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LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS ABOUT ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN BALOCHISTAN

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Abstract

Public and private universities around the world are closed because of the COVID-19, nearly one billion students have had their education interrupted and moved their educational activities onto the online platform. The purpose of this research study is to know the impact, issues, and tools of online-teaching during COVID-19 at the higher education levels of Balochistan. An online survey was conducted in which the students from four universities namely, University of Balochistan, Sardar Bahadar Khan Women's University, BUITEMS University and University of Turbat were asked about their opinion on online teaching and learning during the ongoing

pandemic. The data, collected by questionnaire, were analyzed, using percentage and frequency. The results of the study exposed that the universities in Balochistan were not prepared for online teaching classes. It was observed that online teaching played a key role during COVID-19, but lack of resources, access to the internet availability, and proper use were the major issues during online-teaching in Balochistan. The findings of the study recommended that the technology and online-based teaching should be fully enhanced throughout the province for such pandemic and sudden crises.

1. Introduction

The coronavirus (COVID-19) was detected in China in early December 2019, it spread very rapidly in the world within a limited time, and soon it was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11th March 2020. Due to this pandemic, all educational institutions including universities in the world were closed and moved their education activities online (WHO, 2020). All over the world, governments and educational institutions took immediate actions in order to stop spreading the COVID-19 and also struggle to make sure the stability of the educational activities, and universities throughout the world moved to online learning (Ali, 2020).

The universities, especially the devolving countries, were not prepared and equipped for the transition from traditional classroom-based education to online education. The majority of universities, particularly in backward countries, had insufficient and weak infrastructure and plans (Zhong, et al, 2020).In this contemporary ear. Online learning is considered an advance opportunity for the learners, during the COVID-19 the approach is known to be a very important aspect for continuing and sustaining the education activities. However, it was a very challenging process for the universities to shift their academic activities into alone. As well, faculty members and students faced a number of problems such as logistic, use of technology, availability of net and equipment and etc (Petrie, 2020).

Moreover, the use of an online approach might create problems and obstacles for students during the process of learning, such as lack of motivation, delayed in feedback or quick response to the questions that teachers are not available at the time students may need help (Yousuf & Al-Banawi,2013). Additionally, these problems and obstacles can be overcome and controlled with the support of teachers who use proper and need-based teaching approaches to the needs of such students. According to a survey study (2020), these problems happen because of the lack of teachers' experiences in using online learning and due to the very short time in which they delivered and used new teaching methods. As result, we concluded that teachers and students were not ready for online classes.

In order to protect the lives of people, all over the world took the decision to complete the lockdown of the market and other activities. In this regards, on 23rd March 2020 the government of Pakistan took the decision of complete lockdown, and on 9th May 2020 the complete lockdown converted to smart lockdown (Kaleem, 2020). A number of complaints from students, especially those belonging to rural areas, were reported regarding the lack of internet access, lack of facilities, and other tools for their education because of online teaching (S Haider & Al-Salman,2020). It was also noted that the poorest parents had lack of technology facilities and skills. Therefore, their children faced many difficulties to get online classes from their homes. Their careers are at risk, and they think they might lose better opportunities. As Guzman and

Malik (2020) said, COVID-19 has affected the whole world, especially the developing countries like Pakistan. This infection affects educational institutions extremely and badly and creates a number of problems for students regarding career opportunities. According to Ellis and Roberts (2021), there is no well-designed framework to save educational loss during any emergency situation.

In general, it is observed that developed nations have many facilities, technology, and equipment in using the online tools for students to attend their educational activities through digital and internet mediums. However, a country like Pakistan where the educational sector is the most neglected and there is a lack of all types of facilities and access to online classes is a serious issue during emergency and crisis situations. It is so much difficult to continue the academic activities in the traditional way during COVID-19. Therefore, it is very important for governments and institutions to enhance the technology facilities in educational institutions and avoid serious impending educational loss in the future. Developing educational institutions or universities is a need for time to keep this sector ready for any crisis time.

The purpose of this research study is to know the learning experiences of students of Balochistan about online teaching and learning during the COVID_19 pandemic crisis. Due to COVID-19, all universities in Balochistan closed and adopted online learning and instructional mode. We surveyed students at the higher education levels of Balochistan about online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic crises. This study was also designed to set recommendations for educational institutions and policymakers and higher education institutions about how students can be helped during the crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, to address the purpose of this study, the following questions were developed;

- What are the key experiences of students about online learning during ongoing COVID-19?
- What are new technologies used for online learning?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of online classes?
- What are the major issues faced by students?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Online teaching and Learning during the Coronavirus-19 Pandemic

Because of the COVID_19, the lifestyles of people throughout the world have changed, the governments and the World Health Organization (WHO) advised and requested people to stay at home to prevent themselves from being sick, and these safety measures were also applied to educational institutions as well. The COVID-19 has badly interrupted teaching in all educational institutions, especially universities. All around the world, traditional and physical face-to-face classes were suspended to make sure the security of students, faculty members, and non-teaching staff. To control the impact of the COVID-19, the students of universities were instructed to go to follow another approach of teaching named electronic learning to be the key method of teaching the syllabus during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the closure of educational activities has given very negative impacts on education (Goyal, 2020). In the period of the COVID-19, teachers are advised to teach their students via online learning tools like zoom, WhatsApp, YouTube and, etc. saying

that this is the time for implementation of new methods of teaching to continue the education activities (Kumar, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic introduced the digital revolution in the education system via online teachings, lectures, online examination and interaction at virtual meeting platforms (Abidah et al, 2020). In this modern era, online learning has got very high value, and it will be the best tool for future academic activities. Zoom and WhatsApp played a very tremendous role in academic activities as a platform for teaching (Petrie, 2020a). The key issue in adopting the E-learning from traditional learning is the unavailability of resources and lack of proper use of equipment. It is very much essential to use the online teaching method with the use of various techniques for education as well as for daily life activities to advance the learning for learners (Poole, 2000).

There is a limited literature on the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on students learning at higher educational levels in Pakistan, and particularly in Balochistan. The key impacts changed in the method of instructions from traditional classroom to online teaching, for which the educational institutions, especially universities, were not prepared in Pakistan, especially in Balochistan (Naila & Zarina, 2020). A study was conducted by Adnan and Anwar (2020), according to the study, the majority of the students were not mentally ready for the online classes due to the following reason, lack of internet availability, poor interaction connection, proper use of technologies, and unavailability of the classroom environment. The authors also argued that among other backward areas of Pakistan, the students from Balochistan are facing major issues due to unavailability and poor internet connections. Another research study was conducted by Abbasi et al.,(2020), the researchers said that the majority of students had negative remarks about online classes during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. According to the students, the traditional classes are much better as compared to online classes because the quality of online classes is so poor.

According to Akram et al.,(2020), almost all students were happy and accepted the online classes, but they disliked the lecturer's quality and said that online classes are completely different from traditional classes. Similarly, a research study was conducted in Lahore with university-level students, the study found the advantages and disadvantages of online classes. They said that online classes are much flexible, comfortable, and accessible, but they are not gaining that much which they learned from traditional classrooms. (Mukhtar et al., 2020). According to Murgatrotd (2020), the online teaching method is generally and frequently discriminatory to poor students. Online education was the only source or approach for academic activities during COVID-19, so this study tries to find out the impacts of online teaching compared with traditional classrooms during the COVID-19.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design and sample

An online survey was conducted to investigate the online teaching and learning experiences of students in Balochistan. A sample of 100 students from four universities namely, University of Balochistan, Sardar Bahadar Khan Women's University, BUITEMS University, and University of Turbat were selected by using a convenient sampling technique. The table. No 1 shown the demographic details of the respondents.

Table.No1

Demographic details of the respondents	Categories	Numbers	Percentages
Gender	Male	50	50 %
	Female	50	50 %
University	University of Balochistan	25	25%
	Sardar Bahadar Khan Women's University	25	25%
	BUITEMS University	25	25%
	University of Turbat	25	25%
Age	20-25	70	70%
	25-30	30	30%
Areas	Rural	78	78%
	Urban	22	22%

3.3. Data collection & analysis

The data were collected at the end of April 2021 when the universities of Balochistan were closed. The questionnaire was sent via WhatsApp and email to students. The collected data were analyzed by using frequency and percentages for close-ended questions and open-ended ones. The open-ended questions were analyzed using content analysis. The filled narrative responses read, coded, and categorized in different themes as per the words and phrases used by students.

4. Finding and analysis

4.1. Overall experience about online classes during COVID-19

Table.2: Experience about online classes

Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Good	35	35%
Average	32	32%
Poor	33	33%
Total	**100**	**100**%

A total of 35 (35%) respondents rated online classes as a good experience. Of these, (33%) said it was poor, and 32 (32%) found it was an average experience. There was no significant difference between answers given by students.

4.2. Access of course during COVID-19

Table.3: Access of course

Accessing course	Frequency	Percentage
Personal computer, tablet or laptop	21	21%
Use home computer, tablet or laptop	35	35%
Use personal cell phone	34	34%
Borrow from friend	7	7%
Not able to attend the class	3	3%
Total	**100**	**100**%

No. 3 focused on access of course content during online classes, it promoted to identify how they were able to access their online classes. Results have shown that nearly, 35% students used their home computer, tablet, or laptop. While 3% of respondents had no accessibility to attend the classes, so they missed their online classes. It is shown that the majority of students of Balochistan don't have personal computers, tablets, or laptops. According to the UNDP report (2018), nearly 71% of the population is living under the poverty line. Where they don't afford to buy personal technology equipment for each child; therefore, they use a signal PC at home for all. It was also observed that a number of students had missed their classes because sometimes classes were held at the same time due to the inaccessibility of equipment for each child.

4.3. Most used digital platform for online classes by students

Table.4: Most used digital platform

Digital platform	Frequency	Percentage
ZOOM	81	81%
WhatsApp	02	02%
Google Classroom	17	17%
Total	**100**	**100**%

Table.no.4 focused on the most used digital platform for online classes by students, the educational institutions mostly give multi-platform choices to students for online classes, but, in Balochistan, the majority of students were directed to use ZOOM. The table.no.4 was calculated out of the total number of respondents, the majority of students, 81% used Zoom for online classes followed by Google Classroom, 17% and WhatsApp, 02%. Zoom was considered the most suitable platform for online classes because it can be used on PC, laptop, and tablet, providing a number of ways for students to access the classes, and, secondly, materials (lectures, presentations and, etc) can be easily saved and accessible at any time for students. The majority

of students of Balochistan live in rural areas, and whenever they access the internet, and then they save or download materials which were uploaded by teachers.

4.4. Accessiblity of good internet connectivity

Table.5: Accessibility of Good Internet Connectivity

Accessibility	Frequency	Percentage
Good accessibility	14	14%
Poor accessibility	86	86%
Total	**100**	**100%**

Table.no.5 focused on the accessibility of good internet connectivity, the majority of students didn't have good internet connectivity, 86%. The majority of the population of Balochistan lives in rural areas which comprise 68%, where they don't have basic facilities including internet services. Secondly, internet service is only available in urban areas. Thirdly, the government has restricted internet services in some districts of Balochistan due to security reasons.

4.5. Advantage of online classes during COVID-19

Table.6: Advantage of online classes

Advantage of online classes	Frequency	Percentage
Access at anytime to personal convenience	06	06%
Saving time	05	05%
Saving expenses	02	02%
Stay at home	51	51%
Download materials at anytime given by teachers	36	36%
Total	**100**	**100%**

Table.6 shows the advantage of online classes during COVID-19. It shown that a number of students (51%) found the advantage of online learning is staying at home, and their safety can be prevented from COVID-19. 36. About 70% Of students said that it can be an advantage because the materials given by teachers can be downloaded at any time, and there is a network connectivity issue in Balochistan, and most students get connected after a long time, so it is easy for them to download materials at any time according to their convenience. Only 6.06% of students said that they can learn anytime according to their convenience. It must be mentioned that only 05% students were saying it was saving their time. In other advantages, students said 02% about saving expenses.

4.6. Disadvantage of online classes during COVID-19

Table.7: Disadvantage of online classes

Advantage of online classes	Frequency	Percentage
Poor learning	16	16%
Poor connectivity	65	65%
Technical problem	05	05%
Lack of proper guidance	14	14%
Total	**100**	**100%**

Table 7. We found that the key disadvantage was poor connectivity (65%) during online classes in Balochistan, and most areas of Balochistan are facing this issue. Regarding poor learning in online classes, 16% of students said that they did not learn very well and a number of questions arose because of the uncertainty of answers. Due to the limitation of the time, students don't get enough opportunity. Nearly 14%, students don't have proper guidance about online classes and platforms and because of these students don't get full focus on their study. A few students, 05% said that other disadvantages such as technical problems because a majority of the students don't have computer education. The technical problems create stress and depression.

4.7. Satisfaction with online learning during COVID-19

Table.8: Satisfaction with online learning

Satisfaction with online learning	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	31	31%
No	69	69%
Total	**100**	**100%**

In response to the question (table.8), the majority of students (69%) were not satisfied with online teaching and learning. The majority of students live in rural areas in Balochistan, and they don't have internet facilities in their native villages. According to C. K., and M. Tam (1999), students who have insufficient learning resources and limited opportunities for education have mostly shown dissatisfaction in online classes. On another hand, Seive and Troja (2014) said that more opportunities and resources motivate students for online learning.

4.8. Lecture delivery modes used by teachers

Table 9: Lecture delivery modes used by teacher

Lecture mode	Percentage
PowerPoint (slides) presentation	97%
Video from online source	10%
Textbook materials	82%
Teacher-made video	02%
Video conferencing	07%

On the use of lecture delivery modes by teachers for online teaching, it was found that teachers mostly used the slides presentation mode (97%) followed by textbooks materials (82%), video from online source was 10% and video conferencing was 07%. The least used mode was teacher-made video. Slides presentation mode is also commonly used in traditional teaching. It is easy to deliver the lectures. As Ding and Liu (2012) mentioned, mentioned that PowerPoint mode may be encouraged by more than one factor, neglect of interaction with students, over speed in presentations, no creativity, or poor feedback.

4.8. Problems during online classes

Table 10: Problems during online classes

Problems	Frequency	Percentage
No Internet service	45	45%
Net connectivity problem	20	20%
Online exam	10	10%
No lab sessions	03	03%
Lack of expertise	10	10%
Mode of teaching	12	12%
Total	**100**	**100%**

Table.No.10 question was about the problems faced by students during COVID-19 in Balochistan; the first issue is no internet service, particularly in rural areas, where about 45% of students faced this issue. Students were arrested for demanding internet facilities in Balochistan(Usmaima, 2020). For over three years, internet services have been suspended in the district of Balochistan (Zai, 2020). The second issue is internet speed, where about 20 % face this problem. 12 % said that the mode of teachers is a great problem for them. About 10% of students faced the online exam and lack expertise in using internet facilities. Whereas, 3% of students said that they had lab session problems.

5. Discussion

In this research study, we evaluated the students' experiences with online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Balochistan. Due to the COVID-19, educational activities in the world stopped, it gave an opportunity to institutions to go for online teaching and learning. The suddenly started online classes without any proper planning created a number of problems for students as well as for teachers. The findings of the study showed that students were not satisfied with online teaching because they didn't have sufficient resources and facilities for online classes. The finding was supported by Shea, Swan, Fredericksen, and Pickett, (2002) who said that if proper resources and facilities are given, and then there is a possibility of students being too satisfied.

All universities adopted online modes for teaching and learning in order to save the future of students. However, the sudden and unplanned shift brought many problems for students, teachers, administrators, and parents. The findings have shown that students were the most affected during COVID-19 because they were so confused about their studies. As Zaharah,

Kirilova, & Windarti (2020) also mentioned, the sudden closure of educational institutions without proper planning and any situation analysis put the students into a difficult situation. Online classes are based on technology tools that have various technical problems such as electricity, internet service, weak network connections, and interruptions during the online classes. Therefore, the findings of the study showed that students' experience was not good with online classes. They faced major problems such as no internet services, weak connectivity, etc. The findings also highlighted that a number of students, especially in rural areas, were deprived of online classes due to internet services. Secondly, a number of students said that their classmates missed their classes due to the unavailability of devices. As mentioned early, 71 percent of the population of Balochistan is living under the poverty line, and people don't afford to buy devices.

The study revealed that a majority of students from different districts didn't attend their online classes because the internet service is suspended in four major and populated districts of Balochistan due to security uncertainty. As Adnan (2021) comments supported the study finding, internet services in district Kech and Awaran have been suspended for the past three years due to security concerns. District Kech is the second largest district of Balochistan after Quetta, and the literacy ratio is high as compared with other districts.

The findings of the study revealed that a number of students got a very good opportunity to access different materials (lecturers, videos, presentations and, etc) more easily because teachers saved their materials on the ZOOM app. Secondly, online classes gave them an opportunity to spend their time purposefully and saved them from mental illness during COVID-19

6. Conclusion

The study reflected that face-to-face classes can build students' learning and confidence; however, online-based classes could help students to search for new ways of education. The majority of students said that online education has less opportunity for students. Balochistan is the largest and the most backward province of Pakistan. The overall infrastructure is weak and information technology infrastructure doesn't exist. Actually, the majority of the population lives in rural areas, and they are facing a shortage of all basic facilities that is the major hurdle for them to adopt online education. No access to internet services, poor internet connectivity, lack of proper use of devices, and lack of resources during online classes were the major problems faced by students as well as teachers. Online teaching and learning can't replace the traditional classes of education, but it can build a positive and productive education system in traditional education. Thus, online education should be introduced in traditional education activities but after the proper planning and training of both students and teachers. From the results, the education institutions and policy makers can get benefits to develop better policies regarding online education in Balochistan. Lastly, based on the findings, it is recommended that the federal and provincial governments should take necessary actions to restore internet services with suitable measurements in Balochistan.

7. Recommendations:

Based on the research findings and observations, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations;

- The poor network and connectivity were very much disliked, and it was observed that the major challenge or disadvantages of online classes were the poor network and connectivity. It is recommended that necessary technical actions must be taken by the government to improve the internet service connectivity in Balochistan. Secondly, online platforms should be designed in such a way that gives many opportunities to students for better interaction between teachers-students and students because proper interaction and discussion is the major aspect that improves the quality of online learning.

- Today everything is going digital, but, still, some districts of Balochistan are deprived of internet service. Due to the COVID-19, all institutions are closed and students have to take online classes, but due to the unavailability of internet service, a number of students cannot attend the online classes. Therefore, this study recommended that internet service must be restored in banned districts and internet facilities in rural areas must be provided, especially in the wake of the COVID-19.

- The major challenge the teacher faced was the lack of training and a particular framework to use various applications. Teaching online is not easy. It needs technological and digital knowledge to effectively join together online with face-to-face instruction. So it was observed that teachers were not fully trained for online teaching and hardly a number of teachers know how to use the online teaching applications. Therefore, this study recommended that proper training sessions must be arranged for teachers so that the teachers can get well-adjusted into the virtual environment.

- It is observed that the universities of Balochistan are not ready for a quick response during any crisis, and they don't have policies and guidelines regarding online teaching. Secondly, they have not established such a system that shifts traditional classes with online teaching. However, the universities should develop such policies and systems that can be implemented in a sudden situation like COVID-19. Initially, all the universities of Balochistan should start 20-30% online learning and teaching classes.

- All the universities of Balochistan are facing a financial crisis and, due to that, they have failed to establish a digital system at universities. Therefore, the government of Balochistan should allocate a budget for the digital education system for universities.
- After 18th amendment, all provinces of Pakistan have established provincial Higher Education Commission except Balochistan. Therefore , this study recommended that a provincial Higher Education Commission should be established.

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