Experiences of Students regarding Online Classes During COVID-19 Lockdown in Rourkela, Odisha

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Abstract

During the lockdown of COVID-19, the education of the world had stopped like a stagnant water. Online classes were adopted to keep the flow of the education. Schools, colleges, and universities used different information technology (IT) tools to provide education to the students. To study the impact of the online classes on students and the pros and cons of online classes during COVID-19 lockdown, the researcher reached out to some of the students (Grade 7th to 12th) from different schools and boards of Rourkela District, Odisha to know their experiences on how the online classes were working. A semi-structured interview with close and open-ended questions, was conducted on telephone for collecting data. The result of the study shows that the participation of the students was high but they were not satisfied with the improper conduction of online classes. Results revealed that although many of them were worried about the pandemic but some students were excited about spending this time with family whereas many of the students were bored at home. Online classes helped the students in engaging themselves for a certain period of quality time in studies during this COVID-19 lockdown.

***Keywords:** COVID-19, Lockdown, Online Classes, Education*

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Background of the study:

After the two-world wars, COVID-19 pandemic was the greatest challenge that the world had faced recently. It can be defined as the global health crisis of our time. There was a total shutdown in many of the greatest cities. Places are deserted as people are staying inside at home by choice or by country order. This COVID-19 pandemic leads the graph of economy to fall as many shops, markets, theatres, public-tourist places, bars and restaurants were closed not only in India but across the world. The COVID-19 had also affected the educational system around the world and this leading to closures of schools, universities, and colleges. To maintain the flow of education across the world and even in India online classroom were being conducted by many schools, universities, and colleges. By using the IT technology in this disrupted academic year, amid COVID-19 pandemic, students all over India used different IT tools and platforms (Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Cisco WebEx, MS Team, MS Meet, Google Classroom and Google Meet, etc.) to pursue their studies. It was indeed a challenging time as it was a sudden change in teaching and learning environment. Online classes or online learning is not, what we do not know before. Web-based learning was always there since the evolution of the information technology (IT). E-learning is being used to deliver lectures and information about education from many years. Here instructor and learner are separated by distance, time, or both and in order to enhance the learner's learning experience and performance e-learning is being used with information and communication technology (ICT) (Keller et al., 2007; Tarhini et al., 2016). Nothing has changed in e-learning till now but the use of it. New and improved teaching learning tools were being adopted to overcome the situation of lockdown. That why online or web-based learning boomed as no other option was available in the present scenario. According to Arasteh et al. (2014), Draghici et al. (2014), and Mustea et al. (2013) e-learning is a way which allows different professional people especially students to take lessons from home or from anywhere he/she can access the internet, and can interact among different platforms like teacher-student, peer-to-peer, client-services, and web servers. However, the success of an e-learning system depends on the understanding of certain prior factors that influence the student's acceptance and usage of such e-learning systems (Tagreed Kattoua et al.,2016).

Statement of Problem

Experiences of Students Regarding Online Classes During COVID-19 Lockdown in Rourkela.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the experiences of students regarding conduction of online classes during COVID19 lockdown.
2. To study the impact of online classes on student's learning during lockdown period.
3. To study the pros and cons of online classes during COVID-19 lockdown.

Review of Literature

The following studies were reviewed for the study – ***Callan et al. (2010) and Garrison (2011)*** found some advantages of e-learning include affordability, the flexibility of time, accessibility, and easy access to global resources and material, etc. E-learning meets the student's level of

knowledge and interest. It helps students to learn the latest technologies. Nothing is fully perfect own its own. If it has some good points, then it must have some bad or dissatisfied elements. Focusing on the limitations of the online learning, ***Bouhnik and Marcus (2006)*** stated that many learners are not satisfied in using e-learning. They lack to have a firm network which helps them to establish a framework to learn, Lack of self-discipline and motivation, Absence of learning atmosphere while having a bad study habit face to face interaction is more efficient the online interaction. ***Tarhini et al. (2014)*** in their study mentioned that Even after the effective growth and evolution of e-learning in education and having a lot of benefits, it is full depends on the users to make it fully functional and utilized it. Therefore, how successfully the e-learning system will work or not in the future is depends on the students. It depends if they are willing to accept it or not. Thus, it has become necessary to understand the factors affecting the user acceptance of web-based learning systems in order to enhance the students' learning experience. An article Parents, industry experts analyse pros and cons of online classes amid COVID-19 lockdown from The ***Indian Express published on 13th May 2020***, stated that, earlier, students used to spend a couple of days per week on the online platform, but because of the lockdown, their screen time is much longer than the usual. they are using the online platform daily. it also states that the overall engagement of the students in online learning apps is grown up by 200 percent. Discussions in online classes, online activities like Quiz competitions, interactive online games, videos, and poster sharing, test conduction, online home assignment submission are some of the tools or tactics that the teachers employed in favour of students for a seamless learning experience. While teachers adapt and evolve their methodology to the online world, parents are also supporting and helping their children in their studies. As a teacher can only guide the child but parents can help the child physically. Besides that, even teachers are not fond of teaching online (especially school teachers). They are trained to teach using blackboard in the classroom.

Mahyoob in 2020 conducted a study which aimed to determine the challenges and obstacles confronted by English language learners (EFL) in Science and Arts College, Alula, Taibah University, Saudi Arabia, during shift to online learning in the 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study evaluated the learners' new experiences in online education and to assess the practicability of the virtual methods of learning. Responses of 184 learners were analysed through a survey-based questionnaire. A descriptive statistical method was used. It is found that the main problems that influence and impact online EFL learning during COVID-19 are related to technical, academic, and communication challenges. The results o the study revealed that most EFL learners were not satisfied with continuing online learning, as they could not fulfil the expected progress in language learning performance.

Kohli, H & Wampole, D & Kohli, A. (2021) used qualitative exploratory research to documented the experiences of 90 undergraduate and graduate students on how online education was affecting their learning during the pandemic. Data was collected from School of Social Work students at a north eastern public university in the United States. The participants were unhappy with the unpredicted disruption to online education. However, they had adjusted to virtual learning and stated that they would rather have subpar education than putting themselves and others in risk due to COVID-19. The major challenges that the students aced

and reported were (a) struggle with online education, (b) difficulty connecting with instructors, (c) lack of motivation, (d) losses, (e) difficulty accessing other learning resources, and (f) unsafe/inaccessible home environment.

Covid19 has opened opportunities for learners to learn through various online platforms. The present study on experiences of students regarding online classes during COVID-19 lockdown is an attempt to comprehend the present trend of e-Learning and possibly predicting the future of e-Learning systems and tools from the learners' point of view. It is also helpful to understand the Pros and Cons and the effectiveness of online classes. Similarly, we can know the causes and consequences of a pandemic on the educational system. We can get an idea about the solution which is best for solving such type of academic crisis and this will be beneficial for the students who suffer from this problem.

METHODOLOGY

The following methodology was adopted in the present study:

Research Approach– Qualitative research approach was used in the present study. This study was a phenomenological study to study the experiences of students regarding online classes during COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants of the study: Participants were selected using purposive sampling method. A total 20 participants contributed in the study at two phases. In first phase 4 students were interviewed during construction of tool. The participants of the main study comprised of 16 secondary school students studying in class 7th to 12th standards and were attending online classes during lockdown period.

Tool for data collection: A semi structured interview schedule was developed by the researcher on the educational experiences of students during online classes. The interview schedule was divided into two parts: 1. Personal details of the participants 2. Interview questions (close ended and open-ended questions) on following categories: (Appendix A) i. Conduction of online classes. ii. Impact of online classes on student learning iii. Pros and Cons of online classes.

Preparation of interview schedule. For the construction of the tool, the researcher compiled some questions on online learning based on literature review. The researcher also interviewed four students for the preparation of the tool. The Data of these 4 students is not used for the analysis of results in this study. The data from these interviews were used for forming sets of different questions and classifying them in categories. The final interview schedule came up with two parts – 1. Personal details of participants 2. The Interview questions. The questions were basically of two types (closed-ended and open-ended) and were categorized into three groups 1) The conduction of online classes. 2). Impact of online classes on students learning.3) Pros and Cons of online classes.

Collection of Data - The researcher interviewed 16 secondary school students who have been attending online classes and experienced online learning during the COVID19 lockdown. The

participants were from 7th to 12th standards of different boards. All of them were actively participating in different e-learning methods. Telephonic interviews were conducted. Amid COVID-19, it was necessary to make physical distancing. The interview starts with some "chit-chat" and informal questions that were designed to put the interviewee at ease. It took around 30 to 45 minutes to complete an interview.

Data Analysis: Transcription of the data from 16 students' interviews was done and reviewed again and again for trends and consistencies. Data analysed is presented objective wise and described in the form of tables and graphs.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study and discussion are shown objective wise -

Objective 1 - To study the experiences of students regarding conduction of online classes during COVID-19 lockdown.

The first objective was to study the experiences of students regarding conduction of online classes during COVID-19 lockdown. For this objective, the responses elicited from the following questions, asked during the telephonic interviews, are considered:

1. **How many hours you devote for online classes?**
1. Minimum 2 hours
2. 2 to 4 hours
3. More than 4 hours

Table 4.1. - Hours devoted for online classes

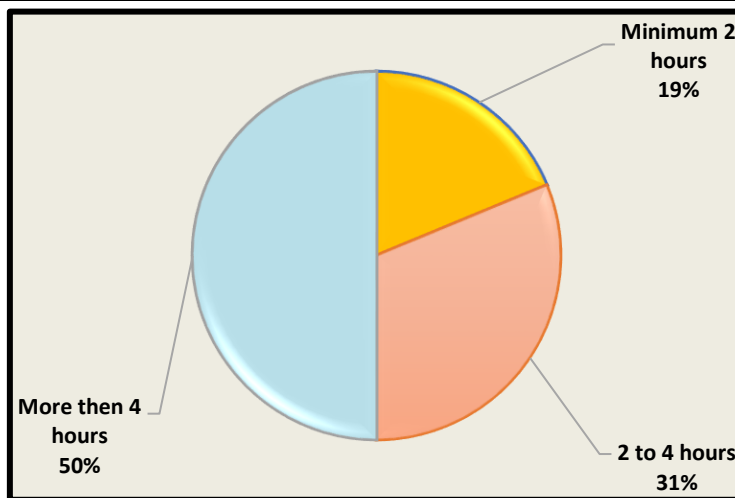| Sl. No.	Hours for online classes	Numbers of Participants
1.	Minimum 2 hours	3
2.	2 to 4 hours	5
3.	More than 4 hours	8

Figure 4.1. - Hours devoted for online classes

2. Are online classes are conducted daily?

Out of 16 participants 11 participants responded that online classes were conducted daily whereas only 5 participants responded that online classes were not conducted on daily basis.

3. Are online classes are conducted as per schedule?

For this question out of 16 participants 15 participants told that the online classes were conducted as the schedule. Only 1 student reported that the timings of the classes was not as per schedule.

4. Are you able to access the internet easily for attending online classes?

- If no, then what are the issues or problems that you face while attending the classes? (for example - network issues, etc)

Table 4.2 - Easy Access to internet

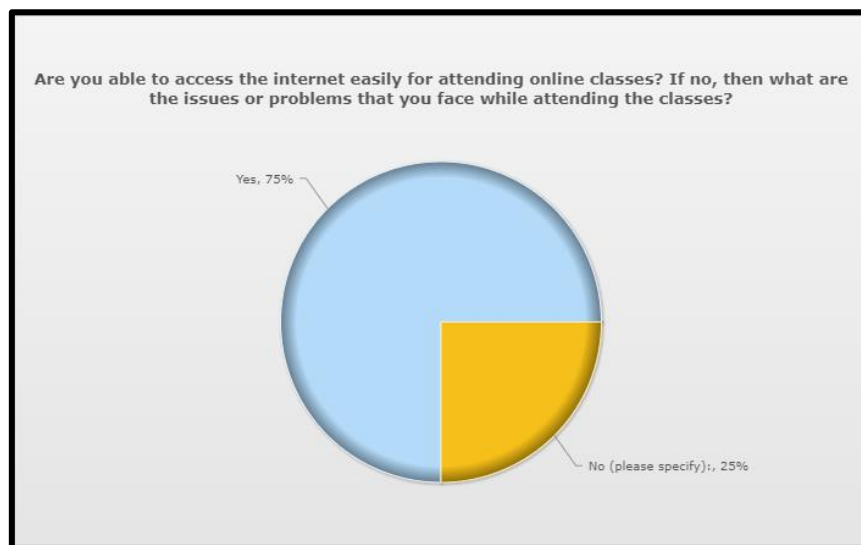| SL. No.	Easy Access to Internet	Number of participants responded
	Yes	12
	NO	4

Figure 4.2 - Easy Access to internet

From the **Table 4.2** and **Figure 4.2** it is evident that 12 participants were able to access online classes easily. There were 4 participants who reported that they faced problems of internet connectivity during online classes like network issues, slow internet connection during classes, destruction of towers due to Amphan Cyclone.

5. Do you find your online classes interesting?
- If yes, what motivates you to attend classes?
- If no, why

Table 4.3 - Interest for online classes

Do you find your online classes interesting?	Responses from participants	Reasons reported by participants	
		Reasons for Yes	**Reasons for NO**
If yes, what motivates you to attend classes?	7	**Classroom teaching seems more effective in terms of engagement with the teacher and doubt clearing.** **Yes, I am interested in online class.** **It's a new way of learning.**	**I feel very disturbed because of the poor internet connection that's why I don't feel online classes to be interesting.** **It's so boring** **Headaches**
If no, why	9		

When asked about the experience of online classes 7 students stated that they found online classes interesting as it was a new way of learning. Some found it an effective way to connect with teacher and clear their doubts is any.

6. **Does teacher easily compose text or upload data and share files during online classes?**
- **If no, what problem you think does the teacher face?**

Table 4.4 - Teacher's competency during online classes

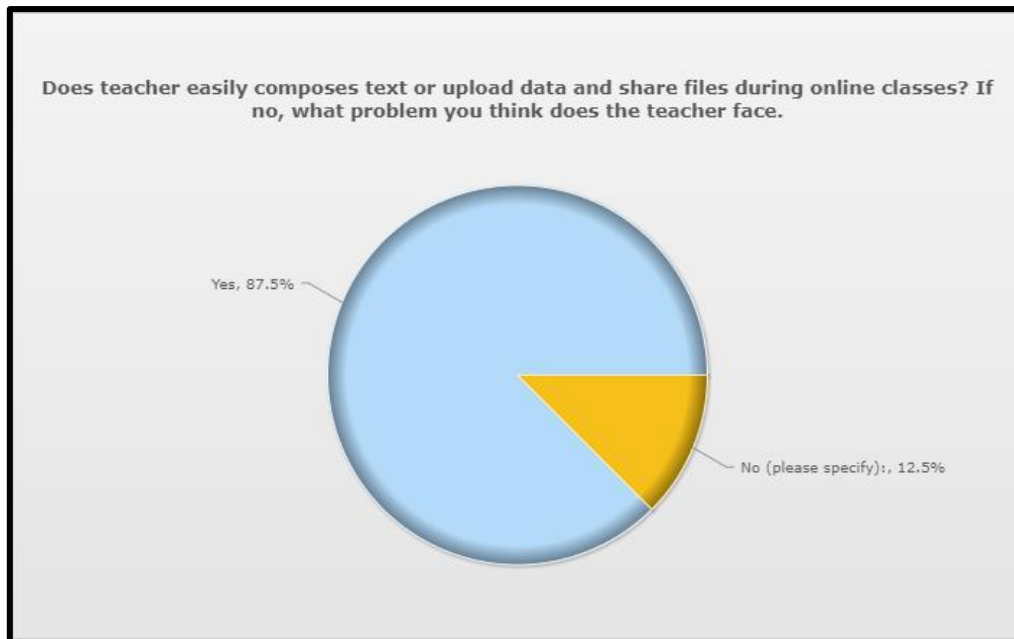| SL. No.	Teacher's competency during online classes	Number of participants responded
	Yes	14
	NO	2

Figure 4.3 - Teachers' Competency During Online Classes

Table 4.4 and above **Figure 4.3** shows the percentage responses of 16 participants. In which 14 students said yes, that their teachers do not face any difficulty in uploading or sharing of files during online classes, but 2 participants said that their teachers are facing to preform different options in online teaching platform and also due to the nuisance of the students, it revokes the action of the teacher.

7. Are there any online activities conducted by teachers during online classes?
- **If yes, then what are they?**
  Responses for this question was equal. From the total number of 16 participants half of them said "yes" and half of them said "no". Doubt clearing session, online quiz, MCQ based test, etc. were some activities that were being done during their online classes.

8. Are you comfortable in communicating easily during online classes?
- **If no, then why?**
  Response for this question from the 16 number of participants was 11 Yes and 5 No. The reason for no response was that someone's class had been held in YouTube and WhatsApp through chats or video sharing. Some of them faced network connectivity problem which created a distorted communication with their teachers. Some participants also faced problem is sharing and asking questions or doubts because of nuisance created by their class mates during online classes.

9. Do online classes increase the sense of community?
- If yes, then how?
- If no, then how?

Table 4.5 - Sense of community

Do online classes increase the sense of community?	Number of participants responded	Reasons stated by participants	
		Reasons for Yes	**Reasons for NO**
If yes, how?	**11**	People can interact by staying in home. We can talk to our teachers if we have any doubt on any topic just like school.	It is not an interactive. It's creates problem and headache.
If no, how?	**5**	Communication with teachers more efficiently because we both are sitting facing towards each other. It avails the opportunity to connect with big community.	

When asked about increasing sense of community through online classes, most of the participants gave a positive response. They agreed that people can interact by staying in home. There is no need to go anywhere. Besides that, they could talk to their teachers if they had any doubt on any topic just like school. Face to face online interaction has made the communication with teachers more effective. Mode of online classes has availed the opportunity to connect with big community. In contrast there were five participants who stated that these online classes were not interactive. Some of the participants reported health issues like headache.

Objective 2 - To study the impact of online classes on student's learning during COVID-19 lockdown period.

1. **Do online classes offer convenience in your studies?**
   In response to this question 13 participants responded as "yes"; they found their online classes very convenient. They were free to use their time with studies, flexibility in terms of learning rate, study at own pace. Rest of the 3 participants felt that online line classes for a long duration creates irritation and boredom and as a result they feel lazy.

2. **Do you find the content (shared online) helpful in understanding the concepts?**
   Almost every participant agreed that the content shared online related to their study material is helpful for understanding concept. They also feel that videos, posters and presentations are good for better understanding.

3. **Have online classes enhanced your learning?**
   The response for this question was very straight forward. Each participant feels that, that online classes does not enhance their learning but helps in understanding the things with their study materials.

4. **Do you think that online classes are a better platform for students learning?**
- **If yes, how?**
- **If no, why?**

Table 4.6 - Responses regarding online classes

| Do you think that online classes are better platform for students learning?	Number of responded participants	Some reasons of participants	
		Reasons for Yes	**Reasons for NO**
If yes, how?	6	In this we can study from our own comfort zone. Because we can access a lot many information at the same time.	Classrooms are better. Because offline classes have a different level of transparency. It's created problem and headache.
If no, why?	10	It avails the opportunity to connect with different experienced speakers.	Learning is best in the traditional way. Offline classroom teaching is more convenient for understanding and doubts. Not everyone able to connect to online.
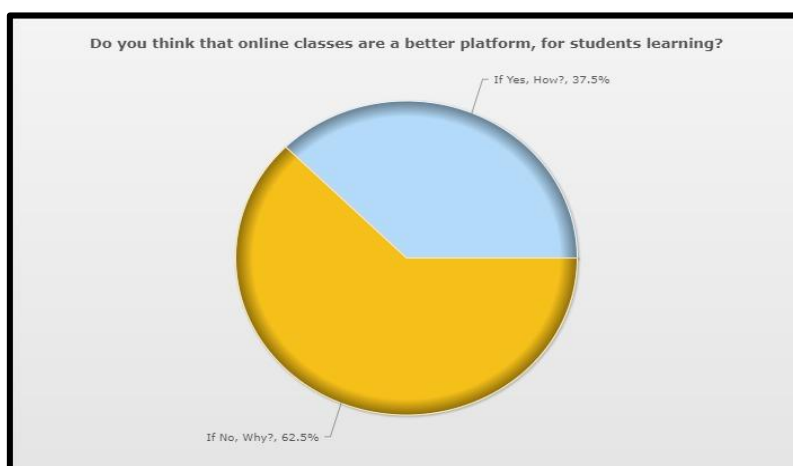
Figure 4.4 - **Responses Regarding Online Classes**

Table 4.6 and **Figure 4.4** show that most of the students reported their disagreement while responding to the question regarding whether online classes are a better platform for learning. Participants stated that classrooms were better. One participant said that offline classes had a different level of transparency. Similarly, one participant reported that offline classroom teaching was more convenient for understanding and doubts. Many participants also said that learning is best in the traditional way. Some reported health issues associated with online classes like irritation and headache. There were participants who reported technical issues like everyone is not able to connect to online.

5. **Do online classes promote participation and interaction?**

The response for this question is in mixed ratio. Majority of them says that online classes doesn't provide participation and interaction. Some of them says yes for the statement and few of them says that it all depends on student. Participation and interaction are dependable on teachers and students as well. If teachers are not making the online classes interactive and interesting then participation of the student may fall. Similarly, if a student if too lazy for his/her studies then his/her participation and interaction will also be equal to zero. In online classes internet connectivity also plays an important role, which may disturb the communication.

6. **What changes do you feel in yourself after attending online classes?**

Participants responded this question very oddly in negative. They do not feel any changes in their learning skill, but they feel tired, pain in eyes, many un-cleared doubts and questions in minds, etc.

Objective 3

To study the pros and cons of online classes during COVID-19 lockdown.

1. **Do you think that online classes are beneficial?**
- **What are the benefits of online classes? Specify some benefits.**
- **What are the drawbacks of online classes? Specify some drawbacks.**

Table 4.7 - Pros and Cons of online classes

| Do you think that online classes are beneficial?	Number of responded participants	Some reasons of participants	
		Benefits of online classes	**Drawbacks of online classes**
Yes	11	It is convenient. Access to expertise, flexibility in terms of learning We can study from our own comfort. It's is an easy way to learn. Time saving. People can study by living in different places. Without going anywhere, we can easily full fill our studies. There is no disturbance by the other students. We can take our time to understand.	Less interaction. Network issues Some students create nuisance during classes. Lack of interest. Not everyone able to connect to online.
No	5		
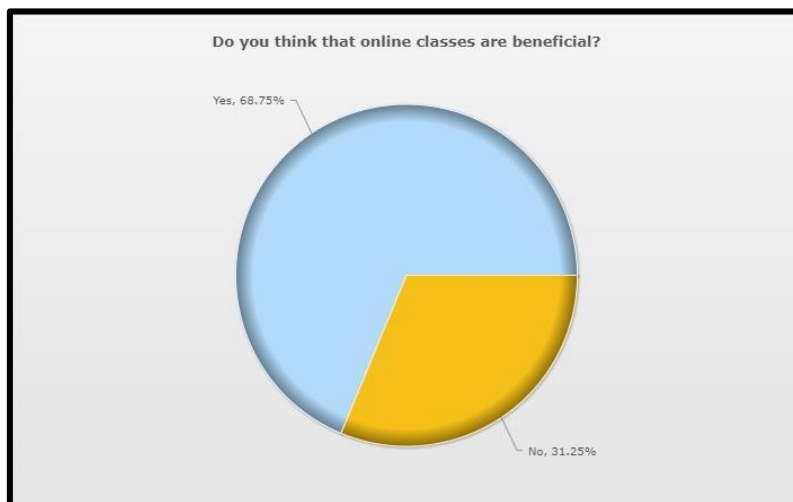
Figure 4.5 - Benefits of Online Classes

2. **What suggestions would you like to give for conduction of online classes?**

Table 4.8 - Suggestion regarding online classes

Answered	12
Skipped	04
Response Percent	75%
Responses	In India, the backbone of network should be first developed in order to facilitate proper online classes. Online classes shouldn't exceed more than 1 hour. After that, it just becomes boring. It should be more relevant. Teacher should explain in board and make a video of that and play online and students can ask doubts if they have. It should be compulsory to turn on camera. Appreciate the students for participation. Students must stop doing disturbing activities during the online classes. They must concentrate on the class. Modify the network problem. Seems online classes are going well but.... some teachers don't take online classes seriously.... full dedication for the class should be needed by both teachers and students. Doing activities that make online classes interesting. Easy to handle and access. Secure and safe to use. Everything is new for us, but performance, quality of video should be clear.

Limitations of the Study

The whole data of this project is collected through a telephonic conversation with each interviewee and the researcher had come across the following limitation;

1. The questioner for the interview was very brief because lengthy questions were not possible.
2. The replies given by interviewees were always brief and limited information was given.
3. Sometimes responses by the interviewee were not clear due to unstable network connectivity.
4. In the telephonic interview only, verbal communication was possible. Assessment of non-verbal communication was not possible.
5. It is difficult to check the validity of the responses from the student given on the phone. Even the person on the telephone may not be the real respondent.

Conclusion

COVID-19 pandemic, a global health crisis destroying the lives of many and shutting down our society, but besides that, during this time it enables us to use our resources effectively. So, as our Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which we are using to pursuing our education online. to keep the flow of education in this pandemic situation, online learning is the only source available to avail education to the students. School students are the ones who are affected the most with this situation. From KG to 12th all are engaged in online classes and gathering different experiences. Students being techno-savvy they experienced many advantages and disadvantages during their online session. Online learning provides easy accessibility, flexibility, self-paced learning, affordability, and comfortability but it is not reached out to each student. Online learning not only providing education during this disrupt academic period but also taking away education to some. In a developing country like India, many students are from a rural background and don't have any digital tool to get online learning and the only source for their education are schools. If they have the tools for online learning then they face connectivity problems. The researcher, from this study, found that many students want to continue online learning but stable internet connectivity is the biggest issue among students. The conduction of the online classes is not that much interactive for the students so that they can keep themselves engaged in online classes for a couple of hours. From the day of the announcement, of enforcing online classes, it triggered a feeling of excitement among students but it was not unto their interest level. This may be due to the sudden closure of schools and the lack of proper time to maintain the system of online classes and students were also not prepared to take online classes. But the fact of global exposure through online classes cannot be neglected. Students came across new technologies, ideas, thoughts, personalities, and a little bit of vision of future education. There are many problems that need to be fixed for a smooth and effective online learning. Teaching with technology will be a boon for us. Education will not be remained bonded under some square meters of the classroom area. The infrastructure of a class or school will not define the standards of education. but we should not change our learning wholly from physical to online. traditional classes should not be replaced by online classes. online learning offers us an immense source of learning but it does not offer any social, ethical, and moral values. Online learning should only be seen as a complementary form of learning. So, keeping the needs, accessibility, and equity of the online classes in the mind it should be upgraded accordingly. To improve the online learning scenario and to fix different

challenges with it both teachers and students have to work equally on their side. Today online classes are just an alternative to provide education but sooner or later it will be a part of the Indian education System.

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