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Faculty and Student Mobility in A Post-Pandemic World: A Study of Bhiwandi

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Abstract

The COVID-19 also called Corona virus pandemic brought significant changes to higher education, particularly regarding student and faculty mobility. Restrictions imposed because of the lockdown, travel bans, stress caused by finances, and the sudden transition to digital learning disrupted the normal academic activities in every part of India. In this paper, the researchers investigate how such changes affected academic mobility in the semi-urban region of Bhiwandi, where students and faculty were already restricted by weak digital accessibility, limited resources, and fewer institutional opportunities. Based on secondary data derived from journals, government websites, public documents, and previous research, this paper examines key factors that underpin mobility changes within the post-pandemic period.

The findings also show that for students, 50%, and for faculty, 40%, the greatest barrier is financial. For students, other concerns include digital access, health, and limited institutional support. For faculty, these are joined by administrative rules and family responsibilities. The research showed that while online learning and virtual programs stored education stable during the pandemic, they also revealed large inequalities in access and opportunity. Summing up, the research indicates that rebuilding academic mobility in Bhiwandi requires improvement in all spheres: digital infrastructure, financial support, better institutional policy, and raising awareness about mobility opportunities. It therefore contributes to knowledge about how semi-urban areas may recover and adjust to an educational environment in flux in the post-pandemic world.

Keywords: Academic mobility, post-pandemic education, Bhiwandi, student mobility, faculty mobility, digital divide, financial constraints, online learning, institutional support higher education

Introduction

The Coronavirus pandemic wrought havoc on societies in unprecedented ways. This highly infectious variety of the COVID 19 as called corona virus brought the world to an overnight standstill, disrupting every sphere of human life, including education. It was thus expected that India could not escape this global pandemic either. From March 25, 2020, onwards, the 'lockdown' brought the world's largest democracy to a grinding halt. Schools and colleges were closed overnight, examinations were postponed, and academic plans of millions of students and faculty members were thrown into uncertainty. Similarly, psychologically, fear, insecurity, and confusion overpowered the aspirations of the learners and educators alike. mobility students and faculty is an essential characteristic of higher education. In the last ten years, internationalization of academia and exchange programs have already remade the educational landscape across the world, with opportunities to learn, research, and develop professionally across borders. Within India, too, students would move from smaller towns to urban centers in pursuit of better educational options, while faculty participate in conferences, training, and teaching collaboratively at institutions other than their own. Such mobility was considered imperative for academic growth, exposure, and career building. In the pandemic, these patterns were disrupted. The imposition of travel restrictions, along with health anxieties and financial insecurities, alongside the rapid move to digital learning, saw an unprecedented drop in both domestic and international academic mobility. Many Indian students and faculty-particularly those from semi-urban regions such as Bhiwandi-faced new challenges which deepened existing inequalities because of the pandemic. Bhiwandi has long been associated with its thriving textile industry and storage houses, but has rapidly grown in

colleges and vocational institutions, attracting students of different socio-economic backgrounds. Being placed in regions with limited access to digital infrastructure and reduced mobility opportunities, unlike metropolitan cities, this region faced peculiar challenges in nature during and after the pandemic. Given this scenario, as India moved to the post-pandemic phase, questions of revival, adaptation, and transformation of academic mobility attained greater significance. Students who had planned to study out of their hometowns started revising their priorities in view of safety concerns, strain on family budgets, and changing family priorities. The faculty was constrained to attend seminars, fieldwork, or exchange programs. "Hybrid learning quickly became the backup plan, although unequal access to and its effectiveness remained uneven across regions. It's essential to understand the patterns, the problems, and the changing ways teachers and students' mobility move around Bhiwandi. This research aims to examine the changes in mobility during the post-pandemic era, factors that influence these changes, and how institutions and individuals cope with this new educational reality. These findings will help the stakeholders build a better understanding of the future of academic mobility in semi-urban India and the implications it holds for shaping opportunities for quality education and sustainable development.

Fig: Faculty vs Student Mobility Barriers in Bhiwandi (Post-Pandemic)

The major obstacle to academic mobility in Bhiwandi is Financial constraints, which have hit both the faculty and students hard. The leading barrier for learners is financial limitation, highlighted by half of the students, or 50% of them. For faculty, financial issues are also the leading barrier (40%), but the difference is less severe compared to students. Among faculty, financial issues are also the leading barrier, at 40%; however, the difference is not as extreme as it is among students. Students, conversely, cite Health/Digital factors (20%) and Institutional barriers (20%) as their second major obstacles, highlighting issues of access. A key distinction lies in the Family/Social category, which is a larger issue for faculty (20%) than for students (10%). In summary, while financial struggle is universal, faculty mobility is more constrained by organizational rules, whereas students face a greater challenge from the sheer cost and accessibility issues.

Objectives

- To Analyze the Extent and Nature of Financial Barriers** To examine the specific ways in which financial constraints (e.g., family budget strain, cost of travel/lodging) differentially affect the willingness and ability of both faculty and students to undertake academic mobility.
- To Evaluate the Impact of Institutional Policies on Faculty Mobility:** To investigate the relationship between current institutional policies (e.g., administrative rules, leave policies, funding structures) and the observed high rate of mobility barriers among faculty (25%).
- To Determine the Role of the Digital Divide in Student Mobility:** To assess how unequal access to digital infrastructure and health anxieties (Health/Digital factors, 20%) act as major secondary obstacles to student mobility and academic engagement

in the region.

Discussion

Challenges on Post-Pandemic Time

Following are the eight challenges the Faculty and Student are facing.

Travel Restrictions & Uncertain Policies

- All countries had strict travel during the pandemic, and even now, the policies change very frequently.
- Faculty and students face uncertainties associated with visa approval, quarantine rules, and even sudden closure of borders.
- This will further reduce opportunities for any kind of global exchange in Bhiwandi, which already lacks international exposure.

Health Concerns & Safety Protocols:

- Fear of infection, demands for vaccination, and institutional measures to guarantee safety undermine mobility.
- For example, some foreign universities may require strict health protocols, which may either be costly or difficult to observe.
- Advanced safety measures may not be adopted by local institutions due to a lack of resources, therefore, this can affect mobility both in and out of the town.

Digital Divide

- During the pandemic, online learning and virtual exchange programs became the main options. However, these options weren't available equally to everyone.
- Students and teachers struggle with bad access to the internet, not enough computers or tablets, and poor skills needed in using digital tools in Bhiwandi.
- This divide reduces participation in international online programs and collaboration.

Constraints in Financing

- Costs of traveling, accommodation, insurance, and tuition constitute the major barriers.
- Post-pandemic economic declines have further exacerbated the financial stresses on families and institutions.
- The faculties in colleges at Bhiwandi may not get enough funding for participating in conferences or conducting research outside the country, and students are unable to bear such expenses themselves.

Mental Health Problems

- Anxiety, stress, and uncertainty about the future are all disincentives to mobility.
- Among students, there is perhaps a fear of a sense of isolation that would occur in foreign countries; among faculty, a reluctance to leave their families.
- It is a concern that is not easily addressed in Bhiwandi, where very few counseling services are available.

Geopolitical & Visa Issues

- These growing geopolitical tensions, more restrictive rules for obtaining a visa, and immigration policies contribute to impacts on the mobility of individuals.
- Students from Bhiwandi, may also receive extra Close

and careful check, or they might not be aware of how to deal with complex visa situations.

- Bureaucratic hurdles have delayed or denied faculty exchanges time after time.

Institutional Being prepared & Administrative Barriers

- Most institutions in Bhiwandi do not have an international office or partnerships with streamlined procedures for handling mobility programs.
- Administrative delay, lack of awareness on scholarship, and weak support systems discourage participation.
- Without institutional Being prepared, opportunities

cannot be accessed, even by motivated students and faculty.

Limited Awareness & Exposure to Mobility Opportunities

- The scholarships, exchange programs, and collaborative research may not be known to the students and faculty in Bhiwandi.
- Lack of mentorship and guidance means the opportunities are underutilized. Limited exposure to the global academic culture reduces confidence in pursuing mobility.

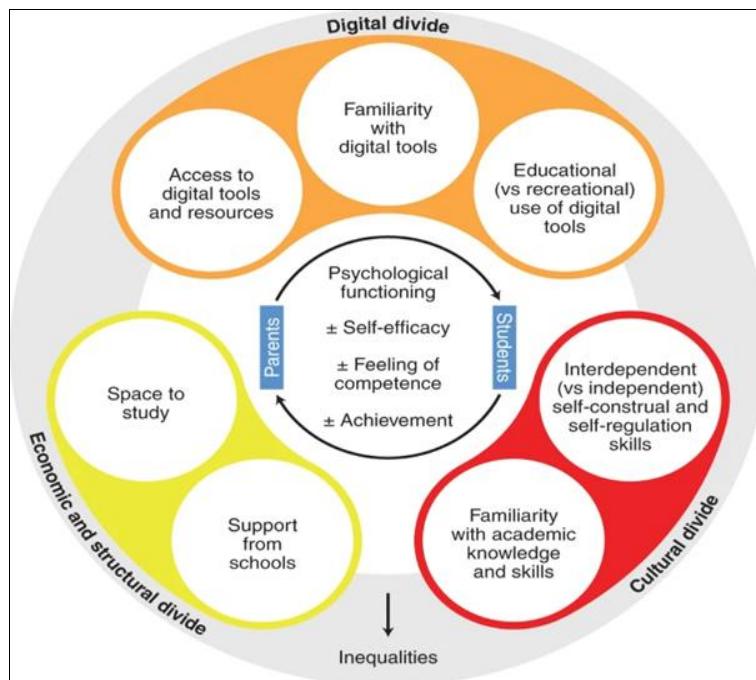


Fig 1: Social Inequality Processes Model

This fig is the show the faculty and Students are facing the Digital divide, Cultural divide and Economic and Structural divide.

Faculty's Role

- **Faculty:** teachers, professors, and school staff—primarily influence the economic and structural divide and indirectly support psychological functioning:
- **School support:** here, the school provides support in terms of academics, emotional encouragement, and opportunities for learning.
- **Creating space to study:** Via structured environments and flexible learning, they support students in finding or creating effective spaces to study.
- **Cultural mediation:** Through appreciation of different styles of self-regulation, faculty members can cross cultural divides and help modify teaching methods accordingly.

Student's Role

Students are at the center of the diagram, as they directly experience the effects of all three divides:

- **Digital divide:** Students have different opportunities to possess and use digital tools, and this fact influences learning.
- **Cultural divide:** Their background finds its application

in how they approach learning, regulate behaviour, and understand academic norms.

Psychological functioning: Student experiences and support systems serve to reinforce levels of self-efficacy, competence, and achievement in students. Together, faculty and students interact within these divides, and their relationship is vital to reduce educational inequalities. By acknowledging these, students can be empowered by faculty who will actively work to decrease these divides.

Literature Review

1. Manish, Jyoti, Soubhagya Impact of Online Learning in India During COVID-19. His study explores how Indian university students adapted to online classes. Poor internet and a lack of devices created major learning obstacles. Students reported stress and reduced motivation during online semesters. Teacher preparedness played an important role in the quality of learning. Research has shown that the digital divide became a barrier to educational mobility.
2. Pravat, Online Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic in India. His paper explores India's sudden shift to online education. Both students and faculty had difficulties owing to a lack of digital preparation. Rural learners suffered more on account of poor connectivity.

It was tough for teachers to keep virtual classes engaging. The study emphasizes that online learning has become a temporary replacement for actually traveling and moving around.

3. Rupa, Shantanu COVID-19 and International Student Mobility: Her research focuses on how Indian students' foreign education plans were affected. Visa delays, along with financial instability, reduced international travel. Students faced fear of infection and uncertainty about studying abroad. Many chose hybrid or online international programs. The study suggests that the patterns of Indian outbound mobility have permanently changed.
4. Amit, Pooja, Parag Challenges Faced by Indian Higher Education Institutions During the Pandemic. The study discusses trouble in teaching, research, and exchange programs. Faculty mobility declined due to institutional barriers. Universities had to struggle with the limited digital infrastructure. Both students and faculty suffered heavy psychological stress. While the paper stressed the need for stronger digital systems and mobility support post-pandemic.
5. Valentyna, Halyna, Nina, Maryna, Liudmyla Academic Mobility Development Among University Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic. This study investigates how university students developed academic mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic, pointing toward its academic, social, and cultural benefits. Quantitative data were collected through surveys and questionnaires in order to establish how students view mobility as an opportunity for learning, growth, and exposure to the world. These findings reflect that even during the pandemic, students appreciated the global experiences and the skills development due to the mobility programs.

However, the participation in mobility slowed down A lot of due to lockdowns, online learning, travel bans, and general uncertainty. The authors insist that universities strengthen digital systems, adopt flexible models of mobility, and enhance international collaboration to guarantee sustainable post-pandemic mobility.

Walter, Tony, Lez, Mark, Diana, Violeta, Danijela, Carla, Abdul-Lateef (2021). Impacts of COVID-19 and Social Isolation on Academic Staff and Students at Universities: A Cross-Sectional Study. It details the bad experiences that university teachers and students went through because of COVID-19 and being forced to stay home. With universities closed, most interviewees reported they were unable to perform their regular study or teaching duties. Being unable to meet others in person made most students and teachers feel sad, stressed, or isolated. Many also reported a lack of drive and a need for their universities to provide more support.

Research Methodology

This research is based on secondary data due to time constraints. The data was collected from various public documents, academic journals, and media sources. For this research, government websites—namely the National Institutes of Health (NIH) -were referred to, along with other research on this topic, to identify gaps in the existing literature.

Conclusion

The study explains this COVID-19 called corona virus pandemic has had an impact on academic mobility in Bhiwandi, raising long-term challenges that students and faculty are yet to grapple with. Financial Difficulty emerged as the most Impossible to beat issue, hindering students from pursuing higher studies outside their hometown and discouraging faculty from even contemplating attending conferences or academic programs. Besides health apprehensions, weak digital access, and institutional support, students also struggled with the idea of mobility. Moreover, faculty faced administrative restrictions and family responsibilities hampering their choices. From the issues mentioned above, it is evident that in semi-urban settings, mobility is shaped not merely through personal aspirations but through economic, digital, and institutional limitations.

The pandemic also Fetched a change in the way people think about mobility. Students and teachers started starting to dependent on online learning, and while it created new opportunities, it also Revealed the digital divide in Bhiwandi. Shifting to virtual platforms was helpful for continuity but could not replace the benefits accrued from physical academic mobility. International partnerships and proper guidance systems are still Without in universities and colleges of the region, which further limits opportunities for global exposure.

Overall, the findings indicate a dire need for improved financial support, an Enough Good digital infrastructure, flexible institutional rules, and awareness programs. The improvement in these Areas would Open doors for students and faculty in both Bhiwandi to participate in national and international academic mobility in the future. Building on these systems will help bring about an equal and supportive ecosystem for quality education and career growth in the post-pandemic world.

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