Challenges Of Online Teaching in India: A Qualitative Approach

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Abstract

The Covid - 19 Pandemic has taken a toll on various sectors. The education sector has undergone a 360-degree shift wherein education was shifted to online platforms. The online teaching process is a much-habituated concept in developed countries; however, it is new-fangled in India. Though the evolution to online teaching entailed a smooth transition, a year later, the niceties of online teaching seem to be taking a toll on facilitators and students. The trials faced by teachers and perceived changes in behavior among students are to be explored to initiate steps to ensure a comfortable learning space. With this intention in mind, a semi-structured interview schedule was prepared considering the theory of change and telephonic interviews were conducted among 54 teachers from schools and colleges. The results are discussed in light of challenges in online learning, concerns regarding students, how to improve online teaching, and the training needs to be addressed among students.

Keywords: online teaching, blended learning, teachers, learners, COVID-19

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused intense distress worldwide which led to many governments being forced to resort to stringent measures such as a lockdown, social distancing, quarantine, etc. (Karakose et al., 2021). The education sector had to undergo a sweeping transition wherein the mode of instruction was switched to online platforms (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). The presence of online teaching in developed countries dates long back to times before the pandemic. However, in developing countries, such as India, though distance education has been quite prevalent, the mode of online teaching would be a new phenomenon with its presence being more intensively and extensively felt during the post-pandemic situation (Mishra et al., 2020). Online education is often used simultaneously with other terms such as blended learning, e-learning, distance education, etc. (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

Lewin's change management model (as cited by Juneja, 2015), which talks about the three stages involved in managing change namely, unfreezing, change, and freezing can be most aptly applied to the shift from traditional teaching to online teaching in the event of the pandemic. In the first stage ie. unfreezing, awareness is created among the concerned individuals regarding the need for a change followed by motivating them to make the change. Effective communication and support are very essential during this stage to help the individual align themselves with the change process. When UNESCO announced the lockdown 2020, the whole world came to a standstill wherein there wasn't enough time to garner oneself to deal with the immediate crisis.

The decision to go into complete lockdown was quick and enforced on the public and other services immediately. Teachers did not have enough time to prepare themselves for this drastic change, however, they were compelled or rather forced to make the transition and shift education to an online platform.

In the second stage, ie. change, the individual has to make the actual transition regarding the change. They have to learn or acquire new skills and information that will help them to deal with the change in the least disruptive manner. During this stage, change endorsers must offer the individual unconditional support and motivation to deal with the novel situation. When taking into account the context of teachers, administrators, colleagues, and their immediate families have a vital role to play at this juncture wherein they have to be pillars of social support for teachers to deal with anxiety and uncertainty regarding the online teaching situation.

In the third stage, ie. refreezing, the individual works their way towards attaining a state of equilibrium by resolving their anxieties and uncertainties. In this context, teachers learn to deal with the new situation with the strength of the new technological know-how and information that they have gathered or learned. Reinforcing or rewarding adaptable behaviours at this stage can help to prolong the lasting effect of the change management strategies adopted by the teachers.

Ascough (2002) proposed online education as comprising of the following features namely, 1) the learners in an online platform are different entailing a novel learning experience, 2) the communication in online education revolves around the World Wide Web, 3) classroom participation of online learners is different, 4) the dynamics associated with the learning environment of the learner is varied, and 5) online education also entails the reduction in discrimination and prejudice of online learners. The debate on the efficacy of traditional learning versus web-based delivery is a long-standing one (Driscoll et al., 2012; Mishra et al., 2020; Shambour & Abu-Hashem, 2021). The evidence for the effectiveness of online learning is mixed with certain studies accounting full credit for its efficiency over conventional education (Westhuis et al., 2006;

Wladis et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2005) for its capacity to produce better performing students, flexibility, and time efficiency. However, there are other studies discrediting online learning as ineffective citing reasons such as difficulty experienced by the instructors in observing learner's behavior; a complete makeover in pedagogy employed in online learning (Haughton & Romero, 2009; Zhao, 2003); student's feeling a lack of sense of community resulting in isolation and lack of interest (Song et al., 2004), etc.

While citing the advantages of online learning, it has been seen that an online environment entails students to be actively involved in the knowledge generation process, rather than being passive learners (Rabe-Hemp et al., 2009), encourages self-discipline and planning among learners, greater flexibility, time and space adaptation to suit the comfort of learners, and self-directed learning (Lin & Hsieh, 2001) When considering the various facets of online learning associated with faculty, it is a long-standing myth that a facilitator who instructs well in offline teaching would do well in the distance mode too. However, in connection to the recent pandemic situation, facilitators have been forced to shift to online education mode owing to the COVID-related protocols laid down by the Government and related agencies. This online situation is a new-fangled arena for many students as well as facilitators (Huber & Helm, 2020). However, when taking into consideration the difference in the experience of teaching offline and online, the intricacies of what leads to this variation in performance offline and online is not well explored.

Many earlier studies have explored certain aspects of online learning such as convenience (Poole, 2002), a lack of sense of orientation to community and delayed communication (Song et al., 2004), and online learning entailing self-directed learning (Hartley & Bendixen, 2001). In another study (Jones, 2008) it was reported that rather than being concerned with the quality of education, distance education directors were preoccupied with the cost of supporting technology. Studies have also found that irrespective of the type of learning environment, it is the positivity rendered by the learning environment that helps to improve student achievement (Chang & Fisher, 2003).

An article (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021) that looked into the challenges that facilitators experience during online interactions reported that the majority of teachers in rural areas of India found it difficult to conduct online classes due to issues in connectivity and lack of required devices. Few teachers reported a lack of orientation towards teaching online, lack of clarity regarding the etiquette to be adhered to in an online platform, interruption from parents, etc. In another study done by Rosalina et al. (2020), it was found that the teacher's inability to design interesting activities and lack of proper communication and interaction are direct challenges that question the effectiveness of online teaching. However, in the same study, teachers have also reported flexibility in time and place as an advantage of online education. Quezada et al. (2020) brought out important themes such as socio-emotional engagement, feedback on the teaching-learning process, consultation for technological support, etc., that are essential for online teaching among teachers.

Though studies based on comparison of learning in the traditional as well as e-learning platforms have been done extensively, research on how teachers and students have been coping with the challenges of online education post the pandemic era is a relatively less researched one. Most of the research in this area focuses on the objective of trying to explore the problem and discuss its dimensionalities, with very few researchers trying to address the problem by suggesting viable and practical solutions.

The current paper was executed with the idea of conducting in-depth interviews with online facilitators to understand their perception of what are the pitfalls of an online platform with the impact being limited not just to teachers but to students as well. The research also intends to address the various solutions that can be brought into practice to address the concern immediately. Going one step forward, the research also intends to explore on an anticipatory basis, the challenges that the educational system would have to go through when contingencies get back to what may be called "normal".

The structure of the paper has been designed in such a manner that it begins with addressing the different challenges that online learning poses, followed by addressing the specific challenges that facilitators experience and a comparison of offline vs. online teaching and towards the end, the paper would address the psychosocial aspects concerning students and the anticipated challenges the education system would have to face once students resume offline education.

Background of the Study

The present study was primarily concentrated on faculty who are residents of Tamil Nadu, a state in the southern part of India. Though Tamil Nadu can be considered as a metro city with sophisticated technological backup assisting the educational sector, it is primarily part of an agrarian community wherein power fluctuations, lack of access to online media convoluted by financial disparities widespread across the communities hinders access to technology which further aggravates technological divide. There is a large gap between the ICT infrastructure availability and integration among the agrarian communities and developed societies (Adarkwah, 2020). Therefore, in the pandemic situation, wherein most of the essentialities of life are dependent on one's access to online-based resources, it becomes extremely difficult for the less technologically advanced sections of the population to gain access to equivalence, the impact of which has been hard hit on the educational sector.

Even in technologically advanced societies, though students may have access to online-based resources, it is not necessary that they may understand their tutor or utilize the services available to them well (Adarkwah, 2020). Another major reason that contributes to ineffective e-learning is the facilitator's lack of experience in the technical know-how (Olesova et al., 2011) with most faculty rejecting online learning technology citing their lack of familiarity and confidence in handling classes on online platforms (Bacow et al., 2012). An inevitable factor that acts as a barrier to online learning is the high initial setup and purchase cost of online learning that hinders technology-based learning (Sinha & Bagarukayo, 2019).

Adding to the financial aspect, the psychological makeup of teachers and students who are part of the e-learning process has to also be taken into consideration. With a large

technological divide putting facilitators at a spot wherein they feel isolated and alone fumbling in the darkness with a lack of clarity on how to proceed and a lack of certainty concerning how far can they stretch; this psychological state greatly impairs the effectiveness of the teaching process. Though the closure of educational institutions has probably been the most effective in helping to control the spread of the virus infection (Sheikh et al., 2020), the impact it has caused on the students and teachers is detrimental.

The sudden shift from traditional to online teaching has caused severe psychological stress to teachers with increased workload resulting in symptoms of depression, anxiety, irritability, extreme sleep loss, and less job satisfaction (Al Lily et al., 2020; Besser et al., 2020; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021), and in certain cases domestic violence preventing effective teaching (Al Lily al., 2020). The UNESCO (as cited by Mawa, 202) has specified that due to abrupt school closure, uncertainty regarding the duration of its closure adding to unacquaintance with online education, confusion, and stress are highly prevalent among teachers. Such an unpleasant work situation can pave way for teachers beginning to question their capacities reflecting a lack of confidence which makes it difficult for them to manage the behavior of their wards on an online platform (Kim & Burić, 2020).

Therefore, realizing the dire need for immediate action to be taken concerning the online education system and the various challenges that it poses to the student and teacher community, the present study made an attempt to identify and propose remedial measures seeking to address the issue at hand.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Research Problem: Educators and researchers have reported on the potential value of online communities as hubs of learning and their potential to foster centers of learning that engage groups of learners and individuals alike. The Covid-19 pandemic has imprinted dramatic changes in the lifestyle pattern, especially in the field of education, it directs teaching professionals both in school and colleges to a new system of online teaching. The initial curiosity and novelty attached to the online

learning process have subsided and the process is now being perceived as cumbersome and appalling. Teachers have slowly started realizing the impact of online teaching on themselves as well as their students at cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels. While the value of creating the feeling of community in an online learning environment is sought by modern educators, the extent to which these strategies are effective is a question that must be explored further. While looking at the review of literature available on the psychological state of teachers during the pandemic, it can be seen that many studies have reported instances of burnout among teachers thereby predicting depression (Karakose et al., 2022), impaired quality of life paving way for loneliness (Cachón-Zagalaz et al., 2020), exhaustion resulting from psychosomatic symptoms, etc., (Prado-Gascó et al., 2020). However, when looking at these studies, it can be understood that the majority of these studies have undertaken a quantitative approach accompanied by online surveys via questionnaires to arrive at the conclusions that they aver. It can be understood that qualitative research allows the researchers the space for arriving at new insights and developing theories when the experience is still afresh in the participant's mind (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Qualitative research entails the researcher to put themselves in the participant's spot and view the concerns being shared from the participant's perspective (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research concerning the various dimensions of the pandemic is relatively scant (Tremblay et al., 2021). Qualitative research is widely recommended in the event of a pandemic wherein it offers an in-depth understanding of the best possible way to mitigate the challenges ahead of us (Vindrola-Padros et al., 2020). Direct contact and extensive field time are characteristic of qualitative research. However, in the pandemic contingency, such criteria cannot be upheld (Goh & Sandars, 2020), at least not to the extent of the pre-pandemic contingency.

Therefore, the authors of the current study perceived that a qualitative approach including few samples would help to generate more rich data when compared to a quantitative survey conducted among a large sample. Thus, this qualitative research intends to (i) explore the challenges and experiences faced by teachers in

online teaching and (ii) identify the methods for improving online teaching (iii) explore the concerns towards students in online mode, and (iv) identify training needs to be provided to students when they resume to offline mode.

Research Design: Before proceeding with the execution of the study, the authors referred to the 32-item COREQ checklist (Tong et al., 2007) for qualitative research in order to ensure that all points were covered sufficiently in the study. The research followed a qualitative research approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018) using open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are suitable to elicit more understanding of particular topics rather than trying to define or identify the cause of a phenomenon (Langdridge, 2007). Further, a qualitative approach provides insights into the various strategies adopted by individuals to deal with the challenges they face (Tremblay et al., 2021). A semi-structured interview schedule was prepared and the data collection was done via telephonic interviews. The collected data was then coded as themes using content analysis. Out of the sixty-five (65) teachers whom researchers contacted, only fifty-four (54) were willing to be the participants of the study and they were interviewed and their respective responses were recorded with their consent.

Ethical consideration: The researchers after receiving approval from the Department Committee of the Department of Psychology, University of Madras sent a formal invitation to the participants through online media highlighting the purpose of the research and their willingness to participate. Participants who expressed interest to be part of the study were contacted and written informed consent was obtained from them. Confidentiality of the responses was assured to the participants.

Sample Description: According to Boddy (2016), though there is no consensus on the adequate sample size for qualitative research, a sample size of 12 is considered adequate. Further, Boddy (2016) suggests that the adequacy of the sample is also closely tied to the saturation of data. In the present study, the sample size was 54. As the researchers were aware of the small sample size as a limitation, care was taken to make the sample considered for the stud as homogeneous as possible.

The sample in this research was the experiences of 21 school and 34 college teaching professionals in the state of Tamil Nadu, India who were engaged in online teaching. The school teachers included in the study were teaching students from Grades 10th to 12th. The participants in this research were 29 female and 25 male teaching professionals. Their ages ranged from 24 - 60 years (average age = 38years). The average teaching experience of the teachers was 11 years with a minimum of one year experience. The hours of online teaching per week ranged from 7 to 24 hours. The participants in this research were from different school disciplines such as 26 from social science (46.30%), 13 from science (24.07%), and 15 from arts and humanities (29.63%) departments. 39 teachers were from urban localities and 15 resided in rural spots. The participants belonged to Private (38), Government (13), and Government aided (3) educational institutions.

Instrument and Data collection procedure: An interview schedule comprising 10 questions was prepared by the researchers in light of the theory of change proposed by Lewin. The theory of change talks about the three stages underlying any change process namely, unfreezing, change, and refreezing. The authors felt that the theory of change aptly suited the purpose of the study which was also conducted amidst a novel situation - the COVID-19 pandemic wherein educators had to undergo a transition phase by switching over to online platforms.

The initial draft of the 10 items was further given to 5 experts for validation. Based on the input received from the experts, a few questions were removed and some were reworded to extract the actual purpose of the study. The final interview schedule consisted of four questions that aligned with the objectives of the study. The following were the main questions that were asked during the interview:

1. What are the different challenges that you face during an online class?
2. What are your concerns regarding students' behavior during an online class?
3. Can you suggest ways to improve the quality of education via online mode?

4. Can you elaborate on the various training needs that are to be provided to students when they shift to offline mode?

The current study adopted a convenience sampling technique. The participants were contacted and appointments were scheduled based on their convenience. The researchers collected the data for this research through in-depth individual interviews with each participant through the telephonic interview method. Each participant was interviewed for 15-25 minutes. The researchers assured the participants that the data collected would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes and recorded the interview after getting their oral consent. As the interview schedule prepared was semi-structured, the researchers also presented the participant with additional questions to elicit more information from the participants and to clarify any doubts.

Data Analysis: After data were collected from all the participants, two researchers listened to the recordings and transcribed the responses in an Excel sheet to gain familiarity with the data. The data were further encoded and analyzed through the process of thematic and content analysis. The researcher read the responses for each question and categorized them into themes and subthemes and then further ordered them based on frequency. Once the initial lists of themes were prepared it was reanalyzed individually by all the authors of the study to account for any changes. Once the researchers

felt a repetition in the responses and experienced a saturation in the responses, they decided to stop the coding process. To further validate the themes that emerged, the coded data was presented to experts who further refined the categories and suggested revisions in the names of the themes. Revisions suggested by the experts were carried out and the final list of themes was prepared.

DISCUSSION

The number of Covid - 19 cases are reducing in India and educational institutions are ready to reopen. However, after a total shift in the last two years, the extent to which teachers and institutions are prepared to welcome the students back to the traditional setup is a question yet to be answered. In this scenario, this study was undertaken to understand the impact or challenges faced by the teachers and concerns or opinions about students.

Based on the information reported and underrated from the teachers, the discussion is presented under four different headings namely, challenges faced during online teaching, aspects to be improved in online teaching, concerns regarding students, and psychological training for students.

I.   Challenges faced during online teaching

Table - 1 Challenges experienced in online teaching

SNO	MAIN THEME	SUB-THEMES
1.	STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	Lack of personal connect
		Non-verbal communication
		Deteriorating values
2.	TEACHER EFFICIENCY	Information dissemination
		Completion of syllabus
		Practical limitations
		Health of Teachers
3.	INFRASTRUCTURE	Ergonomics

| | | Technical issues |
| | | External factors |

The personal interviews with the teachers began with the demographic aspects followed by which the first question, "What are the different challenges you experience in online teaching" was posed to the teachers. The responses given by the teachers have been categorized into themes and sub-themes as seen in Table- 1

The most reported major challenges as perceived by teachers was student engagement during online classes. Factors such as personal connect or physical presence, attentiveness and understanding ability of the students, student participation, communication, and values were greatly affected in online classes. One of the participants of the current study **(Participant 2)** reported that teaching during online classes *"feels like we are talking to the wall"*. The two-way process is an important aspect in the communication cycle without which the cycle stands incomplete. Lack of face-to-face interaction led to the difficulty in holding the attention of the students. Additionally, receiving feedback on whether the student understood the information being conveyed is missing (Dhawan, 2020; Scull et al., 2020; Sithole et al., 2019; Varea & González-Calvo, 2020). **Participant 21** expressed their concerns with regard to a lack of certainty in student reception *("Not sure if students are genuinely listening and understanding").* This concern was further supported by **Participant 5** who stated that *"There is no eye contact; non-verbal communication and body language cannot be assessed..."* and **Participant 23** *("Students don't respond when called….not sure if they are really attending the class also. They either say network issue as a reason or leave the meeting")* Ma et al. (2021) reported the difficulty in managing misbehaviours among students during online teaching and getting instant feedback. The same concern has been expressed by **Participant 5** *("There is no control over the students and we can't give any comments about their discipline like in traditional classroom").* Adnan and Anwar (2020) stated that face-to-face interaction of

traditional classes helps the students to actively participate in the classes and also reported that 79% of students perceived conventional classrooms as more effective and around 71% felt conventional classes as more motivating than distance learning. The feelings, connections, and interactions of students with one another through sharing their ideas enhance a social presence (Jones & Ryan, 2014) which is absent in online teaching.

Another challenge that is experienced during online teaching as reported by teachers is with respect to infrastructure and socio-economic concerns. Technical aspects which include internet connection, gadget availability, usage of audio and video, data consumption, etc. were reported by majority of the teachers (for e.g., *"Technical difficulty such as Internet speed, disconnection from me and students, power cut.."* **Participant - 8***). Many studies had reported that the students' lack of advanced or even basic facilities of Android phones or charges for internet usage and good internet connectivity as problems for people especially among economically weaker sections of the society (Aboagye, 2020; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Flores & Gago, 2020; Naik et al., 2021; Raj & Khare, 2020; Simamora, 2020). Kaup et al. (2020) have stressed that poor audio and video quality, internet issues, etc. are a challenge for teachers towards students' engagement. Panda and Mishra (2007) noted then that online learning is impossible for students who do not have internet accessibility. Even though this study was carried out a decade ago, rural and low socio-economic strata people in India have not progressed much in terms of their ability to afford or access the technicalities required for online teaching-learning. Another aspect of infrastructure was unavailability of a proper workspace environment to attend or take classes *("It is Difficult to find infrastructure/space to teach at home"* **Participant - 43;** *"It is Difficult to find infrastructure/space to teach at home"* **Participant - 25**). Due to poor socio-economic conditions, many students are unable to listen

to the classes and some prefer to keep their videos off considering the ambience aspects (Flores & Gago, 2020).

A teacher's role is not limited to mere delivery of content, but extends to facilitating the students in understanding the concept and assisting fruitful synthesis of the learning process. However, in the event of online classes, teachers are unable to provide fruitful assistance as they experience various physical (*"One of the major concerns about online class is health. Sitting in same place and looking at the screen for longer duration leads to back pain, eye irritation, headache, sleep disturbance, lack of sleep etc."* **Participant - 36**; *"Online class needs more preparation than traditional classroom"* **Participant - 21**) and psychological health related concerns (*"In terms of challenge, physical strain due to sitting in one place and looking at laptop all day….. I think we tend to get mentally exhausted when compared to physical class-room. Need to be aware of the technology and cognitively we are quite occupied with these things and less focus is given to the class material and conduct."* **Participant - 29**) in addition to the extra requirements demanded by online teaching. Raj and Khare (2020) support this finding by adding that doubt clearance is comparatively lesser in online teaching. Teachers in the current study have reported that they try to stay focused in completing the portions and they perceive that inability to disseminate additional information is a major drawback in the online learning process (*"Portions are completed soon as there is no distraction"*- **Participant - 1**).

Due to self-isolation, people experience more psychological problems such as loneliness, fear, anxiety, stress, etc. (El Keshky et al., 2020). Preventive behaviours such as social distancing, isolation, etc. due to Covid – 19 have increased exhaustion and fatigue in individuals thereby preventing them from being active (El Keshky et al., 2020). Balkhi et al. (2020) had stated that people are highly anxious regarding their health, the health of their peer group, and certain life-threatening incidents due to the disease have added to the adoption of extra cautious behaviours. Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. (2021) had reported that the majority of the teachers are found to have stress, anxiety, and depression. However, their ability to tackle these stressors might be affected due to the lack of support from the peer group, being lonely or isolated, distress owing to the pandemic contingency for both students and teachers (Kaup et al., 2020).

II. Improvement in online teaching

Table 2: Aspects to improve in online teaching

SNO	MAIN THEME	SUB-THEMES
1.	EMPOWERING STUDENTS	Student interaction
		Adherence to rules
2.	TEACHING PEDAGOGY	Creative teaching
		Teacher training
		Online tools
3.	EXTERNAL SUPPORT	Technical factors
		Institute and Government support

When teachers were asked about the various aspects that can be improved in online teaching, the various themes they reported are classified in Table 2.

One of the major aspects that teachers have reported with regard to improvement in online teaching is on student's engagement and empowerment. Teachers are of the opinion that students have a lot of misperceptions about online learning" (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020, p.72) as is also evident in the verbatim of **Participant 22** (*"Awareness needed on stigma related to online teaching - switching on camera etc need to be made especially for girls"*). Discomfort with turning on cameras by students is a theme which has been reported in research by Bashir et al. (2021). These misperceptions can be dealt with by educating and training them. In order to enhance their digital literacy. Practices such as blended learning, Hyflex model (Beatty, 2019), peer teaching, autonomy in case work-based studies, etc. can also help to enhance interaction among students thereby enhancing the appealing value of online teaching (Bashir et al., 2021). Teachers in the current study have also expressed similar views, for e.g., **Participant 12** (*"Peer teaching by student's participation can be implemented"*) and **Participant 31** (*"Students need to understand their responsibility and take accountability).*

Weaver (2006) emphasized the introduction of new educational technologies and strategies if pedagogical changes happen in the academic arena. In light of this finding, the pandemic situation is one of the most crucial contingencies that require amendments in curriculum, design, and pedagogy to adapt to the changing scenario (*"Creative and memory-based assessments is required currently as usual method of examination isn't relevant"* **Participant - 31**). Mishra et al. (2020) recommended that curriculum revision that reflects not only the content and learning experience of the students but on the student's ability to engage in critical thinking is also essential. The same concerns are reflected in the statement of **Participant 17** (*"The whole education system has to be rethought and reworked on to make it more comfortable for students. Practices such as hybrid learning must be introduced"*) and **Participant 53**

(*"Curriculum according to the need of the hour should be framed"*)

Though students may have found aspects of online learning interesting and fun at the beginning, the initial curiosity has died out and online learning is now perceived as mundane. In order to deal with this challenge, teachers need to educate themselves on the various technological options available online so as to maintain the interest of the students and to capture their attention (*"Creative way of teaching to keep students engaged is needed.."* **Participant - 8**; *"Teachers need to be trained with advanced tools and better practice"* **Participant - 39**). Teachers' efficiency in terms of disseminating knowledge and conducting practical classes were also raised as aspects to be focused on to improve online teaching. Kaup et al. (2020) had suggested using more interactive tools such as live chat function, pop quizzes, virtual whiteboards, polls, reflections, etc., and use of apps like Kahoot, Google Forms, Poll Everywhere which can ensure students remain attentive by focussing on the aspect of novelty. Teng and Wu (2020) suggested that during this pandemic situation, teachers need professional support during online teaching to turn their distress into eustress (*"Number of participants should be reduced as it is difficult to track large number"* **Participant - 5**).

In addition to improvement on the part of teachers and students, the Government, Management of the institution and other related facets must also work together to support an improvement in online teaching (*"Premium version can be purchased by the organization to use advanced tools"* **Participant - 4**). Additionally, parents must also be educated and informed to monitor their children's participation and engagement in online learning (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). This concern is reflected in the statement of **Participant 12** (*"Support of parents is needed").* The strength of the class, technical difficulties, curriculum change, etc. need to be looked into at the higher level of the educational institutions.

III. Concern about students

Table 3: Concerns regarding students

SNO	MAIN THEME	SUB-THEMES
1.	ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR	Values and Discipline
		Irresponsibility
		Motivation
		Socio-emotional functioning
		Questioning skills
		Fundamental skills
2.	KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS	Academic Dishonesty
		Socio-emotional functioning
		Cognitive capacities
3.	HEALTH	Physical
		Psychological

When teachers were asked about the concerns they had with regard to online teaching and students, the responses reported by them were broadly categorized into three themes namely, Attitude and behavior, Knowledge, and Health as seen in Table- 3.

a) Change in Attitude and Behaviour of Students

A specific concern with regard to students as reported by teachers is with regard to the change in attitude and behavior post the shift to online classes. Teachers are of the opinion that the values and discipline that had been imbibed in students from their childhood are questionable now. Teachers expressed dissatisfaction over students using the limitations of online teaching to their advantage (*"Students had given the login ID to other students and so mischievous activity was done by them"*- **Participant - 11**), especially with regard to the conduction of online examinations. Most of the teachers expressed

their concern with regard to the honesty and integrity of the students during the examination.

Teachers stated that students are mere passive attendees in online sessions and sometimes even leave the online sessions after their attendance is placed as is also reflected in the statement of **Participant 42** (*"Attending for sake of attendance, so some students leave in-between and join again in the end"; "Students don't ask doubts and no discussion is taking place. They are non-responsive"*- **Participant - 29**; *"Students lack motivation, no self-regulation and self-presentation"* **Participant - 42**).

Teachers assert that education is no longer a serious affair as even academically bright students sometimes fall behind in their values (*"Education is not taken seriously. Attitude that even if they don't study they will still get the degree"* **Participant - 2**). It is a challenge for the teachers to find the genuineness of the student's work and whether they have

understood the content delivered (**"*Imparting knowledge and discipline is difficult online*" Participant - 19; "*Procrastination is easy here as follow up is not completely possible*" Participant - 3**) in online mode (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). It is difficult to conduct a secure and valid online assessment (Kaup et al., 2020). Aboagye (2020) commented that teachers are not impressed by the assignments submitted online.

Hiatus in the learning process has collapsed the overall development of the individual (**"*Students do not wake up on time and get ready for class. They simply attend and have no physical presentation and no self–regulation*" Participant- 43; "*Integral growth is missing. Extracurriculars, bonding, club activities, etc are lacking..*" Participant - 21**).

However, amidst all these concerns, teachers are in a partnership with the opinion that online learning has allowed for considerable skill development of the students as they are able to choose and attend from a wide variety of options available the courses that will prove to be fruitful for their academic and career growth (**"*Students are attending more workshops and skill development programs*" Participant - 25**). The technological niceties associated with online content allow for a large number of learners from every nook and corner of the world to have equal access to quality content, resulting in online learning and teaching successfully rising to the status of victor ludorum (Dhawan, 2020).

b) Knowledge and Skills

Assessments play an important role in the lives of students wherein it decides their future academic as well as career prospects. Students have the free will to complete these assessments with complete integrity or choose the easy way of resorting to malpractices. The incidence of malpractices and associated cheating and fraud behaviours in the academic domain is not something new (Comas-Forgas et al., 2021). However, the frequency of cheating behaviours has gone up in the light of education being shifted to online platforms (Baran & Jonason, 2020; Lancaster & Cotarlan, 2021). The quality of assessment procedures available online questions the credibility of academic honors being awarded during the pandemic period

(Goff et al., 2020) which is reflected in the statement of **Participant 29 (*"Although we do get some feedback of their involvement through assignments and case studies and other techniques to foster their response, there is still never clear indication of whether they are learning or not."*)** and **Participant 32 (*"Not able to assess their understanding.."*).**

The link between emotional intelligence and cognitive engagement is a well-researched one suggesting that better emotional capacities enhance academic success (Rabia et al., 2017). However, during the pandemic, the lack of face-to-face interaction leads to the state wherein emotional and psychological concerns of students sometimes go unaddressed as stated by **Participant 4 (*"Socioemotional functioning is affected as they are in adolescents phase, psychological support is difficult to be given at the time of loss of their family members and also we weren't able to provide socioemotional support"*)** which in turn results in negative mental health (Elmer et al., 2020). Recommendations of a study (Iqbal et al., 2022) suggest that academic institutions should pay more attention to the emotional faculties of students so as to promote study habits and it also suggests that the management should undertake psychological initiatives among faculty members so that they can easily identify students with issues pertaining to emotional intelligence and provide them with immediate remedial help.

In a study (Giusti et al., 2020) done among University students during the pandemic period, it was seen that cognitive difficulties such as concentration issues, rigid thinking styles, and sleep disturbances were prevalent. Similar themes have been reported by the participant teachers of the current study such as **Participant 27 (*Students login for the class and do other activities like playing games"*)** and **Participant 29 (*"No discussion is taking place and students don't ask doubts; even if some students have doubts they hesitate to ask because their classmates bully them"*)**

c) Health of Students

Though the uncertainty regarding the adaptability to the pandemic has affected everyone equally, students experience more uncertainties with regard to academic success,

career concerns, loss of social life, etc. (Stieger et al., 2020). In a study done during the pandemic period, psychological concerns that were reported by the students included depression resulting from educational platform shifts, technological issues, homesickness, economic concerns regarding family income, career concerns, etc (Aristovnik et al., 2020). In the current study, when teachers were questioned about the various concerns they had regarding students, concerns were expressed with regard to over use of screens (*"Increased screen-time of students would affect their health and mental development"* Participant - 39; *"Students health like vision is getting affected due to prolonged screen-time.* "Participant - 37). Students were also bothered by concerns such as being stuck in their homes, boredom, hopelessness, sleep disturbances, etc., which is evident in qualitative research undertaken by Browning et al. (2021).

IV. Psychological Training for Students

Table 4: Training Needs

SNO	MAIN THEME	SUB-THEMES
1.	POSITIVE DISCIPLINING	Adaptive classroom behavior
		Discipline
		Responsibility
		Time management
2.	SKILLS TRAINING	Technological skills
		Writing skills,
		Cognitive skills
		Communication skills.
3.	ATTITUDE CHANGE	Achievement orientation
		Knowledge orientation
		Self-determination

The last question posed to the teachers was to elaborate on the various training needs that are to be provided to students when they shift to offline mode. The responses provided by the

teachers included: positive disciplining, skills training, and attitude change (Refer to Table: 4)

a) Positive Disciplining

Post the pandemic situation, monitoring the discipline-related behavior of students (*"Getting adapted to a classroom set up and sitting throughout the day"* - **Participant - 26**) has become one of the major concerns of teachers (Claver et al., 2020). Though many teachers have emphasized the positive aspects of digital learning, they also advocate for participatory learning-teaching that emphasizes correcting the student (*"We need new mode to energize the students when they come back"*- **Participant - 28**), providing considerable autonomy to the students (Gil-Arias et al., 2018) (*"Responsibility and active behavior might change"*- **Participant 10**), collaborative learning, case-study based learning, and project works, etc (Dhawan, 2020.

Teachers play a vital role in endorsing positive practices to advocate discipline in a classroom setup (Wade et al., 2020). Teachers have to shift their focus from academic prospects to positive disciplining aspects (*"Morals need to be taught.."*- **Participant - 27**) so as to avoid disruptive behaviours (Granero-Gallegos et al., 2020) and ensure a healthy classroom environment. Teachers must also take extra measures to ensure that online content delivery is interesting, creative, and student-friendly such that it builds the learning horizon of the learner (Dhawan, 2020).

Research has shown that students who did not adhere to effective time management practices (*"Students should learn Punctuality and time management"*- **Participant 16**) found it difficult to cope with timely completion of academic tasks which paved way for low motivation (Kalman et al., 2020). Various time management strategies such as time prioritizing, following a Time Management Matrix, and using effective time structuring tools such as planners, diaries, calendars, etc can help students effectively organize and manage their time (Alhasani et al., 2022).

b) Skills Training

Resistance to change does not direct advancement or progress. Therefore, academic institutions should develop a sophisticated combination of blended learning to explore the potential of technological tools available to meet students' expectations and enhance their learning experience (García-Morales et al. (2021); Liguori & Winkler, 2020). Both students and teachers should be equipped with the technological skills necessary to cope with unexpected changes due to crises/disasters such as COVID-19. While looking at the digital platform deep reflection is required about refining or changing the policies to support and counsel students in order to facilitate their integration and adaptability (García-Alberti et al., 2021).

In a newspaper article by Sathyanarayana (2021), the deteriorating state of students' handwriting skills owing to the closure of schools in Chennai followed by the pandemic has been averred. The same article also expressed concern among teachers for rural students where virtual classes were at a disadvantage. Teachers have expressed concerns stating that students have forgotten the fundamental alphabets that make up the language of English and Tamil and they recommend that a weekly one-day doorstep visit be made to the children's home to assign handwriting tasks. The same concerns were reported by **Participant 1** in the current study (*"Writing they would have lost practice and so need to state the importance"*). Sariani et al. (2021) suggest that constant honing of four important skills namely, speaking, writing, listening, and reading is essential.

One of the common challenges presented by students during the lockdown period is a lack of motivation with respect to self-initiative learning, concentration in academic work, and day structuring (Lockl et al., 2021). General cognitive skills play an important role in facilitating academic achievement and they also direct engagement in homework (Rodríguez et al., 2019). When inquiring about needs among students that need to be addressed, teachers have expressed concern over the reducing attention span of children and the need for training to enhance it (*"Attention span might be reduced and they might find difficult focussing in the classroom"* - **Participant 39**; *"Students should be relieved from online Cognitive load and adapt to the classroom set up"*- **Participant 29**).

Three important components that constitute student engagement are to be able to relate to the learning and development process, create tasks based on a structural definition of problems and conduct interventions, and donate aiming at transferring the learning gained from the academic environment to the wider community in a meaningful manner (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998). Though there are apparent benefits, one of the major disadvantages of online learning is that it places limits on the communication skills of students (Zarzycka et al., 2021). Communicating in online sessions is primarily restricted to typing which is time-consuming and less effective. After having undergone online learning for a considerable time period, teachers have reported lacunae in the communication skills of students ("Students don't respond when called….not sure if they are really attending the class also. They either say network issue as a reason or leave the meet"- Participant 23) and they have also specified the need to address this with future training (*"Needs to work on interaction with teachers and peers"*- **Participant 42**).

c) Attitude Change

According to the Achievement Goal Theory (Nicholls, 1984), human beings are rational beings engaging in behaviours that are goal-directed and purpose-driven. Behaviours are largely governed by the beliefs and motives that underlie them. The role of a teacher in creating an academic environment that is driven by passion and pursuit is inevitable. Teachers have to build an environment that is task-oriented wherein the mastery of the task is prioritized over success and an ego-oriented climate advocating healthy social comparison among the students (Wallhead et al., 2013). Student motivation is an important construct that addresses both discipline and academic success (Chik & Abdullah, 2018). Students need to be motivated to let go of their lethargic attitude and they should be introduced to avenues that build up their interest and hold their curiosity. The same concern was reported by **Participant 46** (*"Let go of all the stress, laziness, lethargy and boredom and come to physical classes. curiosity should always be there, search for knowledge"*). A framework that emphasizes academic glory along with coexistence skills is to be introduced in schools to reduce the incidence of disobedience, classroom disruption, and conflict which are all underlying traits of school amotivation (Anderson et al., 2019).

Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness are the three basic psychological needs as specified by the Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The psychological need for autonomy directs the student to take control of affairs and to bring the situation under their control. The need for competence helps the student master the task with precision and pushes them to acquire the required essential skills. The need for relatedness instils a sense of affiliation thereby allowing the student to positively and efficiently function within a group. In a study conducted among students, it was seen that high competence was related to exhibiting adaptive behavior (Spray & Wang, 2001). Therefore, competency-based initiatives on the part of the institution as well as the educator will help to elicit more rewarding and adaptive behavior on the part of the student. One of the disadvantages of having shifted education to an online platform is the increasing incidence of academic dishonesty (Janke et al., 2021). The reasons cited by students for resorting to cheating behavior include the belief that they can get away with it (Costley, 2018) and reduced motivation among teachers to detect cheating incidences (Janke et al., 2021). Therefore, it can be seen that when students do not attach value to a particular avenue, they are more likely to take it easy which paves way for behaviours that are unregulated and disruptive. Therefore, instilling more rigorous and strict monitoring practices on the part of educational institutions (Clark et al., 2020) and teachers (Amzalag et al., 2021; Janke et al., 2021) along with motivating students, to be honest in their performance can help to bring about an attitude change which is reflected in the words of **Participant 38** (*"Students might need to learn to work hard and write exams by studying with seriousness as they cannot be lethargy or copy.."*) and **Participant 27** (*"Reframing of the syllabus is necessary. Crash course or bridge course is needed when students resume back to the school as they might have forgotten the fundamentals."*). However, the validity of all these practices is questionable unless the student is self-determined to bring about an effective change in their behaviour (Kirby et al., 2015).

Conclusion

The present study was undertaken to understand the intricacies of online learning and the various ways through which it had impacted online facilitators. Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions have been drawn: When considering the challenges faced by facilitators in an online platform, engaging the students in an online setup, lack of sufficient infrastructure, and health of the teachers were perceived as prominent challenges. The second objective of the study addressed the different concerns teachers had with regard to students' behaviour in an online mode for which worsening attitude and behaviour of students, knowledge, skills, and health of students were reported as the major concerns. The next objective addressed the different ways through which online learning can be improved for which empowering students, building on teaching pedagogy, and enhancing external support from management, Government, and the parents emerged as the themes. The last objective of the study looked at anticipatory measures to be taken to handle students when they resume back to college or school. The training needs that were identified included positive disciplining, skills training, and attitude change. Addressing these training issues will help teachers and the learners feel more comfortable in readapting to the situation of what may be termed as the "new normal"

Limitations

Qualitative research strives to understand the phenomena being explored within close vicinities. However, owing to the pandemic contingency, the researchers were unable to meet with the participants for a face-to-face interview thereby hindering extensive field investigation which may place limits on the credibility of the findings due to reduced interactions among the participant and the researcher (Vindrola-Padros & Johnson, 2020). Alternative options of data collection to facilitate group discussions such as chat or video calls could have been employed (Dodds & Hess, 2020). The technological medium that connects the researcher and the participant can serve as a source of limitation (Krouwel et al., 2019) owing to technological concerns and the duration of the interview (Dodds & Hess,

2020), therefore, the extent and quality of information gathered by the researchers over a 20-minute phone call are questionable. Further, as data were collected only from online facilitators residing across various regions of Tamil Nadu, the generalizability of the themes that emerged to other regions across India is limited. Further, a comparison between the concerns reported by participants who are school teachers and college professionals was not done. Though details regarding gender, type of locality, years of teaching experience, subject taught, etc. were collected, the analysis of the data based on these factors was not done. Lastly, data collected in the present study only involved the teacher's perception of the students; however, the accuracy of the data was not validated through additional information from the students.

Implications

In a qualitative study done among students by Almendingen et al. (2021), students reported that though they were enticed by the novelties of online learning, they perceived it required greater motivation to stay connected through the course of the online session. Therefore, the current study necessitates the appointment of psychologists in educational institutions to help students cope with the transition from online to offline modes and also to help them stay motivated. Training is to be imparted to the teachers to effectively manage the psychosocial changes that are anticipated among students. A Teacher Preparedness Training Package is advocated by UNICEF to help teachers better equip themselves to deal with students when they return back to what is termed the "new normal" (UNICEF MENA REGIONAL OFFICE, 2020). Advanced technology such as virtual lab facilities, recorded videos, interactive classes, peer learning, etc., needs to be adopted for effective conduction of classes. Government has to work in collaboration with educational institutions to ensure infrastructure and technological aid to the educational institutions in the existing scenario (OECD, 2020). Policymakers have to work towards designing and incorporating changes in the curriculum that would focus on relearning academic aspects, basic values, discipline, (Claver et al., 2020), etc through life skill development and cognitive training to regain

fundamental skills such as attention, writing, speaking, creative thinking, etc.

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