







Students with Special Needs During COVID-19: A Case for Pakistan

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Abstract

After the COVID-19 pandemic, a phenomenological research was done on 19 students with special needs to examine their motivation and the educational environment. A questionnaire and in-person interviews were used to gather the information. Data collection was done, and percentage and frequency analysis were used. The majority of students, it was discovered, liked taking lessons online and felt at ease with this radical shift in teaching style. The benefits of taking lessons online motivated the majority of the pupils. The flexibility and financial savings of online education were rated as its best features. Unfortunately, it has flaws including interaction, disturbances, and one-sided learning. Online safety and security concerns, as well as teachers' incompetence and lack of help for some students with disabilities, were not addressed. It is recommended that instruction be individualised for each student, and that educators try to understand the particular requirements and difficulties faced by students with disabilities in order to include them in online learning settings.

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Introduction

Since its outbreak two years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted education systems globally, affecting the most vulnerable learners the hardest worldwide as of March 10, 2020, the WHO has reported 1,13,702 globally confirmed cases and 4,012 deaths (Rasheed et al., 2021). To educate its pupils, a school offers order, support, and a scheme of incentives and penalties. The advantage of face-to-face encounters with students that are normally encouraged by a teacher is conventional classroom education (Barkley & Major, 2020). It provides a safe atmosphere for social interactions for children especially those in their early developmental years, allowing them to develop skills such as boundary setting, empathy and cooperation. Unlike a simulated learning setup, it also makes plenty of space for spontaneity. They seek more autonomy and intellectual freedom as student advance to higher classes in school. Online learning, possibly even college-level courses, can help them pursue highly individualized educational activities (Pianta, 2013). These can be highly beneficial for their learning progress, combined with hands-on exercises, real world exploration, and thorough evaluations. By seeking out introductory topics from various areas, before sticking to a specialty, they will discover their choices. Online education techniques will help these students become more autonomous students before they reach college (McBrien et al., 2009).

Students should not be holding back from taking an online course, it is claimed, but instead give them feedback as they work through it. Instead of focusing on pros and cons, the conversation we should be having today is about leveraging online education to make our education systems more conducive to learning. Education, which is now influencing the schooling of millions of students worldwide, is a significant problem in the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockout. Social isolation has arisen as a strong mitigation factor in the lack of any medical treatment or vaccine (Hasan & Khan, 2020). In order to deter the transmission of this lethal epidemic, public areas across nations have been shut down and institutionalized schooling is the greatest victim among all. Schools and higher education institutions around the globe have been locked, impacting the schooling of over 90 percent of world's student population. According to UNESCO figures, the closing of COVID-19 influenced the research of 1540 million students across 191 nations. The closing of COVID-19 affiliated education institutions in India influenced the learning of more than 320 million students (UNESCO, 2020).

Online education for working professionals and students seeking higher education has achieved enormous prominence. The versatility and accessibility that these courses provide are of great value to these groups of online learners (Altbach et al., 2019). It is possible to arrange online classes around their schedule, which could include full-time jobs, internships and family care. Online schooling will also encourage them to take some quiet time to learn (Mishra et al., 2020). For a long time, distance learning has been available, even before technologies made it highly available. Traditional schooling is now seeing an increased proliferation of virtual training materials and online courses (Mayadas et al., 2009). Even in a world of tried and tested schooling systems and curricula, the most successful schools are the ones who adapt to the changing times, as well as to the expectations of students, parents and the society. The schooling of students of all ages and levels must be safeguarded by understanding the role that education plays in the all-round and equitable growth of individuals and nations (Crawford et al., 2020). Thus, as a response government throughout nations like India, the use of online tools to promote the learning of students was stressed and promoted. Education is becoming a new standard for India by online teaching, but for most students and teachers it is a very new idea. A sample survey conducted by the National

Statistical Office (NSO) on “Household Consumption of Education in India” found that the supply of computers and internet facilities in India was very limited. Just 23.8% of India’s population has access to Internet services. As per NSO Sample survey, in terms of owning machine and accessing the internet, there is a major divide between rural and urban population. Only 4.4% of rural households had machines, while 14.4% had Internet services (NSO, 2019). 23.4% of households own laptops in urban areas, while 42 percent have Internet connections. This inaccessibility of networks or poor internet connection may renders many Indian students inaccessible, unproductive and unworthy of learning by online teaching (Marginson, 2004)

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO’s) Institute for Statistics data, as of June 2020, 123 countrywide closures were still affecting 1.1 billion students, which was approximately 62 percent of total enrollment (UNESCO 2020). Even though schools were closed, most governments around the world designed and implemented nationwide remote learning initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. This section of the report compiles the main education emergency actions that were deployed by different low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to enable learning during school closures (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020). School closures and the economic downturn severely affected education systems. While schools were closed, learning gains that students previously achieved were partially lost. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds suffered these shocks even more, and were at a higher risk of dropping out of school (World Bank 2020). However, several LMICs reacted quickly to mitigate these shocks to their respective education systems. The first section of this report analyzes governments’ education responses to the COVID-19 pandemic from April until May 2020. As of this date, most countries were focused on coping with the emergency by designing and implementing remote learning programs aimed at reaching all students and teachers, but less on monitoring progress and designing programs for remedial learning

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly unequal impacts on parts of society. People with disabilities are especially sensitive to it so recognizing both the perspective of disability and the position of social media is crucial. This data will help to decrease the risk of the disease. For special individuals who are partly or completely handicapped with disabilities such as blindness, deafness, special education is critical. Education at the person level, group level or in a classroom may be essential. As the overlap between traditional and online forms of education grows more and more inescapable, students should be able to make their learning meaningful to their future via creativity, enthusiasm, and careful preparation (EducationWorld, 2020). Special education approaches are of course, meant to address the demands of different groups of special people. This study work concerned the techniques by which disable students can be inspired, especially in developed countries, through online classes all over the world. There are many issues facing special students, such as the absence of a homogeneous school system in which special people may have the same academic experience as a regular student.

According to Nissman (2020), disable students, especially at higher levels, should be supported in the following methods to feel them relaxed and meaningfully active for the encouragement of online classes during COVID-19. Send documentation to home for student and parent contribution. Before the simulated conference, make sure the student and his parents have a few days to review the appraisal results of the student and any draft papers. Before a meeting, look for details. Get the case manager of the student or another team member the student is familiar with a few days before the simulated IEP meeting contacting the student

and her parents to discuss what the student feels worked and did not work in the past year. Ask the student about the reason for having interests in their favorite classes. Ask them which interventions have helped and have not helped. Ensure the use of cameras. If they both turn on their cameras, the student and his parents are more likely to believe the school-based team members are paying attention to them and not performing any work or activities at the simulated IEP conference. Ask for student input directly, if the student wants to be on tape, but is prepared to talk, make sure a regular to ask the student's input for continuous participation (Nissman, 2020).

Rational of the Study

Many studies reported the association of online classes with students (McBrien et al., 2009; Mayadas et al., 2009) but a research gap exists in the current literature that how the online classes impacting the lives of students in higher education with special needs. During the COVID-19 disease outbreak, this phenomenological study has been conducted on disabled students from higher education to study their educational condition during online education in the lockdown and to analyze the impact of online classes on their motivation.

Research Objectives

To study the impact of COVID-19 on the education of students with special needs.

Research Questions

What is the impact of online classes on encouragement for disabled students during COVID-19?

Significance of the Study

Since the COVID-19 epidemic, no research has been done on this subject, making the current study significant. Because school, supports, activities, and routines are disturbed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is challenging for parents, educators, instructors, related care agencies, and special education institutions to set up supplemental aids for online classes during the lockdown.

Flexibility for Disabled Students and Teachers

With online learning, both the teacher and the special needs student may choose their own speed for learning, and there's also the extra flexibility of creating a schedule that works for everyone. An online educational platform enables a better balance between employment and study, as a consequence. Additionally, sharing goals with the student and instructor might encourage both sides to take on new duties and exercise more independence.

Opportunity for Disabled Students to Study in Higher Level

A large variety of curricula are available in online education. Universities and institutions of higher learning are increasingly providing online versions of their programmes for a range of levels and disciplines. In the future, being aware of online programmes will enable disabled students to get an official certificate, diploma, or degree without ever having to step foot on a university campus.

Online Classes Allow the Disabled Students for A Customized Learning Experience

Online classes are suitable for each student's individual requirements and level of ability because they tend to be smaller than conventional class size. Most of the time, online learning platforms only allow one student at a time, and in almost all cases, this allows for greater interaction and more feedback between disabled students and teacher which will highly motivate them.

More Cost-Effective for Parents

Unlike in-person education methods, online education tends to be more affordable. Online classes will make them able to save money and time on travel. Disabled students might also study through online classes while assisting their family with home duties. This allows for better budget management for the parents of special students.

Literature Review

There is no fixed definition that is universally accepted of what a disability is. However, some organizations specialized on the topic provided definitions that can be used together to get a better understanding of all the aspects that are at stake when discussing disabilities. According to the UN Convention, "people with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (UN.org). However, it is important to keep in mind that impairment refers to a feature that affects the way a person's mind or body is functioning; a disability is created by the society, as it refers to the lack or loss of opportunities to fully and equality participate in, due to environmental and attitudinal barriers. These barriers are, for instance, buildings that are not accessible, negative attitudes, nonflexible procedures, among others. Therefore, the definition of disability given by the World Health Organization is very interesting, "Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives. According to WHO (2011), overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers.

According to Salamanca Statement (1994), people with disabilities have been approached by society that stresses more their limits instead of their potential (UNESCO). The commitment made by the Government of Portugal in Salamanca to develop an education policy that answers effectively to children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) form, opposing segregation and failure, a stimulating educational path of their abilities under a "Education for All", was an extremely important contribution (Ainscow, 1995). In 2008 with the United Nations International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we saw the recognition of disability as one more element that marks the social diversity, breaking with the negative view that had hitherto prevailed in law and culture. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has triggered many changes in K-12 education (some major) like learning remotely from home and (some minor) like sitting farther apart on the school bus. While most students have had routines interrupted, the children perhaps most affected by that disruption

are special education students. Generally speaking, in special education, one of the strategies that works the best is a structured routine and that's gone (Elion, 2020).

Many factors influence students' satisfaction with online teaching. This includes interaction between students and teachers, interaction with fellow peers, content, delivery method, technical support and support services (Roberts et al., 2005). Technological know-how and certain level of comfort with computer and internet technologies is the prerequisite for learners to benefit from online instructional activities (Motteram & Forrester 2005; Rodriguez et al., 2008). Other factors that influence online learning include accessibility and affordability of computers as well as stable internet connection with good speed as supported by many research findings (Atack & Rankin, 2002). Inaccessibility of computers and internet technologies combined with lack of technical skills may cause computer anxiety and also impairs learning (Cheurprakobkit et al., 2002). Researchers found that the effective online learning required both access and technical know-how (Rodriguez et al., 2008). Students' satisfaction with online classroom is determined by students' lived experiences of the online classes. Satisfaction results from quality teaching and learning in online environment. Studies supported time factor as a vital element in online teaching and learning and reflected that flexible study time and use of multiple sources of media to supplement instruction also affected students' online learning (Thurmond et al., 2002; Rodriguez et al., 2008). Interactive and engaging course design by using graphics and text with learners having multiple options to respond also influences students' satisfaction with online learning (Song et al., 2004).

Special education covers a range of needs, from children who could use a little help with reading to children with visual or hearing impairments, to children with multiple disabilities. Special education students have Individual Education Plans, or IEPs, which are legal contracts between schools and parents that set goals for the child and outline the special education services to be provided. Back in the spring when schools closed due to COVID-19, the federal government declared that there would be no special education waivers, which meant "everything within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) all timelines, services, and regulations—remained in force. But that was extremely difficult for schools to implement," Macht-Greenberg said (<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>). The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (formerly the Department of Education) said schools could provide a modification to the IEP in the form of a remote learning program, which was to be submitted in writing to families.

Theoretical Framework

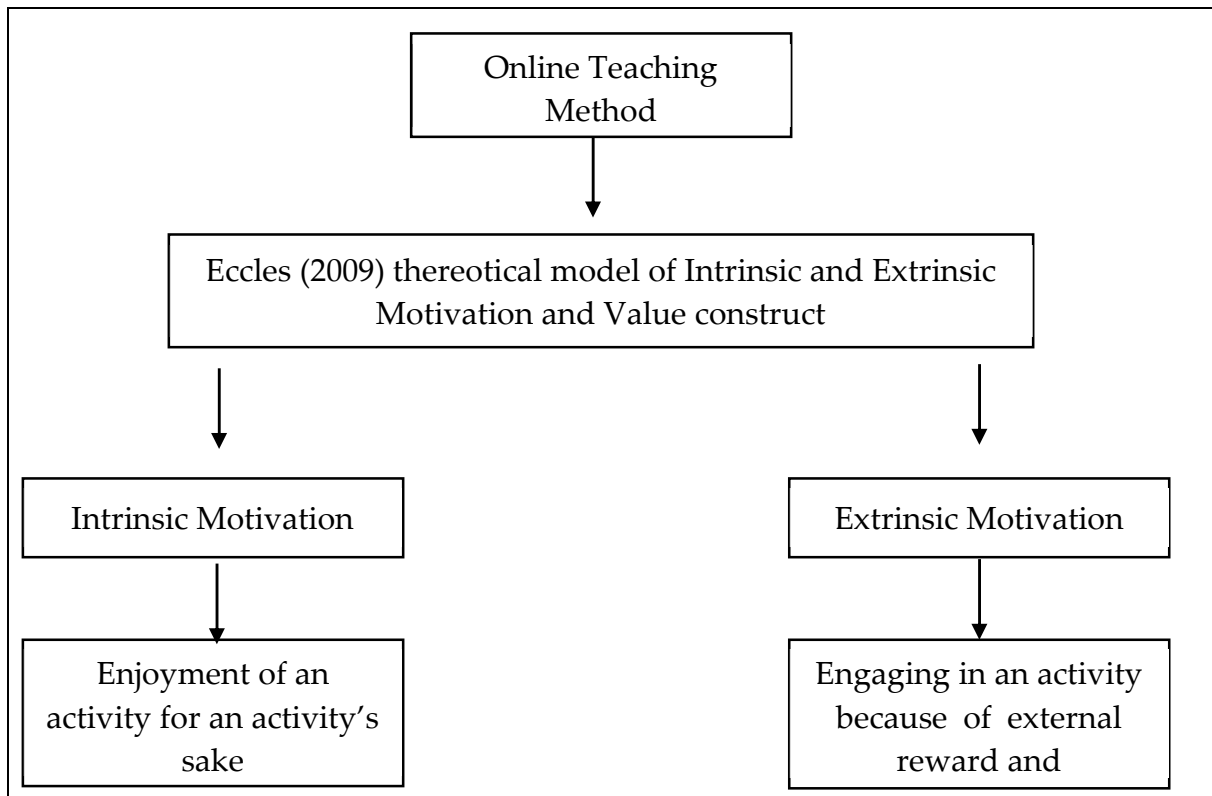
Online teaching and learning method experiences by students with disabilities in this unprecedented time plays a key role in designing online learning experiences joyful and worthy for students. Considering the fact that special students' satisfaction with learning experiences can influence their learning, this study is undertaken to assess the impact of online learning experiences of disable students amid this harsh reality of COVID-19. The present study is intended to uncover the special students' perspectives of learning through online mode necessitated due to COVID-19 induced closure by using the theoretical model of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation and Value construct (Eccles, 2009).

Similar to Eccles et al. (2009), intrinsic value construct, intrinsic motivation is represented in a number of theoretical models as a key reason for valuing an activity (Wigfield, 1994). Simply put, intrinsic motivation is defined as the enjoyment of an activity for an activity's sake (Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000). It reflects engaging in the activity as an end in itself for the inherent pleasure and enjoyment of the activity. Intrinsic motivation is routinely proposed as

the optimal reason for an individual to engage in a task. Being extrinsically motivated involves engaging in an activity because of external reward and punishment contingencies, and creates compliance to an outside authority. It is considered the least self-determined form of motivation (i.e., the individual need not have any investment in the behavior beyond achieving reward or avoiding punishment) (Hulleman et al., 2015).

Figure 1

Theoretical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and value construct



Methodology

Study Design

This study examines the higher level online learning experiences of disabled students during the COVID-19 crisis. It is both explanatory and phenomenological.

Sample Size

Disable students from higher level were search and a sample of 19 students (BS (Hons) and M. Phil in different subjects) from Kohat University of Science and Technolgy, Pakistan and colleges affiliated with it, were selected by using convenience sampling technique. Few students of Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak and Kohat Institute of Medical Sciences have been contacted but no disable student was found, so these 2 universities were excluded from this study. A convenience sample is a type of non-probability sampling method where the sample is taken from a group of people easy to contact or to reach. The demographic details of the participants are given in table 1.

Table 1*Demographic Details of the Special Students*

Total	Male	Female	Age	Rural	Urban	Disability
19	12	7	18-30	4	15	Physical

Data Collection

Data were gathered during November and December 2020, during when the COVID-19 outbreak forced several Pakistani educational institutions to migrate to an online teaching method (HEC Pakistan). These students attended online classes for the whole semester. In Google Form, a questionnaire with 13 assertions was created after consulting the pertinent published materials and scientific literature. Students or members of their families received the questionnaire by email or Whatsapp along with a request letter for their answers. During the COVID-19 epidemic, student experiences were gathered for a report that had two portions. First section comprised of demographic details of participants and second section dealt with statements and questions related to their experiences of online learning initiated by their respective institutions and teachers. There were check boxes, open-ended questions, and closed-ended ones. The questionnaire was created with the ease of answering in mind and included significant information about online learning, including the comfort and enjoyment of online learning, the digital platforms and devices used, the most liked and disliked aspects of online learning, the content delivery methods preferred by both teachers and students, the accessibility of the internet, and advantages and disadvantages as perceived by students. It was created with responses in mind and with the local environment in mind.

Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

Earlier, a 30-item element pool was constructed to ensure the instrument's validity. It was examined and reshaped with the support of qualified researchers after the original building. Inappropriate statements were deleted and the questionnaire was reduced to 13 items.

Data Analysis

Responses to the questionnaire were analyzed using content analysis. Data analysis was performed with the help of the percentage frequency method using Microsoft Excel. The researchers used certain criterion based on Best's (1981) criteria.

Findings

Data was collected from 19 participants to examine special students' experiences with online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and to find answers to the research questions. The results of the current study are given in table 2 in the order of the questionnaire's 13 questions or statements. In connection to comfort of learning through online mode, it was found that about 64% students were comfortable in learning through online classes. Regarding enjoyment and comfort, students indicated positive experiences. These students stated that they were enjoying online learning initiated by their teachers and institutions. It is encouraging to know that students enjoy online learning during this tough time. It means that this innovative way of learning is highly enjoyable for students. This enjoyment may prove to be leading to positive and meaningful learning for students.

Table 2

Analysis of the experiences of disable students concerning online learning during COVID-19 pandemic

S. No	Statements	Yes		No		Total	
		n	%	n	%		
1	Comfort with Online learning during COVID-19 pandemic	12	63.15	7	36.84	19	
2	Enjoyment with online learning during corona virus crisis	12	63.15	7	36.84	19	
3	Devices used for online learning	Mobile	14	73.68	5	26.31	19
		Computer	0	0	19	100	19
		Laptop	3	15.78	16	84.21	19
		Tablet	2	10.52	17	89.47	19
4	Digital platforms used for online learning	Zoom	16	84.21	3	15.78	19
		Google Classroom	0	0	19	100	19
		Google Hangouts	0	0	19	100	19
		WhatsApp	3	15.78	16	84.21	19
		Facebook	0	0	19	100	19
		You Tube	0	0	19	100	19
5	Knowledge about the use of Devices and Digital platforms	19	100	0	0	19	
6	Accessibility of Good Internet Connectivity	4	21.05	15	78.94	19	
7	Most liked features of online platforms	Flexibility	17	89.47	2	10.52	19
		Accessibility of content materials	16	84.21	3	15.78	19
		Interaction with teachers and peers	18	94.73	1	5.26	19
		Comfort	12	63.15	7	36.84	19
		Self-paced	14	73.68	5	26.31	19
8	Most disliked elements of online platforms	Poor network and connectivity	4	21.05	15	78.94	19
		Distractions	7	36.84	12	63.15	19
		Lack of interaction	1	5.263	18	94.73	19
		Poor comprehensibility of content	0	0	19	100	19
		Lack of support	2	10.52	17	89.47	19
9	Content delivery modes used by teachers	Teacher-made Text Materials	4	21.05	15	78.94	19
		Video conferencing	0	0	19	100	19
		Textbook or Reference book materials	13	68.42	6	31.57	19
		Teacher-made video	0	0	19	100	19
		Video from online source	0	0	19	100	19
		Teacher made audio file	19	100	0	0	19
	Audio from internet	0	0	19	100	19	

10	Students' preferred content delivery modes	Teacher-made Text Materials	19	100	0	0	19
		Video conferencing	3	15.78	16	84.21	19
		Textbook or Reference book materials	19	100	0	0	19
		Teacher-made video	19	100	0	0	19
		Video from online source	6	31.57	13	68.42	19
		Teacher made audio file	0	0	19	100	19
		Audio from internet	0	0	19	100	19
11	Students' perceived advantages of online learning	I can learn anytime according to my convenience	18	94.73	1	5.26	19
		I can learn from anywhere	12	63.15	7	36.84	19
		I can access materials provided by instructors	15	78.94	4	21.05	19
		It is highly flexible for me	17	89.47	2	10.52	19
		I feel more autonomous while learning online	18	94.73	1	5.263	19
		Teachers are more friendly online than face-to-face teaching	11	57.89	8	42.10	19
		Proper guidance for online safety and security is given	2	10.52	17	89.47	19
		Others: Save travelling expenses	16	84.21	3	15.78	19
12	Students' perceived disadvantages of online learning	Poor connectivity	4	21.05	15	78.94	19
		Lack of time	0	0	19	100	19
		Lack of support	0	0	19	100	19
		No opportunity for interaction	4	21.05	15	78.94	19
		No clarification of doubts and queries	0	0	19	100	19
		No supportive materials are provided	7	36.84	12	63.15	19
		No guidance is given for online platform	0	0	19	100	19
		Lack of comprehensibility of the concept	2	10.52	17	89.47	19
		Learning is teacher directed only	16	84.21	3	15.78	19
		Learning is one-sided	16	84.21	3	15.78	19
		Others: Stressful and Technical problem	11	57.89	8	42.10	19
13	Will you prefer to use online learning after outbreak also?		16	84.21	3	15.78	19

Students uses different devices for online learning such as mobile, computers, laptop and tablets. Therefore, students were asked to respond for all devices they were using. Results shows that 14 out of 19 students were using mobile phones for online learning while none of them used computer. Laptops and tablets were also rarely used by students. In most cases, institutions might be offering online teaching on different and multiple platforms. Considering

this point, students were allowed to choose all platforms they were using. Each frequency and percentage of table 2 was calculated out of total number of responding students. Majority of students (84%) were using Zoom video conferencing application for online learning. All of them were aware about the use of devices and platforms.

The analysis showed that majority of the students did not have good internet connectivity. This could cause inaccessibility of content materials, poor comprehensibility of the content, distraction and lack of interaction. While analyzing the most liked features of online learning platforms, it was revealed that 94% students found online learning interactive with peers and teachers during COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, majority of the students found online classes highly flexible in terms of time and place. Its flexibility makes online learning highly demanding. Students were asked to give open responses regarding elements they disliked about online learning platforms they were using. Its analyses revealed that some students (n=4) faced connectivity and network related issues while learning online. The mentioned responses highlighted the difficulty to get good internet connection and speed for online classes especially in rural areas. Following it, 16.17% students found online learning very distracting because of elements such as noise, poor management, advertisements, etc.

In terms of the content delivery formats used by teachers or instructors for online teaching, it was discovered that the majority of students were given teacher-made text materials (68%) as well as teacher voice/audio (100%), such as a live PowerPoint presentation in teacher voice. Audio from the internet or other sources is the least popular mode. Texts and audios created by teachers are usually adapted to the requirements and characteristics of pupils. Teachers may have chosen certain means of material distribution for this purpose. Students were asked to choose from a list of options to determine their preferred modes of content delivery. The most favoured way of transmission was discovered through analysis to be teacher-made text materials and videos, as well as textbooks or reference resources. Audio files were discovered to be the least favoured mode.

Table 2 displays the results of the study on students' perceptions of the benefits of online learning. The majority of students (18%) discovered the benefit of being able to learn from anyplace. They didn't have to leave their houses to attend lessons. That this explain why 63 percent of students said they felt at ease learning online. Almost all of them mentioned being able to save money on travel and time. They might also study while assisting their family with home duties, according to the report. However, cyber security and safety risks are frequently associated with online learning. Getting participants aware of cyber safety and security is a must before converting to an online style of learning, but only two out of 19 students received sufficient counselling for online safety and security. It is fair to say that this abrupt transition has jeopardized consumers' online security and safety. Students may receive internet safety and security training from their teachers.

Following the positives, students' perceptions of the negatives of online learning were examined. It was shown that the majority of pupils (84%) did not have the chance to engage. As a result, those students saw online classes as one-sided because the majority of the discussion was conducted only by professors. Due to a shortage of time, students were unable to participate in online learning, and their worries and questions went unanswered. In this time of crisis, it is proposed that pupils be distressed by having less work, a feeling of community, adequate counselling, and regular engagement. The children said it was difficult to adjust to online learning since they were overlooked by teachers among their peers who were not impaired. It became challenging for visually impaired pupils to extract meaningful information from every textual discourse conducted by their professors and peers.

“Will you choose to use online learning after the epidemic as well?” elicits a favorable response from 84 percent of pupils. They said that, in the case of blended learning and flipped learning, online learning may be utilized as a supplement to offline/face-to-face learning. Working in groups promotes student pleasure, boosts student involvement, and cultivates social relationships. Collaborative online classroom may be utilized to enhance interaction among peers. The issues and disadvantages that students with negative responses experienced while attending online classes, such as feeling ignored by professors within a group of non-disabled classmates, might be the basis for their negative responses. The sole use of an online style of teaching and learning is viewed as distracting and missing in support and engagement with teachers and classmates, making it less successful and onerous. Teaching and learning is regarded as a social activity. In a totally online learning environment, that aspect is still lacking, resulting in poor understanding and a lack of assistance and engagement.

Discussion

According to the present study, special students enjoyed and felt at ease in online lessons created by their professors and institutions. It's good to hear that students are finding online learning to be beneficial during this difficult time. This might lead to pupils learning in a pleasant and meaningful way. Hasan and Khan (2020) came to similar conclusions. According to Khan et al. (2020), several impaired students reported facing difficulties during the transition from home to university life. These include missing old friends and creating new ones, making financial goals, feeling nostalgic, dealing with complex situations, and coping with a wide range of individuals and their behaviours. Because their parents had previously supported them in these things, the respondents had difficulty organizing their lives and money (Khan et al., 2020).

Lack of contact may create isolation and loneliness among students utilizing online learning platforms, according to research (Bullen, 1998; Hara & Kling, 2000; Zembylas et al., 2008). As a result, collaborative learning methods may be employed to encourage peer engagement, working in groups can boost student pleasure, involvement, and social relationships (Tinto, 1997). According to the findings of Roberts et al. (2005), the present study showed that majority of pupils did not have the chance to engage. They said it was hard to adjust to online learning since they were overlooked by teachers among their peers who were not impaired. Engagement between students and professors, as well as interaction with peers, are all factors that influence students' happiness with online learning.

It is important to involve more actively, such as by attempting to invest in increased awareness and proper training on the various disabilities that students may face. According to some authors, in order to achieve true inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education, fair and socially just pedagogies must be developed in order to combat vision and academic elitist perceptions based on a sense of normalcy (Madriaga et al., 2011). Because interaction is the major component that determines the quality of online learning, online platforms should be constructed in a way that allows for possibilities for interaction between teachers and students as well as between students and students (Phipps, 2015). According to NSO (2019), only 4.4 percent of rural households and 23.4 percent of urban households own computers, which is similar to the findings of the current study, which show that none of the students used computers for their online classes. The reason for this could be a lack of electricity, internet connectivity, or camcorder issues, all of which are required for online classes.

Some students in the current study stated that it was difficult for visually impaired students to choose necessary information from all textual conversations conducted by their peers and teachers. Educators may comply with a social model of disability and promote this transformation by concentrating on ways to change and improve the learning environment and instructional delivery techniques, rather than changing or “healing” children with impairments. According to Hehir (2002), considering all of our kids’ access requirements as we build curriculum and pedagogy would benefit all of our students—disabled and non-disabled equally. Educators can also assist parents and guardians in arguing for their rights to accessible language and information that has been translated into the parent or guardian’s chosen language and mode of communication.

Conclusion

The Internet has taken on a more important role during COVID-19 lockdown in locating education in order to counteract the effects of outbreak. The closing of many educational institutions throughout the globe has given students the opportunity to practise the "traditional form" of teaching and learning. Online instruction is required in this case but occasionally unplanned events start to happen quickly to ensure the academic lives of millions of students who are affected by this worldwide pandemonium. The analysis of this study showed that students enjoyed learning through online courses, if the proper facilities were available to them. The online classes for students with special needs will play a significant role in promoting academic success among prospective students and a real academic institution by emphasising academic management structures in higher education.

Recommendations

If an institution, for students with disabilities, is closed solely because they are at high risk of severe illness and death, the local educational agencies must determine whether each special person could benefit from online or virtual instruction, instructional telephone calls, and other curriculum based instructional activities, to the extent available. In so doing, school personnel should follow appropriate health guidelines to assess and address the risk of transmission in the provision of such services. The study suggest that education should be suitable for individual students’ needs and teachers must try to understand the specific needs and problems of students with disabilities in order to include them in online learning environment. The study further suggested to create student-centered online learning environment that is conducive and supportive for all learners in order to facilitate their learning and to provide opportunities for interaction through use of different media and activities. It should be flexible for accommodating students with less technological support to grow according to their own pace and convenience for example, to resolve the internet issue, institutions should provide the necessary materials in USB on weekly or monthly basis.

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