



## LEARNERS PREFERENCE TOWARDS ONLINE COURSES- A STUDY

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**ABSTRACT**

Online courses are revolutionizing formal education and have opened a new genre of outreach on cultural and scientific topics. These courses deliver a series of lessons to a web browser or mobile device, to be conveniently accessed anytime, any place. Nowadays People are interested in enriching their knowledge with the help of growing technologies, like e-books, mobile library etc. Among them online courses play a vital role. It helps people with authorized certifications, employment etc. without age barrier. For the purpose of study 200 respondents were taken from Coimbatore city. The tools used for the research are simple percentage analysis, and weighted average score. From the study it is found that majority of the respondents have indicated their priority for course cost as highly satisfied feature of the online course when compared to others. The study suggests that an online education is preferred by individuals who may not be able to make it for classes in a traditional brick and mortar kind of college due to various reasons, one can gain more professional knowledge in these online courses if they use it effectively. The educational institutions can also motivate the learners by waving atleast the part of the fees so that more number of students can be enrolled. The study concluded that, the quality of education has improved by online courses and even it has become easy for students to refer the content as per their leisure. In the era of digitalization the scope of online education increases even more and will be beneficial for students, professionals and also institutions.

**KEYWORDS :** Online courses, Online learning, Education**INTRODUCTION ABOUT ONLINE COURSES**

Online courses are revolutionizing formal education and have opened a new genre of outreach on cultural and scientific topics. These courses deliver a series of lessons to a web browser or mobile device, to be conveniently accessed anytime, any place. Online learning is the newest and most popular form of distance education today. Within the past decade it had a major impact on postsecondary education and the trend is only increasing. Online learning is education that takes place over the Internet. It is often referred to as "e-learning" among other terms. However, online learning is just one type of distance learning and a term for any learning that takes place across distance and not in a traditional classroom.

Distance learning has a long history and there are several types available today including, Correspondence Courses, Tele-courses, CD-ROM Courses, Online Learning, Mobile Learning, etc. Now-a-days, there are number of online courses are available through the internet for the learners like SWYAM, NPTEL, MOOC, etc. along with job opportunities for the learners, which is helpful in their lives sustain.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Nowadays People are interested in enriching their knowledge with the help of growing technologies, like e-books, mobile library etc., Among them online courses plays a vital role. It helps people with authorized certifications, employment, etc., without age barrier. It also helps them to learn new things from the place where they are.

Even though it is an emerging module, people faces so many problems and getting more development ideas to overcome their individual struggles related to the online course. At this juncture, an attempt is made to study the learner's perspective and preference towards various online courses and hence the study.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. To study the factors influencing to choose online courses and its effectiveness.
2. To study the difficulties faced by the learners and their level of satisfaction towards online courses.

**METHODOLOGY:****Area Of The Study:**

Area of study refers to Coimbatore city which is one of the very important educational city in South India and also a home for many State Owned Universities and various Colleges.

**Sample Size:**

The data was collected from 200 respondents who are learning online courses to enrich their knowledge.

**Sampling Method:**

The method of sampling adopted is simple random sampling method.

**Sources Of Data:**

The primary and secondary data were used for the purpose of the study. A structured questionnaire was framed to collect the data.

**Tools For Analysis:**

For the purpose of analysis, Percentage analysis, and, Weighted Average Score has been used.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Shivangi Dawn (2020), undertook a study on "Online Learning: A Panacea in the Time of COVID-19 Crisis". The objective of the study is to explore the growth of online learning, strength, weakness, opportunities and challenges analysis of online learning during the corona virus pandemic. The study suggest that educational institutions must build resilience in their systems to ensure and prioritize the presence of these skills in their students. The study concludes that online methods of teaching support and facilitate learning- teaching activities, but there is a dire need to weigh the pros and cons of technology deeply and with due diligence to balance these fears and tensions amidst such crisis.

L.Mishra.et.al (2020), undertook a study on "Online Teaching- Learning in higher education during lockdown period of COVID-19 Pandemic". The main objective of the study is that the perceptions of teachers and students on online teaching-learning, Both the quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used by the author. The study suggests that, due to the

slow internet connectivity, teachers agreed to have been predominantly dependent on whatsapp instead of uploading and downloading study material on MZU-LMS. The study concludes that the few steps need to take in the wake of pandemic, to develop such a curriculum that reflects the perceptible change in the content knowledge and learning experience of students as well as enable them to think critically.

Dr. Pravat Kumar Jena (2020), undertook a study on "Online Learning During Lockdown Period for COVID-19 in India". In his study, the main objective is to measures taken by government of India to support online learning process during the lockdown period for COVID 19 and enlighten various online tools or platforms adopted by educational institutions during the pandemic COVID 19. The study suggest that government should create more awareness on online education with safety measures for children and take measures to create awareness on cyber security. The study concludes that government or educational institutions should adopt the policy to provide free internet and free digital gadgets to all learners in order to encourage online learning as a result of which people would get engaged during lockdown and remain safe from pandemics.

Arun Gaikwad.et.al (2020), made a study on "E-Learning in India: Wheel of Change ". In their study, the main objective of the study is to understand the concept of e-learning. It is found from the study that e-learning plays a vital role in educational development as a wheel of growth in educational sector. It is expected that if India and developing countries proceed as joint venture and work mutually on the issue of e-learning, it will be beneficial for the development of educational sector.

Mahyoob (2020), "Challenges of e-learning during the COVID 19 pandemic experienced by EFL learners". The main objective of the study is to identify challenges and obstacles during the current global pandemic and the possible facilities and solutions that can be delivered to overcome these problems in the future. It is found from the study that the study recommended that technical support is needed to enable reliability in online learning. The study reveals that the major challenges encountered by EFL learners in online learning were technical issues. The study concludes that most EFL learners are not satisfied with continuing online learning, as they could not fulfill the expected progress in language learning performance.

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

**Table 1- Factors Influencing To Choose Online Courses**

S. No	Factors	No. Of Respondents	Percentage
1	Career advancement & updation	50	25 %
2	Variety of programmes and to learn new courses	40	20 %
3	Comfortable learning environment	20	10 %
4	Convenience & Flexibility	30	17.5 %
5	Mandated by Institutions	28	14 %
6	Improving technical skills & Professional knowledge	17	8.5 %
7	Reasonable cost	15	7.5 %
	Total	200	100%

From the above table, it is found that most of the respondents are influenced by Career advancement & updation (25%) as a factor to choose online courses, followed by Variety of programmes and to learn new courses (20%), Convenience & Flexibility (17.5%), Mandated by Institutions (14%), Comfortable learning environment (10%), Improving technical skills & Professional knowledge (8.5%) and

Reasonable cost (7.5%).

**Table 2 - Effectiveness Of Facilities Available In The Online Course**

S. No	Facilities	Level	VE	E	N	P	VP	Weighted Average	Rank
		Score	5	4	3	2	1		
1	Video classes	Level	100	50	45	4	1	4.22	1
		Score	500	200	135	8	1		
2	Exam centres	Level	22	110	59	5	4	3.2	8
		Score	110	440	77	10	4		
3	Interactive sessions	Level	37	75	76	10	2	3.67	5
		Score	185	300	228	20	2		
4	Group discussions	Level	36	87	64	12	1	3.72	3
		Score	180	348	192	24	1		
5	Instructor's availability	Level	46	76	68	7	3	3.79	2
		Score	230	304	208	14	3		
6	Download options	Level	37	77	71	14	1	3.68	4
		Score	185	308	213	28	1		
7	Registration guidance	Level	35	81	63	19	1	3.63	6
		Score	175	324	189	38	1		
8	Text version	Level	37	74	70	12	7	3.61	7
		Score	185	296	210	24	7		

It is found from the above table that majority of the respondents have given up priority for Video classes as a very effective facility offered by the online portal followed by Instructor's availability, Group discussions, Download options, Interactive sessions, Registration guidance, Text version and Exam centres for doing the online courses.

**Table 3- Difficulties In Doing The Online Course**

S. No	Difficulties	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Feedback and response	41	20.5 %
2	Isolation	38	19 %
5	Adaptability struggles	37	18.5 %
6	Technical issues	28	14 %
7	Computer illiteracy	19	9.5 %
8	Time management	17	8.5 %
9	Self-motivation	20	10 %
	Total	200	100 %

The above table explains that out of the total respondents taken for the study, most of the respondents have faced difficulties in Feedback and response (20.5%), followed by Isolation (19%), Adaptability struggles (18.5%), Technical issues (14%), Self-motivation (10%), Computer illiteracy (9.5%) and Time management (8.5%).

**Table 4- Level Of Satisfaction About The Features In The Online Course**

S. NO	Features	Level	HS	S	MS	DS	HDS	Weighted Average	Rank
		Score	5	4	3	2	1		
1	Course cost	Level	99	65	31	4	1	4.28	1
		Score	495	260	93	8	1		
2	Variety of courses	Level	35	114	46	5	0	3.89	3
		Score	175	456	138	10	0		
3	Flexibility	Level	53	82	60	4	1	3.91	2
		Score	265	328	180	8	1		
4	Knowledge	Level	40	100	50	9	1	3.84	5
		Score	200	400	150	18	1		
5	Learning environment	Level	53	81	52	10	4	3.85	4
		Score	265	324	156	20	4		
6	Technical skills	Level	41	90	60	9	0	3.81	6
		Score	205	360	180	18	0		
7	Convenience	Level	41	90	57	11	1	3.78	7
		Score	205	360	171	22	1		

8	Exam fee	Level	38	85	67	10	0	3.76	8
		Score	190	340	201	20	0		
9	Certificate fee	Score	35	83	67	11	4	3.67	9
		Level	175	332	201	22	4		
10	Exam centre	Score	35	76	76	10	3	3.66	10
		Level	175	304	228	20	3		

It is found from the above table that the respondents are highly satisfied towards the Course cost for doing the online courses followed by Flexibility, Variety of courses, Learning environment, Knowledge, Technical skills, Convenience, Exam fee, Certificate fee and Exam centres.

## FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

### FINDINGS

1. Most of the respondents are influenced by Career advancement & updation (25%), followed by Variety of programmes and to learn new courses.
2. Majority of the respondents have given up priority for Video classes as a very effective facility offered by the online portal.
3. Most of the respondents have faced difficulties in Feedback and response (20.5%), followed by Isolation (19%) and Adaptability struggles (18.5%).
4. Majority of the respondents have indicated their priority for Course cost as highly satisfied feature of the online course when compared to others.

### SUGGESTIONS

1. Most of the respondents are not aware and not influenced by the portals and courses offered by them. Online portals providing the courses can create more awareness about the online courses and its benefits so that more learners can be influenced.
2. The exam centres can be easily assessable as most of the learners faced the problem of finding the location of the centres.
3. The text versions and the registration guidelines can be simple and easy to understand. Most of the students have stated that classes can be more effective.
4. It is found from the study that the learners faced the problems in feedback & response and also felt isolated during the classes. This can be overcome by handling the sessions lively with discussions and interactions among the learners. Activity based learning is also encouraged.
5. An online education is preferred by individuals who may not be able to make it for classes in a traditional brick and mortar kind of college due to various reasons, one can gain more professional knowledge in these online courses if they use it effectively.
6. The educational institutions can also motivate the learners by waving atleast the part of the fees so that more number of students can be enrolled.

### CONCLUSION

Online education has brought a positive impact in the lives of students and working professionals. It has given an opportunity to take up additional courses along with their studies or job as per their convenience. The quality of education has improved by online courses and even it has become easy for students to refer the content as per their leisure. In the era of digitalization the scope of online education increases even more and will be beneficial for students, professionals and also institutions. The learners can also actively participate and interact during online classes which will make them to be lively in the classes as well as can get better knowledge through online courses.

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