

An Explorative Study on Perspective of Urban and Suburban College Students towards Online Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Dr. Elizabeth Dey

Associate Professor, Shri Shikshayatan College

ABSTRACT

The impact of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic on college students in India has not been adequately evaluated. This has prompted the present study, which is an exploration of the perception of online learning of urban and suburban college students. Motivation and interest in online learning and suitability of home environment for the same was explored, and a comparison between the responses of urban and suburban college students was done. Mostly, similar results were obtained from both groups of students. High frustration and lack of motivation and interest in online learning was reported by most. Suitability of home environment for online learning however evoked different responses, with more of suburban college students reporting the suitability of the same as compared to urban college students.

Keywords : *home environment, interest, motivation, online learning,*

INTRODUCTION

Learning as we knew it underwent a significant structural transformation during the Covid-19 pandemic. With educational institutions closed down, students and teachers were forced to turn to online teaching learning. However, access to online teaching was badly skewed across India. Data collected by the School Children's Online and Offline Learning (SCHOOL) survey conducted across India in August 2021 show that 24 percent of urban school children between grades 1 and 8 were studying online regularly in comparison with only 8 percent of rural school children. About 32 crore learners nationwide were affected as online learning came with its set of challenges such as having an internet connection, an electronic device and a suitable home environment. It was evident that all sections of the population were not equally affected, with students in urban areas having better access and connectivity. Some studies such as the Azim Premji report in 2021 highlighted the 'Learning Loss' experienced by children due to the lack of access to online learning as well as the doubtful quality of the same. Other studies such as the Wave -1 of the ASER Report 2020 have focused on the lack of access to online learning by a vast majority of students particularly in the rural areas. These and other studies have been instrumental in providing much-needed data on the impact of the lockdown and subsequent shift to online learning by schoolchildren. However, the impact of the same on Higher Education Institutes have not been adequately evaluated. It was this that prompted the students of the Education Dept. of Shri Shikshayatan College to carry out a small study in 2021 on the impact of online learning on college students. As the faculty member under which the students carried out this survey, I have expanded the scope of the study by collecting data from students of other colleges and investigated some of the reasons for their responses. This paper is based on the above effort.

Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the this study were three-fold - one, to evaluate the perspective of college students towards their motivation and interest in online learning and suitability of home environment for the same; two - to see whether there were differences in this perspective between students studying in urban colleges and suburban colleges, and three - to explore some of the reasons for their responses.

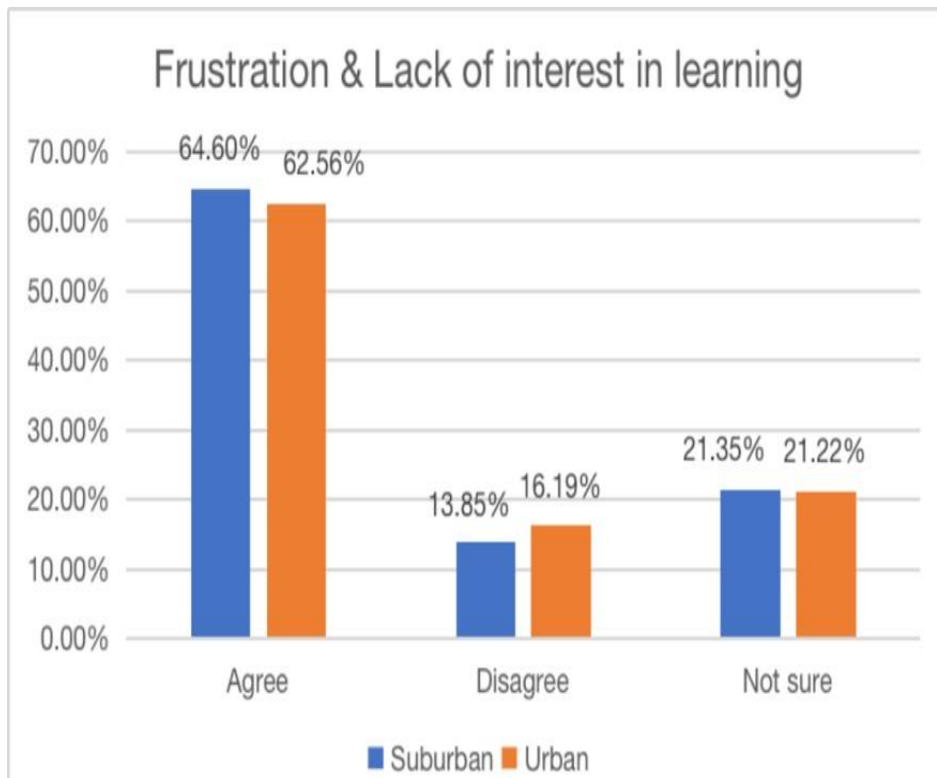
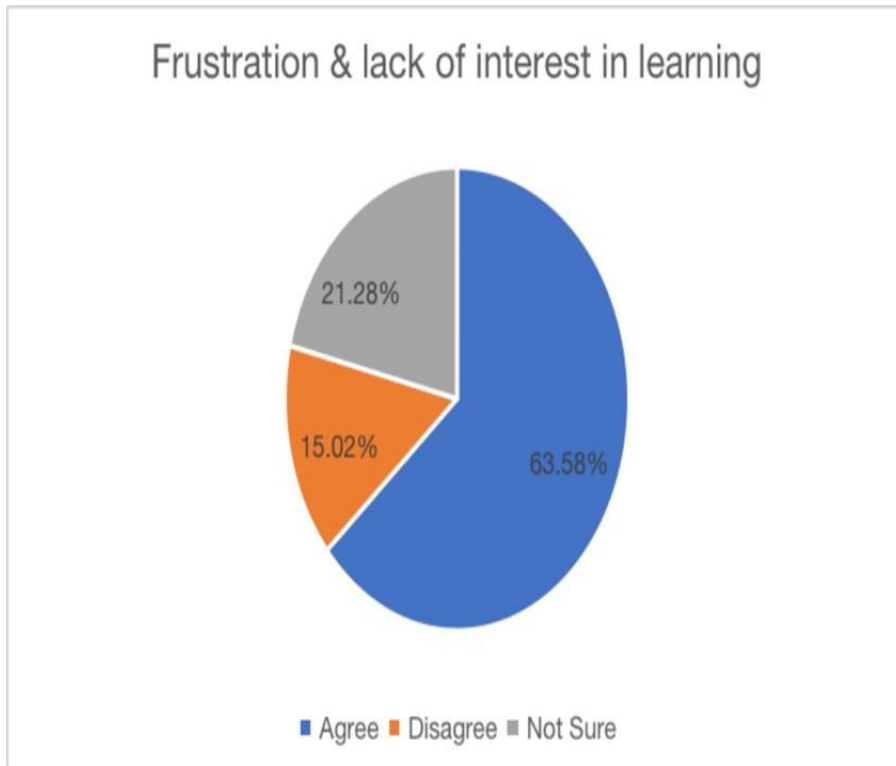
Procedure:

A questionnaire consisting of 10 items on the topic of online learning was prepared by the faculty of Shri Shikshayatan College after going through several writings and reports on the same by educationists across the country. This questionnaire was first used by the students of Shri Shikshayatan College to conduct a survey among their college mates and the same questionnaire was also circulated later among students of other colleges. The total sample size of the present study is 299, with 120 students from suburban colleges and 179 from urban colleges.

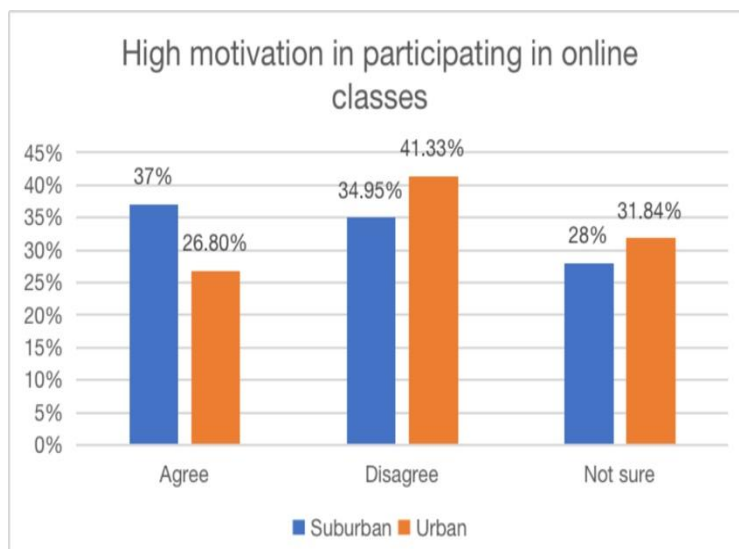
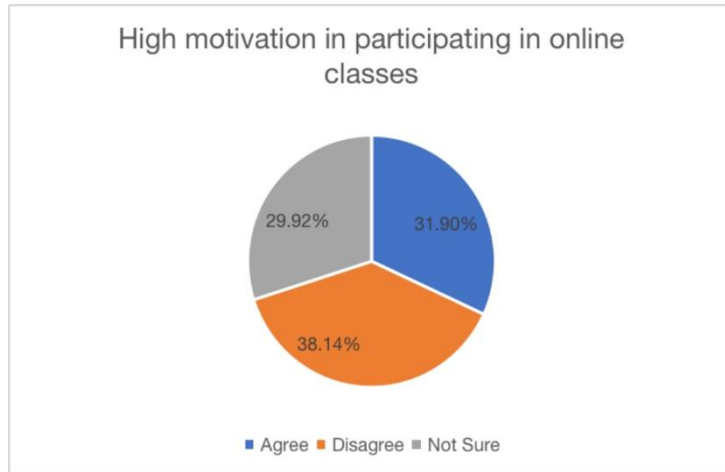
Findings of the study:

Responses to all the items of the questionnaire were not considered for this study. Only those items pertaining to the objectives were considered.

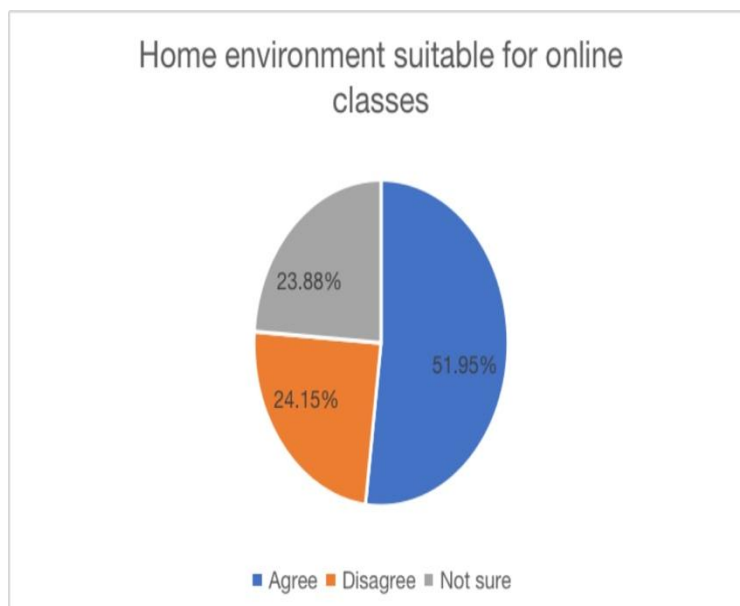
1. Frustration & lack of interest in learning while locked down

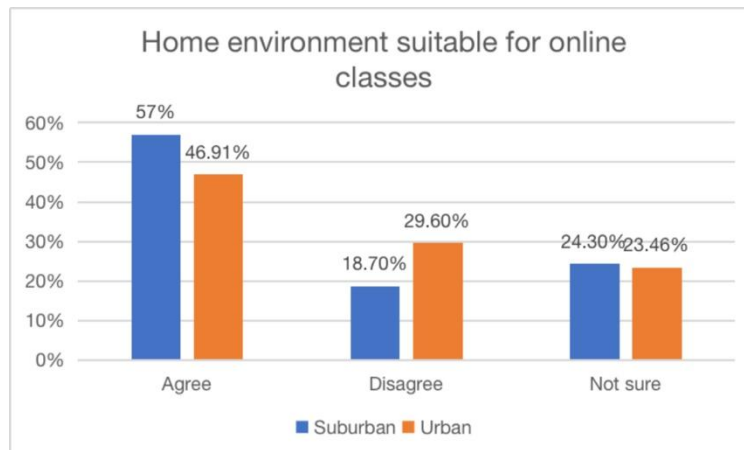


2. Motivation is high in participating in online lectures:



3. Home environment is suitable for participating in online lectures:





Reasons for responses to the items:

Participants were asked to give reasons for their responses to the following questions. Responses were not many, but nevertheless, significant.

Frustration and lack of interest in learning while being locked down:

Most participants agreed that they were frustrated and lacked interest in learning. The reasons can be summarised as below -

1. Lack of proper learning environment, lack of personal space at home
2. Household work a major barrier
3. Technical difficulties such as audio not working leads to frustration
4. Sitting for hours in front of the laptop not conducive to paying attention
5. Lack of interaction leads to insincerity in attending classes
6. Mental health affected due to pandemic resulting in stress and lack of interest in learning

High motivation in participating in online classes;

More students disagreed that they were highly motivated to participate in online classes, with some of the reasons being the following :

1. Technical glitches & connectivity issues leads to lack of motivation
2. Lack of face to face interaction
3. Home environment not suitable for attending online classes
4. Too many distractions at home
5. Lack of structure in online learning and physical absence of classmates
6. Introverts are more motivated to participate in online classes

Home environment suitable for online learning:

Surprisingly, half of the participants agreed that their home environment was suitable for online learning of students. Some of the reasons are given below -

1. Home environment suitable as both classes and household chores can be managed
2. Advantageous because classes can be attended even from bed when ill

Those who disagreed, had the following to say -

1. No proper study environment as too many distractions, household chores etc
2. At home students feel lazy and sluggish unlike in the classroom
3. Bedroom doesn't feel like a class, hence low concentration
4. Joint family set up is not suitable for online learning unlike nuclear family set up

CONCLUSION

What came through was that though frustration and lack of interest in learning was high overall, there was not much difference between students of urban colleges as compared to students of suburban colleges. As for motivation, more of students of urban colleges disagreed that they had high motivation to attend online classes. With regard to the home environment, more students of suburban colleges agreed that it was suitable for online learning as compared to the students of urban colleges.



In conclusion, it may be assumed from the findings of the study that online learning had a mixed impact on both sets of students.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Bakhla, N; Dreze, J; Paikra, V; and Khera, R. Locked Out - Emergency Report on School Education; 6th September, 2021. <https://ruralindiaonline.org>
- [2]. State of Working India 2021: One year of Covid-19; Azim Premji University, December 2023. <https://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in>
- [3]. Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2020; ASER 2020 Wave 1 (Rural) findings - India. <https://img.asercentre.org>