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## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS

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**“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”**

**-Nelson Mandela**

### Introduction

The effect of any disaster can be seen in different dimensions. Covid-19 is also one, it affected the Health, Education, Economical, Psychological and Emotional conditions of the human beings across the world.

Covid-19 affected the Indian system of education adversely. As a developing country, India is still to be improved in Digitalization. Due to lack of online facilities many students got effected, more of girls’ students, where a good number of them got married during the pandemic. Education for girls in rural areas of India is very low, and due to this pandemic, it was depleted further. Various reasons contributed to this scenario, of them poverty, insecurity, lack of knowledge in Digitalization and not having technological equipment which plays a crucial role.

Among the rural students, higher education is lower than the urban students. Due to varied reasons, parents living in rural areas hesitate to send their children to urban areas for higher education especially girls. For example, on a survey, to the exams held in rural areas, everyday hundreds of students did not attend. So, the education for those students has stopped in the first semester. Around 30% of the students went as daily labor for their livelihood. Approximately 50% students would be completing their degree course. So, with the unprecedented situations like COVID-19 education among the rural students is affected adversely. In such situation many students deprived of continuing their education. Despite the hardships the qualified students are trying to excel in their career.

March 22, 2020 is the day of a big bolt on the world called COVID-19. Lockdown was imposed from weeks to months. The main motto of human beings became survival. This led to many disturbances in the world and of them the most effected areas are:

1. Health
2. Education
3. Economical conditions

The appreciable changes in the educational system during the COVID-19 situations are:

1. Online classes that rescued semesters to continue without interruption. (But many students were deprived of learning through online courses due to the lack of resources).
2. Video classes will be recorded, stored and can be accessed at the required time for students who do not have the facility of attending online classes.
3. Teachers are being updated with the latest technologies.
4. In 2021, admissions in Government Colleges improved, due to stay in their native places.

The main challenges faced by students of rural areas are:

1. Social barriers
2. Mental distress
3. Lack of technical resources

### 1. Social barriers

#### a. Poverty

The main constraint of rural students is poverty. Many parents from rural areas are less literate and do not know much about the importance of education. They restrict their children from education for any difficulty. Lack of knowledge and lack of guidance to students push them into chaos and led to drop their education abruptly. On enquiring the students who dropped their education, the main reasons were:



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- Father being a drunkard, and children want to be helpful for their mother and will be the bread winner of the family.
- The bread winner of the family expired due to COVID-19, the necessity to take care of the family's livelihood.
- Searching employment in their location due to lack of money.

40% of the students drop their education for their agricultural work. Lack of sufficient financial support of the family is main constraint that adversely affected the education of rural students.

### b. Early marriages

Child marriages are not gone completely from the society. Still the child and early marriages of the girls in the rural areas can be seen. There are many reasons for the parents to take such decisions for their children, of them:

- Security of the girl child has become a huge burden on the part of the parents. Now and then so many incidents are happening like molesting, rape and even murders. Because of this sort of incidents parents could not get confidence to let the girl children to go for higher education. After 10 AM the rural areas look like a lockdown. Most of the parents being farmers and agriculturists, need to leave their children at home but they are scared of the situations prevailing. So, they want their girl child to get married at early age.
- Due to lack of proper social awareness, the families are unable to provide privacy to the girls.
- Due to lack of awareness about online education, parents misunderstood the situation and think it would lead their children's life into unethical and unsocial practices.

Many such reasons gave no freedom to women to have higher education. But less literate parents are unaware of the consequences of early and child marriages. Many girl students got married during lockdown. Goals of the girls scattered away. The responsibility to bear child soon after marriage gave no choice to women to pursue her dreams. Still there are women who overcame these social barriers and stood as warriors. Their glory is inspiration to many.

### c. Lack of awareness

Less literate parents do not bother about their children's education and do not have proper knowledge to guide their children in education and pursue their careers. They hardly spend time with their children. Though children are ambitious to get educated, they are not encouraged. Many students choose unhealthy habits out of such frustration. Even in some areas it is believed that drinking alcohol would prevent COVID-19. People are still there in such dogma.

## 2. Mental distress

Every one suffers from some or other problems and in frustration. Lives have become tough and challenging and situations like COVID-19 have adversely affected many. Mental health of majority, especially students is totally affected. Due to Digitalization of education, students are stuck with one's own smart phones and watching YouTube videos and surfing internet has become a daily routine. Many students prone through depression, especially youth of age group 18-24. Due to frustration, they are unable to achieve their goals, and the interest on education is disturbed. Due to non-fulfilment of their goals, the suicidal tendency is increased. This has become a worldwide phenomenon.

## 3. Lack of technical resources

Having a single phone for a family and that too with parents or with the head of the families, students were unable to access to the online classes whenever they need. Due to insufficient financial resources, they do not have access to the internet. Still, there are teachers who take classes to the children on conference calls.

With the unprecedented situation like COVID-19, rural area students have affected adversely. Though many changes were made in the educational system, the standards of education are depleted. Teachers, students both face challenges due to such tough situations. The Classes, Examinations were compromised and the results were declared by passing all the students who appear for the examinations. Such situations lead to mental depression. Due to the pandemic, the academic schedule was completely disturbed; this again is a financial burden for students and their parents.

Educational institutions in Higher Education follow the semester system. Paying exam fees twice per a year has become burden to parents and ultimately drops the education of the children. Scholarships are the only supporting system for many students. Otherwise, there will be much more dropouts.



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It is important to focus on the development of the rural areas with all the resources including financial assistance. Parents must be enlightened with the importance of education and should be encouraged to let their children educated. Unhealthy habits are to be avoided and girls must be encouraged to higher studies. Government institutions must be brought to every rural area with all the facilities and resources. Antisocial activities must be strictly eradicated at all institutions. Education is the main source for development of the nation and this has to be acknowledged and taken care of. As 70% of Indian population is in rural areas, the development of rural areas is the development of the nation.

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