



### RESILIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION DELIVERY TO ENDURE CHALLENGES DURING AND AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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#### Abstract:

COVID-19 had demoralising effects on almost every sector in its period of existence. It opened a challenge in every form that humankind could contemplate. It has changed the way education is delivered. This paradigm shift has made the teaching community as well as the students face challenges and converting them into opportunities by accepting technology along with the digital world. This paper aims to study and understand educator's perceptions of the digital world, their Resilience as well as Digital Resilience in these times and how have they evolved during pandemic. There are obvious disparities in teaching pedagogies of teachers across various courses in an institute, but how has the institute ensured that all the Programme Outcomes are attained in totality, is a matter of concern and has formed the basis for this paper. Covid-19 has put focus on educator's resilience and digital competencies while they deliver their postgraduate programme. Resilience means "an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change" (Merriam-Webster) and Digital Resilience is "being more agile by adapting to digital change". The paper aims to discuss how this pandemic outbreak has influenced teaching of an educator, their participation in the digital world and their ability to accept this digital transformation and challenges faced by them. The paper also tries to emphasise the efforts taken by the institute in ensuring quality and timely learning is being provided to all students without any compromise in delivery and content of the course. This study will try to find out hurdles that could affect digital change and learning support for students to enhance their digital competence.

**Keywords:** Online Teaching and Learning, Higher Education, Teaching Pedagogies, Digital Resilience, Covid-19 Pandemic

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#### Introduction:

The outbreak of COVID-19 has forced many countries to enforce lockdowns that brought everything to a standstill including the teaching and learning process. The educational sector suffered the most due to this pandemic. This pandemic has made the world to observe social distancing in the public space. In 2020, the WHO declared it as pandemic. The guidelines that were issued by the



WHO which were ratified by the most of the countries across the world compelled the governments to shut down the institutions of mass gatherings. So along with the educational institutions the academic year-end exams and competitive exams were postponed indefinitely. This step was taken in order to slow down and contain the spread of Corona virus in India by segregating the people who were infected with COVID-19. This process known as Lockdown wherein the Government had imposed severe restrictions on the movement and the gatherings of the people in order to control the spread of this disease. All the educational institutions in India had to be shut down Right from the primary schools to the universities. The regular classes were suspended citing threat to the lives of the learners and the teachers. It also affected the lives of the aspirants who were preparing for competitive & entrance exams. The major and devastating impact this pandemic brought in the global education is, it led to sudden shift of education from classroom teaching to the online mode of teaching and learning that has affected the teaching and learning process in Universities, colleges and schools and thus it has significantly disrupted the higher education sector in India.

We can say that with the introduction of learning through digital mode, learning became very easy to the students as they can sit at home and get access to digital learning. At the same time, some students had to face problems due to the poor internet connectivity. Even after India is adapting to online learning methods, still there lies an obstacles as entire population donot have access to internet and **E-learning facility.**

This paper intends to understand the issues that are associated with the higher education in India due to COVID-19 and to focus on certain drawbacks in the context of online education and its psychological impact on the lives of the students.

### **Impact on Higher Education:**

Around the second week of March 2020, state government across the country began to shut down the schools, colleges due to COVID-19. This was the crucial time for students as different University, institute usually hold examination during this period and different entrance test of various universities and competitive examination were to be held during this period. Students had to face severe problem, as they were not aware of the future examination especially students who were in the final year and those who were to appear entrance test. This closure of educational institutions disrupted the structure of learning; assessment and examination.

Online teaching has come to rescue which was reflected as the threat. However, several issues started coming up along with the introduction of online mode of teaching in higher educational institutions (HEIs). One of the significant question arises regarding online teaching learning is whether it is effective? However, it is effective for those who have right access to the technology. Internet plays very vital role for better learning for higher education. In India, not all students have the required facilities due to different socio-economic background. This might cause discomfort and frustration among students which might give the student a feeling of segregation and thus create digital divide between the rich who can avail all the facilities and the poor who cannot afford to purchase the equipment's that are required for E-Learning. So



in India lot of people are not completely well equipped with all the facilities and many times they cannot get access to fast internet that is needed for online teaching & learning process.

Lack of student involvement during the online classes has increased absenteeism and poor performance. Unfortunately, student's passive role in the classroom became one of the significant reasons for ineffective online teaching and learning process. Mobile applications or virtual meeting platforms like Zoom, Google meet became the virtual meeting hubs.

Educational institutions directed teachers to engage classes through online mode using the virtual meeting platforms like Zoom & Google meet. The teachers who were not well versed with modern technology and mobile applications had to struggle a lot to engage online classes due to the sudden shift from face to face teaching to online teaching. Some teachers were just conducting classes because they were asked to do so. Many students were just joining the classes to mark themselves present. They hardly paid attention towards what was being taught by the teacher as class control is a challenge on these virtual platforms.

Many entrance tests, job recruitment got cancelled which created a negative impact on the lives of the students. All these imply towards increase in unemployment in India. Thus with the increase of unemployment situation, there were enough chances of diminishing interest for education due to the struggle for food. These growing issues have caused mental stress amongst the youngsters and youths who are the future of India.

Though COVID-19 created many negative impacts on education, at the same time it has brought new

dimension to the teaching learning process in India. Though there are many drawbacks of online learning, it became a survivor during the worst situation in the country. It enhanced the digital literacy. People started learning and using digital technology. Electronic media was used for sharing information worldwide. Students preferred Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode of learning as it encourages self-learning. The HEIs also gave their positive response by adopting different strategies during this crisis. UGC, MHRD also have made available teaching and learning materials for students to motivate learning. Some of the digital initiatives have proved to be very effective during the COVID crisis. Some of them are listed below:

**Swayam-** It is said that SWAYAM covers over 1900 courses are available which covers school and higher education. It has been designed as per the guidelines prescribed by SWAYAM for MOOCs to enhance the experience of the learner and to make that platform more learner centric. The main motto of this platform is to create a repository of the e-content as in step with the prescribed syllabus. The principle cause is to provide the students with lectures both in online mode as well as in offline mode. Secondly this platform has strengthened the educational system or one can say that it has made educational system immune against the serious challenges arising from pandemic or disastrous situations like this. Development and change is one of the inevitable parts of human life however during the pandemic people had to accept sudden change as it became necessary for the survival. It encouraged personalized learning which in long run will be beneficial for qualitative teaching and learning process. It also facilitates improvement in



collaborative work.

**E-Gyankosh,-** One of the initiative taken by national government to share digital learning resources which are developed by the open and distance learning institutions in the country. Study material was made available for the students.

**E-Adhyayan, Gyandhara-** It is internet service where students can listen live discussions made by experts and also can interact with them through telephonic conversation

### Literature Review:

Digital resilience in higher education in response to COVID-19 pandemic: Digital competence has emerged with the digitalisation of society, extending across work, learning, leisure, socialisation, and consumerism (Ferrari, 2012). Society's shift towards a digitalised world necessitates knowledge, attitudes, and skills of digital competence. Digital competence refers to the capacity of using digital technologies consciously and critically (Klassen, 2019), as users in public and private life (Pötzsch, 2019) conduct problem solving, communicating, information managing, collaborating, and effective knowledge building (Ferrari, 2012). In academic contexts, resilience is “a student's capacity to overcome acute or chronic adversities in academic settings that could constitute major impediments to their academic success” (Martin & Marsh, 2009, p.353).

Digitally resilient students in tertiary education sustain motivation, achievement and performance in their studies while being able to overcome and deal with stressful events (Alva, 1991). The inevitable stress for such students, does not result in poor educational outcomes or lead to the risk of dropping out, as they adopt resilience into their digital

competencies. Resilience thus has a positive impact on students' health, well-being, performance, and achievement (Cassidy, 2016). Traditionally, digital resilience is related to matters concerning cyber-safety, security, or bullying. In this study, we define digital resilience as the ability of learners to overcome technological difficulties and persist with online learning as they adapted to the changing trends in higher education due to COVID-19. Existing literature largely probes into and seeks strategies for solidifying and enhancing students' general resilience such as psychological resilience (Beale, 2020) and wellbeing (Sood, & Sharma, 2020). Four themes including control, resourcefulness, involvement, and growth, were explored when considering building resilience in students (Wadi et al., 2020). Some other studies evidenced that resilience in curriculum evaluation systems facilitated students' learning outcomes and benefited curriculum design and delivery during the pandemic (Muscat-Ingloft, 2020). However, how to develop digital resilience in students has been overlooked.

Additionally, some studies have contributed practical implications regarding how tertiary educational institutions facilitated resilience in face of the pandemic (Crawford et al., 2020b). For example, universities across 20 countries actioned strategies, including on-campus social isolation and redevelopment for fully online education (Crawford et al., 2020a). Higher education providers have faced challenges of organisational agility (Wu, 2020), technological infrastructure (Zhong, 2020), and online environments (Xie & Rice, 2021), when reengineering resilience for students.

Another example confirmed that distance learning



organised by universities improved students' resilience (Appolloni et al., 2021). Similarly, the design, development, and implementation of learning activities promoted resilience in students (Naidu, 2021). However, how well the tertiary institutions prepare for the digitalisation of learning to develop resilience remains unknown (Houlden&Veletsianos, 2020). To fill the gap, the present study critically assesses ways to strengthen tertiary students' online academic success and cyber-based well-being by exploring the digital resilience in students during and after the pandemic. Secondly, it investigates strategies to help students to manage and bounce back from adversities through rebuilding digital supports and choreographies provided by tertiary educational institutions in the transitioning educational scenarios.

**Discussion:** Difficulties in Implementation of digital teaching learning

- (1) Online teaching is constrained by infrastructure. The network coverage in remote areas is insufficient, which may further lead to educational inequity.
- (2) The proportion and efficiency of the use of online teaching resources are still rather low. a large proportion of teachers had little use and knowledge of online resources before the outbreak, but had to precipitously copy offline teaching content to the network space, without making appropriate adaptations.
- (3) The effect of online education is, to a large extent, contingent on teachers' online teaching ability and experience. As online teaching was not yet a major form of education in institutes, many teachers had no previous experience in

online teaching. Although teachers received various types of training during the outbreak, the short-term effect of such training remains arguably minimal. Further, the urban-rural disparity, different levels of knowledge about information technology acquired by teachers, and teachers' differing attitudes towards, and ability to learn, information technology, are all having an impact on the general effectiveness of online education across the country

- (4) Students and teachers face problems when studying and teaching at home. First of all, there is a wide range of distractions from teaching and studying at home. For example, the burden of housework and childcare can be heavy for young teachers, which may have a negative impact on their online teaching. Secondly, not all teachers and students are able to find suitable spaces for teaching and studying at home. Third, teaching and studying can be constrained by insufficient hardware and an unstable network at home.
- (5) It remains unclear what teaching mode and pedagogy may work best for online education. Additionally, how to take into account and integrate the unique attributes of online education into daily online teaching and learning still needs further exploration.
- (6) To equip teachers with standardized home-based teaching equipment across the country, especially with standardized electronic devices to meet the needs of online teaching and individual tutoring in the home environment. Students' need for basic learning equipment should also be considered.
- (7) To provide systematic training for teachers.





Arguably the use of online platforms for high-quality teaching is an inevitable trend in the Internet era. Thus, preparing teachers with relevant skills through professional development, with legal, financial, and administrative support from the government, becomes crucial.

- (8) To support and call for research into online education, at a national level, to enlighten approaches to effective online education. In addition, to encourage and support social organizations and schools to play their roles fully is also of paramount importance.
- (9) Arguably, one of the most pressing current tasks is to conduct in-depth investigations into online education, especially concerning student support. The findings of these investigations would enable schools to provide a targeted instruction and counseling service for students with learning difficulties during the epidemic, and support students' successful re-adaptation to offline school education after the epidemic.

### Suggestions:

In order to strengthen the backbone of e-learning the government should deploy the necessary infrastructure at remote places where people don't have access to internet; thereby fixing the internet gap which would facilitate students to learn digitally.

Every state government in India should come up with creative strategies to make the education accessible to each and every student especially for those who come from marginalised, underprivileged and remote sections of the society.

### Conclusion:

The purpose of education is to enable oneself to

better the world in which they live. Technology today has become need of an hour. It is difficult to imagine colleges and university education without the use of digital resources which has provided different educational and academic information. However it is also necessary to understand that it shouldn't reinforce structures of power and inequality. It should not create digital divide between rich and poor. As we cannot expect in country like India to have availability of all required resources due to different socio-economic conditions in India. Online mode of learning can be the best mode of teaching if it can be accessed by all the sections of the society however it can pose threat if certain section of society cannot avail this facility and thus exclusion. It is therefore important to take cognizance of online education and plan for interventions that will prioritize greater inclusivity, connectivity and equitability. It is important that colleges and University understands the experience and issues of the students and prepare according the further and design the study pattern in such a way that all students benefits.

Formulating guidelines to prepare for smooth transition back to normal offline education after the epidemic. Teachers were advised to make full use of "the National Elite Online Open Courses" as examples, and to teach in an independent way while drawing on online teaching resources such as those on MOOCs. Various MOOC platforms were also encouraged to develop new modules on epidemiology and infectious diseases, the aim of which was to equip students and the public with relevant knowledge. Moreover, the government urged students to strike a balance between work and rest, continue physical exercise, and protect their



eyesight from looking at the screen too much, with an aim to maintain their physical and mental health.

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