

Impact on Students due to suspension of College because of Covid-19

Physical Classes Vs Online Study- A comparison

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Abstract: This research paper mainly focuses on the impact of Covid-19 over the lives of the students. Four things happened for students worldwide.

- (i) Schools and Colleges were closed overnight.
- (ii) Classes were suspended virtually indefinitely affecting the session as Covid is here to stay for some time.
- (iii) E learning was always there, but never as a surprise and at such a large scale and in such a short time. The physical classes and teaching had to be shifted online.
- (iv) Students and teachers were compelled to immediately, adapt to technology, to save continuity of the academic session.

How has it impacted their study and possibly the performance and what do they think of it?

Co students and friends from other groups were interviewed telephonically and response obtained on suggested questionnaire. Other available data and information emerging online in recent days from the internet was also used.

This paper chiefly focuses on a comparative position between the normal classes and online study and analyses the student experience. Can online classes closely substitute the actual classes in the physical setting of the college in the current scenario? Will the annual performance of students be affected this year?

Results appear to suggest that overnight adaptation to online teaching has its limitations and students are worried that their annual performances will take a hit.

1. INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 has paralyzed student classes being in quarantine. Tutorials, projects, activities in colleges had to be abandoned and teachers had to **develop programs and classes to create continuity from where they had left in college**. E classroom on screen were supplanted as a virtual mentor.

The surprise of closure was so sudden that students did not even have time to lift books and material for notes from markets.

The physical liberty of students died overnight but even Article 21 of the Constitution, cannot rescue liberty of movement in this life threatening pandemic.

2. HYPOTHESIS

Can **technology closely replace** the College classroom experience in the current scenario?

Can **virtual classes and e learning give similar satisfaction** as physical classes in this time of Covid-19?

Will student performance be affected this academic session?

With lockdown, college students from all over the world, pursue the specified degrees and courses staying at home. The classes and assignments are online. E books and E resources are the lifeline and internet ensures that supply.

The college life has shrunk to that small screen which provides the classes and courses. Each one of the student appears to be headed towards praying for having a personal device to meet their work demands online on the E paper.

This paper also traces the student experience in this new virtual classroom via interviews and chats.

The fact that students vied for attendance at bigger institutions globally led us to believe that classroom or institution located learning, was probably considered superior to 'at home' study.

3. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

With the outbreak of Covid-19, schools and colleges have already been closed for almost two months with no prospect of reopening this academic session.

Therefore, our main concern would be to find out whether online classes can substitute the actual classes in the physical setting of college or any institute and note other inputs from the students.

4. OBJECTIVE

As aforementioned, our main objective or aim would be to find out as to what works as a preferable option out of the two choices of online classes and the actual classes for the students. Which setting creates a higher satisfaction level? If online appears better, then will we irreversibly switch to it, even after this pandemic situation ends? What are the pros and cons of either of them? We will thus make a comparative assessment based upon the experience in online classes that are being conducted in these unprecedented times for the last more than one month. We will compare the tutorials circulated and reliable and credible material and articles available on internet.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS

Qualitative research involves words or language and observations whereas quantitative research includes data produced in numerical and they are analyzed using mathematical methods.

After the lockdown, virtual E classrooms were held for more than a month and we also use that experience for our paper. Using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods for collecting data we conducted telephonic and chat interviews and survey of a few of the co students and friends from other groups via phone or text message, on parameters like- ease of attendance, supervision of the class, teaching method for engaging the students, conduct of the students in class, ease of understanding, methods of note taking and impact of absence of hard books and library resources. Students in different form were asked to give a scaled rating.

Some pre-recorded interviews and literature reviews available over the internet as a source of information have also been used. Since this is an unprecedented crisis which has never happened in the lifetime of this generation all the literature review and journals are relatively new and contemporary and made in the virtual setting as actual visits are also locked out. The crisis being very recent, the materials and options have been limited.

6. THEORY OF RESEARCH WORK

We start with the oral Questionnaire raised to fellow students in the class;

1. How would you rate **the convenience** in attending the different modes of classes? (online classes as compared to the normal college classes rated on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= very convenient ; 5= very inconvenient)

Majority of the students rated an average of 2 for the online classes (convenient) and 3 (less convenient) for the normal classes. This is because students found it easier to join the online classes which excluded the long and tiresome travelling time to college for some students.

2. How would you rate **the comparative engagement level** in online mode of classes? (Actual college class was given a presumption average of 10 points for engagement) Students had to rate a comparative score for online classes on a scale of 1 to 10)

(Results plotted on graph)

On an average-normal classes had greater engagement than online.

Based on our ratings and observations, we prepared a graph depicting the level of engagement in five weeks of online classes-

X axis is the week number and Y axis the Grade point of engagement compared to 10 presumed for physical classes

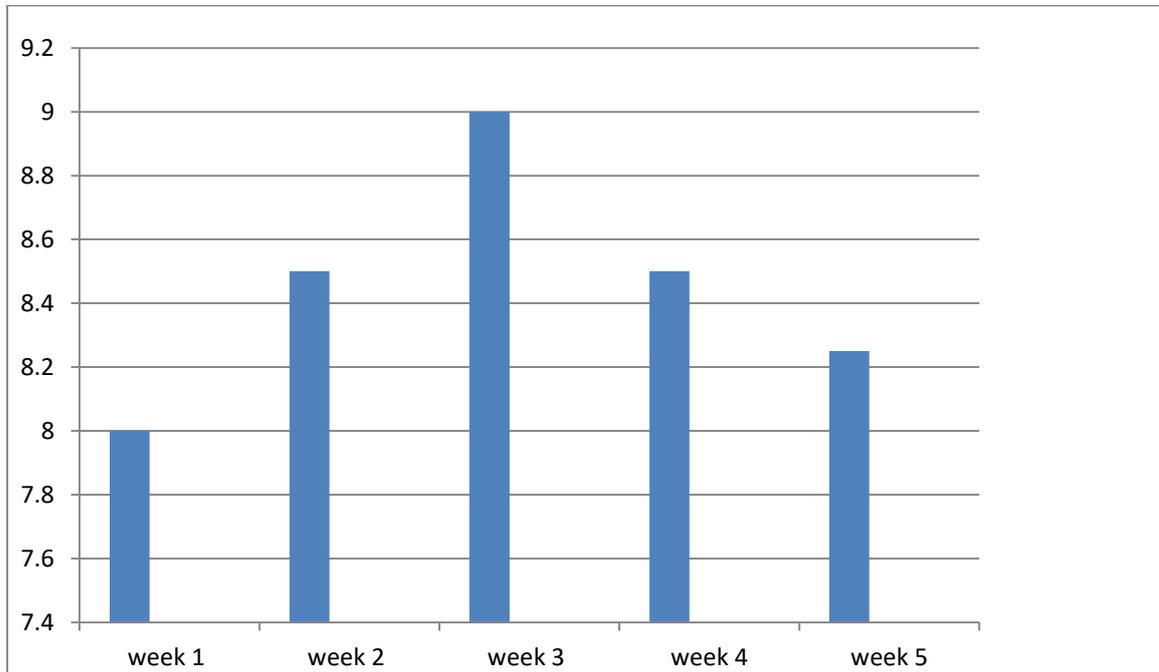


Figure 1

Anonymity was maintained for the co students.

First week the engagement was low possibly due teething problems in accessing the class on new software and device setting.

Second week to fourth week the engagement increased due to novelty in the method of teaching.

Fifth week it started coming down, mostly because some co students wanted to revert to class setting due to limitations of current frame of software and learning, which have been discussed in the paper. Initial excitement had begun waning. In a class of 40 about 10 co students gave inputs. This was after the end of the classes.

Engagement peaked in week 2 to 5 with the highest in week 3.

3. How would you rate **the comparative understanding level** (for students) in online mode of classes? (Actual college class was given a presumption average 10 points for understanding) Students had to rate a comparative score for online classes on a scale of 1 to 10)

Students gave the following ratings on an average-

Normal college classes- 10; Online classes- 8 (little less than actual college class)

4. How would you rate the **behavior of co students** in classes in either setting? (online classes as compared to the normal college classes rated on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= very disciplined; 5= mischievous)

Most of the students reported an average rating of 3 (*less disciplined*)for online classes and 2 (*disciplined*) for the normal classes. This is because in the physical setting of a class, the students are in the visual line of the teacher so it is easier for her to control the students as compared to the online classes.

5. How would you rate the **level of difficulty in taking notes** in the online setting?(rated on a scale of 1 to 5where 1= very easy; 5= very difficult)

Students gave the following ratings on an average rating of 3 (meaning there was average difficulty) in taking notes in online classes.

6. How would you rate the impact of **absence of physical library and non-availability of hard books** (during Covid-19) as affecting your studies? (Choose from 4 options)

1= made no difference; 2= not affected; 3= neutral; 4= slightly affected; 5= extremely affected

On an average, the students rated 2 in online classes because of the easily available e-books and notes being made by the teachers along with classes.

The above questionnaire, thus notes the following parameters for comparison in the two modes of Actual vs Online class study:

1. Convenience of Attendance
2. Supervision of the class
3. Engagement level in class
4. Ease and level of understanding
5. Conduct of co students in the class
6. Method and ease of note taking
7. Impact of absence of hard resources (library and hard books and journals)

Procedure/Setting and Conditions of class for assessed Parameters	Online classes	Actual classes
1. Attendance	Attendance is taken virtually either by a screenshot of attendees or through the chat box (App used is Microsoft teams)	Attendance is taken orally by roll call in the physical setting of classroom.
2. Supervision of the class	Supervision can be done by teachers for those who keep their camera and microphone on. Keeping microphone and camera on is optional.	All students are visually supervised in the actual physical class setting.
3. Teaching method for engaging the students	Presentation is made in on fixed small part of the screen teaching with supporting audio. The same lateral screen is shared equally in small rectangles by the students.	Classroom lectures are made on face to face basis. The teacher is in front and sees the entire class whereas students based upon the row of seating will see the co students and teacher.
4. Conduct of the students	Students are assessed for conduct whenever they may be available on visual basis if their camera and microphone is on.	The students are always in visual line of the teacher.
5. Ease of understanding	Students can only be seen and assessed visually by teacher in some rectangles of the screen where student has video on, while most parts of the screen are blacked out as video is switched off by many.	Teacher assesses the level of understanding based on visual reactions of the students in the class.

6. Method of note taking	Occasionally the lecturer slows for allowing noting of points. Other notes are separately sent as PDF file by teacher. Students can be seen visually taking notes only if video is on.	Notes are mostly dictated by the teacher directly to all students in the class or are written down on the white board. Here, the students usually simultaneously make notes in the hard copy in the visual line of the teacher.
7. Impact of absence of hard books and library resources.	In the class setting, since access is electronic, so resources used are E articles and books also read onscreen. Many text books are not yet available on E books. Individual subscriptions are choice of students.	Students are more focused and dependent on conventional hard books and library resources for hard copy of books and Foreign and Indian Journals and magazines. Library subscription and access to bookshops is equally available to all.

7. IMPACT OF SUSPENSION OF COLLEGE DUE TO COVID ON THE STUDENTS

The students in the study belonged to first year of the five year law course at undergraduate level and all owned devices like mobiles, laptop or I pad. There were about 10 other additional students interviewed from similar college groups, as the ones from our college, who were similarly placed on online classes and who gave their inputs on these points discussed above.

Other inputs received from students were:

- (i) Increased dependence on E resources for explanations. Most **reported overload of information** as sources from the net increased. Choices became difficult.
- (ii) **Which E source to consider authentic** was a problem for most.
- (iii) Most students loved saving the travel time to College and class but many **missed their journey in the public transport with friends**.
- (iv) Convenience and comfort of sitting at home was preferred by most but there appeared to be **monotony setting in the later weeks**.
- (v) Most students reported **struggling with learning new soft-wares and applications** for saving extracts of information and **pasting and merging their notes** at the end of the Class for future reference.

My experience of the classes and new E learning with gadgets

The new challenge was to merge the learning from the class notes online, PDF notes supplied and internet resources.

Seeing a number of online tutorials during this quarantine and saving the travel time of three hours to and fro everyday, I could explore many useful note taking applications which permitted convergence of information processed from lectures, notes and websites. Examples of such applications was Adobe Acrobat, Notability, Good Notes5, Microsoft One Note, Liquid Text, etc. All of them are available on the App Store.

The new E learning setting gave initial difficulty but was eventually very engaging and entertaining. So at least the time saved in travel and due to quarantine opened up the entire world of facilities online.

So when I will be able to use these applications in the physical classroom setting, I hope that this period of Covid-19 break from class will actually prove to be beneficial. This is however, my experience.

Perspective of a teacher

Though not my own teacher, but I discussed with some who had to develop Courses and classes overnight for the E classroom. They initially had a more difficult time in adapting compared to the ease which they have in actual class room. This prompted looking for reasons and we found that with increase in age use of internet and data, became a little less.

The following pie chart shows the usage of internet by different age groups in India as per 2019 survey-

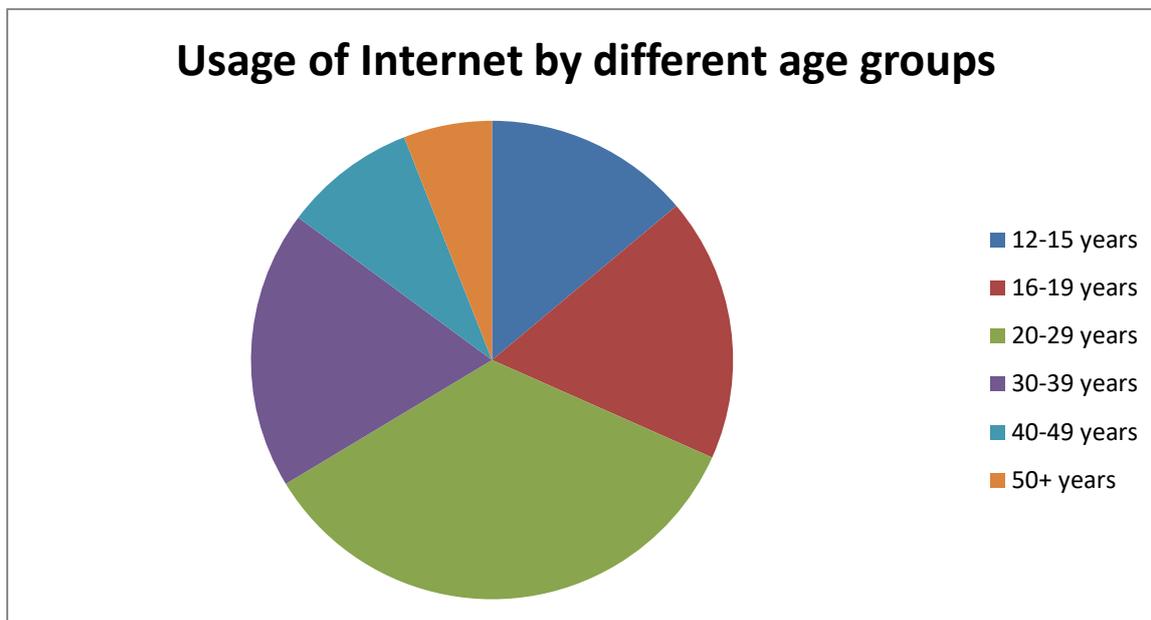


Figure 2

In my observation, considering the data above and the lesser exposure to internet generally at ages between 35 to 50, the teachers have done a marvelous job at recreating the actual classroom as far as possible within the constraints of time and technology.

Most students were grateful that their year could be saved and quarantined time could be utilized. It also continued the discipline of appearing and attending the class to a large extent.

General drawbacks of sudden switchover exclusively to E class setting

Technology still requires access with quality stable internet and good quality devices to be able to process data qualitatively. The people who can access better devices like I pads and high end laptops, sometimes have an edge in assimilation and presentation of data. This puts the disadvantaged section at the lower level of society as they may be able to afford low quality date and older devices. Constraints of regional connectivity in rural or remote areas is additionally an important factor for many.

Challenges faced by some students in the online classes.

The classroom screen has small squares or rectangles for each participant in the lecture, thus showing the large part of class together. Some black out the video and audio as an option leading to a patchy screen.

In summary students reported;

- (i) The **biggest challenge for most was to maintain focus on the screen** for the complete hour at a go. Eye strain, patchy screen and software connectivity often distracted the concentration.
- (ii) Lot of **notifications kept popping up on screen for E mails and entertainment** as all utility application notifications converge on the same screen.
- (iii) If exclusive device in not available, the **continuity due to change of platform** of Apple or Android became an issue for some. User experience is sometimes different in different devices.
- (iv) The College is the first exposure to open world after school and so a lot of students rightly **miss the College setting as part of learning experience** for actual profession or service. Actual events and competitions cannot be replicated online for engagement. Frayed nerves and challenging scenarios of actual confrontation in a competition cannot be replaced by switch on or off.
- (v) **Always being seen present on screen with possible recording of lectures was a privacy issue for some.**

8. CONCLUSION

On the basis of reviewed literature, our observations and the oral interviews conducted, we have made a table of the commonly flagged issues of online classes and actual classes.

Parameter assessed	Online classes	Actual classes
1. Attendance	Connectivity is network dependent otherwise generally easier as travel time is saved.	Attendance is taken easily in the physical setting of classroom.
2. Supervision during the class	Supervision by the teacher may be minimal because the camera and mic of the students is often switched off.	Students pay more attention to their lecture in physical setting of the class because the teacher has direct face view.
3. Teaching method	Poor signal may lead to unclear video and audio causing disruption in the flow of the class.	Students generally preferred to study in the physical setting of the class since they are able to ask their doubts spontaneously.
4. Conduct of the students	Some students created nuisance in the class by anonymously removing people from the group meeting or even muting the teacher. They were able to safely disrupt the class since they are hidden.	The students are in visual line of the teacher and are therefore cautious in disturbing others.
5. Ease of understanding	Attention span of the student is low due to patchy screen frame and distracting activities at time by seeing all of them together	Students pay more attention and are aware in the physical setting of the class and generally do not have to see everyone.
6. Method of note taking	Notes are either dictated by the teacher or are circulated in the form of PDFs. Here, the students are relaxed since there is no pressure of missing out on points.	Notes are mostly dictated by the teacher or written on the white board. Here, the students have to be attentive and competitive to keep on noting down all the points and asking queries.

On the basis of the above table and our research study, we can thereby conclude that *irrespective of the numerous advantages served by the online classes, they cannot replicate or replace the actual classes in the physical setting of the classroom. The normal classes work as a preferable option for the students in the short run.*

However, given the current scenario, the classroom teaching will certainly change post covid-19 and will surely adopt some good points of the E learning and will always be in readiness for this alternative system of teaching.

It will never be able to become the new ‘norm’ but it will certainly be a ‘ready alternative norm’.

Most students felt that this sudden transition to online classes and assessments will adversely affect their grades this year.

With passage of time, teachers and student alike will develop E skills with care and similarly soft wares will become more user friendly keeping in mind the experiences of Covid-19 quarantine.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my special thanks and gratitude to the Research Publication who gave me this opportunity to get this most contemporary project published on the topic “Impact of Covid-19 on students”, which pandemic, we are all battling even today. On one hand the lockdown is constraining and distressing, yet my teacher has opened up for me this opportunity to research and ponder on this aspect of impact of Covid-19.

I would also like to thank my friends and classmates and others who gave their inputs on my questions for the research. I finally thank all those tireless workers including our teachers who are working amongst this pandemic and without whom things would have been much worse.

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