



ONLINE EDUCATION IN HIGHER STUDIES: PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS (18-25 YEARS) AND TEACHERS IN INDIA.

Rege K. and Dedhiya B.

Department of Human Development,
College of Home Science, Nirmala Niketan,
Affiliated to University of Mumbai, India,

Author: Dr. Kamini Prakash Rege, Associate Professor, Department of Human Development, College of Home Science, Nirmala Niketan, Affiliated to University of Mumbai, India.

Co-Author: Binal Dedhiya, Master's Program Research student, Department of Human Development, College of Home Science, Nirmala Niketan, Affiliated to University of Mumbai, India.

Abstract: Over the past decade, the Internet has had a profound impact on higher education by enabling the phenomenal growth of online learning, moreover, the unprecedented situation of uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 forced the Indian education system to move to digital learning and teaching to fill the gap created by suspending classroom teaching across the country. Technological development and the Internet have changed the lives of people immensely and have also brought a huge change in various fields (Nadikattu, 2020). The objectives of current study were to ascertain the perception of students and teachers in higher education regarding online teaching and learning and to provide information regarding its benefits, challenges and suggesting guideline to overcome the challenges resulting in effective and enhanced use of the future of education. Data was collected through a semi-structured, self-constructed tool, separate questionnaires for teachers and students. Questions were constructed both open ended questions and closed ended, Teacher's tool: 9 questions (1 open ended, 8 closed ended), Students tool: 11 questions (2 open ended, 9 closed ended) out of which 3 were relevant for this study. Results revealed for benefits of online learning for students were indicated as added flexibility in schedule and time-convenient by about majority of the students (60%) and large majority of teachers (74%) Little less than half of the teachers (48%) and more of the students (58%) also indicated it as cost-effective (saves time, travel, money, etc.). Regarding benefits of online teaching for teachers, about little less than half of the students (46%) and large majority of teachers (76%) indicated it as flexibility in schedule and time-convenient and large majority of teachers (74%) also indicated it as wide range of tools available (videos, movies, etc that assist in online-teaching.). The literature reviewed indicated the benefits of online teaching as flexible (time and location) and being able to learners who are very far from you. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666374020300121>). However, contradicting to these the current study also indicated benefits such as wide range of available tools and using innovative creative ways of teaching through digital platforms.

Key Terms: Online teaching, Online learning, Higher education

I. Introduction:

The majority of countries worldwide temporarily closed educational institutions to contain the spread of the COVID-19. Although the Indian government has attempted to control the damage by introducing online teaching through the virtual classroom, uploading and sharing e-study materials, and through virtual interaction, all such tools and techniques have limitations. This damage control mechanism will certainly have long-term consequences on the quality, accessibility, and deliverability of educational content. Conversely, due to the globalization and technological advancement, the introduction of computers in various learning institutions gave birth to online learning better known as E-learning. (<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343686522>) Education should be in any form, but the student's education should not be missed, it is necessary to give an important place to this point. Therefore, online education is the biggest means of the medium of education today. Also, it may turn out to be future of education with its numerous benefits. (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/personal-blog/importance-of-online-education-36962/>).

Need of the study: (Rationale)

The altered learning environments created by web-based technologies, not only eliminate barriers of time, space and arguably learning styles, providing increased access to higher education, they challenge our traditional notions of teaching and learning, and indeed higher education itself. (<https://www.ajpor.org/article/27445-impact-of-online-learning-in-india-a-survey-of-university->

[students-during-the-covid-19-crisis](#)). Therefore, it became very important for the research to understand students' perceptions regarding online learning, and will also prepare future faculty to teach online more efficiently by knowing teachers' perceptions and the shortcomings and will benefit the whole online-education. The findings of this study can be used by teachers to understand students' perceptions regarding online learning, and will also prepare future faculty to teach online more efficiently by knowing teachers' perceptions and the shortcomings. Ultimately the aim of this study is to improve their online instructional practices by using the guidelines provided and benefit most of the students pursuing higher education through online learning and teachers in online-teaching.

The objectives of the present study were as follows:

- 1) To elicit the strategies and guidelines from students and teachers in relation to:
 - i. benefits of online teaching and online learning
 - ii. adverse/challenges effects of online teaching and online learning
 - iii. strategies to overcome the adverse effect of online learning and online teaching

II. Methodology:

Research design: Exploratory research- The research design applicable to the current study was an exploratory research design

Sampling Technique, Sample Size and Sample Characteristics: Snowball and purposive/judgmental sampling was implemented. The total sample consisted of 100 participants (50 students, studying in the age group of 18-23 years and 50 teachers, teaching in higher education.) Participants were selected from Mumbai city. (India)

Sample characteristics of students: Age range of students was 18-20 years (50%) and 21-23 years (50%). More of students were currently studying at undergraduate level (58%) little more than one third of student were pursuing post-graduation (32%).

Sample characteristics of teachers: Age range of teachers was 31-35 years (10%) & 41-45 years (10%). Substantial majority of teachers were post-graduate (94%).

Research process and development of tool: In the initial process of the research, the researcher listed various topics which were of dear interest to them from the field of Human Development as well as their areas of interest from prior literature reviewed in journals and articles. Based on all the information collected, a broad category of research was selected. From this, the researcher then deducted a more specific area of research with the help of their research guide after which the researcher could further carry out their research in the area of online learning a relatively new trending phenomena because of covid-pandemic. In the data collection tool, the questions were pragmatically constructed after careful review of the objectives of the research to better understand the online teaching and learning in higher education. Questions were constructed closed ended. Out of all questions constructed 3 questions are relevant for the objective.

It was a self-constructed, semi structured questionnaire which was set in such a way that the researcher was able to gain an understanding into individuals' awareness on this topic as well as their perception about online teaching-learning, benefits disadvantages/challenges they faced, etc and various other topics related to online teaching and learning. Separate tools were made for students and for teachers to obtain data on their perception of online teaching/online-learning. The researcher provided several strategies that could be used to enhance the online teaching-learning practises. The participants could choose from amongst them, the best suited strategies.

Plan of analysis: Data was analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The plan of analysis was done for different objectives of the study. The responses of participants were qualitatively analysed using theme extraction and quantitatively analysed using frequencies and percentages

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No. 1

Benefits of online learning, online teaching according to students (n=50) and teachers (n=50).

Benefits of online learning, online teaching.	Students (n=50)		Teachers (n=50)		Total participants (n=100)
	f	%	f	%	
In relation to self	In relation to students				
added flexibility	30	60	37	74	67
cost- effective	29	58	24	48	53
learning at my own pace	28	56	24	48	52
enhanced technical skills	21	42	23	46	44
broad perspective and more collaborative	15	30	18	36	33
increased time-management	14	28	13	26	27
any other such as, more time to work on assignments	1	2	--	--	1
In relation to staff/teachers	In relation to self				
flexibility	23	46	38	76	61
wide range of available tools	20	40	37	74	57
innovative	20	40	30	60	50
more cost-effective and convenient	19	38	22	44	41

teaching at your comfort from your home	21	42	19	38	40
more-autonomy	9	18	21	42	30
enhanced work-life balance	12	24	15	30	27

Benefits of online teaching and online learning

Varied responses were obtained regarding benefits of online learning for students. About majority of the students (60%) and large majority of teachers (74%) indicated it as added flexibility (flexible schedule and time-convenient). Little less than half of the teachers (48%) and more of the students (58%) also indicated it as cost-effective (saves time, travel, money, etc.) and little more than quarter of participants (27%) also indicated it as increased time- management. [Refer to Table No.1]

Varied responses were obtained regarding benefits of online teaching for teachers. About little less than half of the students (46%) and large majority of teachers (76%) indicated it as flexibility (flexible schedule and time-convenient) and large majority of teachers (74%) also indicated it as wide range of tools available (videos, movies, etc that assist in online-teaching.). Majority of teachers (60%) also indicated being innovative (customisation possible in teaching practises) and little more than quarter of participants (27%) also indicated enhanced work-life balance as benefit. [Refer to Table No.1]

Table No. 2

Challenges experienced in online teaching/learning, according to students (n=50) and teachers (n=50)

Challenges experienced in online teaching/learning	Students (n=50)		Teachers (n=50)		Total participants (n =100)
	f	%	f	%	
In relation to self	In relation to students				
lack of discipline	35	70	22	44	57
lack of practical experience/knowledge	35	70	12	24	47
more distraction and noisy surrounding	29	58	15	30	44
requires self-motivation	19	38	11	22	30
excess screen-time leading to health-issues like poor postures/headaches, etc.	18	36	11	22	29
feeling of detached	17	34	12	24	29
more prone to technical issues	18	36	9	18	27
not suitable for students with practical learning approach	11	22	8	16	27
lack of adequate facilities	10	20	16	32	26
more prone to cheating/ dis-honesty	9	18	13	26	22
lack of technical skills	5	10	9	18	14
any other such as, losing focus	1	2	--	--	1
In relation to staff/teachers	In relation to self				
internet and connectivity issues	29	58	23	46	52
lack of teacher's internet access and lack of technical skills	25	50	22	44	47
distractions at home	27	54	17	34	44
keeping students motivated and engaged	21	42	22	44	43
less support from students	21	42	12	33	33
online communication with students	23	46	8	16	31
converting content and activities into online-friendly mode	9	18	11	22	20
difficulty in managing home and work from home	10	20	7	17	17
time management and organization	7	14	7	14	14
less support and motivation from institution	9	18	3	12	12
no challenges at all	5	10	0	0	5

Student's challenges for self in online-learning and their perception for challenges experienced by staff/teachers in online-teaching.

Varied responses were obtained when the participants were asked regarding the challenges experienced in online learning for self. Large majority of students (70%) stated it as lack of discipline and lack of practical knowledge/experience. More of the students (58%) also stated it as more distraction and noisy surrounding. [Refer to Table 3.2]

When asked about their perception of challenges experienced by staff/teachers more of the students (58%) stated it as internet and connectivity issues and half of the students (50%) indicated it as lack of teacher's internet access and lack of technical skills [Refer to Table No.2]

Teachers challenges for self in online-teaching and their perception for challenges experienced by students in online-learning.

Varied responses were obtained when the teachers were asked regarding the challenges experienced in online teaching for self. Little less than half of the teachers (46%) stated it as internet and connectivity issues and little less than half of the teachers (44%) indicated it as lack of teacher's internet access and lack of technical skills. [Refer to Table 3.2]

When asked about their perception of challenges experienced by students little more than one third of the teachers (44%) stated it as lack of discipline little more than quarter of the teachers (30%) also stated it as more distraction and noisy surrounding at the students end. [Refer to Table No. 2]

Table No. 3

Suggestions/strategies to overcome the challenges of online learning/teaching, according to students (n=50) and teachers (n=50)

Suggestions/strategies to overcome the challenges of online learning/teaching	Students (n=50)		Teachers (n=50)		Total participants (n=100)
	f	%	f	%	%
In relation to self			In relation to students		
make arrangements for good network connectivity	23	46	35	70	58
making class more dynamic and interactive.	37	74	20	40	57
developing more self-motivation	17	34	23	46	40
enhancing self-motivation (e.g.: Set short-term goals, and when you accomplish them, then you can reward yourself with a break.)	15	30	20	40	35
make a strict schedule and sticking to it	22	44	10	20	32
following a to-do-list	15	30	15	30	30
socializing and communicating with classmates virtually after class	12	24	15	30	27
avoiding distractions as far as possible	12	24	15	30	27
learning and adapting to new study skills	8	16	10	20	18
managing finances (take funds or educational aids seek help and ensure good network quality)	5	10	8	16	13
In relation to staff/teachers:			In relation to self:		
professional development (quick courses on online-teaching)	32	64	20	40	52
easy contact with experts (for technical issues, having some session with expert who can help you with technical skills)	20	40	30	60	50
clear guidance from ministry of education (clear instructions about protocols, schedules and regular updates and communication.)	25	50	24	48	49
websites with lists of useful resources (searching for online aids and resources/PPTs etc which assist in class.)	17	34	25	50	42
more webinars and teach meets to share ideas and discuss their challenges.	22	44	18	36	40
Make online classes more dynamic (making it more fun, interactive and online-friendly)	25	50	10	20	35
include more activities to engage interaction and engagement	20	40	15	30	35

Strategies to overcome the challenges of online learning/teaching

Mixed responses were obtained from participants regarding the strategies to overcome the challenges/adverse effects of online learning/teaching. When participants were asked about the strategies to overcome challenges faced by students in online-learning large majority of teachers (70%) and little less than half of the students (46%) suggested it as make arrangements for good network connectivity. Large majority of students (74%) also suggested it as making class more dynamic and interactive. [Refer to Table No. 3]

When participants were asked about the strategies to overcome challenges faced by teachers in online-teaching majority of students (64%) and little more than one third of teachers (40%) suggested it as professional development (quick courses on online-teaching) and little more than one third of students (40%) and majority of teachers (60%) also suggested it as easy contact with experts (for technical issues, having some session with expert who can help you with technical skills. [Refer to Table No. 3]

Discussion:

Similarly, as literature of review indicated these as benefits of online learning, time flexibility, location flexibility, catering to wide audience, wide availability of courses & content the current study also had majority of students who indicated the benefit as flexibility of time and location. (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0047239520934018>) However, it also contradicted some the review and indicated more of students also had benefits like cost-effective, learning at my own pace, enhanced technical skills and increased time-management. The literature reviewed indicated the benefits of online teaching as flexible (time and location) and being able to learners who are very far from you. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666374020300121>). However, contradicting to these the current study also indicated benefits such as wide range of available tools and using innovative creative ways of teaching through digital platforms. In current study the challenges stated by students in online learning were lack of practical knowledge and experience by large majority of students and more of them also indicated distractions and noisy surrounding at home too. In contradictory to the literature reviewed which indicated the challenges such as technical difficulties, learner's capability & confidence level, time management. (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0047239520934018>). Similarly, literature reviewed the challenges faced by teachers in online-teaching are internet and connectivity issues and lack of teacher's knowledge and technical skills. ([https://www.academia.edu/76919485/A Critical Review by Teachers on the Online Teaching Learning during the COVID 19](https://www.academia.edu/76919485/A_Critical_Review_by_Teachers_on_the_Online_Teaching_Learning_during_the_COVID_19)) However, in the current study when teachers were asked about the challenges faced by students in online learning more than one third of teachers and more than quarter of teachers stated it as lack of discipline and noisy surroundings at students place which contradicted the review of literature which indicated cheating, dishonesty and less support from students. ([https://www.academia.edu/76919485/A Critical Review by Teachers on the Online Teaching Learning during the COVID 19](https://www.academia.edu/76919485/A_Critical_Review_by_Teachers_on_the_Online_Teaching_Learning_during_the_COVID_19)). Similar to most of the literature reviewed the strategies to overcome challenges in online teaching/ learning were making class more dynamic, fun and interactive whilst for teachers it was clear guidance, courses on technical skills/professional development and have more support from students and institution. (<https://www.ijser.org/researchpaper/E-Learning-Usage-among-Indian-Students.pdf>) ([https://www.academia.edu/76919485/A Critical Review by Teachers on the Online Teaching Learning during the COVID 19](https://www.academia.edu/76919485/A_Critical_Review_by_Teachers_on_the_Online_Teaching_Learning_during_the_COVID_19))

Contributions of the study

In India, online education came more in limelight only because of global pandemic. As there was very little awareness about online-teaching and learning, hence, the researcher decided to work on this one-of-a-kind research topic. The researcher has contributed by creating an open and closed ended questionnaire which has been reviewed by experts and has been successfully executed it on a large group of 100 participants in a span of 1 month. One of the significant contributions of this research has been to create a brochure with brief information on online teaching and online learning in higher education as well creating strategies and guidelines for online-education as this can be the future of education and prove to be so beneficial in times of crisis which is indeed rewarding for all those who participated in the research.

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