Students opinion of online teaching-learning during lock down

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ABSTRACT

To halt the spread of corona virus, the Government of India announced lockdown from 24th March 2020. It was then decided by the Farm Universities to start online classes. After four weeks of online classes, it was considered necessary to assess the student opinion about online teaching learning. Students from five Farm Universities of Karnataka formed the population of the study. Data was collected from 4920 students through Google forms. Findings revealed that 55.00 per cent were somewhat comfortable with online teaching and 41.00 per cent were not at all comfortable. The discomfort was because of poor internet connectivity (74.50%), difficulty to concentrate(58.89%) and lack of classroom atmosphere (53.17%). Nearly 97.00 per cent of the students were accessing classes with smart phones having small screens, which was probably the reason for difficulty in concentrating. Sixty nine per cent students felt that online classes cannot substitute classroom teaching even in the future. Notwithstanding the difficulties, online teaching could supplement classroom teaching.

Key words: Online, Opinion, Teaching, Learning

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 which started its march sometime in October-November of 2019 at Wuhan, in China, soon spread across the globe including India. In order to halt its spread, the Government of India declared a total lockdown all over the country for an initial period of 15 days with effect from 24th March, 2020. A few days before the official announcement by The Prime Minister, many educational institutions had already sent their students home, only hoping it to be an interim necessity. However, even as the students were preparing to return to their educational institutions, there was this total lockdown. As with many educational Institutions, the Farm Universities of Karnataka took a decision to conduct online courses and advised the teaching faculty to roll out online classes for its students, and by the first week of April, the Teachers and students had built a virtual bridge and rolled out regular classes in all the universities. Having completed almost four weeks of online classes, it was premised that it was sufficient time to elicit responses of the students, and assess their opinion about Online Teaching-Learning Process' with the following specific objectives.

1. To study the opinion of students about online classes and assess their comfort level

2. To delineate the constraints of the students residing in different environments, in terms of devices, connectivity and seating facilities

3. To understand the perception of the students about the advantages of on-line teaching to improve the quality of online system of teaching-learning

4. To know the time utilization pattern of students during lock-down

5. To make appropriate policy recommendations to the Universities and Government

METHODOLOGY

An online survey was conducted using, a comprehensive questionnaire designed with Google Forms, in consonance with the objectives of the study. The population for the study encompassed the students of different programs run by the five Farm Universities of Karnataka State, namely, University of Agricultural Sciences(UAS), Bangalore, UAS, Dharwad, UAS, Raichur, UHS, Bagalkot and UAHS, Shivamogga. The questionnaire was broadcast to reach out to maximum number of students of all the five

Universities by taking advantage of various Whats App Groups formed by students & teachers and requesting Heads of Institutions to lend their support for this purpose. A total of 4920 students responded to the survey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1
Opinion of students regarding online courses

(n=4920)

Sl. No.	Particulars	Yes		No	
		F	%	F	%
I	Study material				
1	Have you seen the uploaded notes?	4034	82.00	886	18.00
2	Are you happy with the uploaded notes?	2646	53.79	2274	46.21
3	Can you manage with notes only without online classes?	1664	33.82	3256	66.18
II	Exams				
1	Do you want crash course in the classroom after returning to college?	4125	83.84	795	16.16
2	Are you willing to take online exams if the lockdown continues?	1165	23.67	3755	76.33
III	Knowledge updation				
1	Have you joined any online courses to upgrade our skills?	965	19.62	3955	80.38
IV	Psychological well being				
1	Is the uncertainty of the academic program troubling you?	3862	78.50	1058	21.50
2	Are you worried about future prospects due to lockdown?	3808	77.40	1112	22.60
3	Are you enjoying the lockdown?	1401	28.48	3519	71.52
V	Future Prospectus				
1	Can online classes substitute for classroom teaching in future?	1523	30.95	3397	69.05

The data in Table 1 shows the opinion of students on five broad aspects.

Study material: Most students (82.00%) had seen the notes uploaded on the University websites, whereas 18.00 per cent of students hadn't bothered to check.

About 54.00 per cent students were happy with the uploaded notes, while a considerable per cent (46.00%) were not happy with the uploaded notes. In class room teaching, the teachers supplement their lectures with explanations on the blackboard or power point presentations. The sudden lockdown did not give teachers enough time to make notes in a format suitable for uploading. The hurriedly uploaded notes by the teachers therefore need to be modified /improved. The notes can be made more readable with proper titles, sub headings, right type of fonts, colors, and embellishment with illustrations. This will probably be taken care of by the teachers in due course of time.

Only 34.00 per cent students said that they can manage with uploaded teaching material, while majority of the students (66.00%) said that they need explanations. If the trend of online teaching is to be continued, the teacher needs to take care to clarify concepts and prepare self-explanatory reading

material.

Exams: Only 23.67 per cent of students are willing to take online exams, with majority of them (76.33%) prefer to take the regular classroom exam.

About 84.00 per cent students would like to undergo crash courses after returning to college, and before taking the exams. Only 16.00 per cent are mentally prepared to take the exams immediately on return.

Knowledge updation: Though small in number, 19.62 per cent students have taken advantage of the stay at home period to enroll for other online classes to update their knowledge and skills.

Psychological wellbeing: More than three fourths of the students (78.50%) were worried about the uncertainty of the academic programme and their job prospects (77.40%). Probably the uncertainties have caused stress among students and so 71.52 per cent say that they are not enjoying the unexpected holidays of lockdown.

Future Prospectus: Majority of the students (69.05%) opined that online classes cannot be a substitute for classroom teaching even in the future.

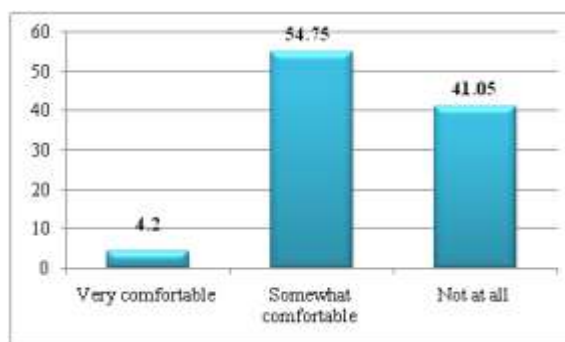Comfort level of students with online learning

Fig.1: Comfort level of the students with online learning

When the comfort level of the students to online learning was assessed (Fig.1), it was disheartening to note that only 4.20 per cent of the students were very comfortable with online teaching/learning, 41.05 per cent are not at all comfortable, while 54.75 per cent very somewhat comfortable. This somewhat category of students in all probability say so because, there is at present no alternative method of teaching-learning.

Studies conducted in India and abroad by Baig (2011), Young (2016), Pasha and Gorya (2019) and Smart and Cappel (2006) have reported the advantages of online teaching. However, Blackman and Major (2016) reported that some students were satisfied with online courses but still struggled with balancing online work responsibilities.

Table 2
Constraints faced by students during in online Teaching-Learning

(n = 4920)

Sl. No.	Reasons	F	%
1	Connectivity problems	3693	75.06
2	Difficultyin concentrating	2897	58.89
3	Can't get the feel of classroom when sitting at home	2616	53.17
4	Not suitable for practical sessions	2413	49.04
5	Not everybody has laptop/ mobile screens are small	2252	45.78
6	Strenuous to the eyes and headache	2155	43.80
7	Disturbance at home	1873	38.06
8	Timings are irregular	1716	34.87
9	Mobile screens are small, less clarity	1539	31.29
10	Online classes consumes too much data	1441	29.29
11	Cannot see teacher in person, so teaching not effective	1332	27.07

* Multiple responses are possible

The responses of students to the constraints faced (Table 2) showed thatmost students (75.06%) were not being comfortable with online teaching due to the problem of inconsistent internet connectivity, especially in remote villages and hamlets. Difficulty in concentration was expressed by 58.89 per cent of the students, while 53.17 per cent said that they were not comfortable because they do not get the feel of a class room. About 49.00 per cent students expressed the non-suitability of online classes for practical oriented courses like agriculture and allied courses and about 46.00 per cent said that not everybody can afford laptop especially students from poor farming families. Online classes being strenuous on the eyes and causing headaches was reported by 43.80 per cent of the students. The reasons for this could be that mobile screens were small in size and also when there are continuous classes beyond three hours in a day it could become strenuous.

Problems of disturbance at home and irregular online classtimings were expressed by 38.06 and 34.87 per cent students, respectively. Many teachers are known to take classes at their convenience and during evenings which probably the students do not relish. Lack of clarity due to small mobile screens was reported as constraint by 31.29 per cent. About 29.00 per cent expressed that too much of internet data is consumed due to online classes, while 27.00 per cent that teaching is not effective because the students could not see the teacher in person.

Table 3
Gadgets used for accessing online classes

Sl. No.	Gadget	F	%
1	Mobile	4766	96.87
2	Laptop	121	2.45
3	Tablet	33	0.68

It is to be noted that a whopping 96.87 per cent students were accessing the online classes via their mobiles. A mere 2.45 per cent used laptops and 0.68 per cent used tablets (Table 3). Unlike other professional colleges where most students own laptops, students of agricultural universities from poor and rural households do not own laptops or tablets. They had to make do with their smart phone. The screens of mobiles being small, itwas also difficult for them to hold / place the phones for long periods and the small screens were strenuous on the eyes.
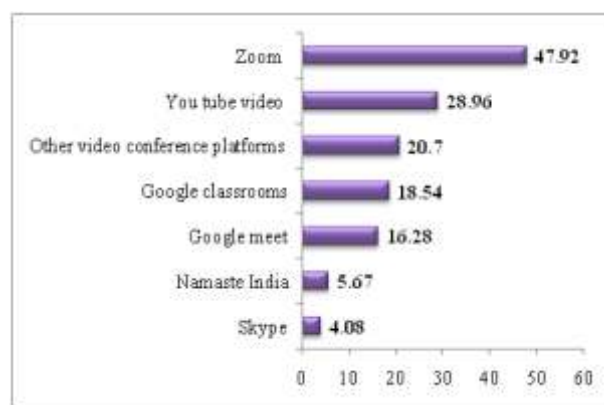
Learning platforms preferred by the students

Fig. 2 : Learning platforms preferred by the students

As seen in Fig.2 the Zoom app was preferred by 47.92 per cent students, probably because this app is the most popular platform being used by teachers. Some universities even organized training programmes for teachers on the use of Zoom app. About 29.00 per cent respondents preferred lessons uploaded on YouTube, 18.54 per cent preferred the Google Class room and 16.28 per cent liked the Google Meet. Other video platforms were liked by 20.70 per cent. Skype and Namaste India were used by about 4-5 per cent of the teachers. The preferences of students are probably based on the platforms being used by the teachers. Students and teachers are still experimenting and Zoom seems to have taken off at the initial stages. Overtime teachers may opt for new platforms.

Table 4
Teaching methods preferred by the students

(n = 4920)

Sl. No.	Methods	F	%
1	Lecture with slide show and teachers face	2802	57.31
2	Only slides with voice	1303	26.48
3	Lecture with hyperlink	384	7.80
4	Only lecture	379	7.70

* Multiple responses are possible

Table 4 reveals that most students (57.31%) preferred a lecture by the teacher who could be seen and which wassupplemented by slidespresentation. About 26.00 per cent did not mind slide show with only voice and no picture of the teacher.

Table 5
Perception of students of the advantages of online class

(n = 4920)

Sl. No.	Advantage	F	%
1	Best alternative in lockdown	2645	53.76
2	Helped to stay connected with course	2375	48.27
3	Can sit in the comfort of the home and listen	1271	25.83
4	No disturbances from other students	552	11.22
5	Can clarify the doubts without any hesitation	499	10.15
6	Clarity of both voice and screen	162	3.30

* Multiple responses are possible

Table 5 on the advantages of online classes shows that 53.76 per cent students expressed online learning as the best alternative during lockdown when no classroom teaching was possible. About 48.00 per cent (48.27%) felt that online teaching could help students to keep connected with the course. About 26.00 (25.83%) per cent expressed that they were happy to attend classes from the comfort of their homes. Some of the students (11.22%) expressed that these classes were undisturbed while in normal classes mischievous students disturb the class. Few students (10.15%) said that they can clarify doubts without hesitation as they are shy to do so in a regular class. It should be noted that students have expressed more disadvantages of online Teaching-Learning than the advantages. This trend may change over a period of time when both teachers and students get a hang of the online method of Teaching-Learning.

Table 6
Time utilization pattern during lock down

(n =4920)

Sl. No.	Utilization	F	%
1	Watching TV /Movies	2807	57.05
2	Using social media	2554	51.91
3	Cooking / House hold work	2500	50.81
4	Farming/Gardening	2310	46.95
5	General reading	2309	46.93
6	Physical fitness	1754	35.65
7	Preparing for competitive exams	1386	28.17
8	Additional reading of study material	1142	23.21

* Multiple responses are possible

During lockdown, 57.05 and 51.91 per cent of the students were spending time in watching TV/movies and using social media, respectively. Half of the students (50.81%) were spending time in cooking and performing household chores. These are probably girl students and girl students being nearly 50.00 per cent of the respondents almost all of them are cooking and giving a helping hand to their mothers either out of interest or out of necessity. Probably the best time for them to learn household skills. About 47.00 per cent of the respondents utilized time in farming /gardening activities and general reading, while about 35.65 per cent of students were into physical fitness regimes. At this point of time it was necessary to be physically and mentally alert. Some of the students (28.17%) were utilising this time preparing for different competitive exams and reading additional study material (23.21%).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

• The inadequacies of the rural society with regard to online systems like; internet infrastructure, broadband connectivity and affordable data must be addressed.

• Since 97.00per cent of the students are relying on their smart phones, at the individual level, Government and Banks need to subsidize purchase of laptops/tablets.

• Being a new experience for both teachers and students, it would help, from the long- term perspective to train teachers in using alternate online platforms of teaching.

• The formats for uploading notes on the websites with regard to clarity in presentation, uniformity and scope for revision need to be worked out.

• Examination being a sensitive and life affecting matter, those from rural areas will be at a disadvantage. It may, therefore, be advisable to spread the exams of different courses over two-three successive semesters on return to normalcy.

• Not with standing the current difficulties, there exists scope for improvement for its usefulness for normal times. The Universities can to share staff-resources by streaming online teaching across their university and college campuses, to make good for shortages of teaching staff.

LIMITATIONS

• The limitation of this study would be that since the study was conducted not long after the start of the online classes and the time period of one month was probably short to study the acceptance/impact of online teaching learning for teachers as well as students to get familiar with the online Teaching - Learning methodologies.

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