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Online Learning System in Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan:
Investigating Problems Faced by Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Novel COVID-19 caused turmoil in every domain of life around the globe. To halt the further spread of virus, preventive measures such as social and physical distancing have led to the temporal cessation of all education institutions in numerous countries. To minimize disruption of teaching and learning process during the pandemic, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan directed universities to transition to an online learning system. The research paper explores the problems faced by students in the current online education system introduced by various universities. A survey research method was employed, and the data were collected through convenience sampling. The link of the semi-structured questionnaire was shared with 550 students enrolled in public and private universities in Lahore, Pakistan. The study brought to light the diversified problems such as lack of internet facility, load shedding, financial issues, ear pain due to prolonged use of hand free/ Bluetooth, and unreliable results in assessments.

KEYWORDS

Assessment System, COVID-19, Education Institutions, Financial Issues, Higher Education Institutions, Internet Connectivity, Load Shedding, Online Learning Problems, Students, Support, Training, Weal Signals

1. INTRODUCTION

At recent times, this epidemic named 'COVID-19' has shifted the whole dynamics of the societal structures and Pakistan is no exception of it. Every individual has dual responsibilities that is to protect himself as well as re-emerge and reunite to start the jammed economy. The universities, colleges and schools are the places that bring thousands of people into contact, hence make them vulnerable for the viruses. Due to this, every single institution is compelled to take bold as well as tough decisions in compliance with the situation. All Pakistani educational institutions tend to move from bricks and mortar education to online education that led to some difficulties for teachers and students both.

However, these institutes have their own schedules and keeping them closed for longer period of time will make the situation worse. In this case, HEC has developed certain Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to sustain the system of education smoothly. These include giving awareness to the masses by using pictures and illustrations. Through flyers and posters all teachers and students

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have been reminded to maintain hygiene and avoid close contact including face to face meetings (HEC,2020). In these hard times, the HEIs needed to conduct online classes that is the only possible solution to deal with ongoing situation. All the universities, colleges and schools have been given instructions to work from home and deliver online lectures.

The situation requires concrete steps to encounter the problem and this has led institutes running behind Learning Management Systems (LMSs) e.g. online white board, Fastmeetin, Moodle, Udemy to compensate the learning on campus. Currently, lectures are being delivered on above mentioned online learning apps and systems and students are obligated to submit designed work and to attempt quizzes on the recommended online system of their universities. As (Abdelraheem, 2012) advocates that Learning Management Systems are most applicable in transferring knowledge and handling huge piles of educational material. . The lessons can be completed in the comfort zone without any fear of being late at workplace and being fined upon it. Online learning systems are characterised by flexibility and ease. The response rate is quicker than face to face learning, yet some hazards are bothersome for sender and receiver (*teachers & students*).

At recent times, the role of technology is increasing in every walk of life. Its importance in education cannot be overlooked. In developed countries the concept of E-learning is not new as compared to underdeveloped countries where traditional classrooms are still of great significance. However, the requirement of E-learning has mounted during recent times (HEC COVID-19 Guidance, n.d.), where all educational institutions were forcefully closed amid the novel coronavirus outbreak. Later on, to sustain education and to disseminate the curriculum, government forced HEI towards online learning systems. Therefore, universities were constrained to conduct online classes that has highlighted not only technological issues but also pedagogical, infrastructural, content based as well as health related issues.

As Mayes (2011) states that previous researches have discussed issues covered under the categories of content delivery, teaching methods, assessments and grades criteria or classification of the students who either proposed or opposed online classes. During Covid-19, the universities were bound to conduct online classes that highlighted not only technological issues but also pedagogical, infrastructural, content based as well as health related issues. Though students are familiarized with online classes yet their reservations have outnumbered than its advantages. The present study unfolds the specific areas of E-learning that learners find vague and debatable proving hazards in their gaining knowledge. Numerous studies are available discussing issues of teachers and students' concern of online classes but this research will specifically discuss problems encountered by students during online education in Pakistani context during an outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 has been declared an epidemic by World Health Organization (WHO), that is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It is occurring over a wide geographic area and affecting an exceptionally high proportion of the population. It transmits rapidly similarly like a flu or cold by sneezing, cough, and close social interaction. A tiny speck has ceased the hustle and bustle of life and rapid increase of infected people has led the governments in state of war footings. According to HEC persistent lock down has caused food shortage, sealed the economic cycle, unemployment, and enhanced the poverty. The educational institutes are no exception of it. Due to pandemic, Higher Education commission had to take tough decisions according to which all educational institutes were bound to conduct online classes.

In recent times, the importance of E-learning in Pakistan has increased. Previously it was not as rigorously practised as it is now emphasized upon. The reason was limited budget and low rate of literacy faced by government of Pakistan to have effective web-based education system. According to Ndubisi (2004), only external factors such as technology awareness to the teachers and students, purchasing and installing the equipment and designing the course material are not the seal of successful

E-learning. The lockdown situation has highlighted various loopholes in our web-based education system that otherwise had required higher level of skills. Out of many hinderances, one is about unavailability of the technology in education sector. Acquiring and placing equipment and a way of operating and replacing infrastructure demands huge price. Therefore, a groundwork has to be done prior taking the above steps. In order to step in internet world, teachers should be tech savvy and knowledgeable, so handling ICT tools can be a smooth process for them. Most often teachers don't have extensive information about the web-based educational tools, so not all are equally applicable in every situation (Habibu, Al Mamun, & Clement, 2012).

This situation has arisen the need of E-learning in order to cope up the situation. Modern teaching and learning to a great extent are based upon information technology. As Chunrao (2016) mentioned that before the advent of E-learning people used to have chalk-and-talk method. Teachers were the primary instrument of imparting the education. As Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has integrated with other areas, teaching methods are equally in changing trends in order to broaden the students' exposure. No doubt, the advantages of E-learning has grabbed peoples' attention, however their annoyance and disappointment cannot be overlooked that is caused by the wave of change from face to face teaching to online learning (Qureshi, Ilyas, Yasmin, & Whitty, 2012). In Pakistan, integration of technology with education is facing many hazards e.g., instructors' own awareness of technology and their satisfaction, installation of necessary equipment, students' motivation level as well as knowledge of ICT. Technology does not serve any purpose if it is not properly implemented (Surry, Ensminger, & Haab, 2005).

A study was conducted in an urban university in North Carolina to examine the students' performance between traditional classroom settings and Online. The researcher opted the quasi-experimental research. Total 368 undergraduate students participated from sociology and anthropology courses. Approximately 231 were from traditional class room while 212 from online classes. The test contained multiple choice questions, brief answers and also essay type answers to look at students' mastery of knowledge and their comprehension about the objectives of the course. Students on campus participated in class discussions actively whenever it took place. On the other hand, students of online classes were dependent upon one-time online discussion presented on slides. After analysing data, the results declared that pupils of face to face learning achieved comparatively good grades than E-learners and further registered in more courses (Adam Driscoll, 2012).

Another research was done in Midway University in (2015). The pilot study was conducted to figure out the fears they had about online study and blockades they face during online classes. After collecting and analysing data this study will open further areas of researches as well as improve the teaching methods currently being employed by the teachers through E-learning irrespective the field they belong to. The research outcome would set right the efficacy of the structure, delivery of lecture transmission of knowledge during web-based classes. Two groups were considered: one group wanted to continue taking online classes and other who was not willing to continue online classes indicated they had already taken before. The results were thought-provoking such as they complained regarding time management, not having enough communication with the lecturers and fellows, some felt isolated, difficulty in group project (Abramenka, Vladimir, 2015).

In developing countries including Pakistan not only learners have reservations about web-based classes, but instructors have complaints too, as they are main instrument to prepare and plan the materials for online classes (Kebritchi, Lipschuetz, & Santiague, 2017). Teachers have to plan and produce the content for the lesson they are going to deliver. In the opinion of (Li & lrby, 2008), It seems very intricate to alter the material according to the mode of classes e.g., from traditional classes to online classes. Mostly teachers are not aware of using technology such as Moodle, Vedamo and zoom or they are not well exercised in changing the material from face-to-face to web classes (Blankson & Keengwe, 2011).The instructors are not solo in the process because they need to learn to grab students' attention in online classes to develop their profound comprehension regarding what they have achieved.

Thus, the content preparators and IT personnel must provide assistance to the teachers in order to deliver the online lectures using technology (The Conversation, 2020). Once instructor prepares any topic, it cannot be transmitted on an online class as it is. As Koehler et al., (2004) suggested that now a days an online course should be designed by focusing on material, methodology and know-how of computers. Yet, teachers don't feel it convenient to change their methodology from traditional classroom teaching to E-learning (Barrett, 2010). Teachers do not have any support, nor are they motivated while designing online lessons (Allen & Seaman, 2014). The continuous support and training provided to the instructors by their management will be helpful for them to deliver the desired results (Jeff E. Hoyt, 2013).

Among other hazards, the foremost problem in conducting online classes is internet connectivity which is being faced by both teachers and learners. Connectivity issue including low signal quality creates a havoc. Since due to lock down has been extended, universities are managing online classes till further notification. Upon which teachers and students both have expressed their serious concerns. Slow connectivity causes poor quality of lectures that ultimately become the reason of dissatisfaction of the students as they are paying large amount of fee to the institutions (Pakistan Today, 2020).

Thenmozhi & Aishwarya (2018) also stated that online classes have been conducting for last four months, moreover classes schedule is of five hours approximately five days a week that shows excessive use of headphones. The continuous usage of headphones may cause damage to hearing sense that sometimes remains incurable. Students complain of having an ear pain or numbness, as it is a known fact that loudness of noise may lead permanent hearing loss because ears can endure loud sound for few minutes. As per research, volume less than 90 decibels do not cause impairment. Thus, students are at great risk concerning their physical health.

Bonk & Zhang (2008) also investigated the role on nonverbal gestures and explored that instructors' facial expressions, body language and gestures play a huge part during the content delivery. During online lesson, either teachers or students remain confused regarding other party's expression. Teachers during lectures may not keep focus on every individual's attentiveness or learners may indulge in other activities simultaneously. They further highlighted a surprising fact that during online classes on Zoom, many learners invite their colleagues from different institutes to join their session that posed a risk to the teacher's privacy.

In the same vein, Davidson (2015), brought forward his study that demotivation is a barrier experienced by the students during online classes that brought along delayed assignments or even missed a lecture completely. Another dilemma that group discussions and group projects are found missing on web learning that otherwise promote the atmosphere of competition in traditional classrooms. Likewise, Singh (2016), also explored the challenge that instructors face in using ICT is English language which has close link with internet world. They perceive English is going to make them restricted using ICT and reason can be being uncomfortable in communication. Instructors and learners fit in different age groups. Hence preference of one age group can be considered 'digital divide' by the other ones. The gap between learner's excessive habitude of technology and instructors limited know-how increases when the students are restricted to solve mathematical equation by hands rather than using computer. In this way, teachers can bound the role of computer just like traditional typewriter. The teachers' job is not just to go along with learns' technological knowledge but to provide them such rigorous knowledge and expertise that led them to apply to unravel complex maths problems.

Another aspect worth mentioning is self-motivation which is sometimes occurs due to peer pressure. In the campus, learners get motivated by seeing others excelling. Since their objectives are targeted that's why they give priority to face to face learning. Apart from it, teachers and their assistants' physical presence induce the learners to meet the requirements of the course set by the authorities. This element is missing on web-education. Some students outweigh the traditional classroom setting to online class by considering reward or incentive system significant. In traditional classrooms, awarded grades, medals or prizes may encourage them but in E-learning electronic badge or shield is not sufficient to motivate them (Rai & Chunrao, 2016).

Khalid (2020) spotted a light on another dilemma that is online class attendance. Instructors and students both want to appear in time but conditions such as internet dysconnectivity or abrupt load shedding prevent to maintain regular attendance rate. In addition to this, the less privileged students or from remote areas may not have modem at home or don't have installed internet at their homes. Thus, they don't have other choice except using mobile data that costs them high. Learners from remote areas have to travel far to get mobile phone balance. If they get the balance coincidentally, the other thing (network issue) may get them in trouble. Occasionally due to weak signals, they cannot hear or see things clearly online.

Online education has become a need in these hard times, COVID-19 but it has surfaced many concerns for teachers as well as students. The excessive exposure of internet for the students, some are of opinion that lack of resources is affecting those economically derived people who may find it hard to get access to the online lectures. The United Nations Children's Fund a philanthropical organization states that a large number of young generations is endangered due to increasing connection to the internet. (Kannankara, Dr. Anjana, 2020).

Ramos (2005) also discussed issues pertaining to E-learning that students and teachers are forbearing various problems which they might not have in traditional classrooms. Online classes, in Pakistan, may not be as effectively held as they could have been. There are numerous reasons; one can be unexpected pandemic, unequipped for the situation, lack of preplanning, technological training into the classrooms and infrastructure. Insufficient resources and expertise didn't allow the institutions to stand by for any such type of calamity.

Many teachers have known about online classes and ICT but using Moodle, Zoom or Meet at home is a novel experience for them. Also, they are not tech-savvy and used computers only it was needed prior this pandemic. Added to it, this study has explored some physical issues faced by students that have not been discussed previously such as excessive use of headphones or hands-free caused ear pain. Few students gave positive feedback as they found quiz or assignments easy to solve and gained good grades while some showed grievance about excessive workload, time management and poor scores, indicating their inclination towards face to face learning.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theory 'constructivism' has been taken as a theoretical frame in this research paper to strengthen the idea that distance education and social-constructivism are interlinked. Constructivism is a learned centred approach. Learning is a wide spectrum that does not take place in anyone's mind rather in a particular setting or background. According to this approach teacher's role is like a guide and to design such a set up where different activities can take place. Thus, students must be mentally robust to experience real life challenges while leaving the traditional classrooms. Proponents of constructivism believe cognitive willingness is comprised of a student's representations, questioning and imitation is dependent upon the level of negotiation and this is backed up by gestures, tones and physical response (Bandura, 1977). Teaching promptness is characterized by selecting the material, prepare it and utilize it where necessary, but it is unfeasible in congested classrooms.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Framework of the Research

Quantitative approach has been used in this research that fits to address the problem of the research, Positivistic Paradigm is philosophical underpinning that shapes the approach of present study. Positivistic Paradigm is based on philosophy that is rationalistic. Positivistic Paradigm determines effects or the outcomes. Positivism can be employed to the social world in a way that social world can also be studied. The research is Descriptive which measures the subjects only once. In descriptive research, the researcher observes the sample or the subjects without intervening. In descriptive research

information is elicited from the sample without the manipulation or changing the environment. The framework of the research is further elaborated in the onion diagram below.

3.2. Population and Sampling

Due to lockdown, Convenience sampling was used to get data from 550 student who were studying online different courses in the leading private and public universities in Lahore. Convenience sampling is a specific type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in study (Research Methodologfy, n.d.). Students studying in the diverse semesters that is 1 to 8 participated in the research.

3.3. Research Instrument

To investigate the problems that were being faced by students while studying online in higher institutes of Pakistan during COVID- 19 lockdown, an online survey was conducted. The semi structured questionnaire was comprised of 26 self-administrated questions. The questionnaire used various types of questions, including multiple-choice, Likert scale and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into 6 sections. The first section comprised of 6 questions regarding participants' demographics. The second section included 4 questions pertaining to participants' general problems of online classes. The third section consisted of 7 questions appertaining to participants' during lecture problems related to online class. The fourth section contained 5 questions related to participants' views about assessment methods (Quizzes & Assignments) in online classes. The fifth section incorporated 3 questions regarding participants' results on online assessments. The sixth section involved 2 questions concerning participants' overall feedback in regards to online classes. The analysis of the questionnaire was based on Likert scale using a five choice of degree of agreement format, including5- Strongly agreed, 4-Agreed, 3-Neutral, 3-Disagreed and 5-Strongly Disagreed. Data was collected between the months of April 2020 and May 2020.

4. RESULTS

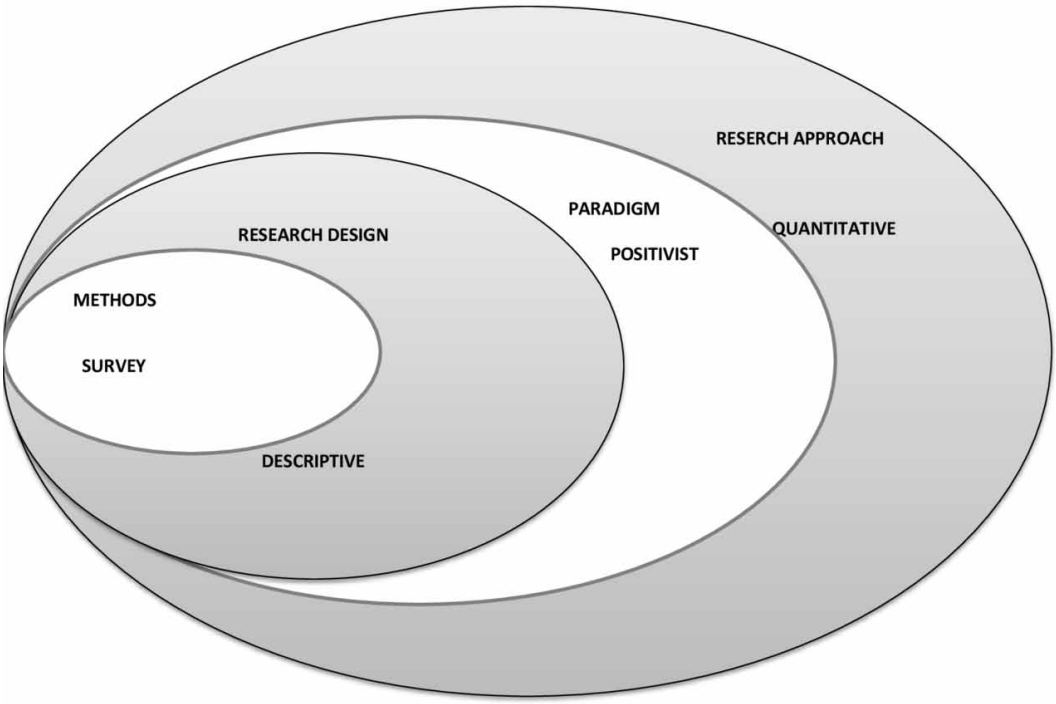
For data analysis, descriptive data analyses (such as frequencies) were conducted using the data analysis tool provided in the online survey site and Statistical Packages of Social Sciences (SPSS) 25 version. The study covered students' problems faced during the COVID-19 online study. It included their general problems, during lecture problems, problems of assessment methods, results and overall feedback on online learning system.

4.1. Demographics of the Respondents

The first section deals with demographic characteristics of the respondents. The section covers 4 questions reading respondents' age, the semester in which they were studying, their prior experience of online learning and their level of technology use. Table 1 summarizes the respondents' responses on the above-mentioned aspects.

Table 1 demonstrates the demographics of the participants. Out of 550 participants the age mean and SD were 20.87and 1.675 respectively. In the study (44.5%) male students and (55.5%) female students participated. Most of the students (25.7%) participated in the research were from 2nd semester. While (21.9%) from 6th semester, (14.5%) students from 1st semester, and (14.4%) students from 3rd semester provided responses. Whereas (7.5%) students from 5th semester and from 7th and 8th semester (7.1%) students participated. Only (2%) students from 4th semester participated in the research. Most of the students (85.3%) have never experienced online learning earlier. Majority of the students (61.6%) disclosed that their level of technology use is moderate whereas and (29.5%) students revealed inadequate expertise of handling technology.

Figure 1. Framework of the Research



4.2. General Problems of the Respondents during Online Classes

The second section in the questionnaire attempted to elicit students' responses regarding the general problems that they face in the online education. This is followed by four statements characterized as training for online classes, expertise in taking on line classes, support from university regarding issues of online classes and course access. Table 2 summarizes students' responses to the items.

Table 2 illustrates the responses of the participants under the rubric of general problems of the students in online learning. The finding revealed that more than half no of respondents was not provided any prior training for online classes (item 2.1). Likewise, majority of respondents indicated that had not been provided sufficient time to learn to develop expertise for studying online (item 2.2). Furthermore, a noticeable percentage of respondents reported that their universities did not provide them any support to resolve their issues regarding online classes (item 2.3). Similarly, the findings also exhibited that over half of the respondents were disagreed to the fact that they could access the course material easily (2.4).

4.3. During Online Lecture Problems

The third section deals with students 'problems related to during online classes. The section comprised of 7 statements appertaining to teachers' professional tone, lack of access to internet, weal signal problem of internet, electricity shortage, lack of nonverbal gestures, class participation and provision

Table 1. Responses of the Respondents on Demographic Characteristics (N=550)

Demographic	Features	N (%)
Age (years) Mean 20.87 SD ±1.675		
Gender	Male	245(44.5%)
	Female	306(55.5%)
In which semester are you studying?	1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th	80(14.5%) 141(25.7%) 79(14.4%) 11(2%) 41(7.5%) 120(21.9%) 39(7.1%) 39(7.1%)
Have you experienced teaching online before COVID-19 pandemic?	Yes No	81(14.7%) 469(85.3%)
Your level of technology use?	Low Moderate High	161(29.5%) 339(61.6%) 50(9.1%)

of equal opportunities for class participation. Table 3 summarizes the responses of the respondents on during lecture problems.

The results presented in Table 2 exhibited that majority of the respondents disagreed to the fact that lecturers maintain professional tone while lecturing online (item 3.1). In addition, a noticeable percentage of the respondents reported that they lacked internet facility for the online classes (item 3.2). Furthermore, over half of the respondents also indicated that they encountered the problem of weak signal of internet during their online classes ((item 3.3). In the same vein, a majority of the

Table 2. Responses of the Respondents on General Problems in Online Classes (N=550)

Items	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
2.1 I have been provided complete training for online classes.	10(1.8%)	65(11.8%)	120(21.8%)	162(29.5%)	193(35.1%)
2.2 I have developed expertise in taking online classes.	13(24.9%)	99(18%)	159(28.9%)	143(26%)	137(24.9%)
2.3 University is providing me full support to resolve issues regarding online classes.	26(4.7%)	123(22.4%)	123(22.4%)	135(24.5%)	143(26%)
2.4 I can access the course material conveniently.	15(2.7%)	147(26.7%)	147(26.7%)	133(24.2%)	106(19.3%)

Table 3. Responses of the Respondents on during Lecture Problems (N=550)

Items	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
3.1 Teachers maintain a professional tone during whole lecture.	40(7.3%)	161(29.3%)	130 (23.6%)	106(19.3%)	113(20.5%)
3.2 Lack of access to the internet.	206(37.5%)	176(32.2%)	78(14.2%)	48(8.7%)	41(7.5%)
3.3 Weak signal problems of internet.	231(42%)	193(35.1%)	60(10.9%)	38(6.9%)	27(4.9%)
3.4 Electricity shortage during classes.	175(31.8%)	174(31.6%)	105(19.1%)	67(12.2%)	29(5.3%)
3.5 Lack of face to face interaction with teacher and class fellows.	195(35.5%)	184(33.5%)	96(17.5%)	48(8.7)	27(4.9%)
3.6 I seldom participate in discussions during online classes.	53(9.6%)	208(37.8%)	116(21.1%)	75(13.6%)	97(17.6%)
3.7 I have been given equal opportunities to participate in the class discussions	33(6%)	200(36.4%)	128(23.3%)	80(14.5%)	108(19.6%)

respondents also reported that they faced the problem of electricity shortage during their classes (item 3.4). In addition, more than half number of the respondents showed agreement that during their online classes they miss lack of face to face interaction not only with their teachers abut also with other peers (item 3.5). Similarly, a large number of the respondents showed agreement to the statement that they seldom participate in discussions during their online classes (item 3.6). Lastly, a little more than half of the respondents reported that they were given equal opportunities to participate in discussions in online during online lectures.

4.4. Problems of Assessment Methods of Online Classes

The fourth section dealt with problems of assessment methods in online learning system. The section comprised of 5 statements such as sufficient time to attempt quizzes, easy quizzes to attempt, assignment topics, clearer instruction regarding the assignments' topics, adequate time for assignments completion. Table 4 summarizes respondents' responses on assessment method in online education.

Table 4 demonstrates the finding on assessments methods during online classes. A noticeable number of respondents brought forward the fact that they were not given adequate time to attempt online quizzes (item 4.10). Likewise, more than half number of respondents showed disagreement to the statement that quizzes were easy to attempt (item 4.2). The majority of the respondents exhibited the fact that the topics of the assigned assignments were not easy to attempt (item 4.3). Moreover, a little more than half of the respondents indicated that they were provided clear instructions regarding the topics of the assignments for their better understanding (item 4.4). Lastly, a substantial percentage of the respondents reported that sufficient time period was provided to them for their assignment completion.

4.5. Results Based on Online Classes

The fifth section deals with respondents' problems regarding results based on online learning system. In this section, 3 statements pertaining to reliability of the results of the quizzes and assignments,

Table 4. Responses of the Respondents on Assessment Methods of Online Learning (N=550)

Items	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
4.1 Sufficient time is given to attempt quizzes.	50(9.1%)	81(14.7%)	92(16.7%)	121(22%)	205(37.3%)
4.2 Quizzes are easy to attempt.	18(3.3%)	73(13.3%)	116(21.1%)	126(22.9%)	216(39.3%)
4.3 Topics for assignments are complex.	29(5.3%)	140(25.5%)	151(27.5%)	103(18.7%)	126(22.9%)
4.4 Clear instructions are provided regarding the topics of assignments	25(4.5%)	190(34.5%)	131(23.8%)	91(16.5%)	110(20%)
4.5 Adequate time is provided or assignment completion.	38(6.9%)	200(36.4%)	116(21.1%)	85(15.5%)	111(20.2%)

and impact of online learning system on results of the students. Table 5 summarizes the responses of the respondents on the results based on E-learning system.

Table 5 shows the findings on results based on online learning. The majority of the respondents showed agreement that the results of the online quizzes are reliable and authentic (item 5.1). Contrarily, a noticeable number of respondents reported that they did not rely on the authenticity of the results of the assignments in the online learning system (item 5.2). Lastly, the findings also revealed that over more than half number of respondents indicated that online system of education has caused a negative impact on their CGPA/GPA.

4.6. General Feedback on Online Learning System

The last section deals with the general feedback of the respondents in which two statement reading the initiatives of the online learning system to date are successful or not and the prolong use of hand free/Bluetooth creates pain in the ear. Table 6 summarizes the responses of the respondents' overall feedback on line learning system.

Table 6 demonstrates the results on general feedback on online learning. The findings revealed that a large number of respondents reported that their universities are not running online classes

Table 5. Responses of the Respondents on Results Based Online Learning System (N=550)

Items	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
5.1 Results of the quizzes are reliable.	39(7.1%)	253(46%)	123(22.4%)	69(12.5%)	66(12%)
5.2 Results of the assignments are reliable.	15(2.7%)	138(25.1%)	167(30.4%)	110(20%)	120(21.8%)
5.3 Results of online assessments impact your CGPA/GPA negatively.	271(49.3%)	155(28.2%)	62(11.3%)	28(5.1%)	271(49.3%)

Note: CGPA (Cumulative Grade Point Average) & GPA (Grade Point Average)

Table 6. Respondents' Overall Feedback on Online Learning System (N=550)

Items	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
6.1 My university is running online classes learning successfully	11(2%)	72(13.1%)	219(38.8%)	113(20.5%)	133(24.2%)
6.2 Prolonged use of hand free/blue tooth creates pain in the ear.	259(47.1%)	168(30.5%)	61(11.1%)	34(6.2%)	28(5.1%)

successfully (item 6.1). Lastly, the majority of the respondents also reported that prolong use of hand free/blue tooth led to pain in their ears.

5. DISCUSSION

The overall findings of the study show that majority of the respondents reveal that they were not provided any training before commencing online classes and when they started taking classes online, they had inadequate knowledge and lacked expertise to join online classes. The online classes are only solution, during pandemic Covid-19, social and physical distancing, to combat with the invisible enemy. Keeping in view the circumstances, and to immediately sustain the education system, HEC notified all the higher education institutions to switch towards virtual learning. That was indeed a great challenge to the universities, students and teachers to cope up with the requirements of HEC. Consequently, with that short notice many public and private universities commenced online classes, but unfortunately students and teachers both were not provided adequate training for the venture which augmented their stress. Similarly, a noticeable number of students also indicated that they were not getting any support or training from their universities and they were facing difficulties in accessing the course material that their teachers were uploading on their official website of online learning.

As for as during online class problems are concerned, a large number of respondents brought to light that most of the teachers did not maintain professional tone throughout online lectures. Another major finding highlighted by the study is, that a noticeable percentage of the students reported that not only did they have no internet facility at their homes but also encountered the problem of weak signal of internet. Similar problem was also documented by Marcus (2020) in his study on learners' perception on online learning system in the midst of a Covid-19 pandemic. He explored that students lack the facility of internet due to financial issues and also face the problem of Internet access "due to the geographical state of their residence which is still difficult to get telephone communication network, SMS, and Internet" (Allo, 2020, p. 8). Similar problems were also reported in the article entitled "Students decry online classes citing lack of internet access, low quality education" that "slow connectivity causes poor quality of lectures that ultimately become the reason of dissatisfaction of the students as they are paying large amount of fee to the institutions"(Pakistan Today, 2020). Likewise, Khalid (2020) also explored in his study that less privileged students or from remote areas may not have modem at home or don't have installed internet at their homes.

Another finding worth mentioning pertaining to during online class problem was nonverbal gesture. The majority of the students missed facial expressions, eye contact and other bodily gestures of their teachers and their class fellows during classes. The importance of nonverbal gestures was documented in the book 'Handbook of Online Learning Innovations in Higher Education and Corporate Training' by Rudestam et al. that "Body language and facial expression send powerful messages, all the more powerful because the messages are usually unconscious" (Rudestam & Schoenholtz, 2002) and Bonk & Zhang (2008) also mentioned the importance of nonverbal gestures in their studies. A

large majority of the respondents also revealed that they seldom took part in the class discussions and the also disclosed that their teachers provided them equal opportunities for class discussions and activities. One among so many reasons is, that students like to work in groups and they feel scary of doing independent work, that is why they hesitate to take part in online discussions. Similar arguments have been mentioned by Davidson (2015) and Graham& Misanchuk (2004) that group discussions and group projects are found missing on web learning that otherwise promote the atmosphere of competition in traditional classrooms.

The study also explored that majority of the respondents also revealed that they relied on the results of the quizzes however, contrarily majority of the students did not rely on the results of the assignments. A large number of the respondents also indicated that online learning system will have a negative impact on their cumulative results. Analogous problem have been stated by Jenna (2017) that "problems of assessment such as technical issues, complexity, sequencing of activities and learning a new medium have been identified as presenting obstacles to the incorporation of multimedia application and assessment in the learning environment" (Swan, 2017, p. 23).

Pertaining to general feedback on online learning system, majority of the respondents reported that online learning initiatives to date are not successful and various reason have already been explored in the study such as, internet facility, residence in remote areas, electricity failure, financial issues, weak signals, lack of face to face interaction, unreliable results of assignment. Kannankara & Anjana (2020) also stated in the same vein that lack of resources is affecting those economically derived people who may find it hard to get access to the online lectures. Another significant finding that the study unearthed that a majority of the respondents reported that prolong use of hand free/Bluetooth created pain in their ears. Thenmozhi &Aishwarya (2018) and Zia et al., (2019) in their study also reported similar finding that prolong use of ear phones can be a source of mechanical ear trauma which could eventually lead to ear infection.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study mentioned above, they study spotted the light on diversified issues and problems that students are encountering in the present online learning system of Higher Education Institutions. It can be concluded from the results of the study that when universities switched towards virtual learning due to Covid 19, students were not provided adequate training for online classes, assignment submission, and practice to attempt quizzes. Besides, students did not get any support from their universities for resolving their diverse issues (internet facility, provision of Bluetooth/ hand free, IT training program etc.) appertaining to online classes. To worsen the situation, a majority student cannot afford internet packages for online classes due to their financial issues. In addition to that, internet weak signals are the major problem that creates frustration and anxiety amongst students. Moreover, students, who are residing in remote areas, have not the facility of internet connection, therefore found hard to travel to places with internet facility in the present context which is alarming. Lack of facial expressions and nonverbal cues of the teachers and other peers are also found missing in the online classes which eventually lead towards demotivation, lack of concentration and better understanding of the taught concepts. The study also disclosed that majority of the students are dissatisfied with current online learning system and with their results of their assignments, and they seem outright apprehensive that online learning system will impact their CGPA/GPA in future.

Keeping in view the present scenario in Pakistan, online learning system seems the only option, better to say an obligation. To save the future of our generation, and to keep up pace with the rest of the world, it seems imperative to continue the online learning system. Although, there are some loopholes that need to be grappled with to keep things run smoothly and to make the current online learning system successful which will equally be advantageous in the future too.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, following recommendations are suggested for Higher Education Institutions.

I. Develop their own online learning systems to ensure better quality of online education
II. Establish better testing and assessment systems to ensure fairer, more transparent, and equitable marking.
III. Provide high quality IT devices e.g. camera, headphones etc. to its employee to improve the quality of online education.
IV. Support students with internet facility according to their budgets.
V. Introduce and implement new policies and criteria for online assessments of students to make students satisfied with current online learning system.

8. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The COVID-19 has impacted every sphere of life but the education sector is strongly struck by it. The Pre-COVID-19 world had not experienced the need for online education in such a strong way, as it is facing now. Fortunately, despite many reservations, the transition to online learning system within such a short duration, has given a hands-on experience of virtual learning to teachers and students that otherwise seems impossible in normal circumstances. The online education system has opened a new door and multitude perspectives for future researches. This study has already brought into consideration numerous problems of the students pertaining to E- learning. The challenges, that teachers are facing currently in the present online learning system can also be investigated. Further researches can be held about other unexplored aspects of online education such as the benefits of online learning for teachers and students. How can online education diminish the teachers' paperwork including assignment preparation, quizzes and awarding grades etc.

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