PROBLEMS FACED BY THE TEACHERS DURING COVID-19: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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ABSTRACT:

The surge of Covid-19 pandemic placed the world in lockdown situation. The educational sector was badly affected by it. The schools, colleges and universities were closed the world over. In such situations, the teachers turned to online teaching mode to keep the education of students going. The sudden shift from face-to-face mode of teaching to online mode of teaching had put forth many problems and challenges before the teachers at each level of education. The present study aimed to explore the problems faced by the college teachers in online teaching of Samba district during the pandemic. Survey method was used to conduct the study. Self prepared questionnaire consisting of twelve closed ended questions and one open ended question was used to collect the data. College teachers of Samba district formed the population and forty teachers from five colleges of Samba district were randomly selected as a sample of the study. The data was analyzed using percentage. The paper highlights some of the problems faced by the teachers i.e. unfavorable home environment for online learning, lack of students interaction, lack of knowledge about online teaching technologies, poor network connection, Non Availability of smart phones with the students, lack of ICT tools with teachers, lack of internet access, power failure, high data cost, inequality issues and increased workload on teachers and technical glitch etc.. The paper also makes certain suggestions to address the issues and to be better prepared for future.

Key words: Covid-19, online teaching, problems.

INTRODUCTION:

The spread of the corona virus epidemic is responsible for the cause of medical emergencies all over the world, due to which millions had suffered. The entire world economy has been crushed by Covid- 19. Its spread has caused panic in almost all the sectors of the world economy. A nationwide lockdown was announced in India on 22nd March, 2020 to prevent the epidemic from spreading in the country. Thousands of schools, colleges and universities have had to be closed due to lockdown in India. Lockdown has affected the education of more than 500 million students in India (Gupta and Tiwari, 2020). Lockdown has forced colleges, universities and schools all over India to take entire education to the digital platform without ant preparation. It has pushed the academic institutions towards online teaching due to the indefinite shutting down of schools, colleges and universities by the governments (Martinez, 2020). The closure of schools has affected more than 290 million students across the globe (UNESCO, 2020). The education industry has witnessed a pedagogical shift in the

teaching toward e- learning to cope up with the challenges posed by Covid- 19. The issue of students' safety compelled academic institutions to devise the strategies for educating students with nominal disruptions (Hale et al., 2020).

The education system was obligated to reinvent itself to handle this unparalleled challenge. Earlier the e- learning was majorly used in non -formal education and distance education courses. However, the COVID- 19 has compelled the formal institutions to embrace e- learning, as maintaining social distance is of utmost value. Maintaining stringent rules such as maintaining social distancing is improbable in the regular classroom mode of teaching. Post lockdown majority of the educational institutions adopted either synchronous learning or asynchronous learning models. Synchronous learning consists of online or remote training that takes place in real- time in the form of live sessions using various conferencing software's like zoom, Google meet and Cisco WebEx, while online learning is achieved without real- time contact through online networks using WhatsApp, YouTube, and Learning management systems of educational institutes. Both synchronous and asynchronous models require hardware, software, and network supports for both teachers and students. The challenges have become more prominent as the entire education system shifted from offline to online teaching.

Rationale of the Study

Online teaching was the only option for educators and teachers to continue education at all levels of formal education during the lockdown. Government of India as well as states has tried at their best to orient teachers and learners in the basics of online teaching and assessment. In spite of all the efforts, teachers and students faced problems and challenges which were explored by researchers in different fields. Albert and Solomon et al. (2020) revealed that the factors that worked against students' compliance with e-learning during theCOVID-19 lockdown include poor budgetary allocations to the education sector, illiteracy of many parents, erratic power supply, poor infrastructures in the schools, poor parents and did not have computers /laptops in their homes, many teachers were not adaptable to ICT. Deepti and Ayush (2020) found that most people faced internet problems and did not have the knowledge to use and solve problems related to technology. Lack of human interaction between teachers and students as well as among the students, lack of physical spaces at home and support of parents were some of the challenges faced by teachers during teaching learning process in the lockdown period (Fernando and Patrizia et al. 2020). Juliana et al. (2020) identified lack of mastery in technology, additional internet quota costs, additional work for parents in assisting children in learning, communication and socialization between students, teachers and parents were reduced and extended working hours were some of the problems faced by the teachers, students and parents. Sangeeta and Tandon (2020) revealed effort expectancy failed to drive teachers' adoption of online teaching. The above studies were able to address different problems faced by the school teachers in various contexts in both offline and online mode of teaching and learning process. The sudden transformation of mode of teaching and learning might have different demands and challenges. Education

should spell out the kinds of desirable changes needed by the society and now these changes are to be brought among the students. For this, educational research should try to study and understand various problems of the society in specific areas from time to time and should become an integral part of social development. For this, the researcher found an area to explore the problems faced by the teachers through the online mode of teaching and learning during the Pandemic period in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir. Accordingly the study is entitled as 'Problems faced by teachers during Covid- 19'.

Objective of the study

To study the problems faced by college teachers of Samba district in online teaching during the pandemic.

Methodology

Survey method was used to conduct the study. Self-prepared questionnaire consisting of twelve closed ended questions and two open ended questions were used to collect the data. College teachers of Samba district formed the population and thirty teachers from five colleges of Samba district were randomly selected as a sample of the study. The data was analyzed using percentage.

Table 1. Problems faced by the college teachers during pandemic:

S.No.	Items	Response	
		YES	NO
1.	Were you comfortable with online teaching during Covid-19?		
2.	Could you teach effectively without blackboard during Covid-19?		
3.	Could you easily arrange for online teaching during Covid-19?		
4.	Home environment was suitable for online teaching		
5.	Not much teacher- student interaction could happen during online teaching		
6.	Certain concepts could not be explained by online teaching		
7.	Lack of knowledge of online teaching technologies were handcuffs in online teaching		
8.	Lack of smart phone was a problem in online teaching		
9.	There were signal issues resulting in poor connectivity		
10.	High data cost was problem in managing online teaching		
11.	There was an issue of interrupted power supply		

12.	Lack of support from educational institutions	
13.	Felt stressful due to long use of mobile phones	
14.	Any other problems faced by you	
	a) Accessibility issues with students of border areas	
	b) Poor attendance of the students	
	c) Lack of seriousness on the part of the students	
	d) Practical concepts could not be taught effectively through online teaching	
	e) Heavy files of students' assignments could not be downloaded	
15.	Give your suggestions to improve the situations/ better handling in online teaching	

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

To analyze the survey data, percentage method was employed to determine the problems faced by college teachers during Pandemic in Samba District. Pictorial representation through bar graph is also made. The study is concerned almost exclusively with the sensitization of problems faced by teachers due to sudden shift of classroom (offline classes) to online classes (e-learning) due to Pandemic.

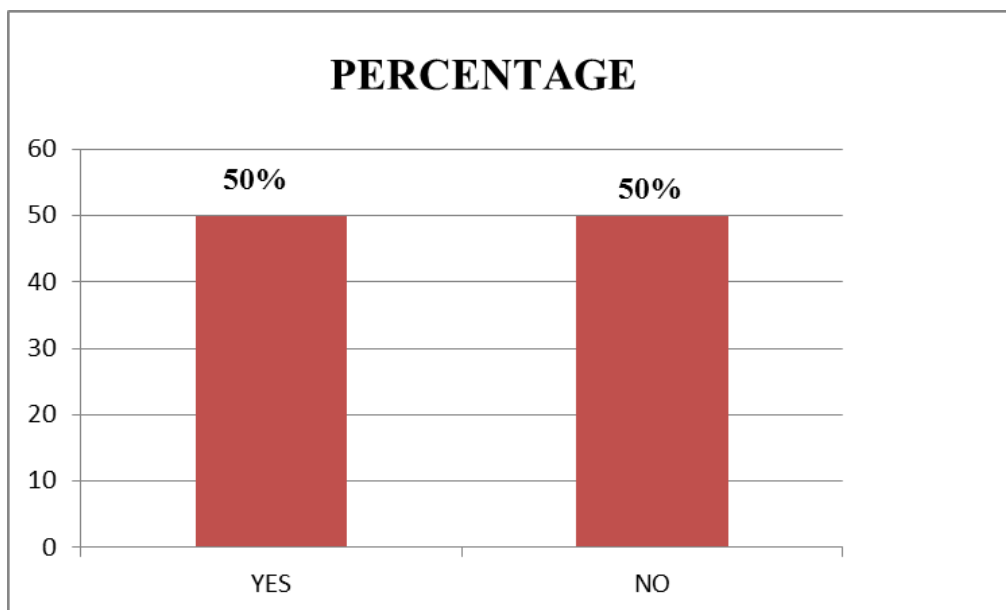Qno.1: Were you comfortable with online teaching during Covid-19?
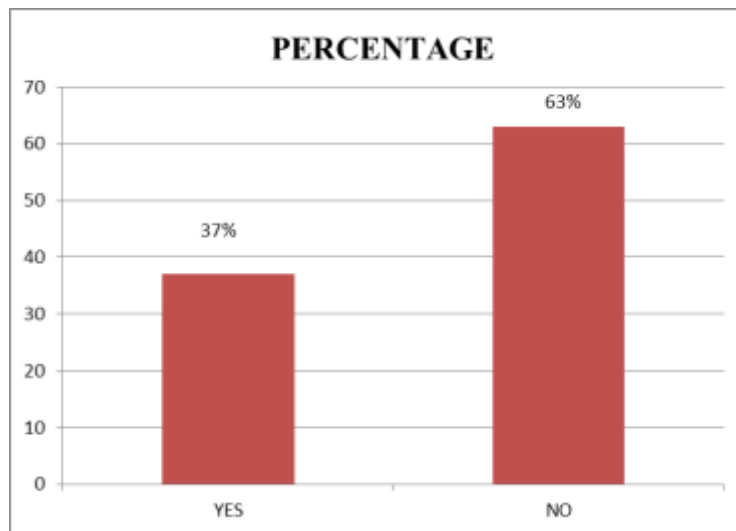
The above graph represents that 37% of teachers were comfortable with online mode of teaching while 63% of teachers found difficulties in online teaching during Covid-19.

Qno.2: Could you teach effectively without blackboard during Covid-19?
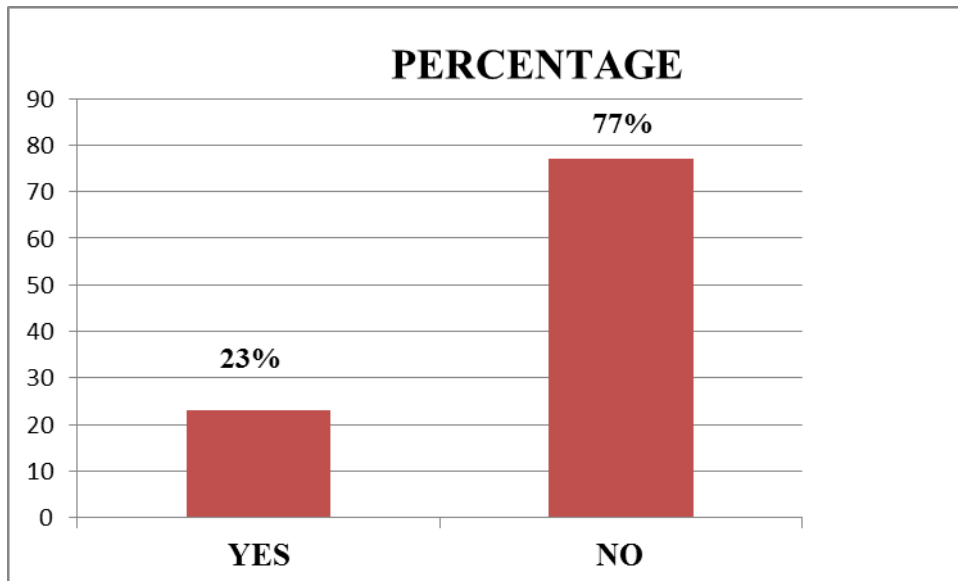
The above graph represents that 23% of teachers taught effectively without using blackboard while 77% of teachers found it difficult to teach without blackboard during Covid-19.

Qno.3: Could you easily arrange for online teaching during Covid-19?

The above graph depicts that 50% of the teachers easily arranged for online teaching and 50% could not arranged for the same.

Qno.4: Home environment was suitable for online teaching
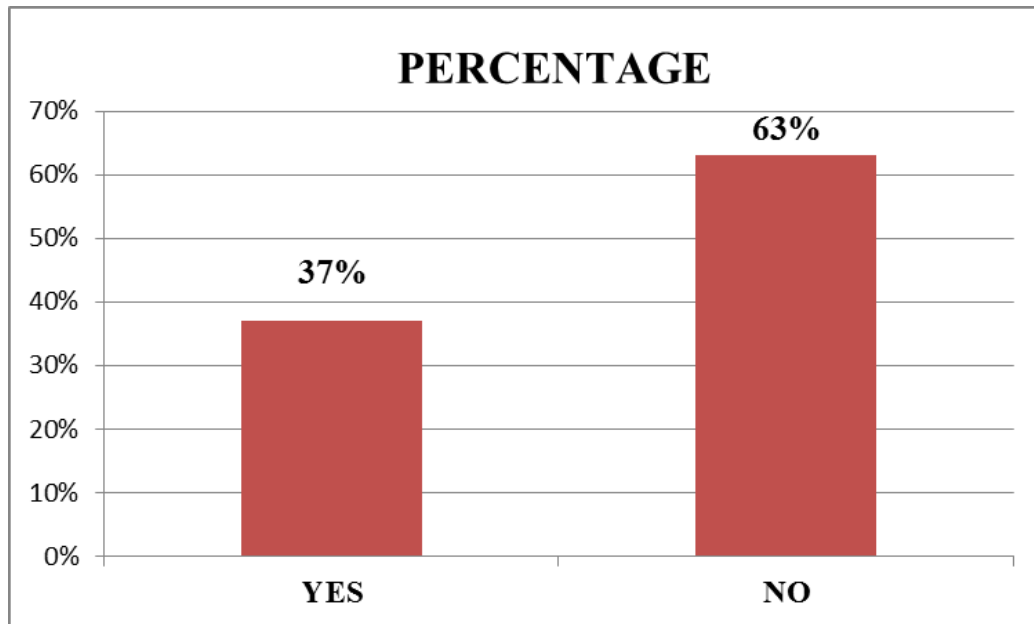
The graph reveals that 37% of teachers were comfortable in home environment for online teaching while 63% of teachers found it difficult.

Qno.5: Not much teacher- student interaction could happen during online teaching
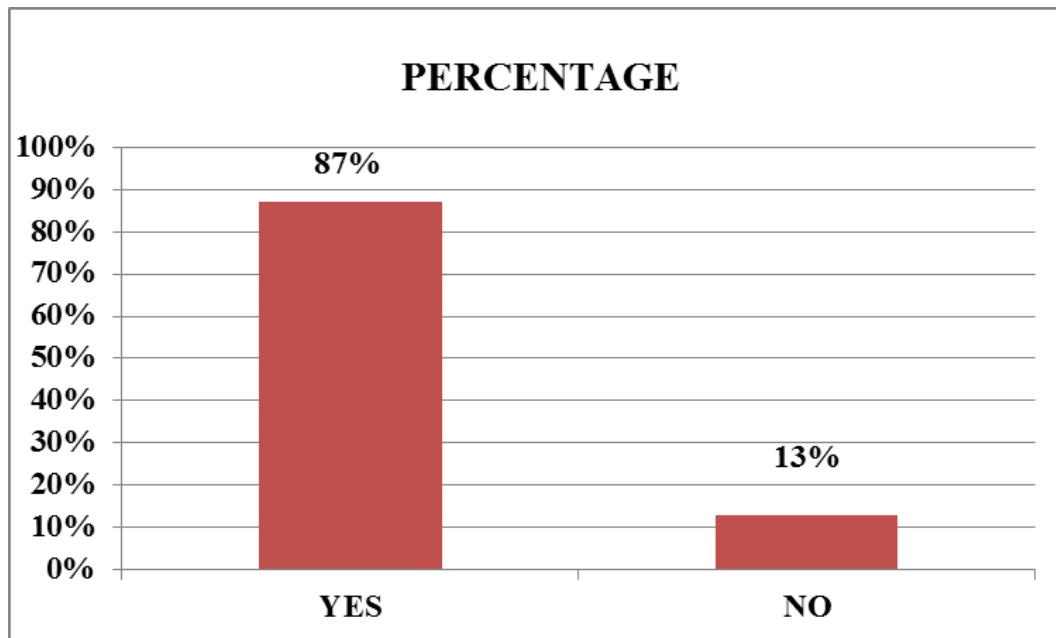
The graph represents that 87% of the teachers agreed that there was less interaction between teacher- student during online classes whereas, 13% of the teachers were satisfied with the interaction.

Qno.6: Certain concepts could not be explained by online teaching
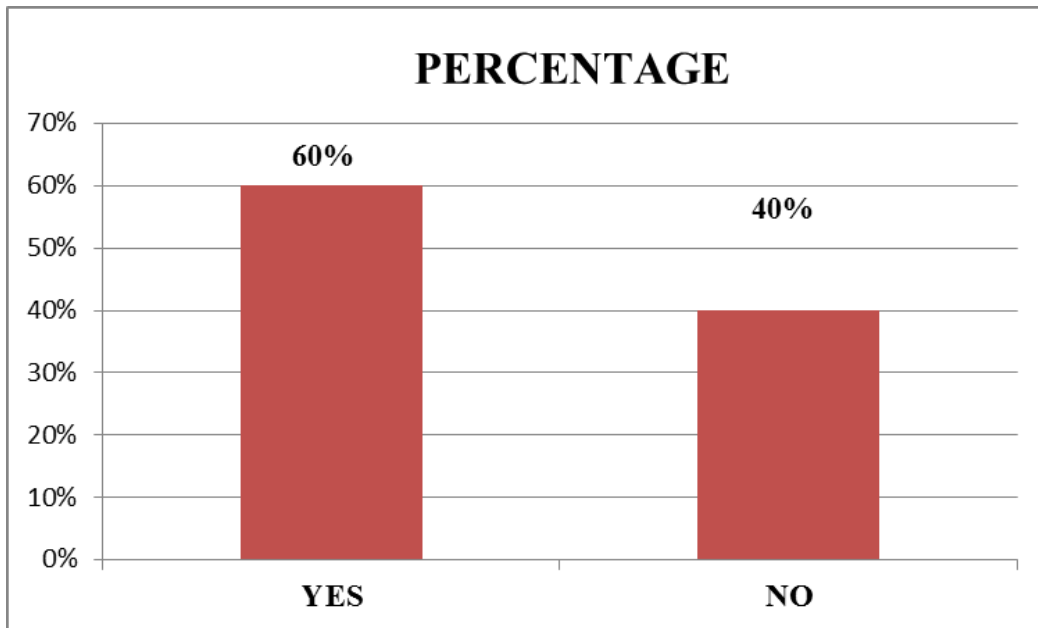
60% of teachers were in favour that certain concepts could not be explained properly while 40% of the teachers found no difficulties in explaining the concepts during online teaching.

Qno.7: Lack of knowledge of online teaching technologies were handcuffs in online teaching
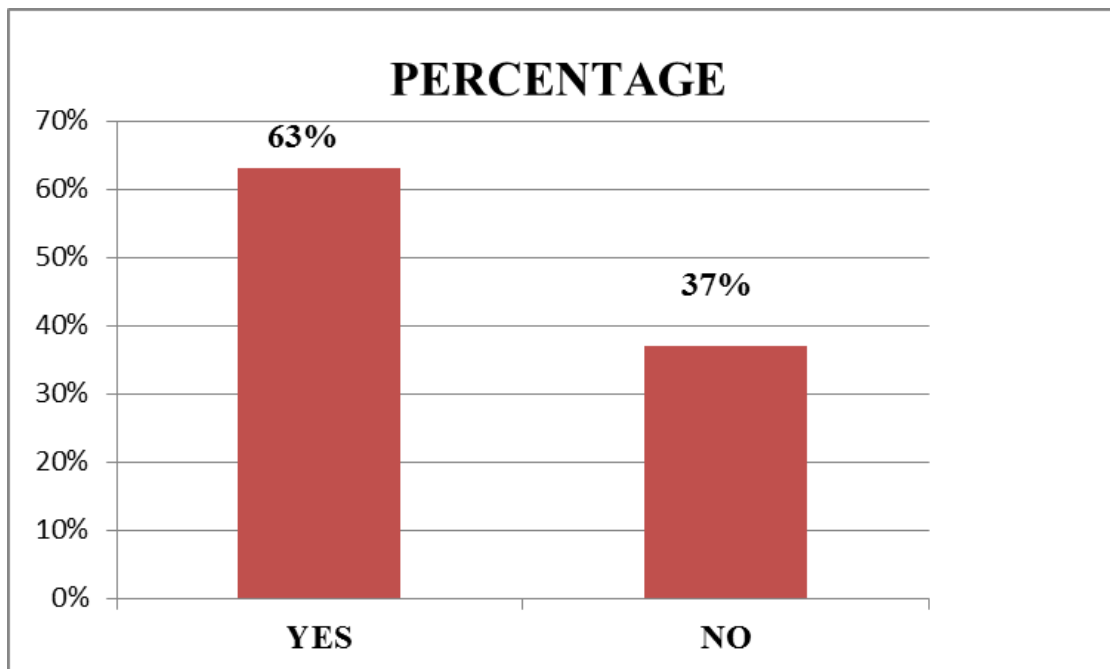
The above graph depicts that 63% of the teachers were not aware of online teaching technologies while 37% of teachers handled online teaching with great ease.

Qno.8: Lack of smart phone was a problem in online teaching
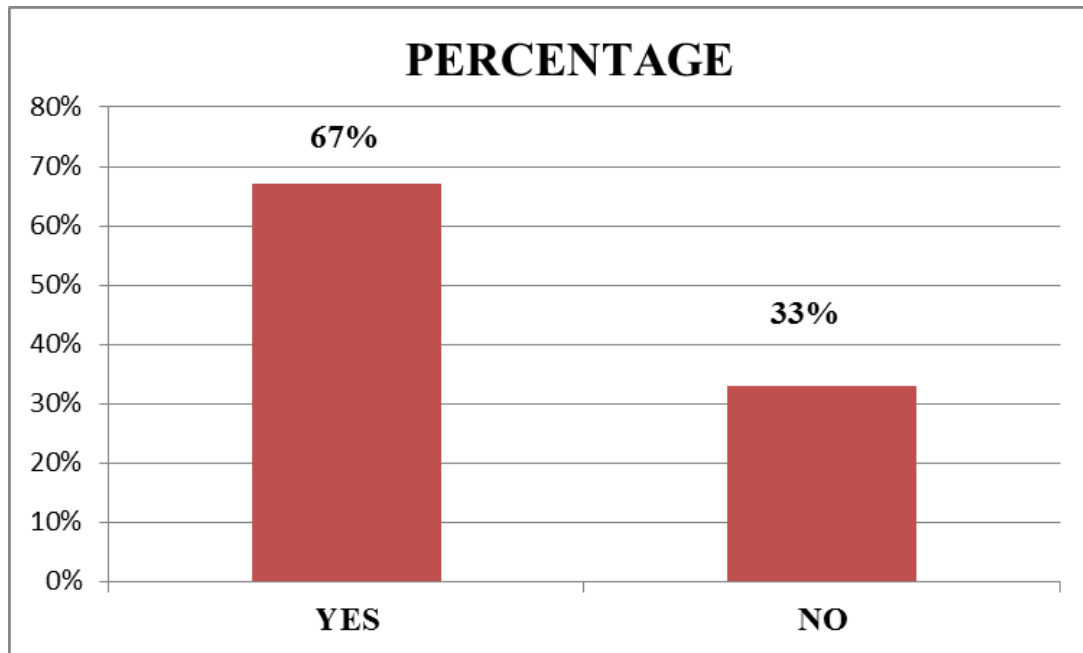
67% of teachers found lack of smartphones was a big barrier in online teaching whereas, 33% of teachers were satisfied.

Qno.9: There were signal issues resulting in poor connectivity
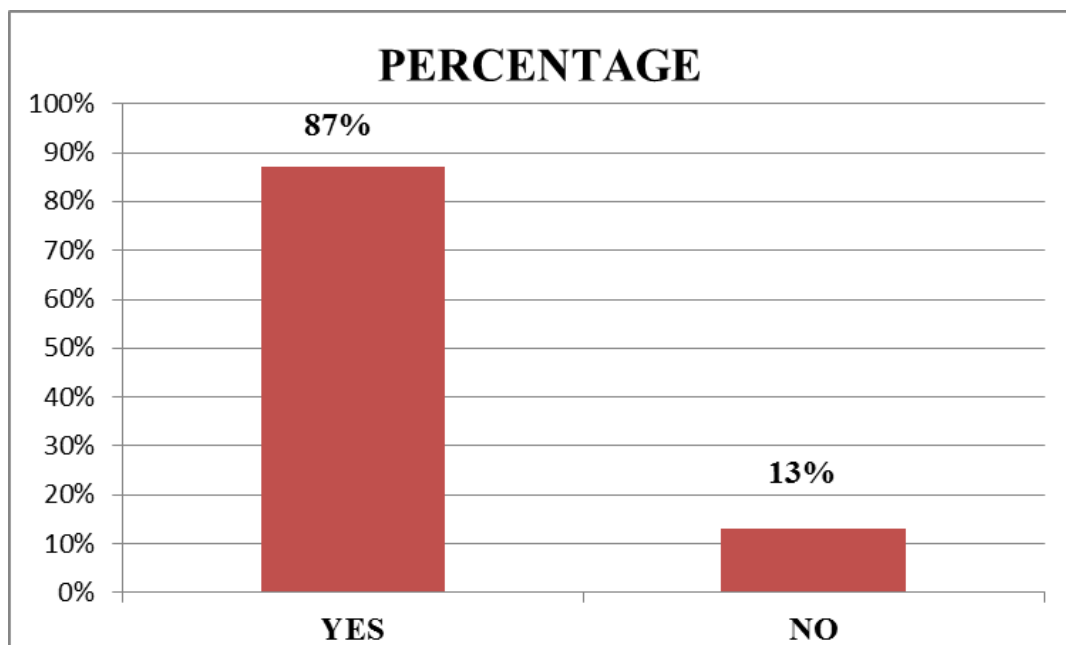
87% of the teachers found that there were signal issues due to poor connectivity while 13% of teachers had no issues.

Qno.10: High data cost was problem in managing online teaching
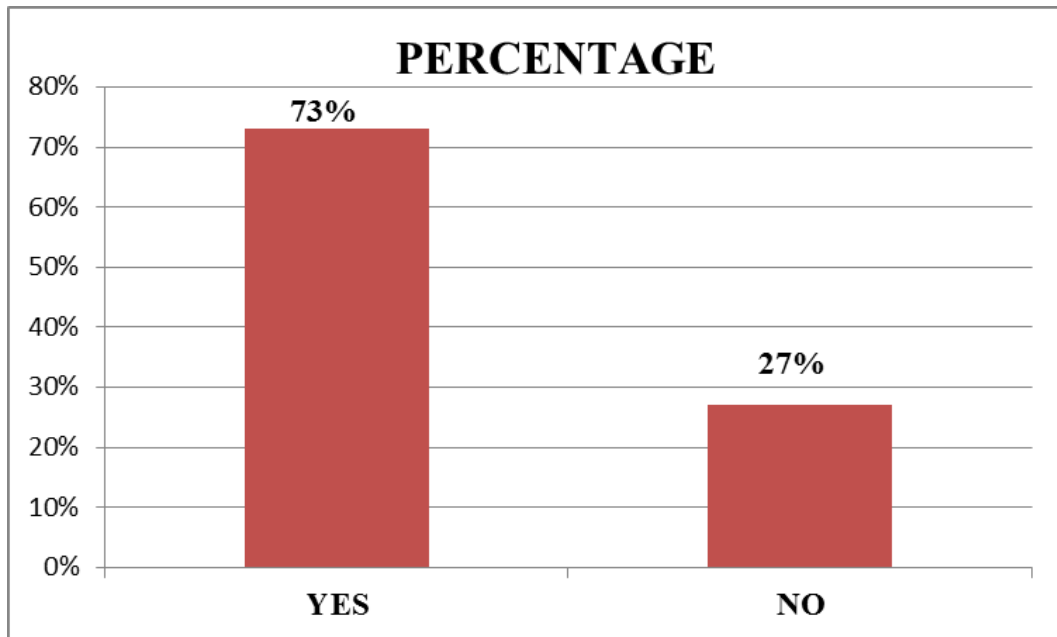
The above graph depicts that 73% of the teachers found high data cost was a problem in online teaching whereas 27% of teachers did not find any problem.

Qno.11: There was an issue of interrupted power supply
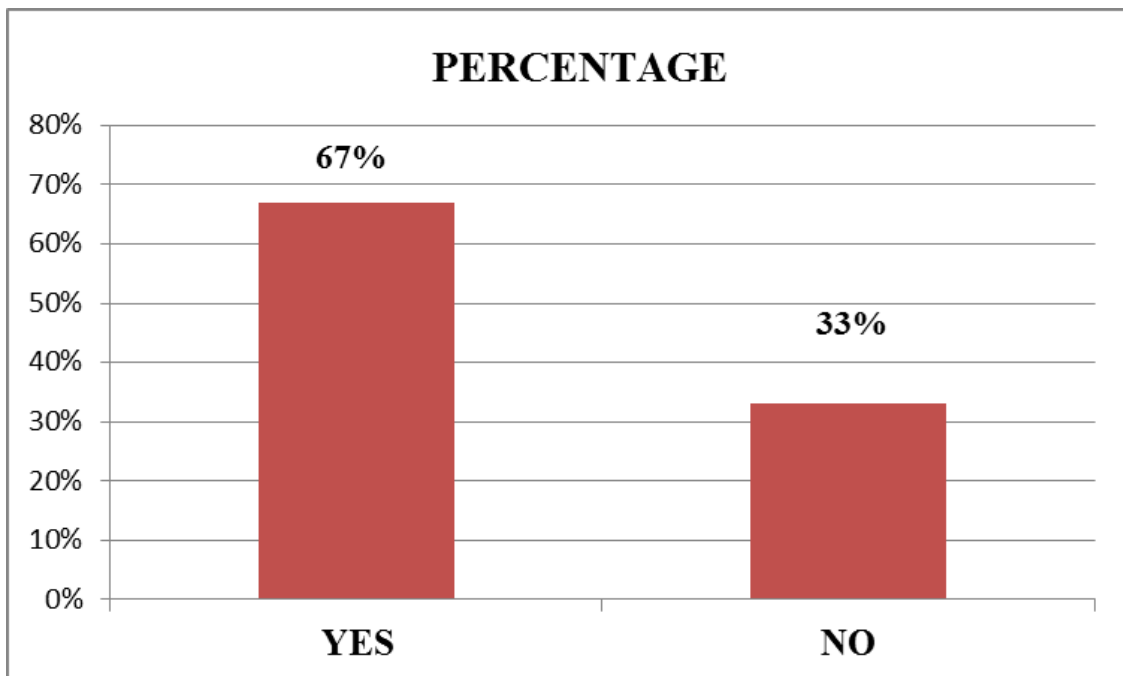
67% of teachers found interrupted power supply as a serious issue during online classes whereas 33% of teachers did not find any problem.

Qno.12: Lack of support from educational institutions
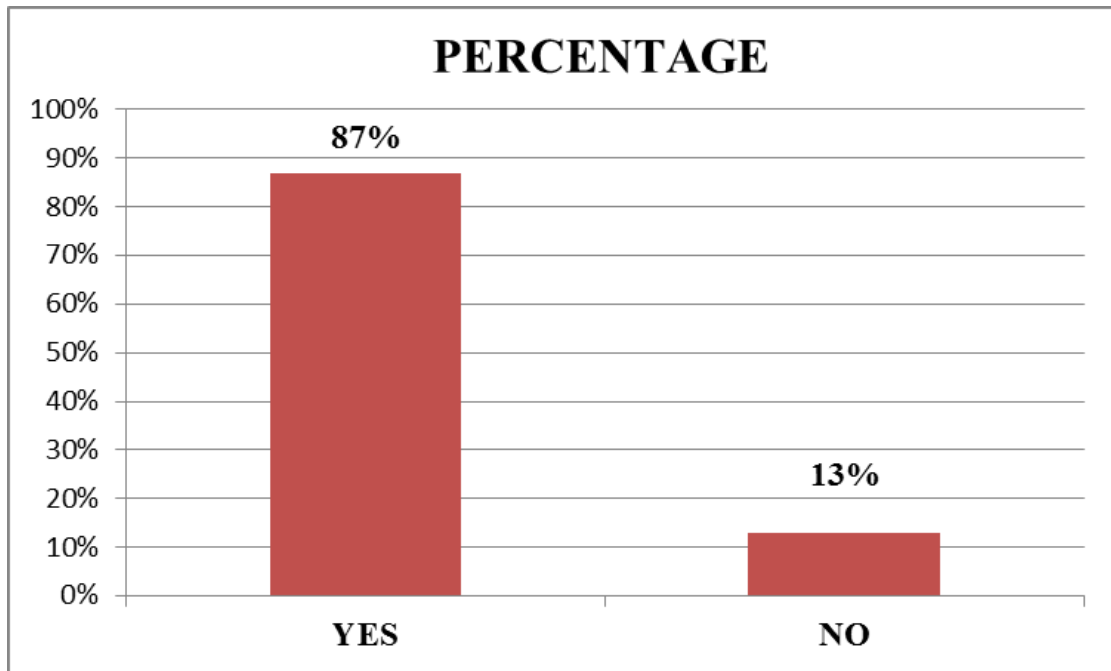
The above graph represents that 87% of teachers found lack of support from educational institutions during online teaching while 13% of teachers had no issues.

Qno.13: Felt stressful due to long use of mobile phones
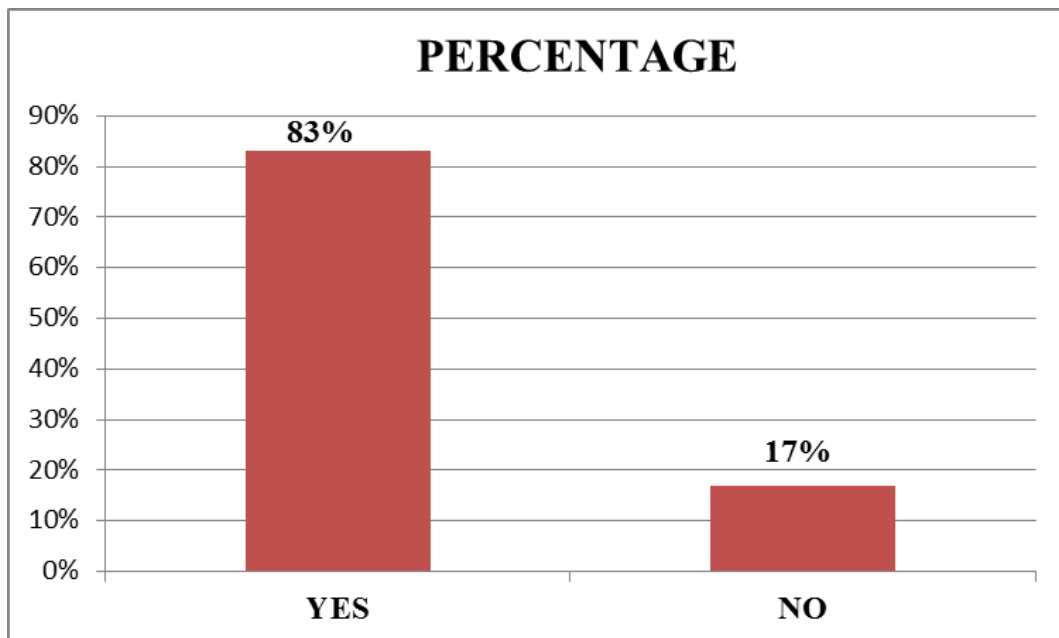
83% of teachers felt stressful due to long use of mobile phones during online classes while 17% of teachers had no such issues.

Qno.14: Any other problem faced by you?

On an open ended question (any other problem faced by you) most of the respondents communicated accessibility to ICT, lack of seriousness on the part of the students, ineffective clarity of the practical concepts, poor attendance of the students in online class and difficulty in downloading heavy assignment files of students work as typical problems faced by the teachers.

Qno.15: Give your suggestions to improve the situations/ better handling in online teaching

A study is incomplete if it fails to suggest new dimensions and proposal for the further study to be carried on in the light of the conclusions drawn in it. Following are some suggestions which will help us in understanding the further study.

1) The present study cannot be called as final or comprehensive. More work can be done on different sample with different categories.

2) The present study was conducted on sample of thirty teachers from five colleges. Similar study can be conducted on a larger sample to study the problems faced by teachers in online teaching during Covid-19.

3) Availability of ICT facilities should be present in every educational institution.

4) Proper training of using ICT with latest technologies should be given to the teachers.

5) There should be provision for uninterrupted power supply.

CONCLUSION:

The sudden shift from traditional classroom to online classroom put challenges as well as brought newness to the education system. Though developing country like India was not ready enough to equip this change, but the teachers as well as students adopted as far as possible. The situation taught us to move forward with the challenges and difficulties. At the beginning, adopting online mode of teaching was not possible for many teachers as well as students but gradually acceptance to online mode caught a high speed throughout the country. In this context, a mixed response from college teachers regarding their perceptions and difficulties faced in online classroom was captured. Certain problems like internet connectivity, unsuitable home environment, lack of student teacher interaction was some of the major difficulties were recorded by teachers whereas teachers' willingness to adopt new technology, passionate in taking online classes and completing prescribed syllabus with clearing doubts is admirable. Under these circumstances, it is a call for educationists, government and society to support online mode of teaching and learning to achieve its fullest potential.

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