Impact of Covid-19 on Academics: Role of Human Ethics in Online Classes

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Abstract— **The sudden outcome of Covid-19 pandemic in the beginning of 2019 in India has completely changed the socio-economic aspect of our society. Not only that, the pandemic came as a serious threat to the entire academic system and at the beginning the academic sector was going to crash completely. However, the concept of online class and exam came to the focus as rescuer. It is of no doubt that it is because of the concept of these online classes and examination, the entire academics is still having a go. This is the occasion, because of which different online academic platforms like "Zoom', "Google meet", "Microsoft Team meeting", "Great learning", and others become popular in India and both the students, teachers as well as scholars or researchers could take the advantages of these platforms for the academic interactions. Practically, these helped the system running without a break.**

However, the concept has shown several drawbacks regarding necessity of accessories, network connectivity; initial cost as well as the increasing the tendency indulging fraud among the students.

This article deals how the concept of online education has shown a threat to the academic by giving a shake to the human moral values and ethics. The concept has been discussed on the basic of different statistics related to the online education in India especially in last two years.

Keywords— **Covid-19, pandemic, online education, human value, ethics, virtual academics**

I.   INTRODUCTION

Since the first registered case of Covid-19 in India on 30th January 2020, the country has witnessed its most devastating form due to which the social, economic, as well as academic activities got completely crashed initially. The situation even got worse due to the phase wise consecutive complete lockdowns in the entire country and it was instructed by Government of India that every academic institutes that include primary schools, secondary or high school, colleges, Universities and even research Institute to remain complete shut. Even in that turbulent situation it was very soon realized that a society cannot give its academic a complete pause otherwise the entire future of the society will come under question. That brought the concept of online education under focus.

It is to be noted that before the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of education in India was theoretically in blending mode with an online-off-line combination but in practice on-line part was only limited to watching few video lectures and studying different articles. Here direct teacher-student interactions were completely absent. However the pandemic brought a complete change in everything especially in academics. After few dais's closure of every academic institute when it was realized that education must go on all academic institutes and all kinds of academic institute suddenly switched over to the online mode. As the switching over was abrupt every associates faced a huge challenge in coping up the concept. The associates include teachers, students, support staff, administration and even the parents.
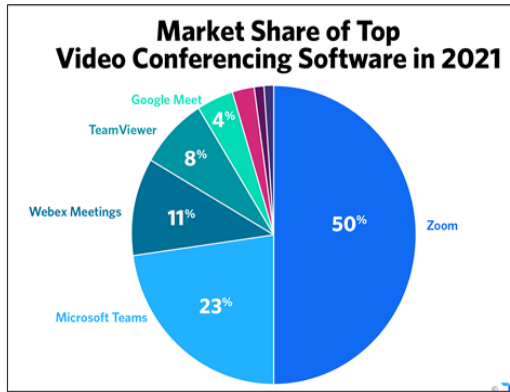
Fig.1: Comparative market of different video conference platform world-wide [1]

Fig.2: A generic framework for e-Learning platform [2]

The first challenge was to find a proper medium, device as well as platform. Off which regarding the devices, students mainly use were the mobile (smart) phones and laptops in some upper and upper middle class families. The medium, of course no doubt, is the internet whereas different platforms were chosen for the interaction that include simple Google meet, Whatsapp video call, zoom meeting, Microsoft team meeting and many other of which most used platform not only in India but throughout the globe has been Zoom cloud as shown in statistics (Fig.1).

Generally, all the merits and demerits of the online academics are hidden in the basic challenges of the operation as mentioned before. Broadly, the advantages lay on the fact that it is easily available, time saving as well as cost friendly.

On the contrary, the initial cost (like arranging of laptop or smart phone) is high and sometimes it is out of the reach of common people especially in the country like India. Another very serious issue is the network connection. In this country like India where in some places mere drinking water or electricity is rare to get, internet connection is surely being unavailable. Thus the academics in those places get seriously disrupted [2].

The online academic process has a general framework that may be classified into asynchronous and synchronous set.
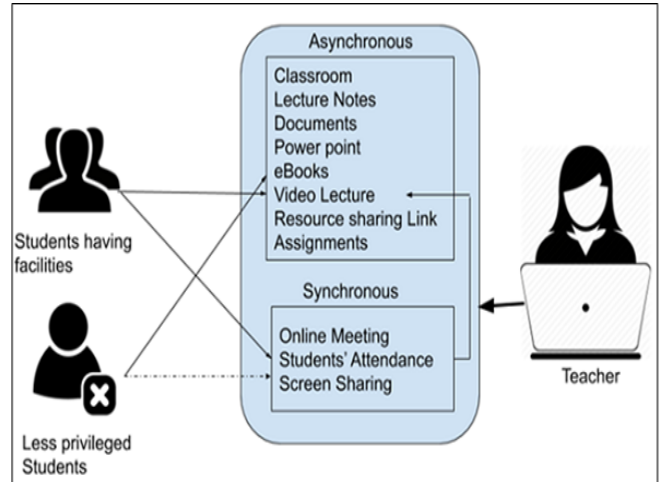
In the first category i.e. in asynchronous set teacher-student interaction was not direct and students can access the material without having a virtual face to face interaction. On the other hand in synchronous set teachers and students join the virtual meeting simultaneously and can interact directly with each other. Here teacher can share his/her study materials live and students can clear their doubts live as well. Teachers can use multimodal data as the medium of learning contents that include word documents, pdfs, power points, spread sheets, video lectures, and link of any web resources. Student can explore these data as per their convenience. In this entire process teacher and students set a meeting time with meeting link at a time of mutual time of convenience. Here sometimes teachers share their material before the scheduled class and use the class as doubt clearance platform some do the contrary. Fig.2 shows the basic generic framework for e-Learning process [2].

A survey has been conducted by a group from University of Kolkata among 2152 UG and PG students of which 47 students said they are totally inaccessible to the any kinds of online education as they do not have any smart-phone laptop or desktop. The result of the other students has been shown in Fig.3
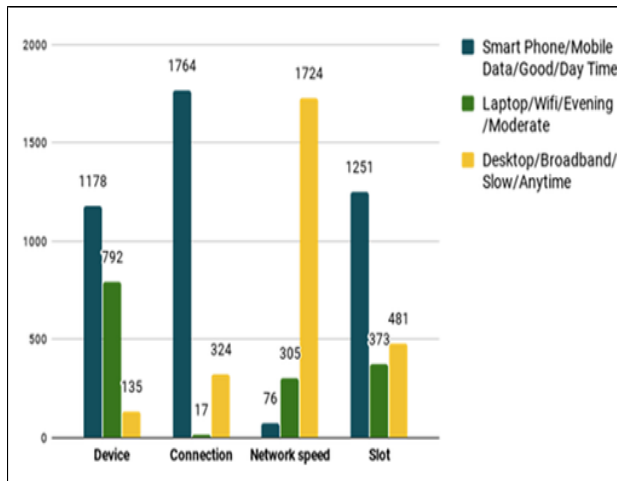
Fig.3: Technical facility status of the students in India [2]

Based on the above survey the most prominent points that come to our mind is that:

1. Ensuring technical facilities for the students.

2. Ensuring best outcome from each of the online classes.

3. Ensuring proper and continuous evaluation process.

4. How to perform the laboratory based examination and assessment.

Not only that apart from normal class room teaching there are serious issues related to online examination. The issues include:

• Connectivity loss during examination.

• Browser dependence of MCQ based exam.

• Process complexity in setting questions that includes equation/formula/diagram/chart/figure

• Unavailability of the provision regarding local storage when real-time submission suffers a failure.

II. Ensuring Effectiveness in Online Teaching

Even in this short period since the first report of Covid-19 or more specifically education system got shifted to online form there are numbers of suggestions from various groups. For instance, In the 2020 Naffi et al. suggested few means by which online learning may see an improvement specially in Universities. As per his suggestion the universities should ensure easy accessible material, proper digital platform, lecture recording, flexibility in student participation, understanding of student needs and other [3].

In the same year Leif et al. suggested few basic steps for the improvement of online learning. The steps are like understanding how students prefer to join classes, providing virtual class room tour video, ensuring availability of adequate study materials, and other [4].

Martin and group also suggested almost similar points like the previous group. Their suggestion stood on five keywords given by: instruction, content, motivation, relationship and lastly mental health [5].

Similar suggestion came from Dhawan et al. [6]. Additionally they gave emphasis on project based learning.

It is of no surprise that students faced difficulties in joining classes due to mainly the poor network connectivity and thus teachers have to make the class attractive by incorporating different catch points. In this consequence Fung et al. gave some useful points like studying classes early, keeping videos on for better interaction, asking feedback on daily basis and all [7].

III. Human Ethics and Online education

Even after all these difficulties mentioned in the previous section one can see there is a huge enthusiasm among the students, when the declaration of online education and online exams come. This is more acute in the second phase onwards. When the concept of online classes and exam came for the first time the students were bit anxious initially. However, very soon they found out several loop holes into the system to bypass the effort and ultimately get passed. Not even pass they actually manage to secure a good marks.

The different loop holes are associated with attendance, interaction, examination and others. In all these cases the genuine difficulties are excluded. In these issues students are mainly taking the different unfair means completely forgetting the

basic human ethics. They also take the full advantages of the sympathies of the teachers and other associates.

Regarding attendance issue, students are aware of the fact that keeping video switched on while joining in a conference may create difficulties in network issue and thus always they prefer to keep their video off and make themselves engaged in any other mischiefs while keeping themselves virtually present in the class. Thus classes are actually off no use regarding knowledge development.

Not only that, frequent bad network issue in country like India are is limitlessly being abused in attending classes. Here, the other engagements are given priorities by the students giving excuses of connectivity issues. As there are no ways to cross check the statement the every associate have to believe the statement of the students and practically there is a mockery of the human ethics.

In case of examination the ill use of human values are even more acute. Whenever students are asked any questions they are uncomfortable with, students readily pretend to be suffering from network issues. Thus examiner actually has nothing to say. As the academic activities follows a certain time limit the system has to evaluate the student on the basis of average evaluation. Not only that, there are many instances where during online examinations students switched off his/her video and take different unfair means. Fig.4 and Table 1 show compares the online and off-line cheating case during examination [8].
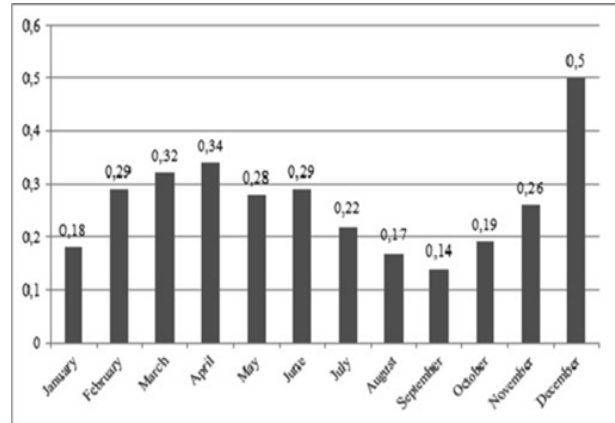

Fig.4: Monthly search trends for the set of keywords during 2020 [8]

For table -1, 94 keywords were taken and that has been categorized into 5 broad classes for getting an idea about the type of searches performed. It is clearly seen from the table 1 that how rigorous searches have been made to find ways and means to cheat in exam in the year 2020.

Table 1: Search categories based on the analysed keywords [8]:

Categories	Examples of keywords	Percentages
1. How to cheat	"How to cheat on an online exam", "how to cheat on an exam", "how to cheat on an exam with a cell phone"	40.4%
2. Generic concepts about cheating	"Exam cheat sheets", "cheat on an exam", "101 exam cheat sheets"	26.6%
3. On electronic devices for cheating	"Cheat with a cell phone on an exam", "cheat sheet watch", "cheat with a cell phone"	12.8%
4. On non-electronic devices for exam cheating	"Lenses to cheat on exams", "water bottle cheat sheet", "Tipp-Ex cheat sheet"	10.6%
5. Applications, programs and pages to cheat	"Chuletator", "app to make cheat sheets", "cheat sheets pages"	9.6%

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In this article the impact of covid-19 pandemics on the online exam systems have been discussed. Special emphasis has been given on the negative impact of the pandemic. The article shows how

students are depriving themselves from acquiring proper knowledge by taking unfair means in class room teaching learning as well as examination. It further tries to enlighten how maximum of the students are taking advantage of the few basic problems of the online education and exploit for fulfilling their evil purposes. It further pointed out few such aspects in which such misuses are the maximum. All the discussions have been well supported by the statistical record.

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