

The perception of the parents toward the online teaching and learning during the covid-19 pandemic.

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Abstract

On March 5, 2020, the first positive case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Bhutan, and on March 18, all the nationwide schools were closed to decrease the spread of Coronavirus. Like many other countries, Bhutan initiated online teaching and learning to replace traditional face-to-classes during the COVID-19 pandemic to continue children's learning. Lessons were broadcast on television and self-learning materials were distributed to rural schools and those who don't have access to online learning. This study is projected to investigate the parents' perspectives on online teaching and Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was conducted in a small village under Shumar Gewog (block) under Pema Gatshel Dzongkhag (district) in the East of Bhutan. This paper was a qualitative study based on in-depth semi-structured interviews which were limited to thirty key informants due to several limitations. Data were analyzed with a content analysis approach. The study found that there is a mixed perception towards online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The result suggested that online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic will assist their children to keep engaged, it helps many students to clear doubts and understand the concepts in better ways, it helps the students to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which enhances their capability to explore the world beyond. On the other hand, it is connected with the parents concerning the quality of education due to the online classes, the poor network connectivity issues, wastage of money on data, and most of the children are engaged in online games and other unhealthy websites which can result in the risk of cyberbullying.

Keywords— COVID-19, Online, Perspectives, Pandemic.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is an important issue in one's life. It is key to achievement in the future and having many prospects in our life. Education plays a critical role to prepare students to lead a successful adult life. Education helps people to enhance their minds, reinforces their thought and strengthen their character, promotes the human personality, thoughts, and social skills and it also contributes to the community development.

Bhutan is a small Himalayan landlocked country with a unique and remarkable culture and tradition, rich religious festivals, significant historic monuments, and a pristine environment. It is situated in South Asia, bordering China in the North and India in the south with a total land area of 38.140 square kilometers (world bank,2020). Before the introduction of modern education in the country, monastic education based on Buddhism was predominated and was provided only by monasteries. However, the foundations of modern education in Bhutan can be traced back about 100 years to the reign of the first hereditary king Ugyen Wangchuk. In 1914, the foundation of modern education

started when 46 boys traveled overseas to study at a mission school in Kalimpong in India (Takehiro, 2015 as cited in Tandin Wangmo & Kinga Choden, 1 2011, p. 445)

After the first-ever outbreak of the virus in December 2019 Wuhan, China, it has affected every corner of the world including Bhutan. The COVID-19 pandemic has created the greatest disruption of education systems in the entire world, disturbing nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries with the closures of schools, institutions, and other learning spaces. In Bhutan, the closing of schools and other learning institutions was declared in March 2020 (kuensel, 2020, March 6). The colleges, schools, and institutions were reopened for certain levels, however, the teaching and learning processes were continued and carried out online classes employing various social media for others.

During the time of lockdown, online teaching and learning have helped to introduce digital teaching and learning and have provided the opportunity for both the teachers and parents to explore ICT.

This study targeted the small community of Shumar Gewog (block), Pema Gatshel Dzongkhag (district) to examine the perception of the parents towards the online teaching and learning during the covid-19 pandemic.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Lockdown due to Covid-19 has led to the closures of the colleges, schools, and institutions throughout the world hampering the daily work, businesses, teaching, and learning processes. There was a paradigm shift in the way the teaching and learning process were conducted to deliver quality education using various means of social media to ensure that students receive their education under safe conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled universities, colleges, and schools all over the world to make adaptations in their procedures of delivering classes (Zhou et al., 2020, as cited in MoE, 2021). More than ever, the use of technology to influence online teaching and learning has improved significantly (Adarkwah, 2020; Bergdahl & Nouri, 2020; Hill & Uribe-Florez, 2020). Online teaching and learning refer to the readiness of the children to prepare to learn efficiently in an online environment (Demir Kaymak & Horzum, 2013; Wei & Chou, 2020). Online learning refers to “the learning experienced through the internet” either in the synchronous or asynchronous environment where students engage with instructors and other students at their convenient time and place (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

After closing the schools following the Covid-19 pandemic, a group of teachers volunteered to come up with the notion of Volunteer Teachers of Bhutan (VTOB). VTOB started delivering educational lessons through the national television so that students could continue their education and has turned into a foundation to supplement the mainstream education (kuensel, 2020). The Ministry of Education initiated teaching online using social media, Self-Instructional Materials (SIM), video and radio lessons, including psychosocial support through Sherig Counselling services (MoE, 2021). Then, E-learning tools have played a crucial role during this pandemic, helping schools and universities facilitate student learning during the closure of universities and schools (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021, as cited in Subedi et al., 2020). During the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, various kinds of platforms are used to deliver the lessons. Some of the online platforms employed comprise integrated communication and teamwork platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Telegram, and WeChat, which allow the teachers to create educational courses, training, and skill development programs (Petrie, 2020). According to the report compiled by the Ministry of Education, it was revealed that 119,772 students accessed

lessons through various social media Apps, and 3,301 students accessed lessons through the radio. Among the different Apps, it was found that WeChat was the most popular app used by the students to assess the lessons (MoE, 2021).

The execution of online teaching and learning similarly depends on community participation, particularly by parents. Students' accomplishments in using E-Learning can progress through attention from their parents (Kong, 2018). Therefore, parents' perception of E-Learning usage is important to be noticed (Abdallah, 2018). According to (Barbour & Reeves, 2009), stated that online learning possesses certain benefits and these advantages comprise growing educational access, providing high-quality learning opportunities, and allowing for educational choice. However, they also pointed out some challenges posted by online learning and these include high start-up costs associated with virtual schools, access issues surrounding the digital divide, and student readiness and retention issues. Likewise, Cavanaugh et al. (2009) found out in their investigation on Research and practice in K-12 online learning that expanding educational access is the one studied the most. Among all identified challenges, “access issues surrounding the digital divide” and “high start-up costs related to virtual schools” tend to be studied the most. Many pieces of research revealed that parental participation in online teaching and learning has long been noticed as positively related to students' academic achievement (Wang and Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). However, (DePlanty et al., 2007, Paulson and Sputa, 1996, Thomas et al. 2020 as cited in Yang et al, 2021) pointed out that students perceive lower levels of parental involvement than their parents do. According to (Aldhafeeri & Khan, 2016), pointed out that, due to the progression of new communication technologies, online learning can offer a rich, authentic learning ecology that can enable cooperation and interdependence between learners. Conversely, researchers (Chen, 2010, O'Doherty et al., 2018) have stated their concerns regarding the quality of online learning and emphasized the key problems in creating an online learning community with a high degree of social presence and engagement. In addition, some researchers are also concerned about the main problems of online learning, such as social isolation, lack of interactivity and participation, and delayed or insubstantial amount of feedback (Khurana, 2016). Similarly, online learning has also been a heated debate among scholars. Some researchers emphasized their concern regarding the online risks and dangers, addition to videos, social isolation, and physical health issues (Jiang & Monk, 2015; Radesky et al., 2016). As stated by, Nouwen & Zaman, 2018) that, parents play an imperative role to avoid harm and controlling children's online activities, such as

setting up technology use rules for and monitoring their children's media use.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Location of the study

The research area is located in the Eastern part of Bhutan under the Pema Gatsel Dzongkhag (District). The Dzongkhag (District) covers an area of about 1023 square km with elevations ranging from 1000 to 3,500 meters above sea level. The District is divided into 11 blocks called Gewog and the present study is situated under Shumar Gewog (block).

3.2. Research Design

This study was qualitative in orientation and was based on in-depth interviews with semi-structured questions employed to find the paramount appropriate and perceptive information required. In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that encompassed conducting and understanding with a small number of participants to examine their perspectives on a specific idea, program, or situation. The in-depth interview was the desired approach to acquire the essential data in this research because the key participants would be more likely to get involved rather than sending some questionnaires to be read by themselves. According to Miles & Gilbert (2005) pointed out, semi-structured interviews are discussions constructed on the researcher's questions designed at inspiring a conversation where the interviewee experiences relaxation and truly speaks about what he or she contemplates about the topic. In this research, the interviews were directed by a set of pre-determined questions regarding the parent's perspectives on online teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected in the village of Shumar, which is located under Shumar Gewog (block). Altogether 30 parents whose children were enrolled in Shumar Lower Secondary school were interviewed for the period of 20 days during the Covid-19 pandemic. The key informants were in the age range 25 to 50 years and included 15 males and 15 females, these key participants were born, raised, and lived in this community. The key informants were selected based on simple random sampling so that it will provide the key informants with an equal and fair probability of being chosen in this study. The interview guidelines were translated into local dialect because the majority of the key informants were illiterate and farmers. Responses were later translated and transcribed into English. Notes and recordings were taken during the time of

the interview to check for reliability and to support the data. After the completion of data collection, raw data were studied thoroughly employing the content analysis method to determine the relationships of the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts and meanings.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In-depth interviews were conducted with 30 key informants (15 males and 15 females) signifying the importance of gender, with the age group of 25-50 years. The followings are the perspectives of the parents about online teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic which can be organized into two themes, positive response and a negative response. The majority of the key informants reported that they had no idea about what is online teaching and learning before the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.1. Positive perspectives toward the online teaching and learning

Overall, (35%) of the respondents reported that they possess ideas about online teaching and learning and therefore, support the idea of online teaching and learning platform for their children. The findings revealed that online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic has helped their children to learn at least a few things rather than simply closing the schools. The majority of the respondents indicated that online teaching can help students to clear their doubts and help to understand the concepts even if they can't meet their teachers.

"My son can continue his studies during the closure of the schools due to Covid-19 pandemic. Online teaching and learning helped him to continue his studies" (key informant 12).

"I am not literate and I cannot help my daughter to clear her doubts. Online teaching has facilitated her to clear whatever doubts and obstacles she faced during the lockdown" (female key informant 5).

Further, the key informants believe that with the development of technology, it is high time to introduce information communication technology (ICT) to our children. Online teaching and learning during the pandemic, has assisted their children to employ ICT in their studies, which helped them to explore the world beyond their school.

"Now my child can use the internet to explore further. Whenever she has doubts and doesn't understand the concept taught by the teachers, she can browse google to clear and understand the concept. This has helped her to be an independent learner." (key informant 23).

4.2. Negative perspectives toward the online teaching and learning

In contrast, there was opposition to the perceptions toward online teaching and learning. The majority of the key informants (75%) argued that although children can learn through online teaching and learning platforms, the quality of learning will diminish and the learning impact is bad. Further, the majority of the key informants explained that young children cannot concentrate fully, and therefore, it affects their learning. This finding is in consistent with the findings of (Chen, 2010, O'Doherty et al., 2018) who mentioned the quality of education being diminished due to online learning and teaching. In addition, it was revealed that the absence of direct contact between students and teachers is a major challenge during online classes.

"My children cannot understand the lessons delivered by the teachers which affects the learning. I am worried about the quality of education if we continue online classes". (male key informant 13).

Further, network connectivity issues were the most problem faced by the students and the parents as most of the parent's dwell in the rural areas. It was found out that, students along with their parents have to walk kilometers to get proper network connectivity and this caused them lots of problems such as time management and life threatened by the wild animals. The finding of this study is supported by the studies conducted by (Mishra et al., 2020) about online teaching and learning in higher education during the lockdown period of the COVID-19 period pandemic which found that the foremost challenge while teaching online was the unstable network connection.

"In our village, frequently there is bad network coverage. This has caused lots of problems especially to attend the online classes during the Covid-19 pandemic. Parents need to accompany the children for walking hours to get the better net coverage".

Additionally, the majority of the key informants revealed that online teaching and learning has caused lots of issues such as wastage of data on online games, and conflict about mobile phones among the children in the family. Moreover, the findings revealed that there are chances of children getting into cyber risks if they are too much dependent on the internet and in classes. The findings of this research is in consistent with the study conducted by (DQ Institute, 2019), where they found that through digital intelligence teachers can provide children's digital skills who are on the brink of cyber risk into the learning prospects to get achievement in future risks, particularly during the COVID-

19 pandemic where children are solely dependent on online learning.

"In my family, I just have one smartphone and online classes have caused lots of misunderstanding among the family members" (key informant 27).

"I am a farmer, it is very hard to time to manage mobile data for the online teaching and learning. I don't support this approach of imparting knowledge to our children as it is expensive for us" (Key informant 7).

The key informants were investigated about what method of online teaching and learning their children are being taught during the Covid-19 pandemic. The approach their teachers employed is Google classroom, Telegram, recorded video lessons, and, WeChat. It was found out that, the WeChat approach to teaching and learning was the most preferred method used by the teachers and students as it is easy to operate.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Digital online learning and teaching are growing in popularity because of the benefits, such as greater flexibility, wider access, and low cost (Khurana, 2016, Chen, 2010). Conversely, the findings of this study revealed that the execution of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic has both positive and negative perceptions from the key informants.

In this research, the positive perceptions are connected with the children keeping engaged during the COVID-19 pandemic, it also helped many students to clear doubts and understand the concepts in some better ways. The online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 have helped the students to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which enhanced their capability to explore the world beyond.

The negative perceptions are connected with the parents concerning the quality of education due to the online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, the bad network connectivity issues where they have to walk kilometers to attend the online classes, wastage of money on data, and most of the children being engaged in other activities such as online games and U TUBE which can result in the risk of cyberbullying.

Several recommendations can be considered for future research:

1. Future research should include both parents and children to investigate their perception of online

teaching and learning so that comparative studies can be done.

2. Future studies should employ more tools to collect data such as participant observation and focus group discussion to acquire more authentic data.
3. Mixed method studies should be conducted to thoroughly investigate their perspectives on the related topic.

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