

## Perceptions of Students regarding online classes – adapting the New Normal

### ABSTRACT:

**Background :** The COVID-19 pandemic has halted teaching in variety of institutions, especially in dental schools. Educational directors had to refine education from the formerly class based lecture into long distance/online training program. This study directed to compute the impact of COVID-19 on dental education enquiring the students' perception of this method of e-learning.

**Methods :** The study was held in Adesh Institute of Dental Sciences and Research, Bathinda, Punjab, India, from April to May 2020 after formerly being approved by the Institutional Ethical Committee. A survey was conducted disseminating an online questionnaire made on Google forms, which was further assessed and evaluated for its validity and reliability and further descriptive stats for procuring final results were applied.

**Results :** A total number of 310 students were considered for data analysis out of which 13.6% preferred online classrooms in comparison to 86.4% which were more inclined to offline classrooms. Present study on the BDS students' perception revealed some supportive but also inhibitory factors

**Conclusion:** E-Learning programs are a potent way for teaching dental students. However, lucrative, execution of online learning into the academics required a well-reasoned strategy and a more functioning approach.

**Key Words :** Perception, e-learning, online classes, internet connectivity, BDS students, COVID-19.

### Introduction:

The magnanimity of information technology impacts on multiple aspects of our lives today. It cannot be contradicted neither can its flourish fame and use in the education sector be revoked. This role in the academic sphere gained furthermore gravity after the WHO declared a state of global emergency due to outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Indian governments to avert the spread of the students and faculty to the school and college grounds were truly forbidden and educational institutes switched from traditional class-room to Home-Based learning. The flourishing inventive technologies and learning administration system both for the teaching and evaluation took a headway and contributed to a utilize solution for instructors and giving policy makers an opportunity to execute the use of information technology during the quarantine days covering the assignments and academic work. E-learning proved to be an effective method in providing education with its cost- effectively and ease of

accessibility at one's convenience. However, the success of e-learning reckons on many factors including accessibility, usage of appropriate methods, course content and assessment criteria. In the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, this novel study

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focuses on the perception of BDS students regarding online classes as the dental schools halted in person courses. As some curricular changes may endure after the pandemic subsides it is censorious to understand the application of learning and technology as best viewed from the students' perception because they have a direct experience and impact from it.

### Materials and Methods:

This study involves survey on the BDS students' perceptions of online learning during the pandemic COVID-19 in Adesh Institute of Dental Sciences and Research, Bathinda, Punjab, India. The study was conducted from April to May 2020. The self-designed questionnaire comprised of multiple choice questions which were employed to obtain the percentage. Simultaneously, open-ended questions were used to acquire the student's insight regarding the topics on the implementation of e-learning. Before finalizing the questionnaire terminal changes were made based on a pilot survey conducted on some students to evaluate the expediency of the survey. Content validity of the questionnaire was tested by experts. The e-questionnaire was disseminated using whatsapp through the cooperation of the class leaders that helped us to deliver the survey to all the undergraduate students. The received responses were determined, analysed and further illustrated.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethical Committee. The study was directed with the caution to ethical standards and research and rights of participants to accept or decline to contribute in this study and that their data will be treated classified for the purpose of research. A document was sent to all the student recipients that provided them with a familiarity with the design of the study, followed by an informed consent. The sample was selected based on exclusion and inclusion criteria.

### Inclusion Criteria:

- BDS students willing to participate in the study using electronic learning program.

### Exclusion Criteria

- BDS students who were not accepting to participate in the study.
- BDS students not using android mobile phones for studying.

To assess the clairvoyance of students' subjected E-learning program, a total of 350 students enrolled in BDS

undergraduate program were sent the e-questionnaire. 325 students reverted back with filling the form. When the data was further submitted through analysis 310 responses were considered valid and 15 of them were ruled out due to incomplete data submission in the form.

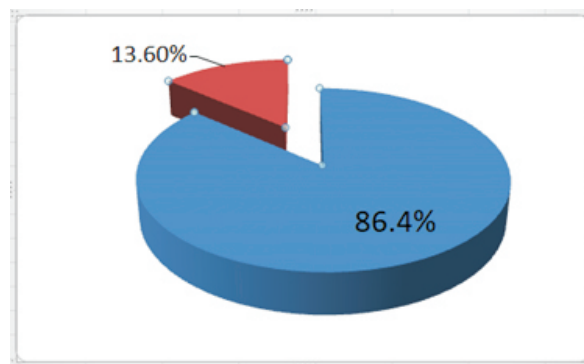
### Statistical analysis:

The data were processed and tabulated into the personal computer. The data was subjected to descriptive statistics and were expressed as number and percentage.

### Results:

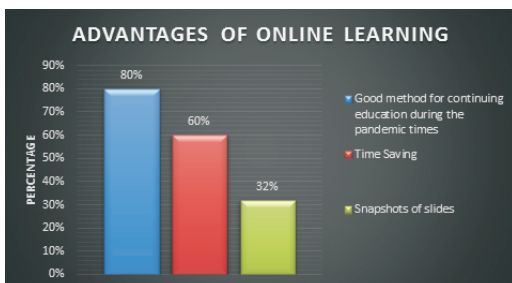
The e-questionnaire disseminated through whatsapp attained significant responses by the students making them a vital component of this online survey. Among the 310 students considered rational for data analysis, 267 (86.4%) preferred offline classrooms and 42 (13.6%) of the participants were inclined towards E-learning Techniques. (Diagram 1)

Diagram 1 Distribution of BDS students regarding preferred method amongst online vs. offline learning

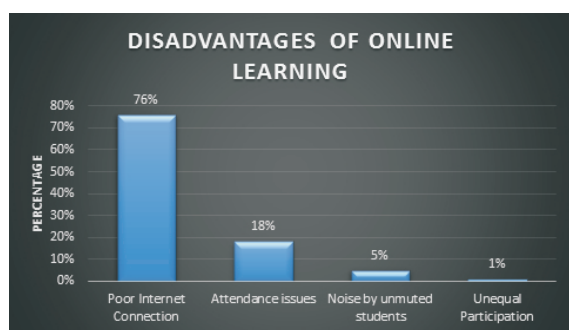


The rate of satisfaction in accordance with the students regarding online teaching was recorded on the scale of 1 to 5. 64 (20.9%) of the students stated their satisfaction level to grade 2 and 135 (43.6%) participants reported grade 3, and 67 (21.8%) asserted grade 4 level (where 1 is characterized as the lowest level of satisfaction and 5 stands for most satisfied participants). When asked about how e-learning was different from traditional method of classroom teaching, numerous reasons were stated amongst which the most common reported answers included less student teacher interaction, poor connection online, recorded lectures that help later, no travelling saves a lot of time. The participants were examined regarding what the students state best about this method of

online teaching. Time saving, snapshots of slides, good method in continuing education during the pandemic times were the most frequent responses.



The next analysis was done regarding what the participants preferred least regarding e-learning which were aggregated into poor internet connection problems from both students and teachers part, unequal participation, attendance issues, noise by unmuted students.



The undergraduate students were questioned on how to improve new method of teaching, the answers were summarized into introduction of remedial classes, and better technology with proper internet connection, by updating to new pro apps, seminar projects can be given about a particular topic which can further improve this method of home based learning.

### Discussion:

Unquestionably, the execution of e-learning systems has enabled a rudimentary change in teaching and learning practice.[7] Attainability of mobile phones among students are also paving the way for shifting focus to online learning to continue their study especially in an unexpected situation such as COVID-19 pandemic.[3] In this short cross-sectional study, we evaluated perception of BDS students operation. Out of 310 students considered for data analysis, only 13.6 % preferred online learning and the rest 86.4% felt that face teaching was more poignant over e-teaching. The key outcome of result was in accordance with Abbasi *et al*, El-Hamed Diab *et al* showing that the students are not yet ready for e-learning..

The participants were asked to grade online teaching on the scale of 1 to 5 amongst which 135 (43.6%) state grade 3 level, 67 (21.8 %) participants asserted grade 4 and 28 (91%) students stated level 5 of satisfaction. On contrary, Baczek *et al* reported a total of 589 (73%) respondents rated e-learning as enjoyable, 125 (15%) found it extremely enjoyable and 237 (29%) found it very enjoyable.

Ease of access to academic materials and the potentiality to choose the time and place to study were shown as the strongest advantage of e-learning amongst the respondents of our survey which was in accordance to Biswas *et al*, Abassiet al and Baczek *et al*.

Gadgets are always user-friendly and easy to operate which was perceived as one of the basic strength in order to fight COVID-19 and at the same time accomplishing the responsibilities of an educational administrator delivering education to the students.[2] Well-organized with energy efficiency, recorded lectures used to enhance academic approach, e-learning proved to be a vital method for continuing education during the time of a pandemic were the exceedingly reported responses by the participants when inspection was done regarding this new method of e-learning. This was in line with many researchers' point of view like El-Hamed Diab *et al* and NurAgung *et al*.

Nevertheless, e-learning is not without the drawbacks. The chief complaints for our respondents in the survey were poor internet connectivity problems from both the students' and teachers' side. E-learning requires a dependable internet connection and the requisite hardware and software technology.[5] This rationale was reported in accordance to Abbasi *et al*, Daroedono *et al* Biswas *et al*, Nuragung *et al*, Baczek *et al*, Doren *et al* and El – Hamed Diab *et al*. Other inhibiting factors that emerged as prime concern included unequal participation, attendance issues, kind of boring, noise by unmuted students.

In a bigger picture, to the opinion, online classrooms actually directed dental college's executive to improve upon their education delivery to the undergraduate students. When interrogated regarding how to ameliorate e – classroom profuse amount of response were tabulated amongst which introduction of interactive classes, by updating to new pro apps, seminars projects can be given regarding a particular topic were perennial replies. But most importantly INTERNET was considered the source of needed materials to achieve the goals of teaching and learning. The answers to this

query in the study were restated in accordance with Abbasi *et al*, Daroedono *et al* Biswas *et al*, Nuragung *et al*, Baczek *et al*, Doren *et al* and El – Hamed Diab *et al*.

Based on the outputs of this study and findings of related existing studies conducted by Abbasi *et al*, Daroedono *et al*, Biswas *et al*, Nuragung *et al*, Baczek *et al*, Doren *et al* and El – Hamed Diab *et al* etc. It can be stated that e – learning platform is a very beneficial mechanism to ensure normal educational administration during these jarring times of COVID-19 pandemic, if the obligatory adaptation regarding logistics, internet accessibility etc. be already in order.

#### Limitation:

It is a single centered study with fewer sample size which limits its generalizability.

#### Recommendation:

The study sample should be multi center with larger sample size which can provide with better understanding by comparing of results with off-line classes. Few suggestions by respondents included:

- Group activities to be included with discussions.
- Online test series should be incorporated.
- Better internet connection with use of advanced apps.

#### Conclusion:

The pandemic of COVID-19 has created a big stream of prototype shift in India's education system: from physical to internet based classrooms. However, despite gaining surplus popularity today, digital learning program has still not been welcomed by dental students. Students are still more disposed towards face to face learning than e- learning. In reality, the shift presents a significant challenge, especially for those who are in least developed regions. The study disclosed some supportive but also some inhibitory factors. These aspects can be demanding but in the other hand to our realization as an educational administration is considered, it gave a chance to improve dental education delivery to the students.

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