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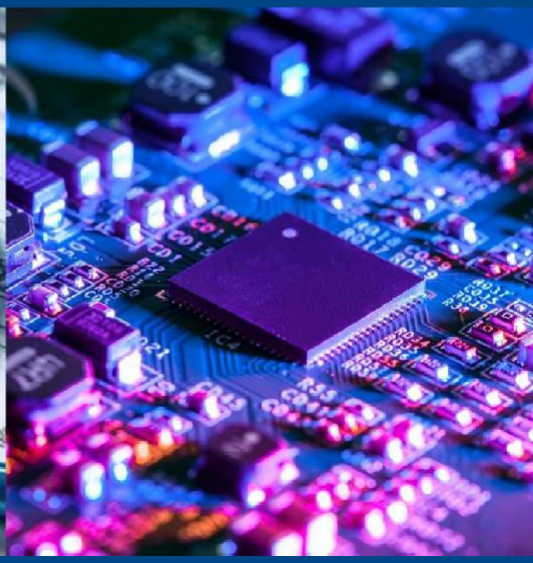

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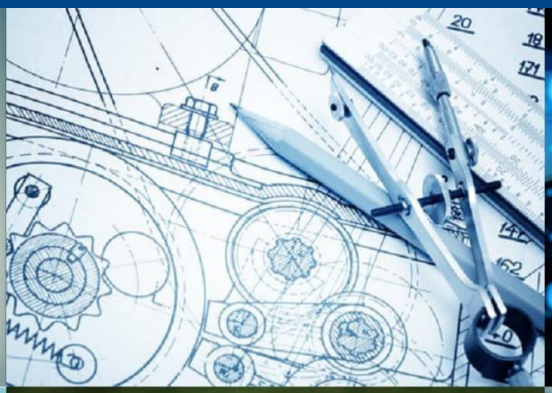

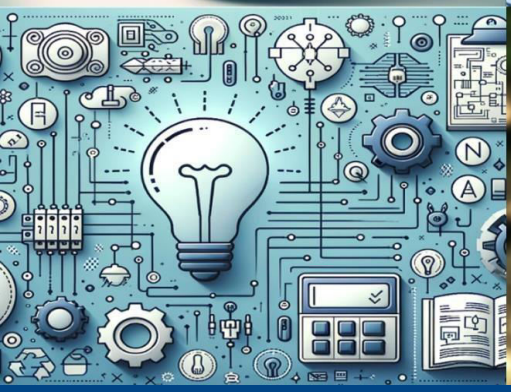

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A Study on Students Perception Towards Online Courses

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ABSTRACT: This research delves into the students' attitudes towards online courses with emphasis on their experience, satisfaction, and issues within the backdrop of the increasing adoption of digital learning in India, particularly post-COVID-19 pandemic. The study seeks to evaluate major determinants such as the quality of course content, lecturer interaction, ease of use of platforms, flexibility, and value for money. Information was collected from 112 students of different backgrounds by means of structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques such as Percentage Analysis, Chi-square Test, Mann-Whitney U Test, Kruskal-Wallis H Test, and Correlation Analysis. Percentage analysis indicated very high levels of satisfaction with clarity of content (more than 80%), knowledge of the instructor (greater than 75%), and flexibility in access and timing (approximately 80%). Despite this, there were issues reported in interactive teaching and assignment efficacy, with over 20% being dissatisfied. Inferential statistics reported no differences among age and gender in perceptions, but there was a moderate positive relationship ($r \approx 0.33$) between instructor expertise and interactive learning. Chi-square analysis also did not show any significant association in relation between students' location and mobile access. All in all, the research indicates that although students appreciate flexibility and expert teachers in online education, engagement strategies must be enhanced, technical assistance must be provided, and cost disclosure must be enhanced. Based on the study, in order to enhance the effectiveness as well as equity of online education, platforms, inclusive access, and nimble pedagogy need to be improved.

KEYWORDS: Online Learning, Student Perception, E-Learning, Flexibility, Digital Education

I. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of technology and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly altered the landscape of education. Online courses have become the new normal, providing self-paced learning, flexibility, and accessibility. Learning platforms like Google Classroom, Moodle, Blackboard, Coursera, and SWAYAM have enhanced remote learning experiences. Despite these advancements, students' attitudes toward online courses vary greatly.

Perception plays a vital role in the learning process. It influences motivation, participation, and overall performance. Positive perceptions lead to better engagement, while negative perceptions can cause disengagement. In India, several initiatives like SWAYAM, NPTEL, and DIKSHA have encouraged digital education. However, challenges like poor internet connectivity, lack of infrastructure, and limited digital literacy persist. This study seeks to understand students' perceptions of online courses to improve their effectiveness and inclusivity.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies have investigated student perceptions of online learning:
Fidalgo et al. (2020) conducted an international study examining students in Portugal, the United Arab Emirates, and Ukraine. Their findings indicated that online learning often faces limitations in areas like motivation, self-regulation, and interaction. Students struggled to maintain engagement without physical classroom presence, and those from non-English speaking backgrounds faced additional language barriers. They also observed that cultural context significantly influences how learners perceive and adapt to e-learning.

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Sharma and Gupta (2021) reviewed digital adoption in India, concluding that infrastructure inequality, especially in rural areas, presents a formidable barrier to digital education. Their study highlighted how initiatives like SWAYAM and DIKSHA have tried to bridge this divide, yet their effectiveness remains uneven due to inconsistent execution and lack of localized content.

Jaggars and Xu (2016) analysed student performance in online versus in-person learning. They found that while online education offered convenience and flexibility, students often reported feeling isolated.
Nguyen and Santos (2021) contributed to the debate by examining the effects of adaptive learning systems. Their findings indicated that personalization through technology can significantly enhance learning outcomes, but only when paired with strong instructor oversight and regular communication.

These studies highlight the complexity of online education and the need for continuous improvement.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore students' overall perception of online courses.
- To assess the effectiveness of online course content, instructor engagement, and platform usability.
- To evaluate the role of flexibility and access in shaping perceptions.
- To identify demographic influences on student satisfaction and engagement.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology of this study comprises a detailed plan and structure for conducting the research in a systematic and reliable manner.

- **Research Design:** The study follows a descriptive research design, which is suitable for understanding and describing the current state of affairs without altering or influencing the environment. Descriptive research enables the collection of quantifiable data that helps in drawing meaningful insights into students' perceptions of online learning.

- **Sampling Design:** Simple random sampling was employed to ensure that every individual in the population had an equal chance of being selected. This method reduces bias and improves the representativeness of the sample. The final sample consisted of 112 students drawn from various academic backgrounds and institutions.

- **Data Collection Methods:** Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire that included Likert-scale items to measure levels of agreement, multiple-choice questions for categorical data, and ranking questions to understand preferences. These instruments were designed to extract detailed and accurate responses from participants.
Secondary data was obtained from academic journals, research articles, online publications, government reports, and educational websites. This data provided context and helped frame the study within the broader academic discourse.

- **Questionnaire Design:** The questionnaire included multiple sections. The demographic section collected details such as age, gender, education level, and region. Other sections focused on aspects of online learning such as course content, instructor quality, platform usability, interactivity, flexibility, cost perception, and overall satisfaction. A five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" was used for most attitudinal questions.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The demographic analysis of the 112 respondents provides a foundational understanding of the population under study. A significant majority of respondents (approximately 60%) were in the 21–24 age group, which is typical for undergraduate and postgraduate students who are likely to engage with online education. Gender representation was balanced, with a slight male majority. Educational qualification data revealed that postgraduate students formed the bulk of participants, suggesting that online learning is particularly popular or accessible at higher levels of study. Furthermore, most respondents hailed from urban areas and studied in private institutions, a factor that may influence their access to stable internet connections and digital infrastructure.

When exploring students' perceptions of course content, the results were encouraging. Around 80.36% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the course content was clear and well-structured. This indicates that the majority of course providers are successful in designing materials that are understandable and relevant. Similarly, 81.25% of

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students acknowledged the depth and clarity of instructor knowledge, highlighting the importance of faculty competence in online learning environments.

Platform usability was also rated favorably by 80.36% of the participants, suggesting that user experience in terms of interface design, navigation, and accessibility plays a crucial role in student satisfaction. However, there was noticeable dissatisfaction concerning assignment effectiveness, with only 57.14% of students expressing satisfaction and 17.86% explicitly stating dissatisfaction. This points to a possible disconnect between course content and assessment methods, which might fail to reflect student understanding adequately.

A notable concern emerged around the interactive aspect of online learning. While 43.57% of students agreed that the courses were interactive, a significant minority (21.43%) disagreed. This disparity underscores the need for more dynamic and engaging teaching strategies, such as live discussions, group projects, and feedback loops, to replicate the classroom experience. Similarly, technical support remained a challenge, with nearly 20% expressing dissatisfaction. Efficient troubleshooting mechanisms, responsive support teams, and user guides are crucial to address this gap.
The Chi-Square Test did not reveal a significant association between geographic location (urban/rural) and perceived mobile accessibility. This finding is somewhat surprising, as rural students often face internet challenges. It may reflect the increasing penetration of mobile internet in semi-urban and rural areas or may indicate a sample skewed towards better-connected rural populations. Lastly, correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between instructor expertise and interactivity ($r \approx 0.33$). This implies that well-qualified and engaging instructors are instrumental in fostering an interactive learning environment.

Overall, the data analysis demonstrates that while students appreciate the flexibility, content clarity, and instructor knowledge associated with online learning, there are clear areas for improvement. Enhancing interactivity, refining assessment methods, and improving technical support are key areas where educational institutions and e-learning platforms can focus their efforts.

FINDINGS

1. The majority of students found online courses flexible and convenient, allowing them to manage their study schedules efficiently.
2. Over 80% of students agreed that the instructors demonstrated sound subject knowledge and clarity in teaching.
3. Platform usability was appreciated, with students finding the interface of learning platforms easy to navigate.
4. More than half of the students felt that assignments were somewhat effective, though nearly 18% expressed dissatisfaction, indicating a need for better evaluation methods.
5. Interactive teaching remains a concern, with 21% of students feeling the lack of engagement and two-way communication.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Enhance the interactivity of online courses through live sessions, breakout discussions, and Q&A forums to replicate traditional classroom dynamics.
2. Design more practical and application-based assignments to improve student engagement and reduce academic dishonesty.
3. Strengthen technical support by establishing real-time help desks and proactive troubleshooting systems.
4. Offer instructor training in online pedagogy and communication to make virtual sessions more impactful and engaging.
5. Improve the affordability of online courses and communicate pricing transparently to increase trust and enrollment.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of this research clearly indicate that online education is not only a viable alternative to traditional learning but also a powerful platform that can cater to diverse learning needs. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online education, transforming it from an optional mode to a necessary one. As educational institutions continue to adapt to this shift, the perspectives and experiences of students become critical indicators of success. Students, as the primary stakeholders in the learning process, have highlighted several strengths of online courses. The flexibility in scheduling, the ability to revisit recorded sessions, and the convenience of accessing content from remote locations are among the most appreciated features. Additionally, the competence of instructors and the clarity of

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content delivery have positively influenced students' experiences. Moreover, the emotional and social aspects of learning — such as peer collaboration, mentorship, and classroom engagement — are harder to replicate in an online environment. These deficiencies can lead to feelings of isolation and reduced motivation among students. From a policy and administrative perspective, it is crucial to address these challenges proactively. Institutions must invest in advanced Learning Management Systems (LMS), provide extensive training to instructors, and offer dedicated support services to ensure seamless learning. Curriculum designers should also rethink assessment methods to make them more application-based and reflective of real-world scenarios. Furthermore, the findings underline the importance of digital inclusivity. While this study found no significant differences based on demographic factors, it is essential to ensure that marginalized communities, particularly students from rural and economically weaker sections, are not left behind.

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