Online Classes During *Covit-19*: Experiences of Public Sector High School Teachers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
  	The qualitative study investigated problems faced by high school teachers in delivering online classes during *COVIT-19*. Data were collected from 45 government high school teachers in district Swat through open-ended interview. Using coding and categorizing, four themes were emerged: Unavailability of proper devices to students, Weak and fluctuating internet signals in rural areas, Installation and effectiveness of various App(s) in the device, and Non-serious attitude of students to attend online classes. The provision of free devices along with strong internet services to the students, essential training regarding the installation and use of devices and initiate a parallel program of paper-pen home assignments for the better teaching-learning process in such challenging times of pandemic may be made sure.

INTRODUCTION

Human history is full of pandemics like Cholera, smallpox, plague, influenza, SARS, WN disease, TB and AIDS. In contrast to other diseases influenza has a colossal impact on social surroundings all over the world which forced the population to stay at home (Wickramasinghe et a;. 2020). In the last month of 2019, a viral disease Corona virus *(COVIT-19)* pandemic unexpectedly emerged in Seafood market, Wuhan, in Hubei province of China and spread rapidly leaving millions of deaths across the globe (Zhu et al., 2020).. The disease was able to transmit through mouth droplets of infected person or by contacting different surfaces of objects (Li, et al.2020; Meng, Hua & Bian, 2020). According to the report of UNICC (2020), the pandemic has strongly affected the lives and occupations of people of all ages as well as education systems all over the world. To minimize its spread educational institutes were closed which caused numerous problems including necessary social interaction between teachers and students. Social interaction between teacher and students is very essential for learning and development of students. The government of Pakistan has not taken serious steps on national level to combat with the educational crisis during the pandemic.

Students were promoted to the next classes without taking any examination (Saeed, 2020). The government launched official Tele-education on Pakistan television for home learning but it was inadequate and one way teaching method which could not fulfill the educational needs of the students. To cope with the present crisis and to keep the students touched to the learning process on emergency basis some leading schools managed to launch online classes by utilizing different communication Apps i.e. ZoomApp, WattsApp etc. But majority of public sector schools did nothing in this regard (Yousafzae, 2020). Though these steps seem beneficial to bridge the gap between students and teachers' social interaction but this virtual teaching and learning was a tough task which created problems for both students and teachers living in the remote areas of the province where hiring the device, installation of Apps and fluctuating internet signals hinder the process. However, the purpose of this study was to unveil the problems hindering the learning- teaching process in delivering online classes in the era of *COVIT-19* pandemic as experienced by public sector high school teachers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

In November, 2019, Corona virus *(COVIT-19)* pandemic raised its head in Wuhan, China and reached Pakistan in the month of February, 2020. In March 2020, schools, colleges and Universities were closed and all social interactions were strictly prohibited to stop the virus under the slogan "*Stay at home save lives*" (Mehreen Zahra-Malik, 2020). In March, 2020, UNISCO reported that due

to the pandemic 107 countries had adopted national school closures, affecting 862 million children, nearly half of the words' student population (UNESCO, 2020). Due to ban on social gathering to avoid the impact, educational activities were interrupted (Jackson, Vynnrcky and Mangtani, 2016). Children likely tend more to transmit Fluenza and affect as compared to adults due to low level of tolerance (Wallinga, Teunis, and Cretzschmar, 2006). Reduction in transmission of virus was observed due to school closure (Cowling, Ali and Ng, 2020) Some repots revealed that both adults and children may be affected alike but children may have common sort of illness (Shen,Yang, wang, 2020).

The pandemic has strongly affected teaching/learning process and has put challenges on governments to ensure the continuity of educational activities (Chang Yano, 2020). Educational system of Pakistan has already numerous issues including teaching/ learning facilities but the present wave of pandemic added more in these difficulties (Asaari, 2012, Mansoor and Akhyat, 2015). According to PTA (2020) only one million school going students have regular access to the digital services. In the second week of pandemic PTV House started Tele-teaching program from grade 1 to 12 with services charges and round about 54 million peoples were viewers. According to Yousafzai (2020), the program was launched from four Ed-tech organizations ie. *SABAQ, Orenda Project*, *Knowledge Platform* and *Sabaq Foundation*. In addition, a test message system of 250,000 users was added to communicate students with devoted teachers (Malik, 2020).

In Ghana, a descriptive study on the effects of school closing on 214 tertiary level students' learning and achievement was conducted by Owusu-Fordjour, Koomson and Hanson (2020). The study findings revealed that students were unable to adequately attend online classes and learn from it due to many problems including the usage and setting of online learning network. A mixed method study was conducted by Sintema, (2020), in Zambia, to explore the impact of covet-19 on grade-12 students' performance in the subjects of mathematics and science. The findings of the study revealed that the pandemic has negative effect on students' performance as pass rate of students decreased in examinations. The study of Machado (2019) highlighted that teachers and administrators were struggling and putting their efforts to combat learning challenges in critical times. It has been found that low-income parents seem less interested in buying learning aids/devices for their children as compared to high-income parents due to economic problems and educated parents are capable of helping their children in online learning at home by providing all necessary aids to carry on children's educational activities (Smith, 2006, Heymann and Earle, 2000)..

In home learning since the teacher is not present physically during online class the parental assistance becomes more necessary for a child because of organizational challenges, encouragement, self regulation and comprehension of learning resources (Liu et al., 2010, Menchaca and Water, 2014, Stevens and Borup, 2015). With the assistance of parents, children at home may get mental comfort and internet skills in attending online classes by utilizing the device because educated parents are more skilful and have more access to internet as compared to children their selves (Zhao, Zhang, & Jiang, 2020). In these crisis governments of some countries like China, South Korea, Japan and France inclusively provide free devices, internet services and printed assignments to those students who have no access to modern technology. They are also managed to provide meals in such crucial situations (Chang &Yano, 2020; Giannini & Lewis, 2020)

Many developed and developing countries of the World like France, Egypt, Italy, US, and UAE have managed to cope with the crisis on emergency basis and are pursuing distance education using modern technology. Some countries such as China, Korea, Mexico, Iran, Peru and Thailand have managed to pursue massive open online courses (MOOC) adopting styled lesson (Chang & Yano, 2020). Some other countries like Saudi Arabia and UAE etc. have launched awareness campaigns on home learning during pandemic for teachers, parents, students and administrators (Change & Yano, 2020). According to the report of UNESCO (2020), in these critical situations there must be a collaboration of telecom industry, school network and education ministry for the continuity of children's learning (UNESCO, 2020). The studies of Fauzia Malik (2020) and Shelina Bhamani, (2020) concluded that students in Pakistan are facing a lot of issues regarding online learning. These classes are ineffective in a sense that majority of students' feel uncomfortable learning in isolation due to connectivity issues in attending the online classes.

METHODOLOGY

The study aimed to explore high school teachers' experiences regarding the problems hindering the learning- teaching process through online classes in the era of *COVIT-19* pandemic in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The qualitative study design was adopted for the study. To peep in the situation deeply qualitative method design was adopted for the study. Qualitative method offers deeper understating of the situation being studied (Clerke, 2000).The researcher gains deeper insight into the situation and the participants get opportunities to give real and accurate data about their feelings, expressions and actions and contribute to the leadership development of the participants (Beettie, 2000).The study was delimited to Peshawar city.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The study was conducted in public sector high schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The sample of the study was 45 teachers taken from 15 high schools from Swat district of the province KP. The selection of schools was convenient while teachers were randomly selected.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The data collecting tool was open-ended interviews. To conduct good interview participant must feel free (Bogdan and Beklin, 2003). To conduct interviews from the respondents I got the permission and addresses of concerned teachers from school principals and contacted them. The interview was informal and non-directive because in open-ended interview the researcher probes more deeply the real situation and it takes the form of conversation rather than interview (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003).When I met the respondent teachers I introduced myself and explained the purpose. During interview I recorded the main points of the responses of the respondent teachers. Two research questions were developed for the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data through interviews were coded; categorized and major sfour themes were emerged.(a) Unavailability of proper devices to students, (b), Weak and fluctuating internet signals in rural areas, (c)), Installation and effectiveness of various Apps in the device, and (d) Non-serious attitude of students towards online classes.

RESULTS

The present study was designed to investigate problems faced by teachers and students in delivering online classes during the *(COVIT-19)* pandemic. The qualitative study was conducted in the public sector high schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Data were collected from 45 school teachers taken from 15 public sector high schools in district Swat through open-ended interviews using purposive sampling techniques. The collected data were analyzed by using coding and categorizing techniques and six major themes were emerged. Based on two interviews questions asked from respondent teachers. The main findings are presented as follows.

Theme a): Unavailability of Proper devices to Students

In response to the question related to problems faced by students some of the teachers responded that to attend online classes some of the students don't have proper device to contact teachers to attend online classes. In this

context some of the teachers including Mr. Sardar Ali, and Mr. Sajjad Khan (pseudonyms) expressed their views as;

"*Some students belong to middle or low-income families and are hand to mouth in this period of "High dearness" and are not in the position of buying a cell phone capable of performing good function to satisfy the needs to run online classes effectively. That is why we find students missing from attending online classes. Sometimes we contact them to know the reason of absentees from online class they complaint about unavailability of the proper device which is the main cause of missing from the classes."*
in their areas. Parents do not allow them to go out in the days of pandemic. This happens to some teachers as well but they manage the alternatives"

Theme b): Weak and Fluctuating Internet Signals in some Rural areas

In the response to the problems faced by students and teachers Mr. Jamshed khan, Mr. Imran and Mr. Sajjad Shah expressed their views in such a manner and responded.

"*Since some teachers and students belong to far-off areas of the province therefore they face problems related to the strong internet services. Though weak and fluctuating signal are available but fluctuating internet signals in some areas of the province cause disconnection between teachers and students during the online class and the idea of the topic taught by the teachers remains incomplete and students gain no sense of that topic and lose interest*"

Theme c): Installation and Effectiveness of Various Apps in the Device

In response to the question asked from about problems faced by students and teachers some of the respondent teachers Mr. Khalid Khan and Mr. Abbas Khan said

"*As we know that to make access to online class installation in the device to a specific App is necessary which a problem is for many students. Since their parents are not educated and skillful in the installation therefore, they could not do themselves and teachers wait the students to be online but they do not respond due to this problem during the online class. Besides this some Apps do not satisfy the needs of online classes. Including "hanging" of the Apps during the class which is the main hurdle causing discontinuity between the learned and learners. This happens to some teachers too*"

Theme d): Non-serious Attitude of Students to Attend Online classes

When I came across the question related to the problems faced by students in attending online class a number of teachers including Mr. Khalid Hussain, Mr. Shahzad and Mr. Zubair (pseudonyms) and some others expressed their views in such a fashion

"We observed during the classes that many students are not interested to attend online classes and have negative attitude towards them without any genuine reason. Though they are physical present in their homes talking to the mums but are mentally somewhere. Therefore, they are usually absent from the classes though they are online but don't response to the questions asked by teachers as well do not complete the assignments and homework given by the teachers. We mark them as absent in the list but the school administration doesn't take any action against the prescribed students. Thus they become habitual. This does not happen once but happened during all classes in the entire session"

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to investigate problems hindering the delivery of online classes as perceived by teachers during the (*COVIT-19)* pandemic. It was a tough task to explore relevant literature to suit present study related to novel pandemic such as *COVIT-19*. However a few studies made it easy to provide a bit description related to prevailed situation of novel disease. Furthermore, most of the respondents of the study were from rural areas and were already invulnerable to face the sudden school closers and global lockdown and were unfamiliar to adapt to a new routine of teaching and learning from traditional setup to online home teaching and learning. Some studies highlighted students perceptions regarding the mentioned problems but experiences of teachers and their perceptions in this connection were researchable (Zhou et al., 2020).

The qualitative study emerged six themes as mentioned in previous section. The results of the present study found that teachers as well as students faced problems during online classes such as unavailability of proper devices to students; weak and fluctuating internet signals in rural areas; charging and installation and effectiveness of various Apps in the device and non-serious attitude of students in attending the online classes.

One of the findings of the present study revealed that student face problems to access the device as well as internet hindering in attending online classes in some areas of the province as perceived by teachers. These results are in favor of the findings of the study conducted by Owusu-Fordjour, Koomson and Hanson (2020) that Ghanaian students were of the views that they faced problems regarding the access to internet during online classes. These results are also in accordance to the findings of Frenette, Frank, & Deng (2020). Due to low-economic status some students have no access effective device and internet to attend online classes. The study also found that students as well as faculties face problems regarding the access to internet and due to lack of skill to access effective apps and their installation. These results were matched by the finding of Saho, (2020) which concluded that students face hurdles in access to install

effective apps to attend online classes. The results were favored by the finding of Mukhtar, Javed, Arooj and Sethi, 2020), that majority of students and teachers had problems in installation as well as access to effective apps for online classes. The study also found that students face problems at home due to no assistance from parents. These results are in contrast to the findings of Zhou, Wu, Zhou and Li, (2020) that students gain assistance from their parents during home learning in the era of pandemic. The study found that lack of net signal and fluctuating internet face problems to students as well as teachers in rural areas. These are in favor by conclusion of Fauzia Malik, (2020) that many teacher and students have connectivity problems while using various apps for online classes. The study further depicts that students feel uneasy and have non-serious attitude towards e-classes. This result was favored by the study findings of Owusu-Fordjour, Koomson, & Hsnson, (2020) that due to some problems students are not interested in online classes.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to investigate problems faced by teachers and students in delivering online classes during the *(COVIT-19)* pandemic. The qualitative study was conducted in the public sector high schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Data were collected from 45 school teachers taken from 15 public sector high schools in district Swat through open-ended interviews using convenient sampling techniques. The collected data were analyzed by using coding and categorizing techniques and four major themes were emerged. Based on finding of the study the following conclusions are presented.

The findings highlighted the experiences and perceptions of Pakistani teachers towards the problems attached to e-teaching and learning which might be different from other countries. In actual practice Pakistani teachers and students face issues regarding online classes in pandemic which are the main cause of ineffectiveness of these classes.

In the light of results and finding of the study it was concluded that most of the students have the problems of hiring proper device for attending online classes.

On the basis of results and findings it was further concluded that weak and fluctuating internet signals in some rural areas make problems in attending online classes for students as well as teachers. Also some apps create problems due to" *hanging"* during the class which connects the teachers and students.

It was further concluded that some students as well as teachers face apps installation problems because it needs proper skill which they don't have.

It was further concluded that many students are not serious and have negative attitudes towards online classes due to these problems.

RECOMMENDATION

In the light of findings and conclusions of the study some recommendations are presented

- ✓ It was recommended that government stake holders may provide devices along with strong free internet services to the students and teachers for effective online classes.
- ✓ Government may launch its own App(s) for educational purposes only capable of effective functions.
- ✓ It was also recommended that students and teacher may be trained to learn essential skills how to install different Apps in their devices in curial times like pandemic by using educational technologies.
- ✓ It was also recommended to launch paper-pen home assignments for the better teaching-learning process in these challenging times parallel to online classes in the times of pandemic.
- ✓ In these critical times educational experts and researchers may come forward and design effective models of teaching and learning which suit to everyone in new situation of the pandemic.
- ✓ Government stakeholders may allocate new budget to help the teachers and students to facilitate online teaching and learning in such situations.
- ✓ Government should manage to establish online monitoring system (OMS) to evaluate the performance of teachers and students during online schooling by using educational technologies.
- ✓ The policy makers may device long-term policies regarding the e-learning though curricula activities to combat with the challenges of new pandemic waves coming in the future.
- ✓ There is also a need of integration of traditional classroom learning and e-learning courses by including physical and psychological components rather than educational goals to reduce the emergency situation in the future.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This research still has limitations so that further research is still needed on the topic.

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