

# RESEARCH AND REFLECTIONS ON EDUCATION

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Covid-19 and Educational Scenario in India



**St. Xavier's College of Education**  
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PALAYAMKOTTAI - 627 002. TAMIL NADU.

Email: rresxce@gmail.com Web: www:sxcejournal.com

Dear Readers!

India is at the crossroads as it reels under the painful process of being bailed out of COVID-19 pandemic. The hundreds of deaths and cremations daily, the thousands of humans languishing in corona fever and physical ailments, the long queue gasping for breath and hence waiting for the connection of Oxygen cylinders, the number of families burdened with members having been admitted in the hospitals for treatment, the elders who are in the grip of corona-psycho threat etc. are the day-to-day experiences. The consequences are the restricted movements of people, closure of business centres, long stretch of lockdown, confinement of humans in the houses, emergence of online classes and exams and so on.

Reflecting on the concerns of educational institutions, online classes have become the order of the day, distancing the students from the face to face instructions; though fortunately the Government has issued free SIM cards with free Wi-Fi internet facilities which ensures the connectivity for the classes, on the other hand, the interactions have been drastically reduced and students are slowly becoming inactive. Faces of the students are rarely seen but the faces of parents seem to be appearing and listening to the voices of the staff... Congrats to elders becoming the students through online out of curiosity. The instructors too seem to have settled down for care-for-nothing, not worried about the presence or absence of students; they are ignorant of new techno-pedagogy but only the completion of the syllabus with minimum power points and finally the apex body worried about the formal completion of end evaluation process in a smoother manner. While we understand the difficulty in all the aspects, including the fast spread of pandemic and the need for lock-down, how are we going to justify the even-tempered attitude of ours if we insist on quality education? What do we have to do? There are questions to be answered.

I think, somewhere we need to touch the core of the educational system where a thorough overhauling has to be done. A new perspective of education which encompasses the radical inclusion of information technology from the elementary education for both teaching and learning has to be thought about so that our students become acclimatised to techno-oriented teaching-learning process along with personal reading and reflections. This demands a deep evaluative study of our system and openness to the new developments in the area of interactive teaching-learning process; becoming techno-savvy is indispensable and the rural student community has to be focussed and enriched in technology. Especially the tertiary education has to be rejuvenated with techno-centred interaction in the classrooms. Let us hope, this pandemic will bring about a change in the days to come.

As usual, we have papers and articles for your reading; keep reading and send your feedbacks to us. We are grateful for the patience of the authors of the papers as it takes more time for publication. This delay is due to the more number of contributions from various parts of our nation. All are duly reviewed in the order and hope to publish them in FCFS mode. Kindly bear with us.

Thank you

Stay safe...take care...help others with what you can.

Editorial Team



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# SCHOOL SAFETY CONCERNS AND CONDITIONS: A SURVEY ON LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT OF ASSAM

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## ABSTRACT

*In the Lakhimpur district of Assam, the investigator did a research survey to assess the schools' development editions with teachers and parent's awareness about school safety. With the help of a self-developed checklist, the researcher collected the data from 100 respondents, including 50 parents and 50 teachers, randomly selected from the Lakhimpur District government and private schools. The findings reveal that there is a significant difference in school safety conditions between government and private schools. The government schools are more aware that school safety must legalise through certification; the private schools are more focused on ensuring the basic facilities that fall under school safety conditions.*

**Keywords:** School Safety, Teacher and Parent Awareness.

## Introduction

The primary concern of every parent is to ensure his/her child safety which seeks every school to assure school safety. Schools that are the agencies of formal education can change the life of the child and society as the child spends one-third of the whole day in the school in the formative years. School administration is responsible for providing a protected, safe, and secure environment to make a child's learning process more effective and enjoyable. Schools must be safe and secure places for students. All educational community members were involved in ensuring adequate levels of school safety through diverse management and organisational actions and measures to ensure physical, emotional, and social safety (Anna Diaz & Joaquin Gairin Sallan, 2017). But the child safety is not only the assurance of the conditions free from fear and exploitation. Still, it includes the school infrastructure, child's health and nutrition, drinking water facilities, sanitation, cybersecurity, and safety from natural hazards and disaster. In the past few years, the number of child physical harm, injuries, abuse and exploitation cases are rising. Lack of disaster management preparation within the school premises (as reported on various news channels and print media) is the cause.

The child's safety becomes the primary concern of the parents, teachers, stakeholders and all local, state and central government.

## Conceptualising School Safety

In 2017 National Disaster Management Authority (NDRA) prepared a comprehensive document- "National Disaster Management Guidelines: School Safety Policy" issued to all State secretaries and UT administration by the MHRD Government of India, the Department of School Education and Literacy. According to this document

*"School Safety has been defined as creating safe environments for children from their homes to their schools and back. This includes safety from large-scale 'natural' hazards of geological/climatic origin, human-made risks, pandemics, violence as well as more frequent and smaller-scale fires, transportation and other related emergencies, and environmental threats that can adversely affect the lives of children."*

The conceptualisation of school safety by the general public is confined to a fearless and comfortable environment which will restrict the focus on behavioural and psycho-social issues only. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) developed the "Safety

**Dr. Sradhanjali Pradhan**

Assistant Professor, Education Department,  
Tezpur University, Assam-784028

Mail id- sradha@tezu.ernet.in

**Ms Purnima Padl**

Assistant Professor, Jorhat College, Jorhat,  
Assam-785001

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and Security of Children in Schools”(2017) manual and checklist assisting various schools and education boards of India for having a common understanding of basic school safety requirements and measures to be ensured for children. The major objective of the manual is to inform, aware, and equip the stakeholders in monitoring school safety and security by highlighting the roles and responsibilities of school teachers and staff. The manual pointed out the different components of school safety ranging from psychosocial elements to school hazard and disaster management elements.

*“This includes safety from any kind of abuse, violence, psycho-social issue, disaster: natural and manmade, fire, transportation. Emotional safety is especially important because it is often difficult for teachers and parents to detect emotional problems and difficulties in children. Bullying can cause victimized students to suffer from lower self-esteem and daily stress about their well-being”.*<sup>1</sup>

### Indian Government Acts and Policies on ‘School Safety’.

1. Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 set minimum norms and standards regarding the location and quality of schools. The Act lays down the information of the School Management Committee for the planning of infrastructure and another requirement concerning the operational functioning of the school.
2. The National Disaster Management Act 2005 looks at promoting safety awareness among stakeholders, including teachers and students.
3. National Policy on Disaster Management (2009) highlights the need for structural and non-structural safety in school and educational institutions.
4. National Policy on Children(2013) recognises that survival, health, nutrition, education, development, protection, and participation as the undeniable rights of every child.

On 15th April 2018 supreme court directed the ministry to confirm the guidelines for fixing accountability of school management towards the safety and security of school children. Besides these guidelines, sources reported some shocking child accidents in few years. These shocking incidents raise questions on school accountability, teacher

and parents’ awareness of school safety. The Government has implemented various steps regarding school building, water safety, health and sanitation, and psycho-social safety in school. Still, these facilities in schools in a remote village and vulnerable areas fall short in adopting adequate measures. Therefore, the paper explores the concerns, the necessary school conditions and parents awareness of school safety in Lakhimpur District of Assam State.

### Research Objectives

1. To study the availability of necessary conditions required to ensure school safety.
2. To compare the available school safety conditions among private and government schools.
3. To study the parent’s level of awareness about school safety conditions.

### Research Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference in school safety conditions between private and government schools.

### Methodology

The descriptive survey method is adopted to assess school safety conditions with the teacher and parent awareness towards school safety in the Lakhimpur district. The sample includes 50 teachers and 50 parents (5 teachers and five parents from each school) selected randomly from a total of 10 schools(7 government and three private schools including Primary, M.E. schools, and High schools)from rural and urban areas of Narayanpur Block in the Lakhimpur district. The study delimits to the Narayanpur block of the Lakhimpur District. The researcher used a self-made checklist for the data collection which consists of three sections. Section 1 consists of questions on demographic information and determines the profile of the respondents. Section 2 consists of 34 questions on the physical safety of the child at schools. Section 3 consists of 26 questions on emotional and personal safety-related statements related to the child’s safety at schools.

Descriptive statistics like percentage analysis is used to analyse the data of the survey. The ‘t’-test was used to test the null hypothesis. The result and discussion were based on the participant information and researcher observation only.

## Major findings

**Objective 1: To study the availability of necessary conditions required that ensure school safety.**

1. In the Narayanpur Block of Lakhimpur district, government school building facilities are better than private schools. Most government school buildings are certified as per the norms of housing by the local authority with proper electrical fittings. Both types of schools have separate toilets for girls and boys with adequate maintenance and cleanliness. The government schools lack protective boundary walls, and private schools lack proper lighting, electrical fittings, and running water facilities.
2. Both government and private schools are aware of the fire safety requirements and do not have a fire safety certificate.
3. The government and private schools are not situated in the earthquake zone. Some government school teachers don't have any emergency plans in place for disaster preparedness at schools. Compared to government school, private school teachers are much more aware of earthquake safety in schools.
4. The government and private schools are situated near the seashore or a river. Both the government and private school teachers don't prepare any plan during the natural disaster. Only a few schools have transported mechanisms in place for an emergency transport system for students.
5. Government schools regularly check the electrical system in schools—the minor importance given to the display of warning signals on electrical fittings areas.
6. Both government and private schools don't have safety certificates for drinking water in schools. Government and private schools are well protected by the water source and always provide safe potable water.
7. Few government schools are providing the facilities of laboratory safety, and none of the government and private school teachers is trained to meet any emergency in the laboratory.
8. Both government and private schools don't meet safety conditions for disabled children. In government schools, differently-abled are less accompanied by a teacher or attendant when using toilets.

9. The government schools regularly maintain records of the health-related issues in schools

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10. Both government and private school teachers are much aware of the regular orientation towards sexual abuse safety. Whereas the government school has a committee on child Sexual abuse, the private schools display child safety posters in prominent locations of the school.
11. Both governments and private schools don't have cyber safety facilities in schools as the schools lack basic computer and internet facilities.

**Objective 2 : To compare the available school safety conditions among private and government schools.**

**Hypothesis 1 : There is no significant difference in school safety conditions between private and government schools.**

**Table 1**

**t-test comparison for Government and Private school Safety Conditions**

Variable	Test Value = 0					
	Calculated 't' value	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the	
			(2-tailed)		Lower	Upper
Government School Teacher	15.193	59	0.000	55.717	48.38	63.05
Private school Teacher	12.094	59	0.000	55.033	45.93	64.14

From table 1, it is evident that for the degree of freedom (df) = 59, the t value is significant at  $p=0.000 < 0.05$  level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level. Hence there is a significant difference in school safety conditions in government and private schools.

**Objective 3 : To study the parent's awareness level on school safety conditions.**

Both the government and private school children's parents are unaware of the primary school safety

requirements like school building, fire safety, drinking water certification. Besides that, parents are least informed of the essential requirements to ensure electrical safety, cyber safety, natural disaster management, necessary components of school safety. Whereas the government school children's parents are aware of the health, nutrition requirements, the private school children's parents are aware of prevention of child abuse, sanitation, and hygiene requirements in the schools. It is observed that private school children's parents are more aware of school safety requirements than government school parents.

### Discussion and conclusion

Safety is an implicit determinant of the quality of the school environment which is explicitly realised through meeting the norms and standards of national policies and guidelines. If not fulfilling these core principles of school safety policies arise risks and threats to child safety putting the child's wellbeing at stake. So, the teachers, parents, and stakeholders need to be aware of school safety policies and guidelines. Every parent has a mutual trust in school for providing a positive and comfortable environment for child learning and overall development next to family. Though the researcher revealed that where the government schools are more aware of school safety should be legalized through certification the parent's schools are focused on ensuring the basic facilities that fall under school safety conditions. Being aware of school safety policy and guidelines can't assure school safety rather teachers have to be responsible for their roles and responsibilities for ensuring school safety. The parents and the other stakeholders have to be informed and provided with school safety guidelines. Government should train teachers through capacity-building programs. Regular monitoring and supervision of school safety conditions should ensure a well-protected, safe and secure environment for children who are the future citizens of our nation.

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