



Influence of Peer Group on Selection of Online Education Service Provider

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ABSTRACT

Digital content development can benefit from different technology choices such as e-learning, pre-recorded sessions, websites, job aids and many more. This feature of blended learning model allows the students to take control over pace, place and path of learning. It represents a much greater change in basic technique than simply adding computers to classrooms. Blended learning provides the best opportunities for learning transition from classroom to e-learning. Student can share a common interest, exchange ideas and help each other in a network. Students call on each other when they have a problem to solve something. The students in a network participate voluntarily and have a great deal of personal freedom. The objective of the study is to find out the influence of peer group on selection of online education service provider. In the present study the primary data has been collected from the selected senior secondary school students & working professionals in Delhi NCR. The study concluded that majority of respondents acknowledge the significant influence of their peer group on their choice of online education service providers, indicating a pervasive impact of social networks. It emphasizes the importance of peer opinions, underscoring the role of social validation and recommendations in shaping decisions about online education.

Keywords: E- learning, Blended learning, Peer group, Online education, Online education service provider

INTRODUCTION

With the introduction of the Internet and the World Wide Web in the 1990s, online or integrated learning was able to reach those in faraway locations or those who wanted the luxury of taking time off to travel; **Palvia et al. (2018)**. Neoliberalism predicts that worldwide "techno-fix" solutions to issues in education, society, and the economy will be prioritized in the global arena. It emphasizes the advantages of trade while focusing on how social technology is changing. Additionally, it approaches digital technology generally and, in a good way, does not necessitate social or political analysis. With the expansion, education is now directly impacted by the education technology sector; **Wright & Peters (2017)**.

The internet and new e-learning programmes make the modern classroom a more participatory setting, allowing teachers to give each student who uses a computer or other electronic device a more specialized learning experience. For students, it provides access to information and knowledge repository that are practically unlimited, improving a number of opportunities for individualized learning. Many institutions are using e-learning because it can be as effective as traditional training at a lower cost. E-learning is used by many institutions because it can be just as effective as conventional training while being more affordable. Numerous educational institutions have integrated a wide variety of e-Learning tools into their support and delivery systems for education. The costs associated with delivering e-learning, including those associated with web servers and technical support, are, nevertheless, significantly cheaper than those associated with using classroom space, paying an instructor, paying participants to travel, and taking time off work to attend classes. Interestingly, an education institution already fosters an excellent model for innovation and progression through an adaptive model of change. E-learning course are everywhere, with more institutions offerings several courses in online & more than half offering a significant number of course in online. Additionally, rather than being revolutionary, the deployment of e-Learning has mostly been evolutionary. The integration of e-Learning into long-standing processes has primarily been accomplished through a bottom-up, incremental change process; **Collis & Van der Wende (2002)**.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Weiger (1998) suggests that due to the inability to ensure the quality of professors in online courses, skeptics cast doubt on the efficacy of online education. Concerns arise regarding the ability of online learners to assess the caliber of the courses available to them. This raises questions about the overall value and credibility of online learning platforms.

The results of various earlier research that revealed that students had a favourable view of online education and what they believe are crucial factors in their success in this field were validated and broadened by **Huss & Shannon (2013)**. The development of courses that offer the needed flexibility while

keeping the crucial link with the institution will be made easier by bridging the gap between those notions and the realities that they encounter in the various online classrooms.

Compared to students who depended solely on traditional classrooms, those who worked alone or online could clearly observe changes **according to Chibani's (2014)** research paper, "The Effectiveness of Online and One-to-One Tutoring in the Writing Center on the Students Achievement: A Multiple Case-Study." The author added that students who completed their assignments online obtained the best grades.

Majeed (2015) suggests that students can enhance their skills through interactive engagement with teachers via applications and online learning platforms. The availability of resources such as e-books, digital magazines, online materials, and video lectures facilitates anytime access to learning materials, enabling students to absorb information through reading and listening at their convenience. This flexibility empowers learners to tailor their study schedules to fit their individual preferences and lifestyles, promoting self-directed learning. Additionally, the interactive nature of online platforms fosters active participation and inquiry-based learning, encouraging students to pose questions and seek clarification from teachers, thereby deepening their understanding and skill development.

According to Ansari (2017) students are using more learning applications. It has been discovered that portable learning programmes can be quite beneficial in the advanced education setting. Additionally, it appears from the results that the students have the knowledge and focus necessary to use mobile technology and the Web in their instructional setting. Higher education in India is a common use of the mobile learning app 8. Additionally, it was shown that students are aware of mobile apps that offer educational materials.

Chavan & Shukla (2018) emphasized that BYJU'S was able to develop a learning app for kids thanks to the use of technology as an enabler and a distinctive blend of media and information. This essay also examines the e-entrepreneurship strategy used by BYJU'S creator to start an educational technology company with the goal of serving as many students as possible online. Additionally, a new endeavour in several company sectors will have new opportunities thanks to the developing digital technology.

Ma & Lee (2019) conducted research to explore the primary challenges hindering student enrollment in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Their findings revealed that several barriers, including usability issues, cultural differences, pricing concerns, and perceptions of MOOCs, significantly impact student participation. Moreover, the study identified additional barriers at both individual and environmental levels.

According to Kiran et al. (2020), the future of new pedagogy in the education sector is Edtech Services. The study's conclusion lists the criteria that influence the registration of edtech services. The investigation found seven things in all. The study discovered factors that encouraged edtech service registration. The ease of use, media exposure, extra features, and reputation of edtech all had a role in enrollment.

Mo et al. (2021) studied the online learning resources of higher education institutions in China during the pandemic were largely learning platforms provided by the Ministry of Education (MOE) of the People's Republic of China. Online courses were seen as more beneficial by university students because of the platform's user-friendly interface and the inclusion of learning-related items in the content. A platform's ease of use might encourage a favourable attitude about using it.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To study the influence of peer group on selection of online education service provider.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study, or the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. For this topic, research methodology has been presented in the context of, survey design, data sources, and tools of the data collection, sample design, data analysis and interpretation.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The framework of the research methodologies and procedures a researcher selects to carry out a study is known as the research design. This present research study is classified as descriptive research i.e., it is design to study the influence of peer group on selection of online education service provider.

Thus, the research design in case of the present study is a **descriptive design** throwing light on objective of the study.

SAMPLE DESIGN & SAMPLE SIZE

In the present study, stratified random sampling has been considered so as to collect the data from senior secondary school students and working professionals in Delhi NCR.

Sample size: Sample Size= 385 Respondents

According to research advisor (2006); Sample Size Determination: (At 95% confidence level with 5% margin of error the required sample size is 384). So, in the present research study the research has taken 385 sample size.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Primary Data

In the present study the primary data has been collected from the selected senior secondary school students & working professionals in Delhi NCR.

Secondary Data

The researcher has used following sources for collection of secondary data: Reports and Publications, Various Research Journals and Websites.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

For the present study, a questionnaire method has been used to obtain primary data. A structured questionnaire has been used to collect the data and has been administered through hand delivery and online also. The responses to the questions have been rated using a Likert Scale based on objective of the study.

VALIDITY OF QUESTIONNAIRE

For validity of questionnaire in the present research, researcher has conducted a pilot survey of 30 respondents to ensure that the questionnaire is easy to understand and that it covers all the relevant aspects of the research study. The researcher has used Cronbach Alpha to test the reliability of questionnaire. There are six questions related to this aspect and the value of Cronbach Alpha is given below:

Table 1: Table showing Cronbach Alpha and Standard Alpha related to influence of peer group on selection of online education service provider

Items	Cronbach Alpha	Std. Alpha
All items	0.8228	0.8146
V1 excluded	0.7437	0.7585
V2 excluded	0.7184	0.7264
V3 excluded	0.822	0.8215
V4 excluded	0.7735	0.7431
V5 excluded	0.8247	0.8091
V6 excluded	0.8403	0.8328

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

H₀: There is no significant influence of peer group on selection of online education service provider.

H₁: There is a significant influence of peer group on selection of online education service provider.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE USED

In the present research Kolmogorov Smirnov test is used to test the hypothesis. It is mostly used when the researcher is interested in comparing a set of values and questions are in the form of 5 point likert scale. The researcher has found the value of largest absolute difference which is known as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov D value. This test is concerned with the degree of agreement between a set of observed values and the values specified by the null hypothesis; **Beri (2008)**.

ANALYSIS RELATED TO INFLUENCE OF PEER GROUP ON SELECTION OF ONLINE EDUCATION SERVICE PROVIDER

Table 2: Response to the question "To what extent do you agree that your peer group has a significant influence on your selection of online education service provider?"

Components	Number of Respondents	Per Cent
Strongly Agree	83	21.5
Agree	200	52

Neutral	52	13.5
Disagree	48	12.5
Strongly Disagree	2	.5
Total	385	100

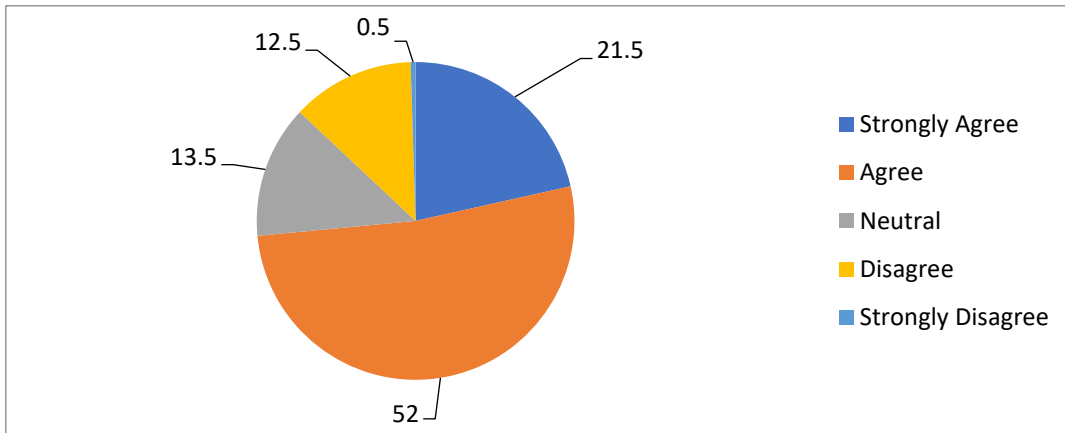


Figure 1: Response to the question “To what extent do you agree that your peer group has a significant influence on your selection of online education service provider?”

Analysis: A majority of respondents, 52%, agreed that their peer group significantly influences their choice of online education service providers. 21.5% of respondents strongly agree, indicating a substantial number of individuals who feel a robust influence from their peer network in this regard.

On the other hand, 13.5% of respondents remain neutral on the influence of their peer group, a smaller but still notable percentage, 12.5%, disagrees with the statement, suggesting that a portion of respondents does not perceive their peer group as a significant factor in selecting online education service providers. Meanwhile, a minimal percentage of 0.5% strongly disagrees, indicating a very small number of individuals who are adamant that their peers have no influence on their choice.

Table 3: Response to the question “How important is your peer group's opinion of an online education service provider in your decision-making process?”

Components	Number of Respondents	Per Cent
Very Important	79	20.5
Somewhat Important	190	49.5
Neutral	56	14.5
Not very Important	56	14.5
Not Important at All	4	1
Total	385	100

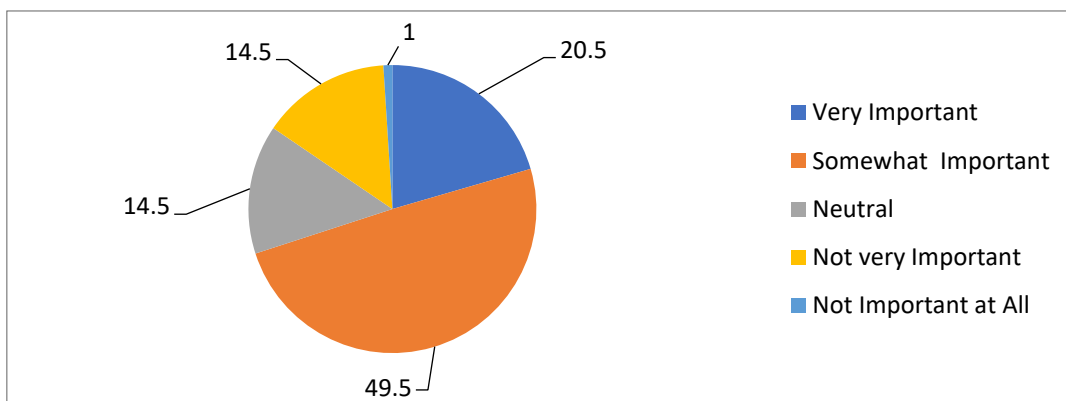


Figure 2: Response to the question “How important is your peer group's opinion of an online education service provider in your decision-making process?”

Analysis: The result reveals that 20.5% of respondents express that their peer group's opinion is very important, underscoring the significance of social validation and recommendations in shaping decisions about online education. A significant proportion, 49.5% indicates that peer group opinions are somewhat important, suggesting a moderate but noteworthy impact on decision-making. On the contrary, 14.5% of respondents each state that their peer group's opinion is not very important and neutral in their decision-making process. Interestingly only 1% of respondents indicate that their peer group's opinion is not important at all, representing a very small number of individuals who assert that the views of their peers have no impact on their decision-making regarding online education service providers.

Table 4: Response to the question “How frequently do you discuss online education service providers with your peer group before making a decision?”

Components	Number of Respondents	Per Cent
Very Frequently	77	20
Somewhat Frequently	147	38
Neutral	56	14.5
Not Very Frequently	96	25
Never	9	2.5
Total	385	100

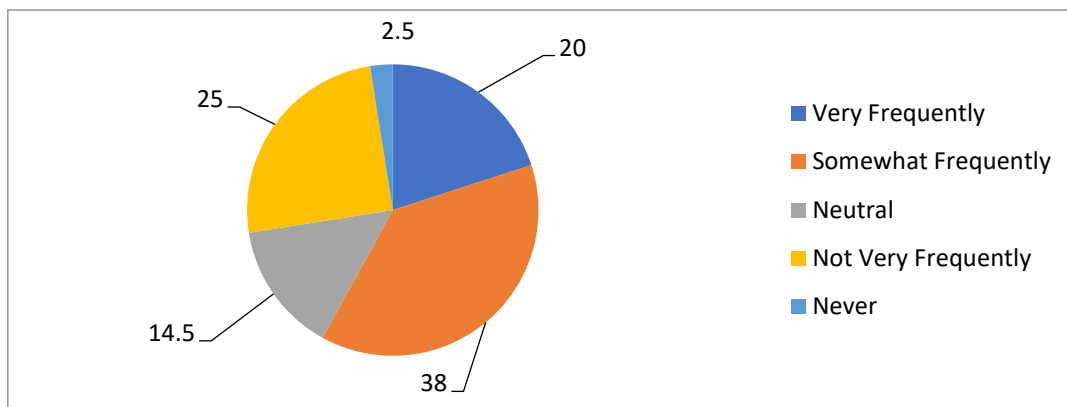


Figure 3: Response to the question “How frequently do you discuss online education service providers with your peer group before making a decision?”

Analysis: The above figure shows that 20% of respondents agreed that they discussed about online education service providers very frequently with the peer group, notably, a considerable 38% of respondents indicate that they somewhat frequently engage in discussions with their peer group about online education service providers. On the other hand, 25% of respondents agreed that they do not discuss online education service providers very frequently, a smaller but still noteworthy percentage, 14.5%, remains neutral on the frequency of discussions within their peer group about online education service providers. Interestingly, a mere 2.5% of respondents state that they never discuss online education service providers with their peer group, representing a very small number of individuals who seem to make such decisions independently of their social circles.

Table 5: Response to the question “How much weightage do you give to your peer group's recommendations when choosing an online education service provider?”

Components	Number of Respondents	Per Cent
A great deal	99	25.5
Some weightage	198	51.5
Neutral	37	9.5
Little weightage	48	12.5
No weightage at all	3	1
Total	385	100

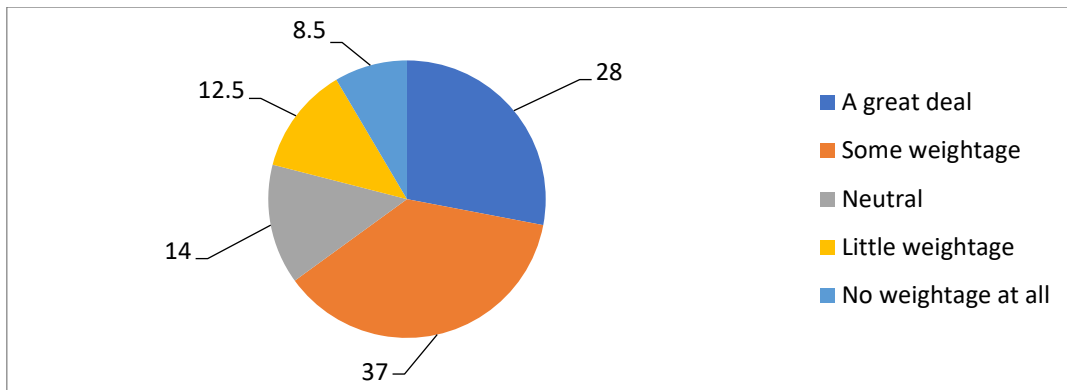


Figure 4: Response to the question “How much weightage do you give to your peer group's recommendations when choosing an online education service provider?”

Analysis: The above figure shows that 25.5% of respondents express that they give a great deal of weightage to their peer group's recommendations. This percentage suggests a significant impact of social validation and trust in shaping decisions about online education. A majority of respondents, 51.5%, indicate that they give some weightage to their peer group's recommendations. 12.5% of respondents state that they give little weightage to their peer group's recommendations, implying that this segment of the population relies less on social input when making decisions about online education service providers. A relatively smaller percentage i.e. 9.5% remains neutral, additionally, 1% assert that they give no weightage at all to their peer group's recommendations, representing a small number of individuals who appear to make decisions independently of their social circles.

Table 6: Response to the question “How much influence do you think your peer group has on your overall attitude towards online education service providers?”

Components	Number of Respondents	Per Cent
Very Influential	96	25
Somewhat Influential	193	50
Neutral	38	10
Not Very Influential	55	14
Not Influential at All	3	1
Total	385	100

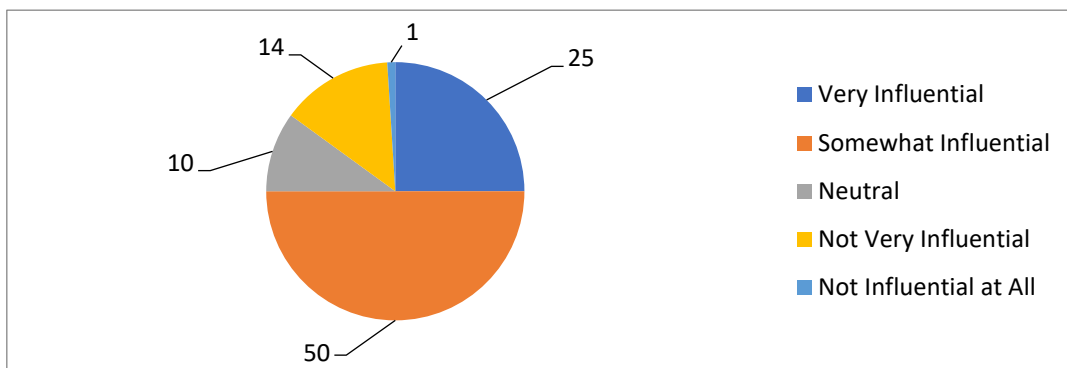


Figure 5: Response to the question “How much influence do you think your peer group has on your overall attitude towards online education service providers?”

Analysis: The above figure shows that 25% of respondents state that their peer group is very influential, indicating a sizable group for whom peer opinions have a significant impact on their attitude towards online education service providers. A significant 50% of respondents express that their peer group is somewhat influential in shaping their attitude towards online education service providers. A smaller but still notable percentage, 10%, remains neutral on the influence of their peer group, 14% of respondents believe that their peer group is not very influential in shaping their attitude towards online education service providers. Additionally, 1% of respondents assert that their peer group is not influential at all, representing a very small fraction of individuals who perceive no impact of peer opinions on their overall attitude towards online education service providers.

Table 7: Response to the question “Have you ever changed your mind about an online education service provider based on feedback or recommendation from your peer group?”

Components	Number of Respondents	Per Cent
Strongly Agree	73	19
Agree	221	57.5
Neutral	31	8
Disagree	49	12.5
Strongly Disagree	11	3
Total	385	100

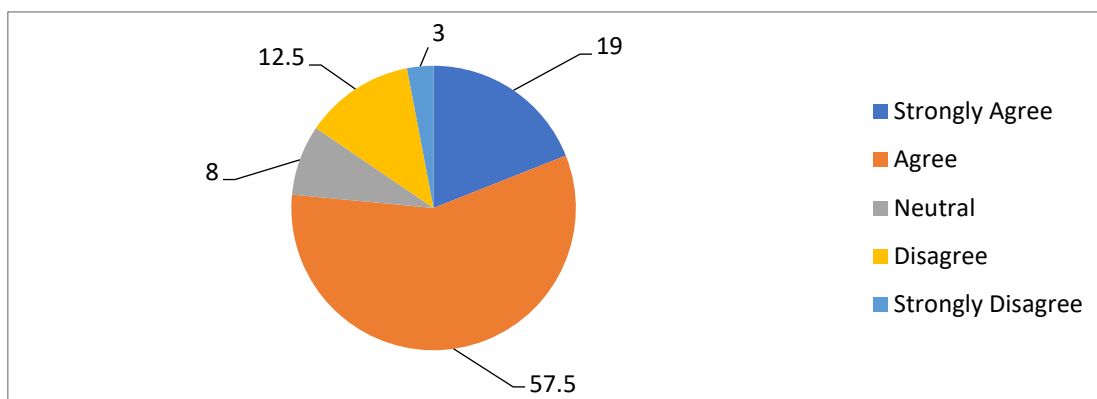


Figure 6: Response to the question “Have you ever changed your mind about an online education service provider based on feedback or recommendation from your peer group?”

Analysis: Moreover, 19% of respondents strongly agree that they have changed their minds based on peer recommendations, a substantial 57.5% of respondents agree that they have changed their minds about an online education service provider based on peer feedback or recommendations. A smaller but still noteworthy percentage, 8%, remains neutral on the impact of peer recommendations on their decision-making. On the contrary, 12.5% of respondents disagree that they have changed their minds based on peer recommendations. Lastly, 3% of respondents strongly disagree that they have changed their minds based on peer recommendations..

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis 1: H₀: There is no significant influence of peer group on selection of online education service provider.

H₁: There is a significant influence of peer group on selection of online education service provider.

Table 4.29: Calculation of Kolmogorov Smirnov D Value regarding influence of peer group on selection of online education service provider

ON	OP	OCP	NP	NCP	ADON
83	.21	.21	.2	.2	.01
200	.52	.73	.2	.4	.33
52	.14	.87	.2	.6	.27
48	.12	.99	.2	.8	.19
2	.01	1.00	.2	1.0	.00

Kolmogorov Smirnov D value = the largest absolute difference Value

= .33

Calculation of Critical Value of D

D= 1.36/[√]385= .069

Result: KS D Value i.e. .33 > table value i.e. .069, so H_0 is rejected. It means there is significant influence of peer group on selection of online education service provider.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The result found that majority of respondents, 52%, agreed that their peer group significantly influences their choice of online education service providers. 21.5% of respondents strongly agree, indicating a substantial number of individuals who feel a robust influence from their peer network in this regard. On the other hand, 13.5% of respondents remain neutral, 12.5% disagree with the statement, suggesting that a portion of respondents does not perceive their peer group as a significant factor in selecting online education service providers. Meanwhile, a minimal percentage of 0.5% strongly disagrees, indicating a very small number of individuals who are adamant that their peers have no influence on their choice.

2. The result reveals that 20.5% of respondents express that their peer group's opinion is very important, underscoring the significance of social validation and recommendations in shaping decisions about online education. A significant proportion, 49.5% indicates that peer group opinions are somewhat important, suggesting a moderate but noteworthy impact on decision-making. On the contrary, 14.5% of respondents each state that their peer group's opinion is not very important and neutral in their decision-making process. Interestingly only 1% of respondents indicate that their peer group's opinion is not important at all, representing a very small number of individuals who assert that the views of their peers have no impact on their decision-making regarding online education service providers.

3. The result shows that 20% of respondents agreed that they discussed about online education service providers very frequently with the peer group, notably, a considerable 38% of respondents indicate that they somewhat frequently engage in discussions with their peer group about online education service providers. On the other hand, 25% of respondents agreed that they do not discuss online education service providers very frequently, a smaller but still noteworthy percentage, 14.5%, remains neutral on the frequency of discussions within their peer group about online education service providers. Interestingly, only 2.5% of respondents state that they never discuss online education service providers with their peer group.

4. The result shows that 25.5% of respondents express that they give a great deal of weightage to their peer group's recommendations. This percentage suggests a significant impact of social validation and trust in shaping decisions about online education. A majority of respondents, 51.5%, indicate that they give some weightage to their peer group's recommendations. 12.5% of respondents state that they give little weightage to their peer group's recommendations, implying that this segment of the population relies less on social input when making decisions about online education service providers. A relatively smaller percentage i.e. 9.5% remains neutral, additionally, 1% assert that they give no weightage at all to their peer group's recommendations, representing a small number of individuals who appear to make decisions independently of their social circles.

5. The result shows that 25% of respondents state that their peer group is very influential, indicating a sizable group for whom peer opinions have a significant impact on their attitude towards online education service providers. A significant 50% of respondents express that their peer group is somewhat influential in shaping their attitude towards online education service providers. A smaller but still notable percentage, 10%, remains neutral, 14% of respondents believe that their peer group is not very influential in shaping their attitude towards online education service providers. Additionally, 1% of respondents assert that their peer group is not influential at all.

6. Moreover, 19% of respondents strongly agree that they have changed their minds based on peer recommendations, a substantial 57.5% of respondents agree that they have changed their minds about an online education service provider based on peer feedback or recommendations. A smaller but still noteworthy percentage, 8%, remains neutral on the impact of peer recommendations on their decision-making. On the contrary, 12.5% of respondents disagree that they have changed their minds based on peer recommendations. Lastly, 3% of respondents strongly disagree that they have changed their minds based on peer recommendations.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that majority of respondents acknowledge the significant influence of their peer group on their choice of online education service providers, indicating a pervasive impact of social networks. It emphasizes the importance of peer opinions, underscoring the role of social validation and recommendations in shaping decisions about online education.

SUGGESTIONS

Given that a significant percentage of respondents engage in discussions about online education service providers with their peer groups, educational platforms should consider incorporating features that facilitate peer interactions. Creating discussion forums, chat groups, or social spaces within the online learning environment can enhance the sense of community and encourage students to share insights and recommendations.

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