

Navigating Educational Disruptions: Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Competency-Based Learning and Psycho-Social Well-being in Aspirational Districts of North-East Region of India

Virendra Pratap Singh

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted significant disruptions in education, requiring a swift transition from conventional to online learning, particularly in India's rural and aspirational districts. Aligned with the objectives of the National Education Policy 2020 and the NIPUN Bharat Mission, this study explores the impact of the pandemic on competency-based learning and the psycho-social well-being of elementary school children. It highlights the preparedness of schools for virtual teaching, the role of parents and community members in supporting online education, and the initiatives undertaken by schools to ensure continuity in learning during the lockdown. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, gathering data from 191 parents and 180 School Management Committee/Community members across eight aspirational districts belonging to eight States in the North-East Region of India during academic session 2022-23. Key findings reveal that while schools and communities made commendable efforts to facilitate online education, challenges persisted in terms of access to digital devices, internet connectivity, and familiarity with online platforms. Parents expressed concerns about the physical and mental stress of online learning on children, with most favoring face-to-face instruction. Parents and community members emerged as vital contributors, offering diverse forms of assistance, including providing smartphones, conducting awareness campaigns, and fostering collaboration between teachers, parents, and children. Schools, with support from NGOs and religious organizations, implemented initiatives like distributing resources, conducting awareness programs, and ensuring access to academic materials for children lacking digital infrastructure. The findings highlight that shared responsibility among parents, schools, and communities is essential for sustaining learning during crises, a principle that aligns closely with competency-based learning. Furthermore, the call for strategic planning to enhance resilience and inclusivity mirrors the need to embed competencies such as adaptability, collaboration, and equity into educational frameworks, thereby ensuring that the system remains responsive and learner-centered in the face of future emergencies.

Keywords: competency-based learning/education, digital learning, school children, psycho-social well-being, community members, COVID-19

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Virendra Pratap Singh, Ph.D, Email: vpsncert@gmail.com



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The Government of India (GOI) unveiled the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 ([NEP_Final_English.pdf](#)) in July 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing quality education, innovation, competency-based learning/education (CBE), equity, and digital transformation. A key focus was placed on aspirational districts. Aspirational districts are regions identified by NITI Aayog (2018) for targeted development in areas such as health, education, agriculture, infrastructure, and governance based on specific development indicators. This categorization of districts is aligned with the goals of the NIPUN Bharat Mission¹. This study seeks to examine how the pandemic affected elementary education and evaluate the impact of online learning on children's outcomes, especially among socially and economically disadvantaged groups in the North-East's aspirational districts.

Central to NEP 2020 is the goal of enhancing children learning by ensuring Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) in primary education by 2025. The policy underscores that without basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic, its broader benefits may not reach many children. To address this challenge, the government launched the NIPUN Bharat (<https://nipunbharat.education.gov.in/index.html>) initiative as a mission-driven effort to foster an environment conducive to universal FLN achievement. The target is for all children to attain proficiency in these foundational skills by the end of Grade III, or by Grade V at the latest, by the academic year 2026–27.

During the same period, the country experienced multiple lockdowns to control the spread of COVID-19. These disruptions led to the closure of schools, particularly in rural areas, and necessitated a shift to online teaching and distance learning. The GOI introduced guidelines for implementing these alternative methods, as traditional face-to-face teaching was no longer feasible (Dhawan, 2020). Teachers' computer proficiency and access to the internet played a key role in facilitating remote teaching. Encouragement and positive reinforcement during this transition helped boost their morale and supported the creation of an improved teaching-learning environment post-COVID-19 disruption (Bhat et al., 2020).

The NEP 2020 also acknowledged the potential of technology in education while recognizing associated challenges. It emphasized the importance of equity in digital education and called for well-structured pilot studies to assess how digital learning can be effectively implemented, ensuring its benefits are maximized while mitigating potential risks (GOI, 2020).

Traditionally, the process of schooling has been straightforward (i.e., parents ensure children attend school or board the school bus on time and return home afterward). However, the COVID-19 lockdown brought significant changes, shifting from conventional to virtual schooling. While the curriculum remains largely consistent, the learning environment differs greatly. In virtual schooling, children log into online platforms to access their coursework via the Internet. While this method offers flexibility, it also creates opportunities for misuse of freedom. Despite mechanisms to monitor children's progress, supervision is sometimes necessary to ensure adherence to outlined schedules.

¹ <https://nipunbharat.education.gov.in/index.html>

In this context, parents and SMC/Community members have assumed a critical role in the learning process, becoming integral to the child's educational environment. Their active participation is essential in supporting and guiding the child's online education experience. Recognizing their importance as key stakeholders, the study gathered inputs from parents and SMC/Community members through specifically designed research schedules, emphasizing their perspectives on online competency-based learning/education.

Competency-Based Learning/Education as a Variable - Conceptual Definition

Competency-Based Learning/Education (CBE) refers to an instructional and assessment approach aligned with NEP 2020 and the NIPUN Bharat Mission, which emphasizes the *acquisition of demonstrable learning competencies*—particularly foundational literacy, numeracy, digital skills, and higher-order thinking—rather than rote memorization. In the context of present study, CBE represents the transition from traditional content-based pedagogy to skill- and outcome-based learning, which was significantly disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. CBE in this document is rooted in:

- Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) competencies as mandated by NEP 2020.
- Use of digital tools and online platforms to deliver competency-oriented instruction².
- Active children's engagement and application of knowledge, rather than passive reception.
- Parental and community understanding of new assessment and pedagogic methods.
- Teacher readiness and technological preparedness to deliver competency-linked outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

Aligned with the NEP-2020 and the NIPUN BHARAT Mission, as well as the Government of India's focus on quality and innovation, competency-based education, equity, ICT and digital initiatives, and attention to aspirational districts, this school- and parents/community members-based research study aimed to examine the positive and negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on competency-based learning/education (CBE) among elementary school children in selected aspirational districts of the North-East Region. In addition, the study sought to evaluate schools' preparedness for implementing online and virtual instructions as perceived by parents and community members, and to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the psycho-social well-being of elementary school children.

In this study, Competency-Based Education (CBE) is conceptualized as a core pedagogical outcome aligned with the NEP 2020 and the NIPUN Bharat Mission, emphasizing foundational literacy, numeracy, and skill-based learning. The variable captures the degree to which children in aspirational districts were able to acquire and

² Note: The competencies are taught and measured mastery is met before students advance.

demonstrate essential competencies during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes their engagement with digital learning platforms, exposure to competency-oriented instructional materials, parental and community facilitation, and the broader psycho-social conditions affecting their learning behavior. As a measurable construct, CBE reflects both the opportunities and constraints experienced during the transition from face-to-face to virtual schooling. This research study considers the research questions pertaining to the competency-based learning and psycho-social well-being as stated below:

1. Digital Access & Infrastructure:

- How did limited access to smartphones and digital devices affect competency-based learning outcomes in aspirational districts?
- How did internet connectivity quality influence the effectiveness of virtual schooling in rural North-East Region of India?

2. Parents & Community Participation:

- In what ways did parental involvement shape children’s adaptation to competency-based online learning during the pandemic?
- How effective were community-led initiatives (e.g., providing devices, awareness campaigns) in sustaining learning continuity?
- What challenges did parents face in understanding and supporting competency-based education (CBE) in virtual settings?

3. Psycho-Social Well-being:

- What were the short- and long-term psycho-social impacts of prolonged online learning on elementary school children?
- How did stress levels reported by parents correlate with children’s motivation and learning behavior?
- What coping strategies did schools and communities employ to mitigate emotional distress among learners?

A Post-Pandemic Review:

Community Participation and Virtual Schooling in North-East Region

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly transformed education across India, with pronounced effects in the North-East. This analytical review draws from seven contemporary studies that examine community involvement in school governance, virtual learning experiences, and the rollout of competency-based education (CBE) in tribal and economically marginalized areas. In India, “tribal” means constitutionally recognized Scheduled Tribes—distinct cultural communities. Geography matters, but identity and legal recognition define them, not just location.

Community involvement and school governance remain central to the success of educational reforms in India’s diverse contexts. Research from Meghalaya (Singh et al., 2022) illustrates that teachers recognize the importance of community participation in school-based management (SBM), yet they also highlight persistent barriers such as limited awareness, inadequate training, and irregular engagement from families and local actors. Complementing this perspective, Tyagi et al. (2023) under-

score the pivotal role of School Management Committees (SMCs) in advancing elementary education in tribal regions. Their findings emphasize that while SMCs are structurally significant, they require sustained and context-specific training to build the capacity of members. Further evidence from Ribhoi District in Bhorimpong Block (Singh & Singh, 2025a) reveals how cultural constraints and administrative inefficiencies undermine grassroots governance, pointing to the need for leadership that is both locally rooted and culturally attuned. Together, these studies suggest that policies such as SBM and SMCs cannot succeed through uniform application alone; they demand localized strategies, continuous capacity development, and leadership sensitive to tribal realities.

The challenges of governance are mirrored in the domain of virtual learning, where the sudden shift to online education during the pandemic exposed deep inequalities. Singh & Singh (2025b) document how children's experiences varied widely: while some adapted to digital platforms, many struggled with screen fatigue, isolation, and emotional distress. On the other hand, teachers, particularly in aspirational districts, faced their own hurdles—poor infrastructure, limited professional development opportunities, and difficulties in sustaining children engagement (Singh & Singh, 2025c). Yet, amidst these challenges, educators observed a silver lining in the form of increased parental involvement, as families became more directly engaged in their children's learning. These findings highlight that virtual schooling is not merely a technological shift but an emotional and social one, requiring comprehensive support systems that address both digital access and the psychological well-being of learners.

Parallel to these transformations, the move toward competency-based education (CBE) has introduced new dynamics in family engagement. Singh et al. (2025) show that parents generally welcome the transition to skill-based learning, appreciating its potential to move beyond rote memorization. However, many express uncertainties about unfamiliar assessment methods and curriculum changes. This underscores that the success of CBE depends not only on teacher preparedness but also on informed parental participation. In communities where traditional learning practices dominate, families must be supported to understand and embrace the pedagogical shifts, ensuring that the reform is not confined to classrooms but extends into homes.

Finally, the promise of inclusion and equity under the Right to Education (RTE) Act remains incomplete. Kumar & Singh (2025) reveal that while access for disadvantaged children in private schools has improved, subtle forms of exclusion and inadequate support persist. These children often face social and cultural barriers that limit their integration, reminding us that legal provisions alone cannot guarantee equity. Genuine inclusion requires schools to adopt inclusive teaching practices and undertake sensitization efforts that reshape attitudes within the school community.

Taken together, these strands of evidence present a coherent picture: educational reforms in India—whether in governance, digital learning, competency-based approaches, or equity measures—cannot thrive through policy design alone. They demand contextual adaptation, sustained capacity-building, and meaningful community engagement. Only when policies are localized, inclusive, and emotionally

attuned to the realities of learners and families can they achieve their transformative potential. Collectively, these studies offer a comprehensive view of post-pandemic education in North-East Region. Key strategies include - empowering SMCs through localized training and community outreach, investing in digital infrastructure and teacher development to close the digital gap, raising parental awareness to support CBE implementation, providing emotional and psychological support for children in virtual environments and encouraging inclusive practices across both public and private schools. The takeaways are as follows:

- Community involvement is vital for effective school governance, particularly in tribal and rural contexts
- Teachers and SMCs serve as crucial links between policy and practice, but need consistent support
- The pandemic revealed deep-rooted inequities, making community-driven digital education planning essential
- Policy actions should focus on training, inclusivity, and collaboration between educators and communities

Methods

The study was conducted in eight aspirational districts from North-East States, namely, Namsai, Hailakandi, Chandel, Ribhoi, Mamit, Kiphire, Gyalshing, and Dhalai belonging to the States of Arunachal, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura in India, respectively. Four elementary level schools from Mamit and Gyalshing were selected randomly to pilot the research schedules, while sixteen elementary level schools were randomly chosen for primary data collection for the study. In total, data were collected from 20 elementary level schools. The school served as the primary sampling unit and were randomly selected with administrative support from the State/District Education Authorities. From these schools, the parents and SMC/Community members were invited to participate voluntarily in the study. Accordingly, the study carefully incorporates ethical practices—such as informed consent, safeguards for stakeholders, and protocols for data confidentiality—to uphold integrity, respect, and accountability throughout the process of collecting primary data from schools.

CBE as a Study Variable

In present study, CBE emerges as a central outcome variable, influenced by several contextual, infrastructural, and socio-psychological factors in the aspirational districts. The variable is integrated as:

- Dependent variable of impact of COVID-19 on CBE: The document examines how pandemic-related school closures and online learning challenges affected the delivery and achievement of CBE competencies among elementary children. Key influences include - Access to smartphones

and digital devices, familiarity with online learning platforms, parental and community support, quality of digital content and teacher readiness, stress and psycho-social well-being of children.

- Intermediate/Process Variable: CBE functions as a *process variable* when exploring - implementation of competency-focused instructional practices during online teaching, level of parental understanding of skill-based learning, school and teacher preparedness for digital pedagogy, community involvement in supporting learning continuity.
- Outcome variable at the children level: CBE can be operationalized through indicators such as - children's FLN proficiency (as per NEP 2020/NIPUN Bharat), ability to engage with digital lessons, application of skills in problem-solving tasks, participation and performance in competency-linked assessments, children motivation and learning behavior during virtual classes.

Research Schedules

The research schedules specifically designed for parents and SMC/Community members tailored to the study's objectives were developed. These schedules involved the CBE as study variable, and captured the dependent variable, intermediate/process variable and outcome variable, specifically, a range of data-items from parents and community members as given below:

- From parents, data were gathered on smartphone access, household resource availability, methods for obtaining devices for online learning, applications or platforms used by children, parents' agreement with statements on ICT device usage, satisfaction with timetables, concerns about COVID-19's impact on children's learning and performance, and children's comfort with online classes.
- From SMC/Community members, information was collected on opportunities to support schools and families in facilitating online classes, as well as activities conducted by schools during COVID-19 to assist children.

A schedule outlining the key checkpoints and focus areas for the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with respondents was prepared in alignment with the study's objectives. The FGDs were conducted to complement survey data and provide deeper qualitative insights into the study's objectives. While structured schedules captured quantitative and qualitative information from parents and community members, FGDs allowed participants to collectively reflect on their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data Collection, Analysis and Ethical Standards

The schedules for parents and community members were tested in actual field conditions and targeted specifically elementary schools. The study used a mixed-methods design—combining descriptive statistics with qualitative data—to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on elementary school children. The dataset includ-

ed both closed- and open-ended, which were entered into MS Excel for tabulation and analysis following methods proposed by Cox (1996), Daniels et al. (2002), and Kumar (2019). The procedures pertaining to data collection and analysis adhered to the ethical standards and contextual appropriateness. Participation of respondents was entirely voluntary, and data collected from them remained fully anonymous, gathered through structured survey schedules. These survey schedules excluded personally sensitive questions, and all results were reported in aggregate for educational and research purposes.

Results and Discussion

This study aimed to assess the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on competency-based learning /education among elementary school children, focusing on the readiness of schools to adopt online and virtual teaching methods, as well as evaluating the pandemic's effects on children's psycho-social well-being in selected aspirational districts of the North-East Region. To meet these objectives, research schedules were administered to parents and SMC/Community members across all eight States of the region, selecting one aspirational district per State. The primary data were collected from 191 parents (55 males, 128 females, and 8 respondents who did not specify their gender) and 180 SMC/Community members (112 males and 68 females) through face-to-face interactions under the supervision of State Nodal Officers appointed by State Authorities during academic session 2022-23 under a GOI approved and funded program. The results based on collected data from respondents were processed and analyzed to generate insights aligned with the study's objectives.

Access to Smartphones and Resource Availability in Households

The study examined household access to smartphones, specifically those used by mothers, fathers, and siblings. As shown in Figure 1, during the COVID-19 lockdown when online classes were implemented in the North-East Region, 40% of fathers, 34% of mothers, and 27% of siblings had access to smartphones. Additionally, 89% of parents reported the availability of textbooks in their households, while 64% acknowledged the presence of learning support materials.

Parents' Responses on Procuring Devices for Online Learning

Digital devices, such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktops, were essential for online learning. Parents provided insights on how these devices were managed for their children, whether through ownership, sharing, purchase, borrowing, or donation. As depicted in Figure 2, 41% of parents indicated that devices were shared, while 32% reported owning them. Only 9% purchased devices for online learning, and 3% relied on donations or sponsorships.

Figure 1
Access to Smartphones to Households (in Percent) (N=191)

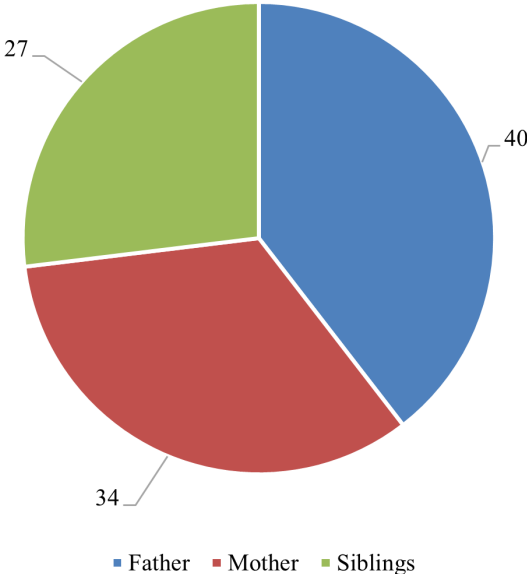
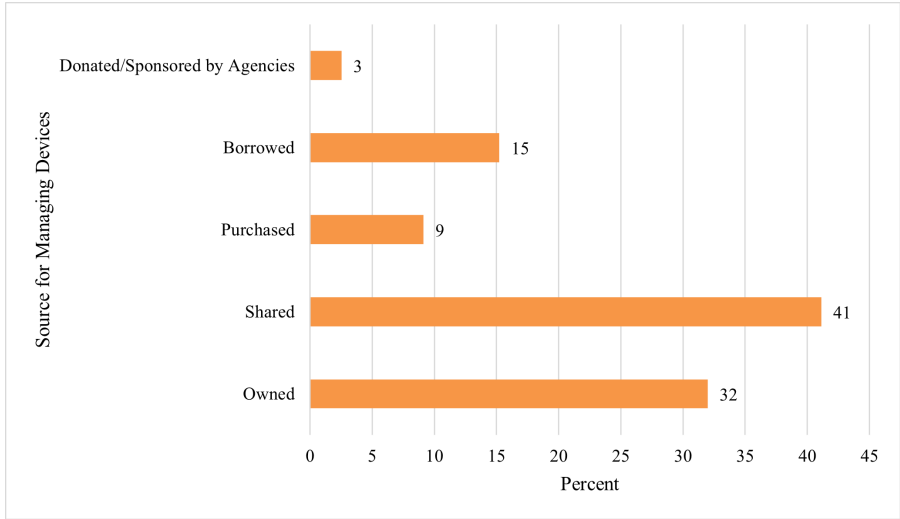


Figure 2
Parents Response on Source for Managing the Devices for Online Learning (N=191)



Parents' Perception of Online Learning Platforms

Parents were surveyed about their familiarity with online platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Webex. Responses were measured on a three-point scale: Yes, No, and Don't Know. According to Table 1, WhatsApp (76%) and YouTube (46%) were the most popular platforms, followed by Google Meet (41%) and Zoom (28%). Awareness of platforms like Google Classroom (8%), Microsoft Teams (4%), and Webex (6%) was notably low.

Table 1

Parents' Perception About Applications/ Online Platforms Used for Learning by Children (N=191)

Application/Online Platforms	Parents' Perception (in Percent)			
	Yes	No	Don't Know	No-Response
Zoom	28	25	14	33
Google Meet	41	24	10	25
Google Classmate	8	35	17	40
Microsoft Teams	4	34	19	43
YouTube	46	21	9	25
WhatsApp	76	4	6	13
Webex	6	31	18	44

Parents' Perception of ICT Use and Digital Resources

Parents evaluated ICT devices used by teachers and the quality of digital resources. The findings showed that 59% reported teachers predominantly used mobile phones, while computers and laptops were rarely employed. Approximately 60% felt the internet quality was satisfactory to some extent. Regarding digital resources, videos (82%) and quizzes/assessment tools (85%) were widely used, whereas digital textbooks and PowerPoint presentations were less popular.

Parents' Satisfaction with Learning Schedules/Timetables and COVID-19's Impact on Learning

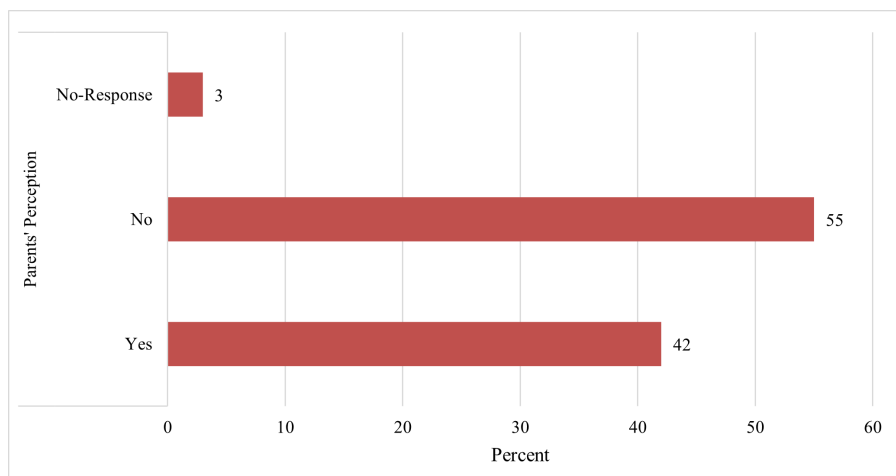
Parents rated their satisfaction with the clarity of learning schedules and tasks assigned to children on a three-point scale. Most parents (63–64%) rated their satisfaction as “to some extent.” In addition, when asked about the pandemic's impact on children's academic performance and motivation to learn at school, most parents expressed concern, with responses ranging from “worried” to “extremely worried.”

Parents' Perception of Children's Comfort with Online Classes

Parents assessed their children's comfort with online classes, considering both physical and mental stress. Figure 3 illustrated parental perceptions on this matter. As shown, approximately 42% of parents believed their children had experienced stress, whereas 55% disagreed, attributing it to online learning.

Figure 3

Level of Comfort (Physical/ Mental) of Children in Online Classes (N=191)



Regarding preferred learning methods during the lockdown, only 4% had favored online learning, while 88% had preferred face-to-face instructions. Another 18% had supported a hybrid or blended model. Additionally, 84% of parents had reported that children had received adequate breaks between online sessions throughout the lockdown.

Opportunities for SMC/Community Members to Assist Schools and Families with Online Classes

Community members were asked about their opportunities to assist schools or families with online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown. About 64% of respondents ($N = 180$) indicated they supported schools and families in various ways, including:

1. Providing smartphones to children for online learning.
2. Encouraging children to attend scheduled online classes and seek clarification from teachers.
3. Motivating teachers via phone to conduct online classes.
4. Raising awareness among parents and the community to encourage children's participation.

5. Conducting sanitization efforts around school premises and providing hygiene supplies.
6. Holding meetings with parents and teachers to organize online learning plans.
7. Helping children take notes from online lessons and attend classes.
8. Delivering notes to children's homes when network issues arose.
9. Motivating teachers to distribute class notes online.
10. Encouraging adherence to scheduled online classes and preparation of accessible lessons.
11. Training families in using platforms like Google Meet, WhatsApp, and YouTube.
12. Acting as a liaison between the zonal education office and the community.
13. Supporting villagers in continuing classes using mobile devices.
14. Spreading awareness about COVID-19 protocols in rural communities.
15. Visiting homes to monitor children's online learning.
16. Fostering better collaboration among teachers, parents, and children.

Activities Conducted by Schools During COVID-19 to Support Children

Community members ($N = 180$) provided input on school activities during the pandemic to support children's education. Approximately 58% reported that school officials had sought community assistance, while 42% said no such requests were made. Key activities included:

1. Organizing COVID-19 awareness programs covering hygiene practices, social distancing, and mask usage, and holding meetings with parents and community members.
2. Distributing hand sanitizers and masks to children and sanitizing school premises.
3. Providing food supplies like oil, rice, dal, and potatoes as alternatives to mid-day meals.
4. Arranging outdoor classes with community and teacher support.
5. Delivering hard copies of notes to children with limited network access, monitoring progress, and providing printed materials for those without digital access.
6. Offering handouts for children in areas with poor or no internet.
7. Facilitating creative activities such as arts and crafts through online classes.
8. Visiting homes to distribute academic materials and conducting online classes using platforms like Google Meet and WhatsApp.
9. Hosting group learning sessions for small groups of children while adhering to COVID-19 norms.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Psycho-Social Health of School Children

The prolonged home confinement during COVID-19, combined with the lack of extracurricular activities, disrupted sleep and eating patterns, and minimal peer

interaction, significantly affected children's psycho-social well-being. Changes in behavior, such as increased irritability and arguments with family members, were noted, often observed more closely by parents than community members. There is a need for further in-depth research to understand these psycho-social effects comprehensively.

Findings

Although parents are part of the broader community, the responses from community members broadly reflect parents' perceptions as well. However, parents often express deeper and more specific concerns due to the direct impact of online teaching on their children. As a result, the study included parents as a separate respondent category. Key findings from their feedback are as follows:

- During the pandemic, schools shifted from face-to-face learning to online instruction. A large majority of parents (88%) preferred face-to-face education for their children, while only 4% supported the online mode.
- The preparedness of schools to address pandemic-related challenges was a significant concern. Analysis revealed that while smartphones and learning materials were available, only 27% of children had direct access to a smartphone, as 74% of smartphones were primarily used by the father or mother.
- For online learning, 41% of children shared a smartphone with others, while 27% relied on newly purchased, borrowed, or donated devices.
- Familiarity with online platforms was crucial for virtual learning, yet many parents did not provide responses on this topic. WhatsApp and YouTube emerged as the most frequently used platforms by school personnel, with mobile phones being the primary communication tool for teachers.
- Opinions on the physical and mental impact of online learning varied among parents. While 42% believed their children experienced stress, 55% disagreed.

Community members are key stakeholders in the school education system, contributing significantly to initiatives aimed at boosting children's enrollment and retention. Various government schemes at the State and Central levels have fostered partnerships with parents, NGOs, and community groups to enhance primary, elementary, and secondary education. Initiatives such as parent-teacher committees, mothers' groups, self-help groups, and community partnerships (e.g., Ekalavya Vidyalayas) emphasize shared responsibility for creating a safe and inclusive educational environment. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "*Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas*" (translated as "Together with all, Development for all") slogan exemplifies collective efforts to achieve societal development. Research has shown a positive link between parental involvement and children learning outcomes, and the Ministry of Education

has provided guidelines to encourage parents' participation in home-based learning, particularly during school closures. Within this framework, the study included community members as respondents to evaluate their contributions to supporting both children's education and schools. Key findings include:

- Community members actively supported education in their areas, with 64% assisting in various ways, such as providing smartphones, taking notes for children, training families, and raising awareness about online platforms like Google Meet, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Zoom.
- Schools sought assistance from community members, with 58% of respondents confirming that school authorities approached them for support.
- Community members noted that schools undertook activities like awareness programs, distribution of masks and sanitizers, mid-day meals, academic packages, arranging online classes, and visiting children's homes to distribute notes and check their work.
- In addition to parents, NGOs and religious organizations (e.g., churches) played a crucial role in supporting schools during COVID-19. About 82% of respondents reported contributions such as distributing masks, conducting awareness campaigns, motivating children to attend online classes, improving Internet connectivity, providing mobile devices and laptops, and distributing food items to families.

Conclusions

The findings underscore the critical roles played by both parents and community members in ensuring the continuity of education during the COVID-19 pandemic. While parents expressed strong preferences for face-to-face learning and faced challenges in adapting to online education due to limited access to smartphones and unfamiliarity with digital platforms, they remained deeply invested in their children's education. Their concerns about the physical and mental well-being of their children further highlight the multifaceted impact of the shift to online learning.

Community members, as essential stakeholders, demonstrated substantial support for schools, stepping in to bridge resources and knowledge gaps. Their contributions ranged from providing devices and training to actively collaborating with schools to implement initiatives such as awareness programs, distribution of essentials, and ensuring access to academic resources. The involvement of NGOs and religious organizations added significant value, particularly in addressing technological and logistical barriers.

This collective effort by parents, schools, and the broader community illustrates the importance of shared responsibility and partnership in overcoming challenges in education. These insights reinforce the need for continued collaboration and strategic planning to build a more resilient and inclusive education system capable of addressing future emergencies effectively.

Implications/Recommendations for Competency-Based Education

Education functions as both an instrument of social development and an agent of social change. Since society is dynamic, continuous innovations in education are essential to keep pace with evolving contexts. Competency-Based Education (CBE), with its focus on mastery, equity, and collaboration, provides a framework for adapting to these changes. The following recommendations highlight the roles of parents and community members in strengthening CBE:

For Parents

- Counselling & Orientation during crises (e.g., COVID-19): In CBE depending on the context (e.g., culture, country, sector, etc.), parents are co-educators. Orientation and counselling empower them to guide children's competency development, ensuring resilience and continuity of learning during disruptions.
- Provision of digital devices for education only: Equitable access to technology is fundamental in CBE. Restricting devices to educational use promotes responsible learning and supports mastery of digital competencies.
- Active involvement in school activities: CBE emphasizes shared accountability. Parents' participation in school governance and daily learning processes ensures progress monitoring and reinforces collaborative learning.
- Engagement in productive home activities: CBE integrates academic learning with real-life skills. Productive home tasks nurture competencies such as responsibility, problem-solving, and social values, preventing disengagement.

For Community Members

- Infrastructure for online learning: CBE requires robust community investment. Digital infrastructure ensures inclusivity, enabling learners to progress at their own pace regardless of location or circumstance.
- Role of NGOs and social organizations: Partnerships are central to CBE. NGOs facilitating online learning embody collective responsibility, extending opportunities to marginalized learners.
- Counselling centers for psycho-social issues: CBE views education holistically. Community-based counselling strengthens emotional resilience, a critical competency for lifelong learning and social development.
- Community Radio for promotion of learning: Local resources democratize education. Radio centers expand access to competency-based content, especially for underserved populations, reinforcing community-driven dissemination.
- Training children and teachers in online tools: Capacity building is a pillar of CBE. Equipping learners with digital literacy and teachers with pedagogical skills ensures adaptability and relevance in a rapidly changing society.

Competency-Based Education thrives when parents and communities act as active partners. Their involvement ensures equitable access, holistic development, and sustainable learning ecosystems where learners progress based on demonstrated mastery rather than time spent in class.

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