RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE PM EVIDYA SCHEME AS AN ELEARNING SCHEME FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS IN INDIA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Riddhi Khosla, Ishani Patil, Paavani Arora, Samaira Tomer, Sanika Merchant, Vir Jain and Yashvarya Goyal

……………………………………………………………………………………………………....

Manuscript Info	*Abstract*

………………………….

………………………………………………………………………

eLearning, as a tool to attain education, has seen prolific advancements over the course of the last few years. Additionally, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the importance of eLearning even further. With nationwide lockdowns resulting in the closure of schools in various countries, educational institutions have been forced to conform to the paradigm of eLearning as a form of education. With an aim to continue students' education amid the crisis, the government of India has announced the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri (PM) eVidya Scheme, which offers a wide range of eLearning platforms for students in India. This paper analyses the potential effectiveness of the scheme in the country, primarily by studying the impact of the scheme on Indian students who may not have access to technological resources required to effectively engage in eLearning. The inability of such disadvantaged students to engage in eLearning would influence the overall success of the scheme in the country.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………....

Introduction:-
Definition of eLearning:
eLearning, also referred to as online learning or electronic learning, is the acquisition of knowledge through electronic technologies. In other words, eLearning is "learning that is enabled electronically". Although eLearning is based on formalized learning, it aims to provide education through electronic mediums such as computers, tablets, laptops, televisions, and cellular phones, among other devices. This method of learning also includes the use of the internet, the development of multimedia such as images, videos, audios and graphics, and the use of digital resources and systems to facilitate learning.

One application of eLearning is seen in physical classroom settings, where teachers use electronic devices, the internet, and other digital technology to aid learning. Another application of eLearning is observed in distance learning - a form of education which includes the physical separation of teachers and students during instruction and the use of various electronic technologies to facilitate student-teacher and student-student communication. Hence, while the adoption of eLearning can be based in or out of physical classrooms, the use of electronic devices, the internet, or other digital resources is a major characteristic of eLearning.

eLearning is a method of learning that is widely being adopted today, and it has also been predicted that the revenue made from eLearning globally will grow to $325 billion by the year 2025- almost triple the revenue made in 2015.

Corresponding Author:- Riddhi Khosla

1018

eLearning in India:
Over the past few years, education in India has undergone rapid changes due to technological advancements and the enhancement of web-based learning services, particularly eLearning platforms. The eLearning industry in the country is a prolific one that is projected to be a $1.96 billion industry by 2021, and the user base of online education is expected to augment to 9.5 million users in 2021 at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 44%.

The Indian Government is keen to introduce digital reforms that push for the growth of the eLearning industry. The government has financed numerous Research and Development projects in the area of eLearning, and government initiatives such as 'Digital India' have aided the implementation of various measures that aim to transform the nation into a digitally empowered society and rapidly drive the rate of digital literacy.

India, however, is a country with acute social and economic disparities. The country has also been ranked 147th among 157 countries in UK-based Oxfam International's 'Commitment to Reducing Inequality' (CRI) Index, which is based on the commitment of nations to reduce inequalities in their populations. Given the vast socio-economic inequality in India, not all Indian students have the resources or the socio-economic abilities to reap the benefits that eLearning provides. Such inequalities between Indian students concerning eLearning will be explored further in this paper.

Rising Need for eLearning in India:
In December of 2019, there was a major outbreak of a respiratory disease in Wuhan, China. The virus causing the disease was eventually detected to be a novel coronavirus. The disease caused by this virus is communicable in nature and is known as COVID-19. In the forthcoming weeks, large sections of the population in various provinces of China contracted this disease. By March 2020, the disease had also spread to different parts of the world, and on the 11th of March, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the spread of COVID-19 a 'worldwide pandemic'. As of June 2020, the number of COVID-19 cases worldwide is at 10.7 million, and this number is only expected to rise.

To contain the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, nationwide lockdowns were imposed by governments in several countries. These lockdowns were imposed to enable physical distancing norms to prevent the spread of the communicable disease. However, the structure of schooling and learning has significantly been affected by these lockdowns. The lockdown has barred the way the traditional method of learning- that is, learning in a physical classroom setting- takes place, since students are not able to attend school. However, with an aim to continue students' education while maintaining physical distancing, educational institutions have moved to an alternate form of learning– eLearning.

The Indian government imposed a nationwide lockdown on the 24th of March 2020 to curb the spread of the pandemic. Naturally, this resulted in the closure of schools across the nation. In fact, the impact of schools being shut in numerous countries has led to 1.2 billion children in 186 countries out of their traditional classrooms. This is 72% of the world's student population, out of which, India compromises over 320 million of these learners. To continue students' education amid a lockdown, a large proportion of public and private Indian educational institutions and students have adopted eLearning methods. A 162% rise in eLearning course enrollments in India in April over March 2020 has also been reported.

Overview of the PM eVidya Scheme:
In an effort to enhance eLearning in India amid COVID-19, India has launched the Pradhan Mantri (PM) eVidya Scheme as part of the government's fifth instalment of their ₹20 lakh crore COVID-19 package. The PM eVidya Scheme has been launched with the objective of providing widespread eLearning platforms to continue students' education during the national lockdown.

The government has launched various programs under the scheme. These include:
1. The use of Direct-to-Home (DTH) channels through the 'SWAYAM PRABHA' program for students without access to the internet. It includes 32 DTH channels which transmit educational content 24/7 and cover higher education content as well. DTH channels will also be used to provide educational content specifically for classes 1 to 12
2. The use of community radio and podcasts - 'CBSE SHIKSHA VANI' -to reach the masses
3. An IITPAL program to help students with IITJEE and NEET examination preparation

4. The Manodarpan initiative to ensure emotional wellbeing support to students and teachers, keeping in mind the psychological effects of learning and teaching online
5. The creation of Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) platform- the National Teacher Platform- which aims to provide a "one nation, one digital platform" for school education in States and Union Territories across the country. This platform contains e-content and QR coded energized textbook for all grades
6. The creation of special e-content for visually and hearing-impaired children. This includes study materials developed on a Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) platform. The course content of the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) will also be recorded in sign language and published on the NIOS website and a YouTube channel.
7. A 'SWAYAM' portal offering Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)
8. Specially curated online courses provided by the top 100 universities of India

Significance of the Scheme:
Objectives and Implementation of the Scheme:
The primary goal of the PM eVidya scheme is to use eLearning as a tool to facilitate effective distance learning for students across India amid the lockdown. Furthermore, the program has been implemented under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (self-reliant India) initiative, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which aims to make India's economy grow in a self-reliant manner.

The eVidya scheme has been implemented through a variety of digital mediums to achieve the goal of reaching out to a vast majority of students. The government aims to deliver multi-mode access to educational content, develop new e-content, earmark television classes with the help of Direct-To-Home (DTH) channels, and use the radio to deliver podcasts, among other services. The government has also specified that the television sets, community radio services, and podcasts will fulfil the objective of ensuring that even students who do not have access to the internet attain the education they require.

In the words of Union Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, the PM eVidya scheme aims to "expand e-learning by liberalizing [an] open, distance, and online education regulatory framework". Additionally, the government wishes to ensure that "education does not come to a standby under the current situation".

The Scheme and Disadvantaged Students:
The implementation of the PM eVidya scheme in India will significantly benefit various students in the country. However, a major drawback of the scheme is that it ignores a large proportion of India's students – the 'disadvantaged students'.

The 1998 Education Act in the United Kingdom defines an educational 'disadvantage' as 'the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education'. This paper defines the word 'impediments' as the lack of access to adequate resources required for effective eLearning.

Hereafter, this paper defines disadvantaged students as follows:

Disadvantaged students are those students who face an educational disadvantage due to their lack of access to the resources necessary to effectively engage in eLearning. The aforementioned resources are primarily stable electricity, internet connectivity, ownership of digital devices and equipment, and digital literacy. This paper will discuss disadvantaged students in India who are currently studying in classes 1 to 12.

To ensure the successful execution of the eVidya scheme, stable access to electricity is crucial for powering the digital equipment and internet connection required for eLearning. However, there are 304 million people who still lack access to electricity in India. Mission Antyodaya, a nationwide survey of villages conducted by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2017-18, also showed that 16% of India's households receive one to eight hours of electricity daily, 33% receive 9-12 hours, and only 47% receive more than 12 hours a day. Furthermore, a report by Quacquarelli Symonds on Internet Usage in India shows that assured electric connectivity has not yet been accomplished. Their survey depicts that among respondents who use home broadband, over 3% encounter cable

cuts, 53% have poor connectivity and 32% experience signal issues. Lack of electricity in households is bound to act as an obstacle for students who wish to avail the eLearning programs of the eVidya scheme.

When observing internet connectivity, India only has around 504 million active Internet users who are 5 years or older. However, while this figure is high, the internet penetration in India is only 40%. This means that around 60% of India's population does not use the Internet. Another report has found that only 38% of school-going children have access to the internet. The disuse of the internet by more than half of India's population is a limitation for the effectiveness of the PM eVidya scheme. This is because a myriad of programs under the scheme require access to and the usage of the internet. Hence, while students with access to the internet will greatly benefit from provisions of the scheme, more than half of India's population misusing it will not gain the same benefits.

A third challenge faced by disadvantaged students is the lack of ownership of digital devices. Reports show that only 24% of Indians own a smartphone only 66% of Indian households own a television, only 11% of households possess devices such as desktop computers, laptops, and tablets, and only 8% of all households with members aged 5-24 have both a computer and internet connection. Without laptops, smartphones, internet connections, or TVs with DTH connections, many students will not be able to attain the education that this scheme offers. The difference can be observed across states too, thereby affecting the overall success of the scheme in the country. For example, the proportion of households that own a computer varies from 4.6% in Bihar to 25% in Delhi. In states like Punjab, Uttarakhand and Haryana, more than 40% of households have access to the internet. Whereas, in the states of Odisha, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh, the proportion is less than 20%.

Digital illiteracy is a fourth challenge faced by disadvantaged students. According to the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) scheme, digital literacy is "the ability of individuals and communities to understand and use digital technologies for meaningful actions within life situations." However, it is estimated that digital literacy is almost non-existent among more than 90% of India's population. This is a significant issue for disadvantaged students, who may wish to avail the benefits of eLearning but may not be able to do so due to the lack of knowledge about the effective utilization of digital technologies.

Challenges Faced by Disadvantaged Students Under the Scheme:
Prevailing Digital Divide:
One of the biggest challenges posed to the effectiveness of the eVidya scheme is the digital divide in India. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines a Digital Divide as the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard both to their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICT) and to their use of the internet for a wide variety of activities.

Hence, a digital divide occurs when some individuals of a group or country are able to gain access to ICT equipment and the internet, while others are deprived of gaining access to such digital resources. India faces a significant digital divide between its people due to their unequal access to digital resources including electricity, the internet, and digital devices, as explored earlier in the paper.

To counter the digital divide, the eVidya scheme has attempted to take a multi-gadget approach, by imparting education through a variety of technological devices, to increase the probability of students having a digital device to gain education through the scheme. However, while a certain proportion of Indian students have access to some devices, many do not have access to a single such device. Additionally, many disadvantaged students' households often have gadgets that are shared between the members of their families, resulting in students not having regular access to digital devices for education. This is corroborated by Sunita Gupta, Principal of Air Force Bal Bharati School, who- in a political debate about the scheme- has said, "Not only do people not have access to the internet but there are problems of families not having enough gadgets, because many parents are working online".

Another challenge is the lack of sufficient electricity in many Indian households, as studied earlier in the paper, that could prevent disadvantaged students from being able to efficiently operate the digital devices they already possess. A final impediment is the quality of digital devices that disadvantaged students have - students with poor quality or malfunctioning digital devices may not be able to reap the benefits of the online education being imparted by the eVidya scheme.

The scheme has also attempted to provide free access to DTH channels for students who have limited internet access. However, while some students may benefit from this provision, other disadvantaged students may not even have a television set in their dwellings to access these free DTH channels being provided by the scheme. As stated earlier, only 66% of Indian households own a television. Conversely, even if students do have a television set, they may not have the electricity or the digital infrastructure in their households that are necessary.

Given the current situation of the rapid spread of COVID-19 in India, disadvantaged students may face even greater challenges in trying to attain the digital resources they lack, with shops and digital service centers closed amid the national lockdown. Additionally, the students of migrant families, upon arriving at their respective destinations, may not be able to immediately avail the digital resources required to return to the fold of education. Finally, with reduced incomes faced by households amid the pandemic, disadvantaged students may not be able to afford the resources required for effective eLearning.

Hence, the adoption of the eVidya scheme in the country provides no concrete solution to the prevailing digital divide in India. Instead, the adoption of the scheme amidst the grave digital divide will uplift students who have access to digital resources, but it will leave disadvantaged students without proper means to access the education that they require. This will strengthen the inequality between students who possess digital resources and students who do not possess these resources.

Prevailing Digital Illiteracy:
While India asserts itself as one of the world's largest growing economies, a recent report by the Digital Empowerment Foundation indicates that 30% of India's population lags on basic literacy and thrice that for digital literacy.

There are various reasons for the low digital literacy rate in India, but one of the causes is the digital divide itself. The term 'digital divide' is also closely related to a 'knowledge divide'. This is because individuals' lack of exposure to technology automatically prevents them from learning more about the utilization of digital resources, thereby causing a lack of digital literacy. Hence, exposure to digital devices is a salient factor for digital literacy. However, there are also many disadvantaged students who may have proper exposure to physical technological resources but may not have sufficient knowledge on how to effectively utilize these resources.

Additionally, there are no provisions or courses offered by the scheme that address the digital illiteracy of the students. This problem of low digital literacy could act as a roadblock for disadvantaged students, who may attempt to attain education through the PM eVidya scheme but may not have the knowledge on how to utilize digital resources required for eLearning.

Legal Restrictions:
There are many legal restrictions imposed by states and Union Territories in India that may prevent disadvantaged students from attaining the digital resources they require to avail the benefits of the eVidya scheme.

The governmental order in Jammu and Kashmir that restricts network connectivity to 2G instead of 4G is an example of a legal restriction that bounds the holistic success and execution of the scheme. However, with the continuation of blanket restriction on mobile internet speed to 2G for the Union Territory, the students who wish to continue their education through this scheme may not be able to exclusively avail the resources and opportunities of the scheme. 2G internet may not be as efficient as a 4G bandwidth for eLearning. This also comes in conjunction with the awareness and understanding of the scheme, which may have not been shared to Jammu and Kashmir due to this restriction.

Additionally, the Karnataka Government has implemented a law stating the discontinuation of online learning for students of grades 1-5. Responding to opinions by child psychiatrists on children's health, the regulation was implemented for the reason of not wanting children of "tender ages" to be exposed to laptop screens for a substantial amount of time. The decision, declared by State Education Minister S. Suresh Kumar, will lead to a large percentage of the scheme's target audience being neglected and thus, contributes to the ineffectiveness of the scheme's aims and objectives.

Potential Solutions and Recommendations:
This section of the paper will explore potential steps and solutions that the government can adopt in order to ensure the holistic execution of the scheme:

Government Provision of Technological Resources:
The government should increase government spending on the provision of technological resources - including technological devices, electricity, and internet connection- for disadvantaged students who lack access to it. Given the high costs of digital devices, priority must be given to students who have absolutely no devices in their households. The government must also attempt to increase access to electricity and internet dissemination and connectivity for households in India.

Along with increasing funding for the production and provision of technological resources to disadvantaged students, if the government enhances the workings of existing initiatives such as 'Digital India', 'Bharatnet', 'Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)', and 'The Digital Infrastructure Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA)', among others, government provision can be a potential solution to ensure that all students are able to avail the benefits of the scheme. Increased government spending on the provision of technological resources will also help increase the Aggregate Demand (AD) of India, which may help tackle the recession that India is facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Role of NGOs and the Private Sector:
In order to provide free Direct-to-Home channel services for students under the eVidya scheme, the government of India has tied up with private companies such as Airtel and Dish TV. The government has also tied up with online learning platforms such as Toppr, upGrad and Goprep, which have contributed significantly to the programs of the scheme by offering their technology and resources. Hence, the government can potentially tie up with other private sector companies like these to facilitate the provision of technological resources to disadvantaged students. This can be done through a 'public-private partnership' (PPP), which is defined by the government of India as "an arrangement between a government/statutory entity/government-owned entity on one side and a private sector entity on the other, for the provision of public assets and/or public services".

Additionally, a UN report on the role of PPPs stated that "The goal of PPPs is to exploit synergies in the joint innovative use of resources". Hence, public private partnerships will enable the government of India to enhance their existing resources and funds and attain new resources to ensure the efficient provision of technological resources to disadvantaged students in India. This idea is further corroborated by Rustom Kerawalla, Chairman, Ampersand Group & Founder Chairman, VIBGYOR Group of Schools, who has said, "...PPPs can be involved for establishment, improvement or management of new or existing education infrastructure in the country." This provision of technological resources to disadvantaged students in India will ensure that they too are able to attain the educational benefits of the PM eVidya Scheme.

Adoption of Other Mediums:
In order to further the scope of the eVidya scheme, the government can include services through Short Message Services (SMS) or telephone call, which can be easily accessed by students, given that while only 24% Indians have smartphones, 64% have mobile phones or landlines that enable them to send an SMS or make phone calls respectively. Additionally, the eVidya scheme does provide Skype call facilities for students who wish to attain further guidance or have any questions. However, since Skype calls require internet connectivity which many students may not have, a telephone helpline can be set up for the same, thus enabling disadvantaged students without sufficient internet connectivity to access the educational services being provided by the government.

Enhancing Digital Literacy:
There are many disadvantaged students in India who have access to technological resources but have poor knowledge of how to utilise these resources. In order to enhance the digital literacy of these students, the government can include sessions or platforms under the eVidya scheme that will educate students on the efficient utilisation of technological resources. The government can also tie up with private eLearning companies to impart digital skills to students and enhance digital literacy.

Long-Term Implications
The following section of the paper studies long-term advantages and disadvantages that would arise for disadvantaged students as a result of the execution of our proposed solutions.

Advantages:
Cost-Effectiveness of the Scheme:
eLearning, as a remote learning method, poses an advantage when considering the financial burden that families may encounter when paying for education. The eVidya scheme conforms to this ideal and is hence cost effective. eLearning, specifically during the pandemic, does not require learners to travel, and thus, the cost of travel is cut down. Additionally, in a traditional classroom, it is likely for teachers to use hard copies of learning materials and printed hand-outs. The costs of printing numerous copies for a class does not need to be borne through eLearning programs, where learning resources are exhibited virtually. Finally, in a physical classroom, students would have to refer to textbooks that need to be purchased. However, the online DIKSHA platform now provides access to the same resources, free of cost.

The government also aims to provide free DTH channel services to students who wish to attain the benefits of the eVidya scheme but cannot afford DTH services. This will greatly lift the financial burden off students.

Through the eVidya scheme, the government has offered IIT and NEET examination training for students, free of cost. One would have to pay large sums of money to attain such education in a physical setting. In fact, a classroom programme for a year at a well-known coaching institute for NEET preparation would cost approximately Rs 1-1.5 lakh per annum and additional expenses worth around Rs 2 lakh for accommodation and food if the student is not a city dweller. Hence, the scheme will provide immense financial benefits to students who can attain the digital resources to access the educational content.

DTH and Multi-Gadget Approach:
As studied earlier in the paper, under the eVidya scheme, television channels are being created for students of classes 1 to 12 and free DTH services are being provided. Furthermore, extensive radio networks and podcasts are also to be used to make learning accessible to all students. By the means of communication platforms that do not require an internet connection, such as television and radio, the scheme does not limit itself to only those who have access to the Internet. This will prove to be beneficial because access to a stable Internet connection is an obstacle for many students in India.

This feature of the scheme is also a benefit since television and radio penetration in India is more than internet penetration. Television remains the most accessible form of media in the country, followed by print and media. With approximately 69.3 million active subscribers with DTH operators, the scheme certainly enhances the reach of this new government initiative.

Hence, through the multi-gadget approach and provision of free DTH services the scheme can be accessed by a large proportion of students across the country.

Upliftment of Students:
The eVidya scheme plays a key role in providing continuity in education for students during the lockdown. Access to education will help students enhance their existing skills and develop the new skills, which in turn will provide them with better jobs and higher incomes, raising their standard of living in the long run. In fact, according to data collected by Eurostat, the average salary for those with a high level of education (at least one year of tertiary education) was approximately 50% higher than those with a medium level of education (secondary/high-school).

Disadvantages:
Absence of Monitoring and Lack of Student Motivation:
To attain a good education, access to quality educational content for a student is imperative. However, the presence of a teacher or a supervisor to monitor the process of learning for the student is equally important to ensure that the student understands the educational content correctly. Monitoring by a supervisor is also necessary to keep the student motivated, focused, and engaged at all times to ensure effective intake of knowledge by the student.

During the current pandemic, concerns such as safety, job security, availability of food, and good health are being given more importance than education. Therefore, many students may also face a significant lack of motivation to study because of the minimal importance given to education in their households. However, if there was supervision of students attaining education via the eVidya scheme, perhaps the students would be more focused on the continuation of their education amidst their other concerns.

Due to the absence of monitoring, there is also no substantial information about students' overall understanding of the content being taught through the programs of the eVidya scheme. Additionally, since the students are not being assessed or tested on the educational content, there is no way to know how well the students have understood or can apply what they have learnt through the scheme. Conversely, in a classroom setting, assessing the level of students' comprehension of what is being taught to them would have been possible through test results, students' participation in class, and students' answering of questions asked by the teacher.

Varying Student Requirements:
All students have varying requirements that need to be fulfilled in order to ensure effective online learning for them.

Firstly, many students new to eLearning are accustomed to direct interaction with teachers, group settings and the kinesthetic simulation of a school, which cannot be duplicated through eLearning platforms. This is especially the case for disadvantaged students, who may be new to the environment of digital learning. The eVidya scheme, however, does not take this into consideration, and the generic disposition of the scheme hinders students' abilities to effectively continue their education online.

Another aspect is the varying requirements of students from different curriculums across India. Each curriculum has diverse subject options and learning requirements. However, the diversity of educational content offered by curriculums in India has not been taken into consideration by the scheme. Hence, the standard educational content provided by the scheme may not be effective for students coming from diverse curriculums with varying subject requirements.

Additionally, each curriculum and school have different learning approaches, such as text-based learning, visual-based learning, and video-based learning, among others. The dissimilar approaches to learning by different curriculums and schools act as a hindrance to students' understanding of the standardized dissemination of the content provided under the eVidya scheme. A sudden shift from students' traditional styles of learning can result in confusion and lack of understanding. This could also reduce students' levels of attention and willingness to focus. Hence, the standardized dissemination of educational content under the eVidya scheme may not be effective when considering the varying requirements of students.

Limitations:
Considering that the PM eVidya scheme was introduced only a month before this paper was written, this paper could not include the impacts of the scheme on disadvantaged students in India based on official reports or data. However, this paper has attempted to analyze the potential effects that this scheme could have on disadvantaged students in the coming months based on pre-existing data.

Due to the global pandemic and nationwide lockdown, our research was limited to secondary sources. We could not conduct in-depth interviews with stakeholders- especially our focus group of disadvantaged students from classes 1 to 12- in order to add more depth to our findings and support our research.

Moreover, many of the statistics in the paper are from reports published before 2020, and updated statistics taking into account various changes that the country has witnessed till date are not available. Therefore, the data in the paper may have certain limitations. Additionally, some of the statistics and data that we have included in this paper may not have taken into account many of the informal settlements or dwellings that exist in India today. Hence, the data in our paper may be under calculated.

Many of the statistics we have mentioned in this paper cater to households and not specifically to disadvantaged students. We have made the assumption that households themselves would include students and hence these statistics would apply to students. Additionally, we have made this assumption since over 63% of households in India have one or more children below the age of 15.

Conclusion:-

eLearning is a burgeoning industry that has found its wellspring during the COVID-19 pandemic. To conform to physical distancing norms, educational institutions have turned to eLearning as means to continue students' education amidst the crisis. The Indian government's intervention is observed through its execution of the PM eVidya scheme, which includes a plethora of eLearning modules for students pan India.

The scheme's primary objective is the continuation of students' education amid the COVID-19 crisis in India. However, by studying the impacts of the scheme on disadvantaged students, this paper highlights how the scheme does not make effective provisions for disadvantaged students who do not have the resources required to effectively engage in eLearning. Hence, while students who have access to technological resources will reap the benefits of the scheme and continue their education amid the pandemic, disadvantaged students will face a significant barrier in their education. This will hinder the overall success of the scheme as well. Thus, this paper hopes to emphasize the need to make certain reforms to the implementation of the scheme in order to ensure that every student in India is willing and able to avail the scheme's educational benefits and that the scheme's success in India is paramount.

To enhance India's development and counter the educational challenges posed by the pandemic, it is certain that we need a paradigm shift in the manner in which the students can access eLearning. In a diverse country like India, it is of paramount importance to identify the challenges and provide equal opportunities to ensure disadvantaged students get the same education as students who don't face any problems continuing their education.

Bibliography:-

1. "What Is The Definition Of E-Learning? | E-Student". 2019. E-Student.Org. https://e-student.org/what-is-e-learning/.
2. Berg, Brenda. 2018. "The Differences Between Elearning And Distance Learning - Elearning Industry". Elearning Industry. https://elearningindustry.com/differences-between-elearning-and-distance-learning.
3. Haythornthwaite, Caroline, and Richard Andrews , eds. The Sage Handbook of E-Learning Research. new delhi, delhi: SAGE publications, 2007. https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Tgqxy-_pKkoC&oi=fnd&pg=PA97&dq=implications+of+e+learning+on+economically+disadvantaged+students&ots=7lauqAuJz8&sig=2ykrLzlnpVClJ7EhiYZfjB7VzKk#v=onepage&q=implications%20of%20e%20learning%20on%20economically%20disadvantaged%20students&f=false.
4. "Timeline Of WHO'S Response To COVID-19". 2020. Who.Int. https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/29-06-2020-COVIDtimeline.
5. Sharma, Kritika, Lt Gen H S Panag (retd) -, Manasi Phadke -, and Anurag Kotoky -. "'PM EVIDYA', to Boost Digital Education, Part of Modi Govt's Final Tranche of COVID Package." ThePrint, May 17, 2020. https://theprint.in/india/education/pm-evidya-to-boost-digital-education-part-of-modi-govts-final-tranche-of-COVID-package/423487/.
6. "Govt Turns to 'TV Classrooms' as Online Lessons Prove to Be a Challenge during Lockdown." ThePrint, May 6, 2020. https://theprint.in/india/education/govt-turns-to-tv-classrooms-as-online-lessons-prove-to-be-a-challenge-during-lockdown/415683/.
7. "PM e-VIDYA: Initiative to Boost Education Sector." INDIATHINKERS, May 19, 2020. https://www.indiathinkers.com/2020/05/pm-e-vidya-initiative-to-boost-education-sector.html.
8. "'PM e-Vidya' Initiative to Redefine Education Sector." SMEStreet, May 18, 2020. https://smestreet.in/msmenews/COVID-19/pm-e-vidya-initiative-to-redefine-education-sector/.
9. "PM EVidya Programme for Digital Education in India: Everything You Need to Know." Hindustan Times, May 17, 2020. https://www.hindustantimes.com/education/pm-evidya-programme-for-digital-education-in-india-everything-you-need-to-know/story-15SmSAyTEckgx6gcYlJNYO.html.
10. "e-Vidya Programme to Online Courses, Top Announcements on Education by FM Nirmala Sitharaman." The Indian Express, May 17, 2020. https://indianexpress.com/article/education/pm-evidya-programme-to-online-courses-top-5-announcements-on-education-by-fm-nirmala-sitharaman-6414046/.
11. academics4nation. "With e-Vidya Programme Modi Government Is Taking a Quantum Leap in Education." Academics4nation. Academics4nation, May 30, 2020. https://www.academics4nation.org/post/with-e-vidya-programme-modi-government-is-taking-a-quantum-leap-in-education.
12. Chauhan, Aarti. "HRD Minister Stresses on E-Learning Model Amid Coronavirus Lockdown." doubtnut, May 18, 2020. https://doubtnut.com/blogpage/hrd-minister-stresses-on-elearning-model-amid-coronavirus-lockdown.

13. Samson, Meera, Claire Noronha, and Anuradha De. Towards more benefits from Delhi's midday meal scheme, January   2007. http://www.delhihighcourt.nic.in/library/articles/mid%20day%20meal/Towards%20more%20benefits%20from%20Delhi's%20midday%20meal%20scheme.pdf.

14. Wu, Yi-Chi, Ching-Sung Chen, and Yu-Jiun Chan. "The Outbreak of COVID-19." Journal of the Chinese Medical Association 83, no. 3 (2020): 217–20. https://doi.org/10.1097/jcma.0000000000000270.

15. Choudhary, Richa. 2020. "COVID-19 Pandemic: Impact And Strategies For Education Sector In India - ET Government". Etgovernment.Com.https://government.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/education/COVID-19-pandemic-impact-and-strategies-for-education-sector-in-india/75173099.

16. Pokhriyal, Ramesh. 2020. "Ensuring Access And Equity In Education, Writes Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'". Hindustan Times.https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/ensuring-access-and-equity-in-education-writes-ramesh-pokhriyal-nishank/story-KSqyOXK2zkUVpl9krJO4dP.html.

17. "'COVID Crisis Shows India'S Science Capacity, But Some Issues Need To Be Addressed … Quality Of Research Can Improve'". 2020. Times Of India Blog.https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/the-interviews-blog/COVID-crisis-shows-indias-science-capacity-but-some-issues-need-to-be-addressed-quality-of-research-can-improve/.

18. Singh, Nirvikar. 2020. "India's COVID 19 Crisis Response: Challenges Are Greater, Getting Money To Individuals And Firms Is Not As Easy". The Financial Express. https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/indias-COVID-19-crisis-response-challenges-are-greater-getting-money-to-individuals-and-firms-is-not-as-easy/1917479/.

19. Sudevan, Parveen. 2020. "Why E-Learning Isn't A Sustainable Solution To The COVID-19 Education Crisis In India". The Hindu. https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/why-elearning-is-not-a-sustainable-solution-to-the-COVID19-education-crisis-in-india/article31560007.ece.

20. Taneja, Anjela. 2020. "Online Learning And Subsidy For Private Schools: Will Education In Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Only Be For The Rich?". News18. https://www.news18.com/news/opinion/online-learning-and-subsidy-for-private-schools-will-education-in-aatmanirbhar-bharat-only-be-for-the-rich-2626799.html.

21. Malik, Kunal. 2020. "Future Of Edtech: What India'S Education System Can Learn From E-Learning". Yourstory.Com.https://yourstory.com/2020/06/future-edtech-india-education-system-elearning.

22. Aggarwal, Prateek. 2020. "Constraints Of Digital Literacy In Rural India: Only 21.3% Of Students Have Access To Computers". COUNTERVIEW.ORG.https://counterview.org/2019/10/21/constraints-of-digital-literacy-in-rural-india-only-21-3-of-students-have-access-to-computers/.

23. "Education: From Disruption To Recovery". 2020. UNESCO.https://en.unesco.org/COVID19/educationresponse.

24. What is E-learning? Definition of E-learning, E-learning Meaning. (n.d.). Retrieved July 03, 2020, from https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/e-learning

25. Tnn. (2020, May 19). PM e Vidya programme: Big push for online courses to ensure edu doesn't suffer - Times of India. Retrieved July 03, 2020, from https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/pm-e-vidya-programme-big-push-for-online-courses-to-ensure-edu-doesnt-suffer/articleshow/75825888.cms

26. Majumdar, R. (2020, May 18). PM e-VIDYA initiative to bring more opportunities for ed-tech startups. Retrieved July 03, 2020, from https://www.livemint.com/companies/start-ups/pm-e-vidya-initiative-to-bring-more-opportunities-for-ed-tech-startups-11589774602446.html

27. McCue, TJ. 2020. "E-Learning Climbing To $325 Billion By 2025 UF Canvas Absorb Schoology Moodle". Forbes.https://www.forbes.com/sites/tjmccue/2018/07/31/e-learning-climbing-to-325-billion-by-2025-uf-canvas-absorb-schoology-moodle/#2c0637e03b39.

28. KPMG in India and Google. 2017. "Online Education In India: 2021".https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/in/pdf/2017/05/Online-Education-in-India-2021.pdf.

29. "India Ranks Among The Bottom 15 Of Oxfam World Inequality Index". 2020. The Economic Times.https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-ranks-bottom-of-oxfam-world-inequality-index/articleshow/66137424.cms#:~:text=UK%2Dbased%20charity%20Oxfam%20International's,whom%20live%20in%20extreme%20poverty.

30. Li, Cathy, and Farah Lalani. 2020. "The COVID-19 Pandemic Has Changed Education Forever. This Is How". World Economic Forum.https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-COVID19-online-digital-learning/.

31. Sudevan, Parveen. 2020. "Why E-Learning Isn't A Sustainable Solution To The COVID-19 Education Crisis In India". The Hindu.https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/why-elearning-is-not-a-sustainable-solution-to-the-COVID19-education-crisis-in-india/article31560007.ece.

32. M Saraswathy, "COVID-19 Impact | NSDC Chief Says e-Learning Course Enrollments Grew 162% in April over March," Moneycontrol, June 2, 2020,https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/economy/nsdc-ceo-says-e-learning-programmes-grew-162-in-april-amid-COVID-19-lockdown-5349761.html.

33. Balachandran, Manu. 2020. "'We Are Doubling Our E-Learning Efforts': HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal | Forbes India". Forbes India.https://www.forbesindia.com/article/coronavirus/we-are-doubling-our-elearning-efforts-hrd-minister-ramesh-pokhriyal/60263/1.

34. International Energy Agency. 2020. "India 2020: Energy Policy Review". NITI Aayog.https://niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2020-01/IEA-India%202020-In-depth-EnergyPolicy_0.pdf.

35. Kundu, Protiva. 2020. "Indian Education Can'T Go Online – Only 8% Of Homes With Young Members Have Computers With Net Link". Scroll.In.https://scroll.in/article/960939/indian-education-cant-go-online-only-8-of-homes-with-school-children-have-computer-with-net-link.

36. Digbijay Mishra et al., "Internet Users in India: For the First Time, India Has More Rural Net Users than Urban | India Business News - Times of India," The Times of India, May 6, 2020,https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/for-the-first-time-india-has-more-rural-net-users-than-urban/articleshow/75566025.cms.

37. Organization for Economic Co-operation AND Development. 2001. "Understanding The Digital Divide". Organization for Economic Co-operation AND Development.https://www.oecd.org/sti/1888451.pdf.

38. Rajya Sabha TV. 2020. PM E-Vidya: Digital Education | Episode 30. Video.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vTWgUF9500&t=871s.

39. Dasgupta, Tapashi. 2020. "2018". Researchgate.https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329365743_India%27s_Digital_Divide.

40. "Karnataka Govt. Bans Live Online Classes For Students Up To Class 5". 2020. The Hindu.https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/govt-bans-live-online-classes-for-students-up-to-class-5/article31798755.ece.

41. Majumdar, R. (2020, May 18). PM e-VIDYA initiative to bring more opportunities for ed-tech startups. Retrieved July 03, 2020, fromhttps://www.livemint.com/companies/start-ups/pm-e-vidya-initiative-to-bring-more-opportunities-for-ed-tech-startups-11589774602446.html

42. Desk, Tech. 2020. "Total DTH Subscribers In India In 2019 At 69.30 Mn, Tata Sky On Top". The Indian Express.https://indianexpress.com/article/technology/tech-news-technology/total-dth-subscribers-in-india-in-2019-at-69-30-mn-tata-sky-on-top-6207866/.

43. Solutions, Clasticon. 2020. "UPSC May 2020 | Current Affairs Current Affairs | Monthly Hindu Review | Top 50 May Current Affairs Download PDF". Iasparliament.Com. https://www.iasparliament.com/current-affairs/upsc-daily-current-affairs-prelim-bits-20-05-2020.

44. [1] Negi, Yogesh. 2020. "2G In The Times Of 4G: Unending Lockdowns Take Toll On Kashmiri Students | Newsclick". Newsclick. https://www.newsclick.in/Kashmiri-Students-Lockdown-Right-to-Internet-2G-Network.

45. "Digitalindia | Digital India Programme | Ministry Of Electronics & Information Technology(Meity) Government Of India". 2020. Digitalindia.Gov.In. https://www.digitalindia.gov.in.

46. "Digital Empowerment Foundation |". 2020. Digital Empowerment Foundation. Accessed June 14. https://www.defindia.org/national-digital-literacy-mission/#:~:text=In%20India%2C%20across%20over%206,than%2090%25%20of%20India's%20population.

47. KS, Jomo, Anis Chowdhury, Krishnan Sharma, and Daniel Platz. 2020. Un.Org. https://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2016/wp148_2016.pdf.

48. "Views Of Mr Rustom Kerawalla, Chairman, Ampersand Group & Founder Chairman, VIBGYOR Group Of Schools - The Education Times". 2020. The Education Times. https://theeducationtimes.in/views-of-mr-rustom-kerawalla-chairman-ampersand-group-founder-chairman-vibgyor-group-of-schools/.

49. "What Effect Does Education Level Have On Wealth?". 2020. QS. https://www.qs.com/what-effect-does-education-level-have-on-wealth/.

50. Gul, Afsha. 2020. "PM Evidya: One Nation One Digital Platform (Diksha QR Code E-Content)". PM Modi Yojana. https://pmmodiyojana.in/pm-evidya/.