

# Impact of COVID-19 on the Motivation of Students in Educational Institutions

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## Abstract

This research was conducted to ascertain the impact of covid-19 on student's motivation in educational institutions. A survey was conducted on 236 students majorly belonging to schools in India and the United Arab Emirates. The survey aimed at understanding the preferences of the students, the various ways in which the institution kept the students motivated, the overall performance, and finally the mental and physical health of the students in an online scenario.

The study showed that 77% of the students preferred face-to-face classroom learning rather than online learning and 90% of the students claimed that they could grasp and gain more knowledge from face-to-face classroom learning. It also ascertained the various ways and steps that were adopted by the institutions to keep the students motivated such as online competitions, online graduation ceremonies, creative writing competitions, additional courses, virtual inter-institution competitions, online quizzes, etc. 79% of the students also said that the teachers could adapt to the online scenario and include innovative learning methods in their teaching. This research found out that the motivation for majority of students has decreased in an online learning scenario due to COVID-19.

**Keywords** – COVID-19 Pandemic, online learning, face-to-face learning, hybrid learning, motivation.

## **Introduction**

### **1. COVID-19: The Pandemic**

In a TED talk back in 2015, (Gates) said “If anything kills over 10 million people in the next few decades, it’s most likely to be a highly infectious virus, rather than a war.” Four years later in the month of November 2019, it became a reality. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global Pandemic. COVID-19 short for Coronavirus Disease 2019 is caused by a Novel Coronavirus called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2(SARS-CoV-2). The Coronavirus spreads rapidly and infects your lungs and respiratory track causing fever, cough shortness of breath, sore throat, loss of smell and in extreme cases even death. Approximately, 4.4 million people have died and over 200 million people infected due to the virus.

In order to restrain the spread of the virus, countries worldwide imposed lockdowns resulting in the decline of their economies. However, with the passage of time, countries are adapting to live with the virus calling it the ‘New Normal’ and slowly but steadily reopening its economies to recover the losses incurred.

The pandemic has changed the way we channelize the use of technology. In a broad sense, everything has shifted to ‘online mode of life’, including teaching and learning. The term online here is referred to as using a device which mediates communication between various people and the conduction of innumerable activities over the internet and a wireless platform without the need for physical presence. With the closure of schools, universities and educational institutions all over the world, it became difficult for students belonging to the lower income groups of the society to continue with their studies as they did not possess the resources and technology to facilitate online learning.

Pharmaceutical companies have developed an effective vaccine against the coronavirus and with the help of government instituted vaccination drives all over the world, we aim to reduce the spread of the virus.

### **2. Education: The Shift in Learning**

Giving all due credit to an organism that is invisible to the human eye, the governments and ministries of around 186 countries have instructed schools, universities and educational institutions to temporarily close down its premises and facilitate an online mode of education. This gave rise to Emergency Remote Learning (ERL), (Khlaif Z.N., 2021) which refers to an unplanned and sudden shift from the traditional face-to-face classroom learning to one that is done remotely by students and teachers in the comfort and safety of their homes. This affected approximately 1.5 billion students across the world (Society, 2020).

The educational institutions with instructions from the governments along with their own autonomy have come up with various ways to implement online learning. Teachers use a

combination of synchronous and asynchronous methods, wherein the teachers would be teaching live through a digital platform and also upload material online so that the students can learn at their own pace respectively. Digital platform such as Google Meet, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Zoom Meetings, WhatsApp calling etc., are being used to impart education to students online. The institutions also tend cater to the extra-curricular activities such as, online competitions, online events, online sports etc., for students through these platforms. They also encourage and provide various MOOCs to students from platforms which helps students to gain wider knowledge. In recent times, with easing lockdowns, the educational institutions are shifting to a (Maria Barron, 2021) hybrid mode of learning wherein there is a mixture of remote and in-person learning. Online learning has so many perceived pros and benefits. However, the question still remains whether the students are really increasing their knowledge and are motivated towards learning in this new setup

### **Literature Review**

(Afif Ikhwanul Muslimin, 2020) found out in their research that students derived their motivation from the goals of completing the particular course with good scores rather than gaining knowledge. The students faced challenges such as internet connection issues, limitations of the WhatsApp features and anxiety. They had concluded that despite the online scenario and challenges faced by the students, they were motivated and completed the course. (Baber, 2020) conducted a cross country research in India and South Korea indicated that factors such as interaction in classrooms, student motivation, course structure, instructor knowledge and facilitation had a positive influence on the students which implies that the students even in an online mode of learning were motivated, satisfied and were able to achieve their perceived learning outcomes.

(Ernie Avila, 2020) conducted research to find out whether students were motivated in the online mode of learning. The data was obtained using the motivated strategies of learning questionnaire formulated by Duncan and Mckeachie (1991). The findings revealed that the students agreed that they were motivated and utilized the various learning strategies to support self-paced learning provided by the institute despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Gustiani, 2020) found out that the students were more intrinsically motivated by their ambition to gain new knowledge and the enjoyment in a new learning experience, their motivation was also affected by external factors such as avoiding compensation for absenteeism and proper environmental supporting facilities. However, a few respondents lacked motivation due to problems such as frustration in technology, electricity problems, bad signals and delays in voice leading to decreased motivation and the belief of being left out. Furthermore, (Putu Subakthiasih, 2020) found that first semester university students had a higher intrinsic motivation than extrinsic motivation for learning an English course during the Pandemic.

(T. Gonzalez, 2020) found out that there was a significant positive effect of online learning on the students' performance due to COVID-19 and concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic helped in changing the students' learning strategies to a more continuous habit thereby improving their efficiency; and this was reflected by better scores in assessment and improved learning performance. (Fatonia, 2020) showed that the students' perceptions of online learning shows that they have a strong desire to excel and grow in their academic's despite of all the complications relating to online learning.

(Mirna Fawaz, 2020) found out that online learning has given rise to issues such as depression and anxiety problems among UG university students and concluded that there was a significant correlation between student satisfaction and prevalence of disorders like anxiety, depression, and stress due to a sudden shift of learning to an online mode and increased workload. (Thomas Volken, 2021) found out that more than 25% of Swiss university students (n = 3571) showed signs of depressive symptoms and other mental health related issues during the pandemic, which was higher when compared to the Swiss population (n = 2328), and finally (Islam M.A, 2020) found out that Bangladeshi University Students were experiencing heightened level of anxiety and depression due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Hermanto, 2021) found out in their research that 52.5% of the total student respondents (n = 238) in their survey did not enjoy learning from home and 91.5% of the respondents didn't gain knowledge or skills from online learning as compared to traditional classroom learning. However, despite these issues their motivation to learn was still high probably due to factors such as completion of assignments, high confidence in accomplishing the assignment for good grades, and achieving their goals. Furthermore, they had better and improved relationships with their family members. (Baczek M, 2021) through their survey conducted on medical students they found out that E-learning was less effective than physical classroom learning in terms of increasing students' skills and social competences, however it was effective in increasing and gaining more knowledge as they found that there was no statistical difference between physical and online learning in terms of opinions on the ability of the learning method to increase knowledge.

There are conflicting thoughts among researchers as to whether the online mode of learning has hindered the motivation and performance of students or proved beneficial to students or find no correlation at all. Therefore, this study tries to make an attempt to solve this conflict.

### **Rationale of the Study**

A prolonged period of online learning can impact upon the motivation of students. The studies that have already been undertaken by other researchers either has a very small sample size, a restrictive age/grade category or a time period which was just a few months after COVID-19 was declared a

pandemic. Hence, this does not show a clear picture of the behaviour and levels of motivation among students.

This study is therefore conducted to ascertain the motivation levels among students with larger sample size, no restriction in terms of gender/age/grade of students and a larger time period of nearly 17 months after the declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic. Hence, it was important to take all these factors into consideration to ascertain the required research objective.

## **Objectives and Scope of the Study**

### **Objectives:**

- To find out the motivation of students attending online classes due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- To find the factors that affect the motivation of students in online classes.

### **Scope:**

The scope of the research is to ascertain how online learning has impacted the motivation and resulting behaviour of the students due to the pandemic.

The study focuses on 5 main aspects the age category of the students, the preferences of the students, role played by the institutions in online scenario to motivate students, the overall performance of the students and finally how online education has affected the mental and physical health of the students.

## **Research Methodology**

For the purpose of the study primary data was collected via a questionnaire that was prepared using Google forms which consisted of 14 questions. The questionnaire was circulated to the population through the social media platform of WhatsApp. The population consisted of students who are undertaking online education due to COVID-19. The sampling of the population was done on a random basis. The primary data was collected from 236 students i.e., the sample size is 236. The sample majorly consisted of students belonging to India and the United Arab Emirates. The sample also consisted of 1 student from Latvia and 1 student from Germany. A Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on the primary data collected by using Pie Charts and Bar Diagrams. The conclusion of the research was based on the analysis done.

## **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

## 1. Category of Respondents

The data collected was of students mostly living in India and the United Arab Emirates and one respondent from Latvia and Germany respectively. Students belonging to the age category of below 11 years and 12 – 14 years are considered as lower levels students (grade 9 and below); students belonging to the age category of 15 – 17 years are considered as high school students (grade 10-12); and students belonging to the age category of more than 22 and 18 – 21 years are considered as university students.

The age group of the students is categorized in the table as follows:

Age	Students
12 - 14 Years	48
15 - 17 Years	83
18 - 21 Years	88
Less than 11 Years	12
More than 22 Years	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>

**Table1: Age categories of the Students**

37% of the sample consist of students belonging to the age category of 18-21 years, 35% to the age category of 15-17 years, 21% to the age category of 12-14 years, 5% below 11 years and 2% above the age of 22 years. This indicates that the majority of the sample consists of high school and university students.

## 2. Preferences of Students

The preference of the students relating to online learning versus physical classroom learning was taken. 77% (n = 181) of the students preferred physical classroom learning and only 23% (n = 55) of the students preferred an online mode of learning. A majority of university students (n = 79) preferred classroom learning followed by high school (n = 55) and lower levels (n = 47) students rather than an online mode.

On the other hand, high school students (n = 28) showed more interest in online learning than lower-level (n = 13) and university students (n = 14).

Furthermore, it was revealed that 90% of the students could gain and grasp knowledge more easily from physical classroom learning and the remaining 10% from online Learning. The reason behind this gap would be the added disturbances that come with online learning, which hinders the motivation of students to study and learn. A brief description of the problems and distractions that students stated in the survey that they were facing during online learning are as follows:

### a. Social Media Platforms

- b. Internet platform.
- c. Family distractions
- d. Network and range issues.
- e. Technical Difficulties
- f. Power outages and unstable connections.
- g. Streaming services such as Netflix.
- h. Background noise from house works.
- i. Consumption of food and beverages at any given time.
- j. Television.

All these distractions create a situation wherein the students lose their motivation to learn, leading to problems like the inability to concentrate, laziness, tiredness, procrastination, sleeping disorders among the students, etc.

### **3. Role of The Institution**

Approximately 40% of the respondents ascertained that their institution did not motivate the students to take part in various extra-curricular activities in an online mode. However, the remaining students mentioned that their institution provided an umpteenth of opportunities and events for students to participate and thereby stay motivated in the online scenario. The institutions organized events such as debates, clubs, online sports competition, online graduation ceremony, creative writing competitions, additional courses, virtual inter-institution competitions, online quizzes, Dance and music activities, project-based learning, MUN conferences, talent day, online speeches, thematic events, online seminars and workshops, yoga and fitness activities, and institution fests.

Apart from extra-curricular activities, the conduct of teachers in the online scenario is one of the main factors that affect students' motivation and learning behaviour. 79% of the students (n = 187) claimed that the teachers could adapt to the online mode and conduct teaching and learning in an efficient manner. They would include various activities in their learning to keep the students motivated such as PPTs, videos, Kahoot! quizzes, Prezi presentation, group discussion and projects, experiential learning tasks, virtual laboratory demonstrations, flip teaching, pop quizzes, teaching with real life examples, virtual learning games, learning platforms like Socrative, Padlet, GeoGebra, Mentimeter and Nearpod, Case studies and research papers.

The unplanned shift to an online mode of teaching was not an easy task for teachers as much as it was for students, since primarily the teachers themselves had to adapt to the new scenario and further make online classes interesting for the students to stay motivated.

### **4. Performance of Students**

Students' motivation can be ascertained by their performance in their assessments and examinations. So, it is plausible that if the grades of students have increased, then in order to



achieve those higher grades they must have been more motivated to study. Hence, achieve higher grades and vice-versa.

50% of the students (n = 118) claim that their grades in the online mode of learning have been the same and has not changed substantially as compared to the offline mode. However, 36% of the students (n = 86) have found their grades to have decreased due to online learning and only 14% students (n = 32) saw an increase in their grades and performance. The major reason to the stagnation and fall in the grades could be accounted for all the demerits of online learning that have been discussed so far.

### **Physical and Mental Health**

The data collected for this portion is astonishing as well as a matter of concern. 72% of the students (n = 171) claim to be alone and isolated due to the pandemic and even with enhancements in technology they were unable to sense a connection with their friends and institutions for learning. Online learning cannot create nor recreate the physical face-to-face classroom learning scenario, this sense of the lack of human touch and staring at machines every day, leads to the feeling of isolation and loneliness among students.

There is a greater magnitude of university students feeling lonelier as compared to high school or lower-level students, the probable reason behind this is that the majority of university students have not yet been to their campus and have not acquainted with the people they interact online on a daily basis. The students perceive a sense of slack in their physical, mental and social well-being. A majority of students mentioned that due to online classes they have a weak attention span, lack focus, feel lethargic, anxiety, physical pains such as headaches, neck, and back pains, visual impairment and eye strains, depressive state of mind, lack of exercise, weight gain, reduced interaction with teachers and friends leading to social awkwardness, frustration, stress and pressure due to increased workload, lack of sleep and decreased productivity. These critical problems demotivate students and further leads to devastating health problems. However, approximately 34% of students (n = 81) did not face any issues with online learning and in fact managed time for physical exercise and meditation.

### **Findings and Conclusion**

For more than a year and a half COVID-19 is still haunting our lives. Educational institutions are facing the drastic effects of COVID-19, as it is much more difficult to teach and learn in an online scenario. The sudden and uncalled shift to an online mode of education made it even more difficult for the students and teachers to adapt. However, with the passage of time educational institutions with safety precautions in place as instructed by the authorities are opened or are planning to open its campuses to the students. With the fear of the virus, 36% (n = 38) of the responded preferred online learning whereas 35% (n = 83) of the respondents preferred to learn by physically going to



their educational institutions. However, 49% of the students (n = 115) wanted a hybrid mix of online and classroom learning, wherein certain students attend physical classes, while others attend classes virtually from their homes.

From the data analysis it is evident that the majority of students were facing problems due to online learning which hampered their motivation resulting to stagnation or decrease in their overall performance and growth. A hybrid mix of learning would solve a lot of issues. Students now would have the option to choose from, according to their preferences of online or physical learning. It would significantly reduce the disadvantages that come with online learning. Students can feel connected, be more active and healthier in their lifestyle, gain knowledge more efficiently, socialize and most importantly be more motivated.

To conclude, COVID-19 has negatively impacted the lives of students which caused a fall in their motivation to participate, learn and grow. It is evident from the factors such as preference of classroom learning, distractions in an online mode, lack of participation, stagnation and decline in the grades, jeopardized health and finally the feeling of loneliness and isolation have led to the decrease in motivation among the majority of students. Hence, both the research objectives have been met. The research in its future scope would entail a larger sample size covering a diverse range of students and assess how COVID-19 has impacted specific types of motivations among the students.

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