

Issues & Challenges of Distance & Online Business Education in Pakistan during COVID 19

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This research study examines the issues and challenges of distance & online business education in Pakistan in the scenario of the turmoil of COVID-19. The basic objective of this research was to highlight the problems of faculty members and students. Many issues and challenges may occur due to the sudden shift from traditional education system to online education system. This research was a qualitative study and data from the 20 respondents was collected through semi-structured interviews through asking open-ended questions. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis which is a form of qualitative data analysis that is available, dynamic and increasingly popular. The study findings highlighted that in underdeveloped countries such as Pakistan, there are a lot of issues and challenges for distance & online business education. The students and teachers have been facing many problems like technological issues, internet connectivity, isolation, lack of face to face interaction, time management, load shading, lack of teachers training and use of ICT tools, students assessment challenges, environmental and behavioral problems, etc. In addition to this, their social lives are also badly affected due to COVID 19. The findings showed that online education is not a substitute for formal education. It was fine in the COVID-19 outbreak situation but after ending this epidemic, formal education should be adopted. Online business education can also be a part together with formal business education.

Key words: *Distance Education, Online Business Education, Issues & Challenges, COVID-19, Pakistan etc.*

1. Introduction

Education is the cornerstone to a country's and a nation's growth and the bottom line of the success of a country. There is no question that education's central role in sustainability has been acknowledged internationally and recognized worldwide. No society can achieve prosperity without the proper education of its people because education lays the path to success and prosperity. In particular, many educators worldwide agree that distance education is the foundation and essential to solving many challenges in developing nations (Perraton, 1988).

According to Perraton (1988), distance learning is a method of education in which someone is separated from the learner in space and/or time to lead a significant part of the teaching. Distance education (DE) is defined as 'the application of telecommunications or electrical gadgets which allow students and learners to receive training from a remote place. Distance learning can minimize tuition costs, increase training access and incorporate a variety of learning material. Learning styles must be understood to boost distance learning (Yukselturk and Bulut, 2007). Distance education offers independent interaction with student emphasis (Ali & Ahmad, 2011).

A disease outbreak is a widespread epidemic of an infectious disease which is transferable. Not just it raised mortality rates but it also caused significant economic, social and political damage. Evidence suggests that the risk of a pandemic is increased by globalization, urbanization, and the over-exploitation of natural and environmental resources (Cunningham et al., 2017; Grønseth, 2018). The COVID-19 is a contagious virus that spreads quickly worldwide. On 31 December 2019, an unexplained outbreak was discovered in Wuhan, China. The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed on January 20, 2020, that the disease may transmit from one individual to another. The germ that origins the COVID-19 is mainly caused by coughing, sneezing, or talking when the infected person spreads through droplets. These water droplets quickly fall on the ground or surface. When people are one meter away from an infected person, or when they touch contaminated surfaces, touch their eyes, nose, mouth, or use unwashed hands, they are easily infected through inhaling the virus (Mahalakshmi & Radha, 2020). The COVID-19 feasts quickly in China, and now in 209 countries including the United States, Europe, Asia, Australia, and Pakistan as well. The World Health Organization (WHO) announced the COVID-19 outbreak as the sixth public health emergency on 30th January 2020 (Zhang et al., 2020). The first experience of the COVID-19 outbreak included China, which is highly affected by Pakistan's border countries. In the west, Italy is the country with the highest number of deaths from COVID-19, while in the north; Iran's death toll is second only to Italy.

In Pakistan, the first case of COVID-19 has been confirmed by the Ministry of Health, and the Pakistani government in Sindh Province on February 26, 2020. On the same day, the

Pakistan Federal Ministry of Health in Islamabad confirmed another case (Waris et al., 2020). Currently, these cases are increasing at a high rate, and the worst situation is the COVID-19 live dashboard. More than 50,000 people have died worldwide, and more than one million people have been affected, and this number is increasing rapidly. Countries around the world have taken different measures to prevent and control new coronary pneumonia. The Covid-19 pandemic has raged all over the world and caused large-scale institutional and behavioral shocks affecting all areas of human activities including education. The impact on learners is unprecedented as on April 9, 2020, more than 1500 million students worldwide from elementary to the third level cannot attend schools. Even with fewer resources, Pakistan has adopted strict measures such as designing special hospitals, testing laboratories, isolation facilities, awareness-raising campaigns, closing schools, colleges, and universities and locking down the country to control the spread of the virus (Waris et al., 2020).

The universities quickly turned to more stringent measures, cancelling large and public-facing events, job fairs, conferences, and speech events (Liguori & Winkler, 2020). The closure of educational institutions for public health emergencies is a contagious effect of a new type of coronavirus. To address the closure of educational institutions caused by COVID-19, UNESCO recommends that educational institutions be equipped with online learning tools (Crawford et al., 2020). The government worked hard to prevent the spread of diseases and began efforts to reduce academic interference. In short, online interaction provides the tools to do so. Therefore, universities are required to prepare themselves to transition to higher business school online courses and online interaction as soon as possible. The Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) also said that as the old saying goes; everyone should hope for the best and prepare for the worst. If the lockdown is restricted by the beginning of June, the university can return to business as usual, but if there is a further delay, there will be no choice but to switch to online education or abandon the semester. This requires not only a short-term response to the virus but also long-term response interruption, which will be followed. Shehzadi et al., (2020) pointed out that as a result, Pakistan's universities have just closed, and the Higher Education Commission recommended that universities be equipped with and promote E-learning management system.

However, Pakistan's higher education system generally still relies on traditional teaching and training methods. Pakistan's universities and their corresponding courses have been recognized by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. A new change is taking place in the world today, and this change is more closely related to the use and application of information and communication technologies (ICT) in all aspects of our lives. According to the planning commission of Pakistan, the 2025 Vision gives much importance to the knowledge economy, innovation and creativity, and is closely integrated with the shift from a traditional paradigm to a technology-based paradigm. The vision of Pakistan of the Digital Pakistan Government is to "transform Pakistan into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy". Due to COVID 19, various manual tasks were withdrawn. Traditional

teaching and learning methods are also damaged. To overcome these situations, ICT applications play an important role in society, especially in the field of education. It provides an effective learning method using online practice through various applications. As we expected, “COVID 19 is negative, but it is positive for E-learning”.

1.1. Research Background

Pakistan is a country with a low literacy rate even when compared to other third world countries in the world. Since social distance is very prominent at this stage, it will hurt learning opportunities. The education department is trying to find various ways to deal with this challenging situation. This situation makes us realize that scenario planning is urgently needed for academic institutions (Rieley, 2020). This is a situation that requires humanity and unity. There is an urgent need to protect and save our students, teachers, academic staff, communities, society and the country as a whole. There are several controversies related to E-learning. Accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, lifelong learning and policy are some of the debates related to online teaching methods. It is said that online learning is a convenient way to reach even rural and remote areas. The government also recognizes that online learning is becoming more and more important in this dynamic world.

In this COVID-19 pandemic situation, online education is the light of hope for students, which provides them with uninterrupted opportunities for continuing education. On the other hand, the population has been growing tremendously every year. Pakistan ranks sixth among the most populous countries in the world. To meet the educational needs of Pakistan’s rapidly growing population, formal educational institutions are not enough. Statistics from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics show that most of the country’s population lives in rural areas, where there are fewer educational opportunities than in cities. In this case, DE can bridge geographic barriers to fill this gap.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic began, Pakistan had two major universities offering distance education courses. These include the Allama Iqbal Open University and the Virtual University of Pakistan. There is no doubt that in this uncertain situation, all universities are trying to use very limited resources to provide students with the best education at home, but there is one thing that needs more improvement, that is its impact on the Internet and the biggest dependence on technology. To meet the new challenges of this epidemic, it must effectively use the best available information and communication technology and other resources, and upgrade the university's online system as soon as possible. It is important to consider that whether this technology and other things necessary for teachers and learners are available to teachers and students.

The Covid-19 pandemic outbreak forced schools, colleges and universities to remain closed temporarily. Massive and unexpected closure in our country affected the education system of Pakistan and which has been forced to seek quick fixes in different digital learning platforms.



It demonstrates how educational institutions and teacher's educational systems transfer their work from classrooms and lecture halls to online education almost overnight. This quick transition has also revealed gaps and shortcomings in how online learning has or has not been adopted in educational institutions. Are our faculty members and students ready for online education and how much they have an understanding of the importance and usage of ICT? What are the problems which can be faced by them? There is a need to explore the issues and challenges of distance and online business education programs during Covid-19. Therefore the main objective of this research is to explore the post Covid-19 issues and challenges faced by distance & online business education in Pakistan.

2. Literature Review

The unconfirmed outbreak was detected on 31st December 2019 in Wuhan, China. This disease spreads to humans, which was confirmed on 20th January 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO). When an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, the virus causing COVID 19 is primarily transmitted by droplets. This gout falls easily on the surface or floor. Individuals will easily be infected when they are one meter infected or touch the contaminated surface, touch the eyes, nose, and mouth or hand unwashed (Mahalakshmi & Radha, 2020). In numerous fields of human life, including education, the Covid-19 pandemic has triggered widespread institutional and behavioral shock effects worldwide. There are more than 1 500 000 000 students from primary school to tertiary school around the world who are unable to attend the school on 9th April 2020. As the countries and societies affected were massively and inattentively shutdowns, rapid solutions were pursued in various digital learning platforms (Jandrić, 2020). Universities had to develop similar protections to minimize the effect of COVID-19 on and beyond higher learning as organizers to large groups of persons (Liguori & Winkler, 2020). These rapid shifts from school to online are the foundation of fundamental questions concerning national policy and the philosophy of education. Three consecutive epidemics consisting of Philip Strong's (1990) model of epidemic psychology, which may be described, as present conditions in a standardized education system: that of anxiety, definition, and intervention. 'Epidemic' is a strong term for a group-specific epidemiological response. The first is an epidemic of anxiety and raises the question: How can education systems and people manage an exceptional situation? The second element is an epidemic of explanation and morality: People cannot know whether a new illness, new outbreak, or something very serious is trivial. From one state of mind to another, they swing back and forth (Strong, 1990). At the same time, numerous players in managerial roles report on how the situation can be interpreted and how teachings and learning proceed. Politicians are, of course, at the forefront of the policymaking of education, at the same time setting limits and decisions based on evaluations by health practitioners and building their official and authoritative stories. Social media enables experts and novices to convey in moderation their rational and irrational views.

Lockdowns impact students in many ways e.g. enhance inequality and stress socially and psychologically Parents and guardians are also affected and many of them are conscious of the social function of the education system and its ability to structure daily life, perhaps for the first time. An outbreak in action is the third element. It shows how educational institutions and teachers around the world move their work from schools and lecture halls almost overnight to digital platforms. This rapid transition has also shown differences and gaps in how online learning in educational institutions has or has not been implemented. Efforts to resolve these gaps have created a flood of support of various kinds, such as drop-in workshops, free webinars and blog postings, urgency policies (Doucet et al., 2020), and even lessons obtained from previous university locks (Czerniewicz, 2020). The situation has perhaps become more critical, for commercial digital learning platform providers, a new business opportunity. Some styles of online emergency learning are criticized for not upholding sound pedagogical standards, best practices, and earlier research. (Hodges et al., 2020). In social media, influential analysts have challenged the motives behind such enthusiastic advice by certain people, organizations, and businesses as to whether their motivation is motivated by market factors (Teräs et al., 2020). Others noted possible negative effects of rapid reparations of education technologies without balancing their implications (Selwyn, 2010). Springing quickly with learning platforms and online learning, posed questions about privacy, surveillance, and the impact on the lives of students and human dignity (Harwell, 2020). Educational organizations should weigh carefully their options in the sense of online education and learning technologies through the crisis. In the future, such choices may echo as new influence and control ties, new types of student inequality and inequality as well as other unpredictable outcomes (Selwyn, 2010). Online learning is also used as a synonym for content-driven self-study in which the rewards are limited to (a relative) time and space freedom. A digital education environment consisting solely of text files and videos that are exchanged with one another through a learning administration system differs significantly from a digital learning environment using an online design such as the reliable learning framework (Herrington et al., 2009) that centralizes interactive knowledge building and a complex, authentic learning framework Critical researchers noticed the disparity between pledges and advances in training technologies well before the Covid 19 pandemic (Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001; Cuban 2004 & Selwyn 2010). Besides, involving teachers and students in the formation, implementation of education technology can influence how technology can support meaningful education and learn successfully (Bates & Sangra, 2011).

3. Research Methodology

The main aim of this study was to find the opinion of the university's faculty members regarding the suitability of current distance and online learning system in Pakistan during Covid-19. In addition to this, what are the issues and challenges faced by students while learning and teachers of distance and online business education in Pakistan in performing their obligations? Finally, what are the measures which need to be taken to resolve these

issues and challenges? This study was major aimed to explore the issues and challenges of distance and online education in Pakistan in current pandemic situation the best design for this study was the qualitative method by using semi-structured call interviews during a covid-19 pandemic.

3.1. Population & Sample

The population is the whole set of observations or people from which the preferred sample is designated for analysis (Van Blerkom, 2008). Qualitative study normally focuses in-depth on reasonably small samples, even sole cases ($n = 1$), carefully chosen with determination (Patton, 2005). The presence standard was constructed on participants who are currently faculty members in different universities of Pakistan mentioned below. A total of eight universities of Pakistan have been selected in this study to achieve the research objectives among which six were public sector universities and two private sector universities. Further, these universities are also geographically dispersed in different cities and localities of Pakistan. These universities include the following:

- 1) Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF)
- 2) University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF)
- 3) Punjab University, Lahore (PU)
- 4) University of Gujrat (UOG)
- 5) University of Punjab Jhelum Campus (PU)
- 6) The Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB, BWP)
- 7) Institute of Southern Punjab, Multan (ISP, Multan)
- 8) University of Central Punjab Gujranwala campus (UCP) and

3.2. Target Teachers & Research Instrument

In choosing the sample for data collection from faculty members of these universities, this study used snowball sampling technique. The target population was faculty members of business and commerce departments of these universities. Interviews were conducted through telephonic calls because this method is realized more safe and suitable for contact with the respondents during the Covid-19 outbreak. Every member was asked open-ended questions related to their general abilities, experience and problems faced related to distance and online education and Covid-19 impact on their lives. In each interview, open-ended questions including socioeconomic characteristics like name, age, university name, study level/qualification, family income /source of income and questions related to their experience about distance and online education their problems and recommendation for solutions etc. were asked.

To conduct this study, a total of 20 faculty members from these universities were interviewed who were holding positions of visiting lecturer, lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor and professor.

4. Results & Discussion

4.1. Respondent's demographic

Table 1 below provides a demographic overview of the participants in the study. The demographic finding reveals that in terms of gender composition, sixteen is the frequency of male respondents with percentage of 80%, and female participant frequency is 4 with 20% percentage. The age category findings show that 10 participants with 50% percentage fall in the category of age 25-35 years while 7 respondents in 36-45 years category with 35% and finally 3 respondents with 15% in 46-55 years category. Income-based analysis results show as the frequency of participants having monthly income of more than one hundred thousand is 12 and the percentage is 60% whereas the respondents having monthly income less than one hundred thousand are 8 with 40% percentage.

Table 1 Demographic details

Factor	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	16	80%
	Female	4	20%
Age	25-35 years	10	50%
	36-45 years	7	35%
	46-55 years	3	15%
Income	1 lac plus monthly	12	60%
	Less than 1 lac monthly	8	40%

4.2. Impact of COVID-19 outbreak on education system

Coronavirus epidemic leads the situation of lockdown all over the world because of this all the fields of life are badly affected. All the universities, colleges and schools were closed with the aim to stop the spread of this virus. All respondents (100%) confess that this virus has adverse effect on education as well as their lives. For instance, Participant 1 said that this epidemic has had a huge impact on the quality of lectures. He further added that If I am teaching a numerical subject then I can deliver lectures more easily in the classroom and now I have to look at the new alternatives that how to solve a numerical class subject and how to

deliver other subjects in an online class. Participants 3 & 8 also supported this argument and said that this pandemic has been making the modes of teaching more challenging in such a way that it was more suitable for us to teach in a physical class. But now I have to go online because of this virus as I have numerical subjects, so for us, it's very difficult to handle these in online teaching. In the physical class, if we explained it on a whiteboard, it would be more effective. That's what made the difference to us. Likewise, this Participant 6 pointed out the fact that online teaching during Covid-19 has made it challenging for the teachers to use non-verbal communication such as warmth, expression and body language during online class.

However, Participant 9 stated that online teaching during Covid-19 has been more challenging for the teachers who have been teaching to post-graduate research classes as compared to undergraduate classes. He said that he believes face to face interaction is very important for managing research of post-graduate students for at least two days a week. Participant 12 expressed his concern over the time management of online classes during Covid 19. He stated this concern as follows:

"From the teaching point of view, I am still working so hard that I am making small lectures on YouTube. I also have to make videos and send them to someone for editing. They also have to be proofread. And if I used to spend half an hour preparing for the whole thing, now it takes me four to five hours to prepare the lecture. This preparation has disturbed my family life a lot. I live at home. Even though I am not with my children as children make noise, etc. It is very obvious but I have locked myself in the room since morning".

Finally, according to participant 14, I am conducting online classes during Covid-19 quite smoothly. However, there is challenge for me to cover subject syllabus when students are not physically present.

4.3. Suitable teaching method during COVID-19 Pandemic

Considering the suitable teaching method regarding the conduct of classes, more than 90% participants were of the view that there is no substitute for formal teaching because in this student can directly interact with teachers and teacher can also easily assess the student that they are getting what the teacher is trying to convey. There are so many other pros of formal teaching but in the current situation we can't make a physical appearance, it can't happen. And another thing is that you don't know how long this condition can last. All of the respondents felt that we have no choice rather than online education. For example, participant 3 stated that *the effective method of teaching is to have a physical class lecture. However, according to the current situation, online education should be given priority rather than interacting with the students. Likewise, participant 18 spoke that we have not enough resources for maintaining SOP's and that's why in this pandemic situation, it is better to go online. There are not so many resources in our country to maintain all the SOP's. In pandemic situation online education is fine.*

Finally, participant 14 also supported this point of view. However, he further added to this as follows:

“The university has a large number of students. Morning, evening and weekend programs classes are going on. Yes, it was only possible that MPhil and PhD students are senior because we can only allow them but when we have to take care of the health issue that is directly attached to your life then it is no doubt that online which is not bad but effective is not as good as the physical is but as a substitute it is very good”.

4.4. Technological modes utilized for online teaching and their issues

This quarantine time offers the use of all virtual facilities as a forehead for teachers and learners such as using different apps, creating virtual classrooms, recorded lectures, online practice tests, an online streaming quiz, conversations, files sharing, video conferencing, and use of different webs for online teaching and learning, etc. That makes the process easier among the teachers and learners instead of before. The technological modes which are usually used by the participant in this study are universities Learning Management System (LMS), Microsoft team, Zoom application, Google classroom, Google forms, YouTube, Facebook, E-mail, Google drive and WhatsApp. Among these, the majority of participants have been using Zoom application for online lecture recording, Youtube, WhatsApp and google drive for data sharing and finally university learning management system for conducting quizzes. One participant from private sector university said that university has its learning management system including university youtube channel. I upload videos on YouTube. After logging in to the system, students see the video. Zoom application for video recording option can also be used. Sometimes I have a meeting on skype and WhatsApp for data sharing.

4.5. Teachers training related to online teaching and use of ICT tools

It is necessary and important to train teachers in online education, as it will increase their efficiency and in return, enhance learning and help students to obtain the best outcomes. It is important because online teaching may be a little different from the formal way of education. And emerging technology training is also important when holding online classes. Online education needs more expertise than face-to-face education in general. Thus teachers in online education will be critical in improving teaching. A big problem which was also realized by almost two third of the participants (65%) that the lack of teachers effective training and student’s awareness about how to use ICT tools.

There was lack of practice in relevant subject areas regarding the use of technologies. Majority of participants (60%) said that before starting online classes, we were not provided with any training by University or HEC. Six respondents (30%) said that just one or two

meetings were conducted by university in which it was only told us about initial level application software usage. No formal training was conducted, nothing for online teaching skills and nor about technical things of ICT's. Minority of participants (10%) said that they have been guided properly and effective training sessions were conducted for them.

For example Participant 1 showed his concerns about the technical training of teaching staff. According to him, many of his colleagues do not have the basic knowledge for using the operating systems. Many teachers are not very friendly with mechanism and many of our teachers who are near to their retirements have a big problem that how they should teach online. I believe that many of our teachers are not very familiar with technology or computer. Specifically, senior faculty members should be given ICT related training so that they can make better use of the latest online software that can improve the quality of online education. Contrary to this, Participant 14 described that he has been trained properly before starting online classes. Effective training sessions were proved very helpful for him in online teaching. He has received trainings in different phases. For instance in phase one; I was guided about how to upload the material, assignment and other usage of software. Second phase was about effective online teaching skills enhancement. The ICT's was related to LMS and regarding online teaching. Participant 16 also endorsed that university has provided all faculty members an effective training session regarding how to use tools of online education system and access those online resources. Except to these two participants, rest of the participants have shown their serious concerns regarding the non-provision of effective training sessions either by the university or HEC.

4.6. Positives aspects of online teaching

All the participants were teaching online due to the COVID-19 outbreak; it was also analyzed that teachers were enjoying online teaching although online teaching has some issues which were already discussed. All the participants were asked about described the best thing about online teaching the majority of those who responded to this question said that you can deliver your lecture while staying at home or your convenient location. Lecture recording is also a plus point of online education. Safe method in current pandemic and student time was not wasted. Minority of participants give viewpoint that there are not so special positive aspects of online teaching.

Majority of participants are of the view that in this emergency situation, you can sit at home and educate your children. It is also helpful in many ways like the best thing is that the student's time is not being wasted. Even within this environment, time is not being wasted. His education is not being hampered. It is not good for him to be depressed due to pandemic and isolation. They did not allow their student to be idle even in this scenario. They kept him engaged in some learning skills. In addition to this, Participant 16 acknowledged that the best thing about online education is facility of lecture recording; he expresses his viewpoint as *"The best thing about it is to record lectures for students. If a student misses a lecture, then*

he has the option that he can go to YouTube and see the recordings. This is also a record for our future reference. I think that's the best thing."

4.7. Summary of Issues and Challenges for distance & online business education

The primary objective of our study is to highlight the issues and challenges of distance & online business education in Pakistan. This study shows that there were a lot of issues and challenges of distance & online business education. Here are among the most common issues and challenges that the students and teachers face during online classes at present.

- Isolation
- Technological issues
- Internet connectivity issues
- Un-Familiarization with emerging technologies
- Application software issues
- Load shading
- Lack of teachers training
- Poor quality of lectures
- Teachers challenges about course content covering
- Students attitude towards online education
- Maintaining online classroom environment
- Lack of gadgets
- Student's assessment challenges
- Social life affected
- Time management
- Understanding standards for the course
- Lack of contact in-person
- Delay in exams and results declaration
- The confusion about the future

4.8. Scope of distance and online education in the amid of COVID-19 and after epidemic scenarios in Pakistan

The global education system presently is turning to the online education system due to coronavirus. In the current situation, online learning is safe and there has a greater scope in the world as well as in Pakistan. E-learning courses have become common because the students and teachers are more comfortable than formal face-to-face learning. All 100% of participants agreed on it that there is no choice other than online education during this epidemic. However, distance education is also a choice for higher degree level like MPhil, Ph.D. classes with implementing SOP's. According to 70% of respondents, distance & online

education have good scope in Pakistan after this pandemic. Online education structures will be developed in many universities before the end of this disease. Remaining respondent stated their viewpoint that after the end of this epidemic, we should switch to our previous education system. Participant 1 added to this viewpoint and said:

“I think Pakistan is a developing country. Many of our students are from the young generation. They cannot afford full-time education. Our people have low per capita income which is why many people can't study full time. When we were taking face-to-face classes, I know a lot of students who are taking classes together, are not able to attend proper classes due to doing a part-time job or taking care of their private business. I think in a developing country like Pakistan, both systems should be used. These are both tracks. Students should be given both faces to face education and online & distance education so that every person can decide according to his resources that which system is more suitable for him so that he can carry things according to his concentration”.

Furthermore, participants 14 & 15 also supported this viewpoint that a parallel system at the same time is more suitable. I studied in Malaysia, you can say, you have the assignment, any project, attendance, or a meeting with your advisor. Everything related to you is online here even there is physical education; they have maintained a good proportion.

5. Conclusions, Recommendations & Future Research Directions

Online education has a very important position in the educational sector and plays a key role in supporting opportunities for higher education in Pakistan. Online education is a convenient system and also cost-effective type of education especially for business students in the present COVID-19 pandemic situation. Due to the coronavirus outbreak, all universities of Pakistan have been delivering online education to their students. The findings show that the COVID-19 negatively impacted on education system in Pakistan especially on teaching and learning. Almanthari et al., (2020) showed that the Coronavirus has had a profound impact on teachers, learners, and academic institutions worldwide. The epidemic induced the closure of campuses, schools, colleges, and universities around the world so that teachers and learners could obey social exclusion paths (Toquero, 2020). Chen et al., (2020) stated that in different countries at the end of 2019, the epidemic of Corona Virus has moved conventional face-to-face teaching to online education sites which affect the education quality. These results reflect those of Liguori & Winkler (2020) who also found that the COVID-19 disease outbreak caused educational institutions to change their entire classroom experience overnight to an online education system.

The main question of this study was to explore the issues and challenges faced by students and teachers of distance & online business education programs in the current pandemic situation in Pakistan. This study explores many issues and challenges faced by teachers and learners such as technological issues, lack of teachers training, lack of student's awareness,

instructor and learner attitude development, teacher and learner in-person contact, online classes taking issues, poor quality of lecture, environmental issues, customized software, lack of resources, infrastructure development needed, electricity issues, internet connectivity issues, etc. The most obvious finding to emerge from the analysis is that online education is not a substitute for formal education. This finding is consistent with that of Raju (2020) who concluded in his research that remote study is not a replacement of formal teaching and other methodologies, but rather an appendage. The results of this study also show that all the participants (100%) are agreed to online education during this pandemic. The findings indicate that there is no other choice rather than online education. Mahalakshmi & Radha (2020) also supported this view that to remain safe and to enforce a lockout, necessary social distancing and limiting contact with anyone is necessary. The Epidemic strongly strengthens the use of online education as education has reached another level of interacting with students through online webs or application software. The findings of this study highlighted that all the respondents acknowledged virtual teaching as the most suitable method during the pandemic of coronavirus. Mohammed et al., (2020) also described in their study as online teaching is more comfortable, since it will offer a flexible and engaging atmosphere for pedagogy.

The study findings also examined that zoom app, google classroom, google forms, MS team, YouTube, G-mail, WhatsApp and LMS currently were used. Study of Mahalakshmi & Radha, (2020) produced results that resembling with this study that the above mentioned online platforms were utilized for online teaching. Raju (2020) study also analyzed that these strategies were used for online education. This study results highlighted that there was a need for proper training of teachers and students related to ICT's usage and online teaching and learning skills. Schoepp (2005) stated in his study the difficult and numerical method of incorporating ICT into teaching and learning of suffering. Such problems are regarded as "challenges". A most widely stated cause of the lack of implementation of technology in education is inefficient professionalism and training (Ertmer et al., 2012). Some other researchers also described similar most commonly reported problem in the literature is the absence of effective training (Sicilia, 2006; Toprakci, 2006; Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015). One finding from Pelgrum (2001) study was that teachers did not have sufficient skills training to use ICTs in a classroom setting. Similarly found by Beggs (2000) that the absence of training was one of the top three barriers to teachers' use of ICT in teaching. However, according to Parkinson (2013), the topic of training is complicated since to make sure training efficacy, it is necessary to consider multiple components.

Among the major problems faced by Pakistani higher education students were lack of access to internet services, lack of proper interaction and communication with instructors and inadequate technology. The abrupt change from conventional classes and face-to-face education to online learning has culminated in students having a radically new learning environment. Many learners do not have access to high-speed or stable service providers and are thus grappling with online learning. Internet services are lacking for students from

underdeveloped regions of the former Fata, Baluchistan (Ali & Ahmad, 2011). Just a few institutions were able to launch successful online classes during the initial months of COVID-19 despite the limited resources of higher education institutions. The research also revealed additional difficulties faced by students such as lack of socialization of the campus, problems of group study.

In contrast to online learning or distance education, participants also indicated that conventional classroom teaching was more effective. Niwaz et al., (2019) stated similarly that the participants faced difficulties relating to measurement and assessment also. The problems of assessment and evaluation were related to the assigning of courses and projects and also the execution of the test. Another concern that impeded distance & online learning initiatives by teachers was a lack of teacher-student interaction, which adversely impacted the learning experiences of our students (Niwaz et al., 2019). This study finds that the social life of teachers and learners was disturbed as described by Zhang et al., (2020) in their study. When engaged in online teaching and learning sessions at home, teachers and learners will encounter challenging issues. Students not only need to know how to deal with fast-paced online courses to maintain a successful and fruitful online program, but they also need to have proper gadgets and technology knowledge to learn from virtual classes (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). This research also highlighted the issue of poor quality of lecture and teaching outcomes. The prior live session on-campus classrooms associated with the curriculum and curriculum results of the courses must be transferred to new approaches to attain successful teaching results, which will impact the teaching outcomes and the content of the courses in any manner (Wang et al., 2020).

5.1. Recommendations

The first important thing is that we have to consider the teacher's point of view and they have to engage students and make them realize about that we have no other alternative available. Furthermore we have to continue the same alternative that is up to the normalization of this situation. Students are not accepting why we are being given online education because we do not have any other alternative. This is what we have to continue. First thing is to convey the students as well as teachers, develop their attitude and second thing is that awareness about ICT's. We have to make the teachers and students well aware of the things related to technology. HEC also has to play its special role for being the Institute of higher learning; it can improve online education through sharing knowledge regarding ICT. The third thing is that we also have to work on the issue of connectivity. What are the student's connectivity issues and also connectivity issue that is coming from the teacher side because the teachers can afford but most of the students are the ones who can't afford it. We believe that if the universities are charging fees and their education cost is reduced then the universities should support the students a little bit in resolving the connectivity issues. In order to increase the quality of education and to maintain a connection with them, a suitable system for monitoring and feedback from students should be developed and enforced.

All teachers should use the same system and the same policy should be made for the monitoring of students and also for the monitoring of teachers who are taking online courses. There is less focus on the skills training, we have to develop strong skills base as well as IT tools related training sessions, so in their minds, the thing is set that is let's not perform badly in exams. It would be made effective if it should be taken in two ways instead of one way 100% effort should be done by both teachers and students.

Also, the teachers should create an official page on Facebook and create a channel on YouTube on which they can upload subject-related lectures in the native language and students can access it freely. The university will have to support the teachers as well. If the teacher wants to do something, he can't do anything because of resources restriction as the teacher might be in the need of a whiteboard through which he has to deliver a lecture. If they have to give an online lecture, they need a technologically upgraded laptop. If they have to write, they also need another dedicated room for online education. It has also been suggested that if the universities cannot afford to facilitate every teacher as it is, then the teachers should be given an office within the university to teach the students and the office should be dedicated to the teaching of students with maintaining SOP's. Universities should engage all the departments to help the teachers and allow the university teachers to come and record their lectures. Teachers' training sessions should be conducted for solving their queries about technical issues. Skilled based training of faculty members should also be conducted in which they must be trained for online teaching. In coping with the students' personality distinctions, training and retraining should be coordinated for academia and teachers.

Our government also has to play its role. Government has to solve the electricity problem and resolve connectivity issues from rural areas. The government should have focused properly on launching 5G technology in Pakistan. The govt. should play its part in technological development which is the need for online education because, without emerging technological tools, we can't improve online education system. Universities should also provide resources to the students like gadgets and internet devices with student packages rates and the faculty should be motivated also.

5.2. Future Research Directions

The findings of this study indicate the impact of COVID-19 outbreak on business education, especially on teaching. The study results inferred that we have to adjust our daily activities with COVID-19 at least for some time as per the WHO guidelines. Future studies can either expand the sample size or use random sampling techniques for data collection. Although the findings are focused only on the views of teachers, the addition of the viewpoints of students in future research may begin to highlight the problems faced by learners about online learning. Finally, there is also a need to investigate the issues & challenges regarding the conduct of the online assessment of students.



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