

An Empirical Analysis Of Online Learning Over The Face-To-Face Learning

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ABSTRACT:

The massive growth in technology gave impetus to the virtual world. Within a decade e-world is gradually entering all the sectors. Right from online shopping, booking tickets, trading of shares, online banking facilities etc., and the education system is not an exception to it. The recent pandemic brought a drastic change to the learning world, as the whole education system took a new path of learning and teaching. This pandemic forced all the schools and education to shut under lockdown and all the educators and students were put in a situation to learn everything online. Various challenges were faced by the teachers and students as it was highly challenging and difficult to adapt to a new learning world within a short time and with less resources. Hence an attempt is made to study the analysis of online learning over the face-to-face learning. The various challenges faced by both teachers and students and areas of improvement are suggested. A sample size of 120 respondents was selected as population; the primary method of data collection was used by using a questionnaire. Descriptive analysis is done to analyze the situation and its acceptance level of this new normal from both teachers' and students' perspective.

Keywords:

Virtual world, e-learning, online teaching, online platforms.

INTRODUCTION

With the increased exposure to the online world, all the traditional systems are transformed into a virtual world like online shopping, banking, booking tickets, watching movies, etc. Hence now the education system is no more an exception. In the past two decades, the government has played a pivotal role in boosting the e-learning. It was initially started with satellite-based classrooms and subsequently followed by NKN (National Knowledge Network), NMEICT (National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology). It also created e-access to information and library databases like INFLIBNET (Information and Library Network). It is also predicted that it shall create a new paradigm of National Academic Credit Bank (NACB), which shall ultimately transform the concepts of new generation degrees in the overall education system.

The current Pandemic has introduced everyone to new normal not only via increased hygiene but transformed the learning process too. The MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) gained momentum after this pandemic. Professional agencies like Coursera, edX, Udemy aggressively promoted and offered a helping hand in this crisis by providing many free courses to students. After the immediate announcement of 21 days lockdown all the schools and colleges were shut

and forced students to return to their native, this period also brought a milestone in academics. It was a drastic change overnight with the pandemic and all the educators and learners were forced to equip themselves as they were all at the closure of the academic year. The major questions posed before educators were-How can data be transformed into knowledge? How to reach students so it doesn't compromise the quality of the learning process in face-to-face lectures? How to get immediately equipped with this new technology? Especially the ones who lack experience in technology faced major issues. This posed a big challenge to all the institutions and administrations for efficient delivery of learning especially the one who lacked organized and efficient online infrastructure. It was also supposed to ensure impeccable learning as the academic year was about to end. It was again a challenge to enthrall students in the current scenario as their mental health was also affected. So many questions but then gradually Virtual learning has become the new ritual. The Internet has made it possible to reach every corner of the world, and educators and researchers adapted to this virtual world as no other option was left with them, while combating the reduction in infrastructure resources. It was the biggest challenge as well bounty opportune to the IT sector, as many software professionals bolstered to

bridge the gap created by the current pandemic by developing various new applications. Some of the applications or platforms used for delivery of online lectures include - WebEx, Zoom, MS Team, Google Meet, Google Classroom, etc. This also proved to be an overnight cost to the schools and college institutions as immediately those licenses of the software were bought to keep the learning going without disruptions. Online teaching was mainly equipped with, for the safety and concern purpose but it is gaining its popularity and momentum with time. Virtual learning is adopted to continue the academics as students' career shouldn't be impacted. Though the pandemic is transitory it gave new milestones in academics. It was a meteoric development in the education system.

With this drastic development in the education system which moved towards e-world, an attempt is made to study and check if traditional "brick and mortar" can lose its strength and possibility of being replaced with the online mode of teaching. An in-depth analysis is made to find out how the current generation are experiencing the online learning and what challenges does it pose, also the level of acceptance in comparison to the face-to-face learning.

This new virtual learning is predicted to a new paradigm and all educators and researchers are interested in taking it with high enthusiasm and concern. It is imperative to consider both the pros and cons of virtual learning so it would enable us to face the challenges involved in it and embrace the opportunities emerging from it.

A) Pros of Virtual Classrooms

Virtual learning gave a new paradigm to the students by not limiting themselves to only bookish knowledge. It gave several accesses to information and various courses for self-building.

1. **Access from Anywhere-** The giant advantage basically to students and educators of asynchronous online learning is it can be done from any corner of the world. All that is needed is only a computer and an internet connection. The biggest barrier of traveling around the globe has been made easy with virtual classrooms.
2. **No time limit-** Students can access study materials and information round the clock at their convenience. There is no time limit in gaining knowledge now. This is more helpful in the current juggling life of work, family, psychological impact, etc. Study materials, lectures are available online for students anytime. This is especially more fruitful for slow learners who can re-read as many times as they want.

3. **Synergy-** The online setup permits an active interaction between the instructor and students and among the students themselves. Resources and ideas are pooled, and continuous synergies are being created through learning. Every person can contribute to the group discussions and give inputs to others' work. The synergy that happens in the student-centered Virtual Classroom is the most matchless and vigorous traits that online learning possesses.
4. **Flexibility-** Holding little excuse for not pursuing higher education to get a degree, many and many people are inclined towards online classes with the hopes of enhancing their careers, which ultimately lead to getting a good paycheck. With the juggling of work and family routine, this acts as a great breather to the learner as they can study or pursue higher education as per their flexibility of the job and other responsibilities. This strengthens their knowledge and quenches their thirst for knowledge.
5. **Work and earn simultaneously-** Often students tend to earn only after earning a degree, but online learning makes it easier for the learners to work as a part-time or intern and study at the same time as per their own pace. This is also highly beneficial for professionals who are already working and want to pursue a higher degree for their career enrichment. It is highly difficult for all to quit his or her job and jump into full-time academia. Professionals can carry the laptop to work and utilize their unproductive or break hours to work on a class in the cafeteria with Wi-Fi services. Commuting to college from work or home is considerably saved. Those using public transportation have been known to sneak in some coursework in such downtimes. This greatly allows utilizing their vacation period to invest time productively to learn some new courses and enrich their knowledge.
6. **Sports and other athletic activities-** Student-athletes can benefit from online courses. Sports are very arduous and need hours of physical activity leaving it to be quite a challenge to complete any coursework. The online course provides perfect flexibility to student-athletes in these aspects. This enables them to schedule their class time, practice time, and game time.
7. **The plethora of options-** Traditionally, students were stuck with choosing from limited options that were available at a certain time and a certain location nearby or remote. With online courses, students can travel the world without a flight and

passport. Students get a plethora of options that suits their area of interest or career. Offline class forces them to choose only limited courses available even by sacrificing their area of interest due to limited options. Now they can choose their course and learn it from anywhere and anytime. This is a major boost for the students to explore all the options and make a strong career.

8. **A lot of savings in money-** Online classes proved to be cheaper in comparison to offline classes. Infrastructure cost like the need for large space, classrooms, and playground is drastically saved. For online classes, all they need is a workstation for each faculty with high-speed internet in a small studio like space to deliver the lectures. The classes can be shot in a single sitting for recorded lectures and can replay as per their requirements.
9. **Direct Interaction with the students-** Live lectures conducted by the college allows direct interaction between faculties and students and eliminates doubts during lectures. This kind of attention is highly rewarding for the students. This also boost students' morale.
10. **Innovative learning making the best use of technologies-** One of the great aspects of learning through digital technologies is Teachers can convert rote learning to interesting learning by making content gamified. Faculties are progressively incorporating content in online courses into interesting online games. This allows creating an interesting learning process and also self-assessing learning and measuring your progress. By self-assessing, students understand what went wrong and rectify their mistakes and learn from it, as a part of improving their weakness. Generally, these point scores don't subsidize towards final marks in the course but do help to quantify the progress and make learning more joyful.
11. **Reduction in classroom chaos-** Every Teacher's favorite dialogue "I want pin-drop silence" is achieved during online classes, as faculty have the privilege to mute the students during the session and unmute them only during doubt sessions. This eliminates a noisy atmosphere that happens during the traditional classroom. No chitchats during class as students are remotely located and they have full focus as they plug into earphones or headphones. This is a major boon for the teachers to teach in a smooth uninterrupted manner without breaking the flow of the content.
12. **Comfortable learning-** Nobody might have ever imagined attending or teaching class in their pajamas or comfort clothes. Many of the times teachers or students keep their webcam off when not required to run a voiceover over the top of lecture slides. In case of doubts, they raise their concern by unmuting themselves or using the chat window. Everyone on both sides uses their private space at the utmost comfort level. A TV is on in the background, a dog is barking, or a kettle is boiling. These people can learn from their comfortable space.
13. **Opportunity for teachers to become e-learning experts-** Online learning is gaining its momentum and considered as a 'specialty' that only certain universities specialize in. In countries like Australia, it's increasingly gaining its importance. In the UK, it's the Open University, and in the US it's Western Governors and Phoenix Universities. It serves as a big opportunity for the teachers to become an expert in e-learning as it may enhance their career as online learning is in trend and may take its place in the near future. When teachers become tech-savvy, ultimately students are benefited as they get impeccable learning.
14. **Learn, Re-learn at your own pace-** Some institutions allow recorded learning or share the complete materials; it helps the slow learners to read, learn, and re-learn at their own pace. Hence students can access the materials and learn at their convenience and can have self-paced learning.
15. **New learning opportunities for students-** It was found that 67% of students who study online complete at least some of their coursework using smartphones. Online courses are increasingly assimilated with mobile technologies to enhance convenience and study while watching TV, traveling, etc. Lectures are also being swapped by podcasts and videos, making learning more student-centered and ensuring students can learn in their own time and space.
16. **Locate, re-locate-** Sometimes people travel for work, vacations, etc. due to which studies get disturbed and they miss on the leanings. Now due to online learning, anyone can travel around the globe and utilize their time in studying without missing it. Most of the time students relocate to study in topmost universities, now all the travel costs are saved which is huge money as it saves ticket cost, renting space etc.
17. **University competition, a big perk to students -** Online learning is growing even while overall university enrolments continue to fall. Universities are working hard to attract more students to their online courses. Universities realize that they can

attract students from far and wide with online degrees. The consequence of this is that there's a massive competition between universities planning to attract students. Online degrees are progressing in leaps and bounds. Such competitions boost them to improve on their quality teaching which ultimately benefits the students.

18. **Digital skill**-While graduating with an online degree, students get exposure to online learning tools such as Google Docs, Canvas, Blackboard, Webinars, Group Wikis, and Forums, etc. Graduating with an online degree denotes to future employers that students are well equipped with technological skills and a future-facing, technology-capable, 21st Century employee. This marks a selling point that on-campus students are less capable in comparison.

B) Cons of Virtual Classrooms

As every luxury comes with a price, online learning also has many cons.

1. **Limitation in access to good technology**- Some institutions offer some online courses and provide their institution technology and it must be updated so that students can download the coursework. This might be a big concern for some students. It is of utmost concern to figure out the budget for the tools to be used in online teaching before enrolling. If institutions provide poor technology the whole learning might go for a toss.
2. **Challenge of virtual class setting at home**- Creating own classroom atmosphere at home is a biggest task and challenge for both teachers and students as a dog might be barking at your house, elders might be watching TV, or listening music, or some doing their household chores which creates a lot of disruption and commotions at the back end. This results in disturbance for the teacher to deliver the content smoothly. While studying online, it becomes independent learning for the students as they have to miss peer learning and can't discuss the way it used to happen in face-to-face classrooms. Furthermore, with independent studying, the likelihood of participating in group projects is bleak. Approaching any issues through teamwork is a strong skill set to have as it is imperative to almost any work environment. Although students have the advantage to contact their professor at the stroke of a key, they tend to eliminate the option of having personal face time with him or her.
3. **Missing out college experience**- College life is not only about academic work, but it's the campus environment, college clubs, college festivals, and

the camaraderie of college pride that's created over the years between students, professors, administrators and staff that create memorable college experience. Online classes can distance students from all such memories and experiences.

4. **Lack of physical experiments**- Some kind of degree might not provide the students with 100% learning experience. As some degrees require experiments, lab tests, it becomes difficult to earn a degree 100% online. Some degree programs like nursing courses, medical courses require some kind of credit hours on physical experiments, etc., some also include site visits which might not be possible in online leanings.
5. **No peer interaction**- One of the major parts of learning is the experience multiplied by utilizing time with peers undergoing the same courses. Many like group discussion, case study analysis, and brainstorming among peers are missed out during online classes. This lack of human interaction is very noticeable in virtual classes.
6. **Distractions on the internet**- The advertisement has been the prominent source of income for every online platform available on the internet. Every website tries to grab the student's attention and views to earn revenue. This could be highly distracting for students to focus on and concentrate on learning during an online class. Pop-up ads and advertisements and other the notification from the app or website form a great challenge for individuals looking to study from online classes.
7. **Lack of discipline**- Along with the leisure of learning anytime, anywhere, here comes the great responsibility for students to be self – disciplined. Class discipline is one of the vital components for successful teaching and learning. Student's accountability is more as they have to be highly dedicated, single-minded, and ready to put their time and energy to finish the classes. Accountability is present in real-life classes in the presence of a teacher, but in an online class, it becomes a task. Self- discipline has become the solution as well as one of the most challenging aspects of daily online classes. Mastering this is sure to prove quite difficult for students who attend just for the sake of attending without interest or under parent's pressure.
8. **Technical issue**- This is the biggest problem during online classes, as the website or the platform used crashes many times leading to disruption in the flow of learning. Poor internet connection also leads to technical glitches and students tend to miss the learning.

9. **Frequent Logging out by the students-** Not every subject is interesting, though the educator put his full efforts in making the class interesting, it is ultimately the choice of the student to attend every lecture. Many students sometimes tend to log out during the online class, reasons are not restricted only to subjects, but the technical issue, distractions at home can also contribute to such activity.

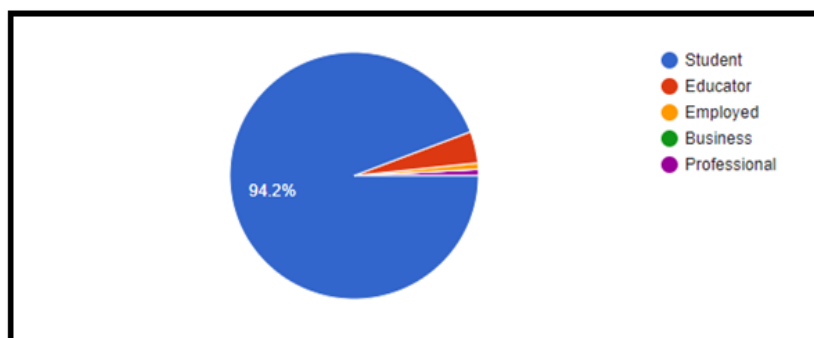
10. **Creating ruckus in chorus-** Some disinterested students create a ruckus if they don't like the teacher or subject by muting the teacher or constantly chatting or sending memes in the chat window, or shouting in chorus in the background. All these things create chaos and demotivate the teacher.

11. **Feeling of isolation-** Like in the traditional learning where the whole classrooms used to be filled with a bunch of new students with a lot of hopes and eager, that sight will no more be available. Since all students might not stay nearby and are remotely located, creating a peer group, making friends, socializing will become a big task, especially to the introverts. This results in a sense of isolation. It will be difficult to cope with teamwork and may miss on pal to tap on the shoulder and ask for their help. Students have to become not only self-disciplined but also self-reliant, although the teacher may be available on the other end for assistance, more often they feel reluctant to contact.

A) Data analysis and Interpretation

Descriptive Analysis

Data of the respondents



Qualification of the respondents

Source: Researchers Compilation

12. **Invigilation issues-** Invigilating students during exams is another level challenge for all the invigilators, as during offline classrooms they tend to find out the infinite room for cheating and unfair means. This online test can be a big add on for them to copy or cheat as they can simply open google and try to fetch answers.

13. **Health issues-** Constant sitting at one place for online learning can result in many health issues like back pain, obesity, posture issues. Also, too much exposure to screen may cause stress on eyes, and constant use of headphones results in ear problems and headaches. Mental health also gets affected as sometimes class control goes for a toss or students misbehave.

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

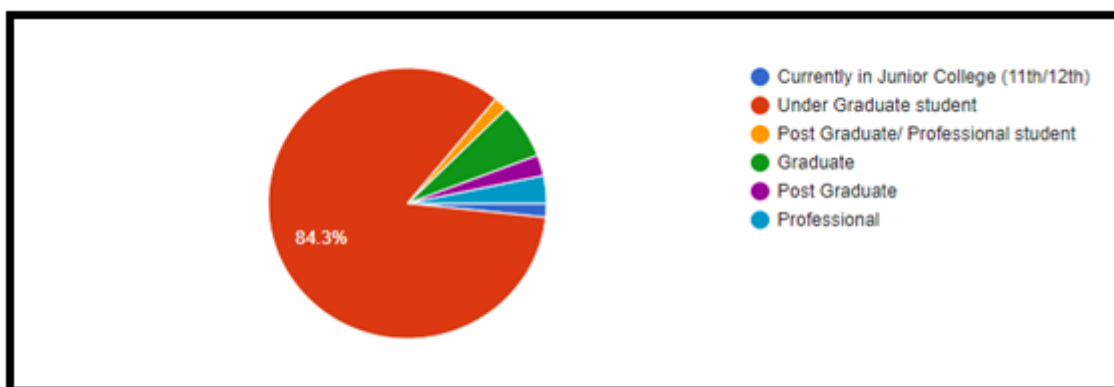
- 1) To study the impact and acceptability of online learning and teaching over the face-to-face learning.
- 2) To study the challenges involved in online learning or teaching in comparison to face to face learning or teaching.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

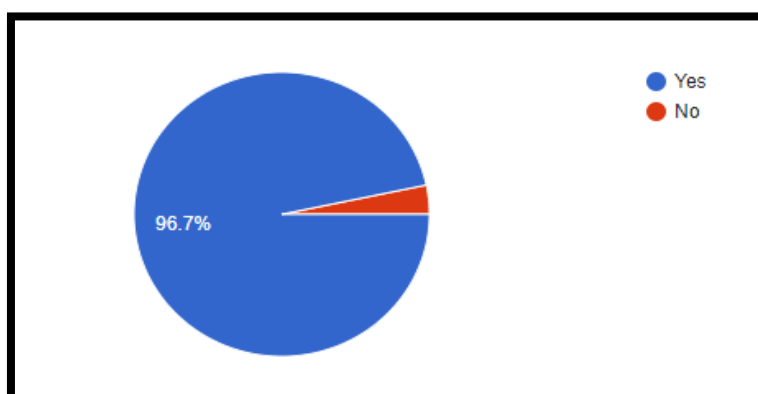
Sample of 120 was selected out of which all respondents' response was recorded.

Primary method – Questionnaire was used as means for data collection.

Secondary – e-resources, newspapers, global reports, and statistic database were used.



Question: Are you learning via online mode? - 96.7% Said YES



Question: Which platform do you use?

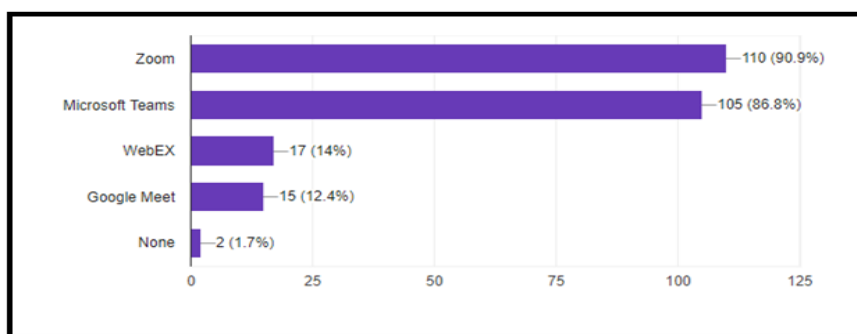
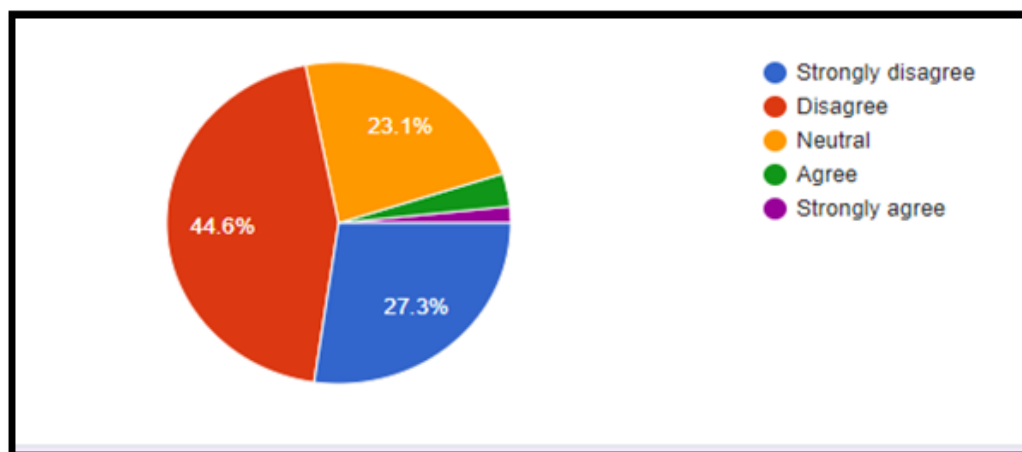


Figure1: Frequently used platform for online learning or teaching.

It was observed from the data collected from the respondents that the majority use ZOOM (90.9%) and Microsoft Teams (86.8%) as a means for learning or teaching. These platforms gained a massive response as Zoom was given free login and many institutions

opted MS Teams as it was free with outlook. It was also observed many found it convenient not only for the online lecture but it was also majorly used for video conferencing and video calls by corporate

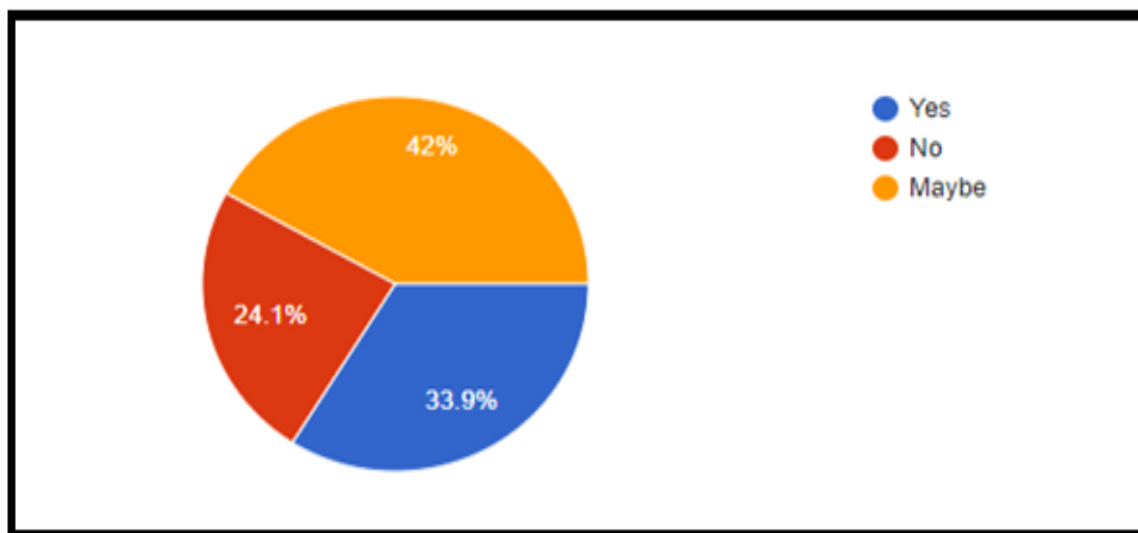


Question: Do you agree Online learning or teaching is much more effective than traditional face to face learning?

It was witnessed that 44.6% of the total population disagreed, which showed the urge of many to learn or teach via offline. The main reason for the students' perspective was some lectures used to be a lull, or slow and students couldn't cope with the pace of the teacher

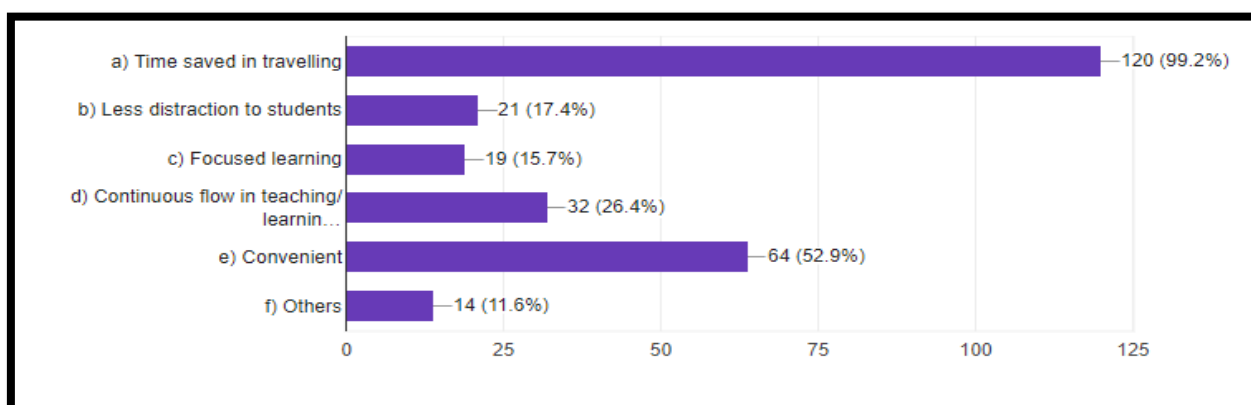
and vice versa. Hence this might have resulted in a communication gap or barrier. From the teacher's perspective, it becomes slightly difficult for the educator to analyze the student's reaction or response which could easily be understood during offline lectures.

Question: Do you think there is class control of the students?



This was a major question in which the resultant was clueless. The major reasons when scrutinized were observed that many students log in, and sometimes keep their account logged in but might be involved in various unproductive activities like watching TV, playing games, etc., if they aren't interested in the lecture. It's highly less likely to come under the teacher or parent's control until they keep a continuous track or watch over them. When scrutinized from Teacher's point, it was observed that sometimes students don't switch on their webcam and come up with various invalid reasons. Also, they are unable to track or identify good students or bad ones.

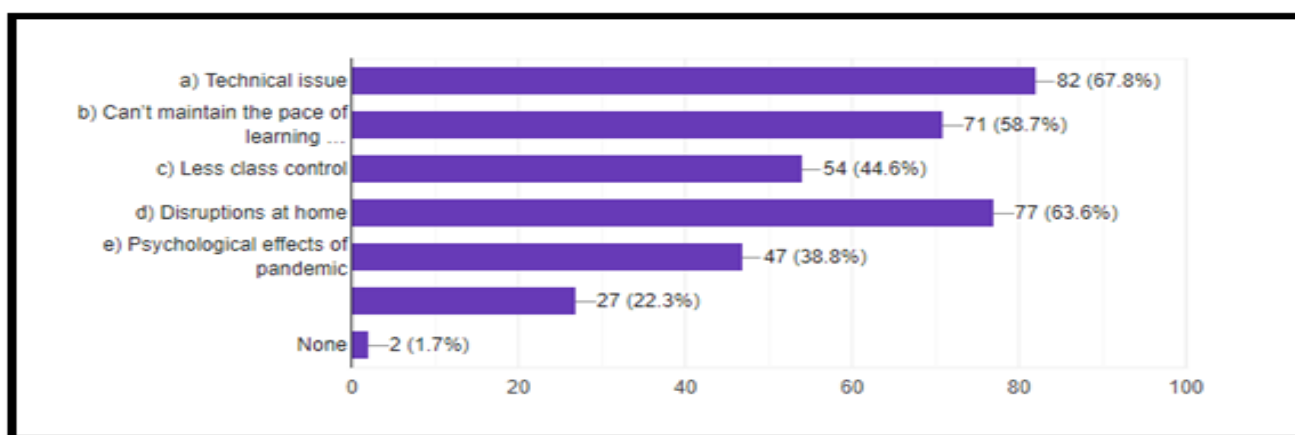
lecture. It's highly less likely to come under the teacher or parent's control until they keep a continuous track or watch over them. When scrutinized from Teacher's point, it was observed that sometimes students don't switch on their webcam and come up with various invalid reasons. Also, they are unable to track or identify good students or bad ones.



The above bar graph depicts the advantages of virtual learning. With the hustle of a city like Mumbai which is well known for its traffic, traveling is a daily task for everyone, and students and professors are no exception to it. Given a choice to learn from home virtually the major benefit was the time saved in traveling for all. It is rightly said by Stephen R. Covey that “The key is in not spending time, but investing in it”. It was highly

convenient for people in Mumbai not to travel and learn virtually. Approximately 99.9% of the population had experienced the benefit of time saved in traveling. 52% of the respondents found it convenient to learn or teach online as they were well equipped with the technology. Those who had good IT infrastructure and love for technology were lured by Online learning and took the best leisure.

Figure 3: Data showing the disadvantages of online learning/ teaching.



From the above data, it can be concluded that the major barrier in virtual classrooms was the technical issue faced by them. Approximately 68% of the respondents faced a technical issue while learning or delivering lectures, followed by disruptions at the home background which is another issue for students and educators to focus on. When scrutinized with respondents many came up with their issues at home like parents yelling, or watching loud music and tv, baby crying, etc. as it's home at the end of the day, creating a classroom-like atmosphere at home was the biggest challenge for both students and educators, as they have to juggle with so many responsibilities at a single point of time. It is of utmost importance to keep

the pace of learning or teaching with the faculty. This was easier in the face-to-face lectures as student-teacher relationships could be established and both could sail in the same boat with proper speed, however, this was slightly difficult to during online lectures. Because most of the time students were logged out several times due to technical issues and second reason found to be the noisier atmosphere at home due to which they were not able to catch up with the speed. Also from educators' view, it was identified that eye contact which is vital during teaching was missed out in online learning. So it was not traceable to educators also to identify the message delivery of the content to students as the main element is lacking even though if webcams were kept on.

Question: Are you satisfied with this new normal of online learning or teaching?

When posed the major question of accepting this new normal of online learning, it was a kind of mixed response. It could be seen from the above pie chart that only 43% of the respondents denied and remaining only 22 % were happy and accepted whereas, approx. 35% of the population were neutral that they may accept this new normal in the future. When it was

scrutinized it could be found that online learning could be embraced provided proper training on technology appropriate equipment was made available to all, like small tabs, laptops, free internet. It was known from the educators that they lacked proper training in technology and IT equipment as it wasn't provided by the institutions and they had to bear the additional cost, which was a burden to them in this lockdown.

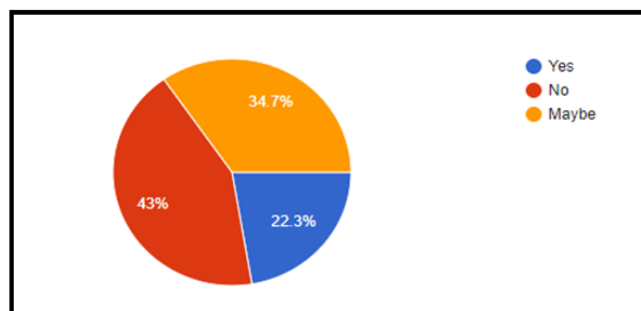
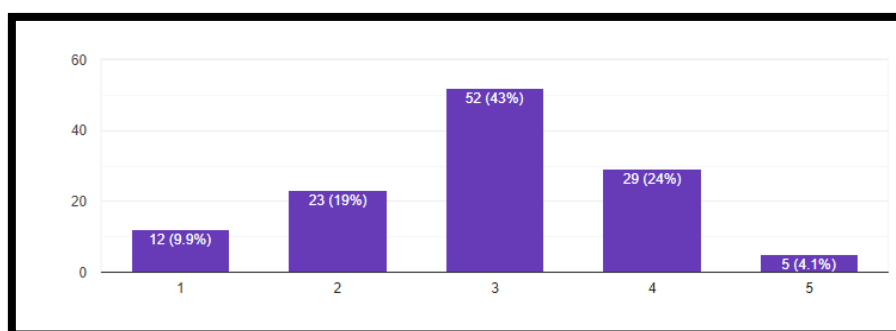
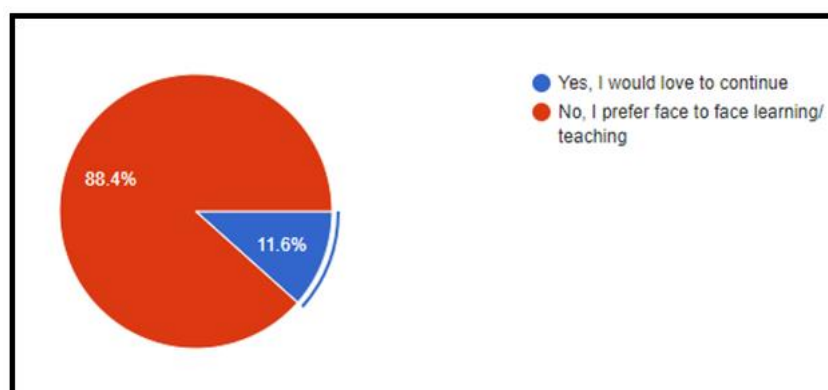


Figure 4: Bar graph indicating the rating of acceptance of online learning on a scale of 1 to 5(1= Poor, 5= Excellent)



Data describes that online learning was neither completely resisted by the users nor it was completely accepted by them. It stood at a rating of 3 with 43% votes, leaving a ray of hope that there still exists the scope of online learning in the future. The major factor why it wasn't counted as the one-stop solution was that the change couldn't be accepted by the students or educators as many facilities were lacking especially the middle-income group of masses. It wasn't easy for them to equip their kids immediately to online

classrooms by providing laptops or even smartphones next came the internet connectivity. Apart from network issues, it was an additional cost to the learners and educators who were deprived of such facilities. Only 4% of the population was ready to accept it wholeheartedly due to the availability of facilities and their good knowledge of technology. Of course, the one who suffered in lockdown also suffered majorly in education, as there were limited resources available with them, some of their parents were jobless or were left with little savings.



Question: Once the Pandemic is over, would you prefer to continue learning or teaching via online mode?

Overall the opinion of the population was in favor of offline learning and teaching. The above pie chart depicts only 11.6% who have accepted this new normal of the virtual world. Remaining 88% of the population didn't want to continue post-pandemic. The major reason was already discussed under the disadvantages of online learning. This pandemic brought a drastic change in the education system to every corner of the world. To compare with an analogy, it was like everyone was thrown in the ocean to swim and survive. And only those who were well equipped with technology and facilities could make progress and embrace this change. The highly affected masses in the pandemic and lockdown were struck and lagging due to the unavailability of resources and couldn't afford to buy all the amenities needed for smooth learning. The higher income group who could immediately afford these facilities could accept this new normal and take the benefit out of the change.

CONCLUSION

With given data and analyzing the facts, it can be concluded that though the pros of online learning outweigh the cons, various amenities are lacking due to which still it couldn't hold a place immediately. Also given the fact online learning seed was planted long ago but it busted out during this pandemic, when the country was under lockdown. This lockdown created a struggle phase for everyone around the world. Many corporates fired their employees, some were working on half-pay, whereas those running their own business also faced severe downfall. Many migrants got stuck, as in many parts of the country railways and airlines were shut. Many got stranded with no money or less money. Also, many were psychologically affected with the pandemic and couldn't focus on one thing, survival was itself a major question. And stress levels were high everywhere. In this kind of situation it was highly difficult not only for

parents but also the educators to create a classroom effect despite several hardships at home, whether disruption in the background during lecture or responsibilities, it was hard to cope-up with both.

The above study depicted that only few who were well versed with technology and could immediately bear the cost of online infrastructure grabbed this new opportunity of learning, whereas the one who were struggling through the current pandemic found it not only hard but quite impossible to adapt immediately. The data also depicts certain shortcomings in the amenities which if were improved might pave road to online learning smoothly. Online learning was very economical and can prove to be a success story, provided proper amenities like training on technology and equipment like laptops, microphones, headphones, whiteboards, and markers were made available to employees beforehand except few institutions who were successful in it. As it is wisely said only the strongest survives, it is proved that only the high-income group who could afford the facilities could make the best out of it whereas the middle and lower-income groups found it difficult to embrace the change during this hardship phase. The content provider should be in sync with the learner to make sure that students have learned and the content is delivered with utmost care for its success. Online learning has many pros in the long run, it can be successful, if provided with a simple facility like a computer and uninterrupted internet service, and improve the shortcomings in it, and then definitely it can create its paradigm in this dynamic world.

SUGGESTIONS

After a complete analysis and as per the opinion of the users few suggestions are listed below to make online learning successful in the long way.

- a) IT equipment like Laptops, computers, microphones, headphones, whiteboards, markers,

pointers should be made available by the institutions for the educators and students.

- b) Uninterrupted internet connectivity which plays a pivotal role should be provided for smooth learning and teaching.
- c) Proper Hands-on training in respect of relevant platforms used like Zoom, WebEx, MS Teams should be given to both educators and students.
- d) An appropriate support system of IT professionals concerning technical assistance should be made available 24/7 for uninterrupted learning.
- e) Educators should come up with proper Course pedagogy to deliver the content in a suitable interesting manner to keep the learners engaged throughout the session.
- f) More Quiz or gaming type learning should be introduced for the active participation of the learners.
- g) Classroom type atmosphere should be made, though it is challenging for both the users, as background disruptions during learning is one of the biggest obstacles during online classes.
- h) Apart from teachers' effort on online classes, students' accountability should also be given due concern, since they are remotely located. And Self-discipline should be mastered by student themselves or parents should keep a track on their learning to be fruitful.
- i) Continuous assignments and projects should be given to assess their performance in academics.
- j) Since online learning is not restricted to only academics, other co-curricular activities like learning music, Yoga, Physical exercises can also be taught by the respective teachers of schools and colleges.

In the long run as the whole world are being digitalized, education system can make a drastic change using online learning and provide plethora opportunities to students. If the government or the institutions could consider and resolve all the shortcoming and hurdles, it can definitely prove to be success in the near future.

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