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Exploring The Views Of Students About Academic Engagement In Online Classes Of Undergraduates

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Abstract

The importance of Academic Engagement has been an emphasis in the learning process. Academic engagement is known to boost student's success in online classes by enhancing retention, desire to learn and student satisfaction. Online platform enable students to reduce loneliness and increase interaction.. The aim of this study is to explore the perception of students about academic engagement in online classes of undergraduates and to examine student perceptions of online learning. This is quantitative research. Convenient sample technique was used for data collection. Sample consists of 97 students that are enrolled in Education department, University of Sargodha. The information is gathered by the use of a 15-item questionnaire. Finding of this research explored that online learning is effective mode of learning as compare to in person learning. It is concluded that male and female students have same perception that online classes provide same opportunities for academic engagement as provided in traditional classes.

Key Words: Academic Engagement, Online Class rooms, E-Learning, Students Engagement.

Introduction

It seems that the modification of the education system of 19th Century to the 21st century education system has brought a new angle into the productivity and usefulness of the two forms of education. The rapid advancement of Information Technology has occasioned the new adaptation and it is observed that the utilization and impact has extended from industrial production to virtually all aspects of life. Online Learning consists of many heading, that is computer-based education, internet-based education, online education system, with the effective use of e-books, social networking sites, audio-visual technologies, and online digital broadcasting networks (Chawings & Zozie, 2016).

Through advancing technologically-enabled tools, the e-learning environment in a higher education institution is a learning system that combines emerging technology with teaching and learning processes as a major educational development (Eze, Chinedu-Eze, & Bello; 2018). Schools at all levels, as well as colleges and universities, have invested significant budgetary and other capital in online learning platforms, especially the Internet. Tertiary educational institutes have shown a significant concern in addressing the improvement in students' academic achievement through the use of promising technologies that provide novel means of access to university education in recent years (Orton-Johnson, 2009).

Therefore, a growing number of tertiary educational institutions are adopting online learning environment to expand access to education. Institutions must rely on factors regarding student engagement, self-regulation habits, and student retention as determinants of student academic performance when transitioning to this learning modality (Commissiong, 2020).These reforms illustrate the belief that using e-learning environments will improve conventional teaching. As a result, universities are investing in the creation of campus e-learning platforms as a chosen mode of course delivery or as an alternative to in person classes, based on the postulation that digitally savvy, students are already familiar with such environments (Parkes, Stein, & Reading, 2015).

Today's students live in technologically advanced worlds that influence how they communicate with knowledge and one another. In the twenty-first century, children have access to a vast variety of technology opportunities and techniques for learning in real-world situations (Lee & Spires, 2009). While using new teaching methodologies and new technologies integrated the learning process, the perceptions of teacher and students are given importance (Arthur, 2009; Crews & Butterfield, 2004; Van Wart, Ni, Ready, Shayo, & Court, 2020). Students' perceptions and reactions to e-learning components, as well as how to successfully use the framework for learning improvement, should be understood by e-learning developers and providers (Koohang & Durante, 2003).

There are various vital factors for the improvement of the educational process and academic engagement. But these factors are not in the direct observation and perception of students, for example, instructors training (Brinkley-Etzkorn, 2018). A variety of psychosocial factors, such as peer community, an active online instructor, and motivation, as well as systemic factors, such as life load and course design, affected active online student engagement. Time management and organizational skills were important for online student performance and engagement because they allowed students to combine their lives and their studies. However, the study found that online students face persistent difficulties in staying to a regular study schedule. (Farrell & Brunton;2020).Furthermore, gaining insight into students' intentions and knowledge of the variables that influence their satisfaction with e-learning will aid school heads and teachers in developing systematic procedures for encouraging students to use e-learning (Grandon, Alshare & Kwan, 2005).

According to Rennie & Morrison (2013), technology has a significant impact on the student knowledge construction process. It helps in motivating them to dig deeper into any sources of information they have. As a result, diverse viewpoints must address to have a quality online learning experience for the learner. Online learning is one of the fastest-growing fields of education in the world because it offers flexible access to educational opportunities to students from a variety of backgrounds and geographical regions who would otherwise be unable to access higher education.

The extent to which teachers and students are satisfied with online learning is directly influenced by their attitudes toward and expectations of online learning. Therefore, whether professors and students (or both) perceive little to no gain from online learning, the effect could very well be a negative view of online learning(Tanner, Noser, & Totaro, 2009). Academic engagement in classroom is initiated and affected by the students' investment in learning experiences as well as interrelated affective (emotive responses), behavioral (active responses), and cognitive (mental effort) elements (Walker & Koralesky; 2021).

According to Richardson & Long (2003) Students' views of the academic content of their courses were influenced by the role of course teachers in promoting academic engagement, and this relationship reflected the connection between the tutors' recorded thinking and practices and the students' overall satisfaction with their courses. Both teachers and students need instruction on how to engage electronically in the absence of pronunciation feedback if online tuition is to be effective (Richardson, & Jelfs; 2007). While online learning platforms, where dissatisfaction rates are elevated than in typical in person settings, engagement is essential (Angelino, Williams, & Natvig, 2007). Student engagement is associated with student retention, determination, and academic success (Meyer, 2014)

However, many quantitative investigations have been done to support the argument, exploring whether traditional or in person training approaches are effective, or whether online or alternative learning is effective (Lockman & Schirmer, 2020). In the view of Misha Chakraborty (2017), via the systematic introduction of effective techniques, students' attitudes toward learning, motivation, and perceptions of learning can all be influenced. Instructor presence and teaching immediacy were two essential areas that the techniques revolved around. Traditional classroom education has been modernized to meet the vast needs of the students through the incorporation of ICT in education system. Nowadays, these two forms of learning seem as same, despite there are distinct similarities and differences.

Generally, there are many similarities between traditional and online education systems. Both curriculums are designed to meet the needs of society. It involves characteristics of both learning and teaching to achieve desired learning outcomes. Currently, education courses are designed to enhance learning through the use of materials like textbooks, which are either printed or electronic. Test, exams, and assessments are used to check the intellectual competence of the learner. Students need extensive related material to understand the lesson. Sometimes, the teacher provides the basic knowledge about the topic or lesson and leaves them to gather more information using different materials. In this regard, electronic media is very helpful as it provides knowledge of various dimensions while printed media is difficult to approach and it provides limited knowledge. The Online education system requires the learner to become fully responsible for learning while the traditional classroom is characterized by the shared responsibility of learner and teacher.

While , it is supported that traditional classroom environment enhances social interaction and sense of individual differences between students. When students with different background and abilities come together for learning, they worked together and performed tasks and feedback(Shahzadi,2022). These aspects enhance their understanding of citizenship and individual difference. While in online classes digital connection are used to create physical environment. Recently, video conferencing and web chats are using for this purpose (Dawley, 2007). Online learning lacks face-to-face interaction between teachers and students, and even between students and students.

In traditional classes' learners covers lesson, and enhances their understanding through face-to-face interaction with instructor and other learners. This creates learning environments which leads to student's satisfaction of course sessions. On the other hand virtual education does not provide a classroom environment as learner is separated at different place. Moreover, traditional environment provides a team working environment for the learners which develop their team working and collaboration skill while online learning grooms individual working skill of the

students which leads them to do independent work in the future.

Methodology

The study was quantitative in nature and aimed to explore the views of undergraduates about their academic engagement in online classes. Convenient sampling technique was used for data collection. Sample consists of 96 Students that are enrolled in undergraduate program of Department of Education, University of Sargodha. A Questionnaire comprising 15 items was developed to explore the views of students. Expert opinion and literature review was used for validation of the questionnaire and Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the reliability of the questionnaire i.e. .786. Data was analyzed to conclude the study

Results

Table 1 Demographic analysis

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	27	28.1
	Female	69	71.9
Qualification	B.S	61	63.5
	B.Ed	38	39.5
Residence	Rural	33	34.4
	Urban	63	65.6

Table reflected that there were 28.1% (27) males and 71.9% (69) were females who participated in the study. It was found that there were 61 BS and 38 B.Ed. students participated in the study. Total students of the study were 96 in number. Table, further, shows that there were 34.4% population belongs to rural areas and about 65.6% belongs to urban areas

Table 2: Mean Analysis

SR.	Statements	N	Mean	Std.
1	Online learning is effective mode	96	3.58	1.10
2	New skills in online class for academic engagement	96	2.83	1.15
3	More opportunity for engage academically in Online class	96	3.34	1.20
4	Online learning satisfied need for academic engagement	96	3.39	1.12
5	Online studies as conductive platform for academic engagements	96	3.24	1.10
6	Online learning encouragement	96	3.25	1.142
7	Online classes is time taking	96	2.67	1.228

8	Online classes reduces teamwork and collaboration between students and teachers	96	2.55	1.085
9	Online learning is difficult to adapt	96	2.68	1.147
10	Schedule of online classes are feasible to manage both for teachers and students.	96	2.39	1.065
11	Timely task completion during online classes	96	2.80	1.130
12	Lack of teacher feedback in online learning	96	2.53	0.921
13	Work load not shared equally during online classes	96	2.42	1.053
14	Online classes enhance presentation skills	96	2.85	1.218
15	Online classes are stressful	96	2.30	1.116

It was found that the means value of 1st item is 3.58 and standard deviation is 1.102 that show respondents agree with online learning is effective mode of learning as compare to traditional learning. In 2nd item mean value is 2.83 and standard deviation is 1.158, which show that respondent was neutral about new skills adopt in online classes for academic engagement.

The mean value of 3rd item is 3.34 and standard deviation is 1.204 which show that responded was neutral upon more opportunity for engage academically in online classes. Mean value is 3.39 and standard deviation of item 4 is 1.127 which also show neutral response of student about online learning satisfied there need for academic engagement. In item 5 mean values are 2.24 and standard deviation is 1.103 that indicates respondent disagree upon online studies as conductive platform for academic engagements.

In item 6 the mean value is 3.25, and standard deviation is 1.142 that shows students were neutral upon encouragement of online learning. In item 7 the mean value is 2.67 and standard deviation is 1.228 that shows students were disagree upon online classes is time taking. In item 8 the mean value is 2.55 and standard deviation is 1.085 that shows students were neutral upon online classes reduces teamwork and collaboration between students and teachers. In item 9 the mean value is 2.68, and standard deviation is 1.147 that shows students disagree upon online learning is difficult to adapt. In item 10 the mean value is 2.39, and standard deviation is 1.065 that shows students were disagree upon schedule of online classes are feasible to manage both for teachers and students. In item 11 the mean value is 2.80, and standard deviation is 1.130 that shows students were neutral upon timely task completion during online classes.

In item 12 the mean value is 2.53 and standard deviation is 0.921 that shows students disagree upon lack of teacher feedback in online learning. In item 13 the mean value is 2.42 and standard deviation is 1.053 that shows students were disagree upon work load not shared equally during online classes. In item 14 the mean value is 2.85, and standard deviation is 1.218 that shows students were neutral upon online classes enhance presentation skills. In item 15 the mean value is 2.30, and standard deviation is 1.116 that shows students were disagree upon online classes are stressful.

Table 3 Analysis on the basis of Gender

IR	Gender	N	Mean	df	t	Sig (2 tailed)
	Male	27	39.67	94	-2.37	.02
	Female	69	43.86			

Table 3 reflects that value 0.02<.05. So, the hypothesis (null) stating that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students for academic engagement in online classes was rejected and it is concluded that male and female undergraduate students have different perceptions about academic engagement in online classes.

Table 4 Analysis on the basis of Residence

IR	Residence	N	Mean	df	t	Sig (2 tailed)
	Rural	33	43.24	94	0.5017	0.618
	Urban	63	42.38			

Table 4 reflects that value 0.50>05. So, the null hypothesis is accepted and it is concluded that of rural and urban undergraduate students have same perceptions about academic engagement in online classes.

Table 5 Analysis on the basis of Residence

IR	Qualification	N	Mean	df	t	Sig (2 tailed)
	B.S	61	60.59	92	1.151	0.253
	B.Ed	38	59.95			

Table 5 reflects that value 1.15 >0.05 level of significance. So, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the perception of B.S and B.Ed undergraduates' students is accepted and it is concluded that of B.S and B.Ed undergraduate students have same perceptions about academic engagement in online classes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research explored that online learning is effective mode of learning as compare to traditional learning for both male and female students. Only some students adopt new skills in online classes, which improve their academic engagement. Male and female students have same perception that online classes provide same opportunities for academic engagement as provided in traditional classes. Students also believe that online classes are not conducive platform for academic engagements. Some students perceive that online classes are not time taking while other perceived that online classes don't have feasible schedule for both learners and teachers. Online classes reduce team work and collaboration between students. In online classes teachers provides proper feedback. In online classes, work load was shared equally between students. Mostly students perceived that online classes are not stressful.

On the basis of conclusion following recommendation of the study: Institution should provide proper facilities and instructions for adaptation of new technologies and skills for online class. For enhancing academic engagement, Administration should provide good time managing strategies for taking online

classes. There should be more opportunities provided to students in online classes for enhancing their academic engagement and teachers should adopt new methodologies for engaging students more in online classes and should provide timely feed back to students for their better performance.

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