ONLINE EDUCATION DEGREE COURSES-OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Dr. Varsha Bapat
Associate Professor, Department of Electronic Science,
Modern College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Pune, Maharashtra

Dr. Sagar H. Mohite
Principal, Atharva College of Hotel Management and Catering Technology,
(Affiliated to University of Mumbai) Malad, Mumbai, Maharashtra

Mrs. Poornima Tiwari
Assistant Professor , Department of Education, Shri Sharankara Charaya
Mahavidhayalaya , Junwani , Bhilai, Chhattisgarh

Mr. Swapnil Pawar
Assistant Professor, Institute of Hotel Management & Catering Technology, Bharati
Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University), Pune, Maharashtra

Ms. Jayashri Dhondiram Hatakar
Librarian, Bharati Vidyapeeth's , Dr. Patangrao Kadam Mahavidyalaya, Sangli, Maharashtra

Abstract

There are currently a significant number of higher education institutions in India that provide online course work for both undergraduate and graduate students. These schools offer complete academic programmes that range from business and the humanities to professional and doctoral degrees. The most recent data suggests that this upward trend will continue, pointing to the fact that online enrolments in India have been steadily growing over the course of the past decade. The trend in higher education toward offering online degree programmes has led to the development of synchronous online instruction, which is ideally suited for classes taught in the seminar format. In the past, fewer schools have been known to bring together smaller groups of students to actively engage on specific topics during the course of a semester. In most cases, this is accomplished by on-going conversation, but in some cases, more formal research may be required. The design of the curriculum for the online class was done with the intention of acquainting students with the theoretical and methodological frameworks of their chosen academic field to a greater extent. Furthermore, the programme for the online class was intended to give students the opportunity to engage with specific examples of the types of practical challenges that may arise during research and practise. There have been a number of research studies done, the majority of which have focused on the capacity, effectiveness of curriculum, programme design, and assessment of asynchronous online training. On the other hand, there have only been a relatively small number of studies that have solely focused on synchronous online interactive instruction. Although these technologies are fairly inexperienced, this

gap is growing increasingly evident as virtual classroom delivery systems incorporate synchronous technology inherent in online tools. This research highlights the major challenges & opportunities in online education degree courses where 150 respondents have taken form Delhi- NCR and results discussed through T-test using SPSS.

Keywords : Online, Education, Degree, Courses, Virtual, Growth, Opportunities

Introduction

More than half of the world's population will have access to the Internet by the end of this decade (Kraft & Jung, 2016). It is difficult to foresee the full worldwide impact of the ways in which the internet and technology are altering social conventions, societal institutions, and corporate ideals (Holladay, 2017). (McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2015).

The impact that technological advances are having on markets and the structure of higher education is having a profound impact on the industry around the world (Christensen & Eyring, 2011). In many cases, online education has completely replaced more conventional classroom settings. Because of the rapid proliferation of digital technologies and the critical role they play in higher education institutions' ability to fulfil the requirements of their students, these institutions are required to make adjustments to the programmes they offer in order to maximise the impact of the curriculum that is being taught, as well as the formats and designs of their classrooms and the overall impact of their business models (Delich, 2005).

Third-party rivals, such as EduTech firms and online educational providers, are entering the market, adding to the already high level of competition in the educational sector. The intersection of IT and university rivalry has been likened to "dancing with the devil" for at least the past two decades (Katz, 1999). The problem has not been solved since the new competitors continue to operate under more independent and profit-driven frameworks. These frameworks do not necessarily seek to primarily serve the higher education market, but they are nevertheless appealing to businesses operating in that industry.

Objective of the study

To explore challenges and opportunities for online education degree courses

To focus the credibility of online degree courses & identify the barriers to facilitating an online environment?

Research Methodology

This research has opted many sources to capture data. Primary source is used on the basis of structured questionnaire of 150 respondents randomly from higher education institutions. Secondary data has been collected from various manuals, articles, google search & government websites. Through a survey, the study's authors zeroed down on their most valuable respondents. This study was conducted in the city of Pune, Maharashtra

Hypothesis of the study

H01: There is no significant opportunities & distinct challenges associated.

Ha1: There is significant opportunities & distinct challenges associated.

H02: There is no possibility to quantitatively analyse credibility of online degree courses & identify the barriers to facilitating an online environment.

Ha2: There is possibility to quantitatively analyse credibility of online degree courses & identify the barriers to facilitating an online environment.

Review Literature

Online learning, as described by Khan (1997), is the process of imparting knowledge to a distant audience using the medium of the World Wide Web. According to the definition provided by Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman (2011), "online courses" are those in which at least 80% of the course content is supplied digitally, while "face-to-face instruction" are those in which digital delivery accounts for less than 30%. Stack, Steven Dr. (2015) claims that the previous decade has seen a proliferation of online universities. According to his findings, there is little to no performance gap between students in online and traditional classroom settings. An additional study by Dr. Fahad N. Al-FAHAD looks into how 186 college students around the country feel about the usefulness of mobile learning in their education. The results of their study show that students view mobile devices as a useful tool for enhancing their academic and social interactions. Herman, T., and Banister, S. compared the prices of on-campus and online education and found no significant difference in either. Their research proves that students are more invested in online courses, that they lead to better learning outcomes for students, and that the university saves money in the process.

A report by Google and KPMG estimates that by 2021, India's online education sector will have grown from its current $247 million to $1.96 billion. In addition, India's market for online learning is the world's second-largest. The report's findings also show that the number of people willing to pay for online education services would increase by at least six times, reaching around 9.6 million by 2021.

Challenges Facing in Online Education Degree Courses

The major challenges are as follows :

Inadequate technological support : There is still more work to be done in India's digital infrastructure, despite the government's efforts. The most pressing issue is the lack of constant power and fast internet. When it comes to internet reliability and speed, India ranks 89th. Just 15% of homes have Internet connectivity, and even fewer have access to mobile broadband (only 5.5 subscriptions for every 100 people), according to research by the World Economic Forum. The latest technological advancement, 5G networks, are essential for today's users because of the increased download speeds they provide.

Few opportunities for socialization : The accessibility of online learning means that there is little impediment to its widespread adoption, low levels of one-on-one contact between students and instructors. As it turns out, According to Dhirendra Kumar (2010), attendance in online courses, particularly those that are self-paced, is extremely low dialogue amongst equals. Online forums, chat rooms, and electronic mail are where most conversations take place. Forums for open debate and discussion. There is no college culture to facilitate friendship building. This is because you are unable to make connections that would aid in professional advancement.

Degrees with questionable credibility: Although businesses are beginning to recognise online degrees, there is a large number of untrustworthy and unaccredited programmes out there. The availability of fraudulent certificates issued by fraudulent organisations is on the rise. Because of these cons, not only do online degrees lose their validity, but so does the trust of potential employers.

Motivation among students to pursue online degree courses : Not all pupils can be expected to make it to class without some encouragement. Students using self-paced online courses may put off their work until the last minute. A large percentage of students fail to finish their courses when taking them online. Self-discipline and initiative are essential to finish the work and submit it on time. An online programme is not a good fit if you have trouble with things like self-motivation, time management, and organisational skills.

The course language : The majority of India's 1.25 billion people live in rural areas and speak one of the country's many indigenous languages. Most of the online courses only provide content in English. Therefore, non-English speaking pupils have a hard time accessing the necessary language materials. Therefore, it is the responsibility of IT experts, teachers, administrators, language content developers, and content disseminators to come up with a workable framework and standard solution for students who are exclusively fluent in Indian languages.

Influential Factors in India's Rapid Adoption of Online Education

1. India has a high rate of internet adoption :

At present, there are 481 million internet users in India, and this number is expanding at a rate of 11.34% annually, according to a survey by IAMAI and Kantar IMRB. Also, as of December 2017, internet penetration was 64.84 percent in urban areas but only 20.26% in rural areas. The proliferation of smartphones is largely responsible for India's rising online population. By the end of 2017, eMarketer, a market research firm based in the United States, estimated that 291.6 million people in India used smartphones. By the end of 2018, they anticipate that this figure will have increased by 15.6% to 337 million. The rise in smart phone usage and the advent of cheaper smart phones are the primary drivers of this expansion. A rise in mobile internet users can be attributed to the widespread availability of high-speed, low-cost internet. The internet has made it possible for people in both urban and rural areas to have access to a high-quality education.

2. Spending less time & energy for online education degree courses

Due to the nature of the internet, online learning can take place whenever and wherever is most convenient for the student. You can read it first thing in the morning or last thing at night, in the comfort of your own home or in the comfort of a cafe or on the train. Since most of the material is already there, you can save the lectures or videos to your computer and watch them whenever it's convenient. Furthermore, the expense of an online education is less compared to that of a traditional classroom setting. Costs for lodging and transportation can be reduced significantly. All information is freely accessible online, eliminating the need to purchase books.

3. Classes that working professionals can easily complete

Because they are unable to give up their employment to attend college, working professionals can benefit greatly from the accessibility of online learning. They have access to a wide range of courses through online education, expanding their horizons in terms of potential professions. The analysis from Google and KPMG confirms this, stating that online certification and skill refresher courses are the fastest-growing segment of the online education market. The 'upgrad' online platform, like many others, provides both online education and employment opportunities related to Big Data.

4. The Indian government's initiative

The government of India is also making strides to expand access to distance learning. They have launched Swayam, through which anyone can take advantage of free online courses leading to various credentials. Together with IITs, IIMs, and NPTEL, they hope to fulfil the initiative's primary goal of improving access to high-quality education. The primary goal of this effort is to build a more robust and faster network through the spread of high-speed internet. The federal government has launched the online National Digital Library, which now houses 17 million digital books and journals. There are currently 32 million users who have registered to use NDL for free. All state universities now have access to Wi-Fi thanks to government funding.

5. Increasing your profile with potential employers

The majority of U.S. colleges and universities now provide access to at least one online course. Even though it might be challenging and expensive to gain entry, several top Indian universities now offer online courses. Employers recognise and value online degrees from reputable universities and colleges. Employers value candidates who can demonstrate the self-discipline, motivation, and other qualities valued by online education. Careful consideration should be given when deciding on a college or university. Additionally, you can pick from a vast array of alternatives. If you choose wisely, attending the correct school can propel your career forward.

6. Bringing together the industry expectations & education level

An estimated 18.9 million Indians would be out of work by 2019, up from the current 18.3 million, according to data from The World Employment and Social Outlook - Trends. A growing proportion of India's population will be of working age by 2021, according to a recent report. You seem to assume it's because there aren't enough good jobs in India, right? According to Nascom, the cyber security industry would need 6 million workers by 2022. Sanjay Bansal has stated his belief that the lack of available jobs that are a good fit for a person's skill set and level of education is the primary reason for their unemployment. This is true for 62% of the unemployed post-graduates and 58% of the unemployed graduates. One solution to the disconnect between what businesses need and what schools are providing is to take classes online. The availability of specialised graduate-level courses in a variety of subject areas is one of the many advantages of pursuing higher education online.

Opportunities in Online Education Degree Courses

As a result of technological advancements, everyone involved in the field of online education now has a lot to gain. sector that incorporates business owners, teachers, and students. Factors include including but not limited to the following that each provide unique possibilities in this field:

The Rise of Mobile-Based Education : In 2017, 320.57 million people used a mobile device to access the internet, per a research in Stastia (2018). It is anticipated that by 2021, this number would have risen to 462.26 million. The cheapness of 4G internet and smart phones is widely attributed with driving this increase in usage. The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) believes that the National Telecom Policy (NTP) 2018, which prioritises emerging technologies like 5G, would lead to increased access to the internet in underserved areas and lower pricing for high-quality data services. In 2018, 73 percent of all internet usage will occur on mobile devices, according to a survey by Zenith. Therefore, in the not too distant future, the overwhelming majority of students will be able to access e-learning via their mobile phones.

Model Combination : In the not-too-distant future, traditional classrooms and digital platforms will merge. The term "blended learning" refers to the practise of combining online digital media with more conventional forms of education. Both the instructor and the student must be physically present for the activity to take place, although the latter may choose the timing, location, and/or pace at which the learning takes place. The concept will make use of both traditional classroom methods and those facilitated by technology. Soon, we will be able to take classes online to improve our practical and interpersonal abilities, complementing the traditional face-to-face offline pedagogy that has been used up until now.

Recently Released Lectures : Information technology (IT) courses, including big data, cloud computing, and digital marketing, are currently the most popular offerings in the world of online education. Unexpected fields including culinary management, photography, personality development, forensic science, cyber law, etc. would see rising demand in the future.
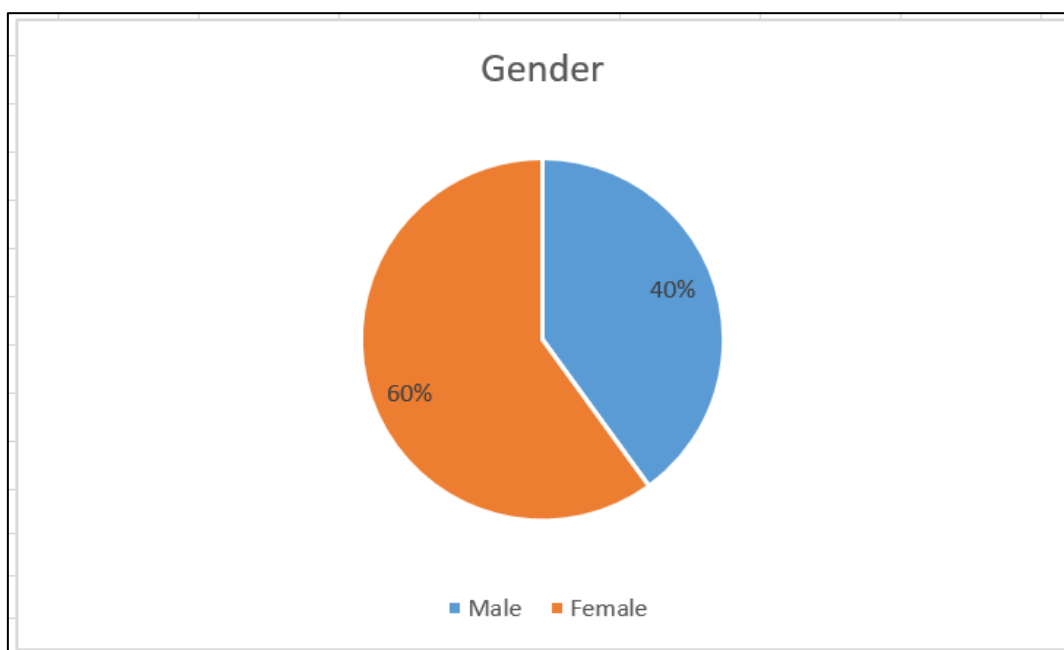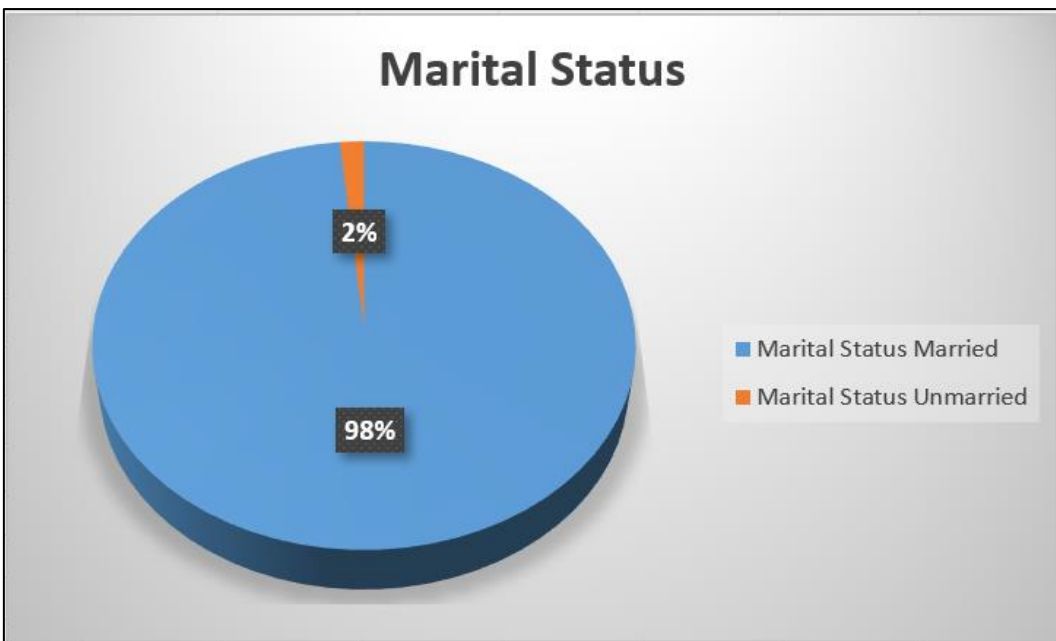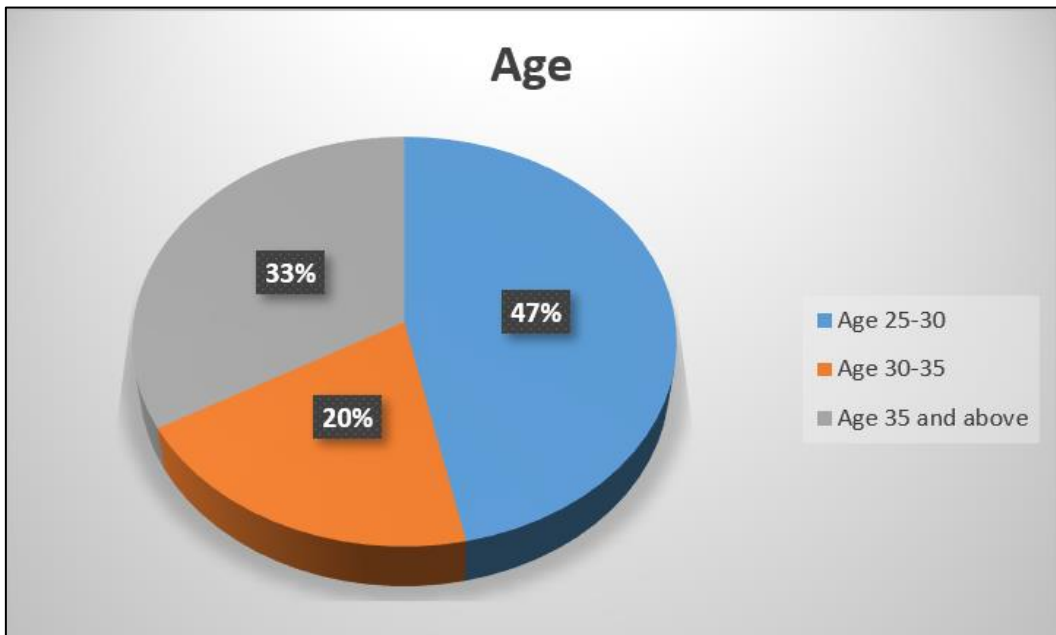
Result and Discussion

Demographic Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Analysis

Demographic Analysis			
		Frequency	**Percent**
Gender	Male	60	40%

	Female	90	60%
	25-30	70	46.7%
	30-35	30	20%
Age	35 and above	50	33.33%
	Married	125	83.33%
Marital Status	Unmarried	25	1.333%
	Graduation	20	13.33%
	Post-Graduation	75	50%
Education Level	Others	55	36.67%

Gender

Male Female

Research Paper   UGC CARE Listed (Group -I) Journal
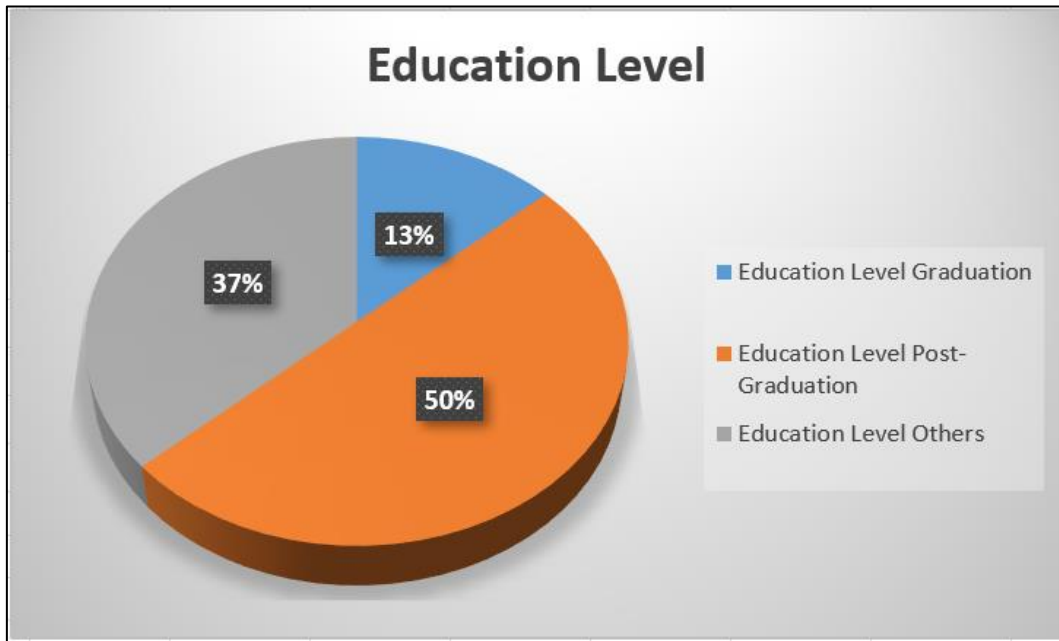
Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Online Programmes and Programme Design	150	1	5	4.26	.833
Credibility of online degree courses	150	1	5	4.35	.796
Constructivist Learning Experience in the Synchronous Online Environment	150	1	5	4.01	.921
Technology Issues	150	1	5	4.11	.803
Traditional Classroom and Asynchronous Learning Comparisons	150	1	5	4.28	.839
Classmates and Instructor as Discussion Facilitators	150	1	5	3.99	.949
Valid N (listwise)	150				

Table 2 depicted the descriptive analysis and identify that majority of respondents focusing on credibility of online degree courses (Mean=4.35 and standard deviation=.796) followed by

Traditional Classroom and Asynchronous Learning Comparisons (Mean=4.28 and standard deviation=.839). Respondents then more focused about Online Programmes and Programme Design (Mean=3.99 and standard deviation=.949). Therefore, findings of the study stated that for online degree courses people are much interested but challenges must be incorporated.

Table 3: One-Sample Test

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 0					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Online Programmes and Programme Design	95.931	150	.000	4.211	4.14	4.28
Credibility of online degree courses	102.697	150	.000	4.301	4.23	4.39
Constructivist Learning Experience in the Synchronous Online Environment	79.620	150	.000	3.979	3.86	4.00
Technology Issues	83.662	150	.000	4.105	4.01	4.20
Traditional Classroom and Asynchronous Learning Comparisons	99.602	150	.000	4.276	4.21	4.39
Classmates and Instructor as Discussion Facilitators	94.206	150	.000	4.215	4.07	4.14
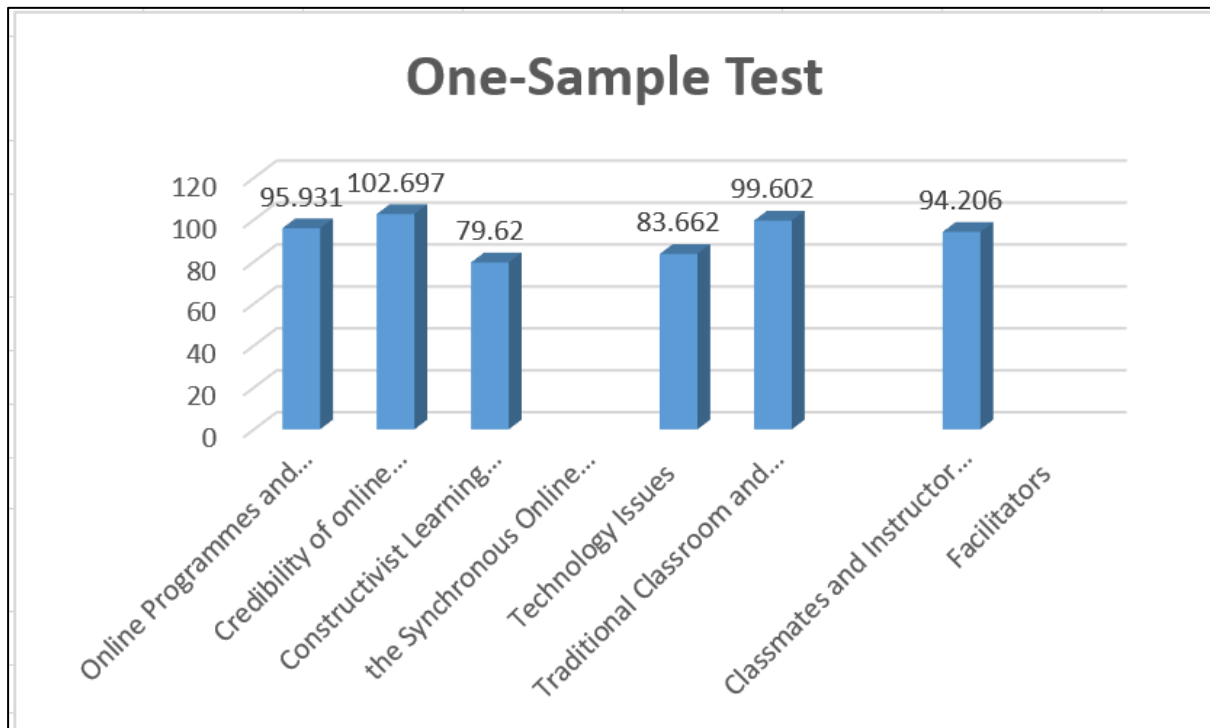
Above table 3 depicted the t-test and identify that majority of respondents want major satisfaction through credibility of online degree courses (t=102.697) followed by traditional classroom and asynchronous learning comparisons (t=99.602). Respondents then more focused about online programmes and programme design (t=95.931). Therefore, findings of the study stated that for online degree courses people are much interested but associated challenges must be incorporated.

Hypothesis Testing:

The findings of t test analysis stated that majority of respondents prefer that credibility of the online courses is necessary and therefore, the null hypothesis is automatically rejected & alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Future Research

More work is required in this area to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the many learning platforms now on the market, as well as their potential for overcoming the technological obstacles that students in this study identified as impeding their progress. The education of the next generation of professionals can be boosted by devoting more attention to the possibilities of digital technology in online degree design, accessibility, and quality. Therefore, additional study on how to implement face-to-face classroom education in virtual classrooms is warranted by technology's double function as a necessary component of the curriculum and a useful pedagogical tool. This research also emphasises the importance of a

more robust pedagogical framework as a guide for online education, one that takes into account theories and principles of education in a technologically advanced setting. Educators can benefit from a deeper understanding of the obstacles associated with fostering meaningful interactions in online contexts by learning about the contributions made by fields including educational technology, computer science, and the social and behavioural sciences.

Conclusion

If adopted in tandem with businesses, academic institutions, and policymakers, online learning has the potential to revolutionise the educational landscape of the future. We need to make major adjustments to the way we teach in the classroom so that our graduates can immediately contribute to the workforce. There needs to be a shift in the way education is delivered, with an emphasis on making theoretical knowledge applicable in real-world contexts through the use of modern tools. The young of rural India would benefit much from having courses available in multiple languages. Creative solutions are needed to help online students develop their interpersonal abilities.

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