



Online Learning And Its Impact On Pre-Primary Education: An Understanding

¹Dr. Abantika Mondal, ²Dr. Sutapa Biswas, ³Sukanya De

^{1&2}Assistant Professor, ³Student,

^{1&3}Department of Teacher Education, Baba Saheb Ambedkar Education University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

² Vidyasagar Teacher's Training College, Midnapore, West Bengal, India

ABSTRACT

E-learning abolishes the distance between teacher and learner, learning resources and learner. The present study has been conducted to understand the issues and effects of online education on the students of pre-primary school in the COVID-19 PANDEMIC situation. The modern concept of evaluation is holistic in nature. So it aims to measure not only the knowledge and information segment but also attempts to measure how far students are able to compare, analyse, synthesize and interpret. This study highlights the advantages and disadvantages of online pre-primary education on various parameters. It is also concerned with the attitude, reactions, acceptability of the parents, teachers and doctors too. It deals with not only the quality education of pre-primary children but also certain other things related to this new issue. From the study it has been found that the use of technology in teaching-learning is highly correlated (negatively) with online pre-primary education system. Sometimes it is found that the management of private school is forcing Nursery, LKG and UKG students to take online classes for their own monetary benefit. It is seen that if the pre-primary school children aged between 2 and 6 years are given this pseudo-preschool experience, they do not gain the right skill set to grow. The results, of which, will arise at a considerably later stage. In fact, it may come out as negative impact on the child's overall development. Some parents complained that this system is making their children introvert.

Index Terms: Pre-primary education, E-learning, Holistic development, pseudo-preschool experience

INTRODUCTION: The world came to a halt as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has caused serious interruptions in all sphere of lives. The educational sector encountered many challenges by the institutional closure from schools to universities and traditional education shifted to the online mode. Einstein rightly said that imagination is the true sign of intelligence. So human beings the most intelligent of all creatures shifted to the online mode to stay connected during the pandemic. India as a country had never taken to online education before but this pandemic forced us to resort to it sooner than we thought we were ready to adapt to it. While we were trying to cope with the pandemic situation by online education for the school and college going students the buzz of our toddlers were not heard of ? Where were our toddlers gone ?

It's nice thinking that school-college and university going children are trying to adapt the technology based digital education, but what about the children below six years age- the most important stage where maximum brain development occurs. Too much screen time can be detrimental to a child's overall well-being (mental, physical and psychological development). They learn through touch and smell, running and crawling, building houses with odd materials, making figures with clay or sand, and much more. Above all, they learn by exploring. It is not in a 2-5 year olds nature to sit idle in front of a digital screen. Pre-primary school children need to explore, use their visual/auditory/kinaesthetic senses, and engage with different materials to gain skills for the future. Have online classes proven to be effective for preschoolers ? Does online education stimulate their attention span?

If the pre-primary school children aged between 2 and 6 years are given this pseudo-preschool experience, they will not gain the right skill set to grow. In fact, it may have a negative outcome over the child's overall development. Kids psychological conditions also needs much focus in this different situation. Parents fear too much pressure of online learning as well as looking at screens for hours at a time can affect children's eyesight and hamper their health.

Amidst the regulations of social distancing and self-isolation, if the toddlers are allowed to attend classes, they might not be able to practice the safety precautions in an effective manner. It will be tough to control the kids from playing or touching anything.

Evaluating both the pros and cons of online pre-primary education is the need of the hour. This study is an attempt to explore new opportunities properly or scientifically in this neo normal situation and to find out more appropriate remedies for challenging situation in future. It has been reported that doctors have faced numerous cases of child patient during COVID-19 pandemic situation whether the

problems are mental, physical or psychological. Also in this paper we have considered the doctor's view here as the opinion about the physical health of the child as well as the mental health of the child..

Objectives of the study

- To understand the issues and effects of online teaching learning system upon the pre-primary school students.
- To find out the gap between expected and ongoing educational aims at pre-primary school level.
- To understand the different attitudes of the guardians about online pre-primary education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In New York, 15 April 2020, UNICEF and partners reported that millions of children are at increased risk of harm as their lives move increasingly online during lockdown in the COVID-19 pandemic. Global Partnership to End Violence Executive Director Dr. Howard Taylor said that the corona virus pandemic had led to an unprecedented rise in screen time. School closures and strict containment for social distancing measures mean more and more families were relying on technology and digital solutions to keep children learning, entertained and connected to the outside world, but not all children had the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to keep themselves safe from the negativity of online.

It was reported in The Tribune that according to UNESCO about 2.7 million teachers in India are inexperienced or untrained to deal with the online teaching-learning. Teachers of the World United in the virtual summit organised by the UNESCO, highlighted that out of 63 million affected teachers 9.1 million teachers across the world are untrained in coping with the challenges of online education during COVID-19 pandemic. They should be properly trained for giving a safe environment for both teachers and pupils and they should be efficient to safeguard the children online. (May 28, 2020, The Tribune).

Children extensively use their senses to learn. From decades philosophers, psychologists and educationists say that effective learning takes place by experiences and interaction with outer world. Learning will be effective when it will be fun for toddlers. Time has changed and day after day open environment for learning is becoming narrower and narrower. Here technology is paving the way to gamification of learning thus toddlers confining themselves in digital world or web world within a screen.

Positive sides: There are so many good effects of online learning like time saving, easy to access, world wide connectivity, number of study materials, join the class from any corner of the world, gamification of learning, learning becomes more colourful by the effect of technology, effective evaluation system, very good feedback system etc.

According to a report published by Akshata Vittal Shindhe, an Art teacher of Global Indian International School, (4th December, 2020, Impact of online learning methodology on pre-learners in India) there are several positive impact of online remote learning for preschoolers as such – Easy Documentation: All the class notes, assignments and other school projects are stored, shared and accessed online. Class work for preschoolers is easily accessible through online learning tools and games and other educational apps.

Videos, animated texts, graphics, and interactive puzzles makes learning more attractive, interactive and interesting to cater preschoolers attention and interest towards learning. It acts as a powerful motivating agent for toddlers towards learning. Academic experts also keep discovering new methods that can make online learning more interesting for children.

Many parents worry about the quality of education delivered by schools. However, with remote learning options, parents can actually visualize the learning process and also access vast information about the child's education welfare at the school portal and whatsapp groups. Moreover, parents can also share inputs with the teachers based on their observations while their child is attending virtual classes. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of online learning varies among various age groups.

Darker side: According to a news report keeping preschoolers engaged online for 15 minutes is impossible. Online education was not suitable for the formative years. It is a big challenge for parents to keep children in front of screen. Online classes were more for parents than for pre-schoolers. For both of the working parents time management is a big challenge. If the children were not monitored, they would mute themselves, switch off the video and roam around. If the staffs were vaccinated, and parents took enough care, sending preschoolers to physical classes would be a good thing. According to a head of a preschool parents are competing with each other regarding the performances of their wards. It is a result of more and more involvement of parents in online teaching-learning system. According to another Principal they had two-hour classes for preschool children. They wanted to reduce that to one hour, but the management needed to justify the fees and parents did not ask for shorter hours. Sometimes parents also agree with the management because they want equal return of their toddlers admission fee.

Online learning has played a panacea during the pandemic but at a higher cost to our society till date when pandemic is almost over. COVID created a deep wound in our physical health but the consequences in online education that created and still creating more deeper wound to our mental health. In January 22, 2021 The Times of India published an interview of famous educationist Anita Rampal, former Dean, Faculty of Education, Delhi University. According to her digital education in this pandemic situation also contradicts the policy of Right to Education (RTE) Act. We cannot ignore the side effects of online education like digital divide, increase of early girl child marriage, school dropout, sexual harassment on social media, social media addiction, mobile game addiction, impaired holistic development of a child, increasing rate of suicide among school students, depression among children, eye diseases, difficulties in speech development among toddlers so on and so forth (A. Mondal and S. Chakraborty, 2021, Rinchen Norbu Wangchuk 26th June, 2020, The better India, Report by Priyanka Prakash, Reader's Blog, The Times of India, 2nd Dec, 2021)

There is a surfeit of distracting content available online which attracts and distracts the students from their actual task. That leads them to a wrong path.

It remained a big question whether such online classes made any sense to provide to the kindergarten or preschoolers. A new trend is emerging for introducing online classes for Preschoolers post COVID, where schools were organizing different activities to engage toddlers, with a good amount of fees.

During parents-teacher meeting regarding the toddlers online classes major parents concern, was the disadvantages. Heads of many pre-primary schools told that parents were getting worried about the effect on the mind of the young ones rather than their education. While the parents were struggling to reduce screen time for their toddlers, those plans of putting them under online classes was like providing fuel to the burning fire.

Now the pandemic is over but we are unable to move children towards playground still confined to mobile and mobile learning. Most of the private schools promoting online education in pre-primary because private school owners see education from business and political perspectives. Some parents prefer online learning because of the high fees they paid. Definitely online education is a big support system to our education during pandemic. But now the situation is different. Is online education a magical stratagem?

Materials and Method

Survey area: Urban and semi-urban areas in West Bengal

Demographic variables: Parents of pre-primary school children, teachers from private/semi private schools and doctors.

Construction of the test:

- 3 separate feedback forms (regarding online pre-primary education) has been developed one for parents of students, one for teachers and another one for the doctors.
- Reliability and Validity of the feedback forms were tested by authentic person of this field.
- Feedback form is developed on the basis of 04 dimensions and Google form has been created differently for parents, teachers and doctors. These forms are circulated to the concern person through email and What'sApp

.The dimensions are following:

1. Dimension regarding availability of proper technological facility
2. Dimension regarding proper and effective use of technology in teaching-learning
3. Dimension regarding learner's interest and motivation towards online mode of pre-primary education
4. Dimension regarding learner's holistic development

- These forms are circulated to the concern person through email and what's app.

SELECTION OF SCALE: Linkert's 3-point Scale: Parameters are Agree, Sometimes and Disagree

Result

For this study we have divided pre-primary online education system into four (4) dimensions. We have collected the views of different stakeholders on different dimensions on online pre-primary school education system. These stakeholders are directly and indirectly related with online education system. These stakeholders act as sample for our study. Here for the study we divided these stakeholders into three (3) categories (Parents, Teachers and Doctors).

Statements are categorized under four (4) different dimensions. Views or opinions against the statements are analyzed by Likert 3-point scale.

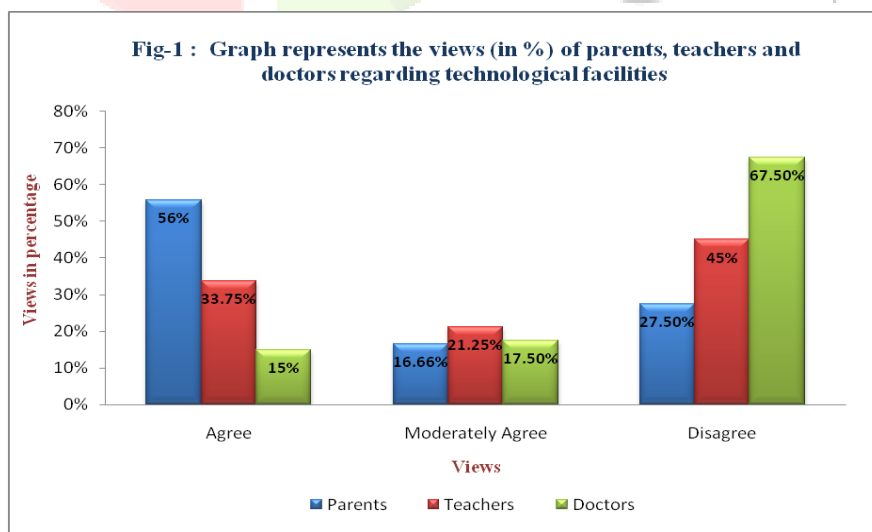
These 04 dimensions act as 04 independent variables for the study effecting overall online pre-primary education system as dependant variable.

Table-1: Table represents the views (in %) of Parents, Teachers and Doctors regarding the different dimensions of online pre-primary Teaching-Learning system

Sl. No	Dimensions	Parents View (In percentage)			Teachers View (In percentage)			Doctors View (In percentage)		
		A	MA	DA	A	MA	DA	A	MA	DA
1	Dimension regarding availability of proper technological facility (V1)	55.84	16.66	27.50	33.75	21.25	45.00	15.00	17.50	67.50
2	Dimension regarding proper and effective use of technology in teaching-learning (V2)	20.00	28.22	51.78	23.00	33.00	44.00	21.25	16.56	62.19
3	Dimension regarding learner's interest and motivation towards online mode of pre-primary education (V3)	16.00	30.00	54.00	19.44	29.16	51.38	52.50	25.00	22.5
4	Dimension regarding learner's holistic development (V4)	16.25	19.75	64.00	12.75	16.50	70.75	13.13	15.63	71.25

Note: A for AGREE, MA for MODERATE AGREE, DA for DISAGREE

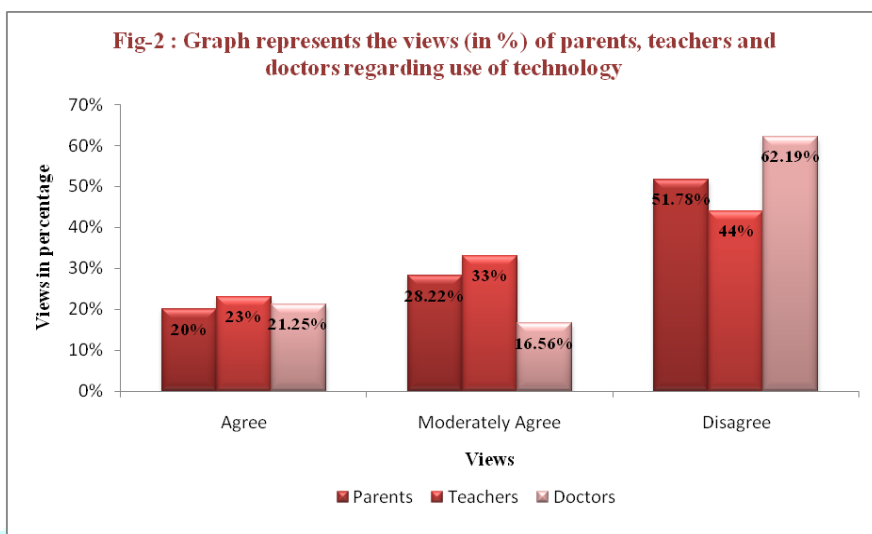
Fig-1: Graph represents the views (in %) of parents, teachers and doctors regarding the accessibility of technological facilities in online pre-primary education



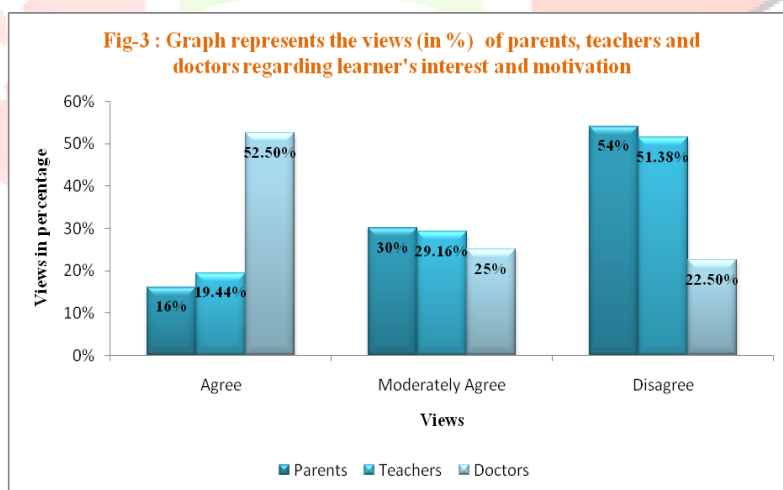
This graph shows that 56 % of parents, 33.75% and only 15% of the doctors of the teachers of pre-primary school children agree with that they get proper technological facility to conduct online teaching-learning. But 45% teachers and 67.50% of doctors disagree on it, who are practicing in rural belt. Here a significant

difference in the percentage of parents with teachers and doctors opinion (disagree) regarding this issue is followed.

Fig-2: Graph represents the views (in %) of parents, teachers and doctors regarding proper and effective use of technology in teaching-learning

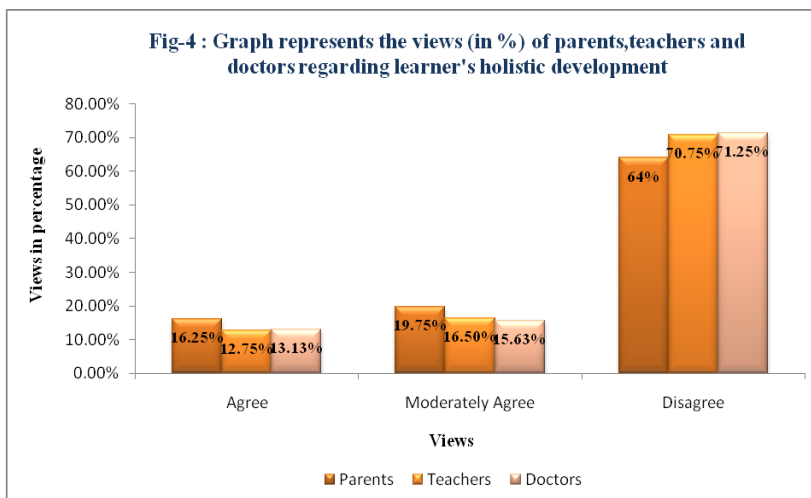


51.78% of parents, 44% teachers and 62.19% of doctors disagree on this dimension. below 25% parents, teachers and doctors agreed with the same issue. Again, it also seems that there is not so much difference among parents, teachers and doctors having opinion with agree. **Fig-3: Graph represents the views (in %) of parents, teachers and doctors regarding learner’s interest and motivation towards online pre-primary education**



This graph indicates that 16% parents 19.44% teachers and remarkably 52.50% doctors agree with their child’s growing interest and self motivation for online school education in positive sense. whereas 54% of parents, 51.38% teachers and 22.50% doctors say online pre-primary school education in negative sense. Here it also seems that there is not so much difference between teachers and parents having opinion like either agree or disagree.

Fig-4: Graph represents the views (in %) of parents, teachers and doctors regarding learner’s holistic development in online pre-primary education



This graph shows that only 16.25% parents, 12.75% teachers and 13.13% doctors agree that the holistic development of their children are going properly while 64% parents, 70.75% teachers and 71.25% of doctors disagree with it. So regarding this issue all of them kept same opinion that there is no scope of holistic development of the children of pre-primary school level through this online system.

Table 14: Table of correlation of dependent variables (Online pre-primary education system) with different independent variables. (According to parents view)

Rank		TOTAL	V1	V2	V3	V4
	TOTAL	1				
4	V1	0.205995	1			
1	V2	0.754303	0.11471	1		
2	V3	0.67974	-0.1353	0.267887	1	
3	V4	0.651815	-0.15703	0.192925	0.198028	1

According to Table: 14 (parents view) V2 (Proper and effective use of technology in teaching learning) is highly correlated with online pre-primary education system. V2 is more than 75% correlated with online pre-primary education system. V2 is more than 70% correlated with online pre-primary education system. V3 is 67% and V4 is 65% correlated with online pre-primary education system So from the table we can say that according to parents’ opinion use of technology in teaching learning in online pre-primary education system is one of the major factors among all the four factors affect the online education system.

Table: 15 Stepwise regression analyses for V2

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.109389
R Square	0.011966
Adjusted R Square	-0.01156
Standard Error	4.391086
Observations	44

ANOVA

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	40.05482	2.930597	13.6678	4.67E-17
	0.172616	0.24203	0.713202	0.479665

According to regression analysis V2 (p value 0.479665) is highly significant to the effect of online education system and according to regression statistic, contribution of this factor to effect online education is 75% among all the four factors.

Table 16: Table of correlation of dependent variables (Online pre-primary education system) with different independent variables. (According to teachers view)

Rank		TOTAL	V1	V2	V3	V4
	TOTAL	1				
4	V1	0.222763	1			
1	V2	0.700887	0.268393	1		
3	V3	0.651668	-0.21127	0.174335	1	
2	V4	0.673481	-0.16328	0.188911	0.372461	1

According to Table: 16 (teachers view) V2 (proper and effective use of technology in teaching learning) is highly correlated with online pre-primary education system. V2 is more than 70% correlated with online pre-primary education system. V3 is 65% and V4 is 67% correlated with online pre-primary education system. So from the table we can say that according to teachers' opinion use of technology in teaching learning in online pre-primary education system is one of the major factors among all the four factors affect the online education system.

Table: 17 Stepwise regression analyses for V2

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.701678
R Square	0.492352
Adjusted R Square	0.480265
Standard Error	3.429001
Observations	44

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	32.1413	2.090338	15.37613	7.43E-19
	1.458417	0.228508	6.382355	1.12E-07

According to regression analysis V2 (1.12E-07) is highly significant to effect the online education system and according to regression statistic, contribution of this factor to effect of online pre-primary education is 70% among all the four factors.

Table 18: Table of correlation of dependent variables (Online pre-primary education system) with different independent variables. (According to doctors view)

Rank		TOTAL	V1	V2	V3	V4
	TOTAL	1				
4	V1	0.472108	1			
1	V2	0.842966	0.259801	1		
3	V3	0.488517	-0.10557	0.305973	1	
2	V4	0.497106	0.309892	0.167081	0.03545	1

According to Table: 18 (doctor's view) V2 (proper and effective use of technology in teaching learning) is highly correlated with online pre-primary education system. V2 is more than 80% correlated with online pre-primary education system. So from the table we can say that according to doctors' opinion use of technology in teaching learning in online pre-primary education system is one of the major factors among all the four factors affect the online education system.

Table: 19 Stepwise regression analyses for V2

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.848234
R Square	0.719501
Adjusted R Square	0.712822
Standard Error	1.605023

	<i>Standard</i>			
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	4.636392	1.711964	2.70823	0.009744
	1.369909	0.131983	10.37946	3.65E-13

According to regression analysis V2 (3.65E-13) is highly significant to effect the online education system and according to regression statistic, contribution of this factor to the effect of online pre-primary education is 84% among all the four factors.

From the statistical analysis independent variable - dimension regarding the use of technology in teaching-learning (V2) play major role in online pre-primary education system (neo normal education system). According to the view of parents and teachers, V3 and V4 are also moderately effecting online pre-primary education. But parents, teachers and doctors all said that V2 is one of the major factors for effecting online education. But from the study a vital finding we got that doctor told that online pre-primary education system has remarkable negative effect on society. It promotes digital divide and serious psychological and health issues among pre-primary students.

Discussion

The primary purpose of the study was to understand the issues and effects of online teaching learning system upon the pre-primary school students. From top to bottom, govt. to private rural to urban, from poor to rich all students and their families faced various problems during this COVID lockdown situation, especially the children of age group in between 2 to 6 are one of the major sufferer. If we consider the impact of online pre-primary education system, it creates a big spectrum to think critically. The children are very little to express their feelings about screen-time based education system but the prevailing education system is forcing them to involve in this.

Dimension regarding technological facility: Online education system is indeed the necessity of the age as well as the best alternative of offline teaching learning system. But when we are considering about the education of the pre-primary children, Govt. schools did not provide online teaching facilities in pandemic situation. Children of rural area were neglected by this system. In urban area parents said that they have all over good technological facilities for conducting online education system. But the teachers denied on that point because maximum number of schools were unable to provide free internet for conducting classes.

Some of them don't have extra electronic gadgets except smart phones. Doctors, who are not directly related to the teaching-learning system, have seen these technological facilities as the most important factor of Digital apartheid. Both the rural and urban area practicing doctors' opinion give the weightage on this factor as the newly emerging reason of social discrimination among children. Thus, there is correlation between the proper availability of technological facility and online pre-primary education system but not in significant level because of simple and low pressure of syllabus of preprimary education.

Dimension regarding proper and effective use of technology: Proper use of technology in online education for pre-primary school children is the most crucial factor to discuss about. We all know the basis of pre-primary education is to involve children in social interaction, regulate their multisensory organs, practice healthy habits, physical exercise etc. .they are not meant to sit idle in front of computers. According to guardian, their children alone cannot use online platforms, so maximum numbers of them find it difficult to use online learning as they faces technological uneasiness. It creates an extra burden for them as they have to do it in between household work. All the home works, assignments, projects are basically prepared by the parents not by their children. They have to put extra time to incorporate the basics of learning as online education does not give any fruitful outcomes for the children. According to teachers, they were not initially trained for the online teaching system so it created a lot of problem for them. Their students are unable to sit calmly in front of electronic media. It is very difficult to manage them from a virtual platform. They found that evaluation for these pre-primary children is meaningless as the children alone do nothing. But they agreed that showing them various images/videos in online is much more easier compared to offline mode. According to doctors, using mobiles or computers for the education purpose of the children has most adverse effects in their all over physical health. Sometimes it creates anxiety, mental stress for the children as well the parents to attain online classes, extracurricular activities, submit assignments within time in online mode. Loss of physical activity is affecting their physical, mental, emotional and cognitive development negatively. As the doctors have dealt many cases of eye problem among the children, speech development and psychological problems also became frequent among children. Many children became introverted in nature, even after the post pandemic situation, they are unwilling to go to school or parks or any kind of social interactions. This is surely a sign of improper social development which creates a negative psychological development. Depression among the children is another major drawback of this system. Online education does not give them joyfulness rather makes them dull. They have found many cases where children with

aggression and negative attitude with their family members came to consultation. So, there is a gap between the expected and ongoing educational aims at pre-primary school students. Thus, it can be said that use of proper and effective technology is significantly correlated to pre-primary education. But it is negatively correlated.

Dimension regarding learner's interest and motivation: In the context of students' as well as teachers 'interest and motivation towards online education system, the result shows that parents of children do not have interest and are not motivated by the online education system. Now it is obvious that screen-time based education cannot be a reason of interest and motivation for the children of pre-primary level. Parents believe that this system in fact can demotivate children from the school based learning system. Teachers have also found that the interest and motivation level remains very low in this system. Many new diseases are taking shelter in the bodies of teachers and students. Mental peace has gone for them. Since doctors are not involved directly in teaching- learning process, they show no correlation in this dimension with online pre-primary education system. Thus, interest and motivation are correlated negatively with online pre-primary education.

Dimension regarding learner's holistic development: In case of character building and holistic development through online education of a child it is seen that parents, teachers and doctors all of them think that the children are not developing holistically. Children are forced to sit in front of the electronic media and thus making them indisciplined, and there is no development of moral values. Teachers also feel the same. Though some parents think that online education is building a school going habit for their child and they are not bothered about the harmfulness of the practice. According to the parents and teachers learner's holistic development is negatively correlated with online pre-primary education system.

Conclusion

During home confinement for COVID-19 online learning became a panacea to school education system. Thus the concept of homeschooling or online classes was introduced in our country through several institutions which means knowledge can be imparted by teachers to their pupils through online classes with the help of internet and computers/smart phones. No doubt schools and parents are joining their hands to make it happen so that their children do not lose a year of their academic career but it can only make sense for children who are in higher grades. But in case of preschoolers, the impact of online education is different.

It is not that online education have no advantages at all.. Students can learn at their own pace and have their individualized schedules. Most parents can also involve themselves in their children's learning. But the disadvantages outweighs advantages. It should be remembered that upbringing and holistic development of a child is not a one-day magic or miracle. Motivation is a key factor and a sense of self-discipline is needed to study online. A school classroom provides a structure and an environment for effective learning which is lacking at home. Classroom and interaction with peers are very important in the school years. It provides students with a neutral environment for social interactions that aids in developing skills like setting boundaries, learning cooperation, and empathy. Children are unknowingly getting involved in the Social discrimination. The dangerous impact may not be seen today, but it will prevail in future if we do not protest against this practice. Private school authorities should stop this practice of online classes now and then. Human touch is very essential for learning. So the time has come that the Government should take necessary steps for the sake of our nation's future.

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