

**TILTM 2022****Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication****EFFECT ON CHILDREN'S EDUCATION DURING PANDEMIC IN INDIA: LESSON FOR FUTURE**

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**Abstract**

The world has been struggling with a pandemic due to coronavirus since 2020. People in virtually every country have been impacted by the pandemic, with children at risk. The children, confined within the four walls, were subjected to an atmosphere of fear and anxiety. After schools and other educational institutions closed their doors, teachers had to come up with alternative methods to continue their jobs in education. Since 2020, some students have been participating in online schooling; more than two years have passed. Several factors have contributed to a decline in the overall quality of education brought on by the epidemic. Children who could use educational resources expressed their concern that their right to receive an education would be curtailed. A digital divide between the wealthy and the poor has emerged due to the proliferation of online educational opportunities. People who are already at a disadvantage and vulnerable are the ones who are hit the hardest by the global epidemic. To cut down on the number of students who drop out of school, efforts should be made to improve educational infrastructure and resources, as well as to improve emergency preparedness and the quality of training provided to educational institutes. This would help both students and teachers work more effectively. This study seeks to investigate the conditions children in India face by way of a survey conducted in the nation's capital.

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*Keywords:* Children in India, education in India, children during the pandemic, effect of pandemic

## 1. Introduction

The Latin term "infants," which means "the one who does not talk," is the source of the English word "child." In ancient Rome, the term "adolescent" originally referred to children under the age of seven, but the age range has since broadened to encompass everyone until eighteen. In 1924, following the First World War, the Geneva Declaration established children's rights. The rights of children were first acknowledged by the UN in 1959 and were ratified by all nations in 1989 (The meaning of the child and the rights of children, n.d.). The Right to Education Act (RTE) was passed in India in 2009 under Article 21(A) of the Indian Constitution to safeguard children's human rights to education. The RTE guarantees everyone's right to an education.

Almost all the states have defined education in the world as a fundamental right. However, some parents lack the means necessary to provide for their children's education (Brannen et al., 2020; Firey, 2020; Goodman et al., 2016; Stoicheva, 2021). One can say that a poor man would pick bread than a book. The literacy rate in India is 74.04 percent (males 82.14 percent and females 65.46 percent) (Literacy, 2022). It shows that India's education policy has many gaps, and as a result, not everyone has access to education. India has come to share this stance in response to international agreements and initiatives on the human right to education. The right to education was established by a statute that India's parliament enacted in 2009 and became operative in 2010. This law was designed with youngsters between six and fourteen in mind. This law has made free and compulsory education available to children. A fixed proportion of places at all state-funded private schools must be reserved for pupils from lower-income families. Many people in society who might not otherwise be able to afford higher education will now have more access to it because of the same law. On educational projects, the central and state governments should cooperate (Kumari & Sharma, 2021; Kumar & Quinn, 2012; Katsaounis & Steinmüller, 2021; Runde et al., 2020). The pandemic due to coronavirus violated this right in some way. Studying and understanding the factors, issues, and resolution is essential to be trained for the future.

## 2. Problem Statement

The right to education act for children was violated during the pandemic for various reasons.

## 3. Research Questions

- i. Study the situation of students during a pandemic through a survey
- ii. Effect of the pandemic on students
- iii. Various ways in which the RTE was violated in India
- iv. Find out solutions to safeguard children's RTE in future

## 4. Purpose of the study

- i. To safeguard the interest of children even during an emergency.

## 5. Research Methods

The study is based on a doctrinal research method. A short survey was conducted to procure the primary data, and the secondary obtained from various official and private organizations' sites has been collected and studied to get the results.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. Pandemic and Children in India:

Since 2020, coronavirus has spread throughout the entire earth. The pandemic epidemic brought several restrictions, boundaries, lockdowns, and social and physical segregation. Around the world, the disease has had a catastrophic impact on many people's lives, especially those of children. The human race was worried and started questioning who would survive a covid infection or avoid becoming infected. In the face of such a threat, every family felt compelled to overprotect their children. For their safety, the kids were locked inside their homes or bedrooms. The children were not permitted outside the house for outdoor or educational activities. The educational institutes were closed to protect the teachers' and children's lives. Gradually, the teaching and learning practices were converted from offline to online. The new strategies for educating people were researched. All of a sudden, nothing needed to be done. The kids were always stressed and anxious about the house's four walls. The educational system has experienced a substantial change due to the epidemic. Children's human rights have been violated in several ways during this epidemic.

### 6.2. Challenges in Education During Pandemic:

A UNESCO report (Learning through radio and television in the time of COVID-19, 2020) states that the COVID-19 epidemic has infected 90% of all students worldwide. Due to school closings, parents and teachers were compelled to look for and implement alternative educational opportunities. However long some of the students have been taking their classes online—nearly two years—the quality of instruction has gotten worse. The delivery of a comprehensive education is not possible through online learning. Sandy Baum and Michael McPherson (2019) cites that:

While rigorous evidence about the significant characteristics of the personal interaction that most effectively fosters learning is scarce, numerous surveys and studies strongly suggest that the absence of meaningful connections contributes to weaker outcomes for students in online courses compared with traditional classrooms. (p. 235)

There will be a vast difference between online and offline education for various reasons. Exams are not administered consistently. Online courses cannot give students the practical training they need to increase their skills in particular disciplines. There is still a learning curve for schools, instructors, and educators. For instance, if students don't turn on their webcams and microphones while class is in progress, the teacher won't know if the students are paying attention, learning the concepts taught in class,

etc. Children's education has been seriously disturbed by the closing of educational institutes; as per various reports and surveys, female students were affected more than male students during the pandemic. Apart from their online classes, they were expected to engage in household work, and even in some cases, girls were forced to leave school and get married or get involved in positions to support the family. According to UNICEF, which released figures on International Women's Day, girls are more likely to marry due to school closures, economic difficulties, and parental mortality due to Covid.

### **6.3. Lack of Resources**

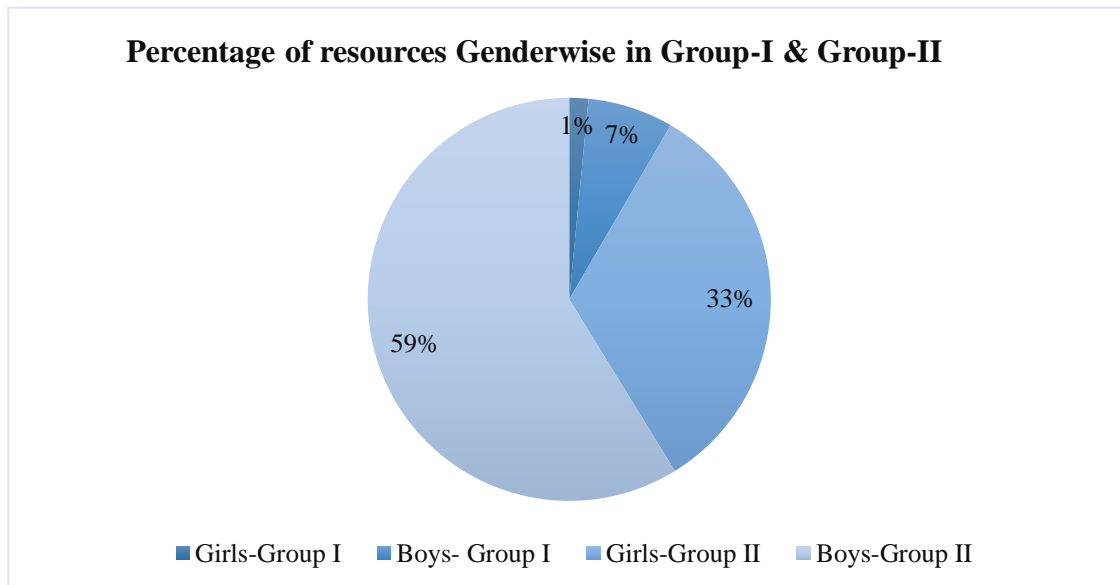
For emergencies, there was no strategy in place for schools, and many teachers had no idea how to use computers in the classroom. Exams, assignments, and classes: how they ought to be handled, how they ought to be graded, etc. In many cases, instructors couldn't get internet connectivity in remote areas in India. Because of this, many young people could not utilize the internet, their smartphones, or their PCs (Vegas et al., 2021). Food was a key concern for families trying to make ends meet, not their kids' education. Many educational institutes could not arrange online instruction because of a lack of funds, infrastructure, knowledge, and various other issues. According to Emiliana Vegas (2021) and others in a study on the effects of Covid-19 on students in India,

Alarmingly, 1 in 5 children in our sample were enrolled in schools that do not offer any remote instruction during the school closures, and even among the children whose schools had begun remote instruction, only slightly more than half attended all the classes. (<http>)

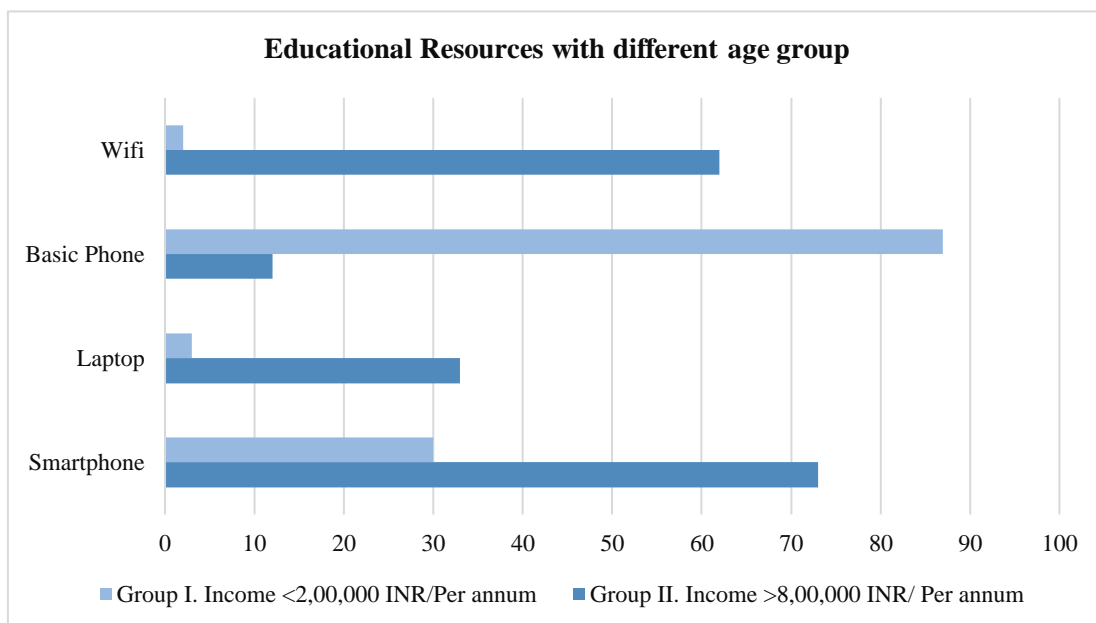
Because of this, many kids in India are unable to attend school. The main reason for this is that the educational system cannot accommodate the needs of students enrolled in online courses. According to some accounts, kids were forced to stop attending school or studying because they lacked the resources.

### **6.4. A Survey at East Delhi**

As a prototype, we conducted interviews in East Delhi in December 2021 to learn more about the conditions there. The discussions happened in a physical space. Young people between the ages of 5 and 15 submitted 201 replies. Responses were divided into two groups according to household income. The first group is the lower-income group, i.e., the income of such respondents is more minor than 2,00,000/- Rs. (~2500USD) per annum. The payment of the second group is more than Rs. 8,00,000/-(10,000/- USD) The number of educational resources available to the two groups differs. The information was used to examine the impact of COVID-19 on kids. The graph below displays the collected data (Figure 1, Figure 2).



**Figure 1.** Respondents Genderwise



**Figure 2.** Respondents with/without Educational Resources

The distance between the two groups based on the resources they have is quite vast. Groups I and II would have different priorities depending on the available resources. Another essential aspect that cannot be ignored is gender. Our survey findings indicated that women's circumstances were terrible because they lacked the resources to finish their education while away from home. Due to the presence of computers or cellphones, only 43% of the girls in group II were able to attend the sessions. Only 2% of the girls had used laptops or smartphones to continue their education during the pandemic in India.

The situation for girls has gotten worse after the pandemic. Many Indian families still think that girls are a financial burden and, at last, i.e., after marriage, must go to others' houses. Most kids and parents claimed they were kept inside during a lockdown by the authorities. Several kids had to leave school due to the worsening conditions. Due to technological limitations like no access to an internet connection, it's unlikely that even people with access to educational resources could utilize them.

The epidemic has increased the number of children who, for various reasons, cannot attend primary school. Over 15 crore children and adolescents in the country could not be enrolled in a formal educational system, Union Education Minister of India Mr. Dharmendra Pradhan stated during a session on "Job creation and entrepreneurship" (At least 15 crore children, youths out of formal education system: Dharmendra Pradhan, 2021). The most valuable resource for a country is an educated populace because a weak population cannot support a powerful government.

### **6.5. Financial Crises**

Due to the outbreak, more individuals lost their jobs due to the closure of markets, and other categories of workers—including construction workers, cobblers, and domestic servants—could not find employment. Between April and June of 2020, the GDP of India fell significantly by 24.4%. Many people throughout the outbreak couldn't afford a quality education. It is natural to choose food instead of school for people with a financial crunch.

### **6.6. (vi). Digital Divide Fuelled Violation of RTE**

The outbreak has created an information gap. The wealth and poverty gaps have grown more expansive due to online schooling. The lack of even the most fundamental educational materials has an ongoing effect on young people's thinking. Society was divided in two over education throughout the pandemic. A group of young people on one side appeared to be living the high life, having access to every convenience. Contrarily, a lack of money forces many families from lower and medium socioeconomic classes to force their children out of school (Learning through radio and television in the time of COVID-19, 2020). Due to the coronavirus outbreak, more than half of the students could not return to class because they could not use computers, laptops, or mobile/internet networks. The growing disparity between the two groups of students led to inequality and violation of the Right to Education. The UNESCO case study examination conducted by UNICEF in India brought attention to the digital divide. According to a poll, the biggest obstacles to continuous learning have been the cost of devices and data and network connectivity infrastructure. A crucial precondition is to develop a solid, extensive power infrastructure that offers technology users affordable, uninterrupted electricity (India Case Study, 2021). Children's constitutional right to education is violated due to this injustice. Michael McPherson and Lawrence Bacow (2015) have written that:

If technology is used in broad access institutions to drive cost down without regard to quality, and at the same time is used in elite higher education to increase the cost further and restrict the availability of the “best” education, we will wind up with a society both more unequal and less-productive than it could be. (p. 135)

## **6.7. Findings: Lesson Learnt for Future**

There has never been a global epidemic of school abandonment. The worldwide spread has a particularly negative impact on the most underprivileged areas. Within the next two years, our educational system needs to be strengthened. With a focus on remote education, fair solutions, and a context-based approach, the education system needs to be equipped with various levels of technical ability to handle such situations effectively. After the complete reopening of the schools, steps should be taken to assist students in reducing the number of kids who drop out of school.

By conducting a door-to-door survey, identifying at-risk adolescents, and relocating students, the Indian Ministry of Education has directed the states to develop a plan to stop the flow of school abandonment. The government created regulations to increase awareness, ensure that children were enrolled, and encourage them through counselling to returning to school. These regulations ensured that children with less of an educational impact from the epidemic had equal access to high-quality education. The teachers may visit students at home for evaluation, provide them with study materials, and encourage them to study at home even if they are unable to come to attend class offline.

## **7. Conclusion: Steps to be Taken**

Due to the epidemic, children's right to education has been significantly jeopardized. The violation still exists today. Based on our study, survey, interviews, and secondary data, we may suggest some steps to protect the Right to Education Act and be prepared for future untoward situations.

The first step is to collect data from all the schools on the equipment and resources they have to conduct online classes. The schools may survey to enquire the students with educational resources. The state may assist the schools and students who do not possess educational resources such as phones, tablets, laptops, computers, etc. A pilot project can be launched to study the data and bring out viable solutions to handle the pandemic type of situations in the future. The collaboration of national and international government or private organizations to upgrade and equip the educational institute so that the students do not suffer due to a lack of resources. Manufacturing of educational resources may be promoted in the country and made available at subsidized rates to the users. Evaluation of the Right to Education Act may be conducted, and necessary amendments may be done. The Act may include a pandemic type of emergency. The modification may also have directives to schools and authorities on how to act in such a situation. Teachers should train to upgrade their knowledge and skills to use educational resources. The training session should be organized for students regularly because students without having the educational resources may also not utilize the resources available in the school properly. Such kind of steps may help to reduce the digital gap. Protecting the fundamental right to education in India will also be fruitful.

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