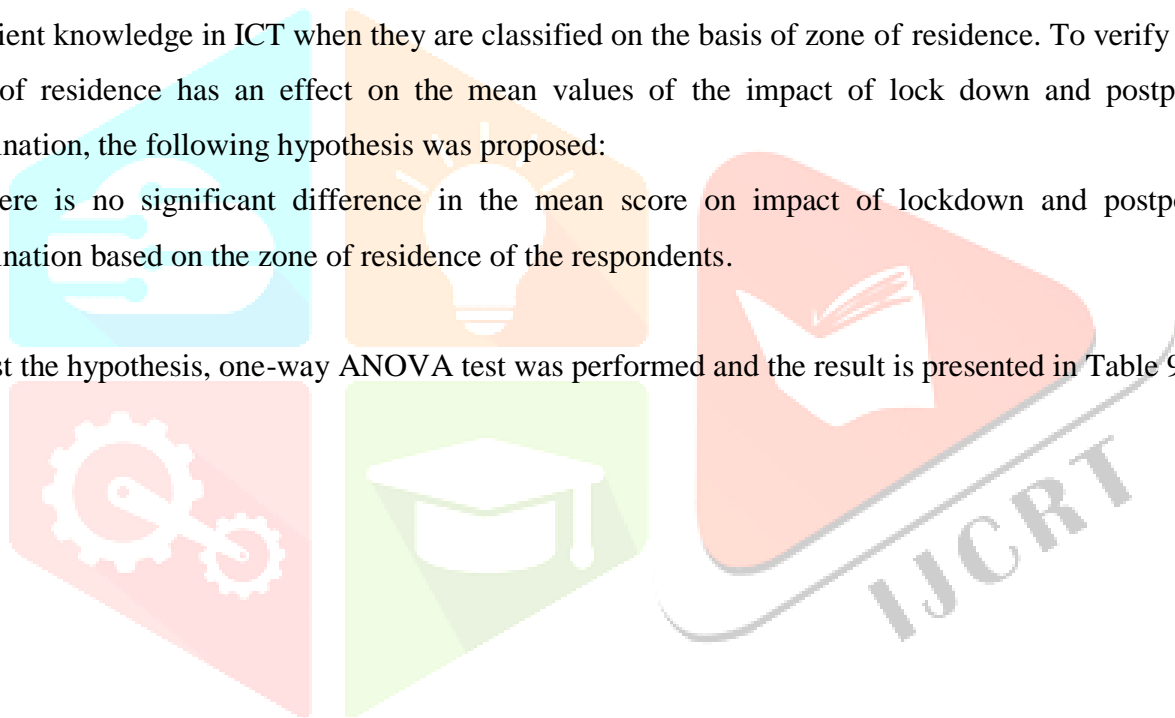


Table no.9

Zone of residence and Mean score on impact of lockdown –one Way ANOVA

Opinion	Zone	Mean Score	SD	F	p value
I find sufficient time for my studies	North	3.50	1.03	.640	.529
	Central	3.35	1.08		
	South	3.47	1.02		
I have no sufficient books to refer	North	3.50	1.33	1.227	.296
	Central	3.16	1.55		
	South	3.43	1.39		
I miss doubt clearing class	North	3.90	1.02	2.809	.064
	Central	3.58	1.31		
	South	3.76	1.20		
It encouraged peer group learning	North	3.28	0.951	1.396	.251
	Central	2.94	1.06		
	South	3.14	1.01		
I often listen to offline lectures or classes	North	3.48	1.16	.002	.998
	Central	3.52	0.890		
	South	3.48	1.10		
Provided real time assessment feedback	North	3.22	0.937	1.627	.200
	Central	3.16	1.13		
	South	3.14	1.04		
Find problem in network connectivity	North	3.86	1.22	.677	.510
	Central	4.06	1.15		
	South	3.94	1.16		
	North	3.14	1.16	.567	.568

Lack of sufficient knowledge in use of ICT affected my studies	Central	2.87	1.26		
	South	3.00	1.20		
I often face pressure from family	North	2.95	1.29	.154	.857
	Central	3.10	1.28		
	South	2.98	1.30		
I often feel lonely	North	3.05	1.29	2.414	.093
	Central	3.74	1.24		
	South	3.28	1.33		

Source: primary data

One-way ANOVA test was performed and the test revealed that the difference is not significant in respect of mean scores on impact of lockdown based on the zone of residence of the respondents, as the significance values are higher than the criterion value of 0.05. Hence it can be concluded that, the zone of residence has no significant effect on the opinion related with the impact of lockdown and postponement of examination.

4. Place of residence and impact of lockdown and postponement of examination

To verify whether the place of residence of respondents has an effect on the mean values of the impact of lock down and postponement of examination, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the mean score on impact of lockdown and postponement of examination based on the place of residence of the respondents.

To test the hypothesis, one-way ANOVA test was performed and the result is presented in Table 10.

Table no.10

Place of residence and Mean score on impact of lockdown –one Way ANOVA

Opinion	Area	Mean Score	SD	F	p value
I find sufficient time for my studies	Panchayat	3.49	1.01	.844	.432
	Municipality	3.35	1.08		
	Corporation	3.64	0.924		
I have no sufficient books to refer	Panchayat	3.45	1.44	1.051	.352
	Municipality	3.16	1.55		
	Corporation	3.82	1.25		
I feel I miss doubt clearing class	Panchayat	3.78	1.23	.370	.691
	Municipality	3.58	1.31		
	Corporation	3.55	1.70		
It encouraged peer group learning	Panchayat	3.18	1.05	.718	.489
	Municipality	2.94	1.06		
	Corporation	3.00	1.10		
I often listen to offline lectures or classes	Panchayat	3.47	1.10	.353	.703
	Municipality	3.71	1.33		
	Corporation	3.36	1.36		
Provided real time assessment feedback	Panchayat	3.10	1.07	.783	.459
	Municipality	3.57	0.852		
	Corporation	2.64	1.21		
	Panchayat	3.97	1.20	.319	.728
	Municipality	3.93	1.21		

Find problem in network connectivity	Corporation	4.00	0.894		
Lack of sufficient knowledge in use of ICT affected my studies	Panchayat	3.01	1.19	.191	.827
	Municipality	2.86	1.41		
	Corporation	2.64	1.21		
I often face pressure from family	Panchayat	3.01	1.32	.038	.963
	Municipality	2.93	1.39		
	Corporation	2.82	1.47		
I often feel lonely	Panchayat	3.29	1.32	.726	.486
	Municipality	3.43	1.28		
	Corporation	3.18	1.60		

One-way ANOVA test was performed and the test revealed that the difference is not significant in respect of mean scores on impact of lockdown based on the place of residence of the respondents, as the significance values are higher than the criterion value of 0.05. Hence it can be concluded that, the place of residence has no significant effect on various factors related with the impact of lockdown and postponement of examination.

FINDINGS

1. Majority of respondents prefer self study (45.1%) and online learning (43.1%) followed by contact with teachers (6.3%) and only few respondents are interested in call a friend method (5.6%).
2. Majority of respondents are from commerce stream (68.8%) secondly English (14%), economics (11.1%) and from social work(2.1%). Only (3.5%) are from other subjects.
3. Majority of students access online classes through smart phone (64.6%).
4. Majority of NET aspirants(31.9%) felt that they lost interest in their studies due to uncertainty in conducting NET exam.21.5% students get anxious.15.3% students facing depression because of the postponement of examination.18.5% of NET aspirants felt Covid-19 period as a moode of relaxation .13.2% of students facing mental tension during this lock down period.
5. Majority of UGC-NET aspirants (55.5%) agreed that postponement of UGC-NET exam affected their studies. and 9.7% have disagreement to this view and 2.1 % of respondents are strongly disagreed with this statement.

6. Gender of respondents has significant effect on the mean values for problems related with network connectivity and the effect is not significant on the opinion of other factors related with the impact of lockdown and postponement of examination.
7. The zone of residence has no significant effect on the opinion related with the impact of lockdown and postponement of examination.
8. The place of residence has no significant effect on various factors related with the impact of lockdown and postponement of examination.

CONCLUSION

The COVID -19 has affected educational system globally. The uncertainty, postponement of examination left the student community preparing for competitive exam anxious and worried, as they are stuck without study materials, libraries, and doubt clearing classes. Many students are relieved as coaching centre's are resorting to virtual means to connect with students, by offering help through on line classes. To conclude students need to make the most of the uncertainty that prevails and use time to prepare for exams that may help them to reach their expectations, and let the dream come true in near future.

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