



Online Learning: An Elixir During the Time of Covid-19 Crisis

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Abstract: An unexpected breakout of a fatal disease called COVID-19 effected by a corona virus (SARS-CoV-2) trembled the whole world. This was declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation. Since the pandemic has destructed the common lifestyle of individuals over the world, the virtual globe has come to the reclaim. This situation also challenged the education system and enforced educators to resort to an online method of teaching overnight. Person-to-person classes have been cancelled and shifted online, leading through the rise of online learning which has authorised learners to carry on with their education. There is a different experience in taking online classes then learning from a teacher's offline. This study throws light on the growth of online learning in the time of pandemic. This paper scrutinizes whether students would benefit from online education and analyse the potential drawbacks and challenges of online coursework.

Key Words: COVID-19, Online Learning, E-learning Platforms, Challenges, Pandemic.

1. INTRODUCTION:

In Wuhan, the pneumonia of unspecified source was first revealed and notified to WHO office on 31st December, 2019. Ever since, this outbreak spread all over the world. World Health Organisation aired the title novel coronavirus (COVID-19) on 11th February, 2020. The COVID-19 was declared as a pandemic by WHO on 11th March, 2020. On 26th September, 2020, there were around 32,110,656 diligent cases with a death calculation of 980,031 in world. India reported on 26th September, 2020, around 960,969 total cases and 93,379 deaths. In every possible manner, coronavirus is affecting the ordinary life. An unparalleled global lockdown has not just made our life depressed, but also forced us to reside inside our homes. Exceedingly only once in a lifetime or two, rare events like this are observed. Indian government declared that there is a necessity to adjust to this situation, by asserting social distance amid themselves. The lockdown result shuts nearly all sectors that made huge impact on economy in many of the countries. After undergoing lockdown period of 50-70 days, most of the sectors were re-opened. Nevertheless, yet the educational institutes remain closed because they find it hard to continue social distance in place.¹

Educational sections are struggling to discover possibilities to deal with this demanding situation. These situations make us recognise that scenario arrangement is an immediate necessity for academic institutions. This is a circumstance which demands unity and humanity.² The schools and universities think about the several approaches to raise the students active throughout the pandemic. This guide them to think regarding the online method of education for the students. There was an immense growth in the resort of education to the online mode. This study aims to scrutinize distinct variations for online learning and examines crucial challenges.³ This paper also highlights various online platforms and gives suggestions to enhance the conduct of online learning.

¹ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1287167.pdf>

² <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0047239520934018>

³ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347450223_THE_EFFECTIVE_USE_AND_PRIVACY_CONCERN_OF_ONLINE_EDUCATION_PLATFORM_DURING_COVID-19_PANDEMIC



2. OBJECTIVES:

1. To study the rise of online learning during pandemic.
2. To examine the challenges connected with online teaching and learning.
3. To know the various online platforms and learning process during COVID-19 lockdown.

2.1 HYPOTHESIS:

- To justify a sudden shift from traditional education to online learning during COVID-19 lockdown has led to the challenges in the teaching-learning process.

2.2 RISE of ONLINE LEARNING:

In the present day, COVID-19 has entirely refrained human civilization. Already, millions of people have lost their lives due to COVID-19. Still, there is an increase of COVID cases and gradually, the condition is getting worse. During this situation, all the country's government has concluded to shift the traditional mode of education to digital method, so that the students can acquire proper education amid this lockdown period. Particularly, the Indian government has taken numerous initiatives to convey ahead the classes, and the educational institutions have also taken part in it. Not only colleges and schools but various private institutes have also connected in the online mode of learning so that they can give online teaching to the students.

In this pandemic, learning can now be acquired online and knowledge can be conveyed virtually using various media. During COVID, online education is now easy with the help of tools like Google meet, Zoom, WhatsApp video call and many others.⁴ Online learning is a learning domain which takes place through the Internet. It is frequently mentioned as e-learning. A supportive environment is created in the virtual classroom by an online educator that identifies the lack of physical presence and where all students sense comfortable to take part in online class. It plays a remarkable role in modifying our lives to digital world by our supplying flexible places, quality contents and class timings. At the time of physical isolation during pandemic, it provides a way to the development of humanity.

Online learning is useful because it offers flexible scheduling and is instantly accessible. In this approach, learners make use of internet technology to be in touch with their fellow learners and teachers through e-mail, instant messaging, video conferencing or using other tools. The worth of online learning is being acknowledged by more institutions, because it is a cost effectual way to convey a large number of people. During lockdown for COVID-19, learning is emboldened due to following reasons-

- One can obtain knowledge by staying at home and can also assert social distancing.
- Due to social distancing, outbreak of COVID-19 can be reduced.
- It provides extremely effective learning environments.
- It provides flexible scheduling.
- It is accessible in any location, with an Internet linked and students can take part in by using their devices like tablets, computers, mobile, etc.

2.3 BENEFITS AND DOWNSIDES of ONLINE LEARNING:

Through its diverse features and complex characteristics, e-learning can strengthen the educational process. Distinct from face to face learning, mainly e-learning achieved popularity because of its accessing content and resources and flexibility in the delivering education. Therefore, e-learning has huge significance in the e-learning process as it has the potential to improve its quality, adapt courses to the needs of the learners and offering the possibility to personalize. Because of its flexibility, e-learning terminates barriers of time and space, the user can have approach to a broad range of information, it facilitates participation, permits students to learn in their own rhythm, it encourages them to discuss with their peers, interact and exchange ideas and points of view. The benefits of the fact that online learning is rapid, it saves money and time because it does not require travelling, and the uploaded content can be easily updated and is consistent. Moreover, while studying the perception of teachers and students about e-learning, there are benefits such

⁴ <https://www.arenach.com/the-rise-of-online-learning-during-covid-19-pandemic/>



as accessibility, focal point on the students, collaboration, and flexibility, participants contemplated to be the most important benefit of online learning.

Definitely e-learning has numerous benefits, but few downsides of it can also be recognised. Online learners may easily lose focus, or miss deadlines and get distracted, e-learning is reliant on technology: the computers and internet, which students must not have access to, and interferences or other system errors might appear through courses. For students, the capability to arrange how they study and the sum of time consumed on learning can occasionally result in reduced motivation, and the lack of physical communication and appearance of colleagues might affect students to feel isolated. Also, in terms of physical health, drawbacks of e-learning can be seen. Because they spend many hours in front of a screen and seated, teachers and online learners may develop back or sight problems, and their outdoor activity might be reduced.⁵

2.4 CHALLENGES RELATED WITH ONLINE LEARNING DURING PANDEMIC:

The COVID-19 has imposed the closure of many physical activities worldwide, comprising educational activities. This circumstance leaves educational institutions no option but to shift to online learning. This sudden modification into online learning has constituted substantial challenges for educational activities worldwide. The crucial challenges are associated to digital competence and technological infrastructure, socio-economic elements (educational inequality), supervision and assessment, compatibility and heavy workload.⁶

Online learning depends totally on the internet and technological devices, so it is indisputable that technology is the most serious challenge to online learning if those engaged in the process of learning and teaching. Few regular technological issues include unstable internet connection, incompatible browsers, lack of knowledge of how to use applications and outdated communication devices. With online learning as the interchange of physical classrooms amidst the COVID-19 crisis, numerous students are helpless to falling behind in their studies or experience further challenges because of their socio-economic status. Students from low socio-economic families are unable to confer broadband connection and applicable devices such as laptops, tablets or computers to support their online learning. Rather, they are making use of smartphones to access learning materials and lessons, complete assignments and take exams.

No doubt, assessment is vital to any learning, either online or face to face learning. Although, online learning throughout this global pandemic creates the assessment more complex. Therefore, new perspectives to assessment are imperative. With online assessment, teachers have bounded control on top of students work as it is tough for teachers to manage treating and make sure that students accomplish the assessment duty by themselves. For various educational institutions, the unexpected shift to online learning has generated an unforeseen workload, especially on integrating external applications and building e-platforms into their system in a suitable manner. Along with that, other critical issue is to immediately support staff and train teachers to use the new platforms and systems. Teachers who play an indivisible role also face the pressure of sharing additional workload as they are in charge of transfiguring subject contents, assessments to online platforms and learning resources. With the instant demand, this amount of work has more or less caused anxiety and stress.

Another considerable challenge is the compatibility issue associated to online learning. While online learning seems to be relevant to particular academic disciplines, for instance, linguistic and social studies, it can be an inappropriate for practical disciplines like engineering, medical studies and sports because these disciplines need first-hand experiences as basic instructional activities. Undoubtedly, teaching such practical disciplines online is a demanding challenge. There are several other challenges in distance or online learning amidst the pandemic as created more frustration, isolation and stress for students who have missed the chance for peer interactions. The sudden shift to online learning has also elevated concerns regarding cyberbullying, online violence, exploitation and cyber security and further

⁵ <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/24/10367/pdf>

⁶ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346719308_Online_learning_during_COVID-19_Key_challenges_and_suggestions_to_enhance_effectiveness



psychological issues caused by uncertainties and difficulties related with online learning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷

2.5 FREE ONLINE PLATFORMS:

There are several live-video communicating platforms are accessible in web, but few of the free online platforms are mentioned below that can be utilised by learners of all sections-

- Zoom- Cloud platform for audio an video conferencing, chat, collaboration and webinars.
- Google Meet- Video calls combined with another Google's G-suite tools. Screen , Join calls, Video meeting recordings using Google Calendar.
- Skype- Audio and video calls with chat, talk and collaboration features.
- Facebook Live- It is a great fit for influencers businesses or individuals who are looking to broadcast videos demos or exhibit their company culture during live stream followers on Facebook can chat live and comment, schedule videos ahead of time to increase excitement.
- YouTube Live- It is a platform for showcasing a product with live interconnection, organising an educational session to train audience with screen sharing or utilising a whiteboard, having features with advanced scheduling and location tags.
- UberConference- Unlimited audio and video calls with chat, talk an collaboration features.
- FreeConference- It is ideal for smaller meetings or teams, feature include Document sharing, Screen sharing, Text sharing etc.
- Teams- Meet, call, collaboration and chat features fused with Microsoft Office software.
- TrueConf Online- HD video with collaboration tools such as remote desktop control, screen sharing, file transfer, recorded calls and shared virtual whiteboard.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research design is an essential process to give a conclusion and future implication for a researcher. This research is based upon Triangulation method. The data have been gathered from students and teachers of primary and secondary section, undergraduate and postgraduate degree. Through Google Forms, online questionnaire has been drafted for collecting data. The link to the questionnaire was circulated via WhatsApp and Instagram. All the questions were close ended. The consent of the participants were also attached with the questionnaire. The sample size was 500. The research was conducted in Gaibi Nagar, Thane Road and Nizampur area.

3.1 TEACHER'S ANALYSIS:

1. Were the students attentive during virtual classes?

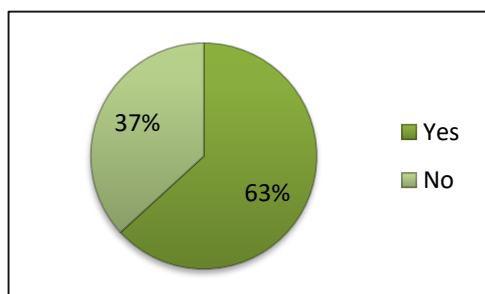


Figure: 1.1

⁷https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343381025_Challenges_and_Opportunities_for_Online_Education_in_India



As shown in figure 1.1, around 63% of students were attentive during virtual classes whereas 37% of students were not attentive due to lack of access to technology.

2. In your opinion, what have been the main challenges for teachers in switching to online learning?

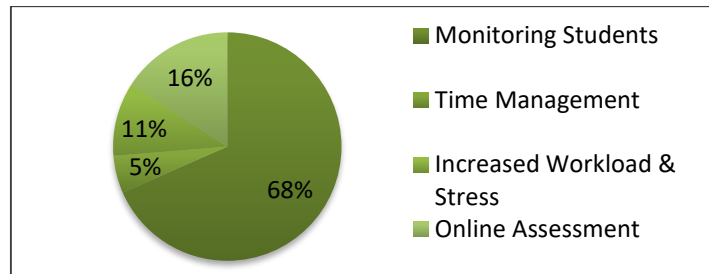


Figure: 1.2

As shown in figure 1.2, the most frequently mentioned challenge was monitoring student as mentioned by 68% of respondents. 16% of teachers were facing online assessment as another challenge in online learning. Increased workload and stress was reported by 11% of teachers and 5% of them were facing time management a challenge.

3. Which online platform do you prefer for online teaching?

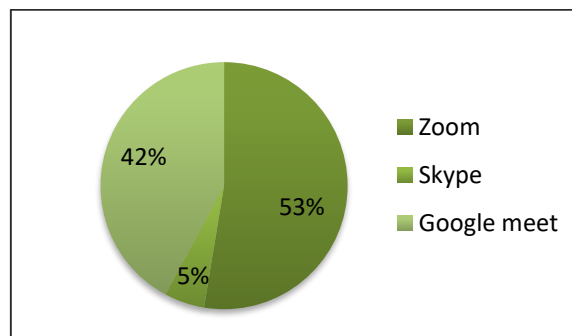


Figure: 1.3

As shown in figure 1.3, 53% of the participants have responded that they are using Zoom software application for teaching online. On the other hand, 42% of educators tend to use Google meet platform. Skype is hardly used by 5% of respondents.

4. Is it easy to evaluate learning outcomes through online teaching?

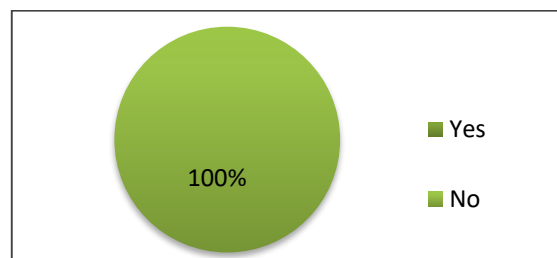


Figure: 1.4

As shown in figure 1.4, 100% of respondents confronted the problems of evaluating learning outcomes through online teaching due to non-availability of smartphones for students, data pack problem, network issues, and less participation of students.

5. Overall, how satisfied are you with your experience with the online teaching system on the e-learning platforms?

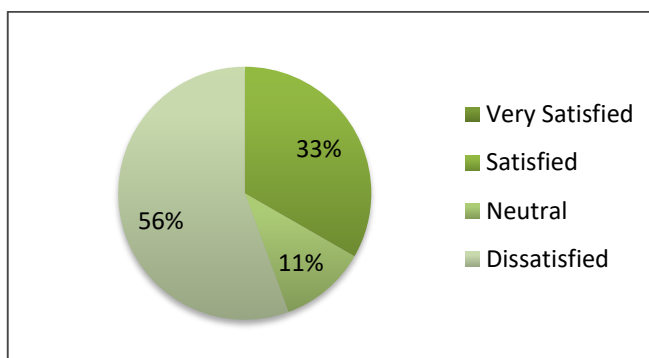


Figure: 1.5

As shown in figure 1.5, 55.6% of teachers were dissatisfied by online teaching system because of authenticity of student’s work, their understanding and behavioural changes cannot be checked. 33.3% of respondents were satisfied and 11.1% were neutral in their responses.

3.2 STUDENT’S ANALYSIS:

1. Do you have access to online learning?

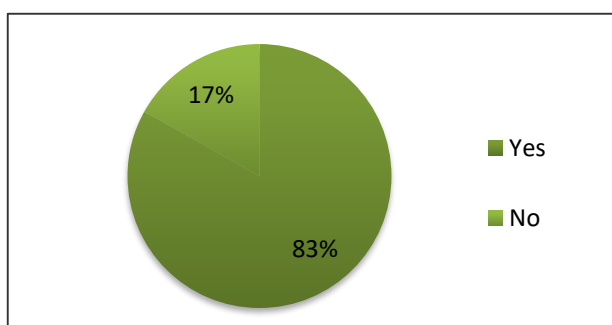


Figure: 2.1

As shown in figure 2.1, 83% of students have access to online learning whereas 17% of them don’t have any access. It was found that many students have low-family income and few of them have only one smartphone where they have to share with their siblings.

2. How satisfied are you with the current learning model at your school/college?

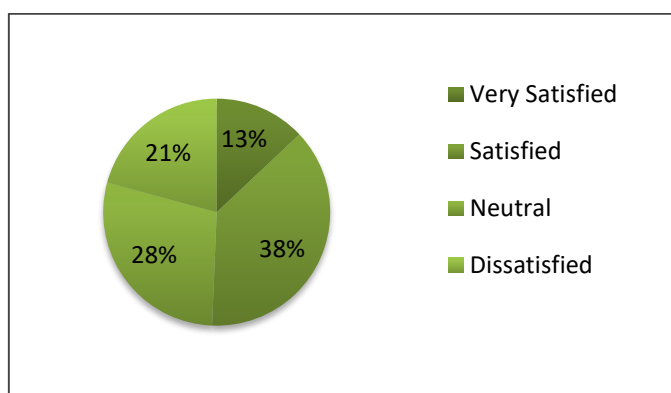


Figure: 2.2

As shown in figure 2.2, 13% of students were very satisfied and 38% were satisfied with the current learning model at school/college. 28% were neutral in their responses and 21% were dissatisfied as they face issues with internet facilities.



3. Do you think face to face learning is important for practical teaching?

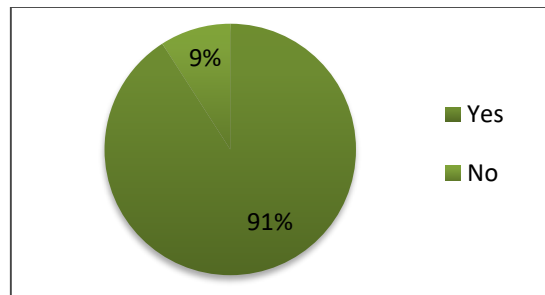


Figure: 2.3

As shown in figure 2.3, it is evident that 91% of students are supportive of conventional teaching for the practical session. And only 9% of them are not positive on e-learning for the practical sessions. In e-learning teaching, theoretical concepts are carried over the through various application tools which make the student more convenient but it lacks in practical teaching.

4. Do you feel lockdown affected your individual growth?

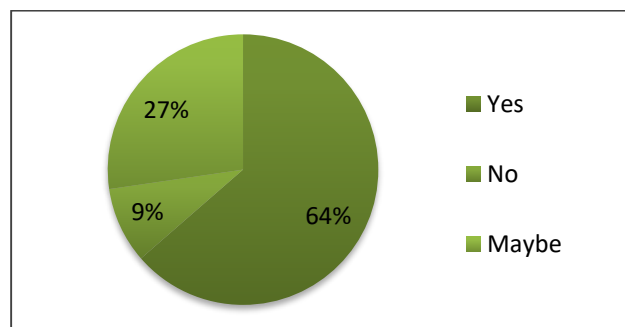


Figure: 2.4

As shown in figure 2.4, 64% of students feel that lockdown affected the individual growth and 9% of them feel unaffected. 27% of students were not sure about this.

5. Do you feel revision of the topics require after school/college re-opens?

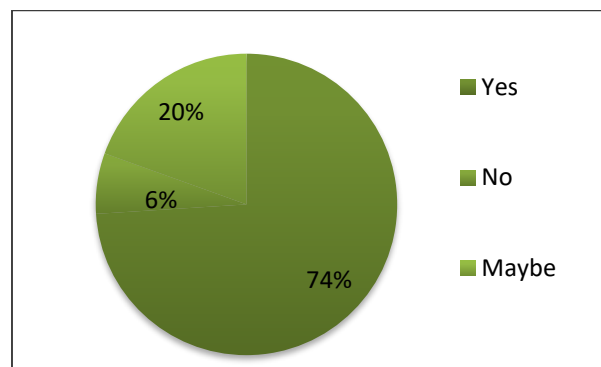


Figure: 2.5

As shown in figure 2.5, 74% of students have responded yes, meaning they require revision with traditional in-class face to face teaching at classroom once the school/college reopens after the COVID-19 lockdown. However, 6% students have responded that they don't need revision whereas 20% of them are not sure about the revision once the classes will be back to offline mode. Many students during teaching given their consent that they are not fully understood the concept due to infrastructure, technical and power problems.



6. Does online learning during a pandemic effects the eyesight of a student?

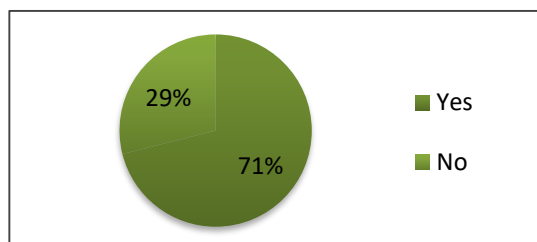


Figure: 2.6

As shown in figure 2.6, 71% of students have agreed that their eyesight is affected due to online learning and 29% of students said no. The main reason of impact on eyesight is due to blue rays which directly passes from device's screen to human eye.

7. Does e-learning improve your study skill?

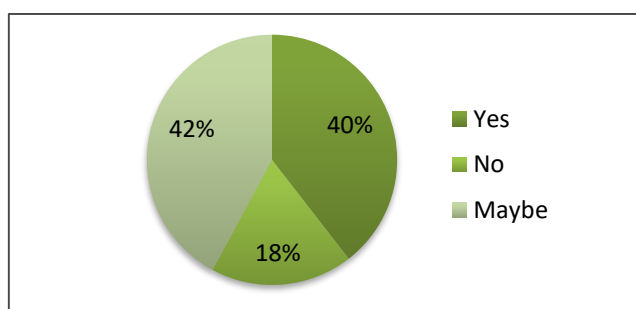


Figure: 2.7

As shown in figure 2.7, 40% of students have reported that their study skill has improved because of e-learning. Around 42% of them were opined in somewhat they are learning from e-sources because there are no other alternatives. And only 18% of them were not supposed that the e-source alone can improve their self-study skills.

4. SUGGESTIONS:

- Online learning is not economical for all comprising the poor and underprivileged of the society. Thus, mandatory steps must be taken by education institutions/government to reduce this gap between underprivileged and privileged learners.
- While conducting online classes, educational institutes must observe good online behaviours of students.
- Educators and learners should be habitual with web-based interactions like email, chat rooms and discussion boards before joining online classes.
- Educational institutions/government must acquire the policy to provide free digital gadgets and free internet to all the learners to embolden online learners.
- Educators should ask students to turn on their videos that can also expand their attention to the class activities or lectures.
- To create interest for online learning among students, educators should promote project-based learning, collaborative-learning and group-based learning.⁸

5. FUTURE IMPLEMENTATIONS:

- Action plan for sudden crisis should be made by government.

⁸https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342123356_ONLINE_LEARNING_DURING_LOCKDOWN_PERIOD_FOR_COVID-19_IN_INDIA



- Internet facilities should be made for all the learners and educators at free of cost.

6. CONCLUSION:

Today, online learning is the most ordinary system of distance learning. It has been enlarging widespread. Online learning mode make use of several applications of the internet to dispensed classroom materials and help educators and learners to interact with each other. During the period of COVID-19 lockdown, online learning is the finest platform to retain educators and learners engrossed and safe by continuing social distancing. Also, there are several free online learning platforms which supports live-video communication. Amongst all, Zoom and Google meet are the widely used platforms by educators and learners. During COVID-19, online learning has certainly brought several challenges for students, educators and school administrators. As argued above, the challenges have been related with the capacity and limited technological infrastructure, lack of experience to conduct supervision and assessment in an online mode, extra workload for education staff and teachers. There are also further challenges linked to learners having lack of access to technology and social economic factors. While studying online, one should wear blue glasses to remain safe from cataract and migraine issue. One should have proper sitting postures during online learning, to avoid spine problem. Also, meditation and mandala art is quite helpful for stress relief and better concentration. Though, mandatory steps should be ensure to train all members of education on online learning platform. Educational institutions/government must also acquire the policy and measures to provide free digital gadgets and free internet facilities to all learners in order to motivate online learning in consequence of which individual might get engaged through lockdown and endure safe from pandemic. At this time of lockdown as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19, online learning is considered as the best form of learning.

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