



ONLINE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC – AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN NAMAKKAL

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Abstract

Online learning is a type of learning that is based on institutionalized instruction but uses electronic resources. While teaching can take place in or out of the classroom, computers and the Internet are an important part of online learning. It's also known as a network-enabled transfer of skills and knowledge, in which a big number of people receive education at the same moment or at various periods. In the early of the Covid-19 pandemic, the study environment shifted from traditional to online learning to prevent and stop the spreading of the Covid-19 virus. Thus, higher education students get more opportunities related their study. Hence, the researches aimed to analyze the online learning opportunities during Covid-19 pandemic among undergraduate students in Namakkal. The nature of this study was descriptive research design and questionnaire survey method. The random sampling technique has been approached to select the sample size of 155 undergraduates. For the purpose of data collection, the questionnaire has been administered and issued among population of this study. The sample data were coded and analyzed by using the software of MS-Excel and SPSS 22.0 software with the help of statistical methods like percentage analysis, mean score and Chi-square test. The results from study observed that most undergraduates are belong to male, Arts department, Aided colleges, Co-education colleges and studying in 2nd year in the study area.

Keywords: *Higher Education, Undergraduates, Arts, Science, Opportunities and Online learning.*

1. Introduction

With the development of COVID-19, a novel corona virus disease, numerous governments have ordered the closure of all educational institutions. Since they had to protect their students from viral exposures, which are likely in a highly socializing student society, educational institutions have come to a halt. While schools and colleges are closed indefinitely, educational institutions and students are experimenting with ways to finish their prescribed syllabi within the time window set by the academic calendar. These restrictions have undoubtedly caused some discomfort, but they have also sparked fresh examples of educational innovation involving digital inputs. Given the slow rate of reform in academic institutions, which continues to use millennia-old lecture-based teaching methods, embedded institutional biases, and outdated classrooms, this is a silver lining on a black cloud. Nonetheless, COVID-19 has prompted educational institutions around the world to investigate innovative techniques in a timely manner. Most institutions have moved to an online method during this time, employing Blackboard, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or other online platforms.

Educational institutions in affected areas are looking for temporary ways to keep teaching going, but it's vital to remember that the quality of learning is determined by the level of digital access and efficiency. When it comes to student motivation, satisfaction, and interaction, the online learning environment is vastly different from the typical classroom setting. Education and educational systems all across the world have been adversely impacted by the pandemic. In an effort to mitigate the effects of Corona, educational institutions around the world were temporarily closed. Higher education students, on the other hand, may have additional chances relating to their studies during the Covid epidemic.



2. Statement of the Problem

Following the government's decision to implement a nationwide lock-down due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Indian educational institutions have likewise made the switch to an online teaching environment. The main problem, however, is the learning quality, which is intimately tied to how well the content is developed and implemented. Learning effectiveness is partly dependent on how content is chosen for the online environment, as well as identifying and overcoming the limits that students confront. The study is all the more important in light of the fact that online learning has never been undertaken on this scale in India, making it a gigantic social experiment. Furthermore, in the higher education sector, the graduation curriculum places a great value on practical features, and adapting it to an online platform can determine its effectiveness. Higher education students can benefit from online learning by allowing them to study in peace. Online education has grown in popularity among students in higher education. These categories of online learners obtain many opportunities in online learning during Covid-19 Pandemic. In this line, this study aimed to analyse the online learning opportunities during Covid-19 Pandemic among undergraduate students in Namakkal.

3. Research Aim

1. To study the demographic profile of the selected undergraduate students in Namakkal.
2. To explore the online learning opportunities during Covid-19 Pandemic among undergraduate students in the study area.

4. Hypothesis of The Study

1. There is no significant relationship between gender of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.
2. There is no significant relationship between department studying by the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.
3. There is no significant relationship between type of the college of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.
4. There is no significant relationship between nature of the college of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.
5. There is no significant relationship between studying year of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.

5. Research Methods

This study focused that the online learning opportunities during Covid-19 Pandemic among undergraduate students in Namakkal. This study has followed descriptive research method and survey method. To understand and obtain the online learning opportunities of undergraduates, the authors have framed the structured questionnaire and issued to population of this study. The required primary data have been collected from the sample size of 155 undergraduates with the help of random sampling method. The sample data have been analyzed by applying the statistical techniques such as percentage analysis, mean score, standard deviation and Chi-square test by approaching SPSS 22.0 software.

6. Results and Discussion

In this section, the researcher has explored the demographic profile of the undergraduates and relationship between demographic profile and opportunities in online learning in detail.

6.1 Demographic Profile of the Students

The following table contains the demographic profile of the undergraduates in Namakkal. For this study, the variables viz., gender, department studying, type of the college, nature of college and studying year have been chosen. The details are given below.



Table 1 : Demographic Profile and Challenges in Online Learning of the Students

| No. | Variables Name | Number of Respondents | Percentage |
|----------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Gender | | |
| | • Male | 88 | 56.8 |
| | • Female | 67 | 43.2 |
| | Total | 155 | 100.0 |
| 2 | Department Studying | | |
| | • Arts | 109 | 70.3 |
| | • Science | 46 | 29.7 |
| | Total | 155 | 100.0 |
| 3 | Type of the College | | |
| | • Government College | 26 | 16.8 |
| | • Self-Financing | 55 | 35.5 |
| | • Aided | 74 | 47.7 |
| | Total | 155 | 100.0 |
| 4 | Nature of College | | |
| | • Gents | 28 | 18.1 |
| | • Women | 43 | 27.7 |
| | • Co-education | 84 | 54.2 |
| | Total | 155 | 100.0 |
| 5 | Studying Year | | |
| | • 1 st Year | 29 | 18.7 |
| | • 2 nd Year | 69 | 44.5 |
| | • 3 rd Year | 57 | 36.8 |
| | Total | 155 | 100.0 |

- It is observed from the analysis that 56.8% of the students are male undergraduates and 43.2% of the students are female undergraduates.
- From the analysis, it is explored that 70.3% of the undergraduates are studying in Arts department and 29.7% of the students are studying in science department.
- From the analysis, it is showed that 16.8% of the students are studying in government colleges, 35.5% are studying in self-financing and 47.7% as Aided colleges.
- From the analysis, it is confirmed that 18.1% of the undergraduates are studying in gent's colleges, 27.7% of the students from women colleges and 54.2% as co-education colleges.
- From the analysis, it is divulged that 18.7% of the undergraduates are 1st year students, 44.5% as 2nd years students and 36.8% of the students are studying in 3rd year.

6.2 Opportunities in Online Learning

In this section, among the undergraduate students, mainly focused on how the online learning gives opportunities in their educational development amidst Covid-19 outbreak situation. So, the researcher has selected five statements which identifies the level of opportunity in the learning of undergraduate students.



The Cronbach Alpha value for the statements of opportunities in online learning is 0.835. This confirms that the reliability of the opportunities in online learning is good and fit for analysis of this study. It could be assessed that majority of the undergraduate students opined as ‘Online education and virtual classes are a suitable solution at the time of Covid-19 pandemic’ with the mean score and standard deviation of 3.91 and 1.15 respectively followed by ‘Online education and virtual classes develop ability to solve problems’ with the mean score and standard deviation of 3.88 and 1.24 respectively.

6.3 Relationship between Demographic Profile and Opportunities in Online Learning

A cross-tabulation is prepared with a view to find the degree of association between demographic profile of the undergraduates and their level of opportunities in online learning. In order to find the relationship between selected independent variables and opportunities in online learning of the undergraduates, hypotheses were developed and tested by applying Chi-square test.

Gender and Opportunities in Online Learning

H₀: There is no significant relationship between gender of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.

Table 2: Gender and Opportunities in Online Learning

| S. No | Gender | Level of Opportunities | | | Total | Mean Score | Chi-Square Value |
|-------|--------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | Low | Medium | High | | | |
| 1 | Male | 12 (13.6%) | 38 (43.2%) | 38 (43.2%) | 88 | 3.66 | 5.598 (0.061^{NS}) |
| 2 | Female | 19 (28.4%) | 27 (40.3%) | 21 (31.3%) | 67 | 3.78 | |
| | Total | 31 | 65 | 59 | 155 | | |

Note: Parenthesis indicates ‘p’ value; NS – Not Significant

It is indicated from the cross-tabulation that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by female undergraduates. Also, the ‘p’ value is greater than 0.05 and the null hypothesis has been accepted. Hence, there is no significant relationship between gender of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.

Department Studying and Opportunities in Online Learning

H₀: There is no significant relationship between department studying by the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.

Table 3: Department Studying and Opportunities in Online Learning

| S. No | Department Studying | Level of Opportunities | | | Total | Mean Score | Chi-Square Value |
|-------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | Low | Medium | High | | | |
| 1 | Arts | 24 (22.0%) | 49 (45.0%) | 36 (33.0%) | 109 | 3.76 | 3.994 (0.136^{NS}) |
| 2 | Science | 7 (15.2%) | 16 (34.8%) | 23 (50.0%) | 46 | 3.60 | |
| | Total | 31 | 65 | 59 | 155 | | |

Note: Parenthesis indicates ‘p’ value; NS – Not Significant



It is explored from the cross-tabulation that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by Arts college undergraduates. In addition, the ‘p’ value is larger than 0.05 and the null hypothesis has been accepted. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between department studying by the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.

Type of the College and Opportunities in Online Learning

H₀: There is no significant relationship between type of the college of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.

Table 4: Type of the College and Opportunities in Online Learning

| S. No | Type of the College | Level of Opportunities | | | Total | Mean Score | Chi-Square Value |
|-------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|----------------------------|
| | | Low | Medium | High | | | |
| 1 | Government College | 4 (15.4%) | 14 (53.8%) | 8 (30.8%) | 26 | 3.63 | 16.304 (0.003*) |
| 2 | Self-Financing | 7 (12.7%) | 16 (29.1%) | 32 (58.2%) | 55 | 3.61 | |
| 3 | Aided | 20 (27.0%) | 35 (47.3%) | 19 (25.7%) | 74 | 3.82 | |
| | Total | 31 | 65 | 59 | 155 | | |

Note: Parenthesis indicates ‘p’ value; * – Significant at 1% level

It is observed from the cross-tabulation that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by Arts college undergraduates. In addition, the ‘p’ value is lesser than 0.05 and the null hypothesis has been rejected. Hence, there is a close significant relationship between type of the college of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.

Nature of College and Opportunities in Online Learning

H₀: There is no significant relationship between nature of the college of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.

Table 5: Nature of College and Opportunities in Online Learning

| S. No | Nature of College | Level of Opportunities | | | Total | Mean Score | Chi-Square Value |
|-------|-------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|----------------------------|
| | | Low | Medium | High | | | |
| 1 | Gents | 3 (10.7%) | 21 (75.0%) | 4 (14.3%) | 28 | 3.59 | 22.163 (0.000*) |
| 2 | Women | 4 (9.3%) | 17 (39.5%) | 22 (51.2%) | 43 | 3.72 | |
| 3 | Co-education | 24 (28.6%) | 27 (32.1%) | 33 (39.3%) | 84 | 3.75 | |
| | Total | 31 | 65 | 59 | 155 | | |

Note: Parenthesis indicates ‘p’ value; * – Significant at 1% level

It is showed from the cross-tabulation that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by undergraduates of co-education colleges. Further, the ‘p’ value is lesser than 0.05 and the null hypothesis has been rejected. Thus, there is a close significant relationship between nature of the college of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.



Studying Year and Opportunities in Online Learning

H₀: There is no significant relationship between studying year of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.

Table 6: Studying Year and Opportunities in Online Learning

| S. No | Studying Year | Level of Opportunities | | | Total | Mean Score | Chi-Square Value |
|-------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|----------------------------|
| | | Low | Medium | High | | | |
| 1 | 1 st Year | 1 (3.4%) | 5 (17.2%) | 23 (79.3%) | 29 | 3.80 | 41.074 (0.000*) |
| 2 | 2 nd Year | 8 (11.6%) | 35 (50.7%) | 26 (37.7%) | 69 | 3.65 | |
| 3 | 3 rd Year | 22 (38.6%) | 25 (43.9%) | 10 (17.5%) | 57 | 3.75 | |
| | Total | 31 | 65 | 59 | 155 | | |

Note: Parenthesis indicates ‘p’ value; * – Significant at 1% level

It is determined from the cross-tabulation that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by 1st year undergraduates. Also, the ‘p’ value is lesser than 0.05 and the null hypothesis has been rejected. Accordingly, there is a close significant relationship between studying year of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.

7. Findings

1. It is found that majority (56.8%) of the selected students are male undergraduates.
2. It is noted that majority (70.3%) of the undergraduates are studying in Arts department.
3. It is identified that majority (47.7%) of the undergraduates are studying in Aided colleges.
4. It is cleared that majority (54.2%) of the undergraduates are studying in Co-education colleges.
5. It is obtained that majority (44.5%) of the undergraduates are studying in 2nd year in selected colleges.
6. It could be observed that most of the undergraduates opined as ‘Online education and virtual classes are a suitable solution at the time of Covid-19 pandemic’ followed by ‘Online education and virtual classes develop ability to solve problems’ with the mean score and standard deviation of 3.91 and 3.88 respectively.
7. It is explored that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by female undergraduates. Also, the Chi-square analysis observed that there is no significant relationship between gender of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.
8. It is assessed that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by Arts college undergraduates. The result from Chi-square analysis that there is no significant relationship between department studying by the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.
9. It is confirmed that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by Aided college undergraduates. The Chi-square test showed there is a close significant relationship between type of the college of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.
10. It is revealed that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by undergraduates of co-education colleges. It could be noted from Chi-square test that there is a close significant relationship between nature of the college of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.



11. It is cleared that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by 1st year undergraduates. The Chi-square test concluded that there is a close significant relationship between studying year of the undergraduates and their opportunities in online learning.

8. Suggestions

- The study revealed that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by female undergraduates. So, the management of institution should motivate male students to actively participate online learning and it should be addressed by the respective faculties to get more opportunities among male undergraduates.
- The findings obtained that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by Arts college undergraduates. Further, there is a need for interactive sessions with quizzes and assignments at the end of each class to enhance opportunities among both department undergraduates.
- It is confirmed that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by Aided college undergraduates. Therefore, all the institutions should create awareness among undergraduates about their opportunities in career and life.
- It is cleared that high level opportunities in online learning is perceived by 1st year undergraduates. Hence, the institution should organize forums or debates online and implement a dynamic interactional approach in online learning among 1st year students.

9. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the online learning opportunities during covid-19 Pandemic among undergraduate students in Namakkal. Online assessment has become an integral part of today's education due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It seems to replace the traditional assessment as every teaching and learning activities including the assessment are being conducted online. In this study, most of the undergraduates replied as 'Online education and virtual classes are a suitable solution at the time of Covid-19 pandemic'. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct an effective online assessment to achieve the desired outcomes. Also, the findings confirmed that maximum level opportunities in online learning is perceived by undergraduates belong to female Arts college and aided co-education colleges. So, the institutions should develop the effectiveness of online learning through conducted at the programs requiring many practices in workshops, getting feedback constantly continually refine their understanding and build new knowledge from online learning.

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