THE COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on Academic Practices and Learning Quality in Higher Education

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Abstract: The inclusion of several new models and methods had been taken into consideration by the educational institutes and organisations to battle the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the educational paradigm. The study looked into the research questions and the research objectives which were based on the core topic of the study. With the help of the section of the literature review, the examination of the past research was looked into. The provision of the themes and concepts was done through the integration of data from secondary sources and the qualitative research method was implemented. The future scope of the study and the limitations of the respective assignment was also jotted down.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, higher education, academic practices, learning qualities, social restrictions, performance levels

1.INTRODUCTION

The academic performance of the students in higher education had been severely impacted due to the initiation of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the study, the researcher would jot down the research objectives and research questions. Along with such, the background of

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the study and the literature review would be jotted down. The methodology for the performance of the assignment would be laid down, and the thematic analysis would be conducted for inspecting the gathered data. With such, the limitations and the future scope of the study would be penned down.

2.Research objectives

The varied research objectives of the article are as follows:
To analyse the various elements of academic practices in higher education impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
To inspect the different learning qualities in higher education impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
To examine the strategies to mitigate the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic practices and learning qualities in higher education
2.1 Research questions
The numerous research questions of the study are as follows:
RQ1: What are the numerous elements of academic practices in higher education impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?
RQ2: How have the different learning qualities in higher education been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?
RQ3: What are the different strategies laid down to mitigate the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic practices and learning qualities in higher education?
2.2 Background
The suspension of classrooms on a global level had occurred due to the initiation of the COVID-19 pandemic. The implementation of rules and regulations for restricting social gatherings and incorporating social restrictions were taken around the globe for lessening the severity and spread of the coronavirus. As suggested by Minkos&Gelbar (2021), with the integration of digital disruption into the midst of the educational background. The shift from the traditional level of schooling had been made to the online platform.
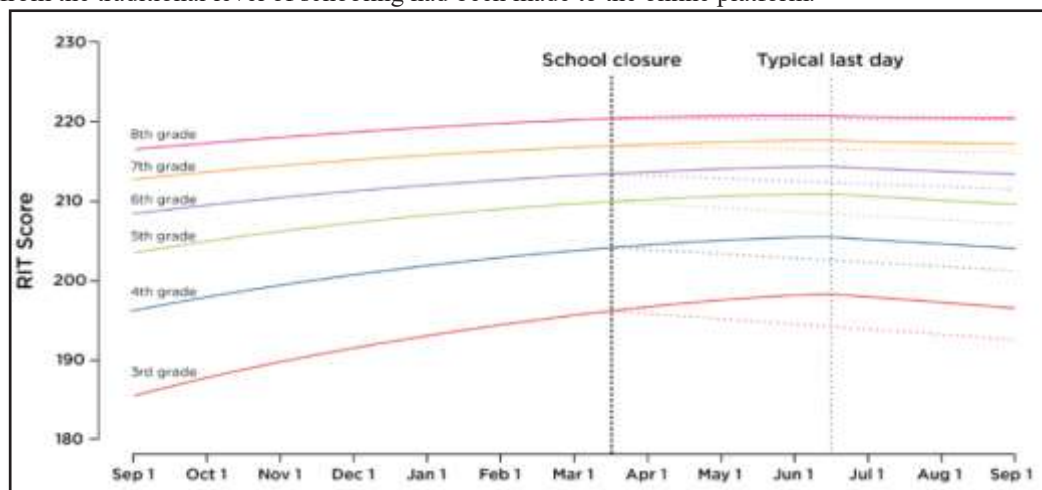

Figure 1: Closing of summer schools during typical seasons against the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic
(Source: Lau & Lee, 2021)

The lack of footfalls in the physical schools had been substituted with the expansion of the digital classrooms, usage of online tools, and communication through social media websites. As seen in the works by Lau & Lee (2021), along with such, the number of

schools had shut down before their original timings, which had laid down a severe impact on how the students perceived education. Figure 1 highlights the difference seen in the days when the schools typically closed for the holidays versus the times when the schools closed for the COVID-19 pandemic.
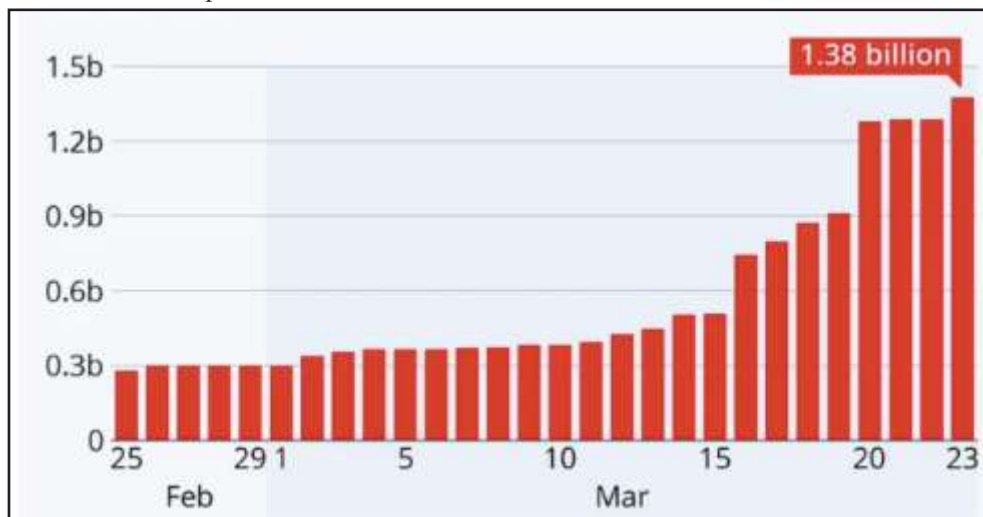

Figure 2: Number of learners being impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic on a global scale
(Source: Statista, 2020)

Figure 2 mentions the exponential growth in the number of students who were impacted as a result of the pandemic. The rise in the scale showed the severity of the pandemic on the methods of education, and how the inclusion of knowledge amongst the students was highly affected.

3.LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1Introduction

The section of the literature review would look into the different factors integrated into the educational background for combating the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the practices in academia for higher education. The strategies to mitigate the issues would also be mentioned in this section

Expansion of digitalisation and online education due to the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic

The mass effect seen in the education grounds was in terms of digitalised methods of learning and imparting education. As per the thoughts of Brassettet al. (2020), most of universities had cancelled their programmes, or shifted them to a later session. The ongoing classes were tuned through the online system. Such measures were taken to lessen the contact between the students themselves and also with the teachers. However, the practical courses faced severe issues while being conducted online mode.
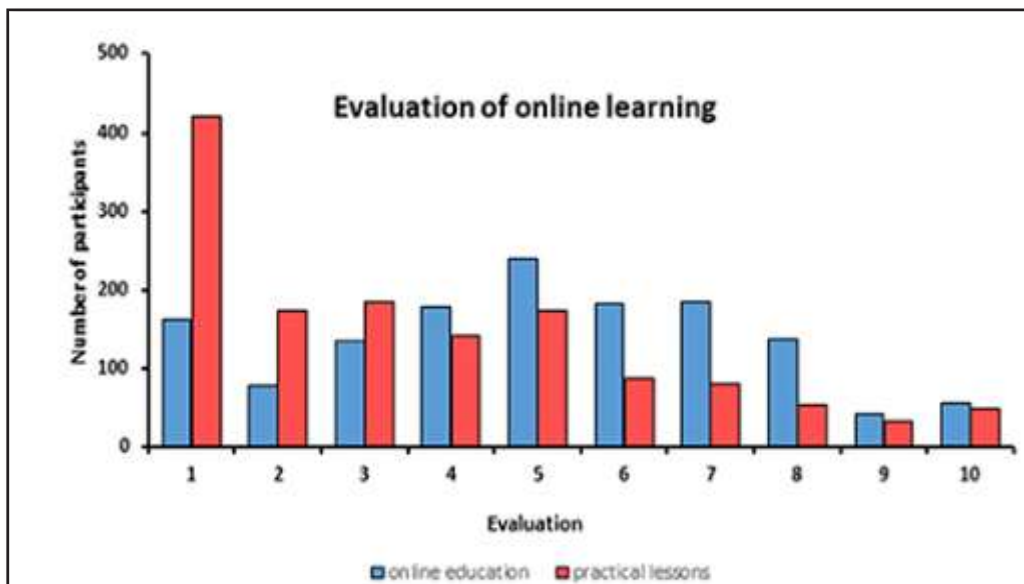
Figure 3: Graph showing the evaluation of online learning with online education and the practical lessons
(Source: Mahdy, 2020)

Figure 3 shows the difference between online education and practical sessions, along with the number of respondents on the Y-axis. From the point of view of García-Alberti et al. (2021), the performance levels of the students were impacted to varying degrees, both with respect to the theoretical and practical lessons.
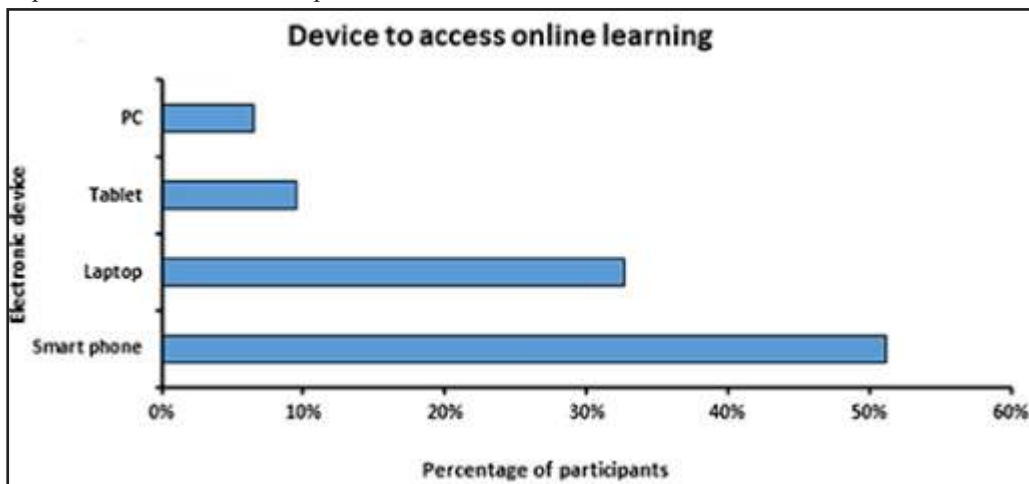

Figure 4: The percentage of participants who had the access to electronic devices for educational purposes
(Source: Mahdy, 2020)

One of the severe issues faced by the students of higher education in obtaining their required lessons was the lack of means for obtaining their knowledge. As per the opinions of Chatziralliet al. (2021), chunks of students were not financially stable for achieving their education. Even though devices such as smartphones, laptops, and tablets were used by the ones who had the ability to obtain them, a large portion of students were unable to do so.

Figure 4 mentions the different devices which were utilised by the students for gathering their education through the online system.

4. Theoretical approach

4.1 Constructivist learning theory

Through the implementation of the *constructivist learning theory*, the mode of learning has been moulded with respect to the perception of the students. The application of online methods of education has been prevalent due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the different resources utilised have enabled the students to perceive their education in various manners. However, according to the workings of Cronje (2020), there have been alterations seen in the philosophical approaches and the methods utilised by the teachers to impact the education.
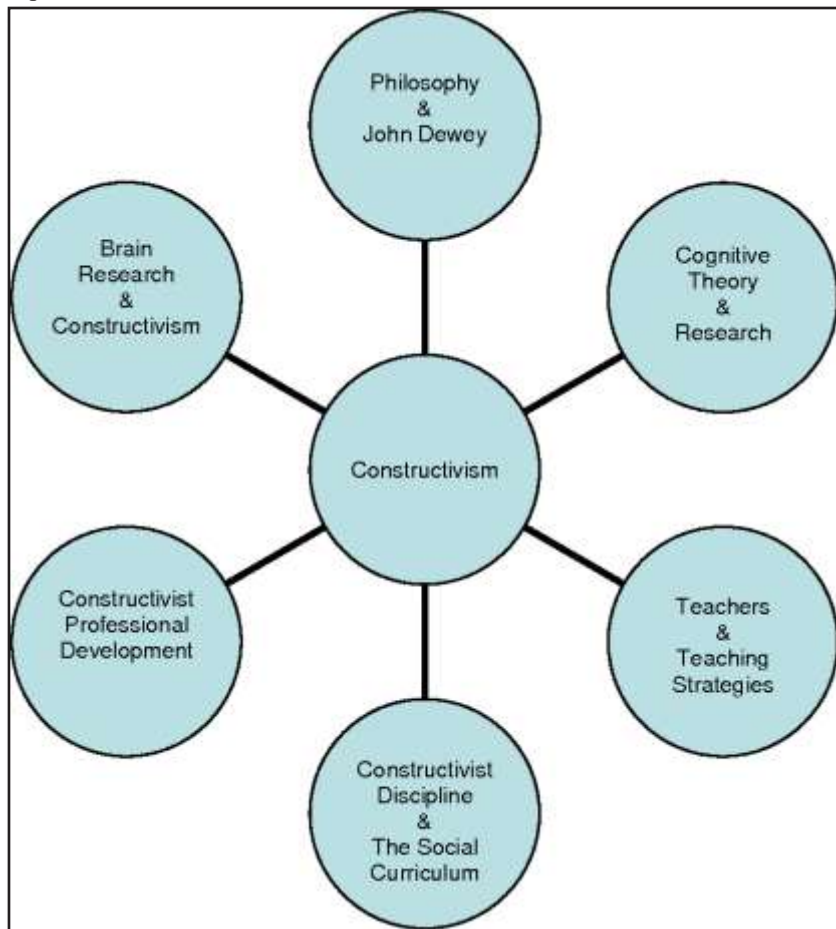

Figure 5: Various elements of the Constructivist learning theory
(Source: Cronje, 2020)

Such a range of factors has impacted how the students obtained their knowledge and viewed the notion of an online system of education, as a whole. Figure 5 mentions the different factors which are associated with the *constructivist learning theory*. As per the views of Eom&Ashill (2018), the learners had the ability of analysing the information,

interpret them through their respective means and develop new ideas to integrate the *constructivist learning theory* into their structuring of knowledge.

5.METHODOLOGY

The conduct of study was done through the allocation of secondary data from secondary sources. Several books, journals, articles, online websites, and such were sieved by the researcher for the gathering of the requisite data. Such data were interpreted with the usage of the qualitative research method, through the application of the positivism research philosophy. As per the comments of Alharahsheh & Pius (2020), the interpretation of the factual information by keeping true to the situation is performed through the integration of the positivism research philosophy. The obtained knowledge was explained in a constructive manner with the aid of the descriptive research approach and the explanatory research framework.

RESULT

Quality review

Authors	Study design	Number of resources	Measured outcomes	Result	Quality review
Alhammadi (2021)	Qualitative	12	Effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the quality of learning and practices followed in higher education	The study provided input regarding the digital disruption which was necessary for increasing the spread of online education, especially in the higher standards, for continuing the curriculum	Moderate
Rashid & Yadav (2020)	Qualitative	14	Factors affecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the concepts of higher education	The utilisation of electronic devices for the spread of education was observed in the study	High

Crawford & Cifuentes-Faura (2022)	Qualitative	17	Implementation of methods of sustainability for improving higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic	The study highlighted the different modes of sustainability which can be integrated into the online education systems for increasing education levels	Moderate
Stracke *et al.* (2022)	Qualitative	16	Identification of trends seen in the educational field for the development of online education during the COVID-19 pandemic	The study mentions the various kinds of trends seen in the educational resources which are required for the students and professional development and training for teachers	Moderate

Table 1: Quality review
(Source: By learner)

Thematic coding

Author	Code	Themes
Alhammadi (2021), Rashid & Yadav (2020)	academic practices, academic models, online tools, COVID-19 pandemic	Elements of academic practices affected due to COVID-19 pandemic
Crawford & Cifuentes-Faura (2022), Stracke *et al.* (2022)	COVID-19 pandemic, strategies, digitalisation, academic instruments	Strategies to combat the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational grounds

Table 2: Thematic coding
(Source: By learner)

6.Thematic analysis

Theme 1: Elements of academic practices affected due to COVID-19 pandemic
The continuous spread of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global scale around 2020 and 2021 had caused the world to reach stagnation (Rashid & Yadav, 2020). According to the opinions of Alhammadi (2021), the learners and the management of the educational institutes had to develop necessary strategies to cope with the educational schedules and curriculums.
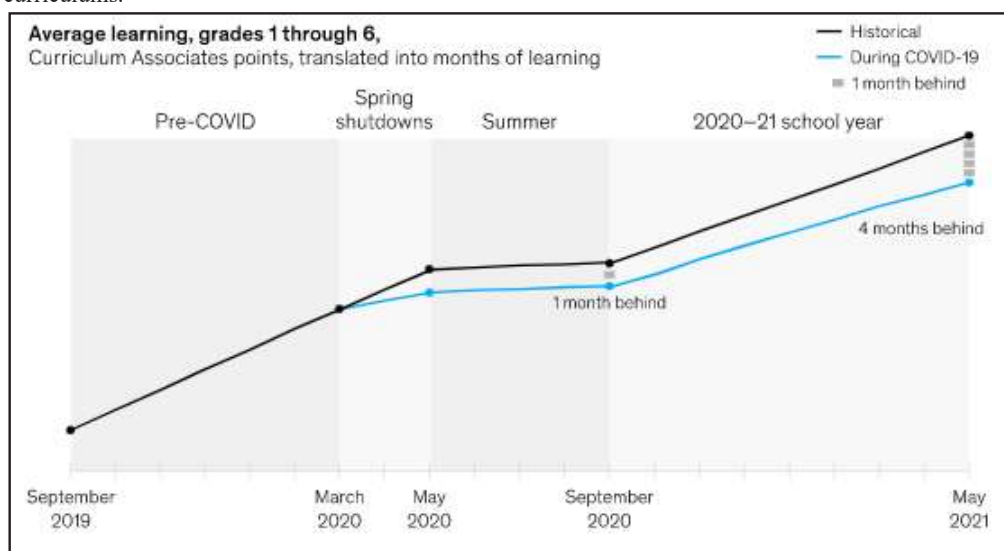
Figure 6: Lag faced by the students due to the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic
(Source: Rashid & Yadav, 2020)

As per the suggestions of Rashid & Yadav (2020), the correct scheduling of the classes and the integration of novel methods such as online activities through quizzes and debates were necessary for increasing the productivity of the learners. Figure 6 highlights the lag which was faced by the students due to the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, such a situation had to be brought under control through the application of several means and methods.

Theme 2: Strategies to combat the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational grounds
The halting of physical schools and colleges had transferred the method of obtaining education to an online method (Stracke *et al.* 2022). The development of certain streamlined and methodical pathways was necessary for curbing the issues and providing the required education to the students at the higher education levels. As per the viewpoint of Crawford & Cifuentes-Faura (2022), one of the significant steps taken for indulging the students was through the clever integration of games.
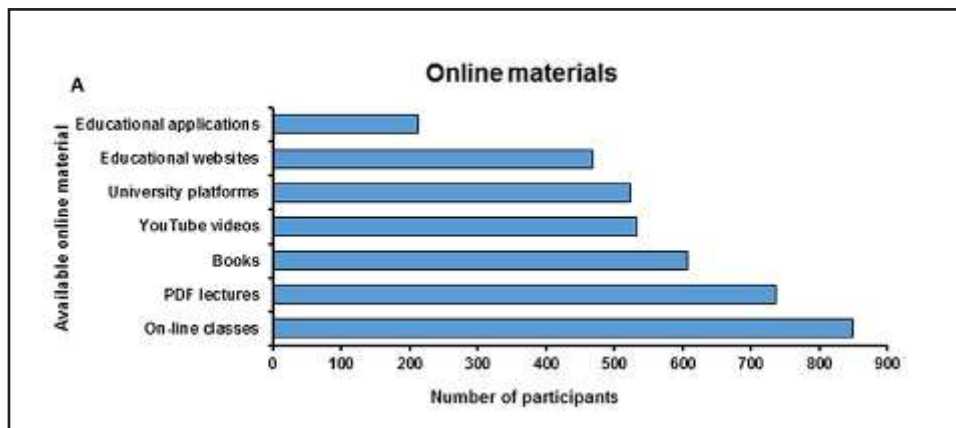
Figure 7: The availability and types of online materials used by the students during the initiation of the COVID-19 pandemic
(Source: Crawford & Cifuentes-Faura, 2022)
According to the thoughts of Stracke *et al.* (2022), the hybrid model of education was being utilised by several educational institutes for motivating students to work harder. Smart calendar scheduling was also provided by certain schools and universities to improve the efficiency of the learners and the professors. Figure 7 shows the different kinds of methods implemented by the institutes for providing the required materials to the students.

7.Discussion

The various strategies for the heightening of the skills and the continuous development of the learners in higher education have been integrated by schools and colleges from a global perspective. As per the findings by Valverde-Berrocoso *et al.* (2020), such a situation has been necessary for keeping the students educated, supplying them with the required materials, and aiding them to complete their schedules on time. Hence, the necessary steps had to be taken for increasing the productivity of the students and the teachers.

8.CONCLUSION

Hence, from the study, it can be seen that the COVID-19 pandemic had served to be a significant tool that changed how the world perceived education. The study provided the different degrees of impact which was faced by the students from a global perspective on their measures of academic approaches and learning qualities due to such a situation. The researcher jotted down the needed methodology for the development of the study and performed a thematic analysis to inspect the developed themes. The theory of constructivist learning was discussed with respect to the core topic of the study.

9.Limitations

The study was conducted through the integration of secondary data from various sources, and a qualitative research method was performed. However, the lack of a primary quantitative study did not allow the researcher to jot down the views of the public domain regarding the respective topic. The provision of information and opinions on the online

educational method and academic practices due to the inclusion of COVID-19 was not taken directly from the primary sources.

10.FUTURE SCOPE

The allocation of the necessary tools and devices for the expansion of online education serves to be of grave importance. Due to the dramatic growth in the means of digitalisation, the proliferation of online education has been observed on a global scale. For future studies, the exact requirements and the methods for the application of the different means of digitalisation can be looked into. In such a manner, the negative issues seen due to digitalised mode of education can be lessened.

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