STUDY ON ONLINE EDUCATION, IT'S BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Online education has necessarily modified the learning landscape, offering flexible access to a diverse range of courses and resources. This mode of learning enables students to study at their own pace and from any location, making education more accessible and cost-effective. Key benefits include increased flexibility, the ability to accommodate varied learning styles, and a broader selection of programs. However, online education also presents challenges, such as limited social interaction, the necessity for strong self-discipline, reliance on technology, concerns regarding the quality of some programs, and complexities in assessment and academic integrity. Addressing these challenges is crucial to maximizing the potential of online education and ensuring its effectiveness as a legitimate alternative to traditional classroom learning. The objective of our study is the advantages and perks of online education, the drawbacks and limits of online education. The scope of the study is based in Guwahati city.

Keywords: Online Education, Learning, E-Learning Platform

INTRODUCTION

The emerging trends, driven by powerful global changes and societal transformations, include the rise and proliferation of e-learning, online education, and distance learning. In particular, the use of these forms of education has skyrocketed during the current pandemic as part of a broader set of changes in the field, "an educational pattern" that features incorporating advanced electronic technologies, the internet in particular, for distributing educational materials and ensuring learning occurs.

E-Learning, the cornerstone of this transformation encompasses a wide range of digital tools and platforms that go from online courses & virtual classrooms to multimedia resources & interactive modules, and even online assessments. The importance of it, being a distant place for learner to visit and continue with the materials in accordance to one own pace as well as timing.

Highlighting more about Online Classes, it refers to the alternate way of studying through the medium of technology without having to go classrooms. It is remote in nature and can be done anywhere with the help of internet. Now, people can access any course of their favour with the Online education system.

Although, the concept of Online classes started decades ago, it received significant momentum in the recent few years. Through Online education, one can learn and do classes flexibly anytime and anywhere they want. This convenience of Online education has brought significant growth to its continuation.

Online education platforms as well as social media applications are used to connect students and teachers to create a learning experience. Google Meet, WhatsApp, Zoom, etc. are some of the examples of internet sources through which the teachers can connect to a large number of students at a time.

But those types of education also come with unique challenges. For example, e-learning requires (more or less) self-discipline and motivation on the part of learners who set their own schedules repeatedly to continue with their studies without any walls in a classroom. While technical skill level is a must having an easy-to-use web platform and tool set. Online learning is facing some critical challenges with the largest one being reduced interaction and collaborative learning owing to the absence of face-to-face communication, thus we must have effective approaches to sustaining interaction and building online communities.

In addition, such strategies might require stable internet access and technological infrastructure, which could be prohibitive for individuals in underprivileged communities or with fewer resources.

BENEFITS OF ONLINE EDUCATION

Flexibility and Convenience

In online learning, one can make his/her timetables to suit personal or professional engagements. This advantage can be very helpful in most situations for the working adults, parents, or any one individual with time limitations. There is self-chosen ability to study at a convenient stipulated time and place, which establishes well-being and a more favourable environment for learning.

Accessibility

Online learning eradicates geographical barriers and allows people in remote or underserved areas to access knowledge. A student can take part in programs offered by universities anywhere in the world without necessarily having to move. Moreover, most online delivery platforms have features such as captioning and screen readers that facilitate learning for individuals with impairments.

Cost-Effectiveness

The online courses are relatively cheaper than traditional colleges. The learners also save on transport and accommodation costs. Thus, education becomes affordable. Most of the resources, like eBooks and online lectures, are free or cheaper, making education more accessible in terms of finance.

Variety of Learning Resources

Online learning sites provide many different types of course material, such as video or audio files for podcasts, quizzes in which students interactively respond to questions, and readings. In this way, the diverse learning styles of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners can be engaged appropriately. Further, the online courses can be changed rapidly; thus, learners will obtain the most up-to-date knowledge possible.

Networking Opportunities Worldwide

Online education connects the students coming from different cultural backgrounds, thereby forming a diverse learning community. In this network, individuals can work together on projects and share their ideas in order to have a better understanding and enhance creativity. Students also get the opportunity to relate with industry experts and teachers that can expand their professional network.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sun et.al in their study they reviews that 47 publicities on online education and learning since 2008 aiming on effective practices and theories in online education. The study also highlights the brisk advancement of technology as a harsh factor in improving online instruction. Eventually the authors bear to provide practical lesson for developing online course, contributing to enhance higher education upshots[1].

Aisha et al encapsulate the article online education amid COVID-19 pandemic and its opportunities, challenges and psychological impacts among students and teachers: a systematic review by asserting that With numerous challenges, the pandemic also brought unparalleled opportunities to the education sector. The most significant change was the flexibility to access, be technology savvy, and the possibility to connect worldwide.". Challenges encountered while taking online school involved insufficient appropriate technology infrastructure, a lack of digital devices, technical skills low at that level, and feeling detached from the society. The immediate outbreak of the pandemic pushed much of the learning and teaching to an online setting. A great number of the students and educators were immediately hit psychologically, including a lack of motivation for self-regulation and heightened his or her inactivity. It takes effective fulfilment of the psychological needs of teachers and students in relation to proper instructional design, the provision of sufficient resources, and acceptable levels of necessary technological competence[2] .

Gopal et.al in their research paper that the impact of online classes on the satisfaction and performance of students during the pandemic period of COVID 19". The paper examines the determinants that affect students' satisfaction in online, remote teachers and teaching and its relation with their performance during COVID 19 pandemic.Four elements which they recommend should be balanced are: instructor quality, course design, immediate feedback and student expectations. All the above four picture have positive impact towards students satisfaction which will further leads to positive performance. Particularly with the abruptness of online education because of the Covid 19 pandemic, it is necessary for these factors to exist so students can have high satisfaction and performance in their online courses[3]

Kranzow et.al in their research they indicate that the "Faculty Leadership in Online Education: Structuring Courses to Impact Student Satisfaction and Persistence." Analysis of this study indicates that effective faculty leadership in curriculum master plan (strategy) can significantly enhance student motivation, happiness and persistence in online courses. Even with increased enrollment in online education, attrition rates continue to be sadly high. The author proposes strategies for instructors, especially new to teaching online, to evoke an engaging and nurturing learning atmosphere. The considerations are to foster open communication, promote companionship and collaboration, and provide adaptive literacy choices. Through

these practices, instructors can revise student ownership and achievement, thus giving way to a better and more caring online educational competence[4] .

Ananga et.al in their paper discuss the "comparing face-to-face and online teaching and learning in higher education". This paper argues that the evolving topography of higher education (HE) in response to growing urge for flexible learning add-on specifically for adult learners. It highlights the effect of globalization and technological gives on teaching provision, shining light on distance education (DE) as an achievable solution to such challenges as precise physical space within universities. The authors catechize the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in DE, prescribing a dual strategy that synthesizes face-to-face and distance learning. They respond to important questions about the validity of both modes, pointing out that although each has its advantages and disadvantages, they can relate to each other. The paper ends with the recommendation for enhancing instructional delivery and discussing the perforce of diverse learners in Ghanaian HE institutions[5] .

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the advantages and perks of online education.
- To study the drawbacks and limits of online education

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

To create an awareness amongst the mass about the new culture in the education sector that is online education.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The entire study and all the data related to the paper is based in Guwahati city in the month of September.
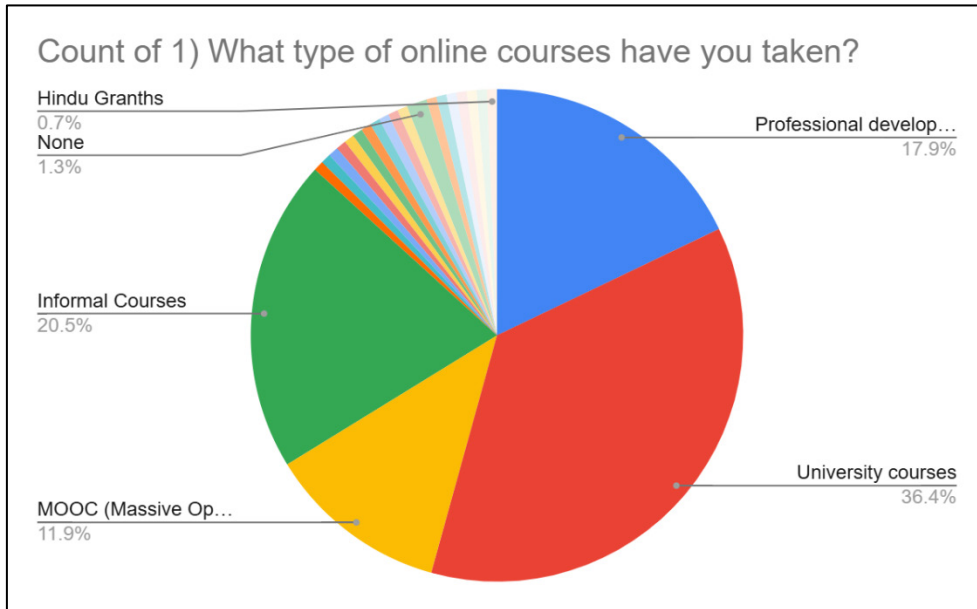
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

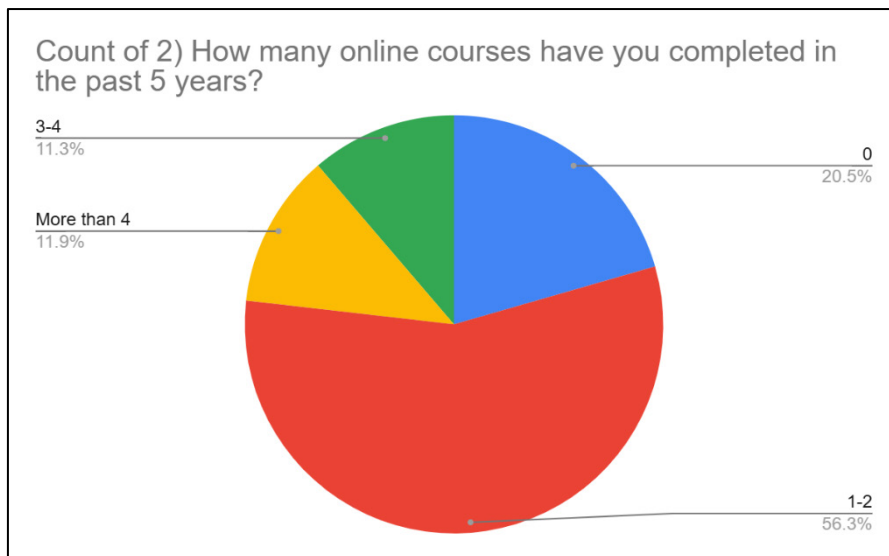|	
Research Design	The research is descriptive in nature.
Population	All the student of Guwahati city who have enrolled in online education.
Sample Size	The sample size of the study is 300.
Sampling Techniques	The sampling techniques used in this study is Judgemental sampling
Types of Data	a) **Primary Data**: The primary data has been collected from a survey. b) **Secondary Data**: The data has been taken from various research papers, websites and books.

Data Analysis

Pie chart and percentage method have been used to analyse the data.
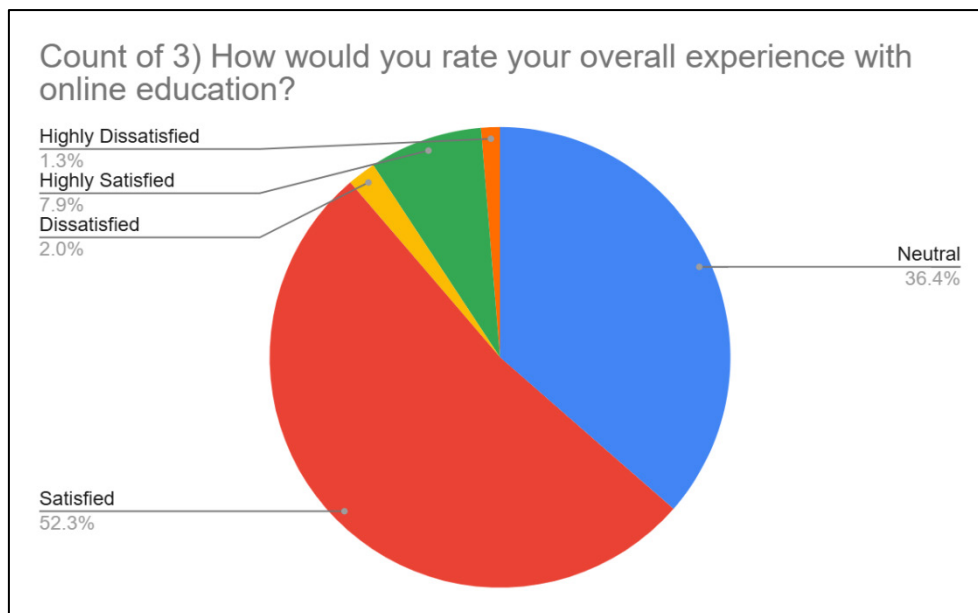
DATA ANALYSIS

Pie Chart 1 : Type of online courses

Interpretation: - 36.4% respondents have opted university courses through online mode.
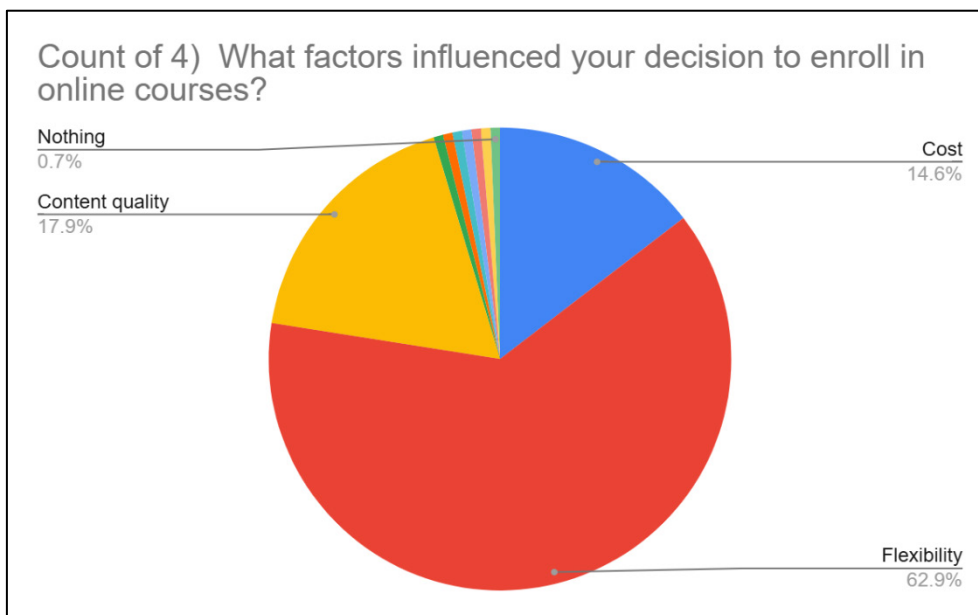

Pie Chart 2 : Number of online courses completed in last 5 years

Interpretation: - 56.3% have completed 1-2 online courses in the past 5 years.
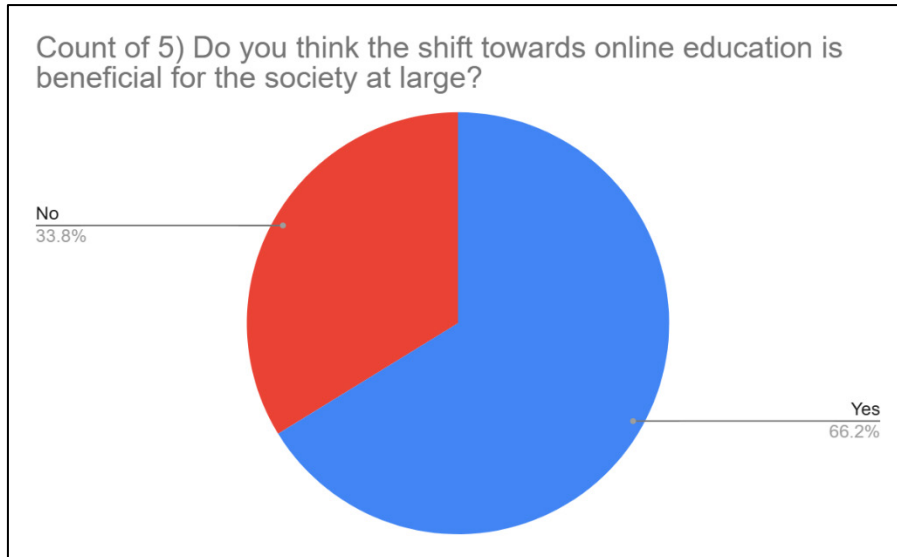
Pie Chart 3 : Pie Chart 3: Rating of overall experience with online education

Interpretation: - 52.3% are satisfied with their experience with online education. 1.3% are highly dissatisfied.
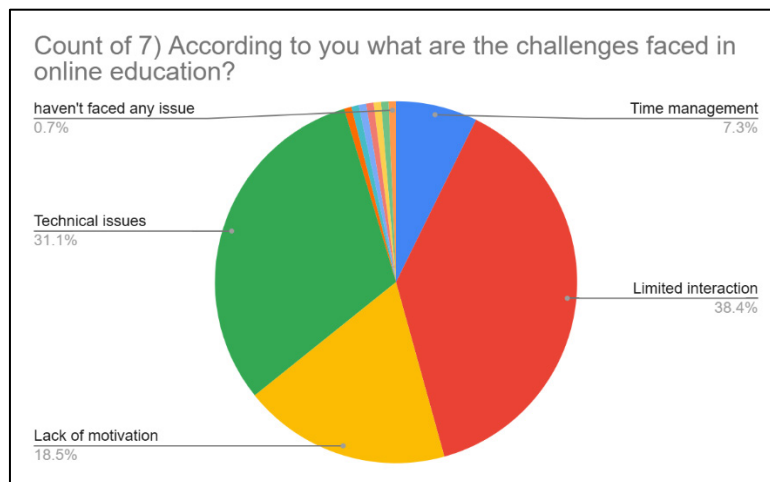

Pie Chart 4 : Factors influencing to enrol in online courses

Interpretation: - 62.9% respondents got influenced to enroll for online course because of its flexibility.
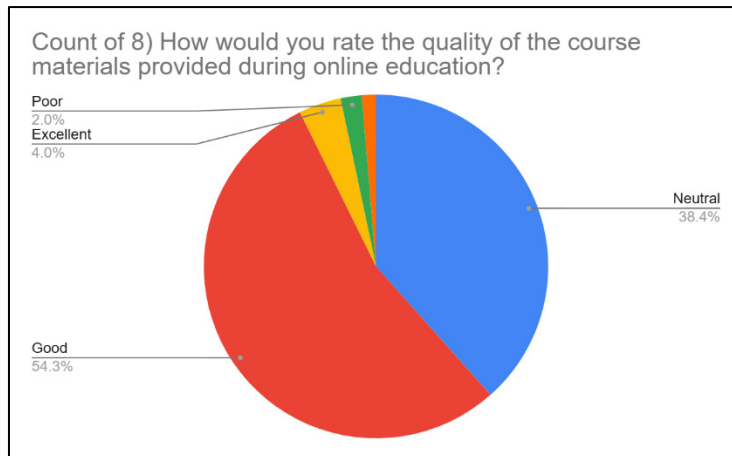
Pie Chart 5 : Shift towards online education is beneficial for the society at large

Interpretation: - 66.2% people think online education is beneficial for the society. 33.8% people think it is not beneficial.
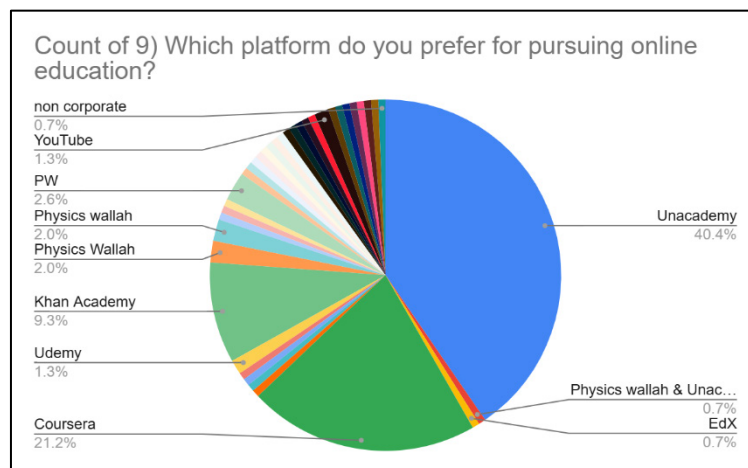

Pie Chart 6 : Challenges faced in online education

Interpretation: - 38.4% respondents feels that limited interaction is the biggest challenge faced in online education.
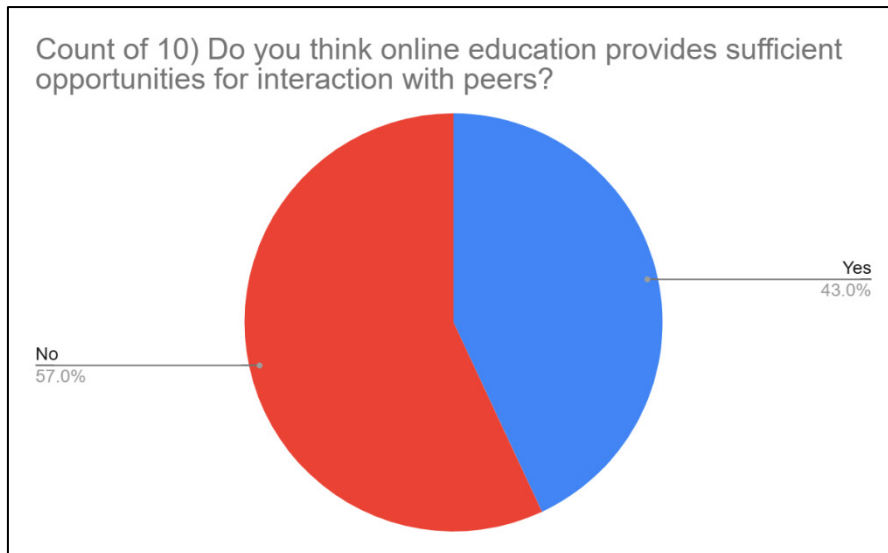
Pie Chart 7 : Quality of course materials provided in online education

Interpretation: - 54.3% respondents feels that the course material provided during online education is good.

Pie Chart 8 : Platform for pursuing online education

Interpretation: - 40.4% respondents prefer to study through Unacademy platform.

Count of 10) Do you think online education provides sufficient opportunities for interaction with peers?

Yes
43.0%

No
57.0%

Pie Chart 9 : Online education provides opportunities for interaction with peers.

Interpretation: - 57% respondents thinks that online education doesn't provide sufficient opportunities for interaction with the peers. 43% feels that it provides sufficient opportunities for interaction with peers.

FINDINGS

- 36.4% of the respondents have pursued university courses in the online format. While 20.5% have pursued informal courses followed 11.9% respondents completed MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) courses. And out of the remaining respondents 17.9% have pursued professional development courses and left over respondents have pursued many other courses such as banking exams, CAT etc.

- We can find that many people have completed 1-2 courses in the past 5years. Whereas many people haven't participated in any online courses. While 11.09% respondents have taken more than 4 online and courses and very few have taken 3-4 courses.

- Maximum (52.3%) of the respondents were satisfied with their experience in online education. While 36.4% respondents had neutral feelings with their experience with online education. Few people (7.9%) were highly satisfied with their experience and the rest were either dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied with their experience.

- 62.9% of the respondents choose online mode of education because of its flexibility. Followed by 17.9% people opted for online education because of its content quality. Whereas 14.6% respondents opted because it is cost effective and the remaining respondents had other opinion.

- 66.2% people thinks that the shift towards online education is beneficial for the society and the remaining 33.8% thinks that it is not beneficial.

- Most of the respondents (38.4%) feels like that online education limits the interactions between the peers. While many respondents (31.1%) suffers from technical issue. Few people (18.5%) feels that another challenge in online education is lack of motivation. And the remaining respondents have mixed opinion such as time management, lack of regulations etc.

- 54.3% respondents feel that the course material provided during online education is good. But 4% people feels that the course material provided is excellent for the students. And a very few people feel that either it is poor or very poor.

- 40% of the respondents have pursued their online course from unacademy platform and 21.2 % have pursued from coursera and 9.3% from physics wallah and rest of the respondents have pursued from other platforms like YouTube, khan academy etc.

- 57% people thinks that online education doesn't provide sufficient opportunities for interactions with peers. While rest of the respondents that sums up to 43% feels that it provides sufficient opportunities for interactions with peers.

- In the scale of 1-5, 44.4% respondents have neutral suggestions regarding recommendation of online education to others. Whereas 14% people are not likely to recommend online classes to others and the remaining respondents are very likely to recommend online courses to others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As online education has become a vital part of the educational structure, there can still be some advancements to make it further flourish in the society.

- Online Education can further opt to provide personification in learning. Providing personalized learning pathways will help the students to understand the study curriculum better and enhance their learning experience. This will create a unique and comfortable setting for the students to learn and engage with their studies.

- Online Education platforms shall create student communities to discuss the necessary doubts and solutions in order to eliminate chaos and confusion. This will also enhance the social connections of the students and inspire team work.

- Institutions should create a user-friendly platform for the students. So, that it has minimum chances of hampering the studies of study through different software bugs and other software problems.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the growth of the online educational industry is the great transformation within the education, which brings a lot of advantages such as flexibility, break in boundaries and the ability of communication with people across the globe. However, along with strengths it have some weaknesses which includes the possibility of self control, the feeling of calm disadvantage, and the gap of technology that hinders equal access. The success of e-learning depends on a number of factors such as the quality of the instructor, the quality of the course, and the quality of the technical equipment. Looking beyond, there is a need to create an efficient environment that encourages online learning. The specific situations in this study on Guwahati City therefore shows the urgent need to engage educational practitioners and policy makers in order to make the online education better and fit to the context of the changing times. Addressing these interrelated benefits and challenges, we are able to develop an effective as well equitable paradigms of online learning which maximally utilize the opportunities presented by the online learning.

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