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Research Article

From Classroom to Screen: Assessing the Impact of Online Learning on Conventional Education

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Abstract: The education system of India has always been based on the face-to-face classroom learning whereby the learning environment was influenced by the structured instruction, the interaction between peers and the direction by the teacher. But this increased growth of digital infrastructure, low-cost internet and broad penetration of digital devices has resulted in online learning becoming a significant alternative. This tendency gained much momentum in the COVID-19 pandemic as the institutions of the country were forced to switch to virtual platforms. Since then, online learning has become a mainstream form of education, with its flexibility and accessibility and the introduction of new digital interaction. The development of online platforms has affected the real-life classrooms in a variety of ways that have sparked the pedagogical changes, assessment and institutional approaches. Meanwhile, the move has uncovered such challenges as digital inequality, lack of hands-on learning and lack of social interaction - aspects that still remain the core strength of the traditional classroom. This paper will look into such changes to evaluate the impacts that online learning is having and redefining traditional education in India. Through the comparison of the strength and weaknesses of the two systems, the study indicates the growing trend towards blended learning models that incorporate the use of digital tools into classroom-based teaching. The paper is then undergoing to receive an insight into how the education ecosystem in India is adjusting itself to this transition and the implications the same has to the future of learning.

Keywords: Online Learning, Traditional Classroom Education, Blended Learning, Digital Infrastructure in India, Educational Transformation.

INTRODUCTION

The education environment of India has been shifting drastically during the last several years when the traditional classrooms are gradually replaced by computer monitors. Online learning or e-learning is defined as a system of education where lectures, tests and study books are presented in digital platforms based on the internet. It enables students to study at a pace they suit them and anywhere provided they use smartphones, laptops, or tablets. Conversely, conventional education refers to the conventional classroom-based learning where learning occurs through direct and in-person, face to face interaction between teachers and students through scheduled lectures in a physical environment. This change was moving faster in India, where schools and universities were forced to switch to online formats almost overnight during the COVID-19 pandemic. What was initially meant to be a simple temporary measure ended up being one of the pillars of the contemporary education system. The increased internet connectivity, the increase of digital literacy, the lower cost of data and government activities such as Digital India, SWAYAM, DIKSHA and PM e-Vidya further imprinted the penetration and adoption of the online learning in both urban and rural landscape. Online learning has been made more structured with the increased development of EdTech websites, such as Byju, Unacademy, and Coursera. Nevertheless, this fast assimilation has also initiated some arguments. Although there are benefits associated with online learning, including flexibility, personalization of learning, and low costs, there is also the issue of the digital divide, the absence of practical learning, less classroom interaction, and screen fatigue. These advancements have had a great impact on the operation and outlook of the traditional education in India. The proposed paper, From Classroom to Screen: Assessing the Impact of Online Learning on Conventional Education is an attempt to understand the influence of online learning on traditional education and the learning ecosystem in India. Through research, the study aims at knowing whether online learning is a supplement of the traditional education model or a disrupter in the Indian context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The introduction of online learning has spawned a controversy among scholars and educators particularly on its effects and contribution to traditional classroom-based education. According to the existing literature, online learning has turned into a primary form of education, initiated by the development of digital infrastructure and the fast pace of digital implementation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Dhawan (2020) argues that the pandemic was a digital catalyst, as educational institutions all over the world quickly switched to online tools and platforms, which has rewritten the method of teaching and learning. A number of studies in the Indian context point towards the increased significance of online learning. According to

reports published by KPMG and Google (2023), the growth of smartphone penetration in even the backward regions and the low cost of the internet has increased access to digital education significantly. In a similar fashion, such government programs as SWAYAM, DIKSHA, and PM e-Vidya have reinforced massive online education systems (Ministry of Education, 2022). Such advances have made online learning a significant solution to the enhancement of reach, particularly among the students in the rural or backward areas. Nevertheless, several publications warn against the notion that online education can be used to substitute traditional classrooms completely. According to research by the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2022), the foundation literacy and numeracy drop in the pandemic with the extended school closure indicates the shortcomings of distance learning in younger learners. According to Azim Premji Foundation (2021), the learning loss during the pandemic is also significant, and the role of teacher support, peer communication, practical learning and classroom setting are especially important. Online learning in higher education has been established to affect the learner satisfaction based on course design and digital pedagogy. In a survey conducted in Springer Discover Education (2024) among 545 Indian university students, the quality of feedback, the clarity of a teacher, and good usability of a digital platform were found to be the most important factors in successful online learning. This concurs with what Anderson (2019) points out that effective and clear online instructions demand a sound pedagogical planning, interactive material and well trained instructors. The emergence of hybrid and blended learning models in recent literature as a moderate model is the result. In the Indian context, researchers believe that blended models can embrace the benefits of both systems, i.e., flexibility and digital interaction provided by online technologies and social and practical benefits of traditional classes (UGC, 2023; Jena, 2022). Large scale interventions such as the Personalized Adaptive Learning (PAL) programme in Andhra Pradesh, where the researchers of University of Chicago (2023) have reported learning gains equivalent to 1.9 years of academic learning through the use of well-designed digital tools in complementing and augmenting classroom instruction, help reinforce such models by large scale. In general, the literature indicates that online education has influenced and transformed traditional education by opening up access, leading to pedagogical change and fostering a life long learning process. However, the problems connected with the digital inequality, engagement and practical learning remain. Thus, available studies strongly point to a future that is based on the blended learning models in which digital technologies serve as an addition as opposed to the replacements of the face-to-face classroom experiences

3. Overview of Conventional Classroom Learning

Conventional classroom learning is an old form of learning in which the teachers and the students have a physical interaction in a school or college. After decades, this system has been the pillar of Indian education, which is based on systematic schedules, interactive classroom and the direct control of teachers. The learning process is usually achieved through lectures, blackboard presentation, textbooks, group discussions and classroom activities that facilitate socialization and learning amongst peers. In India, the traditional classroom training is significant in creating communication skills, student teacher relations and cooperative learning atmosphere. It also focuses on discipline, value-based and punctual education, which is deeply embedded in cultural and educational practices of the Indians. The traditional physical aspect of the setting of the teachers usually assists in giving instantaneous feedback, personalized directions as well as emotional power that assists in the general development of the student. Although this system has advantages, there are also a number of endemic issues in the traditional classroom system in India, including overcrowded classrooms, unhealthy teacher student ratios, old teaching structures and infrastructure disparities, especially in the government and rural schools. These problems bring differences in the learning experiences across geographical areas, socioeconomic groups and institutions. Nevertheless, the traditional classroom education still plays a major role in the Indian education structure. It is much favored by its systematized character, interpersonal communication and its efficiency in applied courses, experiential education and positive disciplining influence. In India, blended and hybrid forms of learning are being constructed on the traditional base as the online learning continues to expand.

4. Overview of Online Learning

Online learning is a system in which education is administered and received using digital media instead of the traditional physical classes. It employs the internet-based resources like Learning Management System (LMS), video teachings, virtual classrooms, discussion and doubt forums and digital learning materials to pass academic content. Online learning became a significant momentum in India during the COVID-19 pandemic, and later the alternative and supplement to traditional education became mainstream. Low-priced smartphones, the enhanced internet connection, and low-cost internet data have created the conducive environment to boost online learning in India, which has been further enhanced by government-based initiatives like SWAYAM, NPTEL, DIKSHA, and individual ed-tech platforms like BYJU'S, Unacademic, Vedanta, and Coursera. Online degree programs have also grown in the universities, which has rendered higher education more affordable and reachable to working professionals and rural learners among those students who need to study at their own time. Online learning offers a personalized and self-paced learning experience that is usually challenging to accomplish in the real world with the help of such features as recorded classes, AI-based testing, interactive quizzes and online libraries. Nevertheless, other issues in online learning in India include untrustworthy internet as well as unavailability of digital literacy in rural areas, unavailability of digital gadgets by the low-income households and the question of student involvement and academic cheating. Irrespective of these issues, online learning is expanding at a very high rate because it is convenient, less expensive and helps to eliminate geographical boundaries. It has now been a very important aspect in the development of hybrid learning models and has revolutionized the general education scenario in India.

5. Impact of Online Learning on Traditional Education

The extensive use of online education over the last several years, which was boosted by the pandemic but followed a very strong pace, has had extensive and far-reaching effects on the traditional education systems. Below are some key impacts:

5.1. Broader Access and Inclusivity

- Online learning has increased access to education to individuals who have previously been geographically, economically or socially challenged. To most students who live in remote or rural settings, digital education has acted as an opportunity door that would have been closed by institutions because of distance or lack of sufficient infrastructure.
- "The online education has made higher education and skill training accessible to learners who may have not considered or could not afford to attend college or university via other methods with the spread of internet penetration and smartphone access in India.

5.2. Growth of Hybrid & Blended Models

- The traditional institutions are also moving towards a model that implies combining face-to-face and online learning, which allows students to have greater flexibility and institutions more dynamically manage their resources.
- This mix can frequently imply a good use of resources (e.g. less need to have physical classrooms, less scheduling issues, ability to learn at own speed) providing learners with the opportunity to benefit of face-to-face interaction.

5.3. Shift in Teaching Methods and Pedagogy

- Online platforms promote the use of digital instructional resources: recorded lectures, video tutorials, discussion room, simulations, digital assessments and interactive materials. This has compelled traditional institutions to revise pedagogy and revamp curriculum delivery.
- Educators are becoming accustomed to technology-based learning, and this has contributed to better integration of multimedia, improved student performance monitoring (through LMS analytics), and individually pacing students.

5.4. Cost Efficiency and Resource Optimization

- Institutional online delivery can save the institutions the expenses of physical infrastructure, maintenance, and the classroom logistics.
- Online courses tend to be cheaper (at least, in case of distance learning, certificate courses or part-time courses) to students, which makes education more affordable and accessible to working adults or individuals who have a lower income profile.

5.5. Increased Enrollment and Lifelong Learning

- The convenience and flexibility of online studies motivate working professionals, part time and non-traditional students to enroll and update themselves.
- Online education encourages lifelong learning and upskilling that traditional institutions might not have been very effective in achieving. This enhances the significance of education to the demographic past the college age bracket.

5.6. Challenges for Traditional Classroom Norms and Equity

- People: There are more drawbacks to online learning that are more vulnerable to inequality: students in poor families or in rural regions might not have good internet access, computers, or consistent study locations. This may result in a digital divide, which will restrict the advantages of online learning to many.
- The traditional classroom relationships, socialization, peer discussion, mentorship and hands-on activities can be undermined in case courses are transferred online or transformed into a hybrid, particularly in disciplines that cannot be offered remotely (labs, workshops, group work).
- Learning quality and academic integrity: online learning can be complicated by such activities as cheating and plagiarism that may decrease the effectiveness of online degrees in comparison with traditional ones.

5.7. Institutional Transformation & Challenges

- Universities and colleges should invest in infrastructure, technology, faculty training as well as redesign their curriculum to be delivered online/hybrid. This requires finances and administrations.
- Some of the institutions might not cope with this transition because of resource constraint or financial limits which results in the difference in the quality of online delivery among institutions.
- Regulatory, accreditation and standardization problems will emerge - it is still a challenge to ensure that online courses are equivalent to traditional ones.

6. Comparative Analysis of Online Learning and Traditional Learning

The movement away the classroom to the screen has produced certain basic distinctions in the ways that teaching and learning takes place in India. Although both systems share a similar goal of enhancing the learning outcomes, they vary greatly in the delivery, as well as accessibility, engagement and effectiveness. The section is a comparative study between the online learning and traditional classroom learning using key dimensions of education.

6.1. Accessibility

Traditional Learning: The facility has restricted access because of the physical aspects like distance to schools/colleges, availability of transport, classroom

capacity and existing disparities in the regions. Children studying in rural areas, particularly those in states such as Bihar, Jharkhand, and Northeast India, have to cover a long distance or are in short of educational centers.

Online Learning: Online learning has the benefit of making learning accessible to a broader group of students since they are able to study anywhere. This has helped especially the learners in remote regions during and after the pandemic. Nevertheless, the areas of device possession and internet connectivity remain problematic- particularly because of the fact that only about half of households in India have access via the internet (NFHS-5).

6.2. Flexibility

Traditional Learning: The traditional learning works on a set time, set schedules and teacher schedules. The students have to be guided by a well-organized programme, which is beneficial in maintaining discipline, but has little room in slow pacing, poses a challenge to slow learners.

Online Learning: It is very accommodative and students have the option of attending real time classes or watching pre-recorded lectures at a later time. The most benefitted are working professionals, people undertaking part time jobs and competitive exam aspirants. It is also through flexibility that allows self-paced learning although it could limit consistency and time management among certain students.

6.3. Student Engagement

Traditional Learning: Interaction is more likely to be high because of the face-to-face interaction, peer interaction, group activities, and instant feedback. The teacher is available, which means that there is less distraction and more concentration.

Online Learning: In this case the level of engagement is different. Although digital tools such as polls, quizzes, discussion rooms and interactive video use enhance engagement, most students find it difficult to handle distraction, camera-off culture or passive listening. These distractions are further empowered by the lack of the physical presence of the teacher. Experiments by UNICEF reveal that more than half of the students became less engaged on the Internet than in physical classes.

6.4. Learning Outcomes

Traditional Learning: The traditional learning normally leads to better concept clarity, practical learning, discipline and social development. The offline results are expected to be better with practice based or hands-on subjects (such as science, engineering, arts).

Online Learning: The success largely relies on the digital literacy, the content quality and the surroundings within which the student is operating. In theoretical or skill-based subjects, there are better outcomes because of the access to global resource but the learning disparity has grown among younger students and those in low-income families because of the inequitable access to devices and supervision.

6.5. Infrastructure Readiness

Conventional Learning: Schools and colleges have developed physical facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries and teaching faculty. Nevertheless, infrastructural problems such as old facilities, overcrowding of the classes and lack of teachers are observed in many government and rural institutions.

Online Learning: It involves use of digital infrastructure such as devices and trained faculty that work and have good internet connectivity. After 2020, several institutions in India have put plenty of money into LMS platforms, digital boards, smart classes and teacher training, yet there remain gaps, particularly in government school where access to devices and connectivity is sporadic.

6.6. Comparison Based on Secondary Data

The first source of comparative analysis is secondary data based on the real sources like AISHE (202122), UNESCO India, UDISE +, IAMAI Digital India Report (2023), Coursera Skills Report (2024), and Deloitte India EdTech Review. These reports give an idea about the important parameters such as accessibility, flexibility, student engagement, learning outcomes, and infrastructure preparedness in both the traditional and online learning systems. The secondary information was broken down and converted into percentage-based distributions that were graphically represented by pie charts so as to allow the systematic comparison of recorded trends under both learning modes.

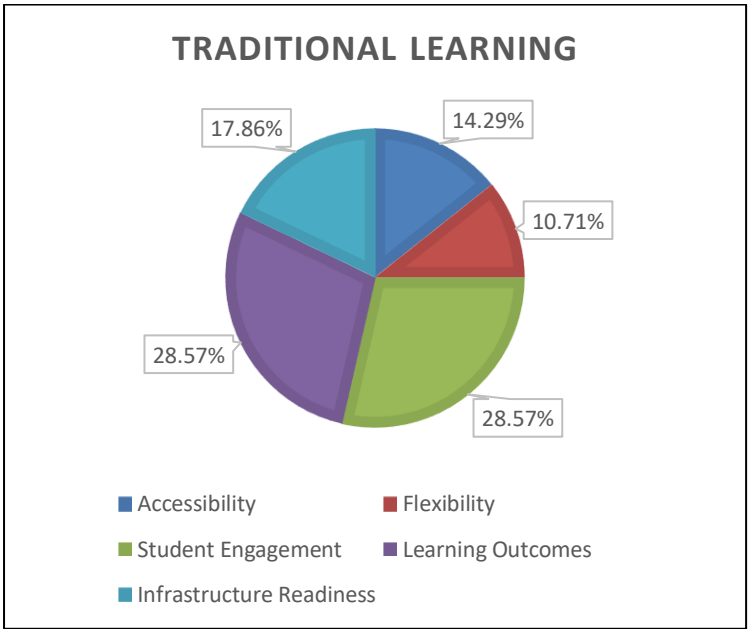

Figure 1: Student Perception of Traditional Classroom Learning across Key Factors.

Source: Secondary data compiled from AISHE (2021–22), UNESCO India, and UDISE+.

According to AISHE (202122), UNESCO India, and UDISE+, the pie chart reveals that the largest shares (28.57 percent each) belong to learning outcomes and student engagement, which demonstrates the superiority of traditional classrooms in terms of grasping concepts and touching things. Infrastructure preparedness (17.86) also favors the prepared learning, whereas the lesser portion of accessibility (14.29%) and flexibility (10.71) represent the restriction of the location and schedules that are fixed. This implies that conventional education is still academic but can be enhanced with digitalization to make it more accessible and flexible.

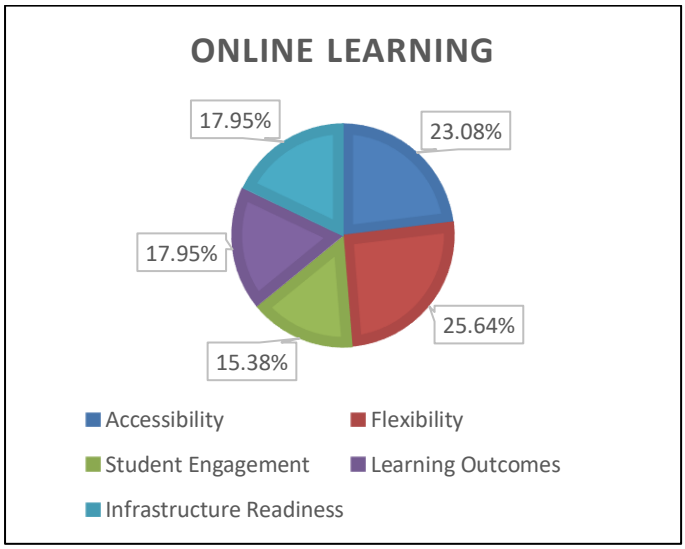

Figure 2: Student Perception of Online Learning across Key Factors.

Source: Secondary data compiled from IAMAI Digital India Report (2023), Coursera Skills Report (2024), and Deloitte India EdTech Review

According to the IAMAI Digital India Report (2023), Coursera Skills Report (2024), and Deloitte India EdTech Review, the chart demonstrates that the main advantages of online learning relate to flexibility (25.64%) and accessibility (23.08%) of online learning. The moderately effective ones are infrastructure readiness (17.95%), and learning outcomes (17.95%), whereas the less effective one is the student engagement (15.38%). These results support the conclusion that online learning is the most convenient and effective in combination with the classroom technique.

6.7. Comparative Analysis Based on Primary Survey Data

To analyze primary data, a structured questionnaire was created with five major dimensions to compare, namely accessibility, flexibility, student engagement, learning outcomes, and infrastructure readiness. The questionnaire was distributed to students in senior secondary (Classes XI -XII) and institutions of higher learning such as universities and 32 valid responses were

obtained. Respondents evaluated their experiences of both online and traditional learning and it was later categorized into positive, negative and neutral.

The reconstructed findings were converted into percentages distributions and depicted using pie charts to allow the visual comparison of the overall perception of the students in the two learning modes. To analyze primary data, a structured questionnaire was created with five major dimensions to compare, namely accessibility, flexibility, student engagement, learning outcomes, and infrastructure readiness. The questionnaire was distributed to students in senior secondary (Classes XI -XII) and institutions of higher learning such as universities and 32 valid responses were obtained. Respondents evaluated their experiences of both online and traditional learning and it was later categorized into positive, negative and neutral. The reconstructed findings were converted into percentages distributions and depicted using pie charts to allow the visual comparison of the overall perception of the students in the two learning modes.

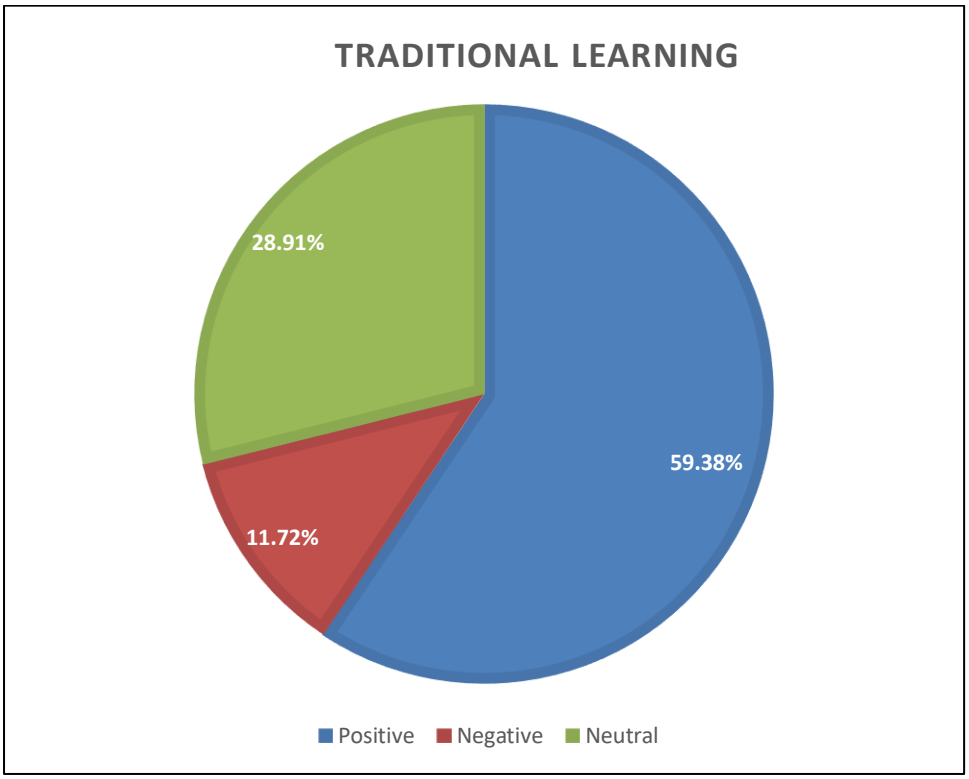

Figure 3: Distribution of student perceptions of traditional classroom learning based on positive, neutral, and negative responses.

Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire (Google Forms).

The Figure 3 presented as pie chart shows that most of the respondents (59.38%) have positive perception towards traditional classroom learning, which enjoyed strength in engagement of the students, their conceptual understanding, and their ability to offer the learners with a structured learning environment. The share of neutral reactions is almost equal (28.91), which indicates ambivalent experiences, which may be caused by strict schedules and a lack of flexibility. The percentage of negative responses (11.72) of dissatisfaction is very low, and it signifies that traditional education is still relatively efficient, and it can be enhanced through the positive digital integration.

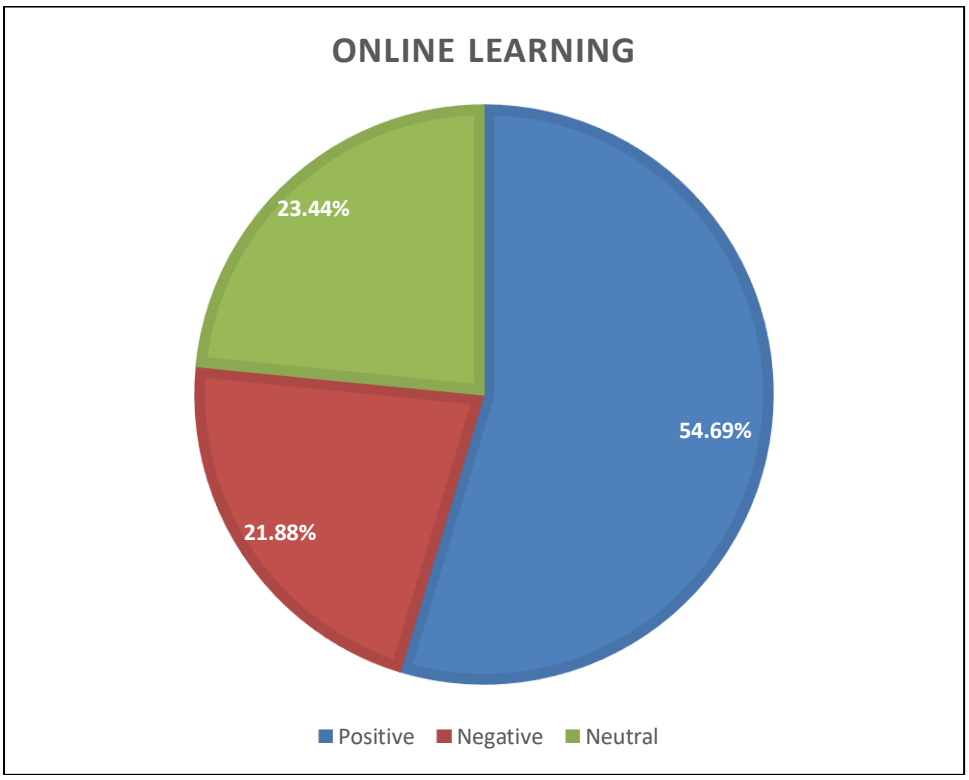

Figure 4: Distribution of student perceptions of online learning based on positive, neutral, and negative responses.
Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire (Google Forms)

As the pie chart of figure 4 demonstrates, over half of the respondents (54.69) have a positive attitude towards online learning, which is mainly determined by its accessibility and flexibility. Nevertheless, the percentage of unfavorable answers (21.88) is higher than the percentage of the traditional way of learning (14.50), which speaks in favor of the issues of the student engagement, the efficiency of learning, and technical difficulties. The existence of neutral responses (23.44) is also another indicator of diverse experiences of learners. The findings can be used to conclude that online learning has better reach and convenience, but can only serve as a complementary or blended method, and not fully replace traditional classrooms.

7. Impact of Online Learning on Traditional Education

The emergence of online education has greatly affected the traditional learning in India in the sense that it has affected the accessibility, the procedure of teaching, the performance of the students and the institution's structure. The recent national data and research reports also demonstrate how online learning has changed the world of traditional education.

7.1. Expanded Reach and Access

Online education has greatly increased accessibility to education in India especially to students living in remote or even economically backward regions. According to the current report of the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 202122, the enrollment in higher education has reached 43.3 million people, with a huge percentage of them preferring online forms of learning. This is an indication of the change in preference by the learners to the flexible and geographically non-curtain education.

7.2. Rise of Hybrid Models in Traditional Institutions

The conventional universities are shifting more towards the hybrid format where the classroom sessions are supplemented with digital applications and techniques that include LMS platforms, online tests and online classes. This change is enabled by regulatory trends-UGC approvals of online and ODL courses in 2024-25 demonstrate that hybrid education is slowly evolving into a long-term institutional policy, rather than a transitional pandemic-induced one.

7.3. Pedagogical Transformation and Teaching Quality

Online learning has enhanced the speed of pedagogical innovations, with the faculty encouraged to employ multimedia content (audio and video), recording lectures, the utilization of online doubt forums and online feedback systems. A 2024 survey of 545 Indian university students by Springer Education reveals that online learning satisfaction has a strong correlation with the course design, quality of feedback and teaching readability, which leads to increased efforts by traditional institutions to develop digital pedagogy and teacher training.

7.4. Evidence of Effective Digital Interventions

The large-scale assessments demonstrate that properly developed digital tools may facilitate and enhance traditional learning. The University of Chicago researchers analyzed Personalized Adaptive Learning (PAL) in Andhra Pradesh, which gained up to 17 months of learning in 17 months and proved that technology, when properly combined with classroom learning can be miraculous.

7.5. Changes in Classroom Dynamics and Social Interaction

Although online learning provides flexibility, it cannot entirely substitute other social interactions, collaboration among the peers, and physical classroom learning. But the use of digital forums, simulations and collaborative platforms have also been adopted heavily by many institutions in an effort to improve the student interaction, not as a sign of a deterioration of the traditional learning setting, but rather as an evolution of the traditional learning setting.

8. Advantages of Online Learning

8.1. Greater Accessibility

Web applications have increased the opportunities of the students in isolated and poor regions. The report of the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 202122 writes that enrolment into online and ODL (Open and Distance Learning) programmes is on the increase, meaning that digital products are now available to those learners who formerly had no access to higher education.

8.2. Flexibility and Convenience

The students will be able to study at their pace and can replay lectures that have been recorded and find a balance between studies and work or family commitments. According to a student survey conducted by the Times of India in 2023, 68 percent of the learners prefer the online mode because it is flexible.

8.3. Cost-Effectiveness

E-learning is cost effective in terms of travelling, lodging and physical facilities. National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) 2023 reports that the average cost of the online upskilling courses in India is between 30 and 50 per cent less than similar offline course programmes.

8.4. Diverse Learning Resources

Online platforms provide multimedia, digital libraries, online discussion room, virtual labs and adaptive learning equipments. The PAL test in Andhra Pradesh (University of Chicago, 2023) proved that the use of quality online material can help substantially improve learning outcomes.

9. Limitations of Online Learning

9.1. Digital Divide and Inequity

Access to internet and devices in India is still not even. The gap in accessibility was observed in the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2022 report, which revealed that 57 percent of all households in rural areas in India had a smartphone accessible during the day, thus allowing them to learn.

9.2. Reduced Social and Peer Interaction

Online learning is weak in terms of imitating peer interaction, group work and emotional support and attachment experienced in classrooms. This manifested in the pandemic, whereby teachers had reported reduced rate of student attendance and cooperation in a virtual system compared with a conventional classroom system (NCERT 2022).

9.3. Quality Variation and Pedagogical Challenges

Online learning relies largely on course design and teacher preparedness and digital literacy. According to a survey of 545 students in Indian universities (2024, Springer/Discover Education), inadequate course design and ineffective instructions had a negative impact on the satisfaction of online learning.

9.4. Limitations in Practical and Hands-on Learning

Labs, fieldwork or demonstrations require subjects that suffer online learning. As UGC (2023) explained, there are major courses such as engineering, medicine, natural sciences, which cannot be taught using digital modes only and this may affect the quality of learning.

CONCLUSION

The shift of the traditional system of learning which was practiced in the classrooms to the online learning is one of the most remarkable changes in the Indian education system in the last few decades. The booming growth of online learning has transformed the nature of access, learning pedagogy and the learning experience itself of a student in India. The results of this study have shown that online learning has not merely complemented the conventional learning but has essentially affected the ways of learning, priorities and operations. The online spaces have broadened the scope of education, not just due to geographical and socio-economic borders, but also by enabling millions of learners to receive flexible, affordable, and technology-oriented learning opportunities. As the number of enrolled in higher education continues to increase to 43.3 million (AISHE 202122) and the rate of digital adoption speeds up in the aftermath of the pandemic, online learning has become a tool of liberalizing education.

Simultaneously, the issues identified by ASER (2022) and the Azim Premji Foundation make us remember that technology is not the solution that will be able to offer equal learning opportunities to every student, particularly those who do not have opportunities to access digital technology, receive personal assistance or positive family space. Since Mr. M. K. Gandhi insisted on having balance between moral, social and practical growth, the current Indian education system also needs to strike a compromise between online and traditional education. This new equilibrium is evident in hybrid and blended models which are now becoming popular with universities and supported by UGC policy reforms.

The effectiveness of the digital interventions like the Personalized Adaptive Learning (PAL) programmes in Andhra Pradesh demonstrates that when properly designed and correctly implemented technology can reinforce learning results and improve the classroom experience. However, the influence of online education, in the end, is not the replacement factor but rather the transformation of traditional education. Classroom teaching still has an incomparable value in terms of social interaction, practical learning and comprehensive formation, whereas online learning provides flexibility and customization, as well as broader access. They are all looking towards an inclusive, flexible and learner-centered educational future. This analysis highlights the importance of a balanced and

integrated solution, in which digital innovation will support the core competencies of classroom education so that India can have an education system that addresses the needs of the quickly evolving world.

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