Research Article

VIRTUAL VERSUS TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING IN THE PRESENT AEON OF COVID

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ABSTRACT

With the global COVID 19 pandemic, the education system worldwide disrupted, and so the learning permuted to smart classroom systems.The technology leveraged, but this shift posed certain challenges to the students, their parents and teachers. In view of this, the online survey was done to compare traditional method of schooling with the present online one. Nearly half of the students preferred online classes. Majority were in favour of opening of schools. The parents were also not comfortable with the technology and preferred traditional schooling. Similarly only one third of the teachers were in favour of virtual mode of classes.

After collating the responses it was concluded that online schooling is less effective and less efficient than regular schooling. It should be seen as a complement and extension of classical forms of learning.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, COVID 19 pandemic has taken a massive hit on all the sectors of the economy. While it has been slightly easier for Multi-National Companies and professionals to adopt work from home as the new normal and continue business as usual, the times have been challenging for the education system around the world. With disruptions everywhere, several concerned scholars, support the need for reimagining and reinventing the education system, to cope up with the present aeon. Hence, comes in the smart classroom systems.[1]

The ratification of smart classroom systems by schools is transforming the traditional education system. The precipitous switch is not only limited to private schools but even a number of government schools have started running smart virtual classes. Though the crisis is devastating, but it has leveraged the technology in our schools and even colleges. No doubt, students and teachers have had to make substantial adjustments, as till now learning has always been in classrooms. But, many of them are not well equipped with technology tools to trail off remote learning.[2]

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The nationwide lockdown following the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a barrage of activities with virtual mode of education.

The Human and Resource Development Ministry's platforms such as SWAYAM and the National Digital Library have seen a five-fold increase in daily traffic during the first week of lockdown. The private schools appear to have taken the lead in swapping over to online classes, especially in metropolitan cities. However, many teachers and students are still struggling with this digital transition. Even certain universities too have pointed out that they are not ready for this upheaval and that many of their students do not have access to the internet.[3]

The infrastructure for online education in India like connectivity, platforms, and content, has been flourishing steadily since the 1990s. However, its escalation is largely incumbent on internet penetration through affordable data plans from the telecom sector.[3]

Since online classes have made their appearance in education, the validity of such courses has come in to question. As the popularity of online classes grows, this study will be able to find out the preferability of schooling modes and how students, parents and teachers view the strength and weaknesses of online classes as well as regular classrooms.

Objective of the Study

- To compare online schooling vs regular classroom schooling and to find out which one is better.
- To identity challenges faced by students, parents and teachers due to this online schooling transformation.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Study design: A descriptive cross-sectional study

Study Participants: Consists of students, parents and teachers. Due to Covid-19 pandemic the above are the people who are mostly affected due to the change in entire education system.

Sample size &Data Collection: A sample of390 students, 325 parents and 310 teachers participated in the survey.

A questionnaire was framed in Google Forms pertaining to questions about online classes and regular classes. The questionnaire was circulated to the participants via online modes (like e-mail, whatsapp groups, etc.).

Statistical Analysis: Responses from the respondents were recorded into a Google Excel spreadsheet and this information was used to generate graphical displays.

RESULTS

The responses were received from: 390 students, 325 parents and 310 teachers. The maximum respondents (32.1%) among students were those, who were above 10 years of age. While among parents and teachers, the maximum respondents were in the age group of 25-40 years (67.7%) and 30-35 years (34.8%) respectively. The participation of female respondents was maximum in all three groups.

The distribution of three respondent groups (i.e. students, parents & teachers), gender wise and as per place of residing is summarised in table 1.

**Table 1** Gender and Place of respondents

	Gender		Place		
	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	Semi-urban
Students	46.9%	52.6%	24.1%	61%	14.9%
Parents	27.7%	72%	40%	32.3%	27.7%
Teachers	37.4%	62.6%	33.5%	43.9%	22.6%

The maximum responses were received from students in 12th standard and above (30%). While teachers (35%) of classes 8th-10th and parents (35%) with kids studying in 8th -10th standard had the maximum participation
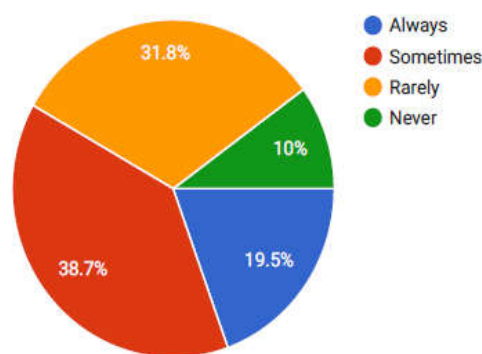
Students

Due to Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, maximum students (41.30%) attended online classes, but they were partially comfortable with the technology.

Nearly half of the students preferred online classes (Figure 1) and for 65.4% students, the online classes were more difficult than the regular ones.
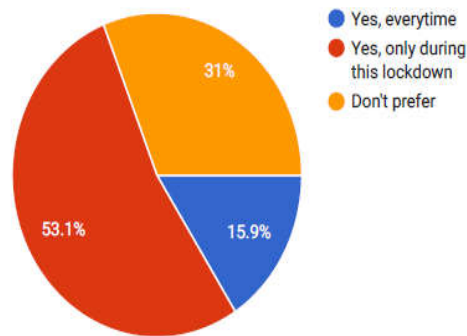

Figure 1 Students preference for online classes

Majority of the students (58.7%)felt that only sometimes they were able to concentrate well and get their teacher's required attention. 32.6% students were rarely satisfied and comfortable in giving online tests (Figure 2). Nearly 32% students felt that their workload had increased by online classes.

Figure 2 Satisfaction level of students in giving online tests

The majority of the students (75.1%) want schools to get reopen again (Figure 3).
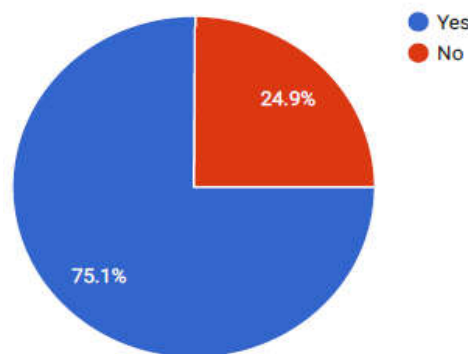
Figure 3 Proportion of students who want schools to re-open

Lack of access to course always (26.7%) and difficulty in using the technology (26.4%) to attend the virtual classes, were the two main reasons cited by the students for theirchoice of regular classes over virtual one. While, those who were in favour of online classes, were satisfied with the flexibility of the virtual classes (33.1%).

Parents

Nearly half of the parents (48%) were of the opinion that regular classroom classes are better for their children, rather than online classes.

Nearly half of the participants (53.5%) found it difficult to cope up with the technology, so were unable to help their children in virtual mode of classes.

More than half of the parents (65.2%) were of the opinion that the learning of the children has been compromised through online mode of teaching. More than 90% of the parents were in the favor that schools should reopen.

The most common reason for parent's denial regarding online classes was the lack of communication with the teachers on virtual mode (81.5%), followed by long screen times of children (77.2%). (Figure 4)
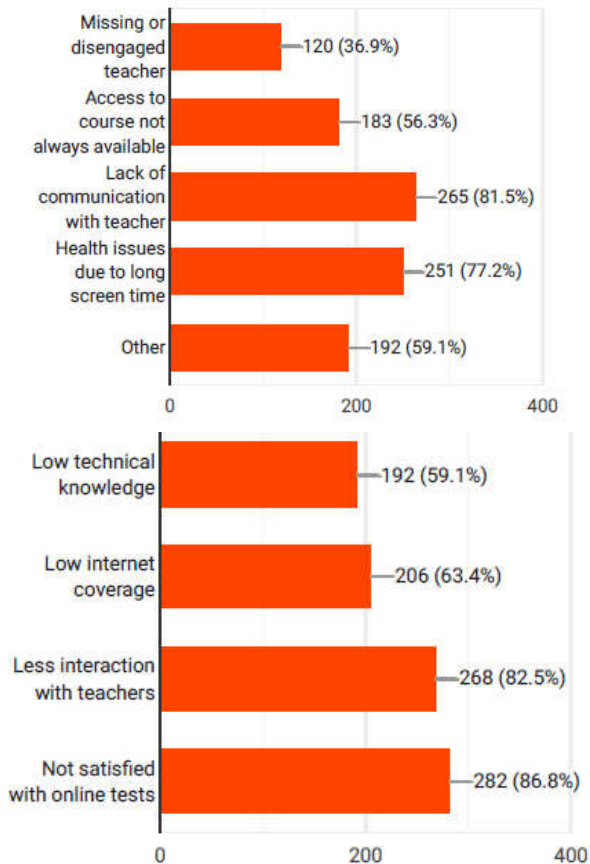

Figure 4 Reasons for denial for virtual classes

Teachers

Nearly 30% of the teachers were comfortable with the virtual mode of classes. About 40% of the teachers were of the opinion that they were rarely able to deliver the lectures in detail and were not comfortable in collecting e-resources for the virtual classes.

Majority of the teachers(87.4%) felt that students are more attentive in regular classrooms compared to online classes. More than half of the teachers (67.7%) felt that online tests are not equivalent or better than offline classroom tests.

According to 56.5% teachers, students learning have been compromised in online mode of teaching. More than half (62.2%) of the teachers don't want to continue with online classes, and half of them (49%) were of the notion that regular classrooms are good for students.
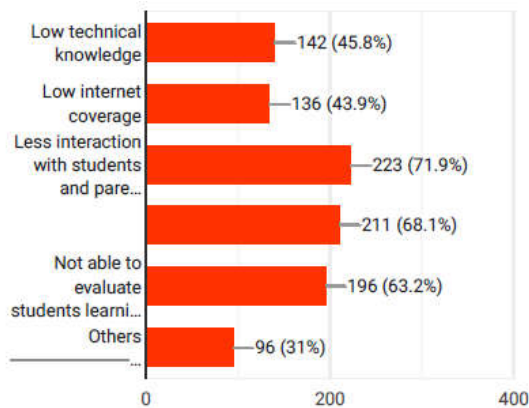

Figure 5 Issues with online classes

Teachers were facing many issues with online mode of teaching like less interaction with students and parents, not able to evaluate student's learning (Figure 5).

DISCUSSION& CONCLUSION

After analysing the responses of three responders i.e. students, parents & teachers, it is concluded that they all prefer regular classes than the virtual classes.

The main challenges confronted during this online schooling transformation were: difficulty in using the technology, lack of communication and interaction, long screen time, lack of technical knowledge, problems with internet connection, and lack of evaluation in terms of performance.

Keeping aside the mentioned concerns of virtual mode of teaching, there are some of the merits reported by the responders. These include the flexibility of virtual classes, availability of material online, repetition of lectures for better understanding. However, the demerits as per the responders outweigh the merits of the online mode of teaching.

The virtual mode of learning hampers the development of morale and human relationship among students and teachers. The advantages of regular classes like better evaluation of student's performance, involvement in extra-curricular activities, practical application of curriculum, imbibition of discipline in students etc. are not achieved through the virtual classes.

At school, students learn how to make friends, be patient, get rid of disappointment, and especially to compete. Competition amongst colleagues can be invigorating and students will only benefit from it. Online learning cannot offer human interaction. Another drawback is that online courses cannot cope with thousands of students who try to join deliberations. Moreover, disciplines that involves practical cannot be learnt through virtual mode.

After considering and collating the responses and comments by various respondents, it can be concluded that online schooling is less effective and less efficient than regular schooling. In culmination, online learning should be seen as a complement and extension of classical forms of learning. Not even the best online course can fully replace the personal contact with a teacher, or the human relationships that develop in a group.

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