



Post Graduate Students' Opinion about Online Classes

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Abstract

Education system confronted a new experience during lockdown. Nationwide practice of online teaching was the need of the hour requirement in the education system. It impacted on the educators and the student's community. The new normal teaching- learning experience brought out drastic change at the both ends of education system. The gadget used; hours spent network availability along with the student- teacher relationship impacted on online classes. Offline fun and joy in the classroom, tutor- ward guidance, interaction, two-way communication, peer learning was missed by the students. This descriptive study is an attempt to know the post graduate students' opinion on online classes. 50 post graduate social work students were the sample of the study, they were chosen by census method. A self-prepared interview schedule covering the socio demographic characteristics, along with the respondents' opinion on classroom interaction, subject coverage, learning ability, academic involvement was studied. The detailed findings and recommendations will be discussed in the full paper.

Key words: Post graduate students, online class, problems and challenges

Introduction

The education industry was one of the worst hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, with institutions scrambling to find solutions to keep their doors open. In these times of need, online learning tools emerged as a boon. In the last two years, investments in EdTech tools, especially in the online education segment, have skyrocketed, resulting in significant technological improvements. Online education has many benefits such as portability, ease of access, reduced need for physical infrastructure, lowered costs and greater flexibility. But that isn't to say that it doesn't come with its demerits. There are challenges in online education today. Humans are sociable creatures. The internet's success was built on the assumption that people will always want to engage and learn more about one another. On the other hand, digital interaction cannot replace direct connection on a mental level. Online education was supposed to be the next engaging and immersive approach for educating the next generation of pupils. The need for physical interaction between the students is also a necessity for maintaining engagement which the online learning methodology has no answers for yet. Though digital training does not necessitate large buildings, large classrooms, chairs, tables or blackboards, this does not negate the need for infrastructure. A computer, appropriate software, steady energy, and greater internet are all necessities. If a person cannot purchase this infrastructure, it is provided to them through public libraries in most industrialised countries. In developing countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and others, however, this level of infrastructure is only accessible to a small percentage of the population. A bigger problem is with constant

technical issues faced by both teachers and students on these platforms. These problems often require technical support to rectify, causing frequent disruption in the learning flow. Though the present generation is excelling in working with digital devices and computers don't necessarily transmit Digital Literacy. To proficiently learn through an online system requires understanding the workings of multiple software, which presents a huge learning curve. Also, students need to understand online communication etiquette and know student rights and responsibilities in an online learning environment. The physical presence inside a classroom with a teacher and fellow peers often leads to an atmosphere that can't be replicated through virtual means. The shift to online learning and other modern teaching tools was thought to bring about a modernization even in the course curriculum and structure. With recurrent technical issues, bandwidth problems and monotonous lectures, online attendance has seen a drastic dip. Most students find learning online boring and often complain of lacking the motivation to make it through a class. Even teachers often complain of a lack of tools to make the classes engaging, leading to a loss of interest from both parties. With the lack of any accountability in the online teaching method, education quality often becomes compromised. Coupled with the free use of laptops and mobile phones during classes, distractions have become countless, often coming at the cost of focusing during class.

Methods and Materials

Aim of the study

To know the opinion of post graduate students about their online classes.

Research Design

The researcher adopted the descriptive research design concerned with describing the various characteristics of the study population pertaining to their personal details, their opinion on the problems and challenges encountered during online classes.

Universe

The universe of this study constituted of Social Work students studying in a self-finance college in Trichy.

Sampling technique:

There were totally 50 post graduate students studying first and second year Post Graduate Social Work constituted the universe of this study. All the 50 students were included in the sample; hence census method was adopted by complete enumeration all subjects were done in this study.

Sample size:

50 respondents constituted the sample to provide primary data.

Tools for data collection:

A self- prepared questionnaire was used to collect data covering personal variables and their opinion on problems and challenges during online classes.

Pre-test:

Pre-test is defined as a study, which is done in the initial stage of the project in order to find the reliability of the interview schedule based on the respondent's response. The tool of this study is administered with 5 students in the selected press to know its suitability. After pre-test, there was no change taken place in the tool. Hence the pre-tested respondents were included in the sample.

Findings and discussion

Findings on personal data

It was revealed from the data that more than $3/5^{\text{th}}$ of the respondents are from urban (64%) community and the remaining are from rural areas. 100% of the respondents use mobile phone for attending online classes. Regarding the engagement of part time jobs among the respondents, exactly $1/5^{\text{th}}$ of the respondents go for part time job. A Vast majority of the respondents (92%) have siblings, among them 64% have 2 siblings, 32% of the respondents have 1 sibling and very meagre respondents have more than 2 siblings.

Table- 1

Opinion about online classes

S. No.	Overall opinion about online classes	Yes	No	Total
1	Interaction	68	32	100
2	Advantage/ Misuse of mute and unmute option	48	52	100
3	Playing with social media during online classes	16	84	100
4	Lack of gadgets due to siblings' online classes	44	56	100
5	Response during online classes	58	42	100
6	Ability to understand the lectures	60	40	100
7	Conceptual clarity	56	44	100
8	Distribution of study materials	84	16	100
9	Class continuity and follow up	68	32	100
10	Interest in subjects	88	12	100
11	Time management	92	8	100
12	Seminar given	100	-	100
13	Seminar done	40	60	100
14	Assignment given	100	-	100
15	Assignment done	80	20	100
16	Missing classroom fun and joy	68	32	100
17	Peer learning	64	36	100
18	Mentor guidance	76	24	100
19	Enthusiasm in class	84	16	100
20	Academic motivation	88	12	100
21	Regularity/ Regular attendance	40	60	100
22	Started part time job	16	84	100
23	Waited for offline classes	88	12	100

The above table shows the problems encountered by the students during online classes. Regarding the interaction of the students, a little more than $2/3^{\text{rd}}$ of the respondents felt that there is interaction during the class and 32% of the respondents were of the opinion that the regular interaction between the teacher and the students is missing in the online mode of teaching. Nearly half (48%) of the students accepted that mute option was taken as an advantage during classes. They muted their audio and video as and when they need it on their own without teachers' permission.

Playing with social media during classes revealed that majority of the respondents did not play during online classes. Nearly half of the respondents felt that they had lack of gadgets due to siblings' online classes. More than $2/5^{\text{th}}$ of the respondents expressed that there was no proper response during virtual classes. Exactly $2/5^{\text{th}}$ of the respondents felt that they were not able to understand the lectures completely during online mode of teaching.

A little more than $2/5^{\text{th}}$ of the respondents felt that they lack conceptual clarity in comparison with offline classes. Majority of the respondents said that the study materials were distributed to them by the subject teachers through google classroom, email and WhatsApp groups. A little less than $1/3^{\text{rd}}$ of the respondents lost class continuity and follow up in the online classes which are there in the offline classes.

Majority of the respondents felt that they have not lost interest in their subjects, whatever the mode of teaching; they have interest in their subjects. A vast majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the time management was carefully maintained during online classes. All the respondents accepted that they were given assignment and seminars during online classes. Exactly 2/5th of the respondents taken seminar and 4/5th of the respondents submitted their assignment in google classroom.

More than 2/3 of the respondents opined that they missed the fun and joy which they enjoyed in the conventional classroom with their teachers and friends. More than 1/3rd of the respondents said that the peer learning choices were absent in the virtual classes. They have not given chance to meet their classmates in person and have not had the group study opportunities, this is especially among those who are from remote areas and other districts.

Though the teachers were there to take lessons through google meet, the regular mentor guidance was missing which was expressed by nearly 1/4th of the respondents. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that they have enthusiasm and academic motivation in their studies. 3/5th of the respondents accepted that they were not regular to the classes due to various reasons. 16% of the respondents started part time job during lockdown. They attended the online classes when they engaged in job. Majority of the students eagerly waited for off line regular classes.

Conclusion

Education system confronted a new experience during lockdown. Nationwide practice of online teaching was the need of the hour requirement in the education system. It impacted on the educators and the student's community. The new normal teaching- learning experience brought out drastic change at the both ends of education system. The gadget used; hours spent network availability along with the student- teacher relationship impacted on online classes. Offline fun and joy in the classroom, tutor- ward guidance, interaction, two-way communication, peer learning was missed by the students.

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