

## **Online Classes and Parents of Private School Students: An Exploration of Challenges**

Mamoona Riasat<sup>1</sup> & Muhammad Shahid Farooq<sup>2</sup>

---

### **Abstract**

The situation of COVID-19 and online classes made parents a bit panic. This paper aims to identify the challenges faced by the parents of students studying in private sector schools during online classes. The current research was an effort to explore the situation and challenges that parents faced during the pandemic regarding online classes. It is an exploratory qualitative research under the shade of interpretive paradigm. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of an open ended question and some probing questions. Parents of students (36 respondents) from Grade I-VIII were selected for the interviews. The study was delimited to only those parents whose children were receiving online classes for more than two months. Data collected from interviews were analyzed by using thematic analysis technique. The themes extracted from responses of parents are: stress level, financial and technical constraints, time management and rejection. The results show that the availability of the gadgets and online access were serious challenges for the parents. Parents were unable to contribute to online classes of their children smoothly due to other allied prerequisites. It is recommended that the awareness and readiness to meet such situations may be made available for masses.

**Key words:** COVID-19, online classes, ICT usage, private schools, online access, parents and challenges.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D Scholar, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, mamoonascholar@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Professor of Education, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, shahid.ier@pu.edu.pk

---

**Introduction:**

COVID-19 pandemic situation has not only effected the health situations but one way or another, almost all walks of human life are affected by it. This novel virus has been able to embed many changes in human life style worldwide. Teaching learning process is also enormously effected by it. As part of preventive measures educational institutions resulted in closure. Shen *et al.*, (2020), mentioned the closure of schools by March, 2020 at international and national level. However, later researches highlighted the fact that less child cases were part of the COVID-19 pandemic reports (Viner *et al.*, 2020). The conflict arose against the school closure but the infection risk of children from the adults was not to be ignored. School closure was a strategy adopted by schools to ensure social distancing. The conflict was supported by somerecent modelling studies predicting that school closures would prevent only 2 to 4% of deaths, much less than other social distancing interventions. A systematic review suggested less school hours, alternative timings for classes and reduced class strength, cancelling co-curricular activities, increasing space between students in classes and staggering morning assembles and break times were suggested as alternative measures of closure (Uscher-Pines *et al.*, 2018). Considering the pandemic, stakeholders of education system tried hard to make the teaching learning process smooth by using information technology when particular pandemic situation broke out in running academic sessions of schools in most of the countries.

In Pakistan the academic stakeholders tried to fulfill the learning gap between the teacher and learner through online classes. As the situation is new for everyone there are lots of challenges faced by them. Private schools tried to earn a good repute as far as public schools also tried its best to cope with the new challenges. Private schools with their extraordinary inter and intra-structure have tried to maintain the quality of education but quality education for underprivileged students have been like hands on moon in the sky (Dey & Bandyopadhyay, 2019). Most of the parents and student of private schools are considered to be familiar with different pedagogies. This paper identifies the challenges faced by the parents of private schools during online classes. Further this piece of research depicts how Mother Nature has evenly distributed this pandemic panic in both the education sectors (public and private) of the country. This research may significantly contribute to improve the process and product of online classes if this pandemic situation lasts for long.

Earlier an infectious disease pandemic, the influenza pandemic broke out and made the globe rest on pins and needles. Researchers presented articles and studies, providing interventions to diminish the destruction in economies, health and education (Lofgren *et al.*, 2008). The criticism clinched that only few studies were held during influenza breakout. Still a handful of modelling studies reinforced the use of alternative strategies.

Some social distancing actions, not harsh are available for the schools other than full closure but somehow they have not been to limelight (Ridenhour *et al.*, 2011). "Since February 2020, COVID-19 has infected more than a million people and taken almost 50,000 lives with 50,000 cases and 5000 deaths in the UK alone" (Kanneganti *et.al*, 2019). Considering the need of the hour school managements are seeking help from ICT to continue teaching learning process.

Security, cost-effectiveness, excellence in teaching learning process and hands on access to everyone has been main intention and objective of using technology (Schrum & Levin, 2016). Chick *et al.*, (2020) presented many new solutions like flipped classroom, online practice approach and tele conferencing to replace physical student teacher interaction. Use of new pedagogies in classrooms is a very crucial process, more importantly when it is related to the assessment of students' performance (Kisirkoi, 2015). Globalization has reduced the isolation (Wan, 2014). Student all over the globe are connected to each other through number of mediums. These mediums have been substantial with significant increase in opportunities to study abroad (Wheeler, 2000). Learners are influenced by their cultures in all means as how they behave and think (Wang, 2006). "Western and Eastern upbringing differ vastly in terms of philosophy, values and cultural backgrounds" (Nisbett, 2004). Asian students are often thought of as passive learners whereas their Western counterparts are the opposite. According to Wang (2006) Asian students learn in more traditional and stereotypical way than Western students so their response to new pedagogies such as flipped classrooms is different (Chua & Lateef, 2014).

Asian students are more dependent upon their teachers than other resources for information. According to Mujahid (2002), developing countries have been more reluctant towards the use of information communication technologies (ICT) in classrooms. The digital divide has deepened with the time. More solutions and reforms are recommended by the researcher for the improvement in quality education. ICT integration in teaching and learning is being notable and policy level in Pakistan. Initiatives like Pakistan's Medium Term Development Framework 2005 to 2010, Vision 2030 and National ICT strategy are providing improvement and strength to teaching learning process (Ismail *et al.*, 2020). Hansen (2017) elaborated the use of social media in cape of ICT usage. It is emphasized in research that accessibility and effective use of ICT are two different things. However both are sides of the same coin, integration without availability is not possible and vice versa.

Literature lacks of material on online classes at school level. Online classes and courses have more been part of higher education in most parts of the world. Ni (2013) presented a comparative study, comparing public administration course and teaching research methods in online classes and found that persistence is more in online class environment, however the test results of students remain independent of the research methodology.

Self-regulation in adults is very vital in online classes but it differ from one individual to other. Further skills are required to develop self-regulation in online learning (Vanslambrouck *et al.*, 2019). During online classes Gamification Tools (GTs), can be used to enhance the motivation, engagement and performance of the students. Gamification tools are elements which are added to a non-gaming environment (Balci *et al.*, 2018). Online classes paradigm has experimented more in higher education as in the situations like war (Rajab, 2018). The effectiveness of online classes learning format, assessments, and curriculums suitable for online classes should be the future horizons for research. More research is needed to emphasize on the factors related to online classes, their effects and impact. More research designs and information should be contributed in the literature. Active learning, self-selection bias, collaborative learning techniques, blended learning, flipped classrooms, hybrid learning and learning soft wares must have more space in educational research. These should be the future horizons for educators and researchers (Nguyen, 2015).

Video lecturing is also a new form of knowledge transfer process changing traditional class rooms, however physical presence of teacher in a classroom effects the learning of the students. The satisfaction of students in face to face interaction is high as reported by most of the experts. The collaborative learning environment enhances the cognitive and social abilities of students (Garrison, 2017). Researchers have tried to study the effect and impacts of video lectures in online classes. The gap between the perception and experience of this process needs to be studied (Hsin & Cigas, 2013). Students get motivated and extra help through video lectures and use of videos also enhances their engagement (Evans & Cordova, 2015). Scagnoli *et al.*, (2019) expressed that video lectures cannot fulfill the requirements of introduction to a new topic or the elements which are put together by a teacher face to face to craft an environment for students. Video lectures serve as a supporting material as these can be repeated and used any time by the student.

The literature reflects paucity of usage and reporting of use of new technologies at school level. The modern pedagogies with stir of technology as blended learning, flipped class rooms, online classes and video lectures are adopted, yet experimented and studied at higher education. In developing and developed countries the use of ICT at school level with different teaching learning process is not much reported. The parents are important stakeholders in education of a child but their perceptions and presence in educational research processes is minimal.

**Figure 1**  
Conceptual framework

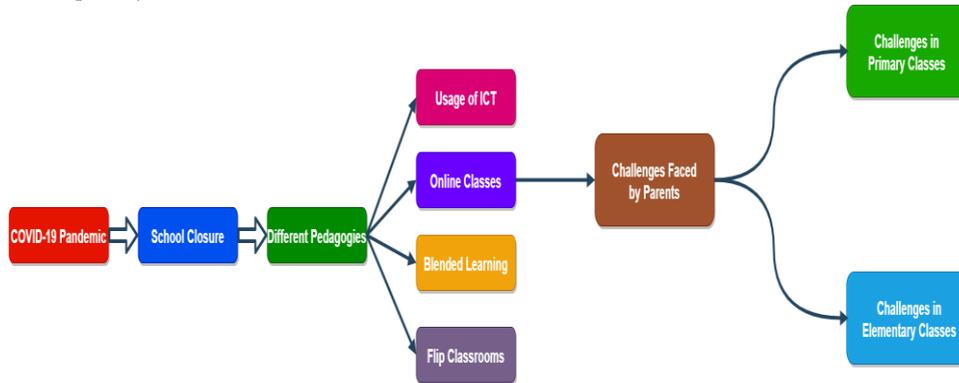


Figure 1 shows conceptual framework of the study under discussion. It describes clearly COVID-19 pandemic led to many changes in the world. As safety measures to ensure the prevention of further spread of virus all the academic institutions including schools were closed. Stakeholder of education (Government authorities' and school managements) stepped ahead to continue the teaching learning process in the country. This made school managements and teachers to adopt different pedagogies for continuity of the teaching learning process. Researcher emphasized upon the process of online classes at primary and elementary level. Further this paper aims to identify the challenges faced by parents of primary school students studying in private schools.

## Research Methodology

It is an exploratory qualitative research following interpretivism paradigm. Population of the study comprised of the parents of students studying in private schools in a metropolitan city of Pakistan. Data were collected through telephonic interviews by the researchers. Three private schools were selected as sample through purposive sampling technique. The parents of four (04) randomly selected students from each class of purposively selected schools, primary (Grade I-V) and elementary (Grade VI-VII) were selected for the interviews. Total sample size was 36 parents whose children attended online classes for more than three months.

## Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview protocol comprised of only one question was developed and used. An open-ended question was asked to the participants of the study about the challenges faced by them during online classes of their children. Further probing questions were used where required. Most of the interviews were recorded. All the



The node chart (Figure 3) represents the nodes (codes) assigned by the researchers in the software. The colors and space taken by each node in the chart represents the data against that particular node. Node chart here is also presenting themes and subthemes. Node chart is a pictorial presentation of the data against each node.

**Figure 3**  
Node chart

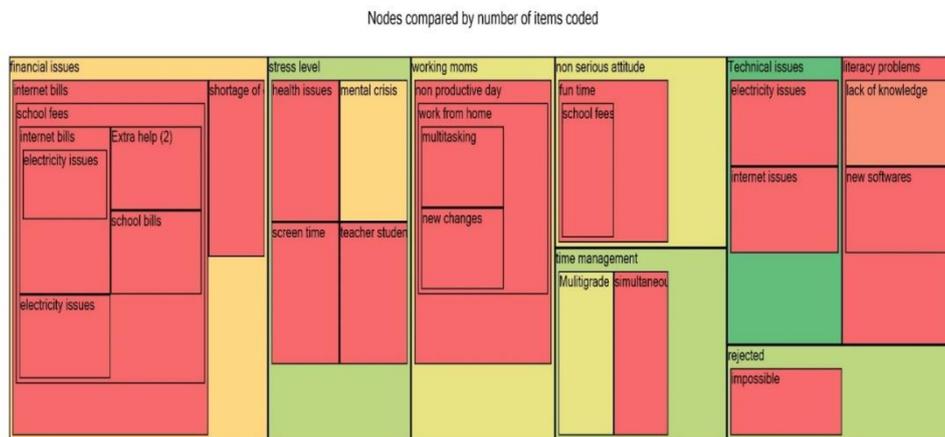
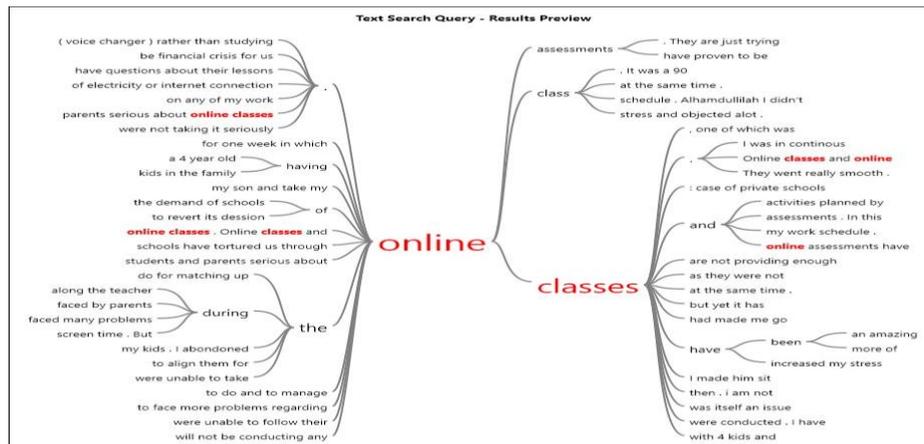


Figure 4 represents the “word tree” of the study. Word tree clearly presents the linkage that exist between the root word and data. It also contributes in the trust worthiness of the data.

**Figure 4**  
Word Tree



The word cloud, node chart and text search query shows different challenges faced by parents during the online classes. The majority of parents faced challenges during online classes. Only one respondent said she had no issues with the online classes but she also ended up saying “...but thanks God classes ended”. Few respondents exclaimed with confidence that they *rejected* and protested online classes offered by school. They faced so many challenges during the online classes that ultimately within a week institution had to call off the classes. Further participants expressed frankly the factor of innovation in the process. Many of them were not familiar with the usage of ICT. One of the participant said “...aysa lag rha tha jaisay computer class mein admission le liya hai” (It seems that she personally has taken admission in computer class). As a whole online classes remained a challenging situation for them every day.

Parents of elementary level students expressed that their kids were not taking the online classes seriously instead they were using it for having fun. One of the participant even confessed that her child has been using voice changer application to disturb the online class. Parents of elementary level students reported the fact of non-seriousness of their children during the online classes. Parents also voiced the circumstance of not been able to teach their kids subjects like Mathematics and History, Geography as they did not have any command of these subjects. Online classes did not provide enough teacher student interaction required for these subjects.

Even parents from a certain school were unable to cope this stress so they did not cooperate with the school management ultimately school has to give up online classes. Instead of online classes students were provided summer packs and parents were alone to help their children. One of the respondent said that online classes were mere defense mechanism of private schools so that they can justify the fee demand for the months of school closure. Empathy is the under laying identified emotion in this research. Parents of the primary school kids used the sentences like “I am realizing now my kid is too tough to handle”, “...pata nahi teachers kaisay parhati hain in ko, muj say tu nahi parhtay” (I don't know how teacher teaches them, I am unable to teach them) and “*I feel like I respect my son's teachers more now than ever before*”. All these sentences bring up the total emotional stress that teachers go through is being realized by the mothers. When parents had to regularize their kids in front of screens and purse them to study and behave at the same time with time constraints. Parents realized the efforts made by each teacher in each class. Researchers identified this positive phenomenon of empathy while analyzing the data.

This study depicted that parents faced lots of challenges regarding online classes of their children. The major themes identified in the study are the challenges faced by parents during online classes of their children. Almost all the participants of the study highlighted the fact that the online classes have been source to increase their *Stress level* in this pandemic situation. As the situation was new to all of the parents' number of

participants expressed their inability to handle *Technical issues* related to internet, connectivity and electricity issues. *Time management* has emerged as major theme from the collected data. Most of the parents highlighted the fact of timing clash between the online classes of their children and work from home timings of their own. Many of the participants discussed online access problems and the *financial issues* like internet bills and school fee. Purchasing electronic gadgets for all the children to engage them at the same time in classes has been a huge challenge for most of the parents.

Parents faced challenges like stress, financial constraints, technical hurdles and time management during the online classes of their children. Current research pops up the fact that in developing countries the availability and usage of ICT still needs to be focused. People are trying to cope with this novel situation but this unexpected and sudden pandemic of COVID-19 has caused panic in teaching learning environment. Parents were unable to contribute to online classes of their children smoothly. Parents faced number of challenges during the process of online classes. Further this research writing reflects a social approach and behavior towards a different mode of teaching learning process.

State run awareness campaign may be launched by Education and Information Technology departments to promote the usage of ICT for teaching learning rather than just for entertainment purposes. Specialized programs may be telecasted on national television to support mothers to get familiar with the e-learning and online learning processes. The governmental and non-governmental organizations may arrange the ICT gadgets on reasonable prices for students. Special packages for internet facility be introduced at low prices for students for day time school classes. School authorities may arrange special training sessions for parents and teachers for helping them to handle the learning situations for the students. Teachers may be trained for online teaching as well as online assessment of students' performance.

## References

- Chick, R. C., Clifton, G. T., Peace, K. M., Propper, B. W., Hale, D. F., Alseidi, A. A., & Vreeland, T. J. (2020). Using technology to maintain the education of residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Surgical Education*, 77(4), 729-732. doi: 10.1016/j.jsurg.2020.03.018.
- Chua, J. S. M., & Lateef, F. A. (2014). The flipped classroom: Viewpoints in Asian universities. *Education in Medicine Journal*, 6(4). 20-26.
- Dey, P., & Bandyopadhyay, S. (2019). Blended learning to improve quality of primary education among underprivileged school children in India. *Education and Information Technologies*, 24(3), 1995-2016.

- Evans, H. K., & Cordova, V. (2015). Lecture videos in online courses: A follow-up. *Journal of Political Science Education, 11*(4), 472–482.
- Garrison, D. R. (2017). *E-learning in the 21st century: A community of inquiry framework for research and practice (3rd ed.)*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hansen, D. T. (2017). Cosmopolitanism as education: A philosophy for educators in our time. *Religious Education, 112*(3), 207-216.
- Hsin, W. J., & Cigas, J. (2013). Short videos improve student learning in online education. *Journal of Computing Sciences in Colleges, 28*(5), 253–259.
- Ismail, S. A. M. M., Jomezai, N. A., & Baloch, F. A. (2020). Hindering and enabling factors towards ICT integration in schools: A developing country perspective. *Elementary Education Online, 19*(3), 1537-1547.
- Kanneganti, A., Sia, C. H., Ashokka, B., & Ooi, S. B. S. (2020). Continuing medical education during a pandemic: An academic institution's experience. *Postgraduate Medical Journal, 96*(1137), 384-386.
- Kisirkoi, F.D. (2015). Integration of ICT in education in a secondary school in Kenya: A case study. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal (LICEJ), 6*(2), 904-909.
- Lofgren, E. T., Rogers, J., Senese, M., & Fefferman, N. H. (2008). Pandemic preparedness strategies for school systems: Is closure really the only way? *Annales Zoologici Fennici, 45*(5), 449-458).
- Mujahid, Y. H. (2002). Digital opportunity initiative for Pakistan. *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries, 8*(1), 1-14.
- Nguyen, T. (2015). The effectiveness of online learning: Beyond no significant difference and future horizons. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, 11*(2), 309-319.
- Ni, A. Y. (2013). Comparing the effectiveness of classroom and online learning: Teaching research methods. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 19*(2), 199-215.
- Nisbett, R. (2004). *The geography of thought: How Asians and Westerners think differently... and why*. Nicholas Brealey.
- Ridenhour, B. J., Braun, A., Teyrasse, T., & Goldsman, D. (2011). Controlling the spread of disease in schools. *PloS one, 6*(12). doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0029640

- Scagnoli, N. I., Choo, J., & Tian, J. (2019). Students' insights on the use of video lectures in online classes. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 50(1), 399-414.
- Schrum, L., & Levin, B. B. (2016). Educational technologies and twenty-first century leadership for learning. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 19(1), 17-39.
- Shen, K., Yang, Y., Wang, T., Zhao, D., Jiang, Y., Jin, R., & Shang, Y. (2020). Diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of 2019 novel coronavirus infection in children: Experts' consensus statement. *World Journal of Pediatrics*, 16(3) 223-231.
- Uscher-Pines, L., Schwartz, H. L., Ahmed, F., Zheteyeva, Y., Meza, E., Baker, G., & Uzicanin, A. (2018). School practices to promote social distancing in K-12 schools: review of influenza pandemic policies and practices. *BMC Public Health*, 18(1), 406. doi: 10.1186/s12889-018-5302-3
- Viner, R. M., Russell, S. J., Croker, H., Packer, J., Ward, J., Stansfield, C., & Booy, R. (2020). School closure and management practices during coronavirus outbreaks including COVID-19: A rapid systematic review. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4(5), 397-404
- Wang, H. (2006). What Matters and Why? *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*, 15, 69-84.
- Wheeler, D. L. (2000). More students study abroad, but their stays are shorter. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 47(12), 74-77.
- Whittemore, R., Chase, S. K., & Mandle, C. L. (2001). Validity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 11(4), 522-537.