

Exploring the Impact of Online Teaching Method on Higher Education during COVID-19 Pandemic: Students' and Teachers' Perspective

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Abstract

The eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted every field of life. But its highly adverse effects were observed in the educational field. By taking into account the seriousness of COVID-19 at a global level, almost all the countries temporarily closed the physical education system that made especially higher education learners suffer at a higher rate. HECs of the different countries instructed teachers to shift physical education to the online learning teaching method (OLTM). Pakistani learners and teachers of Higher Education also adopted this innovative educational system but they faced some problems. So, the present study aimed to investigate the expediency of OLTM and problems related to it in the context of Pakistan's Higher Education System through Online Questionnaires and Interviews. The findings of the study revealed that OLTM didn't prove beneficial for Pakistani learners and teachers of higher education and they faced various physical, social, economic, and psychological problems.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Online Learning Teaching Method

Introduction

Covid-19, an acronym for Coronavirus Disease 2019, emerged primarily as a viral epidemic in one of the Chinese cities namely Wuhan in 2019 (WHO Report, 2020; Bao et al., 2020). Formerly it was diagnosed as pneumonia of an unrecognized causative agent (McIntosh, 2020). Before this epidemic, an outbreak of other coronavirus epidemics was recorded in the last twenty years like SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV (Cascella et al., 2020). At the end of 2019, the Chinese doctors diagnosed that illness was caused by a new type of coronavirus known as "Novel Coronavirus" (Cennimo, 2020) and termed as 2019-nCoV (2019 novel coronavirus). In the meeting held on 30th January 2020, WHO announced the 2019-nCoV outburst as **Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)** (Cennimo; Cascella et al., 2020). In March 2020, this COVID-19 epidemic is declared a pandemic as it has widespread all over the globe (Abid et al., 2020). Though the outburst of this pandemic has a malignant impact across the world it has severe detrimental effects on developing countries like Pakistan. One sector that has faced devastating effects of this pandemic is Education. The global education system was decelerated (Alam, Ruba & Rowshan, 2020). Education can be defined as the process of gaining knowledge and skills through some instructional institutions. It is a fundamental part of human life. Education acts as a backbone of the country and economic development depends on its progress (Zaidi & Salah, 2020). In March 2020, UNICEF and WHO provided a key guideline for the control of COVID-19 in schools. But, when the situation of COVID-19 became worst, then the governments of various countries, like Nigeria, Nepal, India, Kenya, Germany, France, China, Australia, California, Spain, Korea, Japan, New York, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Ghana, Pakistan, etc., took immediate measures and actions towards it. They notified the educational commissions for immediate temporary closure of institutions, including universities, colleges, and schools, nationwide as this disease is contagious and learners and teachers can be exposed to it easily (Jena, 2020). The closure of institutions has a destructive impact on learners (Couzin-Frankel, Vogel & Weiland, 2020). UNESCO calculated that almost 90% of the learners have stopped attending the institutions worldwide (Grahl, 2020; Kandri, 2020). But the learners of higher education were at high risk across the world (Crawford et al., 2020) as they are regarded as the backbone of countries' progress. They

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were highly affected by the outburst of this pandemic (Aristovnik et al., 2020). There was a need for a new innovative learning-teaching method for the continuation of studies as it was unpredictable that when COVID-19 would have lasted. The developed countries like the UN, US, France, Italy, and many more, that are electronically advanced, immediately started digital education (Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), online learning-teaching method (OLTM), virtual learning, distance learning, computer-based learning, remote learning or e-Learning) to compensate in-person education system but it was a great challenge for developing countries to accept digital education countrywide as they lack the infrastructure of digital technologies. Though the online education system replaced the traditional in-person education system for the continuation of studies (Yan, 2020) still the students who were part of higher education encountered various problems using the online learning teaching method. On June 26, the online conference was held by “Professors without Borders” in which discussion was carried out about the problems encountered by higher education learners in online education.

Like other developing countries, Pakistan also adopted an online-learning teaching method (OLTM) to prevent learning loss nationwide (Ali, 2020). Though the infrastructure of the online education system is not well-developed, still Pakistani Government decided not to suspend the classes for a long duration (Rehman, 2020). But Pakistani learners and teachers of higher education faced various problems in the execution of OLTM on regular basis. The main objectives of this study are to find out the usefulness of OLTM in the context of Pakistani’s online educational system, to investigate the online platforms which are frequently used by Pakistani learners and teachers to carry out online classes, and to analyze the challenges faced by learners and teachers in the use of OLTM during COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Background Study

COVID-19 and Global Education

COVID-19 has adverse effects on almost all the human activities of the world (Tria, 2020; Baadani and Abbas, 2020). But its impact on education remains unparalleled (Aristovnik et al.; Sobaih, Hasanein & Elnasr, 2020). The unexpected closure of academic organizations affected the students mentally, physically, and socially (Miller, 2020). In February 2020, UNESCO estimated that learners affected by COVID-19 were 999,014 (0.1%) throughout the world. But at the end of March, the percentage of affected learners increased to 87% (Saeed, 2020). According to the statistical calculation of UNESCO, approximately 1.38 billion (84%) learners have been affected across the world by COVID-19 on 23rd March 2020 (Bania & Banerjee, 2020) including learners of primary sectors, secondary sectors, and tertiary sectors (McCarthy, 2020).

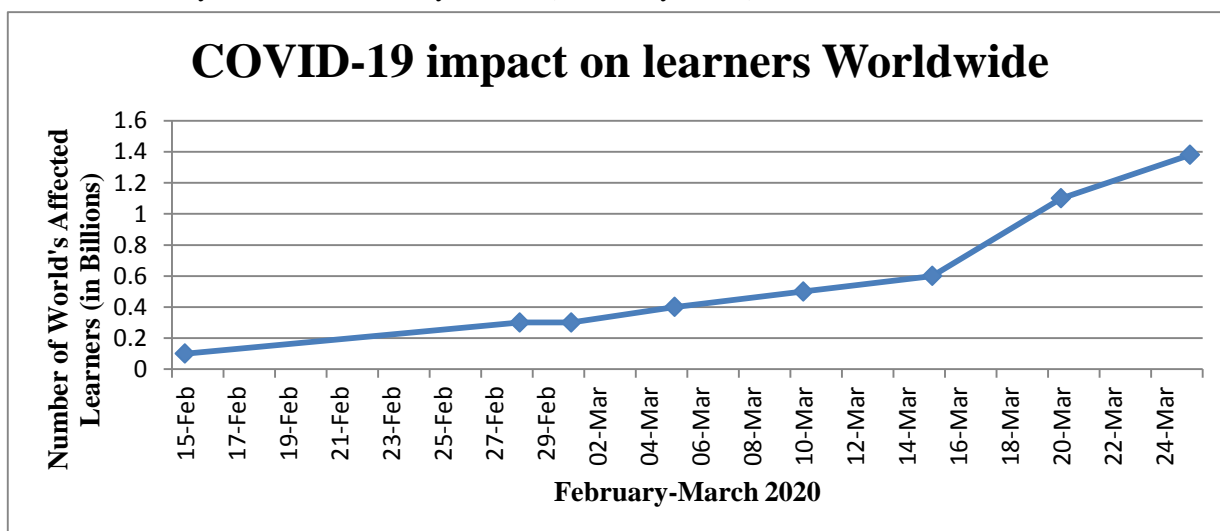


Figure 2: Impact of COVID-19 on Learners Worldwide (UNESCO 2020)

April 2020 was the peak point of COVID-19 spread and the number of affected learners exceeded from 1.38 billion to 1.5 billion (1,576,799,617), approximately from 87.1% to 91.2% (UNESCO; Saeed, 2020).

COVID-19 and Education in Pakistan

Pakistan is one of the developing countries that already facing various challenges before the outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, the Pakistani Federal Education Ministry and Professional Training declared to close all the institutions because of COVID-19 (Rehman, 2020). It is not new for Pakistan to close educational sectors (Saeed, 2020). On several occasions, it has been done before this, like in terrorist attack, smoggy environment, etc due to which the educational infrastructure of Pakistan is pathetic in comparison to other developing countries. In this COVID-19 pandemic situation, more than 46 million learners were affected in Pakistan (UNESCO, 2020). Because of this crucial panorama, the infrastructure of the educational system has become much worse than before. The Pakistani government needs to take serious measures towards improving the educational system of a country in the future; otherwise, Pakistan's education system would crash in the future (Saeed, 2020).

Covid-19 and Global Higher Education

COVID-19 has affected the whole sector of education. But the learners of higher education have been affected highly by it (Baadani & Abbas, 2020). Higher education is a key to the progress of one's country (Zaidi and Salah, 2020). Learners of higher education are the major contributors to the economic development of the countries. COVID-19 impacted all the activities of higher education learners like their academic life, social life, emotional health, and physical life (Aristovnik et al., 2020). To fight this pandemic situation, the demand for an alternative method for educating the learners was increased. Dr. Tedros (2020), Director-General of WHO said "the world cannot go back to the way things were. There must be a "new normal" – a world that is healthier, safer and better prepared". Based on this statement, the higher education commissions of various countries decided to transit from the traditional educational systems to online learning teaching methods (OLTM)/ online education for the continuation of education (Alam, Ruba & Rowshan, 2020; Li & Lalani, 2020). Online Learning-teaching method (OLTM) can be defined as a method used for giving education by the use of technological/digital/electronic devices (computers, laptops, iPods, tablets, mobiles) having the internet services. The transition of the traditional education system to OLTM was easy for the developed countries. Being technologically advanced, they retain all the digital/electronic/technological facilities (Harrison, 2020). Comparatively, it was a great challenge for the developing countries to implement OLTM as they prefer the traditional method of education (Harrison, 2020) because of a limited number of technological resources (Zaidi and Salah, 2020).

With the increase of OLTM usage, there is an increase of OLTM based tools/ applications. The technological applications used frequently all over the world are MOODLE, Skype, Zoom, Google Classrooms, academicearth.org, YouTube, etc (Sobaih, Hasanein & Elnasr, 2020). Though OLTM has been adopted all over the world, still the learners and teachers faced various challenges. An online international conference was held on 26th June hosted by Professional without Borders. The lecturers and learners participated in this conference for sharing the challenges they have faced regarding higher education.

Table 1: International Conference Report on Challenges encountered in Higher Education Online Learning

Panels	Names	Challenges
Panel 1	Dr. Oscar Palma (Colombia)	✓ Students lack internet service
	Dr. George Richards (USA)	✓ Learning material is not accessible to students.
	Chandni Hirani (Africa)	✓ To support students with special needs
	Dr. Sipim Sornbanlang (Thailand)	✓ Educators unfamiliar with online education
	Professor Folasade T Oguniola (Nigeria)	✓ Online classes are lengthened
	Professor Dries Velthuisen (South Africa)	✓ Disinterestedness of students
	Dr. Andrew Bell (UK)	✓ Distractions in online education
		✓ Load shedding of electricity hinders the online learning
		✓ Financial problems evoke anxiety in students and teachers regarding future
		✓ Engaging the students and maintaining it is the main challenge.
		✓ To encourage the students to remain in contact with teachers through online learning.

Panel 2	Victor Warlop (Denmark)	✓	Teachers are expected to be available 24/7
	Kaustubh Dighe (India)	✓	Unavailability of information
	Adamou Boubacar (Africa)	✓	Traveling issues and migration of students
	Njomeza Blakcori (UK)	✓	Assessments issues
	Chidi Nwogbaga (USA)	✓	Unemployment
		✓	Insufficient supply of internet service
		✓	Unorganized and non-motivational students
		✓	Students distracted in online classes
		✓	Unavailability of Teachers

Source: Professors without Borders by Deborah Holubiya and Mariam Radi, 2020

COVID-19 and Higher education in Pakistan

Like other developed and underdeveloped countries, COVID-19 highly affected Pakistani learners of higher education due to the nationwide universities' closure. Approximately, more than 1.8 million (1,878,101 in number) learner of higher education has been affected (Akram, 2020). In the past, the Pakistani government has had closed the universities temporarily for a short duration on various occasions like terrorist attacks (Rasheed, 2020). But at that time, no alternative method was adopted by learners and teachers to continue the education (Akram, 2020). It was the first time in Pakistani history that the Higher Education Commission (HEC) provided instructions to universities for adopting a new mode of learning system such that the online learning teaching method (OLTM) (Rehman, 2020). HEC notified the universities of the immediate initiation of online classes through LMS (Ali, 2020). This rapid transition to online education fabricated various problems for learners and teachers (Rasheed, 2020) as Pakistan lacks digital learning facilities (Zaidi & Salah, 2020) like internet facility is accessible to only 35% of the Pakistani population (Kemp, 2020). Moreover, HEC instructed that only those universities can use OLTM who can fulfill the following requirements (Zaidi & Salah, 2020):

1. University Readiness
2. Faculty Readiness
3. Course Readiness
4. Library Readiness
5. Technology Readiness
6. Student Readiness

It wasn't possible for most of the universities of Pakistan, like the universities of Baluchistan and Sindh, to fulfill the above-mentioned requirements as they lack the assistance of digital facilities (Zaidi & Salah, 2020). Thus, these circumstances altogether make it difficult for the learners of higher education to achieve their academic goals.

Onyema et al., (2020) investigated the effect of COVID-19 on Education by collecting the data from teachers, students, parents, and policymakers of different countries through a questionnaire. The findings showed that COVID-19 adversely affects the educational system across the world but to some extent it has been compensated by shifting in-person education to online learning. Similarly, Dawadi, Giri, and Simkhada (2020) examined the impact of COVID-19 on the educational system of Nepal. Similar results were identified in Nepal too. In the same way, Owusu-Fordjour, Komson, and Hanson (2020) analyzed the effect of COVID-19 on Ghanaian students' learning. The results indicated that students faced various problems due to school closure. Similarly, Adnan and Anwar (2020) analyzed Pakistani learners' viewpoint about the online education system emerged due to the crucial situation of COVID-19. The results indicated that this new norm isn't productive. Upoalkpajor (2020) analyzed students' understanding of COVID-19, its present, and afterward effects on the Ghanaian's education system. The findings revealed that COVID-19 has destructive effects on Ghanaian's education system

Nambiar (2020) investigated the point of view of students and teachers about the online learning system by conducting an online survey. The analysis showed that some areas, like qualitative communication and systematic online system, should be taken into account to fulfill the satisfaction level of students and teachers regarding online classes. Similarly, Fauzi and Khusuma (2020) analyzed the viewpoint of Indonesian teachers regarding online learning during COVID-19. The results showed that teachers faced various obstacles in the implementation of the online learning process. In the same way, Rasmitadila et al., (2020) analyzed the Indonesian teachers' point of view

about the online educational system namely “School from Home”. Similar results were evident in his work too.

Toquero (2020) analyzed the impact of COVID-19 on higher education in the Philippines. Further, he analyzed how higher education responded to the issues that arose due to the outburst of COVID-19. The results showed that educational institutions particularly in the Philippines are presented with surmounting challenges in their system of planning, implementation, and assessment.

Chang and Fang (2020) analyzed the obstacles faced by instructors in managing the online classes as well as their solutions too. Though they arranged the online learning still they found online learning as an ineffective way. Sahu (2020) analyzed how the pandemic situation of COVID-19 affects the education and mental health of the instructional pupil.

The present study focused on the investigation of the usefulness of the online learning teaching method (OLTM), types of digital media applications frequently used in OLTM, and issues encountered by them using OLTM.

Research Questions:

1. Do students and teachers find online learning and teaching beneficial on the outburst of the COVID-19 epidemic?
2. What are the hurdles/ challenges faced by Pakistani students and teachers using OLTM at the time of the pandemic situation of COVID-19?

Methodology:

This study employed a mixed approach which involves both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study. Creswell and Clark (2011) define mixed-methods research as those studies that include at least one quantitative strand and one qualitative strand. The tools used in the present study are “Online Survey Questionnaire” and “Interview”.

An online survey questionnaire is an instrument used to collect quantitative data from respondents through the internet. At this time of COVID-19, when every person is obliged to stay at home, so this tool proved an appropriate one to collect data from respondents. For this study, two online questionnaires (one for teachers and the other for learners) were designed. These questionnaires were made up of close-ended question items as they are easy to collect data. In close-ended questions, Five-Point Likert Scale was used ranged “from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), and Disagree (DA) to Strongly Disagree (SDA)”. The data was collected from 572 learners and 134 teachers across the country through random sampling. Online questionnaires were designed on Google Docs and then circulated through social media applications like Whatsapp with respondents. The data was then analyzed by using SPSS Software version 22.

The interview is a collection of qualitative data through question-answer segmentation. By keeping in mind the current situation of COVID-19 in Pakistan, telephonic semi-structured interviews were conducted with 07 teachers belong to different universities of the country. The data was collected through stratified sampling from respondents. The data was collected, recorded, translated, and transcript carefully.

Data Analysis

Analysis of Learners and Teachers Questionnaire

Table 1. I find online learning beneficial for the successful academic progress.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	133	23.3	25.0	25.0
	Disagree	194	33.9	36.5	61.6
	Neutral	95	16.6	17.9	79.5
	Agree	90	15.7	16.9	96.4
	Strongly Agree	19	3.3	3.6	100.0
	Total	531	92.8	100.0	
Missing	System	41	7.2		
Total		572	100.0		

The results showed that the majority of learners do not find online learning useful. The reason was that they lack the knowledge and training of basics of digital technologies and their use due to which learners went through psychological trauma and they find this new model of education inappropriate for achieving their goals.

Table 2. My teaching skills are improved using OTLM.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	4.5	4.7	4.7
	Disagree	6	4.5	4.7	9.4
	Neutral	40	29.9	31.5	40.9
	Agree	57	42.5	44.9	85.8
	Strongly Agree	18	13.4	14.2	100.0
	Total	127	94.8	100.0	
Missing	System	7	5.2		
Total		134	100.0		

The results showed that teachers agreed to the statement. The reason was that majority of the teachers who were not good at using computers and modern technology before COVID-19 are now good at using it. Thus the computer skills of teachers were improved and it enhanced their teaching skills.

Table 3. I feel highly motivated through online learning than in-person learning.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	143	25.0	26.7	26.7
	Disagree	234	40.9	43.7	70.5
	Neutral	81	14.2	15.1	85.6
	Agree	55	9.6	10.3	95.9
	Strongly Agree	22	3.8	4.1	100.0
	Total	535	93.5	100.0	
Missing	System	37	6.5		
Total		572	100.0		

The results showed a majority of the learners were not in favor of the statement. The reason was that productivity of learning was lost as the learners lost their focus and interest in studies because of the absence of physical activities, learning tasks, qualitative group discussion, and the formal educational environment in OLTM.

Table 4. Internet service is accessible in my area all the time which makes online learning easy for me.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	154	26.9	28.9	28.9
	Disagree	150	26.2	28.1	57.0
	Neutral	94	16.4	17.6	74.7
	Agree	111	19.4	20.8	95.5
	Strongly Agree	24	4.2	4.5	100.0
	Total	533	93.2	100.0	
Missing	System	39	6.8		
Total		572	100.0		

The results showed that the internet wasn't accessible to the majority of the learners. The reason was that either most of the learners are situated in those areas which are devoid of internet and mobile coverage or they belong to the lower class family due to which they were not able to pay expensive internet packages introduced by mobile telecom companies. Another reason was that learners live in those areas where internet signals are weak.

Table 5. I find epileptic electricity as one of the obstacles in online learning-teaching method.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	5.2	5.4	5.4
	Disagree	10	7.5	7.8	13.2
	Neutral	29	21.6	22.5	35.7
	Agree	68	50.7	52.7	88.4
	Strongly Agree	15	11.2	11.6	100.0
	Total	129	96.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	3.7		
Total		134	100.0		

The results revealed that the majority of the learners, as well as teachers, agreed to the statement because load shedding of electricity is one of the common issues faced by the Pakistani population on the regular basis. Either learners or teachers go offline simultaneously in OLTM because of electricity epilepsys thus causing the delay in classes.

Table 6. I feel difficulty in preparing assignments due to load shedding of electricity.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	20	3.5	3.8	3.8
	Disagree	77	13.5	14.6	18.3
	Neutral	104	18.2	19.7	38.0
	Agree	198	34.6	37.4	75.4
	Strongly Agree	130	22.7	24.6	100.0
	Total	529	92.5	100.0	
Missing	System	43	7.5		
Total		572	100.0		

The statistical results showed that the majority of the learners positively responded to the statement because in this COVID-19 pandemic situation the learners were solely dependent on digital technologies for studying and learning. Due to the regular load shedding of electricity learners couldn't complete their assignments on a given time and submit them on the expected submission date.

Table 7. Online learning has an adverse effect on mental, psychological and physical health of learners.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	16	2.8	3.0	3.0
	Disagree	58	10.1	11.0	14.0
	Neutral	102	17.8	19.3	33.3
	Agree	226	39.5	42.7	76.0
	Strongly Agree	127	22.2	24.0	100.0
	Total	529	92.5	100.0	
Missing	System	43	7.5		
Total		572	100.0		

The results revealed that the majority of the learners agreed to the statement positively. The reason was that the physical activities of the learners have been replaced by remote activities. Not only this, but the learners also feel mental stress in OLTM because it doesn't provide learners with opportunities to enhance their academic and personal skills. OLTM has made the learners psychologically unwell as they remained confused all the time that which website is reliable by which we can collect data for the study.

Table 8. I attain the set out academic goals effectively through online learning.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	76	13.3	14.4	14.4
	Disagree	173	30.2	32.9	47.3
	Neutral	157	27.4	29.8	77.2
	Agree	101	17.7	19.2	96.4
	Strongly Agree	19	3.3	3.6	100.0
	Total	526	92.0	100.0	
Missing	System	46	8.0		
Total		572	100.0		

The statistical results revealed that the majority of the learners showed disagreement towards the statement as OLTM is not as effective as traditional in-person education. The learners are unable to attain their academic goals because of the unavailability of various basic resources and the non-serious behavior of the other students who appeared in OLTM.

Table 9. I observe lack of interaction between learners and teachers in online learning-teaching method.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	23	4.0	4.4	4.4
	Disagree	80	14.0	15.2	19.5
	Neutral	83	14.5	15.7	35.2
	Agree	198	34.6	37.5	72.7
	Strongly Agree	144	25.2	27.3	100.0
	Total	528	92.3	100.0	
Missing	System	44	7.7		
Total		572	100.0		

The majority of the teachers and learners agreed to the statement. The reason was that the class duration has been lessened due to which the teachers were burdened to complete the lecture within a given time. In this way, the classes were more subject-based rather than discussion-based ones. And the interaction between students and teachers was lessened which demotivates the learners.

Table 10. Online learning is structured, well-organized and proved time saving for me.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	109	19.1	20.8	20.8
	Disagree	154	26.9	29.3	50.1
	Neutral	111	19.4	21.1	71.2
	Agree	109	19.1	20.8	92.0
	Strongly Agree	42	7.3	8.0	100.0
	Total	525	91.8	100.0	
Missing	System	47	8.2		
Total		572	100.0		

The table showed that the majority of the learners, as well as teachers, didn't agree with the statement because there are no rules and regulations set out for learners in OLTM to control their behaviors and activities by the teachers as online learning is not a formal norm of education. In addition to this, the online classes are not well-organized too as the learners can enter and leave the online classroom according to their own choice. The teaching-learning material is provided haphazardly by the teachers.

Table 11. The assessment and grading of the students in online classes is difficult for me.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	13	9.7	9.8	9.8
	Disagree	28	20.9	21.2	31.1
	Neutral	14	10.4	10.6	41.7
	Agree	58	43.3	43.9	85.6
	Strongly Agree	19	14.2	14.4	100.0
	Total	132	98.5	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.5		
Total		134	100.0		

The majority of the teachers showed positive responses towards the statement. The reason was that teachers were not physically present with the students due to which they were not able to monitor the activities of students during online classes. They were not sure of a fact that either the students have done cheating during online assessment and grading or they have appeared in exams with righteousness.

Table 12. There is a great effect of COVID-19 pandemic situation on the salary of the teachers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	5	3.7	3.8	3.8
	Disagree	18	13.4	13.8	17.7
	Neutral	29	21.6	22.3	40.0
	Agree	46	34.3	35.4	75.4
	Strongly Agree	32	23.9	24.6	100.0
	Total	130	97.0	100.0	
Missing	System	4	3.0		
Total		134	100.0		

The majority of the teachers agreed to it. The reason was that COVID-19 not only affected the education system but also the economy of the country. Due to this reason, the teachers' salary was affected highly as it was reduced to more than half of it.

Table 13. I face anxiety, feel laziness, boredom and less interested during online learning process.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	28	4.9	5.3	5.3
	Disagree	66	11.5	12.5	17.8
	Neutral	77	13.5	14.6	32.3
	Agree	163	28.5	30.8	63.1
	Strongly Agree	195	34.1	36.9	100.0
	Total	529	92.5	100.0	
Missing	System	43	7.5		
Total		572	100.0		

The table showed that the majority of the learners and teachers strongly supported the statement. The reason is that online classes are more teacher-oriented and learners have to passively attend the class due to which the learners feel bored and disinterested and sometimes they didn't perceive the meaning due to which they feel anxious. As the learners were staying at home all the time so they become much lazier than before.

Table 14. I find quality of discussion not desirable.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	24	4.2	4.5	4.5
	Disagree	98	17.1	18.6	23.1
	Neutral	156	27.3	29.5	52.7
	Agree	184	32.2	34.8	87.5
	Strongly Agree	66	11.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	528	92.3	100.0	
Missing	System	44	7.7		
Total		572	100.0		

The results showed that the majority of the learners agreed to the statement. The reason was that learners haven't adopted OLTM seriously. They cracked the jokes and asked silly or out of the context questions during online classes. Not only this, they don't have any fear of teachers' presence as well because of the invisibility of the video.

Table 15. I feel distraction during online classes.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	22	3.8	4.2	4.2
	Disagree	59	10.3	11.2	15.4
	Neutral	91	15.9	17.3	32.6
	Agree	230	40.2	43.6	76.3
	Strongly Agree	125	21.9	23.7	100.0
	Total	527	92.1	100.0	
Missing	System	45	7.9		
Total		572	100.0		

Statistical results indicated that the majority of the learners responded to the statement positively. The reason was that learners experienced various situations (like the homely activities of the other learners, their non-serious behavior, out of the context interaction, and many more) by which their focal point towards learning lost during OLTM.

Analysis of Interview

According to Tria (2020), COVID-19 has adverse effects on almost all the human activities of the world. But major effects were evident in the field of education. Almost more than 90% of learners were affected by it. Due to the closure of institutions throughout the world, learners and teachers undergo mental, physical, and psychological agony. Traditional educational system compensated with online learning teaching method (OLTM). According to one respondent,

"It is the only thing educationist could do in COVID-19. There is no other option because people confined to home."

During COVID-19, OLTM was the best solution by which learners could continue their studies and learning process. Otherwise, there would be a learning loss on the learners' side. At the initial stage, this new model was problematic but with time, it ascertained convenience. For some, OLTM was beneficial while for others it was non-productive. As one respondent responded,

"To not that extent and to not that we didn't achieve that, I should say, merit and the target we are planning for but again something is better than nothing."

The impact of OLTM has both positive and negative impacts on learners and teachers. When we talk about its positive impact, firstly, OLTM saves time, money, and traveling distance. Secondly, new teaching applications usage was acknowledged and teacher-learner technological skills and teachers' evaluation skills were improved. On the other side, it also has a bad impact on learners like social meetings were banned and the absence of learners mentally and physically. As one respondent replied,

"Online education has a negative impact. Students missed many aspects of learning as online learning could not provide all the aspects."

In the meanwhile, there are some challenges faced by learners and teachers. For instance, absence of all learners, internet unavailability and lack of internet signals, epileptic electricity, respectability, and audibility problems. As one respondent replied,

"We miss things like verbal and non-verbal language use. I didn't know what was happening at the side of learners. I was not aware of the respectability of learners on another side. I had semiotic problems. How learners were receiving lectures? It was a disappointment."

So the government of Pakistan should take some appropriate measures for improving the online education system across the country.

Results

Expediency of OLTM

The eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic enforced Pakistani HEC to close the educational institutions for further expansion of this contagious viral disease. On 18th March 2020, the Pakistani HEC instructed all the universities to organize online teaching and learning (Khan, Niazi, & Saif, 2020). As OLTM was the new model of education so at the first it was problematic but afterward learners, as well as teachers, somehow compensate with them. Learners find OLTM an inappropriate and non-productive way of education (Owusu-Fordjour, Komson, & Hanson, 2020) because they lack necessities of OLTM like availability of electricity, internet, training of digital technologies, and digital gadgets/devices (Onyema et al, 2020; Owusu-Fordjour, Komson, & Hanson, 2020). On the other side, teachers find it convenient. As one of the respondents replied,

“Actually because it was inevitable to conduct and to pursue with online classes so we didn’t have any scale so it was good to conduct and continue the procedure of this teaching otherwise our students they would have, have a different gap or we may say a huge gap in their studies. In this way, it was a good online that some or how they were able to continue their studies. So, I am satisfied. Yes, it should be.”

Teachers found OLTM beneficial as it helped the teachers to improve their teaching, technological as well as evaluation skills. Nambiar (2020) analyzed similar results. Thus, some found this new method of teaching-learning beneficial while for others it was inconvenient, inappropriate, and non-beneficial (Fauzi & Khusuma, 2020).

Challenges faced by learners using OLTM

During COVID-19, both learners and teachers faced various challenges while using OLTM for the continuation of their studies. These challenges are as follows:

1. Demotivation:

Learners feel demotivated in online classes (Nambiar, 2020). They found OLTM non-productive because it is a more teacher-oriented method as they have no room to practice their perceived knowledge.

2. Unavailability of Internet access:

One of the major obstacles faced by learners and teachers was internet accessibility (Owusu-Fordjour, Komson, & Hanson, 2020; Onyema et al, 2020). The residential areas of most of the learners are either deprived of internet and mobile coverage or they have poor availability of signals due to which they couldn’t attend online classes.

3. Epilepsy of Electricity:

One of the common issues faced by Pakistani learners was the load shedding of electricity throughout the country. Onyema et al. (2020) investigated the same results in their study. Either the learners or teachers went offline during online classes because of electricity epilepsy. It also disrupted the learners to complete their assignment tasks at a given time (Adnan & Anwar, 2020).

4. Mental, Physical, and Psychological Agony:

Through the use of OLTM, learners go through mental, physical, and psychological stress (Chang & Fang, 2020) as they always remained confused about what they have to do and what they haven’t because of the lack of teachers’ guidance.

5. Attainment of set out academic goals is impossible:

OLTM is a new model of education. So it wasn’t as effective as the traditional education system for attaining set out academic goals because most of the learners were devoid of digital technologies and their training. Canceling of exams and promotion to the next grade diminished the critical development of learners.

6. Lack of interaction:

OLTM reduced the interaction between learners and teachers (Nambiar, 2020) as the lecture timing was lessened in online classes. Teachers focused more on subject orientation due to which the learners remain passive. Another reason for the lack of interaction during OLTM was that teachers weren’t able to contact those learners who live in those areas that lack internet and electricity accessibility.

7. OLTM informal way of education:

OLTM is an informal educational system. Though it compensated education it is not accepted as the new model or the substitute of the traditional education system. The reason was that OLTM is an unstructured and unorganized system of education (Nambiar, 2020). There is no way of monitoring the learner's activities present on the other side by using OLTM. We can't measure learners' behavior, attentiveness, and mental presence.

8. Assessment and Grading:

One of the difficult tasks for teachers in OLTM was to assess the learners' understanding of the particular subject. Online examination is not an appropriate way of assessment because teachers remained unaware of the fact that the learners solved the paper either by themselves with righteousness or they deceived teachers by doing the cheating in the paper. Sahu (2020) reported the same results.

9. Reduction in Salary:

As face-to-face classrooms shifted to OLTM so there was a reduction in teachers' salaries up to 50 to 60%. The reason was that teachers working from home so there was no consumption of money on automobiles or any other formalities so the government reduced the salaries of teachers.

10. Quality of discussion:

The majority of the learners didn't find discussion qualitative during online classes. Similar results were reported in Nambiar (2020) study.

11. Distraction in OLTM:

During OLTM, learners and teachers both felt distracted during online classes (Nambiar, 2020). Not only this, some learners cracked jokes during online classes to divert the attention of teachers as well as other learners from the focal point of discussion.

12. Perceptibility and audibility:

During OLTM, teachers were unaware of the fact that what the learners were doing on the other side. Either they were receiving the lectures or not. Not only this, some teachers faced audible problems because of poor internet signals, and some faced semiotic problems.

Conclusion

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted all human life activities. But education was highly affected by it. The learners of higher education were mainly affected by it. So HEC of Pakistan instructed all the universities to shift from in-person education to online learner-teaching method (OLTM). The present study focused mainly on the expediency and challenges of OLTM. The results of the study revealed that to some extent OLTM was beneficial for the continuation of learners' studies but still it is inappropriate and non-productive as compared to in-person education. The findings of the study also indicated that teachers and learners both faced various challenges while using OLTM like internet connectivity, electricity, respectability, assessment, and grading, etc.

The Government of Pakistan should take an active step toward improving digital technologies and should set up a blended educational system all over the country. Not only this, but every learner should also be provided with digital devices to avail the opportunity for appearing in online classes. HEC should instruct the universities to spread the awareness of using OLTM among learners for the future.

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