

Challenges Faced by Working Mothers and Housewives during Online Education of their Children

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ABSTRACT

Background: WHO recognized COVID-19 a pandemic on March 12, 2020 and National Health Commission officially declared it as a Class-B infectious disease. The technological advancements enabled the teaching staffs to keep their students involved during this period of COVID-19 pandemic. Online classes become the efficient medium to learn by staying at home.

Aim: To find out the challenges faced by mothers during online learning in order to devise a systematic plan for smooth and effective learning in case of another crises like COVID-19.

Method: It was a cross sectional study carried out at CMH LMC&IOD, in which a user-defined questionnaire was introduced to the participants which were mothers of school going children from all over the city. The questionnaire got 161 responses in total, but two were incomplete so 159 were considered while doing the analysis. The results were analyzed using SPSS25.

Results: In this study, 46.9% mothers were of age 40 and above and 47.5% were between 31 -40 years of age. Rest were 30 and below 57.5 % children used laptops to study online, while 34.4 % used a mobile. 7% had their own tablets and only 1.1 used desktops. Only 14.4% mothers supervised their children during all this time. 58.7% however managed supervising studies with other tasks and 26.9% said their children could study online unsupervised. Only 20% mothers thought their children are taking interest in online schooling. 54.5% found their children struggling 37.5% mothers thought that their children were learning much less through this online mode of education and 43.8% thought that online learning is somewhat less.

Conclusion: Among the various the challenges faced by working mothers and housewives during online education of their children the most important challenge was to keep their children focused on study. We discovered that the online study had little effect on grades because most mothers had to take on the role of teacher as well as supervising.

Keywords: Covid-19, online education, working mothers

INTRODUCTION

World Health Organization recognized COVID-19 a pandemic on March 12, 2020 and National Health Commission officially declared it as a Class-B infectious disease¹. The origin and emergence of this virus throughout the world was reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019². The smart or complete lockdown and curfew were enforced in order to keep up the social distances as a most effective solution to reduce the viral outbreaks. Though, these preventive measures have minimized the rate of pandemic spread, it caused a lot of worldwide activities to stop as well³. Likewise, in the education subdivision, all economic events and several areas of life have been paralyzed across the globe. With the latest advancements in the zone of information technology, no one can challenge the significance of related developments⁴.

The technological advancements enabled the teaching staffs to keep their students involved during this period of COVID-19 pandemic. Online classes become the efficient medium to learn by staying at home⁵. A wide range of resources such as Google classroom, Superstar, Zoom, Wechat, Teams, G-suite, Voov, Cloud meeting, etc. are linked with modern means of education and offered for online classes conductance⁶. Web-based education has become ordinary in education and can take a lot of types such as virtual learning environment (VLE), learning management system (LMS), and the massive open online course (MOOC)⁷. The best and well recognized platforms include Coursera, Harvard, and Edx⁸. Entire educational institutes have shifted from conventional means of teaching to modern conducts. During this worldwide lockdown, there is an alternate way available to remain the educational activities continue using online classes over electronic broadcasting⁹.

Developed countries like UAE, KSA, and Japan have launched awareness campaigns for students, teachers, parents, and administrators on distance learning. South Korea and China are also providing printed assignments and devices to the students who lack the access to technology¹⁰. When children and parents cooperate in learning activities, attachment between them increases because they spend more time together. Online education system could help to improve studies, but only with parental guidelines and support¹¹. Unfortunately, Pakistan remained unable to manage the educational crisis at the national level during the pandemic. There are 22,931,305 students enrolled in primary schools, 8,636,383 in pre-primary schools and 22,931,305 in secondary schools of Pakistan¹². Despite limited internet access, online classes are enforced at all schooling level that brought confusion, difficulties and unsatisfactory learning for students and parents particularly pre-primary and primary level children¹³.

The major issue mothers are facing with online learning is unawareness with the technological platforms¹⁰. There are several distractions available for students during home based virtual learning. When kids are being sit before the computer, they often switch over from learning towards gaming. Schools are mostly certain about students to self-learn by watching few videos, printing different learning materials, and reading the courses themselves¹⁴. Meanwhile, several parents who are not highly educated and not financially strong confronting challenges to guide their children at home in addition to bearing additional expenses of virtual education. Since parents and children stay restricted to homes, it has become much difficult for parents to focus on multiple parts of child's development¹³.

As the Internet and social media is full of pandemic news, it is fearful for young children and challenging for parents to address their questions and fears regarding it. Thus, they have to clarify everything with extra care of psychological health. Parents with more than one child learning online certainly feel unable to teach their children with lack of learning facilities like gadgets and

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internet¹⁵. Lack of motivation and loneliness have also reported by parents among children as classroom environment is obviously designed for learning and support that is hard to find in bedrooms. Children miss their friends, classroom buzz, and multiple entertainment activities that have been replaced with sitting before computer screen¹¹. In this situation, parents especially mothers are mandatory to play an active part in supervising the children for studying at home. Parents also need to adapt the accelerating global changes to anticipate the challenges of online education. So, the current study has been designed to examine in order to understand challenges and difficulties for parents specially mothers related to online education system and provide appropriate solutions and recommendations.

The academic year 2021-22 is currently ongoing, and with several institutes remaining closed physically since the start of this year, that's why we must understand and think thoroughly to meet the catastrophe uncompromising. It is also challenging to design and plan an effective instruction for parents and students for the COVID-19 period, when institutional administrations and teachers don't have an agenda or even the accurate language for accommodating online classes¹⁶. Developed nations have higher educational level such as Finland, Poland, United Kingdom, and Norway. Pakistan is also struggling to improve the level of learning¹⁷. In Pakistan, higher education commission HEC has certified educational institutes to continue learning and teaching over different distant learning methods¹⁸. Moreover, weak supportive systems including deficiency of technological development of parents and ways of integrating computers into instructions have left the parents not more than optimally fortified to teach their children throughout the pandemic. The insufficient pre-pandemic training is compound by the restricted technical support during the outbreak¹⁹. Majority of the primary class teachers did not anticipate online instruction till being enforced to do so. Consequently, parents and children should have to come about with a diversity of choices perfunctorily with planning, to complete assigned homework and give back complete online classes conducted via Zoom and an amidst variety of technologies. The main questions of this research are as follows:

- What are the basic challenges for parents with online education of their children?
 - How the parents especially mothers can manage their children's online educational activities in a better way?
- The major aims and objectives of current study are follows:
- To examine the challenges to parents with online education of their children.
 - To explore the ideal solutions to immense the parental difficulties related to online education of their children.

This study will enable us to suggest appropriate solutions and recommendations for parents to manage online education of their children in right way.

The purpose of this study was to find out the challenges faced by mothers during online learning in order to devise a systematic plan for smooth and effective learning in case of another crises like COVID-19 which can help find out the outcomes of formulated plans in future researches.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

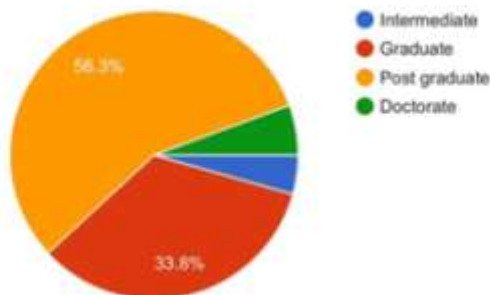
It was a cross sectional study in which a user-defined questionnaire was introduced to the participants which were mothers of school going children from all over the city. The questionnaire got 161 responses in total, but two were incomplete so 159 were considered while doing the analysis. All the participants were briefed about the aims of the study and the confidentiality policy. The results were analyzed using SPSS 25. Permission of this research was granted by ethical committee.

Demographic Parameters of Respondents: 46.9% mothers were of age 40 and above and 47.5% were between 31 -40 years of age. Rest were 30 and below. 94.4% respondents belonged to urban areas. 56.3 % mothers had a post graduate degree and

33.8% were graduates. 11% however had done intermediate and the rest were doctorates. 48.8% of these mothers were employed, 15.6 % self-employed while 35.6 % women were house wives.

Your Qualification?

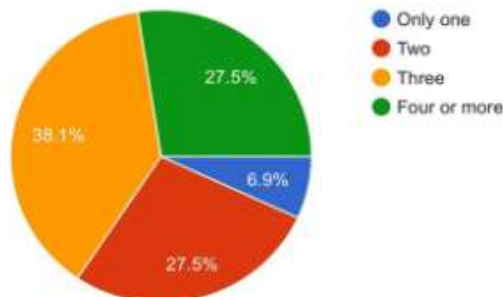
160 responses



Demographic parameters of children: 38.1% mothers had 4 or more children, 28% had 3 whereas 27% had 2 children. Only 9.6% mothers had one child. Amongst these children 50% were in pre matric classes and 43.1% were doing graduation. 3% in metric and 3.9% in intermediate.

How many children do you have?

160 responses



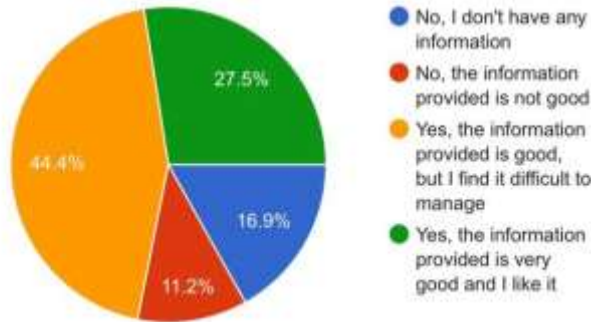
Technical aspects: 57.5% children used laptops to study online, while 34.4 % used a mobile. 7% had their own tablets and only 1.1 used desktops.

Time Management: 41.9% children studied for 5 hours or less, and almost the same studied for more than 5 hours online. Only 14.4% mothers supervised their children during all this time. 58.7% however managed supervising studies with other tasks and 26.9% said their children could study online unsupervised. Maximum (55%) children were getting one or two assignments per day. Only 6.3% got more than 4 assignments a day. However, 54.4% mothers thought that the time allocated for the assignment submission was adequate, 35% thought that the time was too much and only 8.8% found the time to be too little.

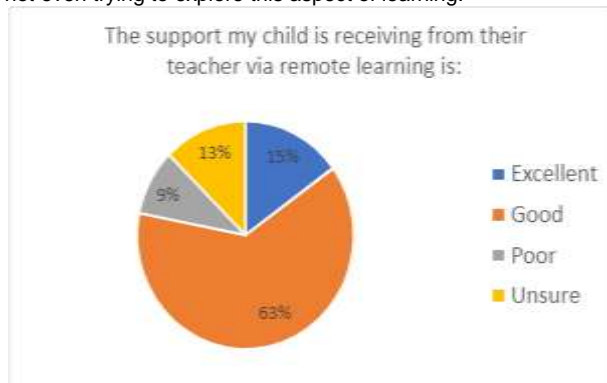
Supportive aspects: 15% mothers rated the support from the teacher during remote learning as excellent and 63.1% thought it was good. Only 9.4% mothers complained that teacher's support is poor in online learning. 27.5% mothers were satisfied with the role of school during online learning in terms of communication ,44.4% thought that although the school provided enough information, it was difficult for them to handle it all and 16.9% said they did not get enough information regarding online system of education from the schools.

Do you think agree with the statement that the school provides you with the right information you need to support your child's learning?

160 responses

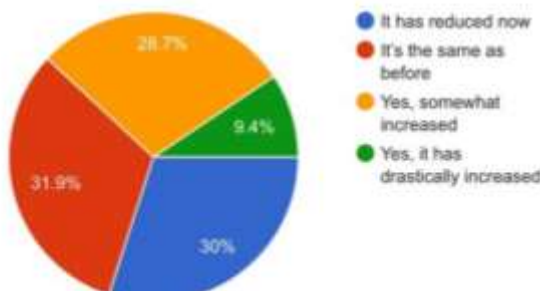


Attitude of Children: Only 20% mothers thought their children are taking interest in online schooling. 54.5% found their children struggling but trying while all the rest thought that the children were not even trying to explore this aspect of learning.



Do you think your involvement in your child's overall school activities has increased because of online mode of study?

160 responses

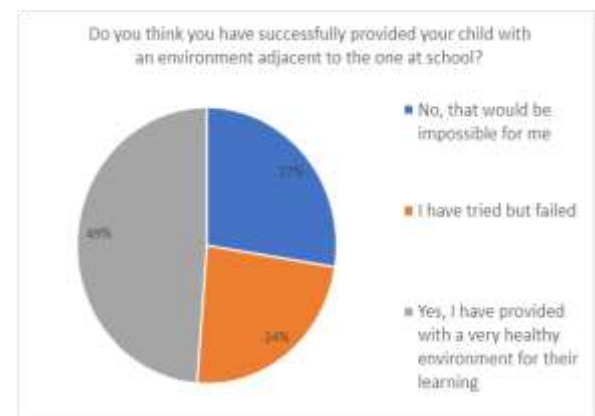
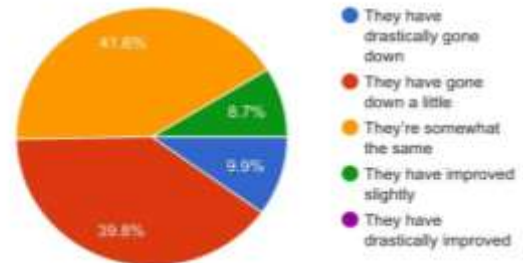


37.5% mothers thought that their children were learning much less through this online mode of education and 43.8% thought that online learning is somewhat less. Only 16.9% were of the view that this learning is equivalent to campus learning. Regarding grades,

40% mothers said that they have gone down while 41.3% said that they were somewhat consistent.

Have your child's grades improved due to the online scheme of studies?

161 responses



DISCUSSION

This research study investigated the basic challenges faced by parents with online education of their children. In this study most of the mothers were of post graduate level, over the age of 40 years, living in urban areas having children in pre-matriculation level of education. 57.5% of the students were using laptops as online study medium which resulted in more financial burden on their parents. Supervising children during remote learning along with other task and job is really hard. Our research showed 14.4% mothers were able to supervise their child during all the time, out of 41.9% students who were studying for five hours or less. Most mothers classified this way of teaching as good but still found it difficult to handle. We found that the grades were not affected much by this mode of study because most mothers had to assume the role of teacher along with supervision. The mothers also find the children to be struggling with this online mode of studying because of more distractions like trying to multitask, gaming etc and lack of classroom environment²⁰.

According to Chuanmei Dong and simin Cao research in 2020 the parents didn't have positive beliefs about online learning. The constant need to supervise them, lack of classroom environment, need of a peer around them, distractions during study like games etc, increased screen time causing eye strain, deprivation of independent thinking and reduced amount of physical activity causing sedentary lifestyle, all had negative impacts on learning outcomes during online study²¹.

In another study about the perception of mothers about online learning during pandemic done at Palestine showed that mothers thought of this way of learning as ineffective, troublesome and boring, and strongly supported the return to face-to-face instruction in schools while taking the necessary precautions²².

Remote studying can cause stress among mothers because of immature online learning systems, slow internet networks, unstable children's mood, and noisy atmosphere etc²³. Online learning might seem like as a good way of studying but like everything it also has its downsides for example the mothers having full time jobs and 4 or more children can result in ineffective supervision of all children especially if they have classes at the same time. Another limitation of this mode of study was that parents had to assume the role of learning, supervising and monitoring their children in the name of online learning, so they got more stressed out and had to educate themselves first in that respective subject. Greenhow, Lewin, and Willet (2020) study shows that 42% of parents were reluctant in teaching their children at home, especially in families with several children²⁴. The difficulties found in online learning are balancing responsibilities, satisfying employment requirements, lack of learner's positive motivation, accessibility, and concerns of students' academic progress

The limitations of our study could be to include the data of public and private sectors as the learning ways and education between them is different²⁵. The differences between them should be spotted and dealt accordingly. Another limitation is to expand the participants to include fathers, teachers and administrators etc in order to find a different perspective of challenges faced during online learning and how it could be improved.

The ministry wasn't prepared nor had the basic infrastructure to support this mode of learning during COVID crisis. A hybrid way of learning can also be introduced if we encounter another crisis. The new learning model should integrate both aspects of learning, virtual as well as campus learning, for effective education²⁶. The government should emphasize on the need of formulating a systematic plan to ensure that if a crises occur next time, we will be better educated and equipped. In this regard the training of both mothers and teachers should be done so as to develop an effective learning environment.

CONCLUSION

The majority of the moms in this study were postgraduates, over the age of 40, residing in urban areas, and had children in pre-matriculation education. 57.5% of kids used computers as an online study tool, putting extra financial strain on their parents. Out of 41.9% of students studying for five hours or fewer, 14.4% of mothers were able to observe their child at all times, according to our research. We discovered that this method of study had little effect on grades because most mothers had to take on the role of teacher as well as supervising. The children are also struggling with this online style of studying, according to the mothers, due to increased distractions such as trying to multitask, gaming, and the lack of a school environment. The goal of this study was to learn about the problems that moms confront when learning online so that a systematic strategy could be developed for convenient and efficient learning in the event of another crisis like COVID-19.

Conflict of interest: Nil

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