

New Educational Platforms and emotional well-being during Pandemic on Rural College Students in Kerala

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Abstract:

The whole world is facing a challenge which is not familiar even to the oldest of the human being alive. The current situation has brought about serious concerns over the physical as well as the mental well-being of individuals despite their age, gender, social status or profession. The Covid 19 pandemic and brought a standstill to all sectors of the economy. Even though the virus is spreading widely, all the sectors have started reviving and is in an attempt to adjust with the new situations. Similar is the case with the education sector. New platforms are being used to impart education. From kinder garten to universities the online mode of education is being practiced in Kerala. The unexpected change in the educational platforms and lack of preparedness for this change may affect the emotional well-being of the stakeholders. This study tries to find out the state of emotional wellbeing of the rural college students before and after Covid 19 and analyse the impact of new educational platforms on the emotional wellbeing of these students. This also tries to bring out the challenges faced by these rural folks in accessing the online education platforms. The study is descriptive and analytical in nature. Multi stage stratified random sampling technique was used to arrive at the sample units. The data was collected from 197 students of Govt. and Aided colleges, situated in rural areas of Northern districts of Kerala, using self-developed questionnaire administered through Google forms. The study uses descriptive statistics like mean, inferential statistics like ANOVA, paired sample t-test, Regression Coefficient, Ranking based on mean etc. to analyse the data and derive at conclusions. The study reveals that there is significant difference in the emotional well being of rural college students before and after Covid and that there is a negative impact of new educational platforms on the emotional well being of the students. While analysing the challenges faced by the students, which might have contributed to the negative impact on emotional well being reveals that the low bandwidth and weak internet creates problem in connecting to the online education platforms and they are also not getting enough chance to socialise or interact with the fellow classmates.

Key words: Educational platforms, Emotional wellbeing, challenges

Introduction:

Covid 19 has brought about significant changes in all walks of life. Countries throughout the world has been affected by this pandemic and this situation has given way to new experiments in all the sectors of the economy. Work from home is considered to be the new normal. It is very difficult to maintain a healthy lifestyle when we are in the midst of a crisis like this pandemic. The uncertainty, and worries related to finances, childcare, elderly parents, and job security disrupt our routines, our lifestyles and mental health. The uncertainty about the future, the ceaseless news coverage and constant social media driven flood of messages can increase our sense of anxiety. This anxiety leads to stress and effect our emotional well-being. Students also have high levels of stress as on one side they see the problems at home due to loss in earnings and on the other side they have to adjust with a new system of education which is not at all familiar to them.

The educational institutions are also forced to adopt new methods to avoid the loss of academic year. Few countries have declared this year as zero academic year. But India has not yet taken such a decision. The Government of India alongside the University Grants Commission (UGC) and Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD) has started on the web and advanced realizing with the goal that the students can proceed with their learning and picking up information during the lockdown time frame and utilize accessible Digital and e-learning platforms and resources. MHRD has distributed top notch of e-learning stages for online training that are effectively open. For school training, Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) that is a National Teachers Platform for India, e-PATSHALA, and National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER). For Higher Education, MHRD has proposed Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspirant Mind (SWAYAM) and SWAYAM PRABHA that are liberated from cost.

Though some states in India like Karnataka has stopped handling online classes due to the emotional problems of students and the protest from parents against increased screen time, Kerala is continuing the education process with the help of Victor's channel for school students and online classes engaged by institutions for higher education students. The Kerala Govt. has made it mandatory for the higher education institutions to engage online classes to their students and the teachers have to submit weekly report to the concerned Deputy Directorate of Collegiate Education. This scenario has forced the teaching community to handle classes

online. Several arguments are associated with e-learning. Accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, life-long learning, and policy are some of the arguments related to online pedagogy. It is said that online mode of learning is easily accessible and can even reach to rural and remote areas. It is considered to be a relatively cheaper mode of education. Another advantage associated with online teaching is flexibility that is a learner can schedule or plan their time for completion of courses available online. Kerala is a state which is in the forefront for higher rate of literacy, high standard of living, high rate of internet connectivity etc. Still many rural areas in the state have less internet speed which came to the forefront during this crisis period because it's not like sending messages in the whats app, in order to download the videos forwarded by the teachers and to attend classes through Google meet or Zoom requires good internet speed and quality handsets. This has contributed towards the emotional pressure on students.

Review of literature:

(Dhawan, 2020)- conducted a study on Online Learning: A Panacea in the Time of COVID-19 Crisis. These circumstances have forced the educators across the world to shift to e-teaching all of a sudden. The main objective of the study is to explore the growth of Ed Tech Start-ups and online learning and also to conduct an Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Challenges (SWOC) analysis of online learning during the Corona Virus pandemic and natural disasters. The research tool used for analyzing the data from different sources for this study is a content analysis and the research method used is descriptive research. The findings of the study are online methods of teaching support and facilitate learning-teaching activities, but there is a need to weigh the pros and cons of technology and harness its potentials.

(Duraku, 2020) in their study examines the anxiety and stress and explores student perspectives towards online learning, including the interactions among learning skills, student life, attitudes toward online learning, with anxiety levels, and perceived stress. Exploratory mixed method study was used and a total of 78 students through convenience method were selected from the Department of Psychology at the University of Prishtina. Majority of the students reported moderate levels of perceived stress and mild psychological and somatic anxiety. Mental tension was anticipated by perceived stress, which was anticipated by student life. Students found that taking part in internet learning empowered them to move consideration away from the pandemic while the enthusiastic help from instructors encouraged for them to adapt to this period. Absence of consideration and center, diminished inspiration to go to

exercises and study, restricted accessibility of room at home, interruption from family, and having numerous tasks during the lockdown were significant difficulties confronting student's internet learning.

(Kazmi, 2020) conducted the study with the aim of exploring the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown on the mental health of individuals. DASS-21 was used to assess Depression, Anxiety and Stress among 1000 respondents which suggested that there is a significant difference among Depression, Anxiety and Stress across age, gender and employment. Depression was found high among the respondents of age range 15- 35 years, Anxiety among those belonging to 21-25 years of age and Stress was found to be high in individuals of 21-25 years of age. The study **revealed** that Covid-19 created psychological distress among the individuals, as lockdown forced people to stay home. Young adolescents and adult age group faced uncertainty with respect to career and professional life.

(Khan A H *et al.*, 2020) describes the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and wellbeing among Bangladeshi students. A cross-sectional study was conducted among 505 college and university students by using online questionnaire including DASS 21 and IES. Descriptive analysis and bivariate linear regression were performed and it was identified that 28.5 % of the respondents had stress, 33.3% anxiety, 46.92% depression from mild to extremely severe, according to DASS 21 and 69.31% had occasion-specific distress from slight to severe in terms of severity according to IES. Fear of getting infected, financial ambiguity, insufficient food supply, absence of physical workout and limited or no recreational activity had significant association with stress, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic symptoms.

(König *et al.*, 2020) – conducted a study on how to adapt with online teaching at the time of Covid 19. This paper shows the result of survey that was conducted in May and June 2020. This study tried to find the extent to which teachers maintained social contact with students and handled the challenges in teaching. The study also tried to find out the potential factor that effect the teaching methods. Findings from regression analyses show that information and communication technologies (ICT) tools, particularly digital teacher competence and teacher education opportunities to learn digital competence, are helpful in adapting to online teaching during COVID-19 school closures.

(Lall & Singh, 2020) - The study was designed to understand the student's perspective, attitudes, and readiness about online classes being conducted. An Observational, Descriptive study was used for this purpose. The present study was carried out amongst 200 students. After

analyzing the results, it was found that 74% of the students liked studying through online classes. The main reason behind the student's interest in online classes is due the flexibility of time that they get in accessing classes (49%). The present study that was conducted among college students revealed that maximum students are in favour of studying through online classes, but they feel that there is a lack of co-curricular activities in the online mode of conducting classes.

(Meo, S. A *et al.*, 2020) investigated the impact of quarantine on the medical students' mental wellbeing and learning behaviours. A Five-Point Likert Scale was used to collect data among 625 medical students of the Department of Physiology, College of Medicine, King Saud University with a response rate of 84.8%. About 44.1% responded negative effect as they were emotionally detached from family, friends and fellow students. The students also revealed the decrease in overall work performance and nearly one fourth of the students felt disheartened during this pandemic period. If the period is going to extend more it may lead o vigorous effect on the students.

(Satpathy, 2020) evaluates the anxiety, depression and stress level of students during COVID-19 outbreak. The online poll reviewed 80 students from the 250 population of MBA in Western Odisha, India. Two stages investigation was done utilizing EXCEL and MAXQDA programming. It was found that the degree of depression was as high as 43% among the students. The main reasons were identified as mental tension, career and negative psychology (maximum hits ranging 80%) and also other factors such as economic downturn, financial issues, future life, social distress, satisfaction in life, and job offers revoked (hits ranging from 73-46% observed) as revealed by Content Analysis. The institutions ought to embrace an online strategy for psychosocial mediation to decrease the downturn level of the students.

Statement of the Problem:

The reviews on the mental health during this pandemic reveals that despite your age, profession or social status all groups of people are facing stress. Some people are taking conscious efforts to maintain physical and mental health, some have succumbed to the pressures and have even committed suicide, some does not identify that they are stressed and end up with psychosomatic diseases. The introduction of new educational platforms has both positive and negative impact. As each classroom is a cross section of the society, there will be different kinds of students. Some may be finding the online classes convenient and for some

others it may not be. The problem of digital divide has become more severe than the economic divide. Though the two are interconnected to some extent. Many challenges are faced by students while accessing online platforms for education. So in this scenario its felt relevant to study the emotional well-being of the students in the higher education sector, especially who are residing in rural areas due to change in the educational platforms.

Objectives of the Study:

- To analyse the emotional well-being of rural college students in Kerala before and after Covid 19.
- To assess the impact of new online classes on the emotional well- being of rural college students in Kerala.
- To assess the challenges faced by these students in online classes.

Hypotheses:

- H_0 : There is no significant difference between the emotional well-being of the students before and after COVID-19.
- H_0 : Online classes through new educational platform during pandemic have no impact on the emotional well-being of the students after Covid-19.

Scope of the study:

Identifying a problem helps in finding out solution for it easier than for a problem which is not correctly identified. The health sector is concerned about the physical and mental wellbeing of people. But as the problem exists with people belonging to all walks of life, it's difficult to identify the major sufferers. Unexpected change in behaviour or in extreme cases, suicides will reveal the pathetic situation of the mental health of people. So research is necessary in all spheres of life to bring into the forefront the difficulties faced by individuals.

This study on the emotional well-being of rural students in the backdrop of the usage of new educational platforms covers the state of mental health of students before and after Covid 19. The study also focuses on the impact of these new online platforms on their emotional well- being and the nature of its impact. The study will help the authorities to understand the difficulties faced by rural students, which has to be kept in mind when taking drastic decisions. The focus of the study on the challenges faced by them while attending online

classes will help in understanding their requirements and government or other governing bodies can take measures to improve the current situation and find solutions to their challenges.

Methodology:

Research design

The nature of the study is both descriptive and analytical in nature.

Source of data

The study uses both primary and secondary source of data. The secondary data was collected from various published sources like journals magazines etc. The primary data was collected from the students of rural colleges with the help of Google forms

Population

The student who are pursuing B.Com degree course from the rural colleges in Kerala

Sampling Design

The multi-stage stratified random sampling method was used to draw the sample units. Accordingly, in the first stage the whole state of Kerala was divided into 3 zones- Northern zone, Central zone and Southern zone and then from this classification Northern zone was selected by using the simple random sampling method. Based on the simple random sampling method, out of the 6 districts in the Northern Zone, two districts (Palakkad and Kozhikode) were selected. Then from these two selected districts the list of Government and Aided Colleges offering B.Com course were obtained. Since the study mainly focussed on the impact of e-learning on rural college students, again from the obtained list of colleges, only the rural colleges offering B.Com courses in both the sectors (Government and Aided) were identified and then from this list 4 colleges(2 colleges from each district), both from the Govt. and Aided sectors were selected at random. Then from this selected 4 rural colleges the list of students residing in the rural areas were obtained and then 50 students from each college who were pursuing B.Com course were selected on random basis. Thus the total sample size of the study turned to be 200. Then the pre-designed and well-structured questionnaire in Google forms was administered to them. Out of the 200 students to whom the google forms were administered, only 197 students responded and hence the analysis and interpretation of this study is based on their responses.

Sample size

The sample size for the study is 200 students from rural college in Kerala

Sampling unit

An individual student residing in rural area and is pursuing B.Com degree course.

Tools of Analysis

The study uses descriptive statistics like mean, inferential statistics like ANOVA, paired sample t-test, Regression Coefficient, Ranking based on mean etc. to analyse the data and derive at conclusions.

Analysis and Interpretation

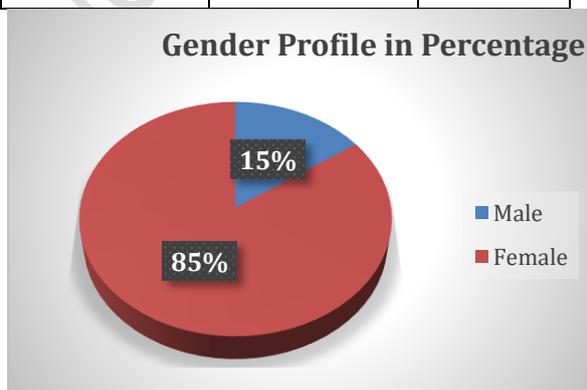
1. Sample Profile

As in this study the rural students studying in rurally located colleges pursuing same degree course are selected. They will belong to the same age group and locality. As the income related questions will again increase their stress levels such questions were avoided. So the Gender profile of the respondents only is collected and depicted in Table:1

Table :1 Gender Profile of Respondent

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	30	15.2
Female	167	84.8
Total	197	100

Figure:1 Gender Profile of Respondent



Source: Primary data

The above table and chart reveals that most of the respondents (85%) are female and only 15% are male students. This is a common trend seen in the Arts and Science Colleges in Kerala where the enrolment rate of female students in the higher education institutions is very high.

2. Emotional well-being before and after Covid 19

Emotional well-being is a state of positive mental health where the individual is able to handle his emotions and all life activities. He understands his emotions, learns, and copes with all the negative situations, achieves, and finds a positive emotional state which finally leads to success. Emotional well-being plays a significant role in maintaining positive mental health. It controls the health-seeking behavior, improves decision-making skill, increases interpersonal communication, and helps recover from stressful situations or illness. Thus, they play a significant role in overall well-being of an individual. However, this psychological aspect called emotion is usually neglected.

The emotional state of health of the selected samples were analysed with the help of 10 factors which were carefully selected to reveal their mental health. All these factors were self-explanatory so that the sample units didn't have any confusion in their responses. The descriptive statistics calculated on their responses are depicted in Table: 2 and the analysis based on the hypothesis below is given in Table: 3;

H₀: There is no significant difference between the emotional well-being of the students before and after COVID-19.

Table: 2 Descriptive Statistics on the Emotional Well Being Before and After Covid-19

Statements	Before Covid-19 Mean Score	After Covid-19 Mean Score
I was feeling optimistic about the future	4.44	1.45
I was feeling relaxed in studies	2.66	1.14
I was feeling confident	4.35	0.93
I had anxiety issues	3.99	4.15
I was losing interest in studies	1.86	4.09
I was feeling isolated in the classroom	0.65	4.75
I was having depression issues	1.93	4.64

I used to get angry soon	2.56	2.88
I was pressurized by Parents	3.77	1.41
I was systematic and stimulated	3.89	1.28
Total Mean Score	3.01	2.67

Source: Primary data

Table: 3 Paired Sample Test

Pair 1	N	Correlation	Mean Difference	SD	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig
Before Covid-19 & After Covid-19	197	.456	0.34	.312	.0178	.673	196	.000

Source: Primary data

It is found from the Table 2 & 3 that the mean scores of emotional well-being of the students before and after COVID-19 were different. The emotional well-being of students before Covid-19 was about 3.01 and after Covid-19 was about 2.67 and it revealed a difference of about 0.34 in emotional wellbeing of the students before and after Covid-19. The results of paired t test highlights that there is significant difference between the emotional well-being of the students before and after COVID-19; since, it's P value (sig=.000) is less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. The result identified that the students felt isolated in the online classroom and have depression and anxiety issues in online classes and this proves that the emotional well-being of the students has declined after Covid-19. As a result of this the students lack confidence and become pessimistic about their future and also identified that the students were not systematic and stimulated after Covid-19; since, they lack interest in their studies through online mode.

3. New Education Platforms and Emotional well being

One of the most tangible results of the COVID-19 outbreak has been a wider gap between the learners. The various activities of teaching and learning have now become factors of stress. The poor connectivity, the poor means for accessing, lack of digital education etc may affect the mental health of students. The analysis in this regard is given using the regression model calculated from the primary data and is depicted in table 4(a)

Table: 4 (a) Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.784	.614	.608	.321
<i>Predictors: (Constant), Impact of Online classes</i>				
<i>Dependent Variable: Emotional Well-being after Covid-19</i>				

Source: Computed from Primary Data

The regression model summary table 4 (a), shows the overall predictability of the regression model. Adjusted R² value 0.608 states that the independent variable has 60.8 per cent influence on the dependent variable. Thus, it is identified that the online classes through new educational platform during pandemic have an impact on the emotional well-being of the students after Covid-19.

On the basis of the analysis result of table 4 (a), a further analysis on the impact of online classes on the emotional well- being of the students is tested with the help of ANOVA which is presented in table 4(b)

H₀: Online classes through new educational platform during pandemic have no impact on the emotional well-being of the students after Covid-19.

Table: 4 (b) ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.123	1	10.123	64.89	.000*
	Residual	30.456	195	0.156		
	Total	40.579	196			

Source: Computed from Primary Data

* 5 Percent level of significance

ANOVA results from table 4 (b) reveals that as the p-value 0.000 (F value = 64.89) is less than 0.05 and it indicates that regression model is statistically significant. So, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there exists a significant difference between the variables tested in the hypothesis. Thus it has been identified that the online classes through new educational platform during pandemic have an impact on the emotional well-being of the students after Covid-19.

4. Nature of Impact on Emotional well-being

With the help of ANOVA, it has been clarified (table 4(b)) that there is significant difference between the new educational platforms and the emotional well-being of students. In order to understand whether the impact is positive or negative the coefficient of regression analysis is being undertaken by taking the emotional well-being after Covid as the independent variable and the impact as the dependent variable. The result of Coefficient of Regression Analysis is depicted in table 4 (c)

Table: 4 (c) Coefficients of Regression Analysis

Model	Variables	UC		SC	T	Sig.
		B	SE	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.23 6	.252		6.117	.000*
	Impact of online class	-.784	.086	- .751	-9.542	.000*
<i>Dependent Variable: Emotional Well-being after Covid-19</i>						

Source: Computed from Primary Data

* 5 Percent level of significance

It is identified from the coefficient table 4(c) that online classes through new educational platform during pandemic have significant negative impact on the emotional well-being of the students after Covid-19, since the significant values of predictor variable is less than 0.05. The mean scores on the factors influencing emotional well-being also support this finding. The factors like losing interest in studies, isolation issues in classroom, feeling of depression and anxiety etc. have high mean values after Covid19.

5. Challenges Faced in Online Classes

Learning has undergone a drastic change. The process of imparting education has seen a significant shift from the channels of physical books made available in educational institutes to the hallways of technological devices. Digital conversion of education has enabled the education seekers to avail the facility with ease. The cyberspace has been the sole platform that can be used to spread online education far and wide. The poor bandwidth and poor means for accessing are common problems faced by rural students.

Since it has already been identified that the online classes through new educational platform during pandemic have an impact on the emotional well-being of the students after Covid-19 an attempt is made to identify the major challenges they are facing. The descriptive statistics on the challenges faced by the sample respondents are provided in Table: 5

Table: 5 Descriptive Statistics on the Challenges faced in online classes

Statements	Mean	Rank
Technological inadequacies	3.24	4
Lack of digital literacy	3.01	5
Low bandwidth and weak internet affect how quickly I can connect and participate in class.	4.89	1
Inefficiency in time management	2.94	6
Problems in interacting with teachers	3.74	3
Less chance for discussion with friends	4.25	2

Source: Primary data

Challenges faced by rural college students is being analysed with the help of six variables ranging from difficulties associated with technologies and also of socialising. It is found from the above table 5, that the that major challenge faced by the rural students in online classes were that of Low bandwidth and weak internet affect how quickly I can connect and participate in class (4.89), the second problem faced by the students is that they get only less chance for discussion with friends (4.25) and the other challenges faced by them in online classes were the problems in interacting with teachers (3.74), technological inadequacies (3.24) and lack of digital literacy (3.01) followed by the challenge of inefficiency in time management (2.94).

Findings

The major findings of this study are;

- The emotional well-being of students was considerably affected by the upsurge of Covid19.
- There is significant impact of online education on the emotional well-being of students.
- The usage of online educational platforms has negative impact on the emotional well-being of rural college students.

- Low bandwidth and weak internet affect student's the connectivity to online classes and that is the most important challenge faced by them.

Conclusion

A change in Education platforms in India and Kerala was accepted by the higher education sector as an alternative to the traditional mode of online teaching. It was a need - based change rather than an evolutionistic change. Like any new system it also has many problems. The main reason was that it was introduced all of a sudden. The students didn't get enough opportunities to know and understand the system and get acquaintance. They were forced to accept the new platforms without any alternatives. So, it is obvious that it will affect their mental health. This will be more crucial for socially weaker groups having less accessibility to modern means of technological equipment. This is being proved by this study which was conducted among the rural college students in Kerala. Even though this is the situation the students cannot hold back from being part of these activities. They have to choke out solutions to overcome their emotional issues.

To achieve the well-being, it is better to do standard yoga, ordinary exercise, 8 hour of rest, legitimate and sound eating regimen, social middle removing or less utilization of telephones for virtual systems administration and to have a good laugh time to time

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