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A Study on Covid-19's Effects on India's Higher Education

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ABSTRACT: Every aspect of human life has been negatively influenced by the CoronavirusCrisis, including education. Many academicestablishments have shuttered their physical locations and moved to offering courses online all around the world.There has been a significant slowdown in Internationalization. Approximately 32 crore students in India stopped attending new schools or colleges, and all academic programmes were discontinued. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have responded well to all of these obstacles and have been able to use various methods and strategies to ensure skill development, tutoring, research, and community outreachin times of the global outbreak.This featureemphasizes the fundamentaleffects of Covid-19 on Higher Learning Institutions in India.

Various measures implemented by Indian educational authorities and higher education institutions (HEIs) to ensure seamless educational services during the crisis are examined.Numerous new learning methods, viewpoints and trends have arisen due to the pandemic and may persist going forward.Presented are several advancements resulting from Covid-19 that might encourage creative strategies for higher education instruction and learning in India. In the case of an unforeseen upsurge, some actionable recommendations are offered for implementing educational programs.

KEYWORDS: Innovative approaches, skill development, pandemic,Covid-19,Authorities, HEIs, postCovid-19

I. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recognized Covid-19 as a global pandemic on 11th March, 2020. Globally, the outbreak has impacted over 4.5 million individuals (WHO).Kerala was the site of the first recorded case of COVID-19 in India on January 30, 2020, and the infected person had previously travelled to Wuhan, China (Wikipedia). On 12th March, 2020, the first fatality was reported in India. Following this, on March 22, the nation observed a day of Janta Curfew. India reintroduced a 14-hour curfew on March 24 in an attempt to manage the coronavirus outbreak and evaluate the country's resilience against the virus. Subsequently, on March 25, the Prime Minister declared the commencement of a lockdown, which would endure for 21 days.

As it assesses the virus's impacts, the Indian government has been steadily prolonging the period of complete shutdown. Lockdown 5.0 was implemented on April 30 and was set to remain in effect for the entire month of June. Every shutdown phase—from lockdown 1.0 to lockdown 5.0—has prevented regular classes from starting again in educational institutions around the nation. Thus, the education sector was significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Data collected during the first week of June 2020 indicates that around 68% of all students worldwide have been impacted by COVID-19, according to a UNESCO report. Around 1.2 billion kids and young people worldwide have been touched by the Covid-19 outbreak due to school and university closures.

Localized shutdowns in various countries have impacted millions of students. The many limitations and the countrywide lockdown for COVID-19 have impacted over 32 crore pupils in India (Wikipedia). Governmentsworldwide have suspendedfunctioning of educational institutions to curb the spread of Covid-19. The number of students globally has been significantly impacted by this global shutdown.Governments worldwide are working to alleviate the immediate impacts of closing educational institutions, especially for vulnerable and marginalized communities. They are also attempting to make it easier for everyone to continue their education by utilizing a variety of digital learning methods.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, published a detailed analysison higher education. The survey's results show that their portal lists 993 universities, 39,931 collegesand 10,725 stand-alone institutions involved in the education sector (DNS Kumar, 2020).Even if the country has been acclimating to modern education, a barrier to full achievement remains asa mere 45 percent of the demographic has access to the digital world

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or e-learning. Communities belonging to rural regions still have very limited access to contemporary technology, which is bad for the development of online education.

The Covid-19 epidemic made it possible for educational establishments to embrace online instruction and foster a virtual educational environment, demonstrating thatnecessity drives innovation. The epidemic has propelled technological innovation and breakthroughs in the schooling sector. The field of higher education has been severely impacted by the pandemic. The pandemic has significantly affected higher education. Numerous Indian students studying at universities abroad, especially in countries hit hardest by the crisis, are now returning home. If the situation persists, the demand for international higher education is likely to decline.

II. OBJECTIVES

The following goals are the main focus of this study

1. To Emphasis how COVID-19 has affected the higher education industry.
2. To describe the different growing approaches to higher education in India.
3. To enlistpost Covid-19trendsofHEIs.

III. METHODOLOGY

Various reports on the Covid-19 epidemic from national and international institutions are searched in order to obtain data for the current inquiry. Information on the effects of COVID-19 on India's institutional education system has been collected from various reliable websites, journals, and online resources, as obtaining data from external sources is not feasible due to the lockdown.

IV. IMPACTONHIGHEREDUCATION

The global COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected educational systems worldwide, including India's. Nevertheless, mentioned herewith are the significantly affected domains within India's institutional education sector.

Disruptedalleducationalpursuits:The Covid-19 pandemic has led to lockdowns across all sectors, including education. When educational activities at the institutions ceased, the institutions closed, posing numerous issues to the stakeholders (Pravat, 2020a). Therefore, a number of board, school, college, and university-conducted competitive examinations, examinations, entrance exams, and admissions processes have been postponed. Numerous entrance exams for advanced study were cancelled, which presented significant challenges for students pursuing higher studies.The core challenge was continuing the pedagogicalframework while employees, instructors, and students could not visit the schools in person.

Institutions found it logical to shift to online training during the pandemic. Despite the rapid transition, higher education institutions (HEIs) quickly adapted to offer online support to students.The usage of digital technology in education has progressed because to COVID-19. All educators and students were motivated to improve their technological skills by it. HEIs began utilizing various digital meeting platforms, likeZoom, Google Meet,WebEx, Skype, and YouTube Live, to conduct orientation programs, counseling sessions and induction meetings.This move aimedforencouraging students to take up online activities and to establish an efficient virtual learning environment.

Mixed consequences on ProfessionalDevelopment and Academic research: The impact of COVID-19 on academic research and professional development has been mixed, with both positive and negative effects.The negative aspect is that it has made cross-border collaboration and travel among researchers impossible. Some joint study or project assignments may be difficult to finish. Some scientific laboratory tests and research initiatives could not be completed. One advantage is that academics have hadample time to refine their theoretical research initiatives. Scholars improved their studies and knew how to use technical methods. Academics and students all around the world now frequently use webinars and e-conferences to exchange knowledge on connected subjects. Through research and idea sharing via webinars and e-conferences, they might focus more of their time on improving their professional development. They improved their technical proficiency and were able to produce books and papers in journals during their leisure time.

Drastic impact on the educationalevaluationframework: While many external exams have been rescheduled, nearly all internal tests have been canceled.his cancellation has adversely affected learners' learning experiences. Although many universities have turned to digital technologies for administering internal tests online, postponing external

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assessments directly affects students' futures in academia and the workforce. Students who are stuck in the same grade or class without promotion are experiencing anxiety as a result of this uncertainty. In a similar vein, many students who completed final or board exams may face difficulties because, once they are awarded certificates, lockdown might have delayed it too much for them to apply for the upcoming scholastic year in foreign nations' universities.

Reduced employment opportunities: The cancellation of some entrance exam employment recruitments had a detrimental impact and posed serious difficulties for students seekingfurtherstudies. Additionally, Indians working abroad were frustrated by the loss of their jobs.The pandemic is making it impossible for the Indian government to hire, and fresh graduates are feeling pressured to accept employment offers from corporate sectors lest they lose them. Numerous students from India and elsewhere may experience career setbacks. The stringent COVID-19 restrictions have made it challenging for alumni to seek employment outside IndiaThese data all indicate that the epidemic has increased the jobless rate.

V. INDIA'S DEVELOPING STRATEGIES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

Covid-19 has posed numerous challenges but the higher educational institutions have tackled the epidemic admirably, deployingvarious strategies to address the problem. The Indian bureaucracy instituted several preventive steps to curb the spread of the epidemic. The MHRD and University Grants Commission (UGC) have created a number of virtual platforms to assist students in pursuing higher education. These platforms include e-books, radio broadcasts, Direct to Home TV educational channels, and other online pedagogical tools, and online depositories. During shutdown, students have utilizedcommondigital media networkssuch as Zoom, WhatsApp, Telegram, Google Meet, Youtube Live,WebEx, and others for online learning.

- Prevat (2020a) describes e-Broucher ICT initiative as a unique platform that gathers all digital resources for online learning. Guidelines for Examinations and Academic Calendar have been released by UGC in relation to the COVID-19 epidemic and the lockdown that ensued on April 29, 2020 (UGC notification). The proposed commencement date of classes is August 2020, and all final exams have been rescheduled until July. Additionally,acomprehensive schedule for the 2020–2021 scholastic year has been released by the UGC, including updated dates due to the lockdown. Below are some of the digital initiatives by the UGC and MHRD for further studies during COVID-19::
- The internet audio counselling service **Gyandhara**is provided by IGNOU. Students can engage with lecturers and professionals on the topic of the day via chat, email (gyandhara@ignou.ac.in), and phone calls while listening to live discussions on a web radio station.
- Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) offered by **Swayam** have been authorised for credit transfer by 140 universities. 32 DTH channels that broadcast educational content are used by Swayam Prabha to deliver top-notch educational programming. Graduate students can use e-PG Pathshala. This site offers e-courses, online study material, and study tools specifically to postgraduate students. The author's earlier study (Pravat, 2020b) describes the specifics of these three digital platforms.
- A portal called **e-Adhyayan** (e-Books) provides over 750+ e-Books for post-graduate studies, all derived from e-PG Pathshala courses. Additionally, it makes playing video content easier.
- An essential component of e-PG Pathshala is **e-Pathya** (Offline Access), a software-based course or content package that enables postgraduate students to study on campus as well as remotely. It also facilitates easier offline access.
- **The National Digital Library of India** (NDLI) is a digital resource that offers e-content in a variety of subjects for a wide range of users, including professionals, instructors, researchers, librarians, students (of all levels), differently-abled subscribers, perpetual learners and so on. Developed at the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, this initiative is aimed to support researchers in conducting interconnected investigation from various sources, to aid individualsprepare for competitive and entrance tests, and enable people to adopt effectivestrategies from around the globe. It is an online learning resource catalogue featuring a one-window search function. Mobile apps are another way to access it.
- Practical experience with embedded systems can be obtained through **e-Yantra** (https://www.e-yantra.org/). It has over 380 labs and has helped more than 2300 colleges.
- The acronym **FOSSEE**, which stands for Free and Open Source Software for Education and is designed to support use of open source software for professional as well as educational use, can be accessed at https://fossee.in/.
- Virtual Labs, located at http://www.vlab.co.in/, provides web-based curriculum-based experiments that can be conducted virtually. It hostsover 150+ Virtual Labs with more than 750+ web-enabled experiments across various

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science and engineering disciplines.These virtual labs are designed to serve both research scientists and undergraduate and graduate students by offering remote access to lab activities.

- e-ShodhSindhu is a comprehensive collection offering long-term access to e-books, e-journal archives, and e-journals. It includes over 3.135 million e-books and more than 12,000 e-journals. Academic institutions can access full-text, bibliographic, and factual databases, along with other qualitative electronic resources, at a discounted subscription cost.
- Research students can publish their doctoral dissertations on **Shodhganga**to make them openly accessible to the entire academic group. Researchers' submitted electronic theses and dissertations can be indexed, stored, shared, and preserved by the repository.

VI. CURRENT TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION POSTCOVID-19

Transformation is inevitably coming, and COVID-19 is forcing that transformation on society. The opportunities arising from the global pandemic are paving the way for a brighter future. The future beholds a fresh start and we could oversee total control of it with effective planning and strategy. Undoubtedly, new technology will put old paradigms like lectures in the classroom, different learning approaches, and evaluation methods to the test. The education sector will be able to devise innovative approaches to teaching and learning thanks to the emerging trends, some of which are indicated.

Promote Individualized Education: Education doesn't have to be confined to traditional classrooms or physical locations. In the future, it's possible that a single teacher could instruct many students through virtual means. Learning resources might come from multiple sources to meet students' objectives and goals, and educational modules could be adapted to suit different learning preferences. Students will have the option to pursue their education in this new format if they choose.

Student Attendance may slow down: After the lockdown ends, many parents might be hesitant to return their kids to school or college right away. Some low-income parents may not have the funds to send their children to institutions if they lose their jobs as a result of the pandemic. For a few more months, home schooling might result from this.

National and International student mobility to pursue higher education may : Concerns about the wellbeing and safety of students play a significant role in the decision-making process when it comes to students and their parents moving abroad to pursue higher education.For some time to come, there will be new types of social distancing that may affect in-person education and learning on campus. Due to the pandemic, many parents are likely to seek practical alternatives nearer to home and may restrict their children's travel. The current crisis has also affected international education. Numerous international universities have shut down and are now offering only online classes. Additionally, many international higher education conferences have been postponed or switched to webinar formats. As a result, there might be a reduction in both national and international student mobility.

Learning with social distancing may continue. Everyone will continue to keep their social distance and refrain from long-term intimacy, handshakes, hugs, and greetings. It's possible that unnoticed limitations limit the enjoyment of college life. Students' physical activity levels may decline if sports, gyms, and competitions are put on hold for an extended length of time.

Different shifts may be operated by educational institutions each day. Less students in each class could be implied by the requirement for social separation. Therefore, a lot of educational institutions could operate in multiple shifts throughout the day, which could make it harder for the staff members who teach and run the school to manage.

Might widen the disparity between pupils from wealthy and poor backgrounds. Because they might not be able to purchase the necessary technological devices for online learning as well as a high-speed internet connection, students from underprivileged backgrounds and low-income homes are more likely to experience difficulties. By expanding the disparity between wealthy and disadvantaged students, it will exacerbate disparity.

Teaching learninggo hand in hand with technology. Students will increasingly rely on technology and online tools for their education, leisure and communication.Through the utilisation of online resources like webinars, video conferences, instant messaging, e-mail, and WhatsApp, students will engage in digital communication with both their instructors and fellow classmates.

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The Demandfor online learning and open and distance learning (ODL) could increase. Human civilisation is now compelled by COVID-19 to sustain social distance. Maintaining social separation while teaching has made things more difficult. In response to these challenges, there is a growing need for ODL and digitallearning, and this tendency is expected to persist in the future.

Hybrid education could become the standard. Virtual and in-class instructions are combined in blended learning. The outbreak prompted educational organizations and institutions to transition into a blended learning model and has expedited the adoption of digital technologies for educational delivery. Every teacher and student gained greater tech proficiency. The integration of post-Covid-19 technology with traditional face-to-face instruction will push education towards blended learning and may change the way the system is structured.

Student debt crisis may rise. Many Indian students and their parents borrow money for higher education. Student debt difficulties could get more severe if the job market does not improve. Student debts may cause students to experience elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and melancholy.

Unemploymentrateisexpectedtobeincreased. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a hiring freeze in the public administration sector, and freshly graduated individuals are concerned that private companies may retract their job offers (Pravat, 2020b). Many Indians who lost their jobs abroad because of the pandemic are likely to have returned home. Consequently, recent graduates seeking to enter the job market may find it difficult to secure suitable employment.

VII. SUGGESTIONS

1. Teachers and students should receive training on how to use technology for online teaching and learning. To encourage online learning and ensure safety during pandemics, both the government and educational establishments need to implement policies that provide free internet access and digital devices to students (Pravat, 2020c).
2. Pressing measures must be taken to lessen the effects of the pandemic on job placements, apprenticeship programs, and research activities.
3. Numerous digital platforms provide a variety of courses on the same topics, each with varying certification requirements, approaches, and evaluation standards. As a result, the calibre of the curricula may vary throughout various online learning environments. In light of the quick development of online learning platforms, higher education institutions in India must thus implement quality assurance procedures and standards for their online learning courses.
4. Educational institutions should implement new methods for academic assessment if the COVID-19 epidemic persists. Students' scholarlyconductcould be assessed through online evaluations, quizzes, or brief projects.
5. The administration ought to support HEIs in bolstering their ability to deliver online learning programs. Since most students cannot afford the amenities, they also require assistance in having greater access to the internet and other technologies. During this pandemic, higher education institutions (HEIs) ought to concentrate more on online, radio, and television-based instruction.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

This paper delineates and outlines the impacts of COVID-19 on higher education in India. The current epidemic offered a chance to introduce virtual education at all educational levels and modify pedagogical strategies. Given the uncertainty surrounding the length of the epidemic, a gradual transition to online and virtual learning is necessary. The UGC and MHRD have introduced several online platforms, including e-books, repositories, databases and other digital teaching resources.Combining mobile and online technologies with traditional technologies (radio, TV, landlines) into a consolidated interface with extensivearchives would elevateconvenience and inclusiveness to academia.

This approach should involve updating the service platforms to meet the educational needs of a large number of students.All service providers need to be mobilised in order to guarantee that disadvantaged populations have proper access to educational service platforms.Currently, web-based virtual education is the predominant method of tutoring due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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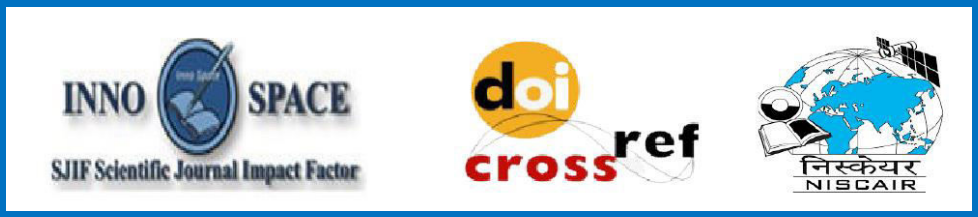

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