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 RESEARCH EXPLORER-A Blind Review & Refereed Quarterly International Journal
 ISSN: 2250-1940 (P) 2349-1647 (O)
 Impact Factor: 3.655 (CIF), 2.78 (IRJIF), 2.62 (NAAS)
 Volume VIII, Issue 29
 October-December 2020
 Formally UGC Approved Journal (63185), © Author

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY FROM WEST BENGAL

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic affected nearly all kind of industries like Auto and auto components, Apparel and Textiles, Aviation and Tourism, Building and Construction, Chemicals and Petrochemicals, Banking Insurance and NBFCs, Food and Agriculture, Metals and Mining, MSMEs, Oil and Gas, Pharmaceuticals, Power, Telecom, Transport and Logistics. Education is also extremely affected by the pandemic. Rather higher education is worst affected by the consequences of COVID. Most of the higher education institute in West Bengal are not in a position to provide or implement online teaching-learning platform because of lack of proper infrastructure in one side on the another side most of students in rural and semi-urban Bengal don't have any kind of android mobile, laptop or desktop. In private colleges' administration are facing confrontations with the guardians of students regarding tuition fees, which becomes a part of daily news in newspapers and television. Outgoing students are very much worried about their future in terms of internship, placement etc. Companies those who have already given appointment letter to the final year students, now are delaying in the process of ultimate recruitment. The outbreak has also far reaching affect like diminution in global mobility of students.

Keywords: *Diminution, Infrastructure, Internship, Mobility, Pandemic, Recruitment*

Introduction

According to a survey report of the MHRD, Government of India observed that there are 993 universities, 39931 Colleges and 10725 stand alone Institutions which contribute education in India. The survey also reported nearly 37.4 million students are enrolled every year in India. The current pandemic is not only affected the health of the citizens but also uprooted higher education system. We are accustomed to watch the advertisement of different online teaching-learning app like Urbanpro,

Unacademy, Byju's etc. But have we ever thought that overnight or one fine morning online education will become an essence of our life. I do particularly feel that though primary and school level education may be somehow manageable through online platform, higher education i.e., college and university level course may not be manageable at all, if manageable, then may be to a few extent. As a teacher of commerce, I am giving you simplest of example that when you are doing a solution of "Final Accounts" in the class with old chalk-duster-board

method, it will give you immense pleasure or satisfaction. Can we expect same level of satisfaction when we will explain it in online, to me it cannot be equal in terms of level of satisfaction. It may be true also for other subjects. The need of the situation is now allowing educational institutions to adopt online learning and infuse a virtual study culture. A paradigm shift to online education has been ensuring that students should not suffer any kind of loss in their academic activities and simultaneously academic progress is being evaluated by timely online exams.

Review of Literature

Arora, A and Srinivasa, R. in their paper “Impact of Pandemic COVID-19 on the Teaching – Learning Process: A Study of Higher Education Teachers” studied responses from 341 teachers of higher education institutions from different regions. The teachers were divided into two parts - One who adopted virtual classrooms and another who did not adopt virtual classrooms. Network issues, less attendance, lack of personal touch and lack of interaction were found to be the significant drawbacks of virtual classes. Lack of awareness in terms of how to use the modern technology and economical condition on the part of the students were found to be the significant factors to adopt non-virtual classes.

McReynolds, Assistant Professor of Clinical Epidemiology, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health in his paper entitled “COVID-19 Higher Education Student Impact Study” he has conducted a series of online surveys with students enrolled in US colleges and universities. His study not only gave an insight into behavioural, mental and physical health of students, but also academic and economic situation and apprehensions related to the COVID-19 pandemic that are shaping students’ lives for present and future.

A group of researchers (Study.eu Team) in their paper entitled “Impact of

COVID-19 on studying abroad in Europe: Overview” surveyed about- How does the Corona pandemic affect studying abroad? They found some of the factors which really influence higher education system such as Restrictions on immigration, Eligibility for admission and Admission procedures and application deadlines.

Research Objectives

There are very few studies so far have been made how COVID affected higher education system. This has prompted me to throw some light on this particular area.

The objective of the study is to find out

- i) Different kind of variables which currently influence higher education system.
- ii) How those factors are really influence both teacher and student

Research Methodology

For the purpose of the study a structured questionnaire (with 23 questions) has been prepared with 7 point Likert scale and **ultimately 10 questions/variables** are selected because to satisfy internal consistency. The questionnaire has been sent to different teachers and students of colleges and universities situated in West Bengal through mail and ultimately 200 responses have been considered for study. Later on Factor analysis has been done for analysis and findings.

Analysis and Findings

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.387	10

Generally, Cronbach alpha is used to verify internal consistency or reliability of data for the purpose of study. Here it is found that; I have started my journey with 23 questions/variables and ultimately 10 variables are found suitable for the purpose of research. Last column of the following table suggest that no more variable can be rejected as it will lead to reduction in the value of Cronbach alpha.

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Online teaching will allow reaching out to a large number of students across geographies	32.50	8.241	.261	.317
Online teaching encourages distance learning	30.69	8.448	.152	.360
Students can be evaluated in a fair manner in case of online assessment	28.57	8.729	.130	.369
Both teachers and students do face technological difficulties related to weak devices or access to the internet	32.43	8.829	.123	.371
Attending online classes at home sometimes distract the attention of both the teacher and students	29.44	8.197	.203	.337
Continuous dependency on technology may affect seriously health issues for the future	32.52	9.085	.083	.385
Limited or restricted number of students in one online meet can increase the quality of online classes	30.56	8.690	.144	.363
Our society will adopt online education as a part and parcel of our life in near future	28.89	8.615	.097	.385
Online teaching may not be fruitful for weak students, as they are not well accustomed with free flow conversation and discussion	32.54	8.722	.152	.360
Online platform really provides educational institute can have a global access on reputed teachers	32.48	8.874	.131	.368

The following table shows the one to one relationship with one variable to another. Here it is observed that nearly all the variables are positively correlated with

each other except a very few case; which are really marginal one where variables are negatively correlated.

Correlation Matrix^a											
	V2	V3	V5	V8	V9	V10	V11	V17	V21	V22	
Correlation	V2	1.000	.129	.042	.066	.132	.045	.133	.034	.197	.159
	V3	.129	1.000	.001	-.031	.180	-.142	.126	.074	.075	.117
	V5	.042	.001	1.000	.072	.120	.213	.115	.060	-.101	-.048
	V8	.066	-.031	.072	1.000	.102	.072	-.035	.106	.038	.058
	V9	.132	.180	.120	.102	1.000	.086	.171	-.009	.026	-.089
	V10	.045	-.142	.213	.072	.086	1.000	-.009	.049	-.054	.056
	V11	.133	.126	.115	-.035	.171	-.009	1.000	-.058	.023	.054
	V17	.034	.074	.060	.106	-.009	.049	-.058	1.000	.127	-.020
	V21	.197	.075	-.101	.038	.026	-.054	.023	.127	1.000	.225
	V22	.159	.117	-.048	.058	-.089	.056	.054	-.020	.225	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	V2		.034	.280	.176	.031	.265	.031	.318	.003	.012
	V3	.034		.497	.331	.005	.022	.037	.149	.146	.049
	V5	.280	.497		.156	.046	.001	.053	.198	.077	.249
	V8	.176	.331	.156		.075	.157	.310	.068	.296	.209
	V9	.031	.005	.046	.075		.112	.008	.452	.358	.105
	V10	.265	.022	.001	.157	.112		.449	.244	.223	.215
	V11	.031	.037	.053	.310	.008	.449		.208	.375	.223
	V17	.318	.149	.198	.068	.452	.244	.208		.037	.387
	V21	.003	.146	.077	.296	.358	.223	.375	.037		.001
	V22	.012	.049	.249	.209	.105	.215	.223	.387	.001	

a. Determinant = .632

Bartlett's test of sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy were used to examine the appropriateness of factor analysis. The approximate chi-square statistic is 89.502 with 45 degrees of freedom, which is significant at 0.000 levels. The KMO statistic (0.529) is also large (> 0.5) Hence factor analysis is considered an appropriate technique for further analysis of data.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.529
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	89.502
	df	45
	Sig.	.000

Higher communalities value after extraction suggests that the variables considered for research purpose are worthy. But if the values are in between 0.0-0.4, then that variables may not be worthy for decision making. In my study all the variables have a value greater than 0.4, which suggests that all the variables are praiseworthy for the purpose of study.

In other words all the factors are considered for our study are important for decision making.

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
Online teaching will allow reaching out to a large number of students across geographies	1.000	.437
Online teaching encourages distance learning	1.000	.547
Students can be evaluated in a fair manner in case of online assessment	1.000	.498
Both teachers and students do face technological difficulties related to weak devices or access to the internet	1.000	.377
Attending online classes at home sometimes distract the attention of both the teacher and students	1.000	.538
Continuous dependency on technology may affect seriously health issues for the future	1.000	.629
Limited or restricted number of students in one online meet can increase the quality of online classes	1.000	.502
Our society will adopt online education as a part and parcel of our life in near future	1.000	.631
Online teaching may not be fruitful for weak students, as they are not well accustomed with free flow conversation and discussion	1.000	.526
Online platform really provides educational institute can have a global access on reputed teachers	1.000	.629

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Retaining only the variables with Eigen values greater than one (Kaiser's criterion), we can infer that 16.009% of variance is explained by factor V2; 13.978% of variance is explained by

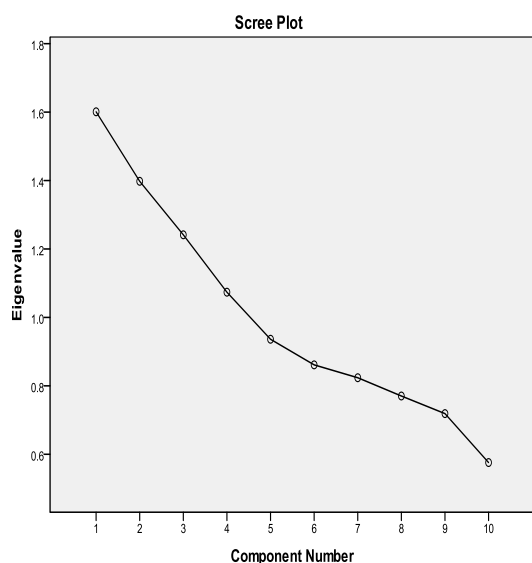
factor V3; 12.414% of variance is explained by Factor V5 and 10.737% of variance is explained by factor V8 and together, all the factors contributed to 53.138% of variance.

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
V2	1.601	16.009	16.009	1.601	16.009	16.009
V3	1.398	13.978	29.987	1.398	13.978	29.987
V5	1.241	12.414	42.401	1.241	12.414	42.401
V8	1.074	10.737	53.138	1.074	10.737	53.138
V9	.936	9.362	62.500			
V10	.861	8.613	71.113			

V11	.824	8.237	79.350		
V17	.770	7.703	87.053		
V21	.719	7.189	94.242		
V22	.576	5.758	100.000		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

In Scree Plot variables are measured in the x-axis. Steeper the curve between the two variables, it suggests that each successive factor is accounting for higher amounts of the total variance or we consider them as strong factors and if the line is almost flat, suggest that the each successive factor is accounting for smaller and smaller amounts of the total variance or they are not considerable variables for decision-making, but here curve is almost steeper, so we may consider that all the variables are important for decision making.



Conclusion:

So here I conclude that the 10 variables are truly influencing the higher education system in West Bengal during COVID pandemic. Due to paucity of time I have started my journey with 22 variables and ultimately reduced to 10 variables and two hundred responses are considered for the purpose of meaningful study. More variables may be considered for the betterment of study and more samples can be included in the study. If

more variables and more responses are considered for study, then there may be a change in the observations of result.

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Questionnaire

Each question is evaluated on the basis of Likert scale:

- 1 = Strongly Agree
- 2 = Agree
- 3 = Somewhat Agree
- 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 5 = Somewhat Disagree
- 6 = Disagree
- 7 = Strongly Disagree

1. Online methods of teaching will allow innovation with the help of technology and online tools

2. Online teaching will allow reaching out to a large number of students across geographies
3. Online teaching encourages distance learning
4. Online mode takes more time compare to formal class-room teaching when clarifying a subject
5. Students can be evaluated in a fair manner in case of online assessment
6. Inability to have a face-to-face connect with students hinder free conversations, discussions, and mentoring
7. Listening or learning from recorded knowledge (such as from Youtube) is one of the major advantage of online teaching-learning
8. Both teachers and students do face technological difficulties related to weak devices or access to the internet
9. Attending online classes at home sometimes distract the attention of both the teacher and students
10. Continuous dependency on technology may affect seriously health issues for the future
11. Limited or restricted number of students in one online meet can increase the quality of online classes
12. Students enrolment in universities in West Bengal from abroad is worst affected by the pandemic
13. Webinar is becoming more popular than seminar
14. Transformation of class room teaching into a digital one will reduce the rate of recruitment of teachers and teaching staffs in near future
15. Most of the aged teachers are inexperienced and ill-equipped to cope with a fast transition to online learning
16. Teachers' gravity is missing in online teaching
17. Our society will adopt online education as a part and parcel of our life in near future
18. Private educational institute are facing financial burden in terms of both receipts and payments

19. Students are seriously doing homework on the basis of E-notes and online assignments provided by the teachers

20. It is impossible to conduct a frequent parent-teacher webinar

21. Online teaching may not be fruitful for weak students, as they are not well accustomed with free flow conversation and discussion

22. Online platform really provides educational institute can have a global access on reputed teachers

Note: This is the full set of questions, but after reliability test it has been reduced to 10 questions or variables and selected questions are marked bold.