

Education Shift During COVID-19: Students' Satisfaction with Emergency Distance Learning

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Abstract

Background: COVID-19 pandemic, a global issue, enforced education system to shift with distance learning mode. This study assessed students' satisfaction with emergency distance learning.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was done among 200 nursing students studying in five nursing campuses of Tribhuvan University. To collect data, questionnaires containing 28 statements measuring students' satisfaction with online learning on a five-point scale was used. The electronic link of the questionnaire was shared to the participants via their emails, vipers and messengers. Descriptive analysis of data was done using SPSS software.

Finding and Conclusion: Distance learning classes were taken through Zoom, Microsoft team, email, viber and messenger. Only 49% students were enjoying online platform applications and >90% of them felt need for training regarding use of technology for distance learning. The learning environment was comfortable for >2/3rd of the students, 74.5% were satisfied with the instructor's encouragement for active learning and >1/3rd had issues with the instructor's pace of punctuality. The classes were interrupted due to technological error. The internet charges were expensive and students refused practical classes through distance learning mode.

Key words: Distance Learning, nursing education, remote education, satisfaction, student

Introduction

Distance learning is increasing due to flexibility in time and place with a lesser cost than face-to-face class.¹ In COVID-19 pandemic, 191 countries in the world and 98% of the global student population switched to distance learning² while, very few educational institutions implemented it before.³ Developing countries like Nepal,

has underdeveloped culture of distance learning.⁴After the closure of education sectors in amid of COVID-19 pandemic, the country pursued alternative modes of learning in higher education.⁵

Educational institutions are not prepared for transitions of emergency distance learning⁶although, various online learning tools are available.⁷Despite teachers' teaching skills, online class is stressful for students⁸and satisfaction with class decreases student's dropout.⁹Although combination of both distance and conventional face-to-face teaching-learning strategy is effective for nursing education,¹⁰ students are less satisfied with the distance learning classes.¹¹This understanding made us think that what would be the nursing students' satisfaction status toward online class? In this scenario, understanding students' satisfaction is important not only to the teachers to assess the

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quality of the lesson taught but also to the campus and university for measuring program quality itself for better academic advancement. Therefore, this study answered the question of are nursing students satisfied with online classes?

Methods and Materials

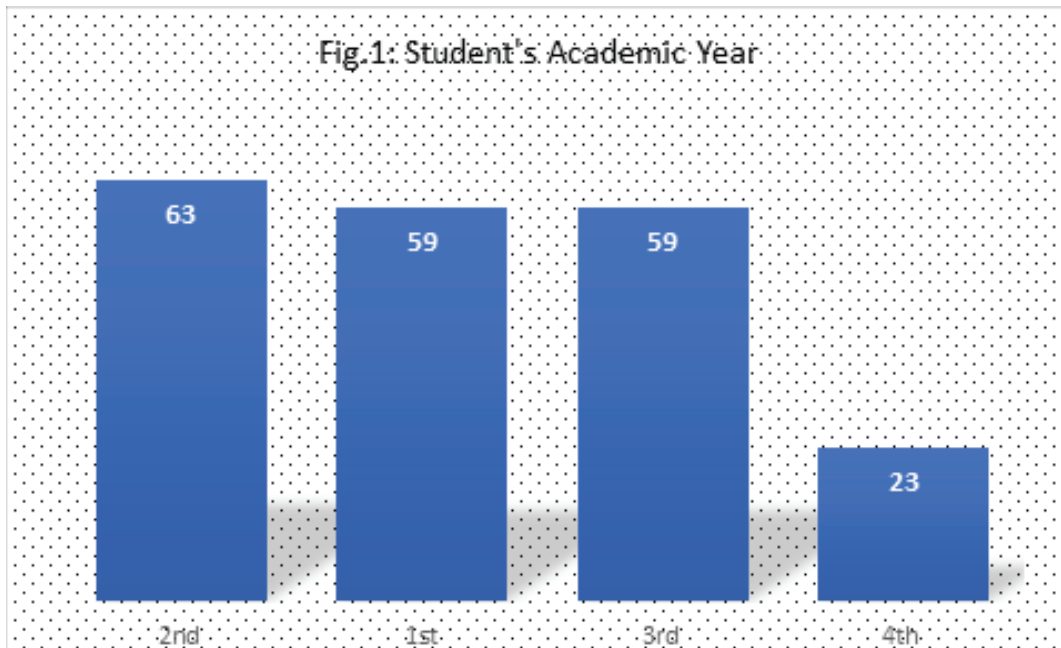
The study adopted cross-sectional survey design, in which, questionnaire was shared with randomly selected 336 nursing students who were studying in the five constituent nursing campuses of Tribhuvan University, Institute of Medicine. A structured questionnaire was developed in google forms containing three sections: Section I related to demographic information, section II measured use of online platforms and the section III geared toward measuring student’s satisfaction with distance learning. It was measured in the scale of strongly disagree-1, disagree-2, neutral-3, agree-4, strongly agree-5.

The campus chiefs of those campuses were approached via telephone and email. They were given a description of the study and requested to distribute the survey link to their institution’s sampled students. In addition to this approach, based on investigators’ knowledge of existing communication structures among

students and faculties, additional student and faculty-led distribution was also achieved through social media groups such as e-mail, viber and messenger. Data was collected from 2 to 8th January, 2021. The information obtained was kept confidential and the researcher was not able to link the obtained information with participants. Detailed information for the participation was sent to the participants along with the questionnaire and were not forced for participation. Self-generated Excel sheet made with Google Forms was transferred to SPSS Version 20 for analysis. Descriptive statistics was done to check the frequency distribution of the variables.

Results and Discussion

Social distancing was instituted due to the Coronavirus induced pandemic that consequently interrupted the conventional classroom teaching. To address this challenge, schools and universities have instituted emergency distance learning. This study aimed to assess students’ satisfaction with distance learning. Out of 336 students, 200 responded to the questionnaire (59.5% response rate). Most of the students participating were residing outside the Capital City. Their class attendance was 75 to 100 percent and most (31.5%) of them were of 2nd year



(Fig.1).

In the study, >85% students said that distance lectures were delivered using zoom, Microsoft team, email, viber and messenger. (Table 1). Other medical colleges of Nepal also used zoom platforms for online class.^{12,13} YouTube and Google classrooms were common

for medical students in Kerala.¹⁴ Access to different e-learning technology made it possible to learn online.¹⁵ However, it is unclear which methods of teaching best fits for online learning⁶ hence, there is still a need for more evidence regarding remote online learning.

TABLE 1: Use of Learning Platforms

n= 200

Variables	Responses (no.%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Zoom	10(5)	12(6)	24(12)	46(23)	108(54)
Moodle	179(89.5)	3(1.5)	16(8)	2(1)	-
Microsoft team	57(28.5)	26(13)	66(33)	20(10)	31(15.5)
Google meet	122(61.5)	25(12.5)	31(15.5)	13(6.5)	9(4.5)
e-mail	16(8)	11(5.5)	57(28.5)	62(31)	54(27)
Viber	60(30)	12(6)	37(18.5)	51(25.5)	40(20)
Messenger	16(8)	16(8)	41(20.5)	61(30.5)	66(33)
not at all-1, little extent-2, sometimes-3, high extent-4, very high extent-5					

Students’ satisfaction with distance learning is presented in table 2 that was measured in the scale of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. In the study, 51% respondents could not enjoy distance learning due to less skill of technology use and >90% demanded training before implementation of distance learning. Success of remote learning depends on learners’ skill for use of technology¹⁶ while, unfamiliarity makes learning complicated.¹⁷

TABLE 2: Satisfaction with Distance Learning

n= 200

Variables	Response (no.%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
I feel confident and enjoy using the online platform applications	5(2.5)	24 (12)	73(36.5)	77(38.5)	21(10.5)
I feel students need to be trained before undergoing online learning activities	2(1)	6(3)	29 (24.5)	97 (48.5)	66(33)
I feel students need to be updated with latest technology	3(1.5)	4(2)	12(6)	65 (32.5)	116(58)

Cont... TABLE 2: Satisfaction with Distance Learning**n= 200**

I frequently interacted with friends and the instructors during the course	5(2.5)	18(9)	65(32.5)	93(46.5)	19(9.5)
I got enough time to study	7(3.5)	23(11.5)	51(25.5)	90(45)	29(14.5)
I like the way my instructor made students feel a sense of belonging	2(1)	4(2)	48(24)	109(54.5)	37(18.5)
Teachers' organization and preparation for class provides comfortable learning environment	2(1)	8(4)	53(26.5)	108(54)	29(14.5)
I like the instructor's teaching ability	1(0.5)	9(3)	56(28)	106(53)	28(14)
I like when instructors emphasize in maintaining the distraction free classes	3(1.5)	9(3)	57(28.5)	105(52.5)	26(13)
I am satisfied with the Instructor's encouragement in class participation	-	11(5.5)	40(20)	115(57.5)	34(17)
I am satisfied with the instructor's accessibility and professional behavior during the class	1(0.5)	11(5.5)	44(22)	123(61.5)	21(10.5)
I am satisfied with the instructor's pace of punctuality in starting the class	10(5)	22(11)	66(33)	79(39.5)	23(11.5)
I am satisfied with the instructor's supportiveness and responsiveness towards my questions	3(1.5)	7(3.5)	44(22)	106(53)	40(20)
Online applications (zoom meet, Google meet, Team) are easy to use	1(0.5)	10(5)	37(18.5)	114(57)	38(19)
Internet charge is expensive	2(1)	12(6)	44(22)	71(35.5)	71(35.5)
Class interruption due to technology/ internet	2(1)	4(2)	20(10)	71(35.5)	103(51.5)
strongly disagree-1, disagree-2, neutral-3, agree-4, strongly agree-5					

Previous scholars also supported the need of training before institution of distance learning.³In the study, only 47.5% respondents enjoyed distance learning and felt comfortable. These finding complements that of Blizak,⁴ in which students opposed online learning and demanded traditional classroom. In general, students are not interested in virtual class.⁵ The reason might be doubts regarding the usefulness of this urgently adopted teaching strategy.⁶ Here the argument is if the majority of the students can not enjoy and feel comfort in class, what would be the quality of education?

In the study, >2/3rd of the respondents was satisfied with the class organization by the instructors that made students comfortable. Even more of them were satisfied with the lectures, use of communication techniques and the instructor's encouragement in class. Contrary

to this finding, there was communication gap between teacher and student during online class.^{7,8}If students are valued and informed, they will be satisfied.⁹ This suggests that unlike others, nursing students have a sense of belongingness in online class and were satisfied with the lectures delivered by the teachers. Although 73% respondents in this study were satisfied with the instructor's supportiveness and responsiveness towards their questions, >1/3rd were not satisfied with the instructors pace of punctuality in the class. Sometimes neither lectures are managed as course⁸ nor students are valued.⁷If teachers cannot be in time for lectures, students will be dissatisfied⁸that affect the outcome of the lecture. In the study, 68% students were satisfied with the content displayed during the lecture. In online class, students focus more on skill and time management over

technology.¹⁰ Here we can argue that online technology being used for class is not a big issue to the students but management of the physical and psychological learning environment matters. However, in the study, 87% students found sudden interruption of the internet affected their learning process. Not only the network and electricity power failure^{6,9} but also the online software failure^{7,8} disturbs lecture. Moreover, in the study, 71% of students worried about the expensive internet charges. Economic burden to afford technology prevents students from enrolling in distance learning.¹¹ This suggests that although there is access to technology for online class, educational institutions need to be aware of learners' affordability while offering the courses online.

In response to the question, "would you need repetition of online classes once usual class restarts", 28% students in this study said yes, 44.5% said may be and 27.5% said no. (Table 3). This finding suggests that students could not decide how to perceive the emergency

distance learning. Superior to this, 78.9% students of Gandaki medical demanded revision of online courses through conventional classroom teaching.⁶ Moreover, 53.5% of students in this study refused continuation of online classes once regular class starts. Contrary to our study finding, 89.9% medical students of Chitwan Medical College³ and 77% medical students of Pakistan¹² feel comfortable with continuation of online class. However, only 39.3% of medical students in India⁹ and 27.3% students of Gandaki Medical college⁶ were in support of online class continuation. Through this discussion it can be claimed that after all the emergency distance learning is in the very beginning stage of development, students could not decide whether or not to accept this transitional education shift and there is confusion about its effectiveness and usefulness. Most of the students (70.5%) in the study refused the practical sessions through online mode. Medical students of India also disliked practical classes through online mode.⁹ Clinical/practical courses of health sciences cannot

deliver through online.⁸ This discussion suggests that although distance mode of learning can be adopted in some situations, it cannot replace the face-to-face mode of learning.

Table 3: Respondents' Perception on Different Dimensions of Distance Learning

n= 200

Dimensions	Responses (no.%)		
	Yes	No	May be
Need revision of courses taught online through face-to-face usual classes	56(28)	55(27.5)	89(44.5)
Continuation of online classes	37(18.5)	107(53.5)	56(28)
Practical sessions through online	17(8.5)	141(70.5)	42(21)
Online sessions' materials to be available for later usage	157(78.5)	16(8.0)	27(13.5)

Conclusion

The swift conversion of conventional face-to-face class to online mode during COVID-19 pandemic is accepted by the students although it is less effective than the conventional one. Students feel a sense of belonging

when teachers ensure their active participation in class. At the same time some challenges including technology preparedness, its affordability, irregular power supply and internet security hinders the effective learning process. Some of the courses/subjects are not easily

transferable to online mode on the other hand practical sessions are almost impossible to deliver through online platforms. Strengthen the education system to face any such challenge in future, preparation for remote online learning will help. Empowering teachers and students for online delivery of lessons, creating e-learning systems at institutional level and creating evidence on online learning are some suggestive measures for improving distance learning.

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