



## EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON INDIAN SOCIETY: SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL, ECONOMIC

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**Abstract:** The “COVID-19 pandemic” has had a devastating “impact on the various spheres” of life and society. It was a global phenomenon and countries across the world suffered due to the sudden outbreak of the contagious virus. The rapid transition to online learning exposed the glaring digital divide in India. The present article provides a detailed “analysis of” the “impact of the pandemic” on different aspects of Indian society with special emphasis on the economy, education and social aspects. The research highlights both the “positive and the negative impacts” of the pandemic on society. The analysis also identifies positive developments such as increased awareness of hygiene practices and a boost to “telehealth”. There is a need to emphasise on the positive aspects to overcome the impact of the negative aspects of the pandemic. These can help in building a more resilient society for India. Moreover, the present research aims in identifying the most affected sectors due to the sudden “outbreak of the pandemic”.

**Keywords:** “COVID-19”, “pandemic”, “Indian society”, “education”, “Economic impact”

### Introduction

The outbreak of “Coronavirus” was a national disruption and it has significantly impacted global health and society. The “COVID-19 pandemic” ripped across the globe in 2020 affecting the social, educational and economic stances of every society. Several countries as well as India implement strict lockdowns to restrict the “spread of the virus”. The occurrence started with a sudden symptom of “pneumonia with an unrevealed aetiology” in Wuhan, in 2019 and soon it created a global health concern (Kar et al. 2021). Nonetheless, upon reporting 88 deaths the “Prime Minister of India” professed a “Janta Curfew” on 22nd March 2020 to restrict the widespread use of the virus. This public lockdown and the “outbreak of the pandemic” have affected the social, education and other spheres of India.

India is a nation with inherent social and economic complexity and the outbreak as well as the widespread of the pandemic has affected the country. In Indian society, the “pandemic has had a far-reaching impact” affecting public health as well as social structure. Lockdown was the primary strategy to manage the outburst of the disease. However, imposing a lockdown in a country like India with a vast population was a historic decision made by the government to restrict the spread of the infection as it was a contagious disease. Hence, the economic and social structure of the country was largely disrupted and people struggled to manage their day-to-day earnings (Kar et al. 2021). Social distancing measures and lockdowns fundamentally altered social interactions in Indian society. Furthermore, the impact of “COVID-19” on Indian society has a significant remark that exposes existing vulnerabilities and inequalities while also prompting some positive changes. The present research article sheds light on the “impact of the pandemic” on Indian society with special emphasis on educational, economic and social factors.

### **A review of the literature**

The pandemic triggered a severe economic downturn in India. In addition to that, lockdowns and restrictions severely impacted informal workers, daily wage earners, and small businesses, pushing many into poverty. As mentioned by Kumar et al. (2021), in “Evaluating the Impact of COVID-19 on Society, Environment, Economy, and Education”, the “outbreak of the pandemic” directly affected the primary economic sectors which are agriculture, industrial activities import, and export. Hence, there is a very drastic impact on the economy of the country that can cause long-lasting casualties. Nonetheless, stringent lockdowns in 2020 severely impacted economic activity, particularly for daily wage earners and small businesses. Deshpande (2020) contends that the pandemic has affected the informal sectors of India and it was one of the substantial sources of employment in India. Moreover, the migrant workers, who were a vulnerable population, faced immense adversity due to travel restrictions and loss of daily wages. Furthermore, the pandemic aggravated existing “inequalities”, “disproportionately impacting low-income families”, daily wage earners, and marginalised communities.

The research of Deshpande (2020) reveals that “COVID-19” has stopped economic activity which specifies a slowdown or stoppage of the women workforce. Moreover, the economic impact of the pandemic was severe, disrupting livelihoods, pushing millions into poverty, and exposing existing inequalities. The research of Sharma, Talan, & Jain (2020) highlights that due to the emerging economies, a significant number of the population in India are living in extreme poverty and these people suffered the most due to the “outbreak of the pandemic”. Moreover, the severe “impact of the pandemic” on the economy disrupted livelihoods and pushed millions into poverty. On the other hand, Deaton (2021) argues that the “economic disparity” during the pandemic was not the same everywhere within the country. Some people were struggling to earn daily wages whereas a group of people were enjoying an economic upturn.

Other than “fiscal impact”, the pandemic has impacted the social stances of India exposing the vulnerabilities and inequalities of Indian society. The research of Someshwar et al. (2020)

reflects on the “impact of social distancing” and the lockdown on Indian society. Quarantine, social distancing, and isolation have impacted the quality of life among the people. This has also created a psychological disturbance that often leads to domestic violence and depression. “Social distancing” may “reduce the spread of the virus” but this also shows the “quality of life” of the general population. Feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression became more prevalent, especially among the elderly and those living alone (Gopal, Sharma & Subramanyam, 2020). Furthermore, the stresses of job loss, financial strain, and confinement led to a rise in domestic violence cases. Hence, an outbreak of “COVID-19” exacerbated the existing social inequalities in Indian society.

The structure of the social contract critically determines the spread of the virus and to control this structure it was necessary to impose social distancing and lockdown. In this regard, the research of Singh & Adhikari (2020) highlights the impact of these strategies on the mental health of the people of India. Nonetheless, “post-traumatic disorder” develops among people due to exposure to “traumatic events” such as being sick with “COVID-19” or losing family or friends. Subsequently, millions of migrant workers faced immense hardship during the lockdown. Stranded without jobs or income, many embarked on perilous journeys back to their hometowns. This has created social chaos and disruption within the society. An extensive research by Khanna (2020) in “Impact of migration of labour force due to global COVID-19 pandemic with reference to India”, focuses on important social issues such as the migration of the labour force in Indian society due to the sudden “outbreak of the pandemic”. Hence, the multidimensional factor of migration and mental issues have impacted the social dimension of the country during the endemic. The “quarantine measures” “taken by the government” are suitable, but “these may lead” to “inefficient outcomes” because many of the “migrants” “would prefer to escape” the “centres of disease”. These consequences inflict “negative externalities” on other “uninfected people”.

Another impact of the pandemic reflects on the education and educational sector of the country. As the entire country was put on lockdown due to the pandemic, the educational sectors also remain closed until further circular from the government. In accordance with Das, Bhuyan & Sultana (2020), the temporary closure of education focuses on the need to replace the conventional way of education within the country. Nonetheless, “COVID-19” significantly disrupts the education system of India which has a cascading effect on students, teachers, and the overall quality of education. In addition to that. The prolonged closure of schools and educational institutes due to the lockdown leads to significant gaps in learning for the students. Different literature such as Joshi, Vinay & Bhaskar (2021) focuses on the shift of the education system from conventional to online education. Hence, “there was a struggling impact on the education of India”.

The shift to online learning exposed the digital divide in Indian society, leaving many students, particularly in rural areas, without access to proper education. Moreover, this led to unequal access to education and potentially exacerbated existing educational disparities. As per the research of Tarkar (2020), focuses on the future determinants of educational disparities within society. The internal assessment and public assessment programmes of the schools and universities

were also disrupted due to the closure of the educational institutes. Furthermore, Online learning presented challenges for students to maintain focus and engagement.

In contrast to that, Rannaware et al. (2022) mentioned the issues regarding “access to the internet” and smart devices to join online classes. People from lower economic status and from the slum areas did not have the access to the internet and the phones that needed to be used for joining the online class. The economic hardship caused by the pandemic forced many families to prioritise earning a living over education, Henceforth, the sudden outbreak of the “pandemic has resulted in disruptions” in many parts of the country affecting the social, educational and economic factors. The findings and analysis section of the article analysed the factors and impact thoroughly to get an insight into the facts.

### **Aim, objectives and research questions**

“The main aim of the present research” is to comprehensively evaluate the multifaceted impact of the “COVID-19 pandemic” on Indian society. The “specific objectives” of the research are:

- To analyse the “impact of the pandemic” on Indian society.
- To assess the impact of “COVID-19” on the “economic system” of the country.
- To determine the disruptions caused in the “education system” due to the “outbreak of the pandemic”.
- To evaluate the social “consequences of the pandemic” on Indian society.

The major research questions that are answered through the analysis of the research are-

- How did the pandemic impact economic growth and employment rates in India?
- Which sectors of the Indian economy were most affected by the pandemic?
- To what extent did school closures and the shift to online learning disrupt student learning in India?
- What are the “long-term consequences” of the pandemic on educational attainment in India?
- In what ways did the pandemic expose and exacerbate existing social inequalities in India?

### **Methodology**

In order to gain a “deeper understanding” of the impact on the social, economic and educational status of India during the COVID, it is important to delve deeper into the facts. In the present study, a “secondary qualitative” “data collection method” has been employed to gain deeper insight. “Qualitative research” is important to gather factual information along with emotions and facts (Corti, 2022). “Secondary qualitative research” is a powerful tool that helps in analysing the data based on the research questions and getting an outcome to understand the overall

impact. Moreover, “method of enquiry” and “method of presentation” have been considered in this study.

**Major findings**

*Impact on the economic aspects*

An unprecedented global economic crisis was triggered in 2020 with the outbreak of coronavirus. As mentioned by Panneer et al. (2022), the lockdown phase has severely impacted the economic system of India due to the restrictions on activities such as predictions, transactions and others. Hence, the country experienced a phase of economic slowdown. Moreover, job losses and economic disruptions pushed many families into poverty, straining social safety nets. The “COVID-19 pandemic” also “negatively impacted the GDP of the country”. As per the official data, the Indian economy “contracted by 7.3% in the April-June” quarter of 2021 measuring the worst decline in the history of the country after the commencement of compelling quarterly GDP stats (Times of India, 2021). Furthermore, global and domestic supply chains were disrupted due to border closures and restrictions on movement. The sharp decline reflected the widespread “economic disruption” caused by the “pandemic”. During the “first wave of the pandemic” in 2020, India was facing economic headwinds due to the “existing inequalities” in the “Indian economic system”.

The sudden “outbreak of the pandemic” was an “unprecedented shock” to the “Indian economy”. As opined by Dev & Sengupta (2020), “the year 2020 experienced the worst” “global economic fallout” since the great depression happened in the 1930s. Due to the poor economic conditions during the “COVID-19 pandemic”, the unemployment rate increased within the company. “Over 119 million people” lost their jobs including “entrepreneurs and salaried workers” in 2020 (Statista, 2022). However, the “pandemic affected various sectors” of the “Indian economy”. The informal sector was highly vulnerable to economic downturn and a significant portion of the Indian workforce is employed in this sector. The supreme condition of unemployment was amplified in India during the 2020 period and the growth rate was lower than the target. In July 2020, the unemployment rate in Rural India was 6.66% whereas the unemployment rate in Urban India was 9.15% (Ali & Kamraju, 2020). The month of April in the year 2020 witnessed the highest rate of Unemployment in the country with 23.52% total unemployment (Ali & Kamraju, 2020). Nonetheless, “Lockdowns and restrictions” on movement “disrupted supply chains”, leading to a deterioration in production and consumption.

**Table 1: Unemployment rate in India during the Pandemic**

MAR, 20	APR, 20	MAY, 20	JUN, 20	JUL, 2020
8.8%	23.5%	23.5%	11%	7.4%

(Source: Data extracted from Ali & Kamraju, 2020)

The “tourism sector plays an important role” in boosting the economy of India. Due to the restrictions on movement and cross-border closure, the tourism sector is experiencing a terrible downfall. As opined by Jaipuria, Parida & Ray (2021), tourism is one of the major sources of revenue and employment in India and due to the restrictions, this sector was affected which in turn resulted in the downfall of the Indian economy. Besides this, a vital part of the Indian workforce, the migrant workers also faced immense hardship. Many workers are out of their jobs, and upon returning find it difficult to get into work and hence face financial crisis.

The impact on different industries was uneven as some industries faced severe economic turbulence and loss while some other sectors emerged as relatively unscratched. Due to the restrictions on transportation, the exports and imports industry experienced a drastic decline. Additionally, the growth rate of the automotive industry in India got hot due to the unplanned lockdown and restrictions. The country also faces issues regarding supply disruption and a decrease in demand. As per the research of Faisal & Dhusia (2021), the global pandemic reveals the weakness of the global economy particularly the developing countries like India. Nonetheless, travel restrictions, lockdowns, and social distancing measures brought tourism to a standstill. Hence, “COVID-19” pandemic has remarkably impacted the Indian economy, exposing vulnerabilities and inequalities.

### ***“Impact of COVID-19” on education***

Education is a vital part of shaping a society. The sudden upsurge of the “global pandemic” significantly disrupted the Indian education system. Due to the closure and lockdown as well as social distancing, the education system was forced to shift to online and this measure unfurl the inequalities within the education system. As mentioned by Rawal (2021), both teachers and students face hurdles due to the sudden shift to online education. There is a lack of facilities at home and there are external distractions which may hinder the smooth process of education at home. In addition to that, the availability of electricity and devices to attend online classes is also becoming a barrier for most of the students from rural India to attend online classes. This suggests that students from unprivileged backgrounds are likely to succumb to inefficiency due to the inaccessibility of technology. Hence, the rapid transition to online learning exposed the glaring digital divide in India.

The lack of access to online resources and support systems disproportionately affected students from disadvantaged backgrounds. On the other hand, more than 20,000 schools were permanently closed during this period (Times of India, 2022). The report of “Unified District Information System for Education” (UDISE) “Plus Report 2021-22” reveals that 20,000 schools that are under private or other management surveillance and administration were closed due to lack of monetary support. Moreover, the “total number of teachers” decreased by 1.95% in the 2021-2022 period (Times of India, 2022). Nonetheless, many teachers lacked the training and technical skills required to deliver online lessons effectively. This situation diversely affects the

quality of education provided to the students via online classes. Jena (2020) mentioned that, due to the lack of technological knowledge or efficiency in conducting face-to-face online classes, some of the educators or lecturers only conduct lectures on video platforms which are not real online classes dedicated to the course and syllabus.

The “closure of schools and educational institutes” in India and the “shift from offline to online classes” have disrupted the student learning process in India. Prolonged school closures resulted in significant gaps in learning for students. As reported by “The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization”, 60% of the student population was impacted by the closure of educational institutes (Panakaje et al. 2022). Furthermore, “social distancing” and “online learning” changed the perception of the students towards the “education system”. Teachers and educators have to entrust digital technology as the primary means of teaching and learning irrespective of technology-related reliance. Reduced focus and engagement of the students in online learning environments become an issue. Online learning presented challenges for students to maintain focus and engagement, especially in crowded households or with limited parental support.

There were repeated lockdowns and repeated school closures due to the second and third wave of the pandemic after 2020. This situation leads to confusion for students regarding switching between online and offline classes. The learning quality, skill gaining and mental well-being of the students get hampered and students get dismayed by the repeated school closures (The Indian Express, 2022). Other long-term consequences are the rates of school dropouts during this pandemic situation. The economic hardships during the pandemic may force families to prioritise earning a living over education. This leads to an increase in dropout rates, particularly among girls. In some of the universities and institutions, especially those that deal with practical evaluation, it has become difficult to teach and evaluate the students (Ravi, 2020). Hence it created long-term consequences affecting the quality of education and the future workforce. Overall, the pandemic has significantly changed the education system of India and the conventional system has shifted towards the digital education system.

### ***Impact of the pandemic on the social aspects***

The existing vulnerability and inequalities exposed due to the “outbreak of the pandemic”. The lockdown and restriction have increased the loneliness among the people and this triggers the mental health issues. Social distancing measures and lockdowns restricted in-person gatherings, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. This situation critically affected the vulnerable population such as the elderly or those people living alone. Moreover, the fear of being infected and getting isolated has triggered suicidal tendencies among people. Dsouza et al. (2020) mentioned that nearly 69 people from different states India and different age groups had committed suicide due to the fear of “COVID-19” infection. In addition to that, social boycotts, the pressure of quarantine and financial crises are other reasons behind the suicidal cases during that period.

Nonetheless, social isolation can exacerbate mental health issues like anxiety and depression, creating a ripple effect on overall well-being.

Other than stress and anxiety, insomnia, denial and anger also become the major social factors during the pandemic period. The issues seem to be higher among frontline workers such as doctors, nurses, community health workers, policemen, sanitation workers and others (Roy et al. 2021). Nonetheless, the sudden drastic changes in the regular lifestyle affected the mental health of the children and older population in India. As per reports, around 50% of people aged more than 60 years have experienced psychological impact (Roy et al. 2021). However, domestic violence also became a societal issue at the time of the pandemic. It has been seen that since the emergence of the “outbreak of the pandemic”, domestic violence, and sexual harassment have risen in numbers. As per the research of Maji et al. (2022), there will be a 47.2% increase in domestic violence complaints in India during the months of May to July 2020. Lockdowns and economic stress may have contributed to an increase in domestic violence cases. Gender roles play a crucial role as in many parts of India women are still underprivileged and ignored.

School closures and disruptions in the daily work routine impacted the family dynamics. The stress of the pandemic, the economic situation, and the fear of infection have led to increased conflict or a breakdown in communication within families. Students have been found to have significant alterations in their sleep routine during the lockdown (Datta & Kundu, 2021). Due to the lockdown and fewer activities, the sleep quality of school-going children has reduced and they tend to become more attracted towards the digital life such as using more phones or laptops rather than spending time with family. Beyond the mortality and morbidity, job fallouts and losses of jobs are other reasons that made drastic changes in the social life of an individual during the pandemic. The endemic has left women with economic and social insecurity due to the limited job options for working women, double work burdens in the household, digital inequalities and “restrictive social norms” (Agarwal, 2021). Hence, women became the vulnerable group that was experiencing the “dark side of the pandemic”.

### ***Overall consideration***

The overall impact of the pandemic was negative on social, economic and educational aspects of India, however, there are still certain sectors and trends that positively impacted the Indian society as a whole. Lockdowns and social distancing measures pushed businesses to adopt online tools and e-commerce platforms. As mentioned by Modgil et al. (2022), the lockdown, restrictions and all these measures helped in accelerating the opportunities for digital entrepreneurship. Moreover, different technologies have emerged during this time that have become an inseparable part of the daily lives of people. “Telehealth” can be taken as an example in this matter. Due to the restrictions, “social distancing” and lockdowns, the importance of telehealth has been reinstated (Bhatia, 2021). “Telehealth includes” the use of “information and communication technologies” (ICT) to construct “communication between two remote parties” which can be healthcare providers or providers and patients.



Other than the economy and digital development, the education sector also developed through the introduction of online classes. The pandemic forced a rapid adoption of educational technology in India. This helped in combining traditional learning with online learning. This movement towards blended learning has a “positive impact on the education system” of India as it helps the students as well as the teachers to get used to technology (Panakaje et al. 2022). The online education system can become a great platform for people with disabilities as they can easily get access to the learning content while at home. Moreover, the closure of schools and prolonged working-from-home situations create a foster of belongingness and collaboration among the family members. This helps in strengthening the relationship and family bond. Hence, it is important to know both the positive and negative “impact of the pandemic” on the “social economic and education system” to build an equitable and resilient future for the nation.

“Digital literacy” has been enhanced due to the pandemic in India. Additionally, community support has been increased as neighbours work together to provide basic support to the family who got infected by the virus. The outbreak also increased awareness regarding hygiene and people became more aware about handwashing and sanitation (Maragoni-Santos et al. 2022). Hence, the “COVID-19” “pandemic serves as a reminder” of the resilience and adaptability of Indian society. These positive aspects become an integral part of India.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, India faces the challenge of addressing the “negative impacts” of the pandemic while building on the positive developments. The pandemic's economic fallout disproportionately affected informal sector workers, daily wage earners, and migrant workers. Other than this, some people in remote areas send their children to school for a mid-day meal, so that they can have at least one proper meal a day. The lockdown, and school closure have stopped this and hence, people were feeling the burden which caused domestic violence against the children as well. Hence, the pandemic has a “significant impact” on social changes and societal values.

The article highlights the educational “impacts of school closures” and the “shift to online learning” disrupted education. The students, particularly students from underprivileged backgrounds lacked “access to technology” and the internet suffered during this period. However, by building on the positive developments that emerged and addressing the challenges exposed, India can move towards a stronger, more connected, and “technologically advanced” society.

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