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Learning Opportunities during School Closure: Exploring prevalence of Shadow Education

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic brought every individual across the globe to a disjuncture. Learning is a lifelong process; here the concept of disjuncture can provide a basis for the lifelong learning process. The present article focuses on the educational dimension which got severely affected due the emerged pandemic. The school closure across the world hampered the pace of growth and development of adolescents at large. The majority of learning experiences have usually been from the day-to-day schooling for the school going learners. The present article, an outcome of a research study explored the learning opportunities that secondary level learners got during the school closure session. This research was done by following a mixed method research design where the data were collected by administering a questionnaire. The participants of the study were the secondary level learners from standard IX and X (N=204) of three different blocks of the district Ganjam in Odisha. It is found that the learners had got a diversified learning opportunity during the school closure in non-formal learning setup. The dependency on out-of-school education as a support raised when formal classroom learning was absent. The causes for choosing private tutoring as shadow education were preparation for academic achievement and examination, self-motivation, overall learning experience in all subjects, school closure and COVID-19 pandemic, parental and peer influence and other. The paper discussed some findings in the light of textual evidence and outlined the implication of the research and scope for further research in this context.

Keywords: Learning Opportunities, School Closure, Shadow Education.

INTRODUCTION

The modes of teaching and learning have evolved since the new learning theories, approaches, and technology were introduced in the field of education. The ways and means of acquiring knowledge have been shifted from classroom-based learning to experiential learning. There has been a huge revolutionary change in the education sector as an impact of COVID-19 pandemic, thus resulting in school closure. The new normal scenario of school education was shifted from classroom learning to a blended mode of learning. Closures of schools in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have exposed a number of barriers restraining educational accesses (Bhati, 2020).

The learning opportunities of children is their Fundamental Right under the broad goal of Right to Education, which is a basic need for a holistic development of any level of learner, has been adapted in accordance with the new normal. The essential learning for growth and development is provided by schools but when schools close, the opportunities of learning for children and youth are diminished which affects their growth and development (UNESCO n.d.-a). The difficulties are uneven for under-privileged students who have fewer educational opportunities out-of-school. Learners from the families that support less in out-of-school learning will face higher learning losses than their more privileged peers (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). Also, it was projected that the lines between learning spaces in and out of formal schooling, families, and other learning opportunities would become even more blurred. The COVID-19 epidemic, which struck at the start of 2020, highlighted flaws, with many face-to-face tutoring businesses and schools closing, while those using technology for distant learning witnessing a rapid increase. (Zhang & Bray, 2020).

School closures are likely to have a number of consequences for the socio-emotional and motivational development of the children and adolescents who have been affected (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). Schools used a variety of strategies, including technology, written materials, and hybrid approaches, to achieve their goals. However, the schooling-at-home approach clearly relies on parents' instructional skills, whereas the use of technological solutions to mitigate the effects of closures was relying on the widespread availability of tablets, computers, and internet access (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020).

Outlining Concepts

Learning Opportunity: The learning opportunity of the learner in this present context is “educational experience from home, school and other supplementary educational support”. The learning opportunities include instructional time in different modes, self-learning, peer-learning, supplementary support other than school teachers. Instructional time refers to the amount of time that students get instruction from a classroom teacher in a school or a virtual setting. (IBE-UNESCO, cited in Bonal & González, 2020).

School Closure: School Closure in the current context refers to not having physical access to the formal educational setup for classroom learning. Unlike elementary learners, secondary level learners were provided with classroom learning opportunities for a shorter period of time as a trial basis. However, it did not turn out to last longer. Hence, the focus of exploring the learning opportunities during the school closure is quite relevant in this context.

Shadow Education: The research evidence had clearly stated that there exists a shadow education system which provided educational support to the learners not only during the school closure but also long before the pandemic emerged. On the one hand, school closures have raised public consciousness of the critical part that schooling plays in socialization and family support; on the other hand, online tutoring's quick response to the crisis has called into question the legitimacy of schooling by giving the impression that tutoring is more effective than schooling in digital learning and by encouraging parents to home school their children. (Zhang & Bray, 2020). The shadow education system in the present study refers to the private supplementary tutoring services in a personalized or in group manner received by the secondary level learners since the school closure.

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REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of the related literature on the present study was broadly divided into two categories which are learning opportunities during the school closure and shadow education.

Learning Opportunities during the School Closure

UNESCO (2021) concerning about the impact of school closure on the education of children have collected data from all over the world, which was clearly outlined as,

“Nearly half of the world's kids are still affected by partial or complete school closures a year after the COVID-19 pandemic began, and over 100 million more children will fall below the minimum reading proficiency level as a result of the health disaster. A high-level ministerial meeting in March 2021 emphasized the importance of prioritizing education rehabilitation in order to avoid a generational tragedy.

UNESCO is assisting nations in reducing the impact of school closures, addressing learning losses, and adapting education systems, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

UNESCO formed the Global Education Coalition to organize and support learning continuity, which now includes 160 members working on three major themes: gender, connectivity, and instructors.”

During the school closure, the school's responsibility in maintaining learning opportunities for pupils from poor socioeconomic families is critical (Bonal & González, 2020), and leaders of educational sector have less data on how school closures have impacted on learning (Kuhfeld et al., 2020) led to create difficulties in providing educational support to the learners.

The involvement of parents in providing learning opportunities for their children during the school closure; the importance was given to the caring pedagogy that the parents should adopt for their children's learning (Daniels, 2020). Despite of the type and source of a crisis, Education in that period refers broadly to ensuring have access to safe, relevant, and quality education people who have affected by emergencies and crises (Winthrop, 2020).

Shadow Education

Dependency on Shadow Education: Complex patterns of dependence on private supplementary tutoring may get 'locked in' to societies (Exley, 2021); the concept of "Shadowing" is a tactical and strategic technique that aims to give private tutoring a valued, legitimized, and competitive place in an increasingly marketized education industry (Gupta, 2021). Secondary level students perceived improved learning through private tutoring (Subedi, 2018). Shadow education can provide valuable opportunities for self-study, career support, and performance improvement (Jansen, Elffers, Volman, 2020).

Impact on Formal Schooling: The prospect of Parents has gradually been encouraged to layer 'shadow education' over public schools, particularly during times of high anxiety (Exley, 2021). In its structure, private tutoring reproduces social inequality by mirroring the challenging practices within formal schooling and showing that it was the wise choice to opt for shadow education. It was a part of the day-to-day schooling (Gupta, 2021). When conceptualising educational processes and formulating schooling policy, the dynamics of private tutoring should be taken into account, particularly in connection to social inequities and the effectiveness of school systems (Bhorkar & Bray, 2018). The system of Shadow Education adapts itself in accordance with the reflection of Formal Education, it designs according to cater the flaws in the Formal Education which promotes the academically weaker learners as well as the high achieves to have Shadow Education (Gupta, 2021; Guan & Wei, 2021; Ghosh & Bray, 2020). The Shadow Education acted as a positive supplementary support to the learners for the improvement of the learners in the mainstream education (Subedi, 2018; Mwanja & Moronge, 2016; Entrich, 2014).

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Policy and Challenges: In the meantime, governments have been faced with disincentives to prohibit private extra tutoring, and public-school teachers have had to adjust to being seen as providing a supplementary service (Exley, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic, which struck at the start of 2020, highlighted flaws of the current educational practices, with many face-to-face tutoring businesses and schools closing, while those using technology for distant learning witnessing a rapid increase (Zhang & Bray, 2020). Government and other education official generally overlooked the existence of Shadow Education (Zhang & Bray, 2018; Bhorkar & Bray, 2018; Zhang & Bray, 2017; Majumdar, 2014).

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The importance of education at every stage is quite important for every country and every culture. The learning is not the mere change in behaviour in a socially acceptable manner, but it has been observed that learning is a process of learn, unlearn, relearn. This process goes on and on throughout the life of an individual. However, the secondary level of learning is very important. The emergence of COVID-19 outbreak forced schools to close across the globe. This created a harmful impact on the learning state of the school going children in particular. Over the last two decades, “education in emergencies” has emerged as a field of study and practice led by practitioners and academics working in humanitarian aid and global development (Winthrop, 2020).

It has been observed that there is alarming evidence that many teachers have had little or no contact with a large number of kids (Lieberman, 2020). Thus, the learning of the students could not be assessed by the teacher and so the difficulties with the academics will not be catered smoothly as before the school closure. According to existing data on the digital divide and surveys performed during the lockdown, it has been observed that teachers have been unable to contact a major proportion of learners, due to a absence of an internet connection or sufficient gadgets to involve in distant learning (Kuhfeld et al., 2020; & Van Lancker and Parolin 2020). The present study is an attempt to explore the learning difficulties, learning opportunities, and the supplementary out of school education of the secondary school level learners.

Thorough further research and teacher training will be required (Researching Education During a Pandemic, 2021). Which will help in the advancement of the existing body of knowledge? The scale, features, practices of private supplementary coaching in India has changed over the last decade. It was realized after the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic that the shadow education system in India has been deep-rooted since a long time ago. But the current scenario has shown the dynamic nature of shadow education and the inclusion of digital platforms in the arena was quite unresearched area. The demand and supply of shadow education before and after 2020 has been changed. The problems faced by the secondary level learners are quite important with respect to their exposure to all the means of learning opportunities since the school closure. The exploration of these learning opportunities will help to identify the chances of dependency on shadow education experienced by secondary level learners. The problem statement was thus titled as, “Learning Opportunities during School Closure: Exploring Prevalence of Shadow Education”.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the learning opportunities of secondary level learners during the school closure?
2. What are the learning opportunities of secondary level learners from the school during the school closure?
3. Did the secondary level learners get an opportunity for out-of-school education (Shadow Education) during school closure?
4. What are the modes, pedagogical practices of shadow education and the causes for opting shadow education during school closure?

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5. What do learners perceive about learning from shadow and from school during the school closure?

OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the learning opportunities of secondary level students during school closure.
2. To find out the opportunity of receiving out-of-school education (Shadow Education) during school closure by the secondary level learners.
3. To find the modes and pedagogical practices of Shadow Education and causes behind opting for Shadow Education.
4. To analyze the attitudes of learners towards support from school and support from private tuitions.

METHODOLOGY

In keeping with the exploratory nature of the study, the researcher used a mixed method research approach. The document analysis of the textual data (research studies, news articles, and data from official websites) was used to collect and analyze qualitative data for the mixed method study. Then a descriptive survey type questionnaire was developed by the researcher and distributed among the participants for the purpose of quantitative data collection. The quantitative data were the number and percentage of learners having different kinds of formal and non-formal learning opportunities during the school closure.

Population and Sample: According to the data of OSEPA, there are 412 Government secondary schools in Ganjam district (Odisha) in the year of 2018-19. The Population will be the secondary level learners of standard IX and standard X of Ganjam district (112045 enrolled in 2018-19). The sample was the students of Ganjam district, selected purposively due to the communication problem raised by the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Out of 22 blocks in Ganjam district, three blocks named Bhanjanagar, Purushottampur and Sanakhemundhi having the number of secondary schools 27, 29 and 27 respectively selected by following a convenient sampling technique. Then, the students from the secondary school selected by following snowball sampling technique, because of the digital divide this technique was used.

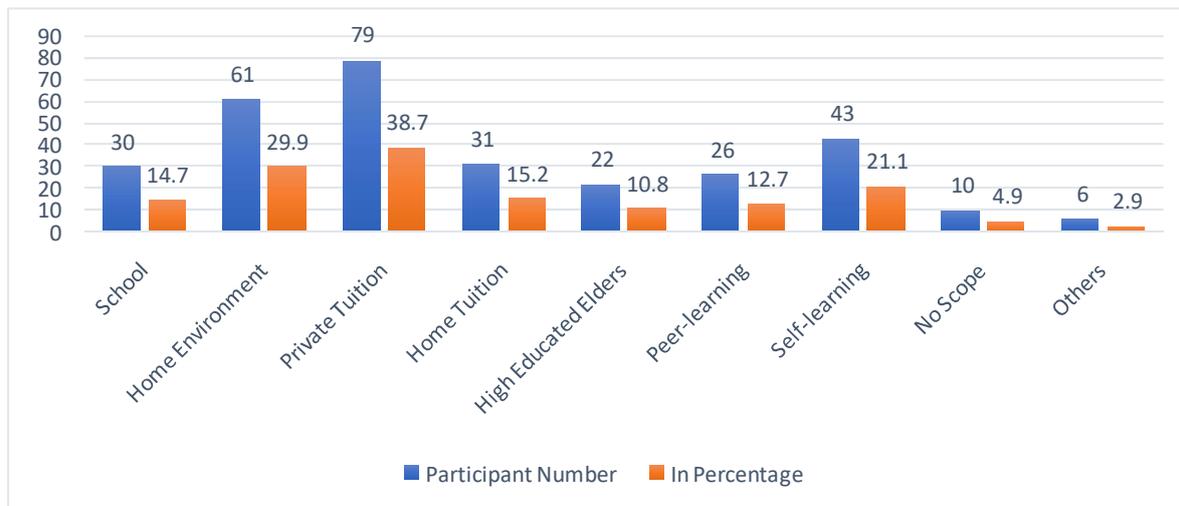
Tools and Techniques: A questionnaire was developed by the researcher specifically for this research purpose. The items of the questionnaire were broadly categorized in multiple dimensions such as: exploring the learning opportunities out-of-school environment; learning experience from school and shadow education; the mode, causes for choosing, pedagogical practices, instructional time, and overall experience of shadow education; and the preference of learners towards the private tuition. The questionnaire was validated by the expert and the peers in terms of the dimensions: i. Sentences should more specific, ii. Name of the student should not be mandatory, iii. Grammatical errors should be corrected, iv. Repetition of questions must be avoided, v. Unnecessary items should be eliminated, vi. Number of questions should not be lengthy.

Delimitations of the Study: The present study was delimited to secondary level learners studying in standard IX and standard X of Government Schools under three blocks of Ganjam districts only because of communication problem raised by the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Data: The analysis and interpretation of collected data was done by calculating the number and percentage of the learners' learning opportunities at school and out-of-school scenario. The qualitative data for research question six was analyzed from the responses of open-ended items in the questionnaire.

Learning Opportunities of Secondary Level Learners during the School Closure

The data collected from 204 participants from standard IX (29.4%) and standard X (70.6%). The learning opportunities experienced by the participants were shown in Figure 1.



(Figure 1: Learning Opportunities of Secondary Level Learners during the School Closure)

The data elaborates that less than one-sixth of participants got learning opportunities from school, nearly one-third from home environment, two-fifth from private tuition, one-sixth from home tuition, one-tenth from educated elders, slightly more than one-tenth from friends and peers, one-fifth from self-learning, and only three out of hundred from other sources. Out of them one-twentieth participants did not get any learning opportunities during the school closure.

- i. *Home Environment:* One third of the participants got learning experience from father, from mother it was less than one-third, from other relatives it was nearly less than a half and one sixth of the participants having no learning experience as observed.
- ii. *Private Tuition:* In private tuition half of the learners got learning at a coaching center in a group, one-third at home and less than one-third at the home of peers.
- iii. *Home Tuition:* The service providers of shadow education in home tuition were 25.2% other school teachers, 9.7% the same school teachers, 7.8% university learners, 14.6% retired persons, 28.2% siblings of peer, 28.9% others and 1% of the service providers could not identified by the learners.
- iv. *Educated Elders:* The support from elderly in the family was 46% from siblings, 21.6% from siblings of peers, 9.3% from uncle/aunt, 7.8% from neighbors, 2.9% from grandparents, 9.8% from other relatives, and 11.8% from any other. 10.8% of participants did not get this kind of learning opportunity.
- v. *Peer-learning:* YouTube, Books, WhatsApp, Google and Learning applications were most frequently used and Facebook was least used.
- vi. *Self-learning:* YouTube, book, WhatsApp, Learning applications, and Google was most frequently used, and Facebook was least used.
- vii. *Other Sources:* Self-learning, tuition, friends, drawing, plantation, cooking, dancing, Utkarsha programme, You Tube, WhatsApp, Newspaper, Madhu application on phone, Dikhya application on phone, Television.

- viii. *Cause of not having scope for learning:* COVID-19 pandemic, unavailability of digital resources, no scope for solving the academic doubts, Internet Connectivity issues during the online classes, school closures, problems of accessing materials, books, financial problem, problems at home, no electricity, no access to private tuition/coaching centers.

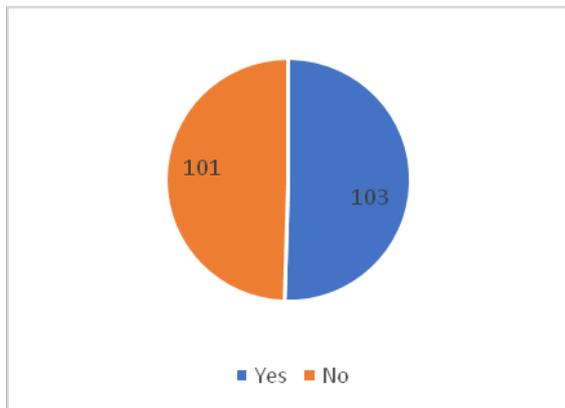
Learning Opportunities of Secondary Level Learners from School during School Closure

- i. Half of the participants got and other did not get learning opportunities from school. The learning experiences where two-third participants got online, little more of one-sixth with personal contact with the school teacher, nearly one-third with online interactive sessions and one-tenth having a passive online session organized by the school have been explored through the study. Little less than half of the learners expressed the pleasure of learning through online mode, little more than one-third through classroom teaching and nearly one-sixth through both the modes.
- ii. The support provided by school was helpful in solving the educational problems realized by four-fifth part of the learners whereas one-fifth did not find that helpful. The education from school was not sufficient for slightly more than one fourth participants and sufficient for nearly three-fourth participants.

Learning Opportunities of Secondary Level Learners from Shadow Education during School Closure

Half of the participants got learning opportunities from shadow education(N=103) and others N=101) did not get in the form of home tuition and private tuition during the school closure as shown in Figure 1. The range of getting shadow education was in years shown with the frequency distribution in Table 1.

Table 1: Range of Years having Shadow Education



Range of Years having Shadow Education	Frequency
0-3	52
4-7	13
8-11	26
12+	12

(Figure 2: Number of Learners having Shadow Education)

Modes and Pedagogical Practices of Shadow Education during School Closure

- i. *Service Provider:* The service providers of shadow education in private tuition were 27.2% other school teachers, 11.7% the same school teachers, 11.7% university learners, 24.3% retired persons, 33% others and 4.9% of the service providers could not be identified by the learners.

- ii. *Mode*: The modes of shadow education in tuitions, the learners expressed the pleasure of learning experience through online mode was 24.3%, through classroom teaching was 49.5% and through both the modes was 20.4% and 5.8% expressed none of both.
- iii. *Subject Preference*: In response to choosing shadow education for which subject preference, 68% learners preferred for all the subjects, 23.3% for Mathematics, 15.5% for Geometry, 12.6% for Life-Science, 12.6% for Physical Science, 24.3% for English, 11.7% for MIL, 13.6% for History, 7.8% for Geography, 9.7% for Hindi/Sanskrit, and 5.8% for other curricular activities.
- iv. *Instructional Strategy*: The instructional strategies were 35.9% of Examination-centric, 56.3% of Book-centric, 20.4% of Learner-centric, 13.6% of Teacher-centric, 10.7% of Constructivist, 7.8% of Peer-learning, 6.8% of Project based, 6.8% of Teaching Learning Material based, 13.6% of Blended learning, 7.8% of Flipped learning 5.8% of Demonstration method, 5.8% of others mean. The data collected was shown in Table 2. The total number of participants was 103.

Table 2: Instructional Strategy in Shadow Education

Teaching Strategy	Number of Participants(Percentage)
Examination-centric	37(35.9%)
Book-centric	58(56.3%)
Learner-centric	21(20.4%)
Teacher-centric	14(13.6%)
Constructivist	11(10.7%)
Peer-learning	8(7.8%)
Project based	7(6.8%)
Teaching Learning Material based	7(6.8%)
Blended learning	14(13.6%)
Flipped learning	8(7.8%)
Demonstration method	6(5.8%)
Others	6(5.8%)

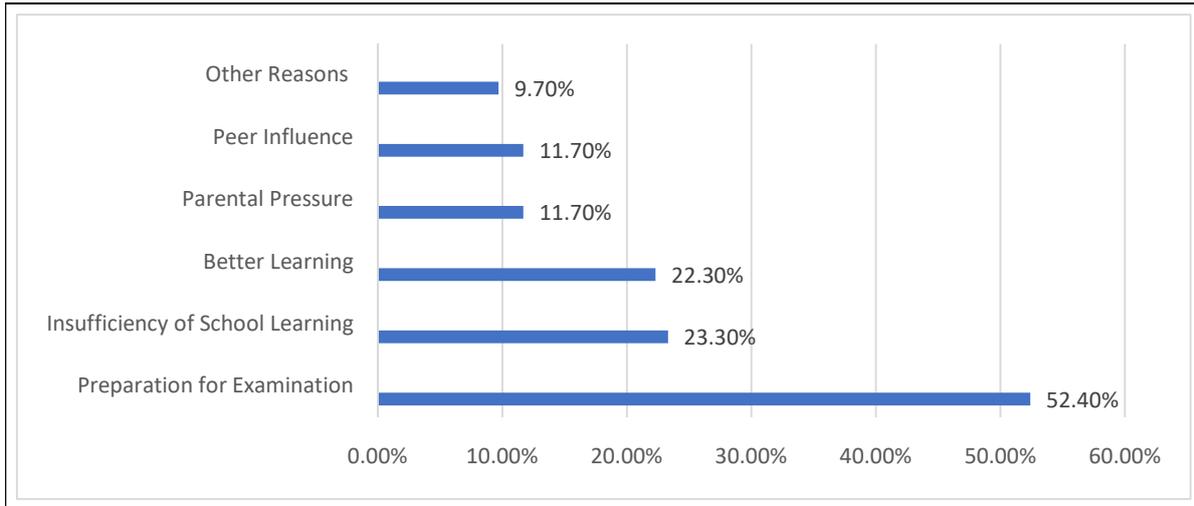
Table 3: Dependency on Shadow Education

Basis on School Closure	Number of learners (In percentage)
Before School Closure	131 (64.2%)
After School Closure	153 (75%)

Dependency: The dependency on shadow education before school closure was 64.2% which was increased to 75% after the school closure clearly shown in Table 3.

Underlying Causes of opting Shadow Education

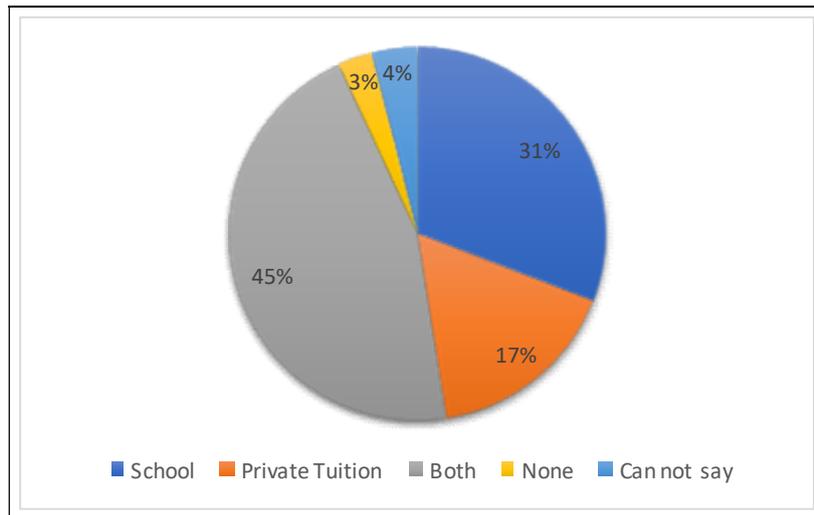
The causes of having shadow education were explored as more than half of the participants for preparation for examination, nearly less to one-fourth for the insufficiency of school learning, slightly more than one-fifth for better learning, nearly one-tenth due to parental pressure, nearly one-tenth due to peer influence, and one-tenth for other reasons as shown in Figure 3.



(Figure 3: Causes of choosing Shadow Education)

Comparison of Learning Opportunities between School and Shadow Education

Figure 4 explained the assessment of the difference between learning opportunities from school and shadow education.



(Figure 4: Learning Opportunities from School and Shadow Education)

The participants responded to the learning needs to cater educational problems from school and from tuition as 30.9% preferred school, 16.7% preferred to tuition, 45.6% preferred both school and tuition together, 2.9% mentioned for none of them, and 3.9% could not determine what to choose.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Learning Opportunities: The learners get maximum learning opportunities from shadow education system which supports the finding of the research by Zhang & Bray, (2020) on shadow education. The parental involvement has been observed as a conducive support to the learners in the academic difficulties during the school closure found in the study of Daniels, (2020).

Learning Opportunities from School: The support from school during the school closure implied that only half of the learners got the opportunity to learn from school in any means. That reflected the unawareness of teachers and other officials regarding the difficulties faced by the learners as studied by Kuhfeld et al., (2020).

Shadow Education in terms of Modes, Strategies: The school closure led the private coaching center to raise their importance in the day-to-day learning where the formal classroom teaching was absent, evidenced from Zhang & Bray, (2020). It was observed that offline learning from private tuition is highly satisfactory for the learners and the learners have maximum benefits from it for the learning of all subjects. The examination-centric approach was observed by the maximum number of learners having shadow education.

Causes for Opting Shadow Education: The parental pressure was the highest drive to opt for private tuition among the participants. The support from the private tuition during the school closure heightened the dependency on this system. As the shadow education cannot be accessed formally during the other times so, the lockdown has not much impact on the service providers of shadow education to provide the supplementary coaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. It seems like that the shadow will expand further and will intensify because of the increasingly fierce academic competition among students due to the growing emphasis on achievements in standardised assessments (Yung & Bray, 2017).

Comparing the Preferences by the Learners: The Figure 2 explained that the learners have a choice of both the education system i.e., formal and non-formal education that will help them maximum which was evidence to think the policy makers about the existence of the shadow education as a supplementation to the formal learning otherwise it might be the deep-rooted system along with the mainstream education.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

Shadow education in providing learning opportunities to the learners and the increase of rate of dependency on shadow education was explored from the present research. Exploring the learning opportunities contributed to the understanding of diversified modes and means of educational experience among the secondary learners. There were different measures taken by the Government to support learners in their academic requirements. However, the initiatives were not very beneficial to cater to all the difficulties faced by the learners. This research could help to identify the difficulties of the learners during school closure and find innovative measures which could be taken by the responsible authorities to safeguard the quality education to the learners in every possible manner.

The present study provides a basis for some quantitative research on the pedagogies practiced in the private supplementary coaching institutes. The policy implication part was not studied under this research which could be done in the further research. The previous studies directed the new researcher in this field to go for further research with the changing dimensions of shadow education. The policies regarding this aspect of education system need to be explored in-depth. The perspective of stakeholders as well as the educationists regarding shadow education i.e., its existence and future with the mainstream education has a great role to bring any kind of reformation towards the holistic development of the education system in the country.

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