Gauthami H
Assistant Professor,
Department of Child Health
Nursing, R.V. College of
Nursing, Bangalore,
Karnataka, India

Yumnam Chanu Superior
Lecturer, Department of
Medical Surgical Nursing,
Rahman Institute of Nursing
& Paramedical Sciences,
Guwahati, Assam, India

Online learning amidst Covid-19 pandemic: Teachers' perspective

Gauthami H and Yumnam Chanu Superior

Abstract

Background of the study: The outbreak COVID-19 has resulted in shutting down of educational institutions all across the country. In the worldwide, more than 1.2 billion children are out of the classroom. As a result, education has changed dramatically, with the distinctive rise of e-learning in primary schools whereby teaching is undertaken remotely and on digital platforms. With students being outside the classroom, schools have shifted their base to virtual platforms to conduct classes online. Consequently, all stages of education from pre-primary to university level, online education has emerged as an alternative to ordinary face to face classes. Accordingly, various stakeholders such as government and private organizations are striving to help each other by sprucing up their existing online platforms, apps and providing training to teachers to use virtual platforms to the optimum level.
Aim: The aim of this study was done to identify teachers' perception of e-learning in primary schools.
Materials and Methods: This was a quantitative study with survey research design which comprises of 50 primary school teachers. The researchers developed questionnaire which included two sections to collect the data. Section-I addressed the demographic characteristics of the participants. Section-II addressed questionnaire on perception of teachers on online learning due to COVID-19 pandemic. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyze the data.
Results: This study explored the perceptions of primary school teachers on online learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The impact of online learning has affected the performance of the teachers and the quality of education due to the lack of teacher's experience in using virtual platform and due to the short time during which that they had to adapt their teaching style to the new conditions. As educators, it is likely that the teachers will have to put in additional efforts to incorporate online learning programmes into the curriculum in the most suitable manner.
Conclusion: Online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the educational systems of all countries across the globe significantly. Until the situation is settled down, changes in national curricula must be made to increase flexibility, and technological readiness must be accelerated. Lastly, education must be viewed as collaborative community effort among government, teachers, parents, and schools to increase the efficacy of teaching-and-learning methods that have been adversely affected and ensure that students do not fall behind.

Keywords: online learning, amidst, Covid-19 pandemic, teachers' perspective

Introduction

The outbreak of Covid-19 has disrupted the education sector globally. All the educational institutions have shifted to online mode of teaching to enforce social distancing. With education worldwide being thrown into disarray by corona virus, more and more teachers are being forced to adopt online learning.

In India teachers are adopting online tools for delivering lectures to ensure that students do not miss out on their studies. Online learning from home can be very isolating and lonely for the students that slowly erodes their desire to learn. Moreover, students do not get the kind of supervision that they would in a classroom. Even the teachers' role becomes limited in online learning. Keeping the students engaged and motivated during online classes have become a great challenge. Parents could be too busy with their own work to supervise online learning. Many students could not gain access to online education during the pandemic due to poor network. In addition to that, there might not be enough devices for the personal use of all the family members. The parents may be working from home and need to use their computer. So, the teachers need to set clear and measurable goals to motivate the students in online learning by finding the appropriate tools and learning environments for them to genuinely progress.

Corresponding Author:
Gauthami H
Assistant Professor,
Department of Child Health
Nursing, R.V. College of
Nursing, Bangalore,
Karnataka, India

Methods
The research approach selected for the study was quantitative approach with survey design. The study was conducted among school teachers of Karnataka. The questionnaires were sent through WhatsApp and e-mail of the participants. Data was collected by using convenient sampling technique. A formal permission was obtained from the participants. Each teacher was assured of privacy and confidentiality. Total 50 school teachers participated in the study.

Sample Size
The sample size was 50 school teachers who were teaching in primary schools in Karnataka.

Sampling technique
Convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample.

Tool for data collection
The tool was developed by the researchers which consist of two sections:-
Section-I addressed the demographic characteristics of the participants.
Section-II addressed rating scale on perception of teachers on online learning.

Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyze the data.

Method of data collection
Data was collected using semi-structured questionnaire.

Procedure for data collection
The survey was carried out from 25th September 2020 to 22nd October 2020. Participation in the survey was fully voluntary and written consent was obtained from each participant. The objectives of the study, confidentiality of individual information and ethical considerations mentioned in the survey guidelines were explained to the participants prior to data collection. The participants were interviewed by using the questionnaires prepared by the researchers in Google form. The researchers contacted the participants and requested them to answer the self-administered questionnaires which were sent through e-mail.

Data analysis
The data obtained was analyzed and interpreted in terms of the objectives of the study by using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Frequency and percentage distribution was used to analyze the demographic variables.

Results
Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of selected demographic variables among primary school teachers

Sl. No	Variables	Frequency	%
1.	**Age in years**		
	a. 21-30years	31	62%
	b. 31-40 years	16	32%
	c. 41-50years	03	6%
	d. Above 50 years	0	0%
2.	**Gender**		
	a. Male	32	65.3%
	b. Female	18	34.7%
3.	**Educational status**		
	a. Graduate	31	62%
	b. Postgraduate	18	36%
	c. Ph.D.	1	2%
4.	**Teaching Category**		
	a. Primary	22	44%
	b. Upper Primary	8	16%
	c. Secondary	8	16%
	d. Higher Secondary	12	24%
5	**Income per month**		
	a. Rs 20000- 25000	36	72%
	b. Rs 25001- 30000	8	16%
	c. Rs 30001- 35000	3	6%
	d. Above Rs 35000	3	6%
6	**Tools used in Online teaching**		
	a. Zoom	18	36%
	b. Google Classroom	5	10%
	c. Google meet	12	24%
	d. Cisco webex	9	18%
	e. Others	6	12%

Teachers' perception on online learning

Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution of teachers' perspectives on online learning

SL No	Items		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	You have sufficient computer knowledge and IT skills to conduct your online lectures.	Freq	20	21	0	1	8
		%	40	42	0	2	16
2.	You prefer to have training on conducting online lectures.	Freq	20	26	0	3	1
		%	40	52	0	6	2
3.	You prefer to have a training/ guideline on preparation of online lecture materials.	Freq	20	25	1	2	2
		%	40	50	2	4	4
4.	During online sessions, give proper breaks so that the students will have the time to think about the topic and frame their questions and doubts.	Freq	23	22	3	2	0
		%	46	44	6	4	0
5.	Online tools are easy to use when conducting lectures.	Freq	14	10	1	7	18
		%	28	20	2	14	36
6.	Flexible hours of conducting online lectures.	Freq	16	24	5	5	0
		%	32	48	10	10	0
7.	Gained experience of conducting online lectures.	Freq	21	20	4	4	1
		%	42	40	8	8	2
8.	Online lectures are effective than traditional/live classroom lectures.	Freq	2	10	1	20	17
		%	4	20	2	40	34
9.	Lack of direct contact with the students.	Freq	33	16	0	1	0
		%	66	32	0	2	0
10.	Students are motivated during online lectures.	Freq	7	5	3	20	15
		%	14	10	6	40	30
11.	You feel happy about the student-teacher interaction during online teaching and learning.	Freq	8	8	0	15	19
		%	16	16	0	30	38
12.	Students ask questions or clear doubts during online lectures.	Freq	4	4	2	20	20
		%	8	8	4	40	40
13.	It is difficult to conduct practical sessions.	Freq	29	17	0	3	1
		%	58	34	0	6	2
14.	It is difficult to teach some subjects (Eg.Maths).	Freq	22	18	5	3	2
		%	44	36	10	6	4
15.	It is better to keep class short or as a series of short sessions.	Freq	16	28	6	0	0
		%	32	56	12	0	0
16.	It may be difficult to get an immediate feedback on what was being taught.	Freq	16	25	2	5	2
		%	32	50	4	10	4
17.	Online environment simply takes more time than a face-to-face class to effectively accomplish.	Freq	20	20	2	6	2
		%	40	40	4	12	4
18.	Home environment is suitable for conducting online lectures.	Freq	10	10	0	10	20
		%	20	20	0	20	40
19.	Possibility of distractions from other family members during online lectures.	Freq	20	21	2	3	4
		%	40	42	4	6	8
20.	You like to conduct online lectures with conventional lectures after COVID-19 pandemic over.	Freq	20	15	5	4	6
		%	40	30	10	8	12
21.	Online teaching promotes student's independent learning.	Freq	15	21	5	3	6
		%	30	42	10	6	12
22.	Online teaching can cause impaired vision.	Freq	20	15	4	6	5
		%	40	30	8	12	10
23.	Online method can be used sustainably in primary education of students.	Freq	12	1	11	6	20
		%	24	2	22	12	40
24.	I appreciate online teaching method as I can access and take classes any time at my convenience.	Freq	10	20	12	6	2
		%	20	40	24	12	4
25.	Technical problems discourage me from online classes.	Freq	25	18	7	0	0
		%	50	36	14	0	0
26.	Online classes are useful since students can access/made available from any location.	Freq	17	21	0	5	7
		%	34	42	0	10	14
27.	Learning to take online classes is easy, does not require much time and more convenient.	Freq	13	17	12	7	1
		%	26	34	24	14	2
28.	The service level provided by the various online classes' tools was better than expected.	Freq	9	7	0	24	10
		%	18	14	0	48	20
29.	I am satisfied with the use of communication tools in the online environment (Eg. chat rooms, threaded discussions etc.)	Freq	11	2	4	11	22
		%	22	4	8	22	44
30.	Overall, most of my expectations from using tools for online classes were admirable.	Freq	8	1	12	3	26
		%	16	2	24	6	52

Discussion

In the study total 50 teachers took part. The study revealed that majority of the teachers 31(62%) were in the age group of 21-30 years, 16(32%) were in the age group of 31-40years and 3(6%) were in the age group of 41-50years. Majority 32(65.3%) of the teachers were females and 18(34.7%) were males. Most of the teachers 31(62%) were graduates, 18(36%) were post graduates and only 1(2%) was found to hold PhD. Most of the teachers 18(36% were using Zoom online platform for online teaching, 12(24%) were using Google meet, 9(18%) were using Cisco Webex, 5(10%) were using Google Classroom and the remaining 6(12%) were using other platforms for online teaching. Majority of the teachers who participated in the study were teaching EVS and English.

The teachers expressed their difficulties to motivate the students such as interference from family members which causes distractions that reduce the concentration as online learning lacks direct contact with the students. It is very challenging on the part of teachers to take online classes as majority of the teachers 41 (82%) do not have computer knowledge or IT skills. So, 46 (92%) of the teachers prefer to have training on conducting online classes. Majority of the teachers 43 (86%) expressed the technical issues they faced during online classes.

Conclusion

The present pandemic situation has caused a lot of troubles to almost all walks of life. The teachers need more technical preparedness with necessary online educational resources and training programmes. Excellent domain knowledge, proficient computer knowledge, communication skills and emotionally connect with the students are required to deal with the demands of the online platforms. It is challenging to manage online learning on a long term basis due to lack of interest and attention during the online classes as the students were not accustomed of learning with smart phones and computers.

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