



RESEARCH ARTICLE

PERCEPTION OF ONLINE CLASSES AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC IN A TERTIARY HEALTH CARE CENTER, KERALA

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Abstract

Online classes became a mandate during Covid 19 pandemic. In the initial phase it had negligible acceptance and the system had its own glitches which created a lot of obstacles that it was approached with disdain. Later the system slowly started gaining momentum. A survey done in Government Dental College, Kottayam, Kerala among BDS students during Covid 19 pandemic through Google platform is elaborated in the present study. Since that it was during a time frame where the acceptance for this mode for academics was negligible, the survey report reflects the same. Currently this system after going through a lot of corrective procedures is considered as an accepted tool in academics.

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Introduction:-

For students, online classes have become an imminent trend in the education sector around the globe. Digital learning has provided easy access to the files and folders that can now be organized and saved without any physical damage. During Covid 19 pandemic learning never stopped, in fact, it evolved itself not just to survive but to thrive and technology has proven it. Online learning is certainly not a novelty. In fact, higher education institutions initially started with online courses as early as the beginning- and mid-1990s¹. With the development of technology, online learning has become more accessible and diverse.

Covid created an impact in the world hitherto unknown to humanity; it touched all realms and facets of life, its ripples created a huge impact on every human being either directly or indirectly. Academics world wide came to a pause- in this situation online classes gain momentum². Online classes were a big boon, like a silver lining in the sky. Till its inception education was at a grinding halt. Many were skeptical about the credibility of such a new venture. Now its 3 years past the start of Covid pandemic and contact classes was the main stream mode of academics then, but still now online platform is very well an accepted mandate in academics. During COVID 19 pandemic situation, online classes for health care professionals were running steadily to a large extent. This study aims to find out the effectiveness of online classes for students in Government Dental College during COVID 19 pandemic period by a survey with questionnaires (google platform) distributed to the students attending the online classes^{3,4}. Surveys like this had been conducted to assess the acceptance of this tool and also to come up with guidelines to improve the online classes being conducted to make the sessions more student oriented and effective.

Materials & Methods:-

This study was aimed to find out the effectiveness of online classes for students in Government Dental College during COVID 19 pandemic period by a survey with questionnaires (google platform) distributed to the students attending the online classes⁵. All students who were willing to participate were included in the study.

Results:-

In order to evaluate the true perception of online classes amongst students about 20 questions were structured and it was validated by an expert. Upon validation 14 relevant questions were selected and it was sent via Whatsapp in Google Platform to study subjects. Participants opinion regarding the attributes are mentioned below with question numbers and frequencies in (-)

1) The time spend for online education is more than 6hrs for about 83.6 % (127) of the study group while 16.4 % (25) were spending less than 6hrs for classes. 2) Break time enjoyed between classes is more than 30minutes for 55.9% (85) but for 44.1 % (67) it was less than 30 minutes. 3) 94.7 % (144) had fair access to internet at the same time 5.3 % (8) had problems with net connectivity. 4) 80.9% (123) students had a conducive and supportive environment for online studies in the mean time 19.1 % (29) had poor ambience for studies. Majority of students complained 5) ear irritation and 6) eye strain and accounting to 75 % (114) and 90.8 % (138) respectively. 7) 70.4 % (107) suggested that their grasping potential was inhibited and 11) 83. % (127) could get easily distracted. 7) Participants felt difficulty in learning without peer interaction 69.1% (105), 8) practical studies 88.8% (135) and 12) study materials in pdf format 73% (111). 14) Poor teacher student interaction was a matter of concern for 67.1% (102) and 10) doubt clarification was difficult for 52.6% (80) although 47.4 % (72) had no issue with this attribute. 13) 61.2% (93) were of the opinion that it reduces the cost of education whilst 38.8% (59) had opposite opinion

Statistical analysis

The data is entered in Microsoft excel sheet and the data analysis done using statistical software SPSS version 16.0.

Discussion:-

Online learning is certainly not a novelty. In fact, higher education institutions initially started with online courses as early as the beginning- and mid-1990s^{1,2}. With the development of technology, online learning has become more accessible and diverse. Synchronous online learning runs similar to traditional classes, as the lecturer and students are present in the same interactive online environment at different physical locations. Examples of this mode of online learning are online lectures/webinars, virtual congresses, or real-time chats. Asynchronous learning modes allow the students to interact with the educational material and the teacher on their own flexible schedule³.

In the present study 14 validated questions were answered mostly with a crisp majority to the dichotomous answers which reinforces the negative aspect of online classes.

The study findings disclosed students' reflections on the numerous challenges that influenced their academic performance including ear and neck problem⁶. Majority of students were of the opinion that their studies was negatively influenced by limited peer interaction, classes in pdf format, poor student teacher interaction and without practical classes^{7,8}. The findings, however, have limitations and cannot be generalized to other.

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