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*RESEARCH ARTICLE*

# READINESS OF RURAL INDIA FOR ONLINE EDUCATION

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## *Abstract*

India is a developing country with a large population living below the poverty line in villages. Rural India still lags behind in important modern facilities like high speed internet connectivity, 24 hours power supply and devices necessary for digital transactions. This study was undertaken to explore the availability of services and devices needed for online education. A self made questionnaire was used to collect data.100 families from two villages, near Manauri, located at 20 km away from headquarter of Prayagraj district were the participants. The questionnaire collected information regarding types of houses, source of income, family size, no. of working member, availability of devices needed for online education and its awareness etc. Percentage analysis was done. It was found that socio- economic condition of the families was very poor as 38 % families were living in *kaccha* houses. Majority (80%) having only one earning member with average income varied from 5000 to 8000 rupees per month. Most (70 %) of them were labourer working on daily wages. Only 35 % children have access to touch phones for academic use.



## Introduction:-

**India** in 21st century is growing fast in terms of economic development, but at the same time, India is forecast to surpass China as the world's most populous country in the world. To manage such a huge population efficiently, technology has to play a big role in all aspects of life. In India recently, many technological advancements opened new ways of planning especially high speed internet connectivity in industrial, financial, social and educational fields in the Covid-19 pandemic era as well in the post pandemic era. Making adaptation according to these technological changes has become a big challenge for large number of Indian population.

In the field of Education, the focus of Union government has been on making India into a knowledge society. The Government is trying to fill gap between rural and urban education. The new National Education Policy, 2020 is founded on the five guiding pillars Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. It will prepare our youth to meet the diverse national and global challenges of the present and future. The policy seeks to increase public investment in education, strengthen the use of technology and increase focus on vocational and adult education among them. The policy shall not only ensure the holistic development of students but will also develop India as a global study destination. Technology will be integrated with education through several initiatives like e-text books and e- content for capacity building of teachers and learners.

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So, it is very clear that in future, online teaching and learning are going to play a big role in educating India as well as world at large. Recently, the Prime Minister launched 5G services in select cities during the India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2022 conference. Prime Minister Modi said "5G marks the dawn of a new era and presents a sea of opportunities." The Prime Minister said his government's vision for 'Digital India' was founded on four pillars -- the cost of devices, digital connectivity, data cost and digital-first approach. The 5G network speeds will be ten times faster than 4G. The latest network will bring seamless coverage, high data speeds, low latency, and more. But the question arises how a country like India where poverty is still a big problem and the situation became worse due to increased unemployment in the era of Covid- 19 pandemic, can afford costly devices needed for online mode of education.

**Loss of Learning during the pandemic**

The shift to technology based learning has seen rural students falling behind and the situation has been exacerbated by the pandemic. School closure due to the pandemic has led to complete disconnect from education for the vast majority of children. Studies across the world have clearly indicated that school closures have significant negative impact on learning levels of children, with children from disadvantaged backgrounds being affected more severely. The Azim Premji Foundation conducted a field study between January and April 2022 covering 108 teachers, as many schools, and 1644 students in classes 2 to 5 across 41 districts in 5 states to capture efforts of teachers towards recovery of learning loss due to school closure during the pandemic. They found that these children are devoid of basics in terms of computers, internet access and also the know how to derive benefits from the intentions of policy makers.

Recently, a NAS survey was conducted on November 10, 2021 across the country. It is a national level large scale assessment conducted to obtain information about the learning achievement of students of class 3, 5, 8 and 10.The data was collected from 34 lakh children.37 state reports and 720 district report cards were also released. The sample collected was mainly from rural India around 78 %.The report says 47 % of students in UP experienced obstacles to learning in pandemic. A large no. around 47% students had no digital device at home. On the other hand 45% were happy being by myself' at home.

In the above background, this study was undertaken to know the present status regarding the availability of digital devices, connectivity and awareness of online education in rural India.

## Objectives:-

Following were the objectives of the study -

1. To know the socio-economic status of families.
2. To gather information regarding availability of devices needed for online education at home and their use.
3. To know the awareness of online education and programmes broadcast through television.

## Methodology:-

This study was undertaken to explore the availability of services and devices needed for online education. A self made questionnaire was used to collect data. One hundred families from two villages, near Manauri railway station, located at 20 km away from headquarter of Prayagraj were the participants. The questionnaire sought information regarding types of houses, source of income, family size, number of working members, availability of devices needed for online education etc. Percentage analysis was done.

## Findings and Discussion:-

Socio economic condition of the families was found to be very poor. Around 38 % families are living in *kaccha* houses. Majority (80%) having only one earning member with average income varies from 5000 to 8000 rupees per month. A family has average of 4 children. Around 30% of main earning member of the families are engaged in farming. Most (70 %) of them are labourer working on daily wages. They leave their homes early in the morning, in search of employment. Majority of them (60%) carry android phones with them, but only 35% children have access to them for academic use. Only 25 % of families possess Television set in working condition in their homes. Power supply for only 10 -12 hours per day was reported. Awareness regarding educational programmes being broadcasted in Doordarshan or other educational channel was very low. This may be due to timings of power cut mostly during day time. Only 20 % of families were aware of online mode of education. Only 20% of them were aware of Diksha app and other initiatives taken by government to promote digital education.

## Conclusion:-

Technology is the best way to measure, track and standardize the nation's basic learning requirements and achievements. India is a developing country with a large population still living below the poverty line in the villages. The rural -urban gap is a long-standing issue in India. For sustainable rural development to occur, rural communities must be able to enjoy appropriate public services. Investment in public services and infrastructure in rural areas should be a priority that will contribute to growth in agricultural development and to the development of non-farm sectors .The findings revealed that rural India still lags behind in basic facilities like high speed internet connectivity, infrastructure and 24x7 power supply. The Uttar Pradesh Government has recently launched free smart phones distribution scheme to meritorious students in order to digitalize education.As much more needs to be done to diminish the rural/urban digital divide therefore, in this scenario it is difficult to say that Rural India is fully prepared for online mode of education.

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