



Impact of COVID 19 on Student Mobility in India

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Abstract

The Pandemic COVID 19 has left humanity stranded with a question ‘what next’. The student community is perplexed to make decisions on where to pursue their education from. The fear of contracting the disease along with many other associated challenges has altered decisions of many students. This paper examined the preferred destinations of Indian Students for graduation, factors affecting the decisions, the impact of gender on student mobility. The paper attempts to factor in all the major reasons which contribute in deciding where the students will be moving for their Higher Education Studies. The paper is based on survey method. A self-constructed questionnaire was administered online and the data was collected from a sample of 147 XII grade students. T statistic employed shows that COVID 19 has impacted the decision of students to study abroad.

Keywords: Pandemic, student mobility, Higher Education

Introduction:

Corona virus has wreaked havoc across cultures in unprecedented ways. The new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) is a highly infectious disease that caused an epidemic of acute respiratory syndrome (COVID-19)(Dryhurst et al., 2020).No country was spared from its widespread disaster.The government of India acted swiftly and a complete lockdown was announced from March 25, 2020. The largest democracy of the world came to a standstill. The impact was so huge that board exams for some of the major subjects were postponed. Everyone felt the jolt of Corona. Students who were waiting for the exams to get over and plan for admissions in the college of their dream were taken for a toss. All the dreams were shattered and new logistics were searched for looking into psychological perspective and insecurity overshadowing all the spheres of Indian life.

International student mobility has existed for decades(Choudaha, 2017) and Indian students who could afford it always pursued this dream of studying besides their hometowns. There is no question that internationalization,

and particularly international student mobility, has transformed the higher education landscape in the last decade(Knight, 2012). Students are traditionally considered to be a mobile sub-set of the population(Prazeres, 2013). Transitions to higher education generally involve geographical mobility as students. Education has become an internationally traded commodity. And for those Indian students who are not able to cherish this dream of a foreign degree have to settle with doing their graduation from institutes of excellence in India. India is the second largest country in South Asia and has one of the largest systems of education(Misra, 2012). India has over 800 universities and approximately 40,000 colleges, reflecting the overall severe fragmentation and small size of HEIs currently in the country(Government of India, 2019).Every Indian has started realizing that higher education institutes are a contributor for sustainable living. The rising demand for higher education in institutes of excellence has been growing among the Indian student community.

Students basically long to have a good job. But the Corona Crisis has hugely impacted the education sector.



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Most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. These nationwide closures are impacting over 89% of the world's student population (UNESCO, 2020). India bears testimony to this scenario. All the schools were completely shut and some of the exams even for board students were postponed leaving many students anxious.

Research Methodology

The researchers were curious to know whether COVID 19 would alter the plans of students pursuing higher education. Researchers wanted to know whether COVID 19 altered the mindset of students who completed their XII and all excited to step into higher education and who otherwise in normal conditions would have pursued higher education from abroad. With this intent a survey was undertaken in the month of April 2020 when coronavirus was slowly spreading in the subcontinent and India was into a complete lockdown. A self-constructed questionnaire was administered online. The questionnaire was validated by an expert in research. A survey approach was adopted to find the factors effecting student mobility during the COVID 19 Pandemic. A subsequent survey was conducted in the month of August to ascertain the student decision on pursuing further studies. August was month when the cases were growing, however people had learned to live with it and they were in a stage of exploring and prioritizing livelihood and future prospects over life. So the same questionnaire was administered again to note the difference in the mindset of XII grade students wanting to pursue their higher education from a foreign land.

Objectives of the study:

- To find the preferred destination of Indian Students for graduation.
- To identify factors effecting the choice of higher education
- To assess the impact of COVID 19 on the decision making of students
- To study the difference between the preference of girls and boys for pursuing their further studies

Sample of the study

147 students from class XII studying in various schools of Central India responded to the online survey. 74 girls and 73 boys participated in the survey.

Limitation

The survey was limited to India particularly to central India. The survey was carried out among English medium students having access to smart phones and acquainted with answering on google forms. The survey was conducted only among XII grade students. Lot of data from the pre covid times indicated that a majority of students at international destinations are Indians. The researchers wanted to know whether COVID 19 altered the plans of XII grade students.

Data Analysis

O1: To find the preferred destination of Indian Students for graduation

Our findings (Table 1.1) indicate that COVID-19 has impacted the decision of students to pursue their further education hugely. Only 10.95 pc of students wanted to pursue their higher education abroad. Contrary to last decade where a greater number of Indian students went abroad for graduation and post-graduation. One reason was the growing Indian economy and enhanced affordability of Indian Parents. However with the fear surrounding the pandemic the "pull factor" drawing many Indian students abroad has diminished.

Our study finds that 46.57 pc students still preferred a place besides their hometown in India to pursue their further studies. India has successfully created one of the biggest higher education systems in the world (Chakrabarti, 2016) and this is slowly but surely impacting the decision of students to study abroad. The COVID 19 pandemic has rekindled the thoughts of students and parents to pursue their education in safe haven not far from homes i.e. in their home country.

36.3 pc students prefer to pursue their further study in their home town only. Eventually this is the resultant of the pandemic fear and also the financial crisis the families were facing due to job losses and layoffs. Also 6.16 pc students prefer to take a drop due to COVID-19



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Table 1.1; Students Preference to pursue their further studies(in the month of April)

Preference to pursue their further studies	
Parameters	%
Abroad	10.95
Anywhere besides my Hometown in India	46.57
My Hometown	36.3
Would take a drop due to COVID 19	6.16

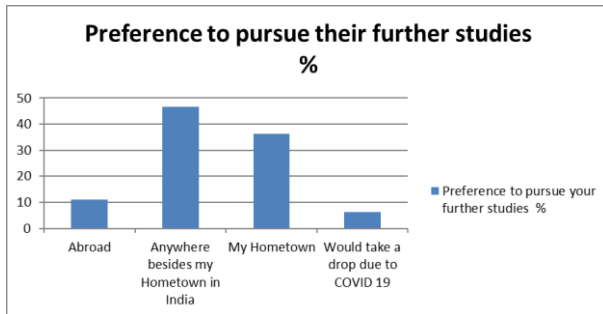
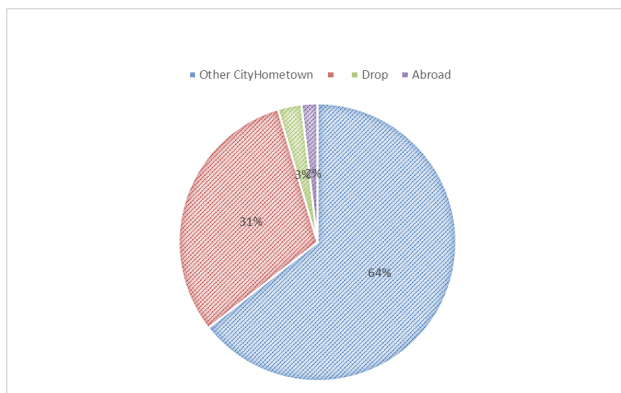


Figure 1.1; Students Preference to pursue their further Studies.

And when Students were asked their preferences in terms of where they wish to study in the month of August the responses were quite



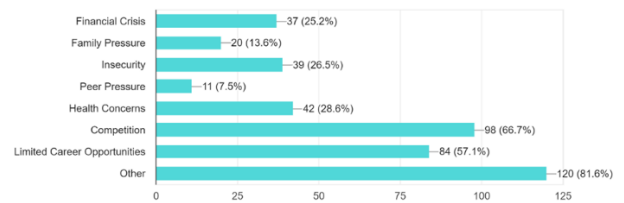
O2: To identify factors effecting the choice of higher education

The students cited personal reasons, Competition and limited career opportunities as the major reasons for the preference of destination with regards to their further studies. Other reasons cited were health concerns, Insecurity and Financial crisis. The major reasons cited were accounted in the perspective of high competition and

shrinking job opportunities and personal reasons like ill health of a family member, divorce of parents, death of a very near one.

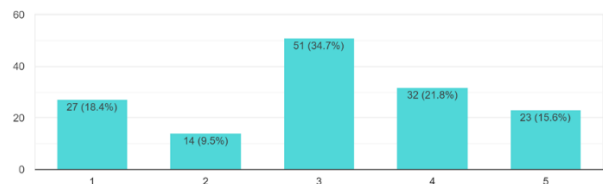
The secondary reasons were the effect of the coronavirus fallout. This finding is coinciding with previous research findings. Financial crisis is a pre-eminent barrier to mobility (González et al., 2011). The pandemic was the first witness of a major crisis by most of the generation Z and was slowly impacting the decision-making process.

What is the reason of Your Preference
147 responses



O3: To assess the impact of COVID 19 on the decision making of students

Do you feel your dreams of higher education has been altered because of COVID 19
147 responses



The graph shows that 37.4% of students strongly feel that COVID 19 has altered their plans of further education and 34.7% students were in dilemma during the month of April 2020 when the survey was conducted. The data was subjected to a t test analysis and the results are presented in the table below

Standard Deviation	1.30
T test	0.25

The calculated value of t test is 0.25 and the table value is 3.091 which indicates that the hypothesis fails to get rejected.



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O4: To study the difference between the preference of girls and boys for pursuing their further studies.

Ho: There is no significant difference between the preference of girls and boys for pursue their further studies.

Table 1.2; Difference between the preference of girls and boys for pursue their further studies.

Gender wise Student's Preference to pursue their further studies							
Group	Category	Mean	SD	DF	t-Value	Table Value at 0.001 level of Sig	Sign
Female	73	65	76	145	8.833	3.091	Significant
Male	74	66	73				

Interpretation: Above table shows that the calculated t-value is 8.833 which is very high than the table value at 0.001 level of significance (3.091) at 145 degree of freedom. So, the null hypothesis “there is no significant difference between the preference of girls and boys for pursuing their further studies” is rejected.

Conclusion

In the progressive economies’ student mobility has become very prominent and a strong indicator of the nations progress. Gross enrolment ratio in India as per AISHE reports 2019 is 26.3%. However, students going abroad for pursuing higher education have been always fluctuating like last year 21% less Indian students went abroad for their higher education. COVID 19 pandemic has been devastating and India has been fighting dual battles both on the economic front and healthcare. This has definitely impacted the decisions on students venturing abroad for further studies. The study revealed that majority of students preferred to study in Indian institutes besides their hometown. Students have expressed competition, limited career opportunities and health concerns as their primary concerns. Also the findings of the study indicate that 37.4% of the students feel that COVID 19 has altered their plans of educational future. The pandemic has impacted the lives of

one and all but one on the crossroads are the students especially ones stepping into their higher education. But every dark cloud has a silver lining. COVID 19 has opened the doors for digital education. By improving the digital infrastructure and the right kind of twinning programs and associations lot more students can be given access to world class education without actually leaving the country. This will in the long run help the economy to grow and also curb brain drain.

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