Online Schooling of Primary School Children during COVID-19: Parents' Perspectives

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to find out the effects of online schooling on parents of the primary school kids in the current pandemic situation. This study analysis the workload which is increased due to technology enabled education as there is no other solution in current scenario. It also knows the opinions of parents about online teaching learning process.

Design/methodology/approach – Quantitative descriptive survey method was used for the purpose of this study. A questionnaire comprising 22Likert-type items was administered on a 163-student sample from different schools of Delhi and other states by randompurposive technique. First a pilot test was done to test the reliability and validity by Cronbach alpha.
Findings –

Research limitations/implications – The study was conducted on the parents of primary class students only and restricted on onlineclasses and its effects on parental workload due to this kind of education.

Practical implications – This research will explore the effect of online schooling for primary classes and will show how the parent's load increased by it. The result will highlight the issue and will help to find out solution for improvement in online teaching learningprocess to make the online education better for future.

Originality/value – The questionnaire was self-made by the researchers with valid and reliable measurements through views of theparents from different kind of schools e.g., Government, public private, government aided, Schools run by charitable trusts and minority schools who belong to different background.

Keywords - Online Schooling, technology enabled education, workload
 Paper type- Research paper

Introduction

First time in History, the whole world is facing the same situation due to COVID-19.Sudden outbreak of this Pandemic didn't give time for any preparation in any sector; health, education, marketing, hospitality etc. For the time being many precautionary measures had been taken especially in educational sector. Schools were been shut immediately to save the lives. "The whole world feels unsafe and the uncertainty about how and when this may end is affecting all" (Rahimi,2020) "According to UNESCO, schools are currently closed country-wide in 143 countries, affecting more than a billion children. Most other countries have imposed partial schools closures, affecting hundreds of millions more"(Doepke, 2020)

There was no time limit regarding opening the schools, that's why to lessen the loss of academics, online classes were started immediately. In this kind of Distance Learning, students have to maintain and follow the protocol of social distancing, instead of going to school, they stay in their homes and are provided the internet based learning at their place (Beauregard,2020).

Many schools were not enabled to cope up from this technological trench. They started the classes and tried their level best but in primary classes, it was not possible to teach them without parent's support. At this stage, children were not very much familiar with technology and knowhow of computers, laptops, tablets, mobiles and internet etc. So, this responsibility came on the shoulders of parents who belonged to different backgrounds. COVID-19 has caused major changes in different aspects of people's lives. Education sector is the highly affected field, and there have been significant transformation especially with regard to parents, teachers, and students (Ocal et.al.,2021). "Parents finding themselves in an unprecedented situation unable to reassure their young children that everything will be fine and this will end soon." (Rahimi,2020).

No doubt, Whether the parents were ready or not, but forcefully they learnt the ability to handle the technological part just to help their children for their better future. It was the positive side of online learning. Mothers who have the major role in their kids educational journey, made themselves ready to confront the situation like never before. Although they are providing unpaid care work for centuries but this pandemic increased their burden as they are not just working at home but outside as well(Power, 2020). According to (Daniela et.al.2021) " In this crisis, parents tried to support their children, and in most cases, it was the mothers of the students who provided this support, but it was primarily based on the need to use digital technologies, which means that children whose parents do not use digital technologies may be more exposed to the danger of falling into a risk group with larger educational gaps." Parents who were well educated and tech savvy, managed to handle the situation but parents who were less literate or illiterate, they faced problems. They need to literate themselves first to teach the children. For that, they need four main things , according to Beauregard et. al.,2020-

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1. Infrastructure: Wi-Fi, signal, devices, and alternatives. 2.
Curriculum: Less content, high quality.

3. Teachers: who can modify themselves to a 'new normal.'

4. Community: Members of community who can help each other and fulfill the gap among themselves to protect disadvantaged and needy people

In this new normal situation, kids who were studying in higher classes, somehow, they managed their academics but in lower classes from pre nursery till primary level, it was very difficult to learn on their own. Learning process is complex by which a child is able to change the information and convert into knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes. Many learning theories reveal how one can learn and the importance of methods of teaching which help to in gaining positive results (Strauch et al.2014). At this time, small children learn word formation, sentence formation, new numeric concepts, vocabulary and grammar part and so on. They learn by eye hand co- ordination, trial-and-error technique, learning by doing (constructivism) and so on. Children also learn by inquiry-based learning and Cooperative learning. Simultaneously they learn in social environment and from social media as well (Strauch et al.2014). Teachers are well trained to use the suitable pedagogy according to the age,class and individual needs. Without teacher's

support, it's very difficult to learn properly. Here the new teachers 'parents' have taken the responsibilities for which they all are not fully capable.

Were they able to take this responsibility or not, and what were the effects of online schooling on parents of the primary school kids in the current pandemic situation, is the matter of concern? This study analysis the workload which is increased due to technology enabled education as there is no other solution in current scenario. What kind of problems and challenges they are facing; this research finds out. It also knows the opinions of parents about online teaching learning process.

This research will explore the experiences of parents regarding online teaching learning process, their challenges, satisfaction level and suggestions will be considered for study.

Literature Review

A study done by Ocal et. al.(2021)to know the effects of pandemic COVID 19 on ICT competencies of teachers and parents and found that the success of remote learning depends on technological skills of the teachers which enhance quality teaching. The study also emphasis that lack of technical knowhow, Parents educational level and poor internet connectivity also have impact on distance learning.

According to Heba & Sultan (2020) In this pandemic, Parents became main source who help students to make them aware to continue the studies with the help of ICT. In their study they revealed the views of parents related to remote learning and the problems they faced after analyzing views of 738 school children. They mentioned the types of tools/apps school can use effectively. Also, parents expect from school more knowledge about the procedure to help their kids in technology part as the children whose parents do not know digital technology, are more vulnerable condition.

Garbe, Ogurlu, ,Logan, and Cook, (2020) explored the experiences and challenges of parents during lockdown period in their online survey in which parents have shown their consent on closer of schools and the way they schools were dealing with. It was necessary at that time for the safety of the children. Because of unprecedented outbreak, they were not fully competent to tackle the situation. They face challenges in keeping balance to perform their other duties. Motivation in their academics, accessible teaching learning process and the academic results were the main concerns. Parents have mixed reactions towards online learning. Some parents said that they are more connected to their children but some feel it as a burden. Even schools and teachers have no guidelines for better involvement of parents.

Doepke (2020) explained the scenario where low-income groups struggled a lot for their kids' educational needs as they are not well educated, they have shortage of time, energy and patience to be a good teacher at home. They also have less means for academic e.g., computers, laptop, smart phones, printers and internet facilities. Many parents who are not poor but they faced difficulty in teaching their children because of low competencies in technology. Doepke (2020) added that "News reports in recent months confirm that remote learning is not working for many children. The Wall Street Journal reported that 20% of US students do not even have access to the technology needed for remote learning. Even among those who do, many fail to log on to online classes entirely, and others are engaged for only a short period each day".

Franklin, Burdette, East, and Mellard, (2015) Said that there is no measurement of parent involvement in online schooling which is a very big challenge for the schools and the parents. Secondly, there is no accustomed norms for the parents regarding regulation about what information should be given and how information is communicated about their responsibilities, so that they can help their children in their academics. Sometimes parents are supposed to watch a video to know their role as an educator or trainer but it doesn't have any check whether they have understood the given information or not. Mostly online classes are prepared in English language which is accessible for middle- or upper-class parents. Majority of parents face problems because of language barrier. Parents who have children with disabilities also have to face challenges.

This study explores the connections between involvement of parents, self-regulated learning (SRL) and reading achievement. In this longitudinal research, six factors were noticed which are School Involvement, Education Expectations of Parents, Homework Help, Frequency of Homework, Rules for TV, and Extracurricular Activities. In these factors Parents involvement is most significant part (Xu, Benson, Mudrey-Camino and Steiner, 2010) The article explained the role of parent's involvement in use of technology or digital devices. The research was conducted on 6-14 years old children in 8 EU countries and found that there are three kinds of mediation by parents–Active or evaluative, restrictive, and co-use. Restrictive mediation is better to maximize the opportunities and reducing the risk of misuse of technology. It is also seen that where both parents are digitally skilled, the risk is less (Livingstone, Olafsson, & Helsper et al ,2017). Beauregard et.al.(2020) showed in their study that school opening had positive effects on labor force. Mothers can devote more time on their work especially single mothers. The comparative study used triple difference model where comparison of parents of students whom school are shut and whom schools were opened. Another comparison was done between mothers and fathers and their involvement in employment in pandemic period affected by online teaching of their kids. Lastly, the comparison of single mother and where dual parents are available was done in the context of better and more work force. The results suggested that reopening schools facilitate parents to spend more hours on their employment to support their family especially single parents can balance accordingly.

Livari et.al (2020) drew attention on current scenario of education which is relying on technology but ironically there is vast digital divide among the children. Sudden unexpected changes in teaching patterns and different ways of using technology forcedly convinced the school authorities, educators, parents and society to adapt these necessary changes even in the primary education. This paper highlighted that some parents managed this situation and cooperated with teachers but some were unable to cope up. Sometimes teachers also struggled with digital competencies and skills. They also faced cultural issues and internet related issues and sometimes non-cooperation from parents due to many reasons.

Vial (2019) in his article said "digital technologies create disruptions triggering strategic responses from organizations that seek to alter their value creation paths while managing the structural changes and organizational barriers that affectthe positive and negative outcomes of this process". He proposed a future strategic IS research on digital transformation to know the special capabilities and ethical matters and its significance. Heba and Sultan (2020) did a concurrent mixed method design where qualitative and quantitative approach was selected for the purpose to know the views about online education. 122 parents were taken from UAE who had given their positive and negative responses. Mostly working parents were satisfied than non-working parents as they were been associated with their children's academic activities. That's why they can better assess the learning activities like teacher's competences, way of teaching, home assignments and so on. Secondly, the study said that mothers were more involved and satisfied than fathers towards online education.

Bhamani, Makhdoo, Bharuchi, Ali, Kaleem, and Ahmed, D(2020) explained in their descriptive qualitative research about the experiences about home study and it's management in pandemic time and found that children were missing social interaction which has a significant role in learning and enhancing the personality of the children. The study revealed that all the countries and their academic staff members tried their best to facilitate parents for better online learning. On the other hand, parents adjusted very fast to lessen the loss. New and updated educational technologies (ICT) were used for better support among students, teachers and parentsfor direct interaction. New curriculum was designed where parental guidance added in it. New academic system encouraged self-learning strategy to make the students more responsible.

Data Analysis

To find out the effects of online schooling on parents of the primary school kids, a Quantitative descriptive survey method was used where a questionnaire comprising 22 Likert -type items was administered on a 163-students sample from different schools of Delhi and other states by random purposive technique. First a pilot test was done to test the reliability and validity by Cronbach's alpha.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation

Item Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
I am worried about the academic track of my child as studies has been hampered due to school closure.	3.60	1.046	163
I feel my role in my child's studies has considerably increased due to home based online schooling.	3.76	.992	163
I cannot teach and assist my ward's online studies due to reasons such as lack of education, lack of computer know-how, unwillingness etc.	2.98	1.183	163
I can teach and assist my ward's online studies but do not have adequate time to do so due to work and home related responsibilities.	3.42	1.185	163
I can teach and assist my ward's online studies and I am also able to take out sufficient time for it.	3.00	1.083	163
I feel that my child's studies is suffering due to lack of distraction free study environment required for online schooling.	3.53	.977	163
I feel psychologically stressed as I am not trained to instruct like a teacher can.	3.20	1.149	163
The proximity that I share with my child gets angry on my child gets more during online classes.	2.98	1.098	163
I feel that the technology being used by the school has limitations and is not sufficient for smooth transaction of learning as it happened in physical classes.	3.60	1.022	163
I feel the need of external help and support to be able to manage online schooling of the ward.	3.38	1.033	163
I am worried about increased screen time of my child due to online studies as it may adversely affect his/her health.	4.01	.994	163
My work-life balance got disturbed during the pandemic due to my involvement with my child in online classes.	3.28	1.133	163
Now I feel that I am ready to send my ward to school if the school open with all precautionary measures in place.	2.91	1.265	163

Out of 13 items, there are 10 items have mean more than 3.0 which showed general agreement /consent of participants. The remaining 3 items had more than 2.5 which showed inclination towards agreement.

Table 2: case Processing Summary   Table 3: Reliability Statistics

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	163	81.7
	Excluded[a]	36	18.3
	Total	201	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.745	.751	8

To check the reliability of the test, internal consistency of the items were checked by Cronbach's Alpha value which was 0 .745.The questionnaire was validated by experts and their suggestions were included.

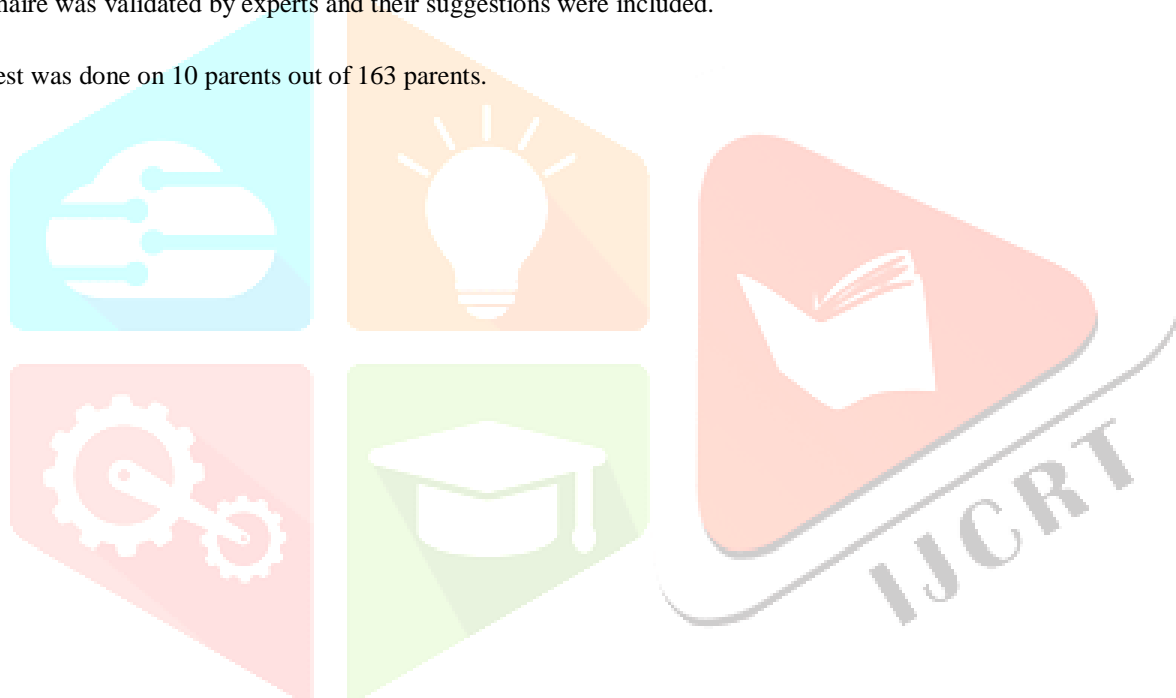A pilot test was done on 10 parents out of 163 parents.

Table 4. Demographic details of the sample under the study;

DEMOGRAPHIC TYPE	DEMOGRAPHIC DETAIL	RESPONDENT NUMBER	RESPONDENT PERCENTAGE
Gender	Males	73	44.78
	Females	90	55.21
	Total	163	
Qualification Mother	Vth	10	6.13
	VIIIth	10	6.13
	XIIth	39	23.92
	Graduate	62	38.04
	Post graduate and Above	29	17.79
	No formal schooling	3	1.84
	No response	10	6.13
	Total	163	
Qualification Father	Vth	3	1.84
	VIIIth	12	7.36
	XIIth	28	17.18
	Graduate	61	37.42
	Post graduate and Above	19	11.66
	No formal schooling	2	1.23
	No response	38	23.31
	Total	163	
Age	20-29	24	14.72
	30-39	105	64.42
	40-49	33	20.24

	50-59	1	0.61
	Total	163	
School Type	Government school (State Govt./KVS/NVS etc.)	102	62.58
	Public private school	53	32.51
	Minority school	4	2.45
	Government aided school	2	1.23
	Schools run by charitable trusts	2	1.23
	Total	163	
Attending Online Class	Yes	158	96.93
	No	3	1.84
	No online class provided by school	2	1.23
	Total	163	
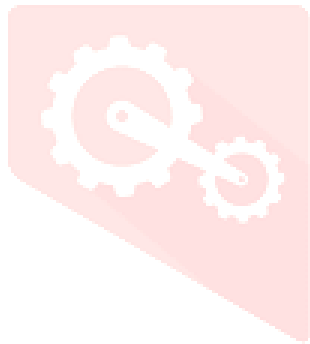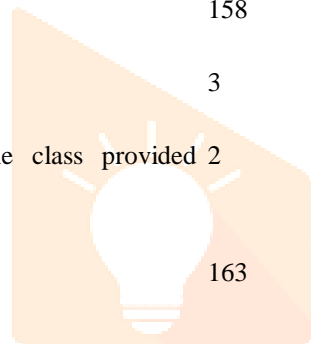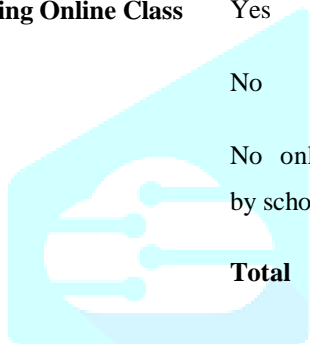
DEMOGRAPHIC TYPE	DEMOGRAPHIC DETAIL	RESPONDENT NUMBER	RESPONDENT PERCENTAGE
Occupation (Mother)	Homemaker	126	77.30
	Business	3	1.84
	Salaried	20	12.27
	Freelancing	3	1.84
	No response	11	6.75
	Total	163	
Occupation (Father)	Homemaker	5	3.07
	Business	36	22.09
	Salaried	80	49.08
	Freelancing	7	4.29
	No response	35	21.47
	Total	163	
Type of internet	Mobile Data (Unlimited 3G/4G)	30	18.40
	Mobile Data (Limited 3G/4G)	86	52.76
	Wi-fi connection	44	26.99
	Wired Ethernet connection (internet cable)	2	1.23
	Wired cable connection	1	0.61
	Total	163	
Classes attend in a day	One	12	7.36
	Two	23	14.11
	Three	88	53.99
	More than three	40	24.54
	Total	163	

Duration of one class	30 Minutes	32	19.63
	40 Minutes	103	63.19
	50 Minutes	11	6.75
	More than 50 Minutes	10	6.13
	Other	7	4.29
	Total	163	
Duration of break between class	Less than 20 minutes	69	42.33
	20 - 40 minutes	85	52.15
	45 - 60 minutes	4	2.45
	1 - 2 hour	4	2.45
	More than 2 hours	1	0.61
	Total	163	
Video conferencing tool	Google Meet	106	65.03
	Zoom	22	13.50
	Jio Meet	2	1.23
	Microsoft Teams	12	7.36
	Webex Cisco	3	1.84
	Other	18	11.04
	Total	163	
Platform used for submission of assignment	Toppr OS	1	0.61
	What's App	40	24.54
	Microsoft Teams	11	6.75
	Google Classroom	106	65.03
	Other	5	3.07

Findings and Discussions

The findings of the study based upon the data analysis are given below:

The respondents were almost equal with females (55.21%) and males (44.78%). Mothers are mostly graduates (38.04%) and post graduates (17.79%).On the other hand fathers of most students are mostly graduate (37.42%) and 12th passed (17.18%).Although 23.31% didn't respond on their qualification. The data shows that 64.42% of parents are in the age group of 30-39. They are sending their children in a government schools. 62.58% students are going in a government school whereas 32.51% of children are from public private schools. In the ongoing pandemic, many schools have started online classes and around 96.93% of students are attending online classes. 77.30% mothers are home makers and 12.27% are working on salary based sectors. Although mostly fathers (49.08%) are associated with salary based works, 22.09% are in business and 21.47% fathers didn't disclose their occupation.

Mobile data (limited3G/4G) were used by 52.76% parents,26.99% parent used wi-fi connection and wired cable connection was least used (0.61%). 53.99% students attend three classes per day and 24.54% attend more than three hours. The duration of the classes are mostly 40 minutes long (63.19%) and 19.63% classes are 30 minutes long. Break time during the classes are give mostly 20-40 minutes and less than 20 minutes are given to 42.33% students. Google meet is the most usable app (65.03%) and zoom is used by 13.50% students.65.03% students use Google classroom as a platform for assignment submission and 24.54% are using what's app for the same.

Among the respondents, 63.48 % collectively agreed or strongly agreed to be worried about their child's education due to school closure. 20.36 % were neutral which indicates that they might not have any problem by online schooling of children. About 73.65 % reported that their role has considerably increased due to home based online schooling of their child. 11.97 % parents disagree on this issue and 14.37 % are neutral. About 37.12 % parents agreed to feel burdened to assist their ward's online studies due to reasons such as lack of education, lack of computer know-how, unwillingness etc whereas a considerable 47.91 % are disagreed and 14.97 % are neutral. That's why Gallardo - Echenique(2015) emphasized on digital know how which makes a person able to understand and then use the information in various ways. When coming to take out sufficient time for ward's online studies, over 38.32 % disagreed whereas 40.12 % agreed. 2.99 % strongly agreed. The findings suggest that workload of parents has increased due to online learning. 25.75 % parents can manage time for their child's studies with other responsibilities but 59.47 % feel difficulty n time management. 13.77 % parents were undicided. 43.11 % parents found that they can teach, assist and give sufficient time to their children. 38.32 % disagree on it and 18.56 % were neutral. Aliyyah et.al.(2020) said in Indonesian context" Another change is that the involvement of parents with children has become more intense in SFH (school from home) than in pre - SFH learning. Parents can assist children in understanding subject matter that is not understood or conveyed well by a teacher". 66.36 % parents think that their children don't get distraction free environment for studies, 19.16 % disagreed and 14.37% were neutral. It also shows that around 39.52 % parents having anger issues due to online classes and 50.3% parents were feeling psychologically stressed because they have to instruct their child like a teacher which they are nottrained in. About technology, 54.67 % said that it's not sufficient for smooth educational transaction as it happens in the physical classes. 19.36 % disagree on this issue and 14.97 % didn't respond. 60.47 % agreed that they need external help for their child's studies. It can be because of their time constraint or low qualification.

24.55 % don't feel like that and 14.97 % were not responded. Parents are also worried because of worst effects of increased screen time due to online classes. 79.05 % parents agreed on this. Only 11.37 % disagreed and 8.38 % remained neutral. Many parents (50.90 %) feel that their work- life balance has been disturbed during the pandemic due to the involvement with their child in online classes. 22.94 % not agreed and 19.16 % were neutral. In spite of all, 39.52 % parents are ready to send their wards to the school if the schools reopen but with all the precautionary measures. Although 41.31% are afraid of and 19.16% were remained neutral.

Conclusion and suggestions

The findings of the study shows that parents specially mothers are educated (graduates and post graduates) and home makers. Parents are in their young age (30-39).They are mostly sending their children to the government schools. Majority of students are taking classes online as there is no other option for studies in this pandemic period. On an average, students take three classes per day with 20-30 minutes break in between every class. Google meet is the most usable app for classes which is used with limited mobile data.

Majority of parents are worried about their wards education because of schools are not opening and their responsibilities are increased. Some parents who are well educated, they somehow manage but others are feeling difficulty in handling digital devices as they don't have knowledge and practice for that. Time management is also a concern for parents. Parents are also worried about the study environment which should be distraction free but it's not possible every time because joint family system. Majority of the sample of this study live in Delhi which is a metro city. Houses are not very big here. Flat system is being seen here where sounds come from the neighborhood. Sometimes parents became frustrated, stressed and angry when they can't handle the technology to teach their children. They also think that technology which schools are using is not sufficient for smooth educational transaction as it happens in the physical classes, so that they need external help from tutors. In online teaching learning process, screen time is increased which is also a matter of concern. Many parents who are working, they feel uncomfortable in balancing work life and household chores and studies of their children. So, Parents want school should be open as soon as possible but there should be all precautionary measures like sanitizing, social distancing, wearing mask, vaccination for all the staff members and so on.

The results of this study associated with Delhi region mainly. Although some parents from outside Delhi are also included. So, there must be the similar studies which cover other parts of the India especially rural India. Here only Primary classes are taken for the research. Further studies can be done for senior classes and college/university levels as well. All the instructions and teaching is available in English language but what is the status of regional/vernacular language in online education, it also should be examines by studies. Here researcher especially wants to emphasis about the matter of mothers who are single and they need to go outside forbread earning or fathers who are labor class and can't sit at home to assist their children. In this situation, what steps should be taken, school management should take consideration accordingly. In India, there is a big digital divide especially in rural areas.what problems they are facing,it should also be studied.

The researcher has taken only parents' perspective but students' perspectives should also be researched. Furthermore, the perspectives of principals and administrative departments can also be considered.

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