

Attitude of Rural Undergraduate Students Towards Online Learning

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Abstract

E-learning is an advanced form of distance education. Expansion of internet facilities along with e-learning resources has given a boost to e-learning scenarios all over the world. Online education became the need of the time when the Corona virus pandemic affected the educational settings regardless of the boundaries of countries and continents. Online education has been adopted as the best alternative of classroom teaching. In India, the online learning system was supported and advocated by the government. Present study was conducted in order to understand the attitude of students towards e-learning. Students from under-graduate courses of rural colleges were selected and their attitude was measured. Results of the study revealed that students have moderate attitude towards online learning and testing. High positive attitude was found for observed benefits of e-learning. The reported difficulties were slow internet, lack of smart phones and laptops and difficulty to concentrate in virtual class.

Key words: Attitude, Rural students, Online learning

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I. INTRODUCTION

Last two decades have been rapid change as far as the education system is concerned. ICT imbedded activity based new pedagogical experiments have completely changed beyond structure of classroom teaching-methodologies. Technology supported learning became a demand of modern era. This newest development began in the mid 1990s with the spread of internet and World Wide Web. E-learning is the future of learning that focuses upon both the individual requirements of the learner and the content delivered. (Colvin and Mayers, 2008). In 2000 only 8 percent students were enrolled in an online course but by 2008 enrolment have increased to twenty percent. (Radford, 2011). In 2020 the global corona virus pandemic forced educational institutions to hastily transition to online education in order to continue teaching learning capabilities. In 2021 schools and colleges are opening and organising offline classes but only to a limited extent. Online classes and tests are still going on across the world. Online education is a flexible instructional delivery system that encompasses any kind of learning that takes place via the internet. (www.encyclopedia.com). It includes audio video animation, text, graphics, live chats etc. most of the education institutions utilize a learning management system to carry on these activities. Learning experiences are provided through synchronous and asynchronous communication. Online education has worked as miracle pill during the present pandemic and has catered the need of students, teachers and administrators. In a county like India with diverse geographical and socio-economic structure, it is quite mandatory to understand the basic necessities and challenges of online education. The successor any plan or program depends largely upon the perception and attitude of stakeholders towards it. If a program is welcomed, cutting down the difficulties is easy and its success is

ascertained. This study focuses of the attitude of under graduate students towards e-learning. It also tries to underline the basic problems that students feel about online learning.

II. NEED OF THE STUDY

Online education should be adopted positively both by the teachers and the students. The role of government and administrative authority is to provide basic infrastructure facilities and training. Positive attitude is the key factor in determining the perception and acceptance of any new idea. Online education can only be a success if teachers and students take it as a positive change rather than felling it a burden. Many studies have been conducted all over the world to examine the perception of teachers e-learning but many few studies have concentrated upon the satisfaction level of students for it. In India where internet facilities are still in developmental phase and face to face teaching is considered to be the best, popularising online education is a big challenging task. Need of the present study was felt, in order to, understand attitude of college students towards online mode of education.

III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Rapid increase in the number of students, technological advancements and present situation of pandemic has forced educational institutions to adopt online education as a part of of educational practices. Teachers and students are two pillars of the teaching process so they must be ready to accept these technological changes. There are many factors that affect students' attitude towards online learning. Positive perception of Technology in terms of ease of access and use of online learning material with autonomous learning mode

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increases the satisfaction of students towards online learning. (Drennan, J. et al, 2010). Interaction among students and between teachers and between teacher and taught is a crucial element of teaching activities. Classroom teaching provides more time and space for social interaction but there has been a little work regarding scope and satisfaction interaction in online teaching. Wallace (2003) reviewed the research work done in the area of social interaction in online education and found that there has been little work that connects these concepts to subject specific interactions and learning. Different types of online platforms are used for virtual classes. Research done by Almusharraf and Khahro (2020) showed that post graduate students have high satisfaction level with Google hangouts for lecture delivery followed by Google classroom and LMS (Moodle) for course management and assessment. Some studies showed that online teaching is not as effective as face to face teaching. (Krause and Coates, 2008; Pickering and Swinnerton, 2019). The possible reason could be poor content design, pedagogy and poor oversight for the low acceptance and satisfaction for online education. (Woodworth et al., 2015). Some other studies also showed no difference in student satisfaction and outcome in traditional and online mode of learning. (Pickering and Swinnerton, 2019). There are a number of factors that are investigated by different researchers that contribute towards attitude and satisfaction. Blackmon and Major (2012) studied students' overall experiences in online learning environment. Several factors like managing time, to balance work and family and physical absence of instructor, were found to be major factors affecting learners' experiences with online learning. Actually teacher's role is very crucial in both conventional and online education. In online mode teacher's role becomes more skill based as creating an interactive classroom environment, providing encouragements to students and capturing students' attention in virtual settings needs specialized technical and communication skills. Compromising any aspect of teaching learning situation can create a barrier in students' achievement. Administrative issues, social interaction, academic skills, technical knowledge, learners' motivation, time and support for studies, cost and access to internet and technical problems comprise barriers to online learning. (Muilenberg et al., 2007). Online education demands a different approach because technology use, content design, learning assessment, student diversity and best practices are different in online setting. (Davis, 2000; Clark, 2005; Fayer, 2017).

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Statement of the problem

The basic question raised by this study is - 'what is the attitude of rural undergraduate students towards online learning?'

4.2. Research design

Present study is a descriptive research employing survey method as it examines attitude of students with the help of an attitude scale.

4.3. Tool used

An attitude scale 'Students satisfaction scale' was developed by the researcher to collect data about attitude of college students. The scale consists of fifteen items. Items were both positive and negative in nature. It was a Likert type scale with responses ranging from completely disagrees to completely agree. All items are related to three areas of measurement viz observed benefits, attitude towards online education and observed difficulties.

4.4. Sample:

Sample of the data consists of 75 students of government college of Varanasi district, Uttar Pradesh, India. Attitude scale in the form of Google forms was mailed to 85 students and 75 were received.

4.5. Statistical procedure

The data was analysed on the basis of percentage mean and standard deviation descriptive statistics was used to analyse and summarise the properties of the data collected. (Gay and Airasian, 2000).

V. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data was analysed and interpretation of data is as below:

5.1. Description of the respondents:

The sample of the study consists of rural college students show all the respondents but from rural background and work undergraduate students. The age range was 18 to 20 years. The sample had both male and female students. Out of total 75 respondents number of male Participants was 8 and number of female respondents was 67. Table.1 shows the summary of demographic characteristics of the respondent.

Table 5.1

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

S.N.	Profile		Number	Percentage
1	Residence	Rural	75	100
		Urban	-	-
2	Sex	Male	08	10.67
		Female	67	89.33

5.2. Attitude towards online learning:

Undergraduate students of rural degree colleges for asked to respond to 15 statements related to attitude towards online education. This was a five-point Likert type scale. Mean and standard deviation were computed to understand the direction of attitude and the same were compared to the following scale.

Table 5.2

Scale for Attitude

S.N	Mean	Scale
1	0-1.5	Very Low
2	1.6-2.5	Low
3	2.6-3.5	Moderate
4	3.6-4.5	High
5	4.6-5.0	Very high

Higher the mean shows, greater positivity of attitude towards e-learning while lower mean score shows lower positivity of attitude. The mean and S.D of the responses were compared to the above scale for interpretation of data. For each statement of the attitude scale mean and S.D have been shown in table 5.3.

Table 5.3

Mean and standard deviation of students on attitude scale

S.N.	Statement	Mean	S.D.
a.1	Online teaching is effective	3.28	1.07
a.2	Online tests are more convenient than class tests	3.21	1.24
a.3	Student-teacher interaction is less in online education	2.81	1.19
a.4	Less opportunity of interaction among students is there in online education	3.16	1.15
a.5	e-learning is convenient	3.78	0.69
a.6	It is difficult to concentrate in online classes	3.09	1.24
a.7	Slow internet is a big hurdle in online learning	4.26	0.05
a.8	Students' lack smart phones/laptops	3.94	0.61
a.9	Group feelings develop in classroom teaching	4.32	0.84
a.10	Probability of unfair means is high in online assessment	3.58	1.14
a.11	Online learning saves time	4.53	0.95
a.12	I want to learn computer for online learning	3.86	1.19
a.13	I prefer classroom learning over online learning	2.45	1.26
a.14	I don't want to participate in online education	3.51	1.24
a.15	If starts in college, i am ready for online learning	2.77	1.03

It is clear from the table that students have moderate attitude towards effectiveness of online learning. Mean and S.D for convenience with online test, shows moderate attitude (3.21) of students. Respondents showed less moderate attitude (2.81) towards interaction opportunity between teacher and the tot in online mode of education and same was the case for interaction among students (3.16). High positive attitude was found (3.78) towards convenience towards e-learning while moderate attitude was found towards ability to concentrate (3.09) in virtual classes. Most of the students (4.26) responded that slow internet and lack of smart phones and laptops are major challenges of online learning. High positive attitude was found for the statement that in classroom teaching group feeling is easy to develop (4.32). Most of the students felt (3.58) that there is always a probability of use of unfair means in online testing. Students showed high positive attitude (4.53) regarding time saving in online mode of learning. Level of agreement was found to be high regarding the statement 'i want to learn computer for online education', while higher number of students (2.45) marked that they would prefer classroom learning over online learning. Moderate level agreement was found (3.51) for the statement 'I don't want to participate in online learning'. Students were less ready (2.77) to participate in online learning.

All the statements of the scale were related to three main areas of attitude towards online education viz; observed benefits, attitude towards online education and observed difficulties. All the responses have been categorized under these three areas and have been table 5.4.

Table 5.4

Summary of scores on Attitude Scale

Area	Statement	Mean	S.D.
Observed benefits	a.2. Online tests are more convenient than class tests	3.7	0.96
	a.5. e-learning is convenient		
	a.11. Online learning saves time		
Attitude towards online Learning	a.1. Online teaching is effective	3.38	1.11
	a.9. Group feelings develop in classroom teaching		
	a.12. I want to learn computer for online learning		
	a.13. I prefer classroom learning over online learning		
	a.14. I don't want to participate in online education		
Observed difficulties	a.15. If starts in college, i am ready for online learning	3.47	0.89
	a.3. Student-teacher interaction is less in online education		
	a.4. Less opportunity of interaction among students is there in		
	a.6. It is difficult to concentrate in online classes		
	a.7. Slow internet is a big hurdle in online learning		
	a.8. Students' lack smart phones/laptops		
	a.10. Probability of unfair means is high in online assessment		

High positive attitude (3.7) was found for the first area of the scale that is observed benefits of online education. For the second area that was attitude towards online education, a moderate level (3.38) of attitude was observed. Some statements of the scale were related to the observed difficulties that come in the use of online education. The mean score for this area was 3.47 this depicts moderate level of attitude towards felt difficulties.

VI. FINDINGS

Attitude is a key factor that determines level of acceptance, readiness of use and level of satisfaction with a new technology or program. Acceptance and adoption of new technology demand positive perception of the stakeholders. When a person feels that a program is beneficial in terms of convenience and effectiveness, he shows willingness to adopt that plan. Earning technology is not an exception to it. Students should feel easiness in using online classes as well as online testing. Findings of the present study suggest that rural undergraduate students bear high positive attitude towards benefits of online education. Most of the students reported that online assessment and e-learning both are more convenient than classroom test and conventional teaching. They also marked that online learning saves time so in terms of effectiveness, time saving and convenience online education has got an edge over traditional education.

Some statements of the scale were positive and some were negative the overall attitude towards online learning was found to be moderate. A larger percentage of students reported that in classroom teaching group morale and team feeling among students is better developed that is why students showed their preference for face to face learning over virtual learning. Most of the students were not ready to participate in online teaching and hence showed low attitude for it. No the question arises that even though students were quite positive about benefits of online education while the overall attitude was at moderate level? Third section of the

findings probably answers this question. For the felt difficulties of online education attitude level of students was moderate. Larger number of students felt that there is less opportunity of interpersonal interactions in virtual settings. Due to lack of interaction they found it hard to concentrate on the subject matter being delivered. As the sample of the study consists of rural students only most of the students reported that they do not have smart phones and laptops on one hand and a good speed internet on the other. These are the basic requirements for online education and if these are missing the goal of online learning cannot be achieved. Students feel that online assessment is less reliable as it has a scope of using unfair means. Due to all these perceived difficulties the attitude of students for virtual education becomes moderately positive.

VII. CONCLUSION

Distance education has been a call of the time as there has been an imbalance between the demand and supply of traditional education. Incorporating technology in distance education has made it more feasible and effective. Current covid-19 pandemic has forced to accelerate technology embedded learning in all spheres of education system. Online education has popped up as the only solution to keep studies in general and education system as a whole, on the track. Present study signifies that students of rural area possess moderate attitude towards online education but it is also evident that students feel that challenges like lack of interaction, dearth of smart phones and reliable internet connection create hurdle in the learning process. On the basis of the results it can be suggested that students of rural background need financial and technological support to adopt e learning as a part of their academics. Teachers and administrators motivate students and provide them with basic necessary skills; attitude of students can be shifted to higher side of the scale.

VIII. REFERENCES

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