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"Lockdown Within a Lockdown": The "Digital Redlining" and Paralyzed Online Teaching During COVID-19 in Kashmir

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, academia worldwide resorted to the remote teaching–learning alternatives in the form of online classes, virtual tutoring, and online learning software. To ensure the sustenance of education systems, educators exploited Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) to facilitate continuity in teaching at all levels. However, in the Indian-administered Kashmir region, the disputed territory between India and Pakistan, online teaching was marred by the political instability in the region, thanks to the stringent communication blockade imposed by the authorities ("Kashmir," 2019). The Kashmir conflict dates back to the historic partition of the Indian subcontinent between India and Pakistan, after the British withdrawal in 1947. Ever since the partition, the Muslim-majority territory of Kashmir remains contested between India and Pakistan and the two nuclear rivals have fought three wars in 1947, 1965, and 1999 to consolidate control over the disputed region (Schofield, 2021).

In August 2019, Indian Parliament unilaterally removed the autonomous status of the disputed Kashmir region and to preempt any backlash, the authorities unleashed an unprecedented curfew, suspended phone networks and Internet services while putting the entire region under strict lockdown ("History's longest," 2019). During the lockdown, the region witnessed the longest e-curfew in history with more than 13,600 public and private educational institutes remaining closed for almost six months, restricting students and teachers to their homes with no means of correspondence with each other (Wallen, 2020). It was only in January 2020 that the government approved limited 2G-speed Internet access to 301 "white listed" websites with no access to any social media platforms (Sareen, 2020). When schools and colleges were resuming after some ease in the restrictions, the Indian

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