Online learning during pandemic: A study of Government Degree Colleges of Jammu (J&K)

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Abstract: Covid-19 pandemic has led to many changes in the lives of the people. It has led to an innumerable number of changes in our lives. Its impact has caused the total shutdown across the world. Sudden shutting of schools, colleges and universities had immediately shifted its education to online learning. Many studies have been done so far related to educational shifts and its impact during this pandemic. The present study primarily aims at studying about the apprehension of students about online learning during the pandemic period. The paper includes the study of undergraduate students of various government degree colleges of Jammu division of Jammu and Kashmir UT. This paper consists of data collected from 862 undergraduate students across Jammu division. The study is quantitative as well as qualitative in nature. The results from 862 students suggest that the students prefer online learning and found it more effective but they want online learning as a secondary method of learning.

Index Terms -Covid-19, J&K, online learning, students apprehension.

I. INTRODUCTION

The **WHO (World Health Organisation) on 11th March, 2020 declared Covid-19 a pandemic which was first identified in China in November 2019. This deadly virus led to the sudden shutdown of schools, colleges and universities around the world. Suddenly, the learning paradigm shifts to online learning rather than the traditional face to face learning. Around the world already blended learning techniques are used in higher education to impart education to the students. In fact, in India so many higher education institutions had earlier started blended learning but traditional setup still remained as the primary method of learning. Emphasising on ICT and using e-learning as an imperative tool for learning in higher education had become a matter of importance by the government of India. Already many Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) courses are available throughout the world through platforms like coursera, edx etc. MOOCs had become a common word by 2012. The MHRD ministry launched MOOCs in the year 2017 with the name SWAYAM which is a sanskrit word meaning "self". SWAYAM stands for Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (Mishra,2020). SWAYAM is a ICT platform which provides MOOCs covering all the subjects and offers a variety of options and high quality education from professionals from IITs, IIMs. It offers courses from school level- from 9th to 12th classes, and to undergraduate and postgraduate classes. The University Grants Commission (UGC) had also notified in UGC 2016 regulations regarding transfer of credits to college and university students in exchange of the courses they attended online through SWAYAM to their subject credits (Economic times, 2016). The initiative has helped not only students across India but it also helped teachers, research scholars and even parents through online learning platforms. Other than this, the UGC has also introduced SWAYAM PRABHA- which consists of 32 DTH channels which broadcast different level educational problems throughout the week. There is Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT), e- Pathshala, DIKSHA, National Digital Library of India (NDLI), E-Shodh Sindhu, National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL), Virtual Labs etc are the other online learning platforms which are providing free education and learning to teachers, students, research scholars.**

This pandemic had forced both the teachers and students to imbibe digital learning as the summum bonus of this digital process (Lederman, 2020). To manage the present day educational requirement teachers and students were impelled to acculturate online teaching learning platforms. Though, in the 21st century teachers isnd students both are well equipped and skilled in using various social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc which is somewhere quite helpful in using online tools such as ZOOM, Google Meet, google classroom etc for online learning. Understanding and adapting the new digital technology is a prerequisite demand for online education. We have been burdened with specialized knowledge by our "modern" universities (Pathak, 2020). But we are almost unable to address the uncertainty inherent in existence.The world was discussing and pointing to the digital divide, another level of inequality which this pandemic has brought (Jaeger and Blaaback,2020). This digital divide basically exists among rural and urban areas (Lembani et al., 2020). Rural areas students always remain deprived of technological advancements in IC. Many of them

are from economically weaker sections and are living in rural areas that have inadequate access to digital technologies (Grrishchenki, 2020). In a country like India, there still exists a huge digital divide. Undoubtedly, technology has reached every corner of rural areas but still there is need for rectification in internet connectivity, growth of rural sphere, infrastructure development etc. There is also a great need of the hour to train teachers as well as students with well equipped technological innovations related to online learning.

The rest of the country was imparting education through available tools for online classes, but J&K was struggling with another issue of 4G internet services. On 5th August, 2019 '4G' services were suspended in J&K after the abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35A. It was restored on 5th February, 2021 after terminating its services for 18months (Daily Excelsior, 2021). Since 11th March, 2020 to 5th February, 2021 without 4G internet it has become a problem for teachers to impart education and for students to receive education. With 2G services it was impossible to take live online classes without interruption. Numerous online learning platforms came floating in the market but all was in vain as it was of no use in J&K at that time. But soon in August 2020, two IIT graduates, Mubeen Masudi and Bilal Abidi generated an app known by the name "Wise App" which works well with 2G speed (Tribune,2020) (Maqbool, 2020). It works with lower bandwidth. This app is user friendly as it does not ask for meeting IDs and passwords. In fact one does not have to do that much advance in technology to use this app. It's techno savvy and anyone can easily download this app from the play store and just start easily (Tribune, 2020). Both of them wanted to 'democratise education' so it reaches everywhere where internet speed is always an issue (Iqbal, 2020). So, after this higher education passed an order to take classes on wise apps and thereafter live online learning started in J&K UT.

II.OBJECTIVES:

To study the online tools/methods adopted for online learning during Covid-19.
To study the conception of students about online learning during Covid-19.

III.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The researcher has used the mixed method approach. The data collected is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative form. It is more than by simply collecting and analysing data. Using both the methods in tandem is quite helpful for the overall quality of the study. So, the researcher used this approach to enquire about the conception of students of online learning during a pandemic. This study is limited to the government degree colleges of Jammu division of J&K UT.

3.1 Population and Sample:

The present study includes data collected from undergraduate students from different government degree colleges of Jammu division. The researcher received responses from 862 students in total. Out of the total, the researcher received 525 responses from students pursuing B.A degree, 143 responses from students pursuing B.Sc. and 194 responses from students of other streams like B.Com., B.C.A etc.

3.2 Data and Sources of Data:

The researcher have collected primary data by interviewing and questioning through google forms. A questionnaire was sent to students. In addition to this the researcher randomly chooses 100 samples out of 862 responses to interview telephonically about their experience to have more clarity about their views.

IV THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

Social learning theory Focusing on the concept of learning theory, e-learning proves to provide significant results. Online education provides adjustability, variability, suitability and advantage in learning in their favourable environment where the students desire to. Online learning proved to bring a positive effect in the education system. Usage of technology in the area of education has led to the advancement in the standard of education. Many studies earlier revealed that the students preferred e-learning over virtual learning (Maheshwari,et al., 2015),(Singh.A,, 2017),(Selorm, 2016).

Deschooling society (Illich, 1971) is what fits well with the prevalent situation where children are totally detached from the traditional form of education and exploring themselves with their inquisitiveness. Many empirical studies till date have discovered that students are more in favour of offline classes than online classes as they feel they learn better in the physical classroom (Bojovic et al., 2020). According to Bordoloi (2018), e-learning has filled the void of literacy levels by outreaching to the rural domains.

It's unsurprising that the emphasis is on content delivery rather than democratic internet conversation. Online education has focused on efficiently distributing knowledge to large portions of learners, with the emphasis on length rather than substance, since the earliest efforts to implement information systems into formal educational activities (Peters, 2002). This limits the opportunities for learner-instructor dialogue that leads to knowledge generation. Creating classrooms where students are unable to "achieve" in order to develop distributed knowledge overlooks the possibility of critical debate (Tait, 1989). Muilenburg & Berge, 2005 found that social isolation is a barrier to learning and leads to higher disengagement (Phirangee & Malec, 2017).

Marcuse's (1941) claim for a new technological rationality, including the use of technology by social categories, has striking parallels to the communicative rationality finally developed by Habermas. Communication aimed at reaching consensus among many participants, according to Habermas, enables for critical analysis. A deeper process facilitated by language and practical speech can occur when individuals and communities participate in ideological speech (Habermas, 1989/1991).

V RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

From the above, it is clearly evident that 832 students (96.5%) of students use smartphones for their classes. Students

Device used for online classes

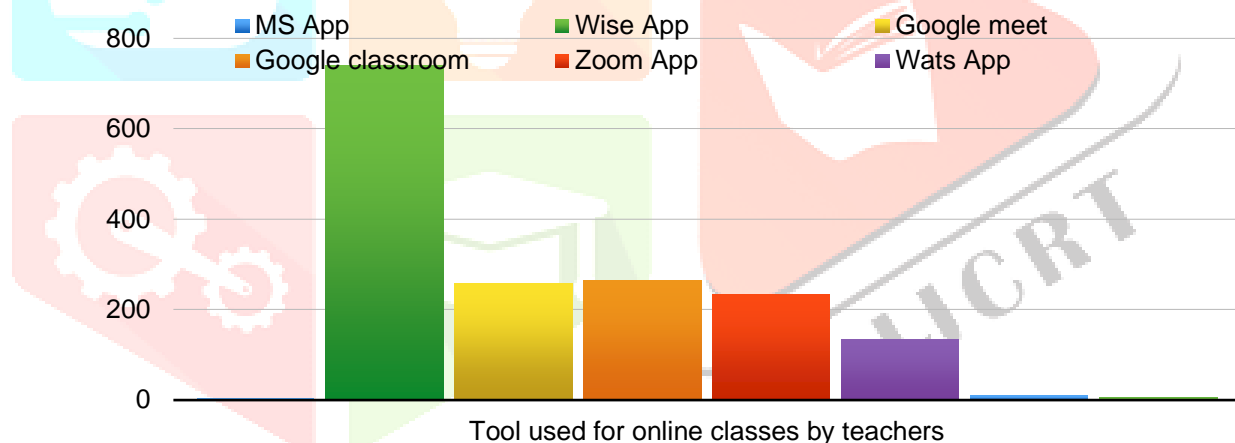■ Smartphone ■ Laptop ■ Desktop ■ Tablet ■ Other
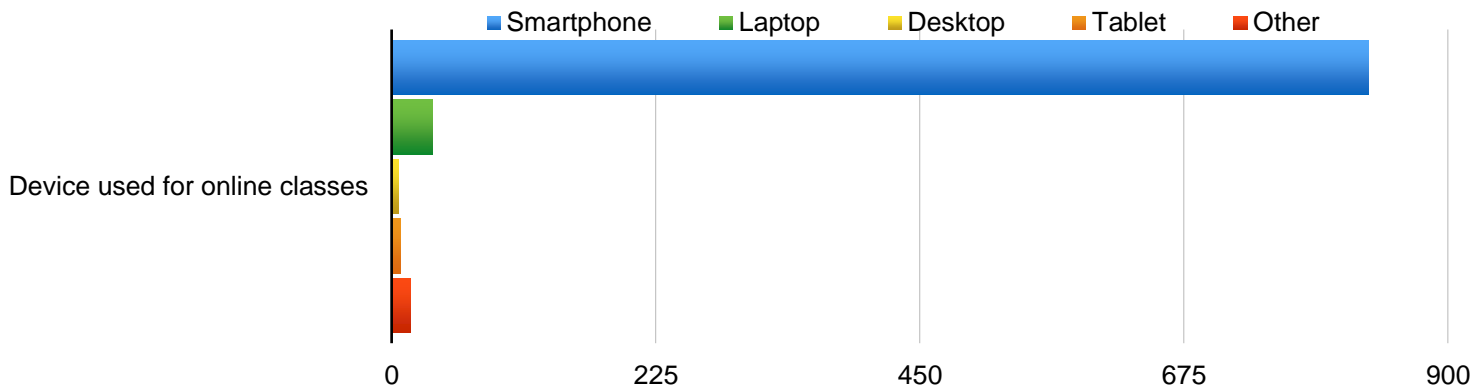
find smartphones as the most handy tool to attend classes. Many are of the viewpoint that it is the cheapest tool they can buy to attend online classes. Yilmaz (2016) study has also revealed that e-learning has become handy and practical as smartphones have become one of the most widely and preferably used tools among the students.

Since already mentioned in the introductory part that internet connection has been an issue in J&K when total lockdown was declared throughout the country. Students and teachers both were juggling with the online system of learning with 2G connectivity. But later when internet services resumed in the UT the students and teachers both were able attend online classes. But still there are areas where internet issues have occurred. Since the data collected is from colleges from rural and as well as urban areas. Out of 862 responses, 226 (26.2%) students were having very poor internet connectivity and were unable to attend classes on time and regularly, 282 (32.7%) students was having moderate connectivity and 380 (44.1%) were having good internet connection and were able to attend classes without any interruption. Most students from urban areas had no issue with the internet connection.

Before the pandemic also there were a huge variety of tools that were used for online learning. Few of them are available with surcharge and few are free of cost. In order to study the most common app used by the students for their online learning the students were asked questions. The outcome of the findings is well illustrated in the following graph.

In this pandemic time, the biggest issue teachers and students face is the usage of technology. Though everyone in present

■ MS App ■ Wise App ■ Google meet
■ Google classroom ■ Zoom App ■ Wats App

Tool used for online classes by teachers

times is using smartphones,laptops etc everyday. But still this digital gap persists among people. They find using phones normally for calling searching is something else than using different apps for teaching that they find totally technical. Out of the total 862 responses, 740 (85.8%) students use a wise app for online education. Actually, it's the teachers who are using a wise app for online classes. Because according to them, it's very easy to work with. Even the founder of wise app has mentioned that it's not like other apps where one has to share their meeting IDs and passwords (Iqbal, 2020). 134 students have mentioned classes on WhatsApp also. But it's quite strange as on whatsApp at a time only 5 participants can be live at a time. So, either the teacher is using that platform for sharing resources or lecture videos. This somewhere reflects on the tendency to use -oriented and handy easy tools regardless of their prime function.

Infact, data reveals that students are also satisfied with the wise app for their online classes. 535 (62.1%) of students are very satisfied with the tool their teachers are using to impart education. Undoubtedly, the reason being it works well with lower bandwidth. 13% are not satisfied and 24.9% are slightly satisfied. Students are having mixed responses regarding help they received from their college and teachers regarding course material and resources. 32.3% of students found them extremely helpful, 32.5% believe that they were moderately helpful and the rest 25.2% and 10.1% believe that they were not helpful enough in providing help during online classes.

Over the years online learning has become a trend and many studies revealed that the students feel e-learning is a better option for studies. Infact, some studies suggest that the students were satisfied with e-learning (Maheshwari et al., 2015). Now, if you take into account the above data, it clearly suggests that 21.2% and 9.2% of students find online classes very effective and extremely effective. If we combine the results of both these it suggests that 30.4% i.e 262 students find online learning as effective. 28.4% of students find them moderately effective and the rest percentage i.e 41.2% finds it not at all effective. It's clearly evident from here that students find online classes less effective.

Students were asked about their teachers completing the syllabus and their understanding of topics during online classes. Though 41.2% of students have clearly mentioned that they did not find online classes effective; but data received

suggested that 57.5% of students understood clearly in their online classes and 84.1% said that their teachers completed the syllabus on time. Infact, about 47.2% students mentioned that their teachers apart from completing the syllabus take regular tests and assessments, 52.8% say they just complete the syllabus and do not take any tests/assessments.
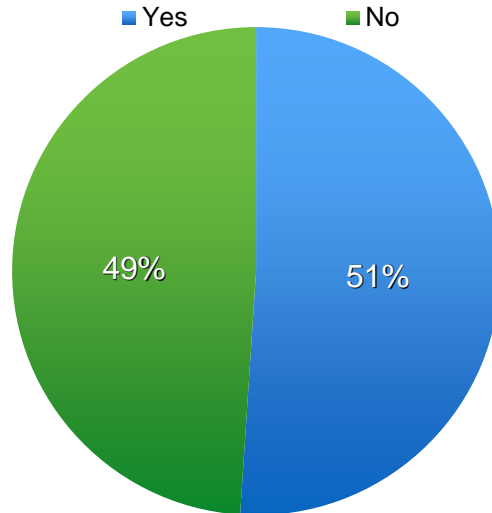
Now, when the students at last were asked about their choice for learning, again a mixed result was received. Out of 862 responses, 438 prefer online learning whereas 424 prefer offline learning. Since the researcher received mixed responses, randomly the researcher selected 100 samples and interviewed them telephonically about their views on online learning. 50 out of 100 were the ones who preferred online learning and 50 who preferred offline learning. After interviewing, the researcher found out that students enrolled in B.A courses preferred online classes whereas students enrolled in B.Sc. stream preferred offline classes as they face difficulty in their practicals and they face difficulty in understanding the questions which have huge mathematical equations. Many of them face internet connectivity issues in their areas (they were mainly from rural backgrounds) so they want offline classes. Few of them mentioned that they want online classes as per now only for safety reasons due to pandemic. When questioned

about the effectiveness of online classes they believed that one can find innumerable videos on Youtube which very well explains the topic, so even if they don't understand the topic they have other alternatives. It is quite concerning that there is a great deal of unstructured content available on the internet, which might lead to restricting and incorrect views that are not supported by evidence.

VI CONCLUSION:

The present paper findings stated that the students with different courses have different views about online learning. Students' viewpoints can be rationalised based on their positive and negative perception of online classes (Kulal and Nayak, 2020). Students with Arts as their subjects find online classes more flexible, time saving, cost effective and they believe that teachers are more active regularly while teaching online. Whereas students with science background or mathematics as one of their subjects revealed that they are unable to get through their topic because many times they need to be understood practically and that is difficult in online classes. Other students complained about the internet connectivity as one of the main factors that affects their online learning process. More numbers suggesting online education as better reflects the normalisation of online education. Prof. Avijit Pathak (2020) has discussed the issues that may arise as a result of the prospective "normalisation" of online education He emphasized that while online education may be regarded as facilitating and democratising the educational process, it has its limitations. It is critical to recognise that education is more than just disseminating knowledge (finishing the syllabus and grading the students), as authorities' current reaction in the form of online teaching and learning emphasises. Rather, it is to help in the entire development of

a society's youth. He further said that given the current circumstances, it is necessary to reconsider the aim of education in order to provide students with the emotional and intellectual capabilities they need to navigate the times they are in. The lack of such contact, as well as the pressure to complete the specified course in order to give the impression that everything is normal, has only contributed to the sorrows of students who are already upset about their circumstances.

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