

# Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown: perspectives from educators working at primary level in UP East

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**Abstract**— In human history, the Covid-19 pandemic has created the greatest disruption in education systems. In March 2020 WHO declared a pandemic outbreak affected the lives of 862 million students worldwide as within a week 107 nations had closed schools (Cuffari B, 2020). To cope with the shutdown of schools, educational institutions adopted a distance learning mode to continue uninterrupted learning as the rest of the world was battling pandemics. Although higher educational institutions in urban areas were aware of online learning methods, the teachers in most primary schools were left behind with a lot of confusion regarding the use of technology. Leaders of the school were also struggling to make the immediate plan of action to be followed by teachers and students. Teachers, students as well as parents were also unprepared to switch to online learning methods. Many teachers and students didn't have access to the internet in the Uttar Pradesh East rural areas, some of them had access but they didn't know how to use it, students used relatives', neighbors' phones to access online education systems. Parents were burdened to buy separate gazettes for children. In this study, researchers have used questionnaire methods to survey the opinion of educators working at the primary level. The survey was focused to observe how much support educators received from school authorities, colleagues, family, and parents as well.

**Keywords**— educators, covid-19, pandemic, online teaching.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In developing countries like India, traditional learning methods were more widely accepted but the Covid-19 pandemic has digitalized the rural India teaching and learning scenario. Closure of institutions and pressure to complete the prescribed syllabus in the stipulated academic calendar compelled them to adopt emergency remote education. March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 central government of India has ordered a nationwide lockdown of 21 days. The Center has sent letters to state governments to start remote education after 2-To 3 weeks of lockdown.

Therefore, within May 30, 2020, most of the educational institutes commenced remote teaching (Mishra et al, 2020 MHRD). When the schools shut down all of a sudden teachers visited students' homes with their smartphones to collect the contact numbers and another mode of contact.

WhatsApp was the main medium of connecting teachers with their students. Access to the internet coupled with the absence of teachers physically, absence of tests/exams, and marks resulted in direct children to explore new ways of learning. This lockdown has forced teachers also to learn the new technology that they can continue using post lockdown also to enhance their teaching skills. Still, the teachers faced great difficulty contacting the parents in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh. Sometimes parents gave contact numbers of relatives to the teachers, if the school tried to contact the student to assign some tasks, they received a response to call later. Like White warriors during Covid-19 teachers also fought with the pandemic like The Great Warriors and finally came out with some light for future developments in the education sector. Teachers responded to the pandemic actively and devised teaching practices that they believe will improve their effectiveness as educators.

**“Teachers are one of the most affected workforces of the pandemic and yet there have been few resources brought into supporting them”** – Dr. Joanne Beames

The researcher also worked as a teacher during this pandemic, along with their own experience several talks with other educators motivated her to conduct this study. The purpose of this study is to identify the obstacles experienced by teachers during the Covid-

19 pandemic situation. This paper emphasizes finding the key loopholes during online teaching and learning so in the future the results can be used to rectify those issues. This quantitative study is therefore to reflect the perspectives of primary school educators regarding school closures between March 2020-October 2021 and their experiences of the initial phased reopening of schools to identify recommendations of future school closings and blended learning.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Within a short period, many researchers have studied different aspects of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on teachers and students and shared their work in different ways. Pandemic is still ongoing, since December 2019 schools were forced to shut down to restrict the infections among students. Teachers well played their role to stop the infections as for a few months some schools reopened and then closed again due to multiple outbreak waves of a pandemic. The UP government has planned a five-step plan in April 2020 to keep in mind the extended closures of schools. These five steps included turning parents into teachers, creating a pool of web-based content, connecting teachers and parents, and targeting parents without Smartphones through Doodarshan and Akashvani (Gupta S,2020).

**Agarwal S, Diwan J (2020)** explored in their study “An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Online Learning in Colleges of Uttar Pradesh during the COVID 19 Lockdown” using online survey method that online education became a necessity, this is the only way of un-interrupted teaching-learning method over the traditional way. They concluded that technology has empowered education however proper planning is required to get desired outcomes.

**Gupta A, Goplani M (2020)** investigated “Impact of Covid-19 on Educational Institutes of India” using descriptive and analytical methods. They collected data from various government websites and found out that the government well played a role during the pandemic to stop the spread of infection by implementing the Janta curfew initially. While CBSE, UGC, MHRD, etc. higher authorities provided proper guidelines for teachers to follow online teaching.

**Chouksey A, Agrawal M. (2021)** aimed their study Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the psychological health of college students of India. They used an online questionnaire method to get responses and surprisingly found 61 % of respondents experienced mild to severe depression and anxiety. The study suggests to immediately find a solution for this issue, the study can be further extended to measure the anxiety level among teachers as well.

**Khattar A., Jain P.R, Quadri, S. M. K. (2020)** conducted an online survey for a study named “Effects of the disastrous pandemic COVID 19 on learning styles, activities and mental health of young Indian students-a machine learning approach” to understand the day to day living, activities, learning styles and mental health of young learners of India and to assess how they are adapting to this new normal life. The study concluded that most teachers understand the need of the hour that the young learners are dependent on them not only for learning online but they need to be concerned for their mental health also.

**Maity S., Sahu, T. N., & Sen, N. (2021)** analyzed “Panoramic view of digital education in COVID-19: A new explored avenue” and explained the dilemma faced by teachers and students during the rigorous lockdown. Through a structured questionnaire primary data was collected, as a result, they found that teachers and students faced extreme pressure from their organizations to use the screen for long extended hours. Overall digital teaching can’t replace classroom teaching but it may be channeled as a parallel mode.

**Bokde V., Kharbikar H. L., Roy M. L., Joshi P., & Ga, A. (2020)** explored the possible effects of pandemic lockdown in the education sector of India using the descriptive method of study. They collected information from various reliable websites and find out that the education sector is going through a dilemma phase. Special hygiene measures and socio-economic measures were suggested in this study.

**Ozamiz E N, Berasategi S N, Idoiaga M N, & Dosil Santamaría, M. (2021)** investigated the psychological challenges faced by teachers due to the transition between online and face-to-face teaching, based in Spain, after prolonged lockdown most of the schools reopened in September 2020, researchers observed the symptoms shown by teachers in Basque Autonomous Community when the schools reopened after lockdown. About 1633 teachers participated in the online survey and the result revealed that most of the teachers face anxiety, depression, and stress.

**Aperribai, L., Cortabarría, L., Aguirre, T., Verche, E., & Borges, Á. (2020)** explored teachers’ physical, mental and social wellbeing due to pandemic, they designed an online survey to collect qualitative and quantitative data and found that indoor physical activities could work as a preventive measure during lockdown to maintain the mental health of teachers. Teachers experienced a very high level of distress during the lockdown. The social relationship of teachers also has been affected, No one was ready to leap from one day to another during the lockdown, this study was limited to a particular region of Spain only.

**Kim, L. E., & Asbury, K. (2020)** in their study explained how in March 2020 on two-day notice from government schools were closed and teachers were required to switch to remote teaching. About 24 teachers from primary schools of England were interviewed and a reflective thematic analysis of their interview was done.

**Kotowski, S. E., Davis, K. G., & Barratt, C. L. (2021)** researched “Teachers feeling the burden of COVID-19: Impact on well-being, stress, and burnout”, a total of 5300 teachers participated in an online survey. This cross-sectional study was done during April-May 2021 in public and private schools of the Greater Cincinnati area. They concluded that school systems must start to deal with teachers’ mental health also.

## III. METHODOLOGY

**“Education is a tripolar system.” – John Dewey**

The three poles are teacher, student, and the curriculum. This pandemic has influenced all three poles. Teachers played a very crucial role due to the paradigm shift of traditional blackboard teaching to online teaching was not easy, but teachers did quite a good job. Teachers faced various challenges in this process ranging from lack of training to engaging students. India’s 70 % population resides in rural areas. For urban India online education was easy but for villages, it was a dream. Students don’t have devices, teachers are not ITC trained, they don't even use computers. In these situations, lockdowns paused the learning process for a while, still, teachers tried their best, they visited the homes of students to collect information about learning.

**A. Sampling**

The population consisted of educators working at government and private sector schools focused at districts of East Uttar Pradesh Azamgarh and Mau. Random samples of 100 teachers were taken from private and government schools.

**B. Research Tool**

The research tool used was a self-structured Google form online questionnaire with questions about the support provided by school leaders, about students’ participation, about teachers’ mental-social wellbeing. A total of 15 questions were included.

**C. Data Collection**

The researcher collected the primary data directly approaching the educators working at the primary level (Year 1-6) by using online survey forms. Forms were circulated among various target groups in East UP, especially rural area school teachers. Responses were collected between December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021- January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022. This was done through WhatsApp and social media platforms. All the responses were collected in an excel sheet and visualized in chart form.

TABLE I  
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Demographics		Number	Percentage
Age	20-30 Years	58	58 %
	30-40 Years	28	28 %
	40 Years and above	08	08 %
Gender	Male	55	55 %
	Female	41	41 %
School Type	Government Sector	49	49 %
	Private Sector	50	50 %

- 6 respondents didn’t mention age.
- Out of 100 respondents 4 didn’t reply for gender.
- Out of 100 respondents 1 didn’t reply for school type.



Fig. 1 A simple bar graph to show preparedness of educators during online lessons

**Personal factors during online teaching**

Teachers felt that even though they can save travel time during online teaching still they missed various factors in comparison to a physical school. They missed face-to-face interaction with their students, they missed the interaction with their colleagues, they had technical issues using gazettes during online lessons. They faced interference of family during live sessions, lack of quiet place without background noise was not easily available to all teachers at home, internet connectivity was also a big hindrance in rural areas. 36 % of teachers felt that their family feels that they are available for household work while teaching online, 41 % of teachers felt more stressed due to many changes at once while 38 % find it difficult to balance work and life.

Table I shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Most of the respondents belong to the age group 20-30 years age

group, they are 58 %, then 28 % respondents are in the age group 30-40 years, above 40 % only 8 % respondents. Most of the elderly teachers denied response to the survey, the main issue was a lack of familiarity with digital skills. The second issue was their fixed mindset, they don't want to talk about any experience. 55 5 male teachers and 41 % female teachers participated in the survey. If we see at the type of school, 49 % of teachers were from government schools and 50 % were from private schools, 1 % teachers didn't respond.

**TABLE II**  
**PREPAREDNESS OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE LOCKDOWN**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
School-wide policy for online live classes	60	60 %
A school-wide policy to follow the recorded video or audio lessons	41	41 %
To use WhatsApp to send homework and notes	54	54 %
To wait and follow instructions from higher authorities	30	30 %
To choose whichever approach we prefer	12	12 %
Provided no directions at all	3	3 %
Shut down/ closed the school completely leading to no contact with online learning	5	5 %

Table II shows the preparedness of school management at the beginning of the lockdown. Schools framed different policies to follow during the lockdown. Some schools followed a school-wide policy to run online live classes using mostly Zoom Meeting App, some private schools in semi-urban or rural areas used recorded audio or video lessons to teach remotely. In tier 3 and tier 4 towns schools used WhatsApp to send classwork to students, there were schools in small towns that suddenly closed schools without prior notification, teachers were not paid, school management said to wait and follow instructions from District Education Officer.

#### **IV. RESULTS**

The survey was done to understand the perspective of educators about the online mode of teaching. This survey has these dimensions assessed: online v/s classroom mode of teaching, personal factors, and parents' support.

#### **Online v/s classroom teaching mode**

**TABLE III**  
**PREPAREDNESS OF EDUCATORS DURING ONLINE TEACHING**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Much Less</b>	<b>Less</b>	<b>The Same</b>	<b>More</b>	<b>Much More</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Planning lessons	14	25	22	26	11	-
Preparing online resources	13	5	21	27	29	1
Marking work and sending feedback	10	25	25	26	18	-
Online meeting with colleagues	13	12	18	28	21	4
Attending meetings to learn digital skills	6	12	17	29	24	7
Communicating with parents of my students	8	17	20	28	16	9

Table III shows the preparedness of educators during online teaching, only 11 % of teachers responded that they were more engaged in preparing the lessons, 25 5 teachers responded that planning lessons were reduced because they didn't have much to do, 14 % of teachers replied that they spend much less time in lesson planning. Marking and sending back feedback was reduced for government schools while increased for 18 % of teachers in urban areas. Teachers attended online meetings to learn the new skills and communicate with parents as well.

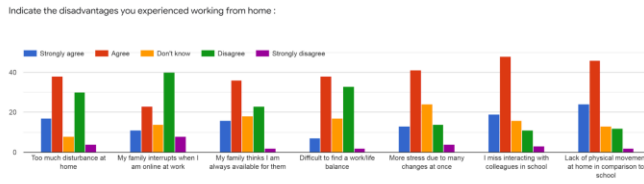


Fig. 2 A bar graph to show disadvantages of teaching from home

### Parents' involvement during online teaching

Majority of the teachers in the private sector used either zoom or Google meet platforms to teach live sessions. Government sector teachers in rural areas of East UP were not that much privileged, they were asked to use WhatsApp to send classwork to students, visit students in their village to see whether they are studying or not, and collect contact numbers, some schools asked teachers to wait for the directions from higher authorities and some schools closed the doors of school without any clear notice. Teachers surveyed villages and found that most of the children don't have access to smartphones, if they have access it was not that much easy. Usually, in rural households smartphones are owned by only working members of the family, they may or may not be available to the children wanting to learn online. Having internet packs was another big hurdle, it is quite expensive and the uninterrupted connectivity was also an issue.

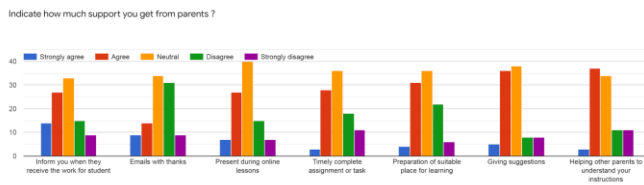


Fig. 3 A simple bar graph to show the support from parents

Caretakers of children use mobile to make videos or take photos, as per data from the Internet and Mobile Association of India, 58 % internet connections in rural areas are used for entertainment, 56 % use them for communication and 49 % use them for social networking.

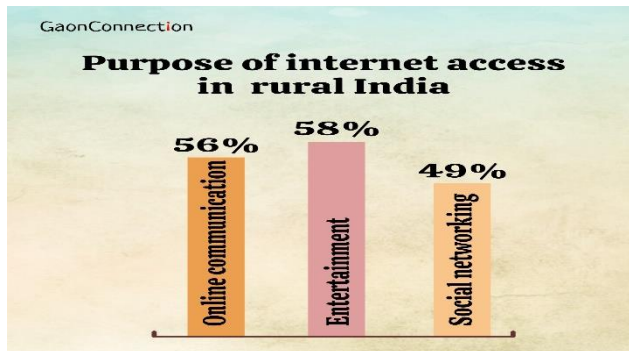


Fig. 4 Source: Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)

The majority of teachers accepted that they have used a "mute all" function to avoid the background noise while taking live classes.

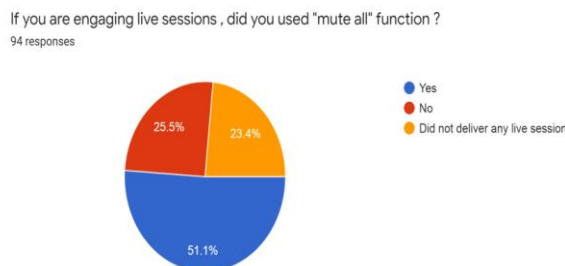


Fig. 5 A simple bar graph to show "mute all" function usage by teachers

## Students' involvement during online teaching

Teachers face great difficulty during assessing the students also, some teachers used live writing of exams or test, some considered projects, and assignments for assessment, some considered discussion during live class as an assessment tool, while most of the teachers used various quiz websites and google forms also for assessing the children.

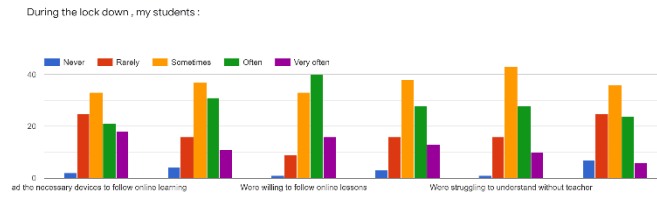


Fig. 6 A simple bar graph to show assessment methods used by teachers

Online quiz websites were very useful and easy to use, the nature of quiz websites was very helpful in creating a fun learning environment, thus improving the overall performance of students.

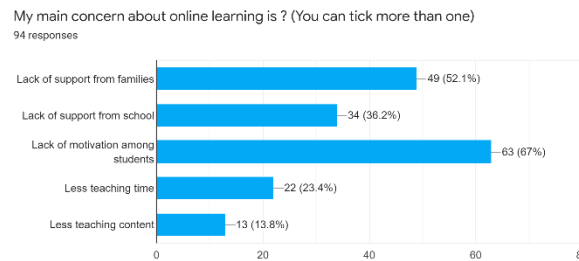


Fig. 7 A simple bar graph to show the main concern about online teaching

67 % of teachers agreed that their students lack motivation among students towards learning online, about 52 % of teachers responded that parents were not involved during lessons. Few teachers complained about less content of teaching and less time to teach effectively.

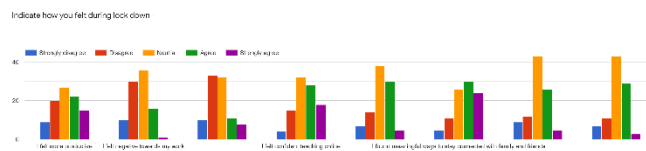


Fig. 8 A simple bar graph to show mental wellness of teachers

Teachers hesitated to talk about their mental wellness, that's why most of them responded neutrally. Only a few teachers get support from senior staff or school management for their mental wellness, most of the teachers didn't feel very much productive towards their work.

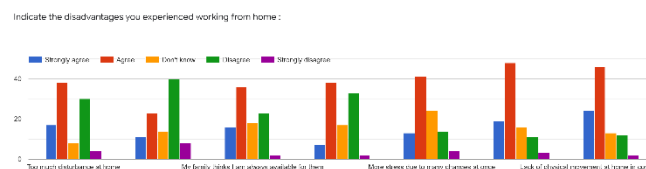


Fig. 9 A simple bar graph to show disadvantages of teaching from home

When teachers were asked about the disadvantages of teaching from home then around 36 % of teachers responded that their family thinks that they are always available for them, 38 % of teachers felt continuous interruption during the lesson due to various reasons, 41 % agreed that they felt stress due to many changes at a time, 38 % find it very difficult to maintain work and life balance.

Educators shared their experiences about personal wellbeing also. They said that they felt more connected to the family during the lockdown and found new ways to stay connected to their family and relatives, they gave a neutral response about parents' involvement.

## V. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study are helpful for the regulative authorities to create higher designing and better methods to adopt online teaching as an everyday activity. Educators may always be prepared to deal with any critical situation like this. Policymakers can plan a nationwide timetable to deal with lockdown-like situations keeping in mind rural India also. A nationwide plan can be designed and implemented especially for rural schools which enables teachers and students more tech-friendly, it will let them get prepared for any future crisis like this pandemic.

## VI. DISCUSSION

Teachers appear to be most adversely impacted by lockdowns and continue to be in the same situation for 15-18 months. Teachers in rural areas and urban areas had different experiences during pandemics, private and government school teachers also had different experiences. Stress and depression continued to be high for most of the teachers globally. These stress and burnout situations may lead to teachers' turnover, either leaving the school or even leaving the teaching profession which they joined because of their passion to teach. A survey from Learning Spiral (March 2021), says that two out of every five teachers lack the necessary device to deliver the digital lesson. Still, teachers tried their best, few innovative teachers created youtube videos to teach science, English, and math, they managed necessary devices anyhow and send the videos to target WhatsApp groups. Keeping all the adverse effects of online teaching aside we can say that it was manageable, it reduced traveling expenses and resources. It eased the administrative tasks for teachers like taking attendance, marking, the greatest positive impact was that students became self-motivated and self-directed learners. Along with some pitfalls, online teaching is effective and manageable.

## VII. LIMITATIONS & SUGGESTIONS

This research like all other studies has its limitations, it represents a very small sample of primary school teachers from East UP who teach online during the pandemic. This research was a very small representation of teachers from rural UP East, So, future studies can be more comprehensive including more teachers from more schools. Future research could address the perspective of students and parents as well. One more very important point to mention here is that data collection is through online forms, which can cause some bias in the result reported. It should be noted that variables such as wages were not included in the survey though being very significant factors in teachers' wellbeing.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Though pandemic lockdowns have caused tough times in the education sector, it has many positive outcomes also. Digital India is spreading to rural regions also and making people more tech-friendly. Educators are forced to learn computer skills that have a positive impact, demand for distance learning increased, online professional development increased, digital literacy enhanced, use of paper reduced so it is environment friendly also. With positives there are several negatives also, the impact of Covid-19 will take a decade to recover, it has damaged the basic structure of the education sector, as educators and students are affected physically, mentally, socially, and financially also. Just 2 years ago we were imposing the rule for our children to stay away from screens or limit screen time and be more physically active but now all those rules and regulations are passed, this sudden change has a very severe effect on health. every child and adult is stuck to gazettes now.

Dr. Joanne Beames, a post-doctoral fellow at Black dog Institute says that teachers were expected to learn new technology skills with ample time to do so, they were also expected to find new ways to engage students during online classes including students who had limited or no access to technology. In her study, she found that all the above has changed the sleeping patterns and stress level of teachers and the situation is worse for those already suffering from mental issues. She emphasizes that teachers should take steps for their mental wellbeing by establishing healthy boundaries for them.

This paper aims to encourage further analysis of the damage caused by the pandemic to educators working in East UP and explore possible solutions to overcome those issues. If the situation remains the same, how can educators in rural areas also be digitalized and reach extreme villages? Developing creative, interactive, and innovative ways of online learning would assist in dealing with future uncertainties. The lesson learned from pandemic lockdown waves is that teachers and students should keep on using various online educational platforms to enhance the quality of education. Finally, education must be viewed as a collaborative process among teachers, parents, students, and school administration to increase the efficacy of the teaching-learning process.



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