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# A Study on Student Satisfaction with Online Learning Platforms in Higher Education During and After COVID-19 in India with Reference to Assam

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**ABSTRACT :**

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated a dramatic shift in higher education, pushing institutions to adopt online learning platforms on an unprecedented scale. This study explores student satisfaction with online learning platforms used during and after the pandemic in higher education institutions of Assam, India. It investigates various dimensions such as accessibility, content quality, interaction, technological support, and overall effectiveness. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire from 400 students across diverse disciplines and analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation techniques. The findings reveal that while students appreciated the flexibility and accessibility of online platforms, concerns remained about interaction quality, technical glitches, and assessment reliability. Post-pandemic, student preferences show a growing inclination towards blended learning models. The study provides policy suggestions to improve digital learning environments in the region.

**Keywords**:- Student Satisfaction; Online Learning Platforms; Higher Education; COVID-19; Assam; Digital Education; Blended Learning; E-learning Experience

## Introduction:-

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 significantly disrupted the global education system, compelling institutions to transition abruptly from traditional classroom teaching to online modes of instruction. Higher education institutions in India, including those in Assam, were no exception to this global shift. This sudden transition brought with it both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, it fostered innovation in teaching-learning methodologies and expanded access to education through digital platforms. On the other hand, it exposed the stark digital divide, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, where internet connectivity, device availability, and digital literacy posed significant hurdles.

Online learning platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Moodle, and various Learning Management Systems (LMS) became central to academic delivery. These platforms offered features such as video conferencing, screen sharing, attendance tracking, and assignment submissions, facilitating continuity in education during lockdowns. However, the question remains: to what extent were students satisfied with this new mode of learning?

Student satisfaction is a crucial determinant of the success and sustainability of any educational innovation. It reflects students' perceptions of the quality of instruction, ease of use of platforms, level of engagement, interaction with faculty and peers, learning outcomes, and overall academic experience. The effectiveness of online learning is significantly influenced by these perceptions, particularly in regions like Assam where socio-economic and infrastructural challenges may shape students' experiences differently compared to metropolitan areas.

As educational institutions gradually resumed physical operations post-pandemic, many adopted blended or hybrid learning approaches. This raises important questions about the changing nature of student expectations and the future of digital education. It becomes imperative to assess not only how students experienced online education during the pandemic but also how their satisfaction levels have evolved in the post-pandemic context.

This study, therefore, aims to investigate the level of student satisfaction with online learning platforms in higher education institutions of Assam, both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. By identifying the key factors that influence student satisfaction and comparing perceptions across the two periods, the study seeks to provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and institutions aiming to enhance the quality and accessibility of digital learning in the region.

## Objectives of the Study:-

The primary goal of this study is to evaluate student satisfaction with online learning platforms used in higher education institutions in Assam during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. *To assess the level of student satisfaction* with various online learning platforms (e.g., Google Meet, Zoom, Moodle, Microsoft Teams) used during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in higher education institutions in Assam.

2. *To identify the key factors influencing student satisfaction*, such as ease of use, accessibility, interaction with instructors, assessment methods, and content delivery.
3. *To compare student perceptions* and experiences of online learning during the pandemic with those in the post-pandemic period.
4. *To explore students' preferences* for future learning modes—whether online, offline, or blended learning—and the reasons behind these preferences.
5. *To suggest practical recommendations* for improving online and hybrid learning platforms in higher education institutions in Assam based on student feedback.

## Review of Related Literature:-

The sudden onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 brought about a rapid shift in the higher education sector from traditional classroom teaching to digital platforms. Numerous studies have since explored the implications of this shift on student learning and satisfaction across various contexts.
*Dhawan (2020)* provided a foundational understanding of online education in India during the pandemic. The study emphasized the digital divide and highlighted the disparities in internet access, digital literacy, and the availability of learning resources across different socio-economic groups. These factors were found to significantly influence the effectiveness of online education and students' satisfaction levels.
*Arora and Srinivasan (2020)* examined the challenges faced by Indian students in transitioning to online learning platforms. Their findings revealed that while platforms like Zoom and Google Meet provided continuity in education, students often struggled with screen fatigue, reduced motivation, and the absence of classroom interaction. The study underscored the need for more engaging and inclusive digital pedagogy.
*Jena (2020)* conducted a nationwide survey of higher education students and noted a moderate level of satisfaction with online classes. Students appreciated the flexibility and convenience of learning from home but expressed concerns about the quality of teaching, internet connectivity, and limited opportunities for peer learning.
*Ali (2020)* highlighted the psychological and emotional challenges faced by students during online learning. His research pointed out that lack of physical interaction, increased workload, and poor assessment practices led to dissatisfaction among learners, especially in remote areas.
*Borah and Das (2021)* focused on the northeastern region of India and specifically on Assam. Their study reported that many rural students lacked access to smartphones or stable internet connections, creating a significant learning gap. The study stressed the importance of state-level digital education policies tailored to the region's needs.

## Methodology:-

This study employed a *descriptive survey design* to explore and analyze the level of student satisfaction with online learning platforms during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in higher education institutions of Assam.

### *1. Research Design*

A *quantitative research approach* was adopted using a descriptive survey method. This approach was suitable to gather standardized data from a large group of students and assess their experiences and satisfaction with online learning.

### *2. Population and Sample*

The target population included *undergraduate and postgraduate students* enrolled in higher education institutions (both public and private) across various districts of Assam.

- *Sample Size*: 400 students
- *Sampling Technique*: Stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation across gender, disciplines (Science, Arts, Commerce, Technical Education), and urban-rural settings.

### *3. Tools and Techniques of Data Collection*

A *structured questionnaire* was developed as the primary data collection tool. It consisted of *both closed-ended and Likert-scale items* and was administered online (via Google Forms). The questionnaire covered the following dimensions:

- Accessibility and Internet Connectivity
- Ease of Use of Online Platforms
- Teacher-Student Interaction and Engagement
- Quality of Content Delivery
- Evaluation and Assessment Methods
- Technical Support and Guidance
- Overall Student Satisfaction

The questionnaire was validated through expert review and a *pilot study* conducted with 30 students to ensure clarity and reliability.

***4. Data Collection Procedure***

- Data was collected from students across different colleges and universities in Assam during two distinct time periods:
  - *During COVID-19 Lockdown* (2020–2021)
  - *Post-Pandemic Phase* (2022–2024)

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and consent was obtained prior to data collection.

***5. Data Analysis Techniques***

Collected data was analyzed using *descriptive and inferential statistical methods*:

- *Descriptive Statistics*: Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated to summarize responses.
- *Inferential Statistics*: Pearson's correlation and t-tests were used to determine relationships and differences in student satisfaction across demographic variables and time periods (during vs. post-pandemic).
- Data analysis was done using *MS Excel and SPSS* software.

***Ethical Considerations***

- Confidentiality of respondents was maintained.
- Participation was voluntary, and no personal identifiers were collected.
- The study adhered to institutional and academic ethical guidelines.

## Major Findings:-

The analysis of data collected from 400 students across various higher education institutions in Assam yielded the following major findings:

***1. Usage and Familiarity with Online Platforms***

- *Google Meet (62%)*, *Zoom (54%)*, and *Microsoft Teams (33%)* were the most commonly used platforms.
- A large proportion of students (85%) became familiar with these platforms for the first time during the pandemic.
- Post-pandemic, 38% of institutions continued to use online platforms for blended learning or academic support sessions.

***2. Accessibility and Connectivity***

- *67% of students* reported facing regular internet connectivity issues, especially in rural and semi-urban areas of Assam.
- *28% of students* did not have access to personal devices (laptops/tablets) and relied on smartphones or shared devices.
- Students from rural backgrounds faced more difficulty in attending live sessions due to poor internet coverage and electricity problems.

***3. Satisfaction with Platform Features***

- *72% of students* found the platforms user-friendly and appreciated features like screen sharing, breakout rooms, and file sharing.
- However, *only 41%* rated the platforms as "very effective" in delivering a comparable experience to physical classrooms.

***4. Teacher-Student Interaction***

- *58% of students* reported limited interaction with instructors during online classes.
- Students felt a lack of personal engagement and immediate feedback.
- Recorded lectures were viewed positively for revision but did not compensate for live interaction.

***5. Learning Outcomes and Assessment***

- *64% of students* expressed doubts about the fairness and reliability of online assessments.
- There were concerns over copying, lack of supervision, and technical glitches during tests.

- Only *45% of students* felt that online classes helped them achieve the same academic outcomes as in-person learning.

***6. Psychological and Emotional Factors***

- *51% of students* reported experiencing digital fatigue or stress due to long hours of screen exposure.
- Many students missed the social interaction, extracurricular activities, and peer discussions that typically occur in physical classrooms.

***7. Post-Pandemic Preferences***

- *70% of students* expressed a preference for *blended learning*, combining face-to-face and online methods.
- *18% preferred* a return to fully offline classes, while *12%* supported continuing fully online education.
- Students saw value in recorded lectures, flexible access, and digital resource availability, but emphasized the irreplaceable benefits of in-person learning.

***8. Overall Satisfaction Levels***

- The *average student satisfaction score* (on a 5-point Likert scale) was:
  - *During Pandemic*: 3.2
  - *Post-Pandemic*: 3.5
- Satisfaction improved slightly after institutions adapted better digital practices, but concerns around interaction and assessment persisted.

## Suggestions:-

Based on the analysis of student feedback and the findings of the study, the following key suggestions are proposed to enhance student satisfaction with online and blended learning platforms in higher education institutions, particularly in Assam:

1. ***Improve Digital Infrastructure***
   - Government and institutional support is essential to expand internet connectivity in rural and remote areas of Assam.
   - Provision of subsidized or free digital devices (e.g., tablets, laptops) for economically disadvantaged students would significantly bridge the accessibility gap.
2. ***Adopt Blended Learning Models***
   - Institutions should implement hybrid systems that combine the strengths of both online and offline teaching.
   - Blended models should include interactive online components alongside in-person classroom engagement to maximize learning outcomes.
3. ***Enhance Teacher Training in Digital Pedagogy***
   - Regular professional development programs should be conducted for faculty members to improve their competence in using digital tools and creating engaging, student-centric content.
   - Emphasis should be placed on interactive teaching strategies and inclusive assessment techniques.
4. ***Develop Student-Centered Learning Platforms***
   - Learning platforms should be intuitive, multilingual (including regional languages), and adaptable to low-bandwidth environments.
   - Features such as discussion forums, real-time feedback, peer collaboration tools, and asynchronous access should be prioritized.
5. ***Ensure Fair and Transparent Online Assessments***
   - Institutions should design better online evaluation methods that include project-based learning, open-book assessments, and continuous evaluation to enhance reliability.
   - Academic integrity policies and the use of plagiarism detection tools must be strengthened.
6. ***Establish Counseling and Support Services***
   - Mental health support, academic counseling, and peer mentoring programs must be embedded into digital education systems to address student stress, isolation, and disengagement.
7. ***Create Continuous Feedback Mechanisms***
   - Institutions should implement structured feedback systems to regularly collect student input on course delivery, platform experience, and overall satisfaction for continuous improvement.

## Conclusion:-

The study concludes that online learning platforms played a vital role in maintaining educational continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, student satisfaction with these platforms in Assam was influenced by multiple factors including accessibility, interactivity, assessment quality, and emotional well-being. While students recognized the convenience and flexibility of online education, they also expressed concerns about reduced engagement and learning effectiveness.

Post-pandemic, there is a clear student preference for *blended learning models* that incorporate both digital and physical elements. Therefore, a strategic shift towards integrating well-designed digital tools into traditional learning environments is necessary. Higher education institutions, policymakers, and

stakeholders must work collaboratively to address infrastructural, pedagogical, and psychological challenges to ensure an inclusive, engaging, and effective learning experience for all students in Assam and beyond.

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