

COVID-19 AND THE UNDER-GRADUATE STUDENTS OF WEST BENGAL: A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract: An estimated 19 lakhs college going students in 508 general degree colleges including government, government aided and self-financing under different universities in the Indian state of West Bengal, who have all been at home since classes stopped across the state from March 16, 2020. So far no one knows when these higher educational institutes can reopen. Thus this COVID-19 pandemic has had a great impact on the Higher Education system all over the country including West Bengal. COVID-19 pandemic has seriously affected the undergraduate students with respect to their academic achievements, their learning, their mind and many more. Millions of Undergraduate students of West Bengal are now going into disaster mode. In this situation a big question lies down that how can evaluation processes of different ongoing semester be done? This paper tries to find out the actual scenario of different semester's students' studies in this pandemic situation.

Key Words: COVID-19 pandemic, Undergraduate Students, West Bengal.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Before the Country-wide Lockdown declaration due to combat of Novel Corona Virus 2019(COVID-19) in India since March 25, 2020, the Government of West Bengal has been decided to shutdown their all educational institutes since March 16, 2020. Then this shutdown period of all level of educational institutes from Kindergarten to Post Graduate extended up to June 10, 2020. Then further Government of West Bengal extends this period for all level of educational institutes up to June 30, 2020 so far. As a result there are an estimated 19 lakhs college going students in 508 general degree colleges including government, government aided and self-financing under different universities in the Indian state of West Bengal, who have all been at home since classes stopped across the state from March 16, 2020. So far no one knows when these higher educational institutes can reopen. Thus this COVID-19 pandemic has had a great impact on the Higher Education system all over the country including West Bengal. In this situation a big question lies down that how can evaluation processes of different ongoing semester be done? This paper tries to find out the actual scenario of different semester's students' studies in this pandemic situation.

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY: The objectives of this study are given below:

- To know the current Semester's syllabus status of various undergraduate courses in West Bengal.
- To know the status of Internal Assessment of Various ongoing Undergraduate courses in West Bengal.
- To enquire the status of so-called Home-assignment related to their semester studies from their institutional end.

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

At first we have prepared a self-made questionnaire on the basis of objectives of this study. Our population of this study are only those undergraduate students who are currently studying in different semester i.e. Semester-II, IV and VI of different courses like Arts, Science, Commerce, Engineering and different professional courses like law and management etc of different colleges under affiliated to different universities i.e. University of Calcutta, University of Kalyani, Vidyasagar University, The Burdwan University, Rabindra Bharati University, and West Bengal State University across the Indian State of West Bengal. We have collected this data through online mode from the students during the month of June 4, 2020 to June 12, 2020. In this online survey we have received total 685 students' responses across the state. The collected data were then analyzed qualitatively by using Microsoft excel version 2010.

3. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS:

In this study we have collected data from 685 undergraduate students of different courses across the Indian state of West Bengal, among these 685 students, male students are 197 i.e. 28.76% of the total sample and female students are 488 i.e. 71.24% of the total sample of this study. This is depicted in the following figure 01: It is very good sign that girls child participation in this online study is approximate 2.5 times higher with respect to male students of

undergraduate level. It may be indicative of high enrolment of girls child to the Higher education in the Indian state of West Bengal.

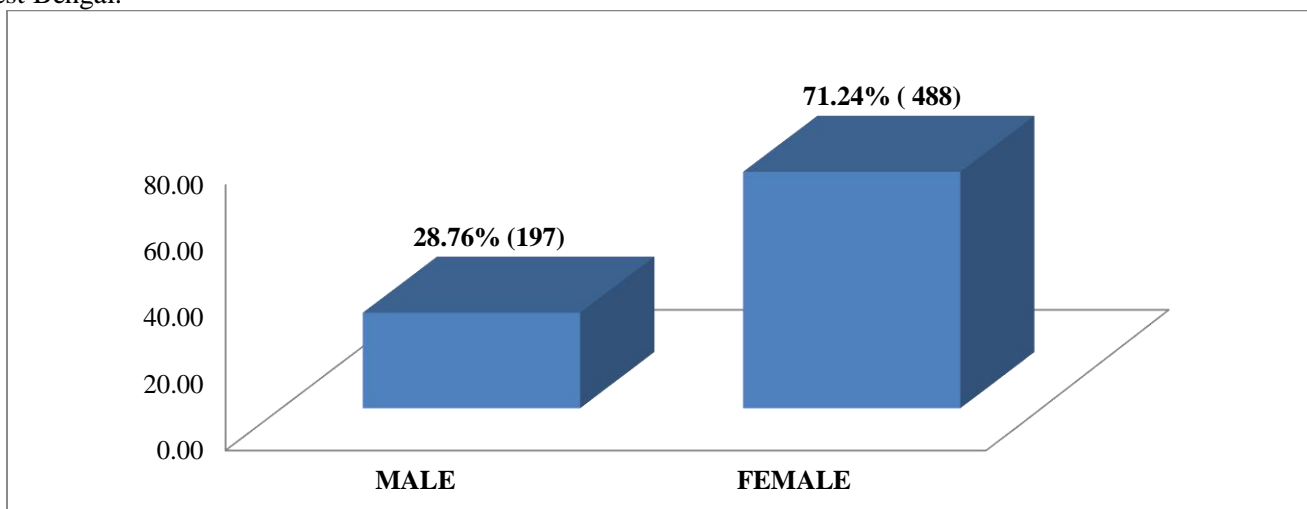


Figure 1: Sex Wise Percentage With Number Of Respondents Source: Primary data

Now we look into the stream wise i.e. Arts, Science, Commerce, Engineering, Law, and Management etc. respondents. Here we find that 78% of the respondents belong to Arts stream, whereas this is 19% in Science stream and 3% in others courses like engineering, law, management etc. The details findings in this regard are depicted in the following figure 02:

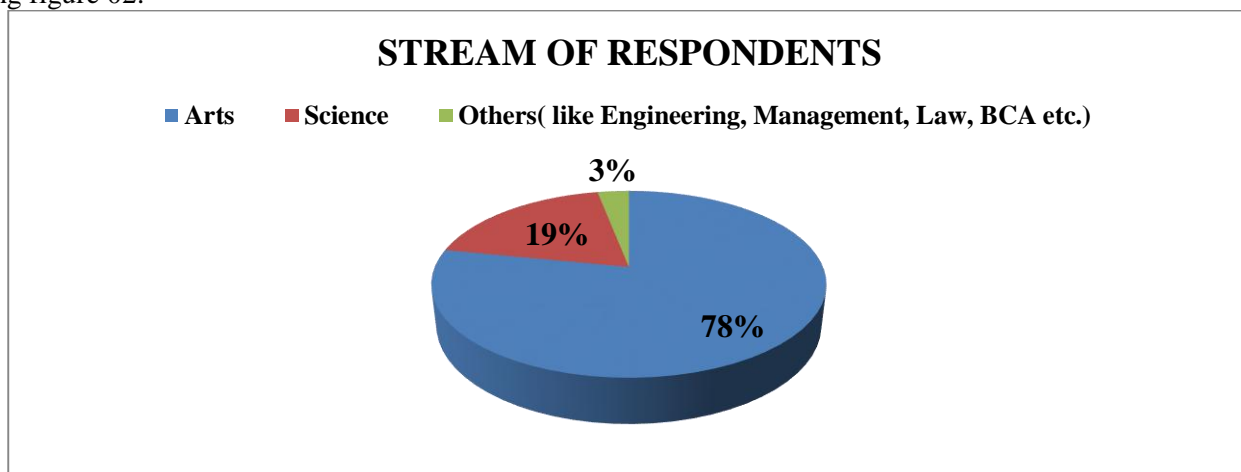


Figure 2: Different Stream of Respondents Source: Primary data

In this study the participation of Semester wise students has shown in the following figure 03:

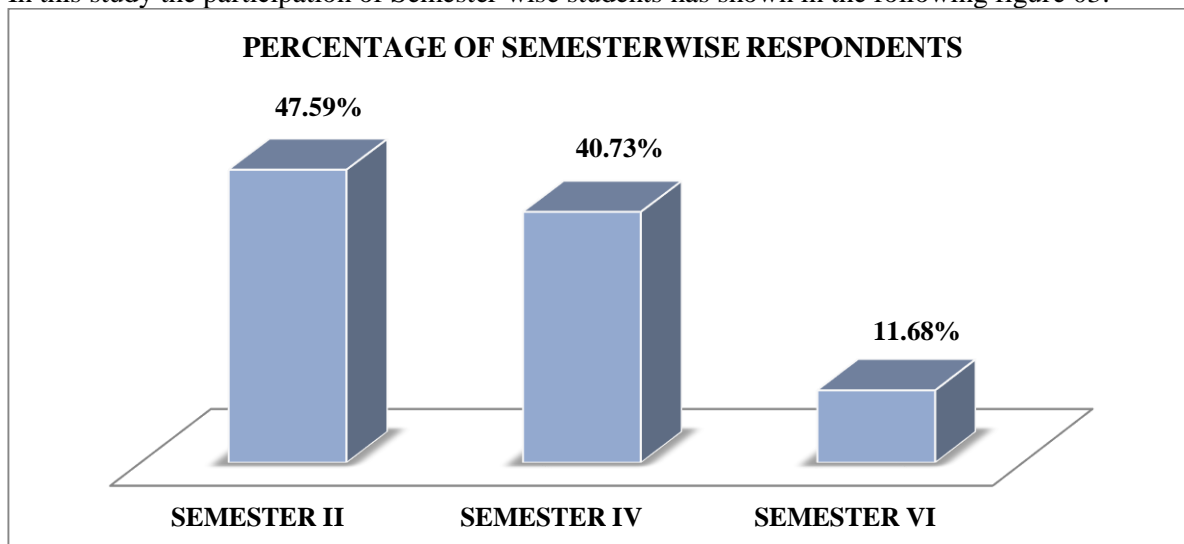


Figure 3: Participation of Semester wise students (in percentage) Source: Primary data

From the figure 03 it is found that 47.59% of respondents are presently studying in Semester II of different undergraduate courses and about 40.73% and 11.68% students under studied are now pursuing their Semester-IV and Semester-VI studies respectively of different undergraduate courses across the state of West Bengal. When we asked to the students that what is the status of their current semester’s syllabus, in response to that about 92% students under studied said that their current semester’s syllabus are still remain incomplete, only 8% students said that their current semester’s syllabus have been completed through online mode. So it is found that majority of the students under surveyed are far behind from their completion of current semester’s syllabus and their academic progression.

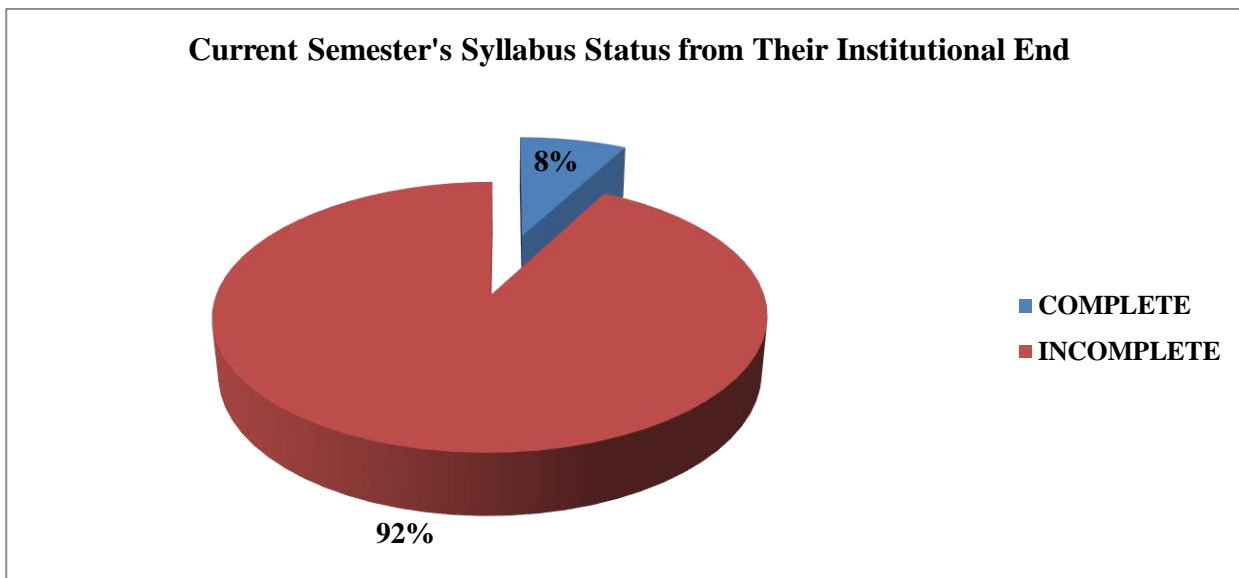


Figure 4: Status of Current Semester’s Syllabus.

Source: Primary data

These ongoing semesters of different undergraduate courses under the different universities in West Bengal have to be completed within June, 2020. But still there is a huge backlog with respect to the completion of semester’s syllabus. It is serious impact of COVID-19 on those approximate 19 million students of different undergraduate courses who are presently confined to their home with different uncertainties. As present University Grants Commission (UGC) has come up with the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) programme throughout the country in which the students have a choice to choose from the prescribed courses, which are referred as core, elective or minor or soft skill courses and they can learn at their own pace and the entire assessment is graded-based on a credit system. In this CBCS system in every undergraduate course there is great emphasis upon internal assessment in every semester. In this regard we have asked to the students that what is status of their current semester’s internal assessment, in response to this question the details findings is depicted in the following figure 05:

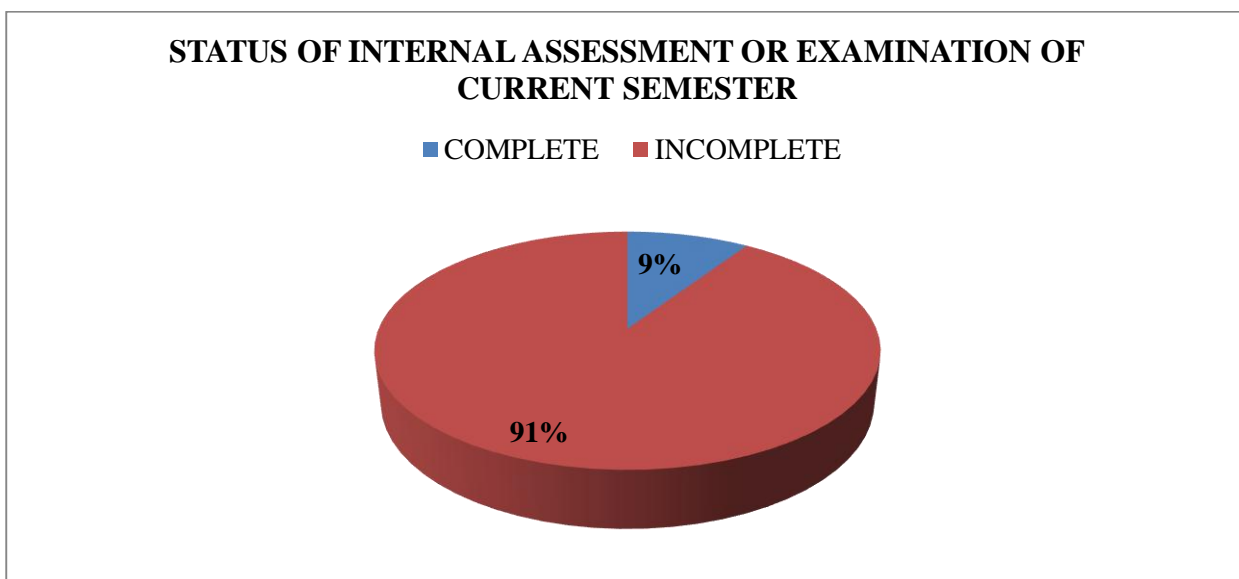


Figure 5: Status of Internal Assessment of Current Semester

Source: Primary Data

It is found that from the above figure 05 that only 9% students under surveyed said that their current semester internal assessment have been completed from their institutional end. Majority of students under studied i.e. about 91% said that their current semester’s internal assessment is not completed so far. It is serious question that may be raised in this regard if internal assessment is yet to be completed then how their semester’s end final evaluation can be done in this situation? In this regard further we have asked to those majority of the students (91%), whose internal assessment have not completed so far, that they have got any information regarding their completion of internal assessment from their institution. In response to this query the details findings have shown in the following figure 06:

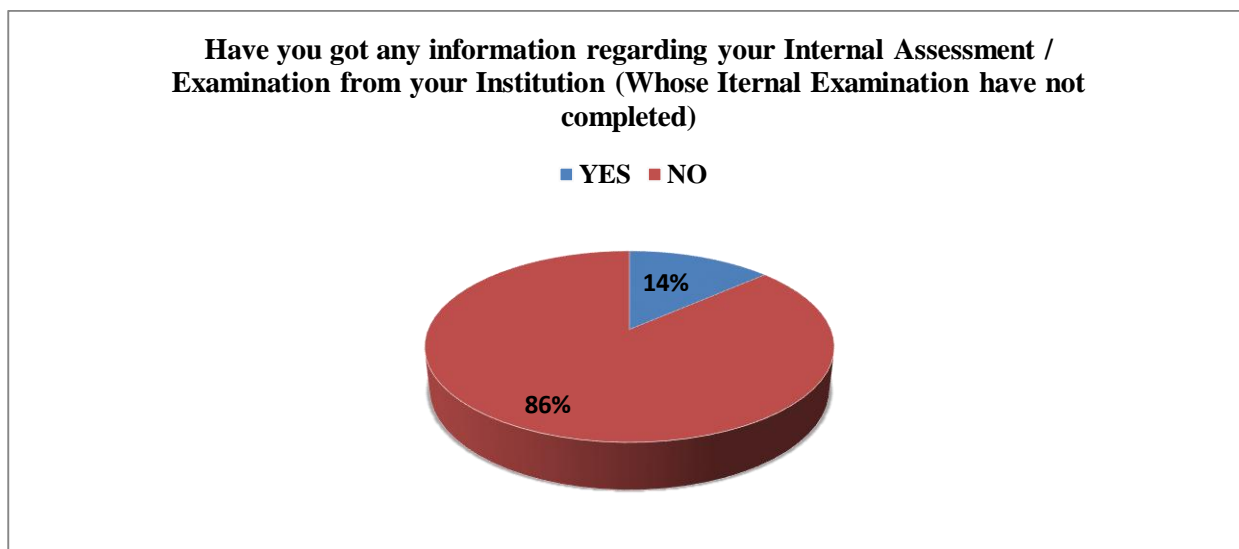


Figure 6: Information regarding Internal Assessment

Source: Primary data

It is found from the above figure 06 that only about 14% students under studied have got information regarding their internal assessment from their institute and majority of the undergraduate students of West Bengal under studied i.e. about 86% have not get even any information regarding their internal assessment from their institutional end. It is huge miscommunication from the institutional end in this situation where various regulating and administrative authority related with Higher Education both in the country and state try to emphasis upon work from home for the teachers who are the future maker of Indian citizens. Millions of undergraduate students in West Bengal have now confined to home to combat the spread of COVID-19 are now stay with various uncertainties and restlessness regarding their academic future. Many educationists have given the suggestion to give home-assignment to the students as they engage themselves to self-study during this pandemic situation. In this study we are also focusing this home-assignment scenario for the undergraduate level in West Bengal. In this regard the ground reality is depicted in the following figure 07:

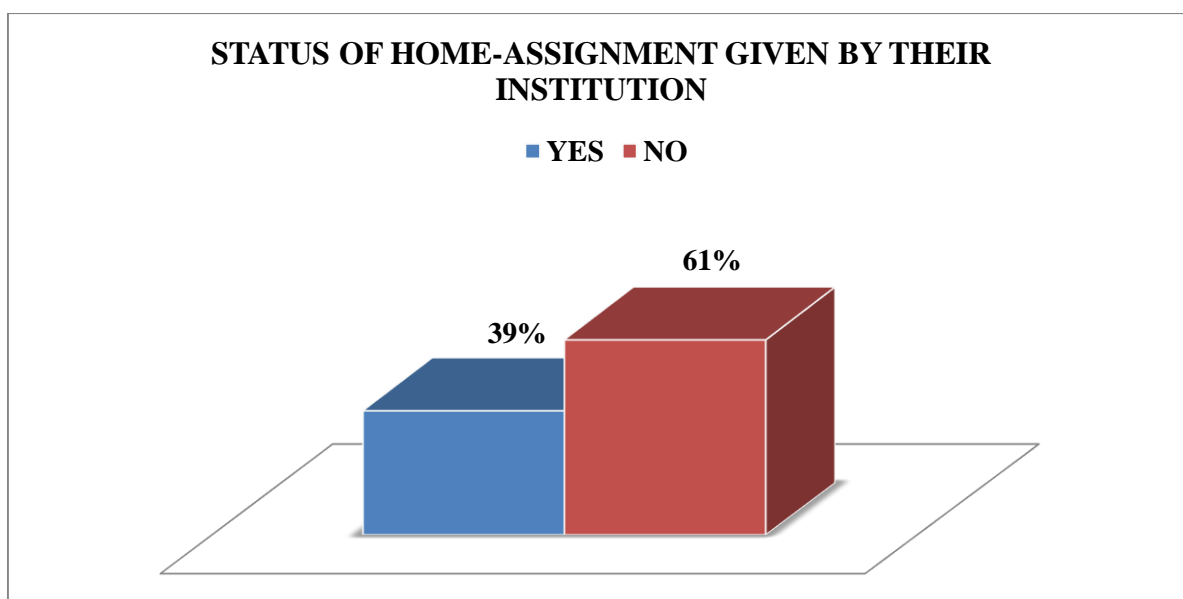


Figure 7: Status of Home-Assignment Given by the Institutions

Source: Primary data

It is evident from the above figure 07 that only 39% of the students under studied said that they have been given home-assignment from their respective institution. Majority of the students under studied i.e. about 61% said that they have not been given any home-assignment related to their ongoing semester's syllabus.

4. CONCLUSION:

COVID-19 has beyond the wildest thoughts of the mankind, changed the ways of living, working, teaching and learning. The actual implications of this pandemic disaster are yet to be thought of in its fullest. However, in the field of higher education, millions of students have been driven out of university and college campuses and the faculty is confined to their homes. In this contagion situation many institutes are offering online classes, but that has its own perils. From the above findings it may be concluded that this COVID-19 pandemic has seriously affected the undergraduate students with respect to their academic achievements, their learning, their mind and many more. Millions of Undergraduate students of West Bengal are now going into disaster mode. It is the right time to accept these new challenges and try to find out various opportunities and way out to reduce the academic loss of those students who are now passing through a serious crisis in their higher educational studies.

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