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### Student perspective on online learning during covid-19 pandemic: a descriptive study of school students in Ernakulam District, State of Kerala, India

Neetha Devan NV  
[neetha@rajagiri.edu](mailto:neetha@rajagiri.edu)

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# **Student perspective on online learning during covid-19 pandemic: a descriptive study of school students in Ernakulam District, State of Kerala, India.**

**Abstract:** The closure of educational activities in the mid-march 2020 in India as well in Kerala due to the ongoing covid-19 pandemic resulted in unplanned shift from traditional class rooms to a set-up that exclusively involves digital teaching and learning. Within this context the present study aims to explore the perspective of school children regarding the effectiveness of learning online as well the difficulties or hurdles faced in remolding themselves to meet the requirement of the pedagogy.

## **Objective of the study:**

1. To study the pros and cons of “The online movement”, and the student reaction to it
2. To study the impact of online learning on students
3. The response of the educational institutions towards the pandemic
4. The change from the traditional teaching -learning methods to the blended method.
5. The impact of online teaching on different age groups of students, to the unplanned and rapid shift in the format.

## **Methodology:**

With the view to study the preference of different age group of students to the online classes, a study was conducted among school Students in Ernakulam district. Four different sets of questionnaires were prepared with regards to different age groups of students. For the primary and middle school students, telephonic interview method was adopted. A short questionnaire comprising of five open-ended questions were asked. The high school and senior secondary students were given a questionnaire of ten questions on google docs to answer. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed of which received 185 responses back. The students were chosen from selected public and government schools in Ernakulam district.

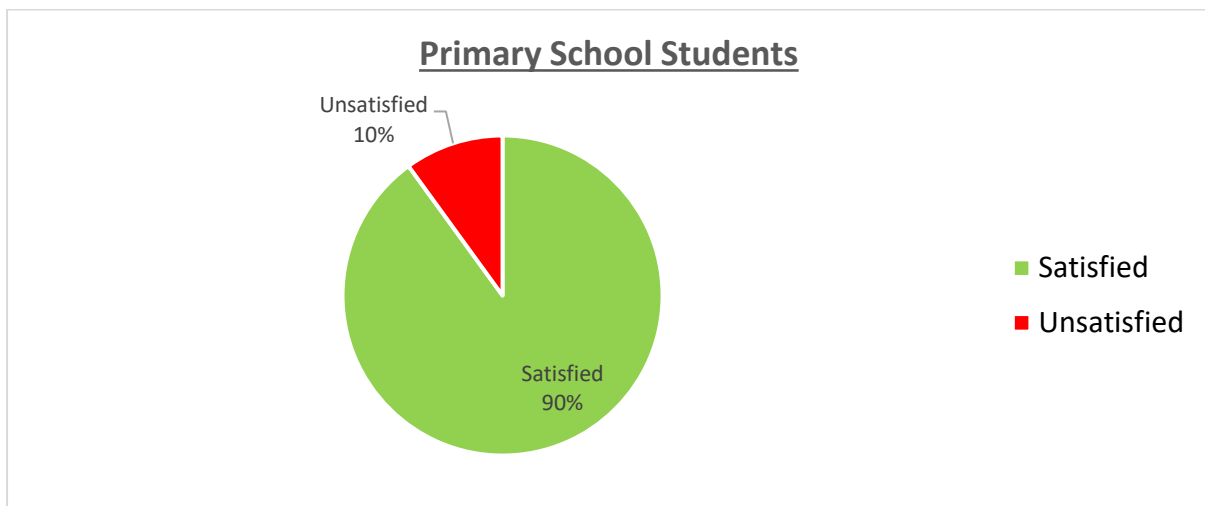
**Introduction:** The outbreak of the deadly corona virus has had an enormous effect on the global economy. This tragedy has also shaken up the educational sector, and this fear is going to last for a while. Several factors effect the educational sector such as accessibility of dependable internet connections, affordability of the same and gadgets needed for the online classes, flexibility to change from the traditional pattern of teaching- learning to the blended mode, the learning pedagogy had to be altered, the challenges were numerous, not only for the students but also for the teachers. Though many institutions in India had practiced the blended learning culture, the traditional format was always the preferred choice. Initially shift from the traditional method to the online platform was full of challenges for both teachers and students.

The alternative medium to traditional face to face learning has shown us some stark realities existent in our society in terms of social inequalities and inaccessibility of essential resources among students coming from a section of the society resulting even in some suicide cases and tragedies in some families. The digital initiatives brought out the digital divide in the society more evidently. The digitalized education common in the elite schools in the society showed the much larger inequality among the rural and urban population as well as the rich and the poor.

There has been a dramatic change in the field of education, remote forms of teaching primarily through digital platforms having gained the upper hand over traditional forms. Students in Ernakulam district, nursery to senior secondary are undergoing schooling on a digital platform from June 2020. Even though blended learning was a part of their curriculum since some years the full shift from traditional classroom teaching to online classrooms has created a lot of anxiety issues among the children in various age groups.

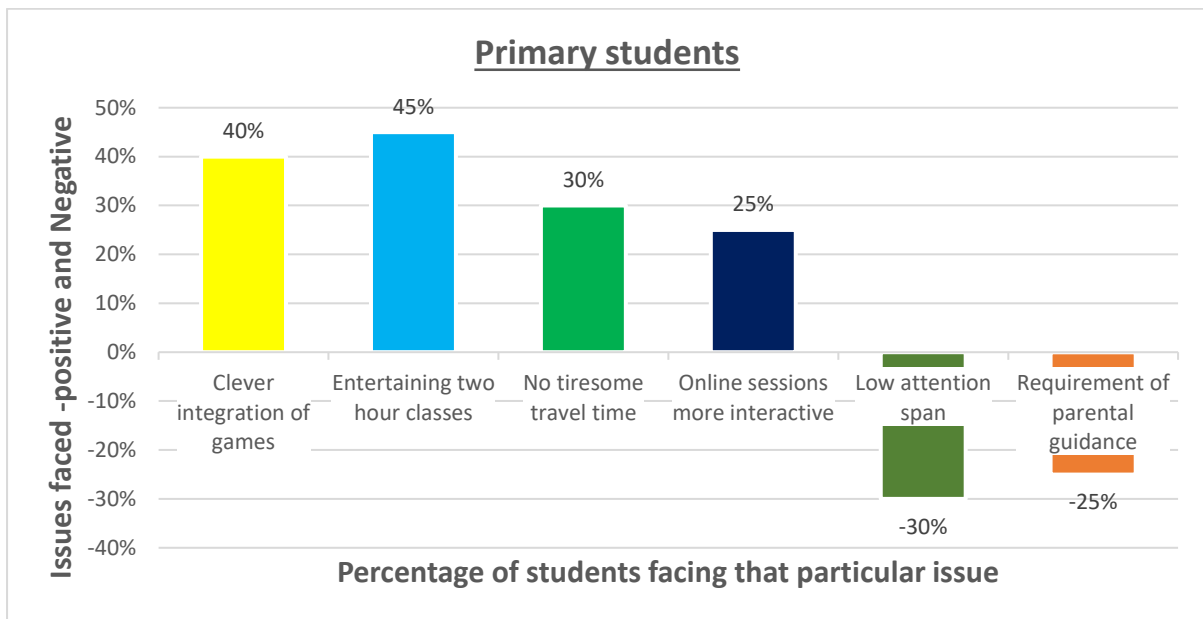
**The first category, Primary students:** The primary students were asked on a few topics about their reaction to the online classes. They in general seems to have a very entertaining two hours of daily classes. The general consensus in children, especially younger ones, the attention span is very low as they get distracted easily. So, its much more difficult for the teachers and parents collectively to make them attend the class regularly and also to concentrate on the subjects.

Category of students	Satisfied	Unsatisfied
Primary School Students	90%	10%



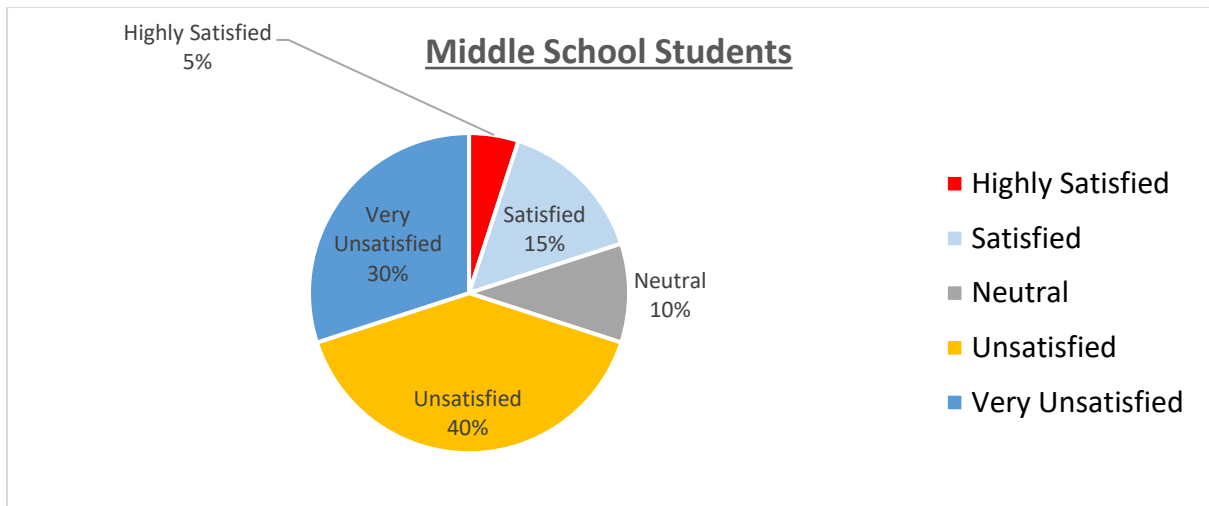
Projects and assignments were given out mostly to finish the portions in the curriculum. It was also noticed that parental supervision was required in almost 98% cases among primary students to ensure class participation among this age group. Another factor observed was the DD channel broadcast for students in the government school is a huge success. Children are keen to attend these broadcasts and the replay of the same at different times too. Teachers in both government and public schools are trying their best to engage their little students in different activities online, which even grabbed high accolades from our state government of Kerala. Another major advantage of online schooling especially for this category of students is cutting down of tiring travel time and exposure to sapping heat and pollution. Among the primary students 90% of the students were happy with their online classes.

<b>Category of students</b>	<b>Clever integration of games</b>	<b>Entertaining two hour classes</b>	<b>No tiresome travel time</b>	<b>Online sessions more interactive</b>	<b>Low attention span</b>	<b>Requirement of parental guidance</b>
<b>Primary students</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>-30%</b>	<b>-25%</b>



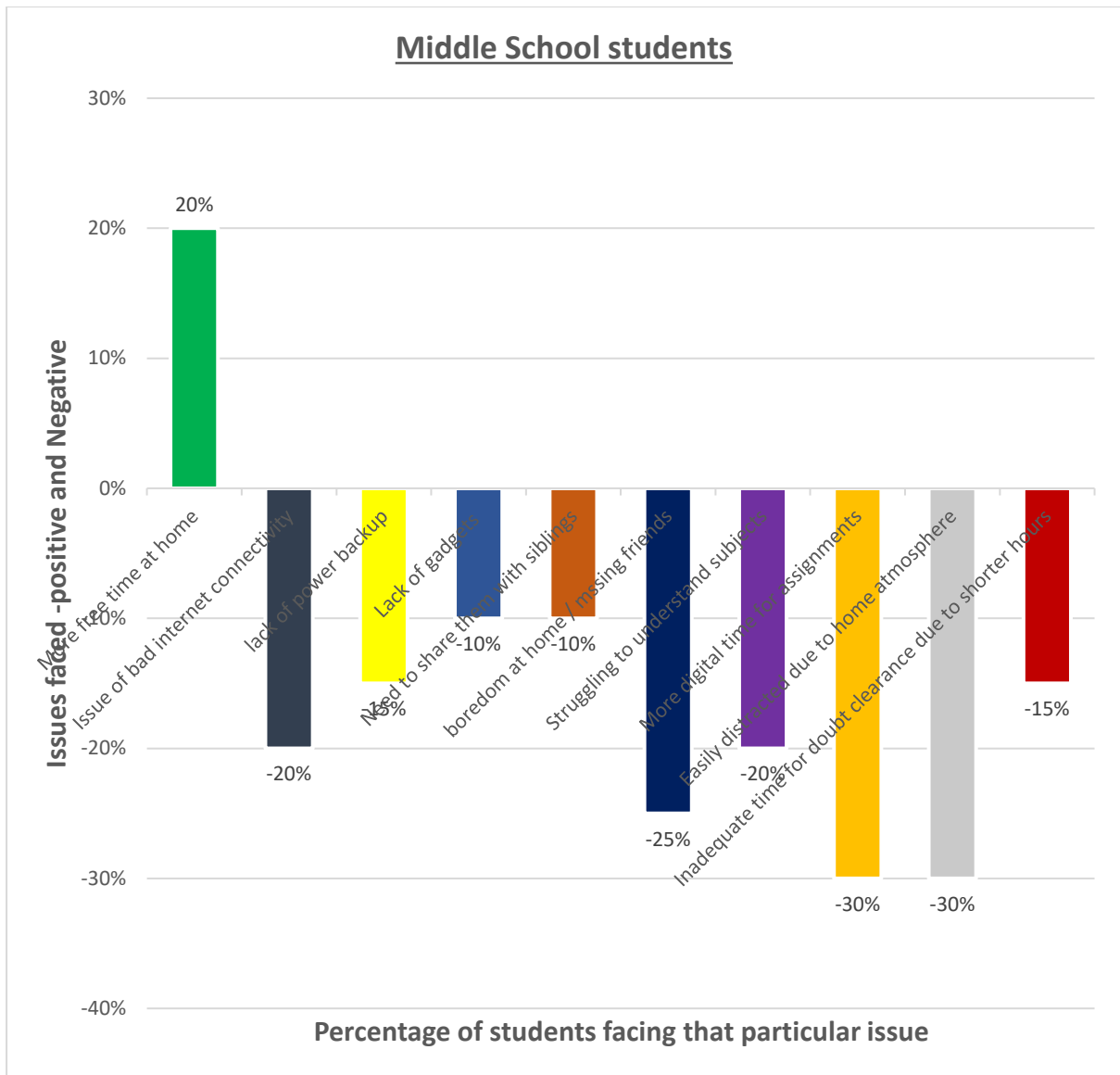
**The second category, the middle school students:** The middle school students have a mixed reaction to online schooling. Unlike the primary students, middle school students were mostly unhappy with the homebound situation.

<b>Category of students</b>	<b>Highly Satisfied</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Unsatisfied</b>	<b>Very Unsatisfied</b>
<b>Middle School Students</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>30%</b>



More than half of them were struggling to understand the subjects taught. The amount of assignments given were making them spend more digital time searching on the internet. They were easily distracted because of unreliable internet connectivity and lack of atmosphere at home. Most of them complained about boredom at home and how they missed their school and friends. Due to the lesser class hours students are not getting adequate time for clearing their doubts during online sessions. They have to wait for a response to their queries through WhatsApp and other medium. The overall preference to the traditional face to face classroom learning was more than 80% when compared to online classes. The only advantage of online schooling to this age group is being able to dedicate more time towards their hobbies and other activities at home.

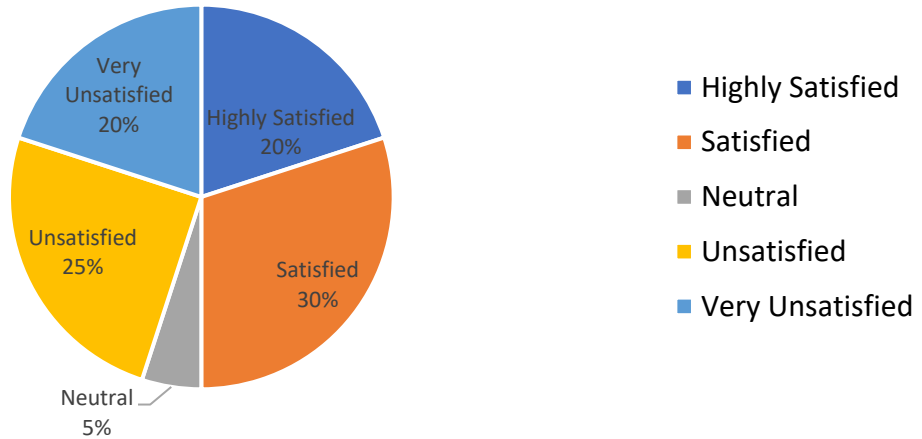
Category of students	More free time at home	Issue of bad internet connectivity	lack of power backup	Lack of gadgets	Need to share them with siblings	boredom at home / missing friends	Struggling to understand subjects	More digital time for assignments	Easily distracted due to home atmosphere	Inadequate time for doubt clearance due to shorter hours
Middle School students	20%	-20%	-15%	-10%	-10%	-25%	-20%	-30%	-30%	-15%



**The third category, the high school students:** Among the high school students it was observed that they have their share of household responsibilities too along with attending online classes.

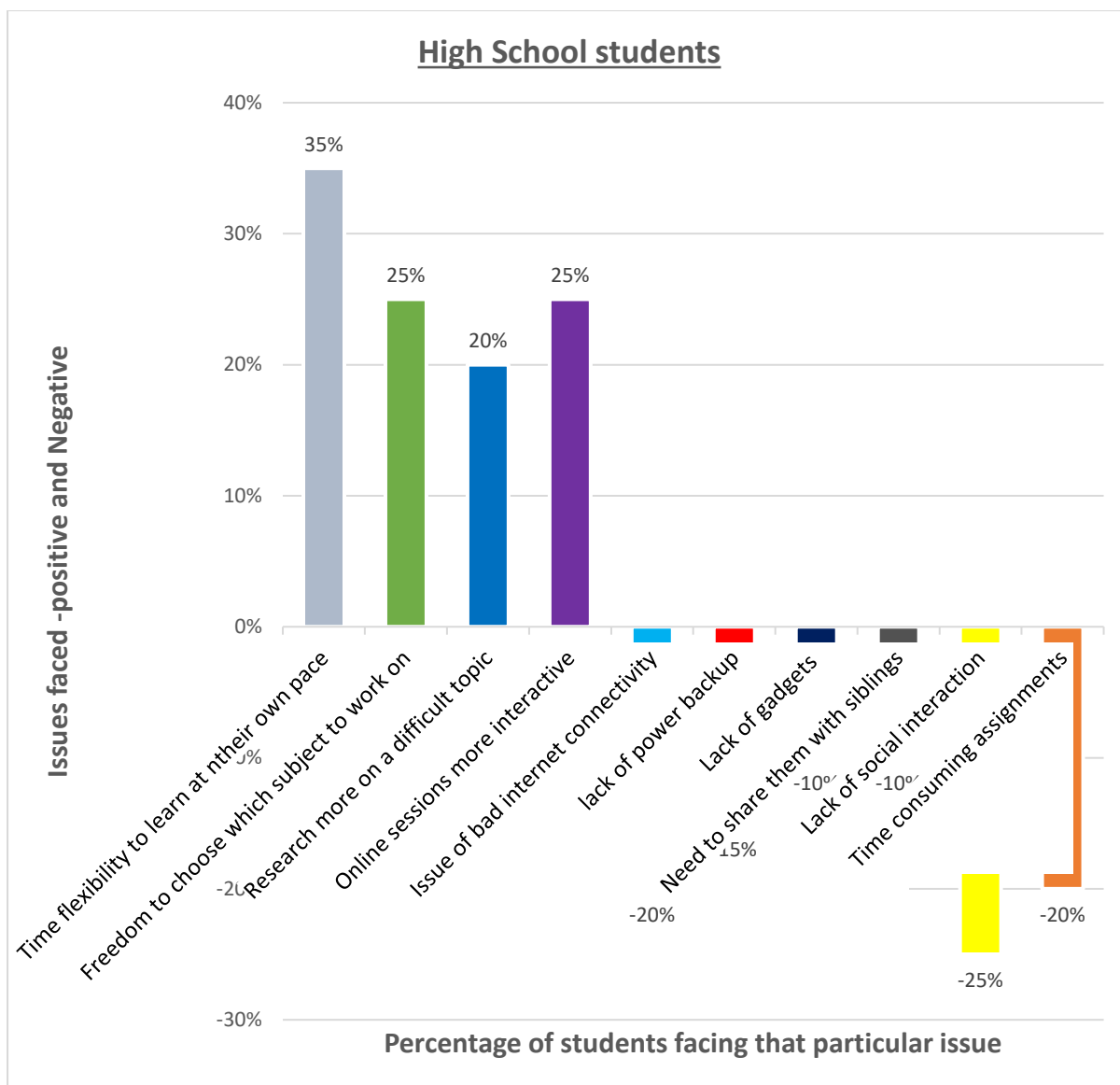
Category of students	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
High School Students	20%	30%	5%	25%	20%

### High School Students



The lack of learning atmosphere is an observation made among this category of students too. Many of the students complained about the lack of gadgets available and the need to share them with their siblings. Though most of them claim that teacher’s presence online ensures learning, not able to see and mingle with fellow classmates are making them depressed. Time consuming assignments is another issue faced by many, though the teachers pitch in, but communication with teachers online and doubt clearing is not easy. Among the advantages of online mode as quoted by some are the time flexibility to learn subjects at their own pace as well as the freedom to choose which subject to work on. They also have the freedom to research more on a given topic if it wasn’t comprehensible in class. The preference to online mode of schooling was chosen by more than 55% of the students in this category.

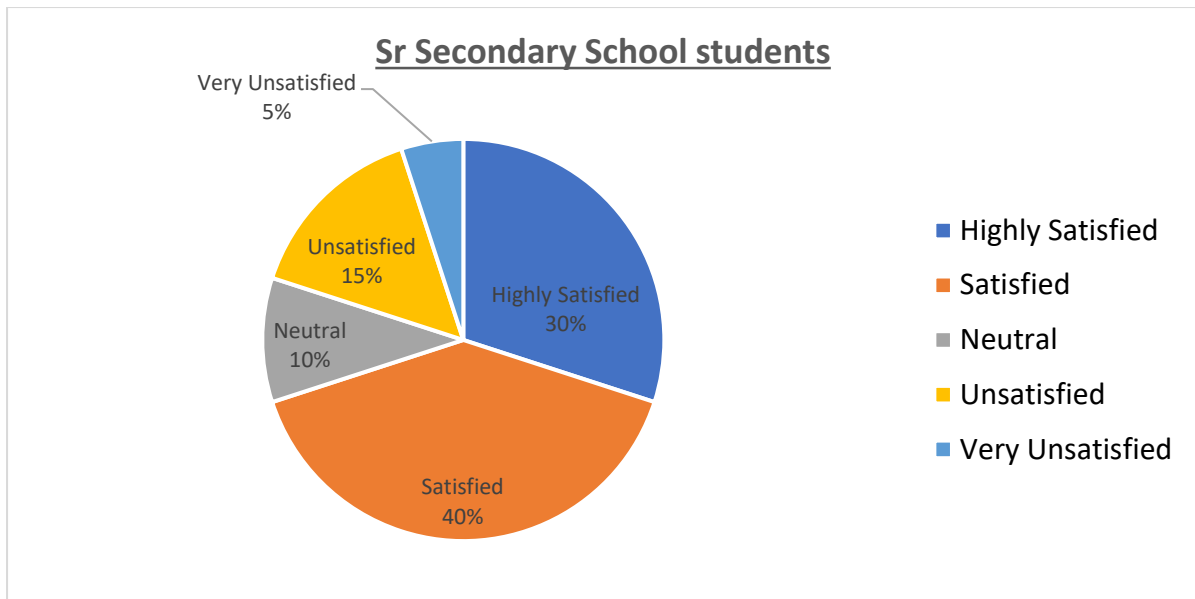
Category of students	Time flexibility to learn at their own pace	Freedom to choose which subject to work on	Research more on a difficult topic	Online sessions more interactive	Issue of bad internet connectivity	lack of power backup	Lack of gadgets	Need to share them with siblings	Lack of social interaction	Time consuming assignments
High School students	35%	25%	20%	25%	-20%	-15%	-	-10%	-25%	-20%



**The fourth category, the senior secondary students:** Senior secondary students mentioned about the freedom to learn at their own pace, managing school syllabus along with their preparation for various competitive examinations. Online classes are providing them the opportunity to research on their chosen topics without any inhibitions.

Category of students	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
Sr Secondary School students	30%	40%	10%	15%	5%



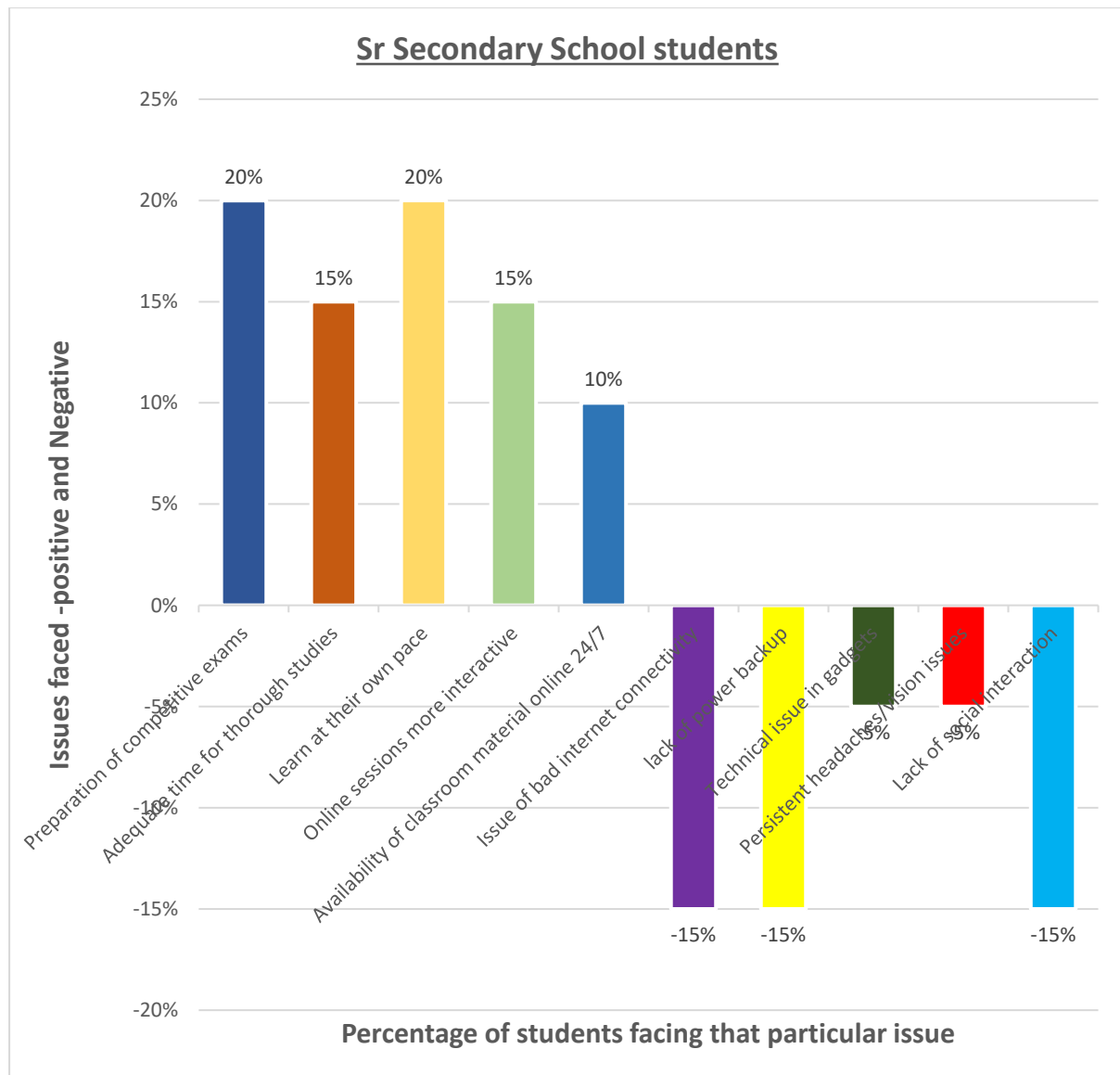


According to them the classes are more interactive and students and teachers are getting more time to interact in online sessions. Unlike traditional classroom, the notes and classroom events are updated regularly in the google classroom, MS Teams etc. which results in accessibility of the same 24/7. The issue of bad internet connectivity, lack of power backup, technical issues in the gadgets used etc. are the major set backs in online learning. Many students have also complained of persistent headaches and vision issues due to long hours of screen time. A normal class hour for a senior secondary student can be of five hours of normal class accompanied by a couple of additional hours of online coaching or private tuitions. Majority of the students, almost 80% are happy with the current online mode of learning. Some students complained about the lack of personal attention that they are used to in the traditional classroom from their teachers and mentors. And stated that they were missing it enormously.

Category of students	Preparation of competitive exams	Adequate time for thorough studies	Learn at their own pace	Online sessions more interactive	Availability of classroom material online 24/7	Issue of bad internet connectivity	lack of power backup	Technical issue in gadgets	Persistent headaches/vision issues	Lack of social interaction
Sr Secondary School students	20%	15%	20%	15%	10%	-15%	-15%	-5%	-5%	-15%

Support is a crucial element for keeping the learners motivated in an online teaching learning atmosphere. Keeping the mental sanity of the learner, providing a positive ambience and retaining a productive, healthy atmosphere is very essential. In this digital world where things are surreal, its essential to keep a healthy balance between the screen and real times. It is very important for the student to create a connect with their teachers and the peer team or one can feel easily dejected or

unhappy in an online environment. Lack of physical activities outside and more screen time resulting in depression and internet dependency and even obesity among school children. Online access for children is now no longer as tightly supervised as before and has become a more personal and private pursuit.



**Findings:** This is a crucial time for the educational institutions right from the Nursery school to the conduct of Board exams. The structure of schooling practiced in India so far including teaching and assessment methodologies was first to be affected by this closure. The school students with the sudden closure of schools missed out on their educational opportunities as well had to face a lot of unprecedented challenges too. Untested and unprecedented scales were used to conduct online assessments on a trial and error basis, some missed out even that opportunity due to bad internet connectivity and other similar issues. Teachers had to develop the digital content of the whole course for online teaching. The limited access to internet, lack of uninterrupted power supply, ill equipped teachers and students with the online mode of teaching-learning, absence of a robust monitoring system, hindrance in establishing a healthy rapport between the students and teachers, bridging the patchy and impersonal connect in an online atmosphere, unavailability of tools to create content in regional languages, are all still few of the many challenges faced on a daily basis.

**Conclusion:** The use of digital content in education was not a very common feature in many parts of the world so far, though Indian education sector had accepted the blended form of learning at least in the urban areas in the country. Access to internet, a quite ambience in the household to pursue online classes, families with multiple children, accessibility to gadgets for all still remains a major hinderance. For those who have access to the right technology and other facilities, online learning journey has been smooth. After the initial struggle of both students and teachers of dealing with accessing these online platforms like zoom, google meet or MS teams, the connectivity issues, the gadget issues for the smooth and effective conduct of online classes, the scenario has come to an amicable equilibrium. This pandemic situation could develop an innovative teaching-learning practice in education. Due to the digital divide it could also result in creating even larger inequality in education.

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