

# ARTICLE

## The COVID-19 Effects on School Management and Governance: A Case Study of Harion Municipality, Nepal

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### Abstract

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic adversely influenced teaching-learning procedures. Education significantly faced a huge problem continuing teaching-learning procedures as a physical presence in the classrooms due to the contamination of disease. The study aimed to carry out the impact of COVID-19 on schools' management and governance sectors. We distributed to collect data using a questionnaire from 100 respondents. The included institutions were applied to both types of educational institutions (private and public schools). The respondents were selected using a judgmental sampling method. The result highlights that the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the schools, governing bodies, and management. The negative impacts include teacher turnover found to be at 16%, students dropping out found to be at 38 %, financial problems in private schools, unable to complete courses on time, and decreased student performance after in-person classes. Approximately, 88% of respondents agreed that students' behaviors were noticeably changed and 73 % believed that the changes in behaviors were associated with the pandemic and its impact on their well beings. Psychologically, students had been highly affected during this pandemic because of sufficiently floating fear over time in the media unexpected death news, lack of recreational activities, financial problem, and spending most of their time on-screen. Governments should invest to develop effective online classes, and launch intervention programs to mitigate the psychological problems of students.

**Keywords:** COVID-19; teacher turnover, student dropout, psychological impact, educational system, governance

### 1. Introduction

The Coronavirus was first identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and was declared as Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) by the World Health

Organization (WHO) on the 11th of Feb 2020 (Xiong et al., 2020). Since then, the movement of people across the globe, it rampantly spread all over the world, that not only killed hundreds of thousands of

people but also created a global health crisis of our lifetime and the greatest challenge we have faced in our life (O'Flynn, 2020). All countries suffered from this disease and declared lockdown which was one of the important measurement tools to control this pandemic (Pathak et al., 2021) because lockdown minimizes people's movement and decreases the chance of spreading the virus quickly (Chalise & Pathak, 2020; Pathak et al., 2020). As a result, all factories, shops, universities, and schools were closed (Pathak et al., 2022; Pathak et al., 2021).

In the early days of the pandemic, 107 countries impeded national school closures to stop the spread of the virus, affecting over 862 million children, as per the report from The UN Educational, Science and Cultural Organization on March 18, 2020 (Viner et al., 2020). This crisis had worsened rapidly in all the countries and all countries closed schools to control the coronavirus to spread further. School closures are based on data and assumptions from coronavirus outbreaks that limit student social interactions and thus disrupt the outbreak of this disease. To re-open the schools, it was required to ensure public health measures are put in place to minimize the transmission of disease while expanding access to education, including distance education, particularly for marginalized groups to survive future crises in education systems (UNICEF for Every Child, 2020).

COVID-19 made its journey to South Asia, particularly to India as well. Nepal shares an open border with India; both Nepalese and Indian citizens can do cross-border travel without Visa. Therefore, it did not take many days for COVID19 to spread in Nepal, primarily through cross-

border travel. Due to cross-border movement, the spread rate of the virus was high in border districts and then slowly moved across the country due to the low mobility with the lockdown. Because of the lockdown, Nepal's schools and universities were temporarily closed. However, till the mid-wave of COVID-19 Nepal faced little catastrophic impact in comparison to other neighboring countries like India (Pathak, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has been significantly affecting students' lives. As schools and colleges were closed, examinations and activities had been delayed, normal health information facilities had been restricted, and socialization with friends and larger families had been greatly discouraged and punishable as well in some areas. Developed countries that are technologically advanced like, the USA, the UK, Australia, Canada, France, and Italy had adopted distance learning to continue education systems during the lockdown. They developed an e-learning platform (Moodle) where lots of books and learning materials have been kept. Similarly, many countries during the COVID-19 period used traditional techniques such as radio and television to teach students and compensate for the loss. Neighboring countries of Nepal, China, and India established e-learning portals for learning resources for students, teachers, administrators, and parents. India provided thousands of complete courses in different languages. China also mobilized provincial and national level online platforms to ensure to continue the learning process for children (Dawadi et al., 2020).

Nepal is a developing country. Almost all people belong to the middle-class and lower classes. Lockdown caused a decreased financial status of people by losing more national and abroad jobs, loss of business activities, etc. Almost all people from rural and small-town areas cannot install the internet and cannot afford digital tools to run online classes because of financial conditions. On the other side, students, teachers, and parents were not adequately trained to operate digital tools, and schools were not well equipped with digital tools and learning platforms (Moodle) to run online classes. Therefore, the crisis due to the pandemic created a major challenge for schools to initiate and continue remote learning during the lockdown period and assess the students' performances online while maintaining the academic calendar (Dawadi et al., 2020).

In this context, it is important to understand how this pandemic affected the school education system in Nepal. There is a lack of adequate research to determine the actual impact of COVID-19 on school management and governance. Therefore, this research is an attempt to examine the effect of COVID-19 on school governance and management.

### **1.1. Purpose of the Study**

To answer the research questions, this study focuses to understand the effect of COVID-19 on school management and governance. Therefore, the purpose of the research is listed below:

- To examine the effect of COVID-19 on school management and governance bodies.

### **1.2. Research Question**

Examining the effect of COVID-19 on school management and governance is the main purpose of this study. The research question to address the research purpose is as follows:

- To what extent does the COVID-19 pandemic affect the school management and governance factors?

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1 Research design**

This study is a cross-sectional quantitative study based on a structured questionnaire and the selected one hundred teachers sampled from Harion municipality of Sarlahi district in Nepal. Study-based descriptions were obtained from respondents within the selected area of the Sarlahi district.

### **2.2 Sample**

For this study, four public schools and two private schools were selected among 22 public and 18 private schools under the judgmental sampling method. Big, medium, and small-sized schools in terms of student enrollment and infrastructure were selected. Among 320 teachers present in the selected 4 schools, a sample of 100 teachers was selected based on the purposive sampling method.

### **2.3. Research Tools**

This research used structured questionnaires as a research instrument. There are two sections of questions in the questionnaire as follows:

**Section 1:** Questions about the informants' demographic data. The informants can write the answer to the questions about his/her name, phone number, and gender.

**Section 2:** Questions about factors affecting school management and governance during the pandemic. The informants can answer questions by ticking the multiple-choice.

#### **2.4 Data Collection**

The researcher collected data from a self-administered questionnaire given time one day in the public and private schools in Sarlahi district, Harion municipality. This research conducted a questionnaire survey of six schools including private and public.

#### **2.5 Data Analysis Technique**

It is one of the important parts of the research, and in this research, data has been analyzed using the thematic analysis method. Administrative and financial aspects, academic, information, and communication technology (ICT) aspects and psychological aspects were examined with descriptive statistics. To know the impact of COVID-19 on administration and financial aspects, academic and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) aspects and psychological aspects frequency were calculated

### **3. Results**

Measurement policies to control COVID-19 declared by the Nepal government could not run school classes physically. So, the affected area of the school was classified into three themes. All data were presented based on three themes, which were presented below.

#### **3.1. Administrative and financial aspects**

In this research, 67% and 33% of teachers were selected from private and public schools respectively (See Table no. 1 below). According to respondents, 98% agreed that COVID-19 impacted school management and governance where education and financial impacts have been highly observed. The fundamental aspect of a school is its financial condition. During the lockdown created by COVID-19, most of the private schools' financial condition was weak. Because of this, schools were not able to pay the teachers' salaries on time. As noted in Table no.1, only 38% of teachers received a salary. Of the total respondents, 33% belonged to public schools in which government are responsible to pay salary. It means only 5 percent of teachers of private schools got a salary fully and 16% got partially. Because of this, teachers of private schools' turnover can be seen at 16%, which is a quite high rate of leaving. Nearly 98% of the respondents agreed that COVID-19 is highly affected in the education aspect of school management. As a result, students' dropout can be observed at 38%.

#### **3.2. Academic and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) aspects**

Among the respondents, 64% of teachers ran online classes (See Table no. 2 below). It represents that despite internet and electricity problems and lack of digital tools, the majority of teachers run online classes during the lockdown. Although the weekly attendance percentage in an online class was significantly good, assignment submission in an online class was not along the same

**Table 1. Effect of COVID-19 on Schools' Administrative and Financial aspects**

<b>Topic area</b>	<b>Response/Result</b>
Type of the school	Private-67%    Public -33%
Impact of COVID-19 on school management	Yes-98%    No -2%
Number of years in <b>the</b> teaching field	Median- 6    Mean- 9.32
Effect area of school management by COVID-19	Education- 54% Finance- 44%
Getting salary during lockdown	Yes- 38%    No- 46% Partially- 16% Government school teacher – 86.84 %
Impact of COVID-19 During lockdown	Student drop out- 38%    Teache turn over- 16% Lack of digital tools 27% Lack of co-operation with parents- 27%

line. The participation percentage was higher in the upper classes compared to the lower classes. After lockdown, 90% of schools have been open and the majority of schools have been planning or running extra classes. For that, 65% of teachers have run extra 1-2 hours for extra classes

and 30% of teachers have run more than two hours to complete the course within an academic year. Additionally, 44% of teachers have been teaching important lessons only in a regular class and in an extra class.

**Table 2. Effect of COVID-19 on Schools' Academic and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) aspects.**

<b>Topic area</b>	<b>Response/Result</b>
Type of the school	Private-67%    Public -33%
Impact of COVID-19 on school management	Yes-98%    No -2%
Number of years in <b>the</b> teaching field	Median- 6    Mean- 9.32
Effect area of school management by COVID-19	Education- 54% Finance- 44%
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### 3.3 Psychological aspects

As shown in Table 3 below, the COVID-19 affected behaviors of students slightly. Approximately 66% of teachers agreed that the behaviors of students changed slightly in schools (See Table no. 3 below). The primary cause of behavior change was a lack of recreational activities, COVID-19 rumors, and continuous use of TV and cell phones. During COVID-19, almost all of the student's time was spent in their home as being unable to go anywhere for recreational activities, thus, primarily engaged in digital tools most of their time. Therefore, it affected the behaviors of more

or less all age groups of students, which directly affected their learning habits and school performance. Approximately, 73% of teachers observed psychological effects in all ages of students, but age groups of 5-8 years and 13-16 years students observed disturbances that are effect related to psychological issues. Similarly, 74% to 80% of teachers have agreed that the psychological effect of COVID-19 has affected schools' performance and students' learning, which is one of the greater challenges for school management.

**Table 3. Effect of COVID-19 on psychological aspects of Schools' students.**

<b>Topic area</b>	<b>Response/Result</b>
Change behaviors of students due to COVID-19	No noticeable change – 2% Slight change – 66% Change- 22% Significant change- 10 %
Factors affecting change in behavior of students	Electronic device- 23% Lack of recreational activities- 40% COVID-19 rumors - 29%
Affected age group using an electronic device	5-8 years-24% 8-12 years-17% 12-15 years-35% 15-18 years-22%
Effect of COVID-19 on the psychological health of students.	Yes- 73% No- 24%
The age group of students more observed psychological effects due to COVID-19	5-8 years- 29 % 9-12 years- 13% 13-16 years- 38 % 17-19 years – 20%
Psychological impact on school performance	Yes- 74 % No- 8% May be- 18%
Effect of COVID-19 on students' learning	Yes- 80% Not assessed yet- 20%

#### **4. Discussion**

The finding of this research is that 98% of respondents agreed that COVID-19 affected the school's management and governance. Additionally, 54% of respondents agreed that COVID-19 affected the educational aspects, however, only 44% agreed on its effect on financial aspects. Due to the pandemic, the student dropout

rate was found to be 38%, which is fearful and may eventually collapse the education system of Nepal, while the teacher turnover was found to be 16%, showing difficulty to retain competent teachers, which ultimately affects the quality of education in the schools. During the lockdown, 64% of teachers ran online classes while the majority of students did not have internet

access. Among them, only 13 % of students actively participated in online classes and submitted assignments, suggesting poor participation of students in online classes. This also initiates the discussion of launching other modes of teaching, such as the use of radio or television, which has broader access, penetration, and reach.

After physical classes were started, 51% of teachers ran extra classes and 44 % of teachers taught only important lessons to complete courses within the academic year. Excessive educational load after in-person classes, use of the electronic device for an extended amount of time during online classes leaving less time for recreational activities during the lockdown, and the fear of getting the disease and dying or losing loved ones directly affected the mental health of students. Approximately, 88% of respondents agreed that students' behaviors were noticeably changed and 73 % believed that the changes in behaviors were associated with the pandemic and its impact on their well-being. This in turn directly affected students' learning and schools' performance

In the academic field of education disciplines, the paradigm shift is going on in the education system for teaching methodology. The education system is being transformed from face-to-face teaching to online teaching, which is an important methodological resource necessary in the teaching and learning process without interrupting education. We showed that COVID-19 highly affected schools' management and governance during a lockdown (Pathak et al., 2021). The student dropout increased significantly in both public and private schools. On other hand, the student dropout rate appeared showed higher in Nepal in

Private schools (Dawadi et al., 2020) because of the intention not to pay the fee during school closure and maybe the uncertainties because of this pandemic. During the pandemic middle- and lower-class, people lost their job and their incomes declined (Alam, & Tiwari, 2021). Therefore, home expenditure declined and most families stop sending their children to school. As a result, students' dropout rates increased during this pandemic. The finding of research by Giannini & Albrechtsen (2020) found that in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone during the Ebola epidemic outbreak, the student dropout rate increased significantly.

Another research by Prasain (2019) emphasized that the Nepalese economy is highly dependent on remittance and so the pandemic directly affected increased dropout rate in school. As a result, private schools may face more financial pressure coming days. It would be a challenge to decrease student dropout and retain competent teachers by decreasing teacher turnover to manage and govern the school properly. It is because private schools were unable to collect the fee during a lockdown and did not pay salary and if paid, they just paid partially which increased teacher turnover. Similarly, Devkota (2020) reported that due to the lockdown created by this pandemic schools were closed and did not collect a fee, and were unable to pay salaries to teachers in Kathmandu which increased the teachers' turnover ratio in private schools. Increased student dropout and teacher turnover directly affect schools' management and governance.

In terms of academics, the majority of schools ran online classes and attendance was good, but participation percentage and

assignment submission percentages were significantly low because a student might have just joined the online classes for attendance and left online classes immediately. On the other hand, participating students were 9-10 classes more which means schools might run online classes mainly focusing on the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) and students might actively participate in online classes to secure high marks in SEE. Because the pass percentage of SEE is an indication of a school's achievement in education. Despite the mean value of weekly attendance is good, most of the students were present in online classes partially and assignment submissions were significantly low because of a lack of electricity, internet continuity, and digital tools. It is the best option to run online classes during a pandemic but it is challenging in developing countries like our country (Sun et al., 2020). According to Zhang (2020), digital tools required to run online classes are not guaranteed for all staff, teachers, and students in developing and underdeveloped countries, which created many difficulties in running an online class in school. Students may just participate, and not be actively involved in educational activities in an online class because of fear of disease and its rumor, lack of good digital tools, and lack of motivation in distance learning.

Students are motivated by internal and external assessments for learning (Dawadi, 2018). Nevertheless, a physical exam was not possible during the lockdown. Students should have passed online assignment assessments that did not motivate students and decreased education quality (Dawadi, 2018). These findings are supported by other studies reporting that

the closing of physical schools and the implementation of distance education resulted in students spending less time learning, anxiety, and a lack of enthusiasm to learn (European Commission. Joint Research Centre. 2020).

After the lockdown, most of the schools started physical classes with extra classes to complete courses within the academic year in Nepal. The majority of students have been interested to take extra-hour classes. However, it is difficult to participate actively in physical classes for students, teachers, and parents post-COVID (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). According to Tiruneh (2020), to provide quality education by compensating schools closed during the lockdown, the concerned authority should make a plan to run extra classes, and provide additional material and remedial courses. On the other side, due to extra classes, students might feel excessive study load decreased motivation to learn in the near future because in a short period they should learn many things. It may decrease the quality of education.

The majority of the respondents said that most of the student's behavior had changed because of lack of recreational activities, COVID-19 rumors, and spending most of their time on electronic devices. It affects all ages of students. All the respondents' teachers agreed that this pandemic affects the psychological health of all ages of people which directly affects students learning and their performance. COVID-19 and lockdown created stress, fear, and anxiety because of getting a disease and getting die themselves and their relatives (Sahu, 2020). Therefore, closures of all kinds of schools negatively affect the mental and physical health of

students' teachers, and parents in the world especially in developing and under-developed countries (UNESCO, 2020b) According to Tadesse & Muluye (2020), the stressful situation of this pandemic directly affect the mental and physical health of students. In addition, mostly the difficulties encountered by health care professionals to manage and care for the pandemic in all sectors (Pathak, et al., 2021). Therefore, the federal and local governments should formulate strategies to mitigate problems created by COVID-19 in schools and should expand alternative ways of adapting digital technologies in teaching-learning practices (Pathak et al., 2022). In summary, in this research, COVID-19 and its measurement policies directly affect school management and governance. The research done by Onyema et al (2020) found the same thing the coronavirus pandemic has a variety of effects on education sectors, including learning disruption, loss of a job in the field of education, research limitations, and a loss of students' learning desires.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study reported the impact of COVID-19 on the school's management and governance of Nepal. The COVID-19 pandemic had affected the education system like other sectors of developing and underdeveloped countries. Education is a pillar of a country. Nevertheless, schools, colleges, and universities had been close to controlling the spread of the COVID-19

virus. Education institutions started online classes to continue the education system, which created challenges in developing and under-developed countries because of a lack of digital tools, internet, electricity problem, and lack of adequate technical knowledge. On the other hand, most of the students had not participated in online classes, and they were not motivated for learning like physical classes, and the other hand, most private schools did not collect student fees, which created financial problems in such schools. Because of this, teacher turnover had increased not getting salary during a lockdown. In addition, student turnover also increased because of decreasing economic status, and uncertainties triggered by this pandemic. Psychological factors of students had been highly affected due to fear of getting a disease and getting die, lack of recreational activities, financial problems, and spending most of the time on screen. In summary, COVID-19 and its measurement policies highly affected schools' management and governance in Nepal. The federal government and local government should increase investment to make a strong online system and train teachers and students, and lunch intervention programs to mitigate the psychological problem of students, which affects the student's performance.

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