

**THE PROS AND CONS OF ONLINE EDUCATION AMONG COLLEGE
STUDENTS (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COLLEGES IN
VELLORE CITY)**



ABSTRACT

In this era of evolving technology, the opportunities made available by the internet have been fully utilized. There was a lot of uncertainty among parents and students when it first came out. This uncertainty has subsided and has become the new normal (an unusual situation that has become routine), and both students and educators can see the benefits and drawbacks of online education. It has more positive aspects than negative ones. The views are taken from the perspective of students. Online education is a costly affair in a country like India, where it is still in its developing phase. Convenience sampling has been used to study the views of students. The researcher used a structured questionnaire to obtain responses from the students from different colleges. A total of 180 responses were received, with 16 being ignored due to response bias. Hence, a valid number of 164 samples were taken forward for analysis. Percentage analysis, Anova, and Chi square were used as tools for this paper. The researcher brings out the difficulties that are faced by students and tries to give practical solutions to make the learning process easier.

Keywords: *Online class, offline class, software, and hackers—the new normal.*

I. Introduction

Online education is a much easier way to deliver any type of education through the internet. Online learning systems enable students and educators to gain knowledge while remaining stationary. The recent pandemic has increased the use of online education in schools and colleges. The applications available on online platforms made usage much easier, resulting in more user-friendly online classes. The vast usage of the Internet has reduced paper work a lot, saving a lot of trees, but in the same way, the implantation of mobile towers has made sparrows an endangered species. Though it makes life easier, there are some notable advantages and disadvantages raised by students about the online mode of education.

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II. Literature Review

There are many definitions of online learning. Khan (1997) has defined "online" as the one that delivers information even to a remote audience using the internet as their mediator. According to Stack Steven Dr. (2015), online education has multiplied in the last decade, and he also did not find any major dissimilarities among the students who take online and offline classes. E-learning has many advantages, according to Callan et al. (2010) and Garrison (2011), including affordability, time and money savings, and the ability to use different learning styles. Bouchnik and Marcus (2006) stated the dissatisfaction of e-learners' lack of framework, low motivation, bad study habits, and lack of learning atmosphere.

Objectives

1. To study the demographic profile of the respondents.
2. To identify the technical, psychological, and functional issues faced by the students in the online classes.
3. To analyse the technical, psychological, and functional issues challenged by the students during online classes with selected demographic variables.

Pros of online classes

Easy accessibility: As India has moved on to 5G, it has benefited from the easy accessibility of the internet and can attend classes from any part of the world.

Collective knowledge: Students gain collective knowledge as they get instruction from around the globe, which they cannot get from mere books.



Cost-effective: It reduces the burden on students, as they need not spend on transportation and accommodations.

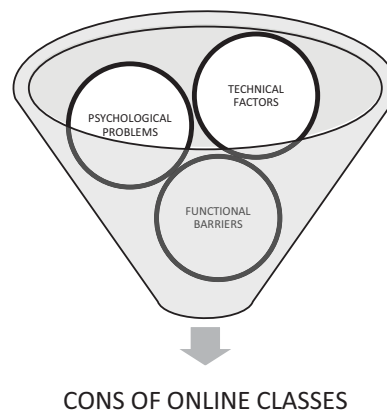
Better opportunity: As the students have the opportunity to choose various courses; it helps them get better exposure to the outside world.

Cons of online classes

The researcher has found certain cons that lead to finding certain factors like technical problems, psychological problems, and functional barriers.

Technical factors

- Network problem
- Lack of strong software facilities
- There is no frequent update.
- Lack of specialists to solve the technical issues.



Psychological problems:

- I fear that hackers can easily access my online accounts.
- I am concerned about losing my privacy and ending up in the wrong hands.
- I fear losing money due to high internet costs.
- I fear having difficulty completing the online classes successfully.

Functional barriers

- Online education is much more complicated when compared to traditional methods of education.
- Online classes would be uncomfortable and create distractions.
- Online classes may not be as effective as offline classes.
- I feel more confident during offline classes than in online classes.

Another disadvantage is that students' feedback is limited, which leads to isolation because they are not in regular classrooms. Students lose their communication skills; online learning requires strong motivation and time management to complete their day-to-day work. As there is no face-to-face communication, it may lead to cheating among students and reduce their morality. There are so many practical issues in a country like India, where there are more illiterates.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Profile	Options	Frequency (N = 164)	Percent (%)
Class Group	BA	44	26.8
	B.COM	78	47.6
	B.SC	29	17.7
	PG	13	7.9
Gender	Male	123	75
	Female	41	25
Type of Institution	un-aided	29	17.7
	Aided	25	15.2
	Government	106	64.6
	Others	4	2.4
Annual income of Parents (in Rs.)	Lessthan Rs.1,50,000	29	17.7
	1,50,000 – 3,00,000	70	42.7
	3,00,000 – 4,50,000	37	22.6
	Above 4,50,000	28	17.1

A total sample size of 164 was considered for the study. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents, in that 47.6 percent belong to the class of B.COM. The majority (75 percent) of respondents were male. 64.6 percent of respondents are doing their graduation in government colleges, and 42.7 percent of respondents' income level is between Rs. 1, 50,000 to Rs. 3, 00,000 per annum.

III. Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis (FA) was applied in this study on the 12 items using principal component analysis with orthogonal rotation (Varimax).

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy had a value of 0.606, which is above the minimum acceptable level of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1974). Barlett's sphericity test was significant at the value of $p = 0.00$. Then a reliability test was conducted to measure the internal consistency. As the value is greater than the minimum acceptable level of 0.70 (Nunnally 1978), the Eigen values are greater than one and are considered for the study. Three factors explain 69.215 percent of the total variance using the varimax rotation method.

Table 2 Factor Analyses

Variables	Technological Barriers	Psychological Barriers	Functional Barriers
Network problem	0.917		
Lack of strong software facilities	0.853		
No frequent updating	0.850		
Lack of specialist to solve the technical issues	0.803		
I fear that hackers easily access my online accounts		0.910	
I am concerned about losing my privacy and ending up in the wrong hands.		0.826	
I fear of losing money due to high internet cost		0.764	
I fear of difficulty in completing the online classes successfully		0.603	
Online education is much complicated when compared to traditional methods of education			0.810
Online classes would be uncomfortable and creates distraction			0.795
Online classes may not be effective when compared to offline classes			0.580
I feel more confident during offline classes than in the online classes.			0.578
Eigen Value	3.612	3.059	1.635
Cronbach's alpha	0.888	0.801	0.742

Percentage of total variance explained (%)	28.553	23.541	17.122
Cumulative total variance explained (%)	25.553	52.094	69.215

The first factor loaded with four variables has a variance of 28.553% and is named "technological barriers." The statement "Faced more network problems" loaded with the highest value of 0.917. The second factor, psychological barriers, has a variance of 23.541 percent and is loaded with four variables. The statement "I am concerned that hackers can easily access my internet accounts" received the highest score of 0.910.

The final factor with four variables has a variance of 17.112% and is referred to as functional barriers. The statement 'online education is much more complicated when compared to traditional methods of education' has the highest value of 0.810.

Table 3 Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents Perception Towards Online Classes

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Network problem	3.91	0.73
Lack of strong software facilities	3.78	0.86
No frequent updating.	3.85	0.74
Lack of specialist to solve the technical issues	3.79	0.75
I fear that hackers easily access my online accounts	3.77	0.76
I am concerned about losing my privacy and ending up in the wrong hands.	3.97	0.83
I fear of losing money due to high internet cost	3.76	0.68
I fear of difficulty in completing the online classes successfully	4.21	0.77
Online education is much complicated when compared to traditional methods of education	3.49	0.64
Online classes would be more uncomfortable and creates distraction	3.64	0.72
Online classes may not be effective when compared to offline classes	4.06	0.76
I feel more confident during offline classes than in the online classes.	3.75	0.82

Based on the mean score, 'I fear that it is difficult to complete the online classes successfully' (4.21) is the most important challenge faced by students in online classes, followed by "Online classes may not be effective when compared to offline classes" (4.06). The least mean score is

"Online education is much more complicated when compared to traditional methods of education." (3.49). The students find it difficult as the courses are over-delivered and more theoretical in nature; this demotivates them and gradually causes them to lose interest, which paves the way for the unsuccessful completion of online classes. Students feel that face-to-face interaction is more effective, which fosters a cordial relationship between them and faculties. As the students are techs savvy, only a few find complications between the online and offline classes.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference among class group with respect to technological barriers faced by students during online classes.

Table 4 Respondents Class Group and Technological Barriers Faced by Students During Online Classes

Technological Barriers	Class Group				F Value	P Value
	BA	B.COM	B.SC	PG		
Network problem	3.73 (0.75)	3.91 (0.40)	4.21 (1.23)	3.85 (0.56)	2.603	0.054
Lack of strong software facilities	3.68 (0.91)	3.78 (0.66)	4.00 (1.28)	3.69 (0.63)	0.857	0.465
No frequent update.	3.65 (0.80)	3.83 (0.49)	4.27 (1.03)	3.76 (0.72)	4.478	0.005
Lack of specialist to solve the technical issues	3.63 (0.74)	3.75 (0.51)	4.17 (1.13)	3.76 (0.73)	3.286	0.022

As the P value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at the 5% level of significance with regard to "no frequent updating" and "lack of specialists to solve the technical issues" as the technical challenges faced by students during online classes. Hence, it is concluded that there is a significant difference among the class groups of respondents with regards to "no frequent updating" and "lack of specialists to solve the technical issues the technical challenges faced by students during online classes. Hence, it is concluded that there is a significant difference among the class groups of respondents with regards to "no frequent updating" and "lack of specialists to solve the technical issues."

As the P value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted at the 5% level of significance with regard to the "network problem" and the "lack of strong software facilities" technical challenges faced by the students during online classes. Hence, it is concluded that there is no significant difference among the class group of respondents with regards to "network problems" and "lack of strong software facilities" or "lack of specialists to solve the technical issues faced by the students during online classes."

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the genders with respect to psychological barriers challenged by the students during online classes.

Table 5 Psychological Barriers Challenged by the Students in Online Classes with Gender

Psychological Barriers	Gender				t Value	P Value
	Male		Female			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
I fear that hackers will easily access my online accounts	3.83	0.797	3.59	.591	2.086	0.040
I fear of losing privacy and ending up in wrong hands	3.93	0.81	4.09	0.91	1.013	0.315
I fear of losing money due to high internet cost	3.60	0.55	4.24	0.80	5.709	<0.001
I fear that difficult to complete the online classes successfully.	4.15	0.80	4.39	0.66	1.862	0.066

Because the P value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at the 5% level for the psychological barriers challenged by customers in online banking, "I fear that hackers easily access my internet accounts" and "I fear of losing money due to high internet costs," respectively. Hence, there is a significant difference between male and female respondents with regard to the above-mentioned psychological barriers. Based on the mean score, male customers have a greater psychological fear that hackers will easily access their internet accounts than female customers. Male students are much more involved in online learning, which leads them to get worried that their online accounts may get hacked while doing and submitting assignments and may not be up to the mark, which makes them feel that they are unsuccessful in the completion of the works given through online learning, and all these things lead them to spend more money on internet charges. The students must learn to float on the internet, and they must not drown in it; if they do, that may lead to a panic situation. Female customers have more fear of losing their money due to high internet costs than male students. Female students must learn to use the internet wisely.

As the P value is greater than 0.01, the null hypothesis is accepted at the 5% level with regards to "I fear of losing privacy and ending up in the wrong hands" and "I fear that it will be difficult to complete the online classes successfully." of psychological barriers challenged by the students in online classes. Hence, there is no significant difference between male and female respondents with regard to the above-mentioned psychological barriers challenged by the students in online classes.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference among class groups with respect to functional barriers faced by the students in online classes.

Table 6 Functional Barriers Challenged by the Students in Online Classes with Class Group

Functional Barriers	Class Group				F Value	P Value
	BA	B.COM	B.SC	PG		
Online education is much complicated when compared to traditional methods of education	3.55 (0.79)	3.69 (0.46)	2.83 (0.38)	3.62 (0.51)	17.086	<0.001
Online classes would be more uncomfortable and creates distraction.	3.45 (0.50)	3.93 (0.78)	3.00 (0.05)	4.00 (0.70)	18.367	<0.001
Online classes may not be effective when compared to offline classes	3.72 (0.75)	4.37 (0.70)	3.68 (0.47)	4.23 (0.83)	11.569	<0.001
I feel more confident during offline classes than in the online classes.	4.00 (0.60)	3.65 (0.97)	3.68 (0.47)	3.69 (1.03)	1.774	0.154

As the P value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at the 1% level of significance with regard to "online education is much more complicated when compared to traditional methods of education" and "online classes would be more uncomfortable and create distraction." and "Online classes may not be effective when compared to offline classes." of functional barriers faced by students in online classes. Hence, it is concluded that there are significant differences among the class group of students with regards to the above-mentioned functional barriers.

As the P value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at the 5% level of significance with regard to "I feel more confident during offline classes than in the online classes." of functional barriers faced by the students in online classes.

IV. Findings

1. The results of the study reveal that the majority of male students are B.COM graduates from government colleges.
2. Students' apprehension about the network problem and hackers' access to their internet accounts contributes to their unease with online classes.

3. The study also reveals that the students have difficulty completing the online classes successfully, as they feel the online classes are not as effective as the offline classes.
4. When they encounter technical problems, their panic is exacerbated by the scarcity of specialists.
5. Male students are afraid of hackers, while female students are afraid of losing money.
6. The study identified some of the technical factors, psychological problems, and functional barriers experienced by the students.

V. Suggestions

To remove the cons of online classes, the students must be provided with awareness programmes on handling their online accounts carefully. Using the internet wisely aids them in identifying the hackers. They should adopt themselves to the new normal, which is to adopt unfamiliar or atypical situations. Anything that is beyond the limit is dangerous.

VI. Conclusions

Online education plays an important role in India. The researcher concluded that the fear of online classes must be removed by bringing in a strong web-based system. This web-based system should cover a student's attitude, character, cultural background, and other demographic characteristics. Instead of taking class monotonously, the faculties must ensure that they give some space to the students by allowing them to participate in online seminars and should give counselling regarding the changes that will soon become the new normal. There are plenty of government platforms like Swayam, the educational channel Swayam Pura, and the National Digital Library that students should be made aware of to make their online classes easier. Teaching faculties must try to increase interaction between students during online classes. Professors must develop peer-to-peer activity among the students and ensure the same comfort that they enjoyed during offline classes. In order to ensure the genuineness of the online classes, anti-cheating measures must be put in place by the colleges to monitor the work submitted by the students.

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