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USE OF ICT AMONG RURAL COLLEGE STUDENTS DURING COVID 19: A STUDY IN MURSHIDABAD DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL

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INTRODUCTION

In the present crisis of COVID-19 one of the important things is social communication, which is unable without Internet Communication Technology (ICT). The government, semi government and private sectors are dependent on ICT to continue their works during this world pandemic. Impact of COVID-19 Central and State government have announced social distance and lockdown policy for breakdown of disease chain. In this condition, all the educational institutions like schools, colleges and universities are closed from 25th March 2020 due to lockdown. The higher education department advised to continue the education system through the internet communication technology. During last two decades Indian central government has been trying to improve the use of ICT throughout the country especially in rural India. But for the unknown reasons in the present time the condition of ICT in rural areas are not good. On the other hand, as per Indian socio-economic structure maximum rural households are belonging to poor economic condition. So, after meeting the basic need of life, it becomes difficult to buy ICT related modern equipments by the rural people. In this socio-economic condition from the last few years our central Government is taking a lot of initiatives for the development the ICT in rural India. Besides University Grant Commission (UGC) is trying to use the ICT in Indian Higher education system. But before the COVID 19 crisis maximum initiatives to use ICT was limited to urban higher educational institutions. During the corona pandemic the students are deprived of their classroom education for more than two months, in this condition rural colleges are trying to provide the online education to their students. So, during the COVID 19 crises Indian rural college students are trying to use of ICT on their education system. The colleges are conducting the online classes with Zoom, Skype, Google classroom, WhatsApp, YouTube etc. with the help of ICT especially in the study area i.e., in Murshidabad district of West Bengal.

STUDY AREA

My study area is Murshidabad district in the Indian state of West Bengal that is situated geographically on the east side of India and borderline of Bangladesh. Total population is 71, 02,430 in the district and there are 25 numbers of degree colleges. More than 80% of college students stay in rural areas of the district. All degree colleges are affiliated under the University of Kalyani. The maximum college students are first generation learners and their economic condition is very poor. One important thing is the district has a high population range and huge numbers of guardians go to other states as migrant labour.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

This study was conducted among rural college students; and at the same time the urban college students were avoided by the researcher in the above-mentioned district. Because the study itself emphasises on the use of ICT among the rural college students during COVID-19 in Murshidabad district of West Bengal.

METHODOLOGY

In this research work, I have used both quantitative method and qualitative method. After the data collection the researcher have analyzed the data through quantitative methods. In this study, I used a purposive sampling system. Because this sample focuses on a particular population, they are interested and qualified to answer the research questions. I purposely selected 100 numbers of rural college students in Murshidabad district to conduct this study. I collected the data personally through a sample questionnaire from selected students by using the Google Forms with the help of ICT. It was collected from 2nd semester, 4th semester and 3rd year students of 10 general degree colleges in rural areas during COVID-19 crises. In this work, I used some print and online materials as books, newspapers, journals, and government documents also in the form of letter and orders etc.

USE OF ICT ON EDUCATION SYSTEM

The concept of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) originated and developed from western countries to support and enhance the delivery of information. ICT began to be widely used in Indian society and administration in the twentieth century for better delivery of information. In this way Indian higher education institution like UGC, Universities, and Colleges have been using ICT to provide information from the last decade. In the last few years UGC focused on the use of ICT on the teaching-learning process in the Indian higher education system. On the other hand, the institutions organised a lot of seminars, workshops and also provides grants to improve the use of ICT on the teaching-learning process. After that many researchers mention in their work



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that maximum faculties and students are not interested in the use of ICT in their academic sector, because they are habituated with the old vision. In the modern time, ICT is a very important tool to the higher education sector, especially to conduct any research. So researchers and guides are using ICT on their work in university levels, but the maximum rural colleges are not able to use ICT on teaching learning processes. Rural colleges students are deprived of the use of ICT in the teaching-learning process due to lack of inefficiency and instrument related to ICT. In this socio-economic condition our government is trying to improve the digitally literate of teachers and students through a lot of government sponsored schemes. Because when the teachers and students both are digitally literate then both understand how to integrate it into curriculum.

Essential Tools for Modern E-learning System: Today education is a global concept through modern E-learning systems. In modern times, any person acquires knowledge from different parts of the world at present by sitting in his/her home with the help of E-learning systems. Present E-learning system is 100% online and fully distance-based learning programme, also the evaluation of the students. The present E-learning module provides all the course material from the instructor (teachers) to students in an interesting format as text, files, Web links, Assignment etc. with the help of ICT. We can divide two parts of essential tools for modern E-learning systems a) Hardware (Mobile, Tablet, Laptop, Desktop, Web Camera, Headphone), b) Software (Mail account, Google drive, Google classroom, Google forms, Google meet, Google slide, YouTube etc.)

These mentioned hardware and software tools are very important to modern E-learning systems with the help of using ICT. One important thing is Google is providing more e-learning supporting apps that make it easy. Google is the best platform for E-learning systems and also it makes more attractive to the participants.



(Two pictures indicates some importance hardware and software tools)

Impact of COVID 19 on Rural College Education Systems: In the present time COVID 19 is a most important factor to every man and it makes a world crisis. Duo to the crises maximum country announced lockdown for breakdown of disease chain that make new socio-economic crises of the whole world. India is not exceptional of the condition, so Indian government had announced that all the educational institutions like schools, colleges and universities are closed from 25th March 2020 due to lockdown. This lockdown is deeply affected to all the college students in India, because maximum colleges are following semester systems. In the recent time, all the colleges in West Bengal especially 19 numbers of colleges at Murshidabad district are following semester systems as per the UGC guideline. But as per the semester guideline students and teachers are fully busy related to exams and curriculum work all year around. In this crisis condition as per government suggestion all the college administrations are conduct E-learning system with the help of ICT in West Bengal. But all the students and teachers are not ready to opt suddenly the E-learning system, because they have no proper knowledge of using ICT. On the other hand, during the lockdown mental health is not good enough of the college student's duo to the corona panic and poor economic condition in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal. During this lockdown maximum college teacher are conducting online classes through audio conferencing, video conferencing and WhatsApp group chats and students are trying to join this online education systems staying at home. So, it is true that COVID-19 crises make skillful to the rural college students and teachers through the use of ICT on educational systems. The impact of corona crises and the lockdown make a radical change in the sphere of using ICT in college education system including the rural areas.

Result of data collection and discussion: I have collected a lot of data from rural college students in the district of Murshidabad through sample questionnaires related to use of ICT during COVID 19 pandemic. On the basis of collected information some analyses are:

Table - 1. Personal profile of the Respondent Rural Student

		Sample	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	75	75
	Female	25	25
	Total	100	100
Age	16-17 year	61	61
	18-20 year	27	27
	20-22 year	12	12
	Total	100	100
Educational positions	2 nd Semester	53	53
	4 th Semester	38	38
	3 rd year	09	09
	Total	100	100
Streams	B.A	86	86
	B.Sc	14	14
	Total	100	100

As per my data collection that shows in the above-mentioned table, majority of respondents are Male students (i.e.,75%) and among which 61% are in the age group of 16-17 years. On the other hand, 53% are from 2nd semester and 86% belong to Bachelor of Arts (B.A) stream.

Table - 2. Do you have proper knowledge of using ICT?

	Respondent	Percentage
Yes	34	34
No	58	58
Partly	8	8
Total	100	100

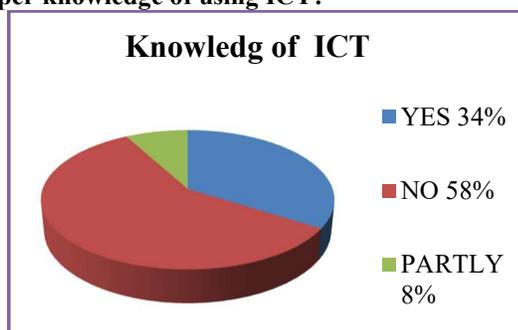
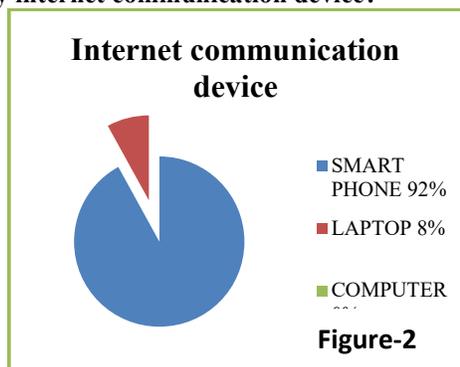


Table 2 and figure 1 show 34 percentage respondent students have proper knowledge of using ICT and 58% respondents have no proper knowledge of using ICT. Besides 8% respondents have partly knowledge of using ICT. So maximum rural respondent students have no proper knowledge to use ICT, which is a very important thing in today's world.

Table 3 Do you have any internet communication device?

Device Name	Respondent	Percentage
Smart Phone	92	92
Laptop	8	8
Computer (Desktop)	0	0
Total	100	100



As per my data table 3 and figure 2 indicate maximum respondent students i.e., 92% have smart phones for internet communication and only 8% respondents have laptops. On the other hand, no respondent has Computer (desktop) for internet communication.

Table 4 Do you have any idea about the E-learning process?

	Respondent	Percentage
Yes	33	33
No	67	67
Total	100	100

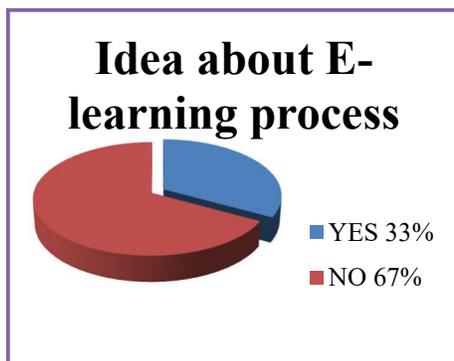


Figure 3

Table 4 and figure 3 show 33% of the respondents have ideas about the E-learning process of the rural students in the district and a big figure 67% of the respondent have no any idea about the E-learning process.

Table 5. Which process is better for you/ better for the students staying in rural areas in the district of Murshidabad in West Bengal?

Name of the process	Respondents	Percentage
Audio conferencing	6	6
Video conferencing	61	61
Whatsapp groups	33	33
Total	100	100

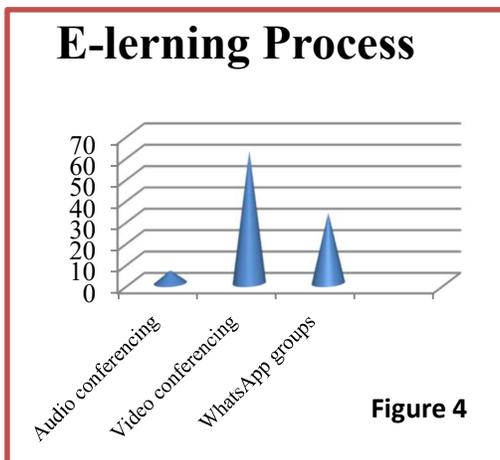


Figure 4

As per my data collection table 5 and figure 4 showing that 6% respondents prefer Audio conferencing process on E-learning process for the rural students and 61% prefer Video conferencing process, but 33% respondents prefer to WhatsApp group.

Table 6. Do you have any idea that your institution has started the E-learning systems recently due to lockdown (COVID 19)?

	Respondent	Percentage
Yes	92	92
No	8	8
Total	100	100

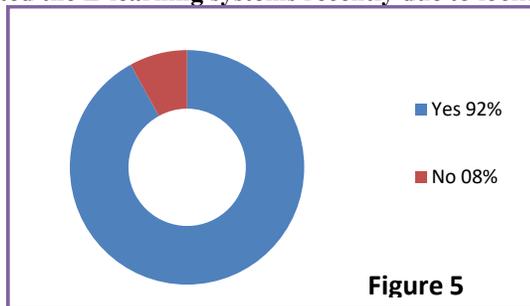
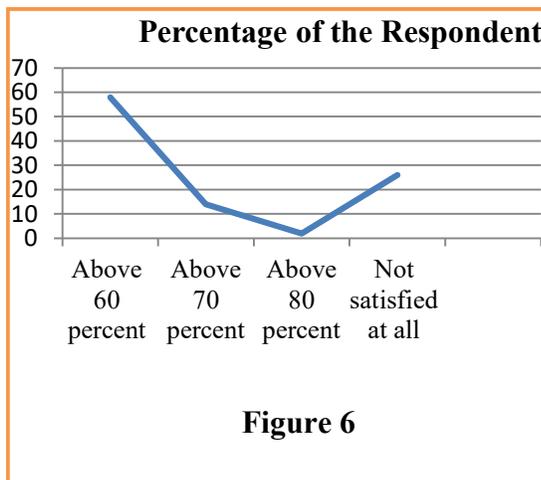


Table 6 and figure 5 indicate important data regarding whether your institution has started the E-learning systems recently due to lockdown (COVID 19). In this query 92% respondent responded 'Yes' and only 8% responded no. So maximum rural college students know that their institution has started an E-learning system.

Table 7. How far the e-learning process helps the students of rural areas of the district to understand better their syllabus like traditional classroom teaching?

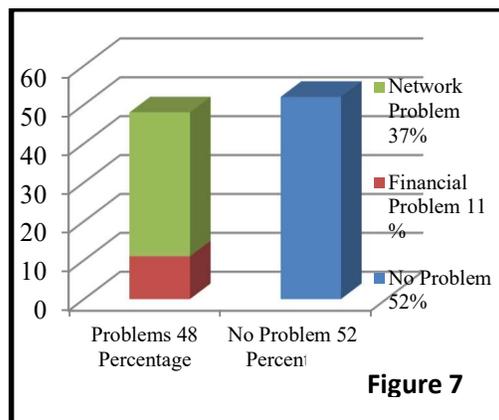
	Respondent	Percentage
Above 60 percent	58	58
Above 70 percent	14	14
Above 80 percent	02	02
Not satisfied at all	26	26
Total	100	100



As per my data collection table 7 & figure 6 showing 58 percentage respondents said that the e-learning process helps the student to understand better to their syllabus like traditional classroom teachings above 60%, 14 percentage responded above 70%, 2 percentage responded above 80% and 26 percentage responded that they are not satisfied at all.

Table 8: Are you facing any problem to participate in this online education system? If yes, what are the problems you are facing for this?

Response of the problem		Respondent	Percentage
Yes	Financial Problem	11	11
	Network Problem	37	37
No		52	52





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Table-8 and figure 7 showing 52% respondent students informed that they have no problem to participate in the online education system and 48 % respondents said they are facing problem (11% financial & 37% Network problem) to participate in online education system.

BASIC FINDINGS

As per my observation, data collection and data analysis basic findings are given below:

- High percentages of the rural college students have no proper knowledge to use the ICT in the study area.
- Maximum rural college students are using smart phones and they are not using desktop computers or laptops.
- The important finding is the large numbers of rural students have any idea about modern e-learning process.
- My fourth finding is highest number of the rural college students prefer e-learning process through Video conferencing system and a lot of students prefer WhatsApp groups in the study area.
- Maximum rural students are known that his college has started the e-learning systems recently due to lockdown (COVID-19), the students are participated in the online education system and getting benefits.
- Another finding is the majority of rural college students prefer online or e-learning system during the lockdown period.
- Majority number of the students said that e-learning process helps them to understand above 60% syllabus like traditional classroom teachings and a lot of respondents mentioned that they not satisfied at all.
- The highest numbers of the respondents informed that they have no problem to participate in this online education system, but a lot of respondents mentioned that they are facing financial and network related problems to participate on the system.
- Few students replied that it also helps a lot by which it saves both time and money which we are not spending during online education system.

SUGGESTIONS

In the last part of my discussion, I want to provide few suggestions. My first suggestion is to provide proper education on knowledge of ICT to the rural college students. Secondly, it needs to provide more information and awareness about modern e-learning process to the students from the institution that make more attractive on the e-learning process. There is the need of giving special focus on covering and understanding of the syllabus through e-learning methods like traditional classroom teaching. For the continuation of E-learning process Government should take necessary steps to provide cheaper internet facilities and it becomes more helpful to participants of the rural remote area student. Lastly, I want to say that there is the need for more initiatives from the various governments, semi government authorities to improve use of ICT among rural college student of the study area.

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