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How do women view the online learning of their children? A Study of Alappuzha District

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How do women view the online learning of their children?

A Study of Alappuzha District

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Abstract

This paper discusses the issues of online education from the perspective of women, an important agent in the education system in their capacity of mothers. The study enquires into the issues of college going students in the Alappuzha district of Kerala state. The study has found that despite the low economic profile of households, parents give utmost importance to the online education of their children. Most of them have ensured that their children have necessary gadgets and internet services to access online classes. Only 30 percent of the women opine that online education has added burden to their household budget. 60 percent of women appear to have been satisfied with the online classes.

Key words: *Online Education, Content. UGC, Household Budget, Women Education, Women assistance*

Covid-19 has created a panic condition elsewhere in the world irrespective of the economic and social condition of the people. It has affected the education sector severely (Bose 2020). Schools and colleges in almost all affected countries have been remaining closed for many months, and it is understood that it will be so for the coming days as well. In this circumstance, educational institutions have shifted to online mode of learning using different online video conference platforms and social media. Although its success remains questioned, students and other stakeholders of the education system have been forced to continue with the online learning as there is no alternative to this. In India, University Grants Commission, Ministry of Human Resource Development and State governments have issued directions to the procedure to be followed in online learning classes (UGC 2020).

Online learning is a new experience to a vast majority of students, teachers and parents. It makes face to face physical interaction in classroom redundant (Segaren 2020). As students and teachers find it increasingly difficult to reach educational institutions owing to country wide and micro lockdowns, they seek to shift to online modes to discuss syllabus based curriculum. Meanwhile universities with the continuance of exams have shown that academic activities especially exams are likely to persist amidst lockdown and the social distancing. Therefore, it has become imperative for teachers, students and parents that they should resort to the online teaching modes and complete the syllabi as prescribed by the Universities.

Other academic exercises have been progressing on the same lines. Recently, many colleges and institutes have come out with the Webinars and Online Conferences discussing important academic things ensuring the presence of all beneficiaries. Even certificates of participation and presentation have been issued to those attending the conferences. These academic exercises and discussions will also continue in the near future as well if the present condition does not evade itself.

Despite the benefits that the online teaching promises in the Pandemic condition, it has created unprecedented apprehensions in the minds of all stakeholders in the education system (Chari 2020). It is generally believed in the household, women take more care in the education of children (World Bank 2017). Studies have proved that there exists positive and strong correlation between the education of the women in the household and their children (Hoarding, Pamela and Diane 2015). Moreover, mothers' interest in the education of their children influences the learning outcome and the progress of the children. Therefore, it is likely that the mothers are to be more conscious about the success and failures of children who are undergoing the newer experiences of online learning. In this circumstance, the present study intends to focus on different aspects of online learning from the perspectives of the mothers of the college going students.

Methodology

The present study is based on primary data collected from the mothers of selected colleges in the Alappuzha district of Kerala state. Questionnaires were sent using the Google form in the whatsapp groups of students and they were asked to record the responses of their mothers and submit the same. Questionnaires were sent to 250 selected students and out of that 228 responses were received. These data was analyzed using appropriate statistical software. Only tabulation and percentages were employed in the present study.

Analysis of Data and Important Findings

Employment

Among the economic factors that influence the education of the children, employment of parents assumes importance. Unsurprisingly, it is obvious that most of the mothers are housewife (83.7 per cent) and only 4.8 per cent are working in the government sector (Table No1). This shows that employment wise, the mothers are not empowered as they stay inside the home focusing on caring works.

Table 1 Employment wise distribution of Women

	per cent	Cumulative per cent
Employed as Casual workers	6.7	6.7
Employed in Gov. Sector	4.8	11.5
Employed in Private Sector	4.8	16.3
Housewife	83.7	100
Total	100	

Source: Primary Survey, 2020

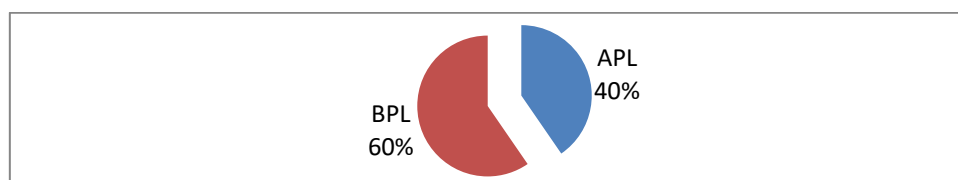
Looking at the occupation of their spouses, it is seen that most of them are reported to have been engaged in casual works and other type of works (81.7 per cent). While 9.6 per cent of the spouses find employment in private sector only 8.7 per cent are employed in the government sector (Table No.2).

Table 2 Occupation wise distribution of Spouse

Occupation	Valid Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Any other	48.1	48.1
Casual worker	33.7	81.7
Working in Gov. Sector	8.7	90.4
Working in Private Sector	9.6	100
Total	100	

Thus it is clear that employment wise the condition of the parents of these students does not appear to be good. Many do not have regular and standard employment opportunities. Of course, this will have far reaching consequences on the progress of students especially in the higher education system where the cost of education has been skyrocketing. Again, it would not be much surprising that 60 per cent of these households hold BPL (Below Poverty Line) ration cards (Figure No.1).

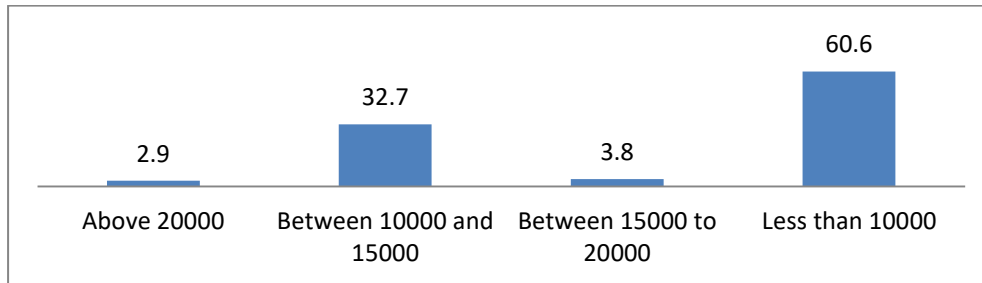
Figure 1 API/BPL status of the Households



Nevertheless, the low income households do not seem to be compromising on the education needs of their children. Most of the students (60.6 per cent) do hold gadgets having less than

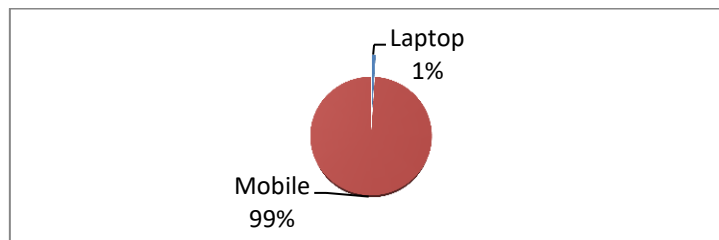
Rs.10000 while not less than 32.6 per cent have bought gadgets worth between Rs.10000 and 15000 prices (Figure No.2).

Figure 2 Price Range of Gadgets



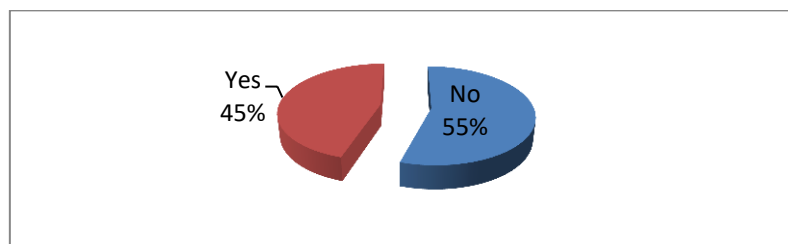
It is quite interesting to note that an overwhelming per cent of respondents (99 per cent) use mobile phones to access the online classes (Figure No2).

Figure 2 Gadgets which the students use



Smart mobile phones having the requisite capacity to install and run applications of different online platforms like Google Meet and Zoom are generally of high prices, and these parents being economically not sound, have had to borrow money from different sources to buy mobiles for their students. While 55 per cent somehow managed it without resorting to borrowings bearing interest rates, 45 per cent had to borrow money to buy gadgets of requisite qualities (Figure No3).

Figure 3 did you borrow money to buy Gadgets



This shows the highest interest that the parents show in the education of their children and evidently this interest is born out of the education process that they went through although they might not have been properly employed despite having average education levels.

Table 3 Education Attainment of Women

	per cent	Cumulative per cent
any other	8.7	8.7
Degree	14.4	23.1
Plus Two or Pre-Degrees	27.9	51
Post-Graduation and above	1	51.9
SSLC	48.1	100
Total	100	

This is evident from the fact 48 per cent of women (mothers of students) are qualified in SSLC exams while 14 per cent are graduates (Table No.3). Further it is interesting to observe that Airtel is the most preferred internet service provider of the students (Table No4).

Table 4 Service Providers

Service provider	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Airtel	31.7	31.7
Anyother	10.6	42.3
BSNL	3.8	46.2
Idea	27.9	74
Jio	26	100
Total	100	

Students of this generation are tech savvy people compared to their parents, and hence they normally do not require any technical assistance from their parents in attending the online classes. Nevertheless, in certain circumstances parents take effort and time in helping their wards to effectively use the online class platform o their benefits. It is of course curious to know the help that the parents render to their wards in this regard. In this study, it has been found that 32.7 per cent of mothers sometime help their students while only 24 per cent of them never offer any help to their children (Table No.5).

Table 5 how often do you help your child (in online learning)

	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Always	25	25
Never	24	49
Often	6.7	55.8
Rarely	11.5	67.3
Sometimes	32.7	100
Total	100	

Online classes have reduced the expenditure on the part of the institutions, but the burden has apparently been shifted to the parents as they have to provide necessary gadgets and reliable internet connection for their children. It is quite unsurprising that 31.7 per cent of women have agreed to the opinion the statement that online learning has added to the financial burden of the household. At the same time, 30.8 per cent do not share this view (Table No.6). This is because of the fact that gadgets and internet connections were accessed by the parents and students even before the necessity of online classes emerged on account of the social distancing and lockdown. But for those who did not have such gadgets, the necessity of buying these things to engage in online classes might have put constraints on their household budgets.

Table 6 online learning has added to the financial burden of the household

Online learning has added to financial burden	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Agree	31.7	31.7
Disagree	30.8	62.5
Neutral	24	86.5
Strongly agree	2.9	89.4
Strongly disagree	10.6	100
Total	100	

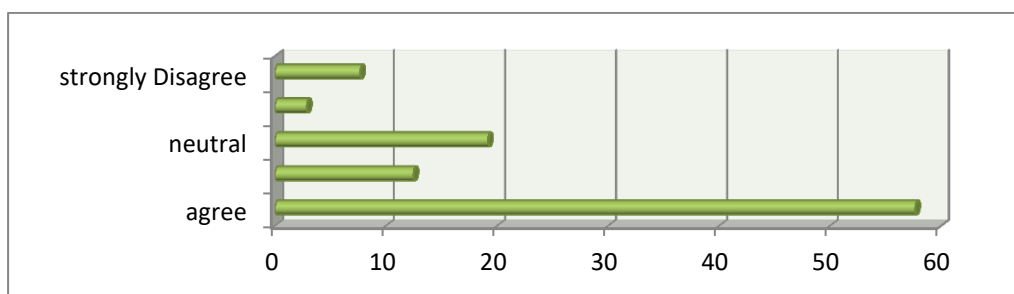
Women especially when they take much caring jobs besides assisting the students in their online classes actually are forced to multitasking in everyday. In this case, time management of women in household affairs matters a lot. We may often believe that when children remain in homes without attending classes in College, household regular activities of women may get affected. But the true story runs contrary to this. In the present study, only 25 per cent of women agree that their household works get affected whereas 42.3 think otherwise (Table No.7)

Table 7 household work gets affected due to online assistance given to children

Household gets affected	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
agree	25	25
disagree	42.3	67.3
neutral	20.2	87.5
strongly agree	1.9	89.4
strongly Disagree	10.6	100
Total	100	

Children can help mother and others in household in many ways, and of course they while being grown up can add values to the life of their fellow being by engaging in productive works. Recently, Kerala government has made changes in the timings of colleges keeping in mind this aspect. The present study reveals that students who keep themselves aloof in times of social distancing and micro lockdown in view of the spreading nature of Covid-19 virus are seemed to be helping their parents in household work. An overwhelming majority of respondents agree with the statement that students help them in household work as they do not have to attend colleges (Figure No7).

Figure 1 children help in household work as they do not have to go to colleges



Two aspects still remain unaddressed: One is the fitness of online education to cater to the needs of the students. We know that online education can hardly be a perfect substitute of the classroom learning which has more added values and qualities. But given the present pandemic condition, we are left with no option but to choose online education as an alternative, and many have taken the same path willingly or unwillingly. Capturing the positivity's of the online classes is something of a herculean task but instead we attempt to embrace everything about this in one simple thing: whether it is good for your child, and to the surprise, the study has revealed that 44.2 per cent agree and 15.4 strongly agree with the view that it is good for their children while, it should not be undermined that, 19.2 percent disagree also. But, since agree plus strongly agree outweighs other responses, online classes can be taken to be good for students provided the present condition, according to the women of the surveyed students (Table No.8)

Table 8 Online education is good for my child

Online education is good	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
agree	44.2	44.2
disagree	19.2	63.5
neutral	19.2	82.7
strongly agree	15.4	98.1
strongly Disagree	1.9	100

Total	100
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Goodness is something related to the outcome of the process whereas satisfaction captures the positive aspects of the whole process. Hence, the present study went to probing whether the women from the surveyed household are satisfied with the online classes or not. Satisfaction takes into account many things, like the timing of classes, mode of delivery of content, quality of internet access, and the whole process through which learning takes place, of course. Needless to say, much to the surprise of many, 60.6 percent of households feel satisfied with the online classes, which by any count points towards the success of the online learning method under the present circumstances (Table No9).

Table 9 Are you satisfied with the online education?

Are you satisfied with online education	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
dissatisfied	20.2	20.2
satisfied	60.6	80.8
unsure	7.7	88.5
very dissatisfied	3.8	92.3
very satisfied	7.7	100
Total	100	

Conclusion

Thus it is evident that women take utmost care in the online education of their children. The study has found that despite the low economic profile of households, parents spend money to meet the online education needs of their children. Most of them have ensured that their children have necessary gadgets and internet services to access online classes. Only 30 percent of the women opine that online education has added burden to their household budget while 60 percent of women appear to have been satisfied with the online classes.

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