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**AN EXPLORATION OF THE ATTITUDE AND READINESS OF STUDENTS
TOWARDS ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCES AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL**

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**Tahir Nadeem , Areeba Shareef, Muhammad Zeeshan, Maaz Ahmed Ramey, Waqar Husain: An
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Abstract

Online learning is a new wave of learning techniques. The main aim of the study was to investigate students' attitude towards online learning at public universities; to compare the attitude of bachelors, and master students towards online learning at public universities; to identify the problems faced by students in online learning at public universities and to give suggestions for improving online learning at public universities. The nature of that study was descriptive. A survey method was used for data collection from students. The population of the current study was all students studying in public universities of Punjab. The sample was taken through random sampling. Four universities were selected randomly. The total sample size was 2000. A questionnaire was administered to measure students' attitudes towards online learning at public universities. The validity of the research tool was as assured by six experts. Descriptive statistics were used for demographic analysis of the sample. The t-test of independent samples was applied for the comparison of views of BS/MSc students about online learning. Findings of the study reveal that there was students' positive attitude towards online learning at public universities during the period of COVID 19. Based on findings it was recommended that awareness about online learning should be enhanced.

Introduction

Online learning as an educational conveyance framework to one of utilizing the computer as a learning apparatus found that the pattern of utilizing online learning as learning and/or showing apparatus is presently quickly venturing into training. Online learning is the new wave in learning technique (Lee & Busch, 2005).

Through imaginative utilization of current innovation, online learning not just alters training and makes it more available, it likewise brings impressive difficulties for teachers and learners. Online Learning situations progressively serve as essential infrastructural elements of colleges that empower educators to give students distinctive representations of information and to upgrade cooperation in the middle of instructors and students, amongst understudy themselves (Clarke, 2004).

Nowadays in the advanced universe, education may develop a significant movement through guaranteeing that learners don't take in the manner in which they are taught, rather they may be taught in the manner they learn. The instructive movement, which is incorporated into educational programming with suitable innovation, may develop learning as energizing and charming when getting fruitful results in a short period (Divjak & Begicevic, 2006). While schools and colleges comprehensively loan to utilize offbeat or deferred advances along with educator like the premise of online education, accordingly incorporate devices e.g. "online discourse discussions, electronic books, online exams and evaluating, web tutoring, web-connected" and so on. The final arrangement provides a chance to reconstruct schemes to complete an additional image of progress that will be considerably more widespread and inclusive, understanding a nation in neediness, spanning the panels that are the center of so ample attention. Whereas it notices that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) holds a remarkable latent for promoting learning stages and increasing nature of training (Arbaugh, 2001).

Students, personnel, staff, and directors now utilize innovation broadly in their everyday exercises and have turned out to be sensibly mechanically educated (Armstrong, 2011). The pattern of utilizing online learning as a learning and showing instrument is presently quickly venturing into training. Numerous teachers and specialists had high trust in online learning, believing that it will provide extra right to use data and communication, and will ultimately rapid further unrest in a drill. A small number of studies have directed to analyze mentalities in the direction of online education in the West and various portions of the world. Yet, in India, linking research in this heading was not enough (Baker, 2004).

In Pakistan, online learning is still at the trial stage. Approaches that are affecting by-product of a person's experience have their centers in the inner needs, attained habits, and the ecological impacts by which he is encircled. Further, the approach results from particular longings and group encouragement. They perform as origins as well as outcomes of behavior. They are private and are connected with the sensation attitudes associated with the person's experiences (Baker, 2004). Attitudes develop and progress, like other intellectual and passionate behavior shapes, concerning a person's feedback to his setting. Attitude is a set of temperament (willingness, disposition, and inclination) to act in the direction of an objective according to its features so far as we are familiar with them. Calculating approach and struggles to increase attitude to technology is very necessary to influence any changeover and done with technology (Berge, 1998). This required the researcher to probe the attitude of teachers of Higher Education towards online learning.

It is moreover wide-ranging than the languages online learning or online education which for the most part refer to electronic learning. In states where transferable developments are applied, the term M-learning revolved to be more normal (Chou, 2012).

Literature Review

Online learning mentions the application of web inventions to take an extensive collection of preparations that advancement, information, and implementation (Wadsworth, 2000). The Higher Education learners need enhanced substance, connection with the workforce and if conceivable with kindred learners. This could be accomplished by the new correspondence advancements (Belkin, 2013).

Teachers assume a crucial part in successful web learning. Three teacher qualities influence learning results and these are the educator's demeanor towards innovation, the teacher showing style, and control of the innovation by the educator (Chou & Liu, 2005). Even though content can, in any case, have an impact in direction, it shows up to put it plainly, compact "lumps"; the guideline is additionally disseminated among other sight and sound segments. These online parts, which are getting to be known as learning articles, incorporate content; electronic mail, discourse sheets, talk utilities, voice over Internet convention, and texting; synchronous sound; video cuts; intuitive exercises, reproductions, and diversions; self-reviewing works out, tests, and examinations; and Web locales (Lewin, 2012).

Building an entire course of study around these learning things can satisfy both brief adjusting needs, as in a data-based or capacities based course, and present and future acknowledging needs that are not course-based. In any case, paying little regard to how you portray your online educational materials, your course should contain certain administrative files to offer instructors some help with sorting out and arrange, and to organize students, especially if they are new to the web (Allen & Seaman, 2011). Synchronous modes include on the web, constant educator, and student interest together with the coordination of place-bounded classroom guidelines. This has prompted the conveyance of online courses over the web with visit spaces for communication through intelligent sound and video conferencing. Then again, asynchronous strategies have discharged students from the ordered limitations that exist in synchronous learning. This is because of the presence of instructive projects that can be gotten to whenever and anyplace on the planet. It incorporates sound and videotaped notwithstanding online projects that learners can get to, study, and connect with whenever (Bates., 2005). Online learning offers extraordinary energy for advanced education establishments since it can contact new gatherings of people and give the chance to change learning conveyance and the aggressive edge (Bates., 2005). Online learning is another advancement, which implies that there is not a considerable measure of good confirmation yet of what makes a fruitful e-learner. Nonetheless, a few qualities are (Clark & Mayer, 2016). It is clear that online learning advances, for the most part, the web, have adjusted the way instruction will be obtained later on. An expanding number of teachers have understood the immense capability of Online learning for instructive purposes and the likely changes that might across the board selection of new apparatuses and methods. A noteworthy part of this pattern includes the foundation of imaginative multifaceted organizations wherein every teammate contributes from its relatively favorable position and harvests its one of kind prizes (Divjak & Begicevic, 2006). If online learning doesn't have a human component – if individuals don't have chances to meet one another and work with one another – we may not care for what we'll get. In this mechanical world, we should keep on saving the general population-driven nature of teaching (Janice Thomas, 2008). An ideal guide is given to build up the current psychological structure, to join the points of interest of the online lesson, and to actuate learners' current structures to offer them some assistance with learning the subtle elements in the lesson. The lesson idea delineates gives learners the "10,000-foot view" (Kaissi & Soufi, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

Online learning aims to equip learners with knowledge and skills and prepare them to face the challenges they face in life. The current study was conducted to explore students' attitudes and readiness for online learning at public universities.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

1. To find out students' attitude and readiness towards online learning at public universities.
2. To compare the attitude of male and female students towards online learning at public universities.

3. To compare the attitude of bachelors, and master students towards online learning at public universities.
4. To identify the problems faced by students in online learning at public universities.
5. To give suggestions for improving online learning at public universities.

Research Methodology

The current study was conducted to measure students' attitudes toward online learning at public universities. A questionnaire was used as a research instrument in the study. Next to a broad literature review, several items were established and added to the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of four clusters was constructed to measure student's attitudes towards online learning at public universities. The population of the study included all the public universities in Punjab. Randomly selected universities were The Islamia University Bahawalpur, Bahuddin Zakariya University Multan, Punjab University, and the University of Faisalabad. A total number of 2000 questionnaires were distributed in four universities. The return rate was 90%.

The Population of the Study

The population of the current study was all students studying in all public sector universities of the Punjab province.

Sample of the Study

The sample was taken through random sampling from the above population. Out of 31 universities of Punjab, four universities were selected randomly i.e. The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Bahuddin Zakariya University of Multan, Punjab University of Lahore, and the University of Faisalabad. Fifteen departments were included from various faculties of each selected university. Data were collected from the students of bachelor's and master's degree programs. Equal consideration was given to male and female students from all the selected departments. The total sample size was 2000.

Research Instrument

A research instrument is a tool that is used to collect facts and information from a sample. A questionnaire was used as a research instrument in this study. After a wide literature review, 29 items were developed and added to the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of four clusters including information seeking, interactive learning, learning readiness, information sharing, and online feedback. The questionnaire covered almost every aspect of online learning. There were three parts to the questionnaire. Part I included the personal information gender, program age, department, faculty, and institution, etc. Part II included 29 statements. Part III included two open-ended questions. A close-ended question was asked on the four-point Likert scale (from strongly Agree to strongly disagree).

Validation of the Questionnaire

Six experts in the field validated the questionnaire. Changes were made based on suggestions given by experts. Problematic statements were omitted from the questionnaire.

Data Collection

A total number of 2000 questionnaires were distributed in four universities. Out of which 1813 Questionnaires were received from students. So the return rate was 90.65%.

Results

Table 1

Overall opinion of students' attitude towards online learning and readiness

Students' Opinions	SA (%)	A (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)	Mean	SD
Students' attitude towards online learning and readiness	42.0	33.1	12.5	10.4	3.86	0.689

Table 1 shows the overall opinions of students' attitude learning. It is clear from the data that the mean (M= 3.86) shows a student's positive attitude towards online learning at public universities.

Table 2

Comparison of students' attitude towards online learning and readiness

Gender	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Male	1.95	.341	.195	.470
Female	1.91	.348		

Table 2 shows a comparison of students' attitudes toward online learning. No significant difference exists in students' attitude towards online learning as the p-value (.470) is greater than the 0.05 level of significance.

Table 3

Comparison of bachelor and master students' attitude towards online learning and readiness

Program	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Bachelor	1.95	.340	2.40	.590
Master	1.91	.349		

Table 3 shows the Comparison of bachelor and master students' attitudes towards online learning. The p-value (.590>0.05) shows that there was no significant difference among the students' attitudes towards online learning at public universities.

Table 4

Major problems faced by students in online learning

Problems	Frequency	Percentage
1. Low quality of internet availability	703	19.38
2. Costly learning	504	13.89
3. Lack of immediate feedback	503	13.87
4. Laptop availability is limited	408	11.25
5. Lack of proper awareness	402	11.08
6. Difficulty in using the internet	303	8.35
7. Lacking resources	300	8.27
8. Deficiency of funds	202	5.57
9. Unavailability of internet	201	5.54
10. Others	100	2.75

Table 4 indicates major problems which were faced by students in online learning at public universities. Nineteen percent of respondents highlighted that there was a low standard of internet availability in universities. Fourteen percent of students elaborated that cost of online learning was high. Fourteen percent of students said the lack of immediate feedback and 11.25% of students remarked that laptop availability was limited. Eleven percent of students said proper awareness was

not provided for online learning and 8.35 % of students faced difficulty in using the internet. Eight percent of students viewed that resources were limited, 5.57% of students also highlighted that funds were limited and 5.54 % of respondents said that the internet was not available. Only 2.75% of students mentioned other hurdles. It shows that there was students' positive attitude towards online learning at public universities.

1. There was no significant difference in the opinions of male and female students about measuring student's attitude towards online learning and readiness at public universities.
2. There was no significant difference among the opinions of bachelor and master students' about measuring student's attitude towards online learning and readiness at public universities.
3. The most important problem faced by students was the low quality of internet availability and other major problems included the cost of online learning, lack of immediate feedback, unavailability of laptops, and lack of awareness about online learning.

Discussion

The main objective of the study was to see the student's attitude and readiness towards online learning. To fulfill the requirements of the study questionnaire was developed. Selected students were asked to fill this questionnaire. From the results, it can be concluded that students are using a different tool for E-learning. Comparative analysis of respondents' responses showed that they were willing for online learning and were aware of its benefits.

Students' willingness towards online learning and their attitude to keep them busy in the online learning future of online learning in Pakistan will be strong. The findings of the study were following the research conducted in Punjab. Development is being due to the usage of computers in universities and has a positive impact (Paris, 2004). Kekkonen-Moneta and Moneta (2002) expose that e-learning has become an essential part of universities to accomplish higher education.

The study also reveals that gender differences do not have an impact on students' interest in online learning both have a positive attitude. This finding of the study is similar to the study conducted by Hussein (2011) he exposed that there is no statistical difference exists between male and female students towards online learning. Results of other demographic variables reveal that there was no statistically significant effect of these variables towards online learning. The findings of the current study revealed that online -learning brought new opportunities for organizing teaching and learning is directly relates to the findings of the study An instigation of students' attitude and motivation towards online learning was conducted by Knowles and Kerkman (2007). The findings also reveal that to compare the attitude of bachelor students with the students studying in master, it was found that there was no significant difference among the opinions of the students about measuring their attitude towards online learning at public universities. The curb-based arch showed that there was a genuine difference between understudies 'demeanor towards web based learning and their degree of admittance to different advancements; obvious, understudies who would do well to admittance to web, produced more grounded inspirational disposition. As per the writing, the degree of admittance to innovation and its dependability impacts understudies' goals to utilize ICTs to help to learn (Papaioannou & Charalambous, 2011).

This study reveals that an understudy aptitude in advancements is a critical indicator of disposition towards web based realizing, which underpins past exploration discoveries re-reported in the writing (Liaw & Huang, 2006).

However, for the internet figuring out how to be broadly acknowledged in advanced education establishments in Punjab, there is a requirement for the arrangement of proper preparation at various levels, the improvement of skill in using web based learning, exploration to accumulate information and advice future turns of events. These are significant undertakings that require

considerable consideration and incredible exertion from the Punjab government to guarantee the advancement of sufficient mindfulness, inspirational perspectives, and improved inspiration towards web-based learning.

These days, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) give additional opportunities to the making of inventive powerful conditions of instructing and learning, by re-characterizing the instructive structures and by conveying new learning offices (Papadourakis et al., 2006). Also, the idea of deep-rooted, individualized learning designed through online instruction is arising as a significant power in and advanced education, just as in expert preparing and improvement (Downs & Jones, 2002).

Recommendations

Following are the recommendations of this study:

- Awareness of online learning should be enhanced. As many students were found less motivated towards online classes. This attitude of the students is a big hurdle in the adoption of online learning mode.
- Online learning should be encouraged in universities. Most students were found reluctant to use the computer as a medium of learning. This creates anxiety with computer usability. So it is recommended that teachers must incorporate computer-based activities in the face-to-face teaching sessions. It would be helpful for students to accept and adopt courses in online learning.
- Standardized availability of internet should be ensured. Uninterrupted and fast speed internet is a basic need in the smooth running of the online session. Moreover, many students belong to a meagre background and they cannot afford the computer and internet facilities. So the university management should consider this issue and resolve it.
- Appropriate training should be provided to instructors to bridge the gap between instructors and learners. The objectives of the training should be associated with the online learning requirements. This training may further be stretched to the students to enrich their partaking in online learning.
- Further research should be done in the area to enhance the concept of online learning and its benefits.

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