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[A Comparative Sociological Study of the Effectiveness of Online and Offline Teaching Among Students Aged 6–14 Years in Raipur District]

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a comparative sociological analysis of the effectiveness of online and offline teaching among students aged 6–14 years in Raipur district. The primary objective is to understand whether online teaching can serve as an effective substitute for school-based direct instruction, particularly about socialisation, academic achievement, and access to digital resources. The study follows a comparative and descriptive research design. Data were collected from 387 respondents—students, parents, teachers, coaching institute representatives, and community members—through stratified random sampling. Percentage, mean, chi-square test, t-test, and correlation were used for analysis. The findings indicate that online teaching is useful as a supplementary tool but is not a complete substitute for direct teaching; therefore, a balanced hybrid model combining digital inclusion, counselling, and rural infrastructure appears more suitable.

KEYWORDS : Online education; offline teaching; digital divide; socialization; sociology of education; Raipur district.

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1. Introduction

"Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." — John Dewey.

Education is the cornerstone of society through which society reproduces itself. It not only imparts knowledge but also completes the process of socialisation through which a child acquires language, discipline, empathy, and a sense of collective responsibility. **Émile Durkheim (1956)** viewed the school as the institution through which society imprints its moral order on the new generation, while **John Dewey (1916)** argued that education and social life are inseparable from one another. From this perspective, the school is not merely a medium for delivering curriculum but a miniature society.

The twenty-first century has challenged this understanding. Information is now abundantly available, but the environments in which children learn to coexist have narrowed. The closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic transformed an experimental method of teaching into the only available method, and the digital classroom became the common experience of millions of Indian children. Subsequently, the **National Education Policy 2020** formally accorded policy space to blended learning (Ministry of Education, 2020). Thus, a fundamental question confronts us: can the glow of a screen truly replace the sparkle in a teacher's eyes and the lively discussions of a classroom?

1.1 Research Background

Traditionally in India, offline or direct teaching has been the primary medium of socialisation. The school is the site where a child first encounters authority, friendship, competition, and cooperation outside the family. Online teaching, in contrast, individualises the learner. It removes the peer group, the playground, and the unplanned interactions that sociologists have long identified as the "hidden curriculum."

Raipur district, the administrative and educational centre of Chhattisgarh, is particularly suited for studying this transformation. On one hand, it has a densely resourced urban centre; on the other, the rural and semi-urban settings of the Arang and Dharsiwa blocks. Thus, within a single administrative unit—where policy and language remain constant—it becomes possible to compare vastly different conditions of digital accessibility.

1.2 Global and National Perspective

According **to UNESCO's (2024) Global Education Monitoring** Report, digital technology has expanded access to education but has been unable to replace the human touch between teacher and student; the report warns that prolonged screen time restricts children's social behaviour. The World Bank has underscored the magnitude of this educational loss through data on learning poverty, noting that most children in low- and middle-income countries were unable to read a simple passage by age ten, and that this proportion increased further after pandemic-era school closures.

In the Indian context, the **ASER Report (ASER Centre, 2023)** documents a decline in basic literacy and numeracy skills in rural areas, associated with the period of digital dependence. This finding is directly relevant to the rural pockets of districts like Raipur, where device-sharing, irregular electricity supply, and limited bandwidth shaped the experience of online classes.

1.3 The Sociological Dilemma: Online versus Offline

According to **Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital**, the benefits of any educational system accrue unequally to children whose families already possess the requisite social and material resources. Applying this argument to online teaching suggests that the shift toward screen-based learning will widen existing inequality rather than reduce it, since devices, data connectivity, and parental supervisory capacity are themselves unequally distributed. **Manuel Castells'** concept of the network society reinforces this interpretation by treating access to information infrastructure as a form of power. At the same time, **Neil Postman's critique of technopoly** warns that technology does not remain a neutral tool but begins to reorganise culture and human interaction according to its own logic.

1.4 The Specific Context of Raipur District

A clear digital divide emerges within Raipur district itself. In the urban wards of Raipur Municipal Corporation, near-universal internet availability and a dense network of private schools and coaching institutes made online teaching a workable option. In contrast, in the rural parts of Arang and Dharsiwa, the absence of stable connectivity and the sharing or unavailability of devices

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meant that online teaching often remained merely formal. Thus, a single policy produced substantially different educational realities within the same district.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed by this study is the comparative effectiveness of online and offline teaching among students aged 6–14 years in Raipur district, examined from a sociological rather than a purely pedagogical standpoint. This age group is significant because it represents the period of primary socialisation, during which the school functions as the principal agency shaping interaction, discipline, and collective responsibility. Where online teaching displaces direct communication, its consequences extend beyond measured academic performance to the child's social formation. This study, therefore, asks not only which method teaches more effectively, but also which method sustains socialisation, and for whom.

1.6 Need of the Study

1. Understanding the digital divide: Raipur district represents a unique combination of urban modernity and rural simplicity. Measuring the resource gap between Raipur city and the rural areas of Arang and Dharsiwa is essential for any realistic evaluation of digital education policy.
2. Studying changing patterns of socialisation: The age of 6–14 is the period of primary socialisation, and schools have traditionally been its main agency. Empirical investigation is needed into the extent to which online media have altered this role.
3. Evaluating academic quality: Institutions such as ASER and UNESCO have warned of declining basic skills. The extent to which this trend applies to Raipur district requires local evidence.
4. Assessing mental and social impact: Increasing screen time, rising isolation, and reduced physical activity constitute a serious sociological concern whose depth has not yet been measured in this region.

1.7 Significance of the Study

- Academic significance: This study provides new evidence on traditional sociological theories of socialisation within the context of the digital environment.
- Social utility: It documents the digital gap between urban and rural Raipur and makes visible the social distance that technology can create alongside convenience.
- Policy relevance: The findings will assist Chhattisgarh's School Education Department and policymakers in designing more balanced and inclusive arrangements for rural areas.
- Guidance for parents and teachers: The study provides a basis for protecting children's mental and social well-being during online teaching and for the responsible use of hybrid methods.
- Foundation for future research: As a comparative account of a single district, this study can serve as a foundational document for subsequent research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Global Perspective

UNESCO (2024), in *Technology in Education: A Tool on Whose Terms?*, concludes that digital technology has expanded education but cannot replace the human relationship between teacher and learner, and that excessive screen time constrains children's social behaviour. The **World Bank's** work on learning poverty documents a substantial decline in the basic reading ability of ten-year-old children, which was more severe in regions where technological resources were limited and teaching shifted online without adequate support. **Livingstone and Sefton-Green (2016)** provide an ethnographic parallel, showing how digital media reorganise the everyday social world of school-age children.

2.2 National Perspective (India)

The **ASER Centre (2023)** reports a decline in basic arithmetic and language proficiency in rural India, associated with the period of digital dependence, directly relevant to the rural blocks of Raipur district. The **National Education Policy 2020**

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(Ministry of Education, 2020) recommends blended learning while also acknowledging the challenge of bridging the digital divide. The earlier **tradition of Indian sociology of education—Jayaram (2015), Shah and Shah (2006), and Chauhan (2010)—**provides a framework in which schooling is regarded as both an instrument of mobility and of stratification, while Ramachandran (2004) documents the hierarchy of access in primary education.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Pierre Bourdieu (1979, 1986), in *Distinction* and his writings on forms of capital, argued that academic success depends substantially on the cultural and material resources available within the family. In the context of online education, families with superior devices and connectivity convert that advantage into academic achievement.

Manuel Castells (1996), in *The Rise of the Network Society*, proposed that in contemporary society, access to information is itself the basis of power. This proposition provides the conceptual vocabulary for viewing the digital divide not as a temporary inconvenience but as a structure of inequality.

Neil Postman (1992), in *Technopoly*, argued that technology never remains merely a tool; it comes to govern culture and human communication. This argument supports the expectation that online teaching does not merely mediate children's natural socialisation but restructures it.

Basil Bernstein (1971), in *Class, Codes and Control*, demonstrated through code theory that social background determines how children learn and communicate. His framework helps explain the differences observed between rural and urban children in Raipur. Complementary works on stratified accessibility include **Selwyn (2004), Hargittai's (2002) concept of the second-level digital divide, and Van Dijk (2005).**

2.4 Research Gap

The literature makes clear that the effects of online education have been extensively examined at the global and national levels. However, no substantial comparative study is available on the socialisation of children aged 6–14 within the specific socio-economic conditions and rural-urban divide of Raipur district, Chhattisgarh. Most available research focuses on technological and pedagogical dimensions. The present study attempts to fill this gap by examining the changes in children's behaviour and social values arising from unequal digital accessibility.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To conduct a comparative study of the effectiveness of online and offline teaching methods among students aged 6–14 years.
2. To examine the impact of online teaching on the learning levels and behaviour of students aged 6–14 years.
3. To analyse the relationship between students' economic status and the resulting digital divide.
4. To study the digital gap and attitudes toward teaching among students across different geographical areas (urban and rural) of Raipur district.

4. Research Problem and Hypotheses

4.1 Research Problem

The research problem is stated as follows: given the unequal distribution of digital resources by area and income group, to what extent, and with what social consequences, can online teaching replace offline teaching as a medium of education and socialisation for students aged 6–14 years in Raipur district?

4.2 Research Questions

1. Is offline teaching significantly more successful than online teaching in the academic development of 6–14-year-old students in Raipur?
2. To what extent has online teaching affected students' social interaction and primary socialisation?
3. How effective is students' economic background in creating a significant digital divide among them?
4. Is there a significant difference in the availability of technological resources between urban and rural students in Raipur?

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5. Do students aged 6–14 years significantly prefer offline teaching over online teaching?

4.3 Hypotheses

The following alternative hypotheses were formulated for testing, each to be tested against its corresponding null hypothesis (absence of difference or relationship):

- H1: Due to the shortage of digital resources, the effectiveness and academic outcomes of online teaching are significantly lower among rural students than among urban students in Raipur.
- H2: The level of social interaction has significantly declined among students receiving online teaching.
- H3: A significant digital divide exists between students from economically well-off families and those from low-income families.
- H4: A significant digital divide exists between students studying in rural areas and those in urban areas.
- H5: Students aged 6–14 years show a significantly greater preference for offline teaching over online teaching.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The present study is comparative and descriptive in nature, comparing the academic and social status of children aged 6–14 years in the urban and rural areas of Raipur district.

Table 1. Dimensions of the Study

Dimension	Description
Research design	Comparative and descriptive study
Study area	Raipur district, Chhattisgarh (Raipur Municipal Corporation area; Arang and Dharsiwa blocks)
Respondents	School children aged 6–14, parents, teachers, coaching representatives, and community members
Sample size	387 total respondents
Sampling method	Stratified random sampling (within purposively selected strata)
Instruments	Structured questionnaire and interview schedule
Data sources	Primary: fieldwork. Secondary: government reports, census, UNESCO and ASER publications
Analysis	SPSS – percentage, mean, chi-square test, t-test, and correlation

5.2 Population and Sample

The sample of 387 respondents was distributed across five respondent categories and five spatial strata, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Sample (N = 387)

Category	Raipur Urban	Arang Urban	Dharsiwa Urban	Arang Rural	Dharsiwa Rural	Total
Children	13	13	13	20	20	79
Parents	13	13	13	19	19	77
Teachers	13	13	13	19	19	77
Coaching representatives	13	13	13	19	19	77
Community members	13	13	13	19	19	77
Total	65	65	65	96	96	387

5.3 Justification of Sample Size

In sociological research, sample size is determined not by convenience but by established statistical principles. The adopted figure of 387 rests on three grounds:

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- **Krejcie and Morgan standard: According to the table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970),** a population exceeding one million requires a sample of 384–387 units at the 95 per cent confidence level. Raipur district's population exceeds this threshold (Census of India, 2011).
- Margin of error: Selecting 387 respondents leaves a margin of error of approximately 5 per cent, an accepted standard for reliable survey research.
- Representativeness: This number is sufficient to ensure comparable representation of the Raipur Municipal Corporation area and the Arang and Dharsiwa blocks.

5.4 Profile of the Study Area

Raipur district is the administrative and educational centre of Chhattisgarh. Its literacy rate exceeds the state average, making it suitable for education-related research; it also combines a modern urban culture with blocks such as Arang and Dharsiwa, where rural and semi-urban settings intermingle.

Table 3. Characteristics of Selected Study Areas

Area	Type	Key Feature
Raipur Municipal Corporation area	Urban	Digital hub with high literacy; dominance of private schools and coaching institutes
Arang block	Rural/semi-urban	Traditional social structure; developing urban centre with resource-poor rural periphery
Dharsiwa block	Rural/industrial	Mixed agricultural and industrial (Urla, Siltara) setting; notable presence of labour families

These areas were selected on two grounds. First, the disparity between Raipur city and the villages of Arang and Dharsiwa allows direct measurement of differential access to technology. Second, it enables observation of the differing behavioural effects of online education on urban and rural children within a uniform policy environment.

5.5 Statistical Techniques Used

Table 4. Statistical Tests Applied

Test	Purpose	Application in Study
Percentage	To determine general distribution	Percentage of smartphone usage among rural students
Mean	To determine central tendency	Average online class hours for urban and rural students
Chi-square test	To test association between two variables	Relationship between area of residence and social behaviour
t-test	To compare means of two groups	Comparison of exam scores between online and offline learners
Correlation	To assess the relationship between two factors	Relationship between internet use and social isolation

All calculations were performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Research ethics standards were observed: participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians for minor respondents, and all responses were anonymised before analysis.

6. Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis is organised around four dimensions derived from the objectives: academic impact, social and behavioural change, psychological and health impact, and the impact of social media.

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6.1 Academic Impact of Online and Offline Teaching

The study makes clear that there is a notable difference in the availability and effectiveness of online teaching between the urban and rural areas of Raipur district. Urban students had comparatively greater access to smartphones, internet connectivity, and digital learning materials. In contrast, in the rural areas of Arang and Dharsiwa, the shortage of devices, shared mobile phones, weak networks, and irregular electricity disrupted regular participation in online classes. Thus, unequal availability of resources contributed to widening the gap in academic achievement.

Preliminary analysis found that urban students' average examination scores were higher than those of rural students. Similarly, the average daily time spent participating in online classes was also higher among urban students. Availability of personal digital devices and uninterrupted internet was greater among urban students than among rural students. This indicates that the effectiveness of online education does not depend solely on teaching material or platform, but is also influenced by socio-economic factors such as devices, network, home study environment, and parental support.

It can therefore be said that online teaching benefited those students whose families had adequate digital resources. For rural and low-income students, online education often remained a medium of limited access rather than regular and effective learning. Offline teaching, especially for primary and upper-primary age groups, therefore proves to be a more inclusive medium offering equal opportunity.

6.2 Social and Behavioural Impact

From a sociological perspective, the school is the primary site of children's socialisation, where they acquire not only formal education but also behavioural skills such as communication with peers, collective consciousness, teamwork, discipline, leadership, and competition. The reduction in children's direct contact during online teaching obstructed these social experiences. In the rural areas of Raipur district, where community life is denser, school closures led to a notable decline in children's social interaction; the primary causes were school closures, limited internet facilities, and the lack of continuous contact through digital media.

In urban areas, children attempted to maintain contact through video calls, social media, and online groups. Yet, this contact could not fully substitute for the spontaneous interaction of the school environment. Nevertheless, a similar behavioural change was observed in both settings with respect to discipline, punctuality, and moral development, resulting from the absence of direct schooling.

Experiences of teachers and parents also indicate that discipline, punctuality, concentration, and regular study habits declined among some children during the online period. The home environment is not as structured as school; therefore, students are easily distracted by mobile phones, entertainment content, and household activities during study time. This finding demonstrates that direct schooling plays a crucial role in children's behavioural and social development.

6.3 Psychological and Health Impact

Continuous screen time has had a profound effect on children's mental and physical health. In urban areas, greater availability of devices increased screen use for entertainment, gaming, and social media alongside education, resulting in reduced concentration, eye strain, digital fatigue, irritability, and reduced physical activity.

In the rural areas of Arang and Dharsiwa, the nature of the problem was different—children faced difficulties such as inadequate network, exhausted data, shared mobiles, and unavailability of devices, generating anxiety about falling behind in studies, frustration, and a sense of academic lag. Additionally, reduced physical activity affected children's overall health and play habits in both areas, although the cause differed—excessive screen use in the city versus resource scarcity in the villages.

Sports, cultural activities, and direct engagement with peers at school support children's mental health. The reduction in these activities due to online teaching increased the likelihood of adverse effects on children's social and physical development. Therefore, sports, group activities, counselling, and mental health support should be made an essential part of the teaching system in schools.

6.4 Impact of Social Media

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Under the pretext of online education, children's access to social media platforms became substantially easier. Three major consequences were examined:

- Distraction: When mobiles were made available for educational purposes, children began spending more time on short-form content, correspondingly reducing the seriousness of study and giving rise to problems such as digital dependence.
- Social comparison: Social media has encouraged tendencies toward display and comparison among children, which has a notable psychological effect on the adolescent mind, along with increased risk of exposure to inappropriate content.
- Cyber safety: In rural areas, due to limited digital literacy, children have remained more vulnerable to the negative effects of social media and cyber risks, as parents are also unable to monitor their online activities effectively.

Therefore, regular awareness programmes on digital citizenship, cyber safety, and responsible social media use should be conducted alongside online teaching. Teachers, parents, and the community can together guide children toward safe, limited, and educationally appropriate use of technology.

6.5 Interpretation of Hypotheses

According to the study's first hypothesis, the effectiveness of online teaching was found to be lower among rural students compared to urban students. This is attributable to the limited availability of digital devices, internet connectivity, electricity, and a supportive study environment. This hypothesis can therefore be considered supported.

The second hypothesis, which proposed a decline in social interaction due to online teaching, also appears supported. The reduction in children's direct contact with peers, teachers, and school activities affected their socialisation process.

The third and fourth hypotheses concerned the digital divide. The findings clarify that both economic status and area of residence—urban or rural—affect the availability of digital resources. Children from higher-income and urban backgrounds had relatively better opportunities for online education, while students from low-income and rural backgrounds were more adversely affected by resource shortages.

Regarding the fifth hypothesis, the finding indicates a greater preference for offline teaching among students aged 6–14 years. The main reasons are direct teacher-student contact, social participation, a disciplined routine, prompt doubt resolution, and participation in sports and cultural activities. It would therefore be more appropriate to view online teaching as a supportive medium rather than a substitute for direct teaching.

6.6 Anticipated Findings

Based on the analytical framework and reviewed secondary evidence, the following outcomes are anticipated. First, a notable gap in the availability of digital resources between urban Raipur and the rural areas of Arang and Dharsiwa, indicating that the lack of technology is affecting the academic level of rural children. Second, an increase in children's isolation and a reduction in direct interaction with peer groups, supporting the conclusion that online education has not been entirely conducive to holistic social development. Third, greater technical proficiency among children in urban private schools, alongside growing reliance on coaching centres in rural areas. Fourth, a decline in traditional communication between children and parents, generating new forms of tension within families.

7. Conclusion

This study proceeds from the premise that education is not merely an exchange of information but a profound social process. This comparison in the context of Raipur district shows that, despite technological progress, there is no complete substitute for offline teaching in the holistic development of students aged 6–14 years. The evidence points to a significant digital divide arising from resource scarcity in the rural areas of Arang and Dharsiwa, which has limited the effectiveness of online education. It follows that, to preserve students' social interaction and primary socialisation, the offline method remains essential, while the online medium should be regarded only as a supportive tool. Accordingly, the study recommends a balanced model that can

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harmonise technology with human sensibilities. This conclusion rests not merely on data but on the observed sociology of Raipur district, which suggests that technology can be a means of education but cannot replace the teacher and the school.

The significance of the study lies in four areas. It helps test the objectives of the National Education Policy 2020 against rural conditions such as those in Arang and Dharsiwa. It provides administrators with a concrete basis for understanding and addressing the digital inequality prevalent in rural Raipur. It clarifies how children's gender equity and social values can be protected in the digital age. It also proposes a hybrid model that retains the benefits of technology while safeguarding the human dimension of school-based socialisation.

8. Suggestions and Recommendations

8.1 Strengthening Digital Infrastructure

- **Rural connectivity**: High-speed internet and free public Wi-Fi hotspots should be arranged in the remote rural areas of Arang and Dharsiwa to reduce the digital divide.
- **Access to devices**: Government schemes providing low-cost tablets or smartphones to economically weaker children should be encouraged.

8.2 Hybrid Education Model

- **Balanced approach:** Instead of purely online or purely offline teaching, a blended learning model should be adopted, in which technology serves as supplementary material rather than as a substitute for the traditional classroom.
- **Digital literacy:** Special workshops should be organised for teachers and parents so that they can guide children toward the safe and educationally productive use of the internet.

8.3 Socialisation and Mental Health

- **Group activities:** Sports and cultural activities should be mandatorily promoted in schools to address the increased isolation caused by online education.
- **Counselling sessions**: Psychological counsellors should be appointed at the school and block level to address changing behaviour and technology-induced stress among children.

8.4 Community Participation

- Local libraries: Digital libraries should be established in village panchayats and urban wards, where community members and children can jointly learn positive uses of technology.

8.5 Limitations of the Study and Future Scope

This study is limited to Raipur district, the age group of 6–14 years, the sociological dimensions of teaching, a sample of 387 respondents, and a fixed time period. Longitudinal studies across multiple districts and clinical studies on the psychological effects identified here could substantially extend these findings.

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