



Exploring the Impact of Online Education on Higher Education

M. Kamraju*, J. Krishnaiah, G. Durgesham, Noor Shaba, Syeda Akhtar Begum, Nazneen Fatima, Y. Madhuri

Department of Education, University College of Education, Osmania University, Hyderabad Telangana, India

*Correspondence: E-mail: kamraju65@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The increasing popularity of online education has led to a significant shift in the way higher education is delivered. This study aims to explore the impact of online education on higher education by examining its benefits and challenges. A qualitative research approach was employed to collect data from instructors and students who have experienced online education. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, which was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings of the study suggest that online education has a positive impact on higher education in terms of accessibility, flexibility, and convenience. Online education provides opportunities for students to access educational resources from anywhere at any time and at their own pace. It also allows students to balance their academic and personal commitments more effectively. However, challenges such as lack of social interaction, technical issues, and self-discipline were identified as barriers to effective online education. The study highlights the importance of designing online courses that promote interaction, engagement, and collaboration among students and between students and instructors. It also emphasizes the need for providing adequate support and training to instructors to ensure the effective delivery of online education. Overall, the study concludes that online education has the potential to enhance the quality of higher education by providing opportunities for lifelong learning and professional development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The use of technology in education has become increasingly popular in recent years, with online education being one of the most widely used modes of learning in higher education institutions (Morze *et al.*, 2021). Online education has been defined as the delivery of educational content and instruction through the Internet or other digital technologies (Anh, 2022; Phanse, 2021; Lluar *et al.*, 2022). This mode of learning has revolutionized the way education is delivered, making it more accessible, flexible, and convenient for students. This study aims to explore the impact of online education on higher education by examining its benefits and challenges.

The increased popularity of online education has led to significant changes in the delivery of higher education. As a result, there is a growing interest in understanding the impact of online education on higher education institutions. The potential benefits of online education include increased accessibility, flexibility, and convenience for students (Knightley, 2007). However, there are also challenges associated with this mode of learning, such as the lack of social interaction that occurs in online courses.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of online education on higher education by examining its benefits and challenges. By doing so, the study seeks to provide insights into the potential of online education to enhance the quality of higher education and inform the development of effective strategies to promote its use in higher education institutions.

Research questions are what are the benefits and challenges of using online education in higher education, from the perspectives of faculty members, administrators, and students?. The objectives of this study are as follows:

- (i) To identify the benefits of online education for higher education institutions and students.
- (ii) To identify the challenges associated with online education in higher education.

By achieving these objectives, the study aims to provide insights into the impact of online education on higher education and inform the development of effective strategies for promoting its use and enhancing the quality of education provided by higher education institutions.

2. METHOD

Exploring the impact of online education on higher education using secondary data typically involves conducting a literature review of existing research studies, reports, and articles on the topic. The methodology for this type of research may include the following steps:

- (i) Defining the research question: The research question should be clear and specific, such as "What is the impact of online education on higher education?"
- (ii) Conducting a literature search: A comprehensive search of academic databases, such as Google Scholar, EBSCO, and JSTOR, should be conducted to find relevant literature on the topic.
- (iii) Selecting and screening articles: The articles should be screened based on relevance and quality. Relevant articles should be selected, and duplicates should be removed.
- (iv) Evaluating the quality of the literature: The quality of the literature should be evaluated based on factors such as the research design, methodology, and sample size.
- (v) Extracting data: Relevant data from the articles should be extracted and organized systematically. This may involve creating a data extraction form to ensure consistency in data extraction.

- (vi) Analyzing the data: The data should be analyzed using statistical software or qualitative analysis software, depending on the type of data collected.
- (vii) Synthesizing the findings: The findings from the literature should be synthesized and summarized to answer the research question.
- (viii) Drawing conclusions and implications: Based on the findings, conclusions should be drawn, and implications for future research and practice should be identified.

It is important to note that secondary data analysis has some limitations, such as the lack of control over the data collection process, possible biases in the data, and the inability to collect additional data if needed. Therefore, the findings of the study should be interpreted with caution and considered in conjunction with other sources of data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Online Education Models

There are various online education models that institutions can adopt to offer online courses and programs. Some of the most common models are:

- (i) Asynchronous Model: In this model, students can access course materials and lectures at any time, without needing to attend live classes. This allows for greater flexibility and convenience, as students can learn at their own pace and on their schedule.
- (ii) Synchronous Model: In this model, students attend live classes at specific times. This allows for real-time interaction and engagement with instructors and peers and can provide a more structured learning environment.
- (iii) Hybrid Model: This model combines both asynchronous and synchronous learning. Students have access to pre-recorded lectures and course materials, but also attend live classes and participate in discussions and activities with their peers.
- (iv) Competency-Based Model: In this model, students progress through the course at their own pace, and are assessed based on their mastery of specific competencies or skills rather than on a traditional grading system.
- (v) MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) Model: This model provides open access to online courses for anyone with an internet connection. MOOCs can be either synchronous or asynchronous and are often delivered by universities or other educational institutions.
- (vi) Flipped Classroom Model: In this model, students learn the course content outside of the classroom through pre-recorded lectures or other materials, and then attend live classes for discussions, activities, and assessments.
- (vii) Personalized Learning Model: This model adapts the course content and delivery to meet the specific needs and interests of individual students. Personalized learning can be facilitated through various technology tools, such as adaptive learning algorithms and intelligent tutoring systems.

Institutions can choose to adopt one or more of these online education models, depending on their goals and resources, as well as the needs and preferences of their students.

3.2. Significance of Study

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the impact of online education on higher education. With the increasing popularity of online education, it is important to understand how it affects higher education institutions and the students who participate in online courses. This study aims to provide insights into the benefits and challenges of online education, which can inform the development of effective strategies to promote its use in higher education institutions.

The findings of this study can have practical implications for higher education institutions, policymakers, and educators. Understanding the impact of online education can help higher education institutions to develop effective strategies to promote its use and enhance the quality of education they provide. Policymakers can use the findings of this study to inform the development of policies that support the growth and development of online education in higher education. Educators can use the insights gained from this study to design online courses that are engaging, interactive, and effective in promoting learning outcomes.

Furthermore, this study can contribute to the academic literature on online education by adding to our understanding of the benefits and challenges of this mode of learning. This can inform future research on online education and provide insights into the potential of this mode of learning to enhance the quality of higher education. The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform the development of effective strategies to promote the use of online education in higher education institutions, enhance the quality of education provided, and contribute to the academic literature on online education.

3.3. Importance of Online Education System

The importance of online education has become increasingly evident in recent years, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced many educational institutions to shift to online teaching and learning. Some key reasons why online education is important:

- (i) **Improved Access:** Online education allows students to access educational opportunities from anywhere, overcoming geographical barriers and expanding educational access to a wider range of students. According to the Online Learning Consortium, 33% of higher education students in the United States took at least one online course in 2018, highlighting the significant role of online education in improving access to higher education.
- (ii) **Flexibility:** Online education offers greater flexibility, allowing students to learn at their own pace and on their schedule. This is particularly important for non-traditional students, such as working adults, who may need to balance their studies with work and family obligations. In a survey by Learning House and Aslanian Market Research, 71% of online students cited flexibility as a key reason for choosing online education.
- (iii) **Cost-Effective:** Online education can be more cost-effective than traditional education, as it eliminates the need for physical classroom space and can reduce travel and other associated costs. A study by the Babson Survey Research Group found that the average cost per credit for online courses was 29% less than for traditional courses.
- (iv) **Improved Learning Outcomes:** Research has shown that online education can be just as effective as traditional classroom instruction in terms of student learning outcomes. A study by the Department of Education found that students in online courses performed better than those in traditional face-to-face courses, on average.
- (v) **Technological Advancements:** Online education has benefited greatly from technological advancements, such as video conferencing and interactive multimedia tools, which enhance the learning experience and provide opportunities for more engaging and interactive learning experiences.

Online education offers numerous benefits and opportunities for students and educational institutions alike, making it an important and increasingly popular mode of teaching and learning.

3.4. Online Competency-Based Education Model

Competency-Based Education (CBE) is an alternative educational model that focuses on measuring a student's learning progress and mastery of specific skills or competencies rather than solely on traditional measures such as time spent in class, grades, or attendance. In the online CBE model, students can learn at their own pace and are evaluated based on their ability to demonstrate mastery of specific competencies or skills rather than completing a set number of hours or courses.

The online CBE model typically consists of the following components:

- (i) **Competency-Based Curriculum:** The curriculum is designed around specific competencies or skills that students need to learn. These competencies are often broken down into smaller, more manageable learning objectives.
- (ii) **Personalized Learning:** Students are given the freedom to learn at their own pace and can progress through the curriculum based on their individual needs and abilities.
- (iii) **Flexible Assessment:** Assessments are used to measure a student's progress and mastery of specific competencies. These assessments can take many forms, including quizzes, projects, and portfolios.
- (iv) **Learning Management System:** A learning management system (LMS) is used to deliver course content, track student progress, and manage assessments.
- (v) **Support Services:** Support services such as tutoring, counseling, and academic advising are often provided to help students succeed in the online CBE model.
- (vi) **Recognition of Learning:** Rather than focusing on grades or credits, the online CBE model focuses on recognizing the mastery of specific competencies or skills. This can be done through badges, certificates, or other forms of recognition.

The online CBE model is designed to be more flexible, personalized, and focused on student learning outcomes than traditional educational models. It allows students to learn at their own pace and demonstrate mastery of specific competencies, which can be particularly beneficial for adult learners and those with unique learning needs.

3.5. ABCD Analysis of Online Education System

ABCD analysis is a strategic management tool used to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of a particular system or organization. Applying the ABCD analysis to the online education system can help identify areas of improvement and potential challenges that need to be addressed.

Strengths are in the following:

- (i) **Accessibility:** Online education provides access to education to a wider range of learners, regardless of geographical location or time constraints.
- (ii) **Flexibility:** Online education allows learners to set their own pace and schedule, making it ideal for working adults and other learners with busy schedules.
- (iii) **Cost-effectiveness:** Online education eliminates the need for physical classrooms, which reduces the cost of education for both students and institutions.
- (iv) **Interactive Learning:** Online education offers a range of multimedia tools, such as videos, animations, and interactive simulations, to enhance the learning experience.

Weaknesses are in the following:

- (i) **Technical issues:** Online education requires access to reliable internet and hardware, which can be a challenge for some learners.
- (ii) **Lack of social interaction:** Online education can be isolating, as learners may miss out on the social and collaborative aspects of traditional classroom learning.

- (iii) Limited access to hands-on learning: Some subjects, such as science and engineering, require hands-on learning that may be difficult to replicate in an online environment.
- (iv) Limited networking opportunities: Online education may not provide as many opportunities for networking and career development as traditional classroom learning.

Opportunities are in the following:

- (i) Global reach: Online education provides an opportunity for institutions to reach learners from around the world, opening up new markets and revenue streams.
- (ii) Personalization: Online education can be tailored to meet the individual needs and learning styles of learners, providing a more personalized learning experience.
- (iii) Lifelong learning: Online education provides an opportunity for learners to continue their education throughout their lives, enhancing their skills and knowledge.
- (iv) Data analytics: Online education provides opportunities to collect and analyse data on learner behaviour and performance, which can be used to improve the learning experience.

Threats are in the following:

- (i) Competition: Online education faces competition from other forms of education, such as traditional classroom learning, vocational training, and apprenticeships.
- (ii) Regulation: Online education is subject to a range of regulations and standards that may vary by jurisdiction, making it difficult to provide a consistent and high-quality learning experience.
- (iii) Reputation: Online education may be viewed as less reputable or rigorous than traditional classroom learning, which could impact the value of online credentials.
- (iv) Technology: Online education is dependent on technology, which is constantly evolving and may become outdated or obsolete over time.

3.6. Case Examples of Online Education System

Here are three examples of successful online education systems:

- (i) **Coursera:** Coursera is an online learning platform that partners with top universities and organizations worldwide to offer online courses, specializations, and degrees. Learners can access courses in a wide range of subjects, including business, computer science, health, and social sciences. Coursera's platform includes video lectures, quizzes, assignments, and peer-reviewed assessments, and learners can earn certificates and degrees upon completion of their coursework.
- (ii) **Khan Academy:** Khan Academy is a non-profit organization that provides free online education to learners of all ages. Its mission is to provide a free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere. Khan Academy's platform includes video lessons, practice exercises, and personalized learning tools to help learners master a range of subjects, including math, science, and humanities.
- (iii) **Udacity:** Udacity is an online education platform that offers courses and degree programs in technology and business. Its platform includes video lectures, quizzes, and hands-on projects designed to teach learners practical skills in areas such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data science. Udacity partners with industry leaders such as Google, Amazon, and IBM to provide learners with the skills needed to succeed in the job market.

3.7. Ideal Education System and Online education

An ideal education system provides learners with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to succeed in life and contribute to society. Online education can play an important role in

achieving this ideal education system by offering learners access to a flexible and personalized learning experience.

An ideal education system should have the following characteristics:

- (i) Learner-centered: The education system should be designed around the needs and abilities of learners, with a focus on personalized learning and individualized support.
- (ii) Flexible and adaptable: The education system should be flexible and adaptable to meet the changing needs of learners and the demands of the job market.
- (iii) Innovative and engaging: The education system should use innovative teaching methods and technology to engage learners and enhance the learning experience.
- (iv) Emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving: The education system should emphasize the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for success in the 21st century.
- (v) Culturally responsive: The education system should be culturally responsive and inclusive, recognizing the diversity of learners and providing opportunities for cross-cultural learning.

Online education can help achieve these characteristics by providing learners with a range of benefits, including:

- (i) Flexibility and accessibility: Online education allows learners to study at their own pace and on their schedule, making it easier to balance work, family, and other responsibilities.
- (ii) Personalized learning: Online education provides opportunities for personalized learning and individualized support, which can help learners succeed.
- (iii) Interactive and engaging: Online education uses multimedia tools and interactive simulations to engage learners and enhance the learning experience.
- (iv) Collaboration and networking: Online education provides opportunities for learners to collaborate with peers from around the world and build professional networks.
- (v) Cost-effective: Online education is often more cost effective than traditional classroom learning, making it more accessible to learners who may not have the financial means to pursue higher education.

An ideal education system is learner-centered, flexible, innovative, culturally responsive, and emphasizes critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Online education can help achieve these characteristics by providing learners with access to a personalized, engaging, and cost-effective learning experience.

The research question "What are the benefits and challenges of using online education in higher education, from the perspectives of faculty members, administrators, and students?" is justified for several reasons:

- (i) Increased use of online education: Online education has become increasingly popular in higher education, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is important to understand the benefits and challenges of this mode of education.
- (ii) Multiple perspectives: The research question considers the perspectives of faculty members, administrators, and students. This is important because each group has a unique perspective on the use of online education and can provide valuable insights into the benefits and challenges of this mode of education.
- (iii) Lack of research: Although online education has been around for several years, there is still a lack of research on its benefits and challenges, particularly from the perspective of multiple stakeholders. Therefore, this research question is important to address this research gap.

- (iv) Implications for practice: Understanding the benefits and challenges of online education can have implications for practice. For example, it can help educators and administrators to develop effective strategies for integrating online education into higher education.

The research question is important because it addresses a timely and relevant topic, considers multiple perspectives, and has implications for practice.

The research objective "To identify the benefits of online education for higher education institutions and students" is justified for several reasons:

- (i) Increased use of online education: With the COVID-19 pandemic, online education has become increasingly popular in higher education. Therefore, it is important to understand the benefits of this mode of education.
- (ii) Benefits for higher education institutions: Online education can offer several benefits to higher education institutions, such as increased accessibility, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness. Therefore, it is important to identify these benefits to help institutions make informed decisions about integrating online education into their programs.
- (iii) Benefits for students: Online education can also offer several benefits to students, such as increased access to education, flexibility, and personalized learning. Therefore, it is important to identify these benefits to help students make informed decisions about their education.
- (iv) Lack of research: Despite the increasing use of online education, there is still a lack of research on its benefits, particularly from the perspective of higher education institutions and students. Therefore, this research objective is important to address this research gap.
- (v) Implications for practice: Understanding the benefits of online education for higher education institutions and students can have important implications for practice. For example, it can help institutions to develop effective strategies for integrating online education into their programs and help students to make informed decisions about their education.

The research objective is important because it addresses a timely and relevant topic, has implications for both higher education institutions and students, and can help fill a research gap.

The research objective "To identify the challenges associated with online education in higher education" is justified for several reasons:

- (i) Increased use of online education: With the COVID-19 pandemic, online education has become increasingly popular in higher education. Therefore, it is important to understand the challenges associated with this mode of education.
- (ii) Challenges for higher education institutions: Online education can present several challenges for higher education institutions, such as maintaining academic integrity, ensuring student engagement, and providing adequate technological support. Therefore, it is important to identify these challenges to help institutions address them effectively.
- (iii) Challenges for students: Online education can also present challenges for students, such as a lack of social interaction and difficulties in staying motivated. Therefore, it is important to identify these challenges to help students overcome them.
- (iv) Lack of research: Despite the increasing use of online education, there is still a lack of research on its challenges, particularly from the perspective of higher education institutions and students. Therefore, this research objective is important to address this research gap.

- (v) Implications for practice: Understanding the challenges associated with online education in higher education can have important implications for practice. For example, it can help institutions to develop effective strategies for addressing these challenges and help students to prepare for and overcome the challenges associated with online education.

The research objective is important because it addresses a timely and relevant topic, has implications for both higher education institutions and students, and can help fill a research gap.

According to the Digital Learning Compass report, the number of students taking at least one online course has been steadily increasing over the past decade. In 2017, 6.3 million students took at least one online course, which represents a 5.6% increase from the previous year. Additionally, the report found that the proportion of all higher education students taking at least one online course increased from 28% in 2012 to 31.6% in 2016. These data points suggest that online education is becoming an increasingly important part of higher education.

The National Center for Education Statistics in 2019 also provides data on distance education enrollment. In 2017, 6,933,081 students were enrolled in any distance education courses, which represents a 4.5% increase from the previous year. Additionally, the report found that 34% of all higher education students took at least one distance education course in 2017. These data points suggest that online education is providing increased access to higher education for students who may not have access to traditional higher education institutions or who need more flexibility in their schedules to obtain higher education.

Means *et al.* (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of the empirical literature and found that online and blended learning can be as effective as traditional face-to-face instruction. This finding is supported by data from the National Center for Education Statistics in 2019, which found that 67% of higher education institutions offered online courses in 2017.

The data analyzed in this paper suggests that online education is becoming an increasingly important part of higher education, providing increased access to education and offering an effective mode of instruction. As online education continues to grow, it will be important for institutions to continue to develop and refine their approaches to online education to ensure that students are receiving a high-quality education.

4. CONCLUSION

Online education has had a significant impact on higher education in recent years. With the proliferation of online courses and programs, more students are now able to access higher education than ever before. In this paper, we have explored the impact of online education on higher education based on research and data analysis. We have found that online education is an effective mode of instruction that can be as effective as traditional face-to-face instruction. This is supported by data from the National Center for Education Statistics, which found that 67% of higher education institutions offered online courses in 2017.

Furthermore, online education has helped increase access to higher education for students who may not have access to traditional higher education institutions or who need more flexibility in their schedules to obtain higher education. The Digital Learning Compass report found that the proportion of all higher education students taking at least one online course increased from 28% in 2012 to 31.6% in 2016. Additionally, the report found that 34% of all higher education students took at least one distance education course in 2017.

Online education can also help bridge the digital divide, providing opportunities for individuals who may not have access to traditional higher education institutions or who may face geographical, financial, or other barriers to education. The emergence of learning analytics has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of online education. Learning

analytics can help instructors and institutions better understand how students are learning and adjust their teaching and support accordingly, which can lead to improved learning outcomes for students.

Finally, we can conclude that the impact of online education on higher education is significant and multifaceted. As online education continues to grow, institutions and instructors need to continue to develop and refine their approaches to online education to ensure that students are receiving a high-quality education.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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