



A study of students' perception about e-learning of Pharmacy students in Pune rural area

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Abstract

Introduction: e-learning is a relatively new phenomenon where currently the educators and students are grappling with the idea of its implementation and adaptation. With the speedy development of ICT and relative exposure of students to it, this study examines students' perceptions about e-learning which would help in a newer teaching learning experiences on the campus.

Materials and Methods: A quantitative approach with a structured questionnaire (18 close and 5 open ended) were used for data collection and it was presented to 150 respondents (Pharmacy students of Pune Rural Area) of age group 19-21yrs of different socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds.

Results and Discussion: 90% students used internet daily. 78% Male [M] and 92% Female [F] respondents have an idea about e-learning, while 92.5% of them indicated their interest to further guidance. 88%M and 79 F students claim to not have any e-learning facilities on campus. 58% M and 49%F use various forms like emails, chat, blogs, video conferencing, WhatsApp to communicate with their faculties. 98% agree to find e-learning useful and 86% M and 94% F are motivated to use it. 81%M and 88% F find e-learning to be of interactive mode and 74% M with 83% F agree about its cost effectivity. Implementing e-learning would improve performance in 99% students with 74% M and 53% F indicating better understanding of the course. 75% believe that they will have ready access to e-learning courses while other don't due to lack of constant supply of internet. 38% agree e-learning is disadvantages as it will replace faculties as they are comfortable with the traditional teaching style, while 26% disagree. 58% M and 64% F think student will skip traditional classes while 39% M and 35% F would be distracted. 86%M and 92% F disagree with adapting difficulties on implementing newer e-learning modules and tools while the others agree due lack of training. Students gave suggestions to start blogs, online discussions, online submission of homework, and video assisted training for clinical work.

The study clearly depicts that e-learning has its benefits from a student's perspective and it will have a positive influence on their performance with better understanding of their courses. Thus for at least the following few years, the university needs come out with e-learning tools and modules for a better teaching -learning experience make a positive impact on the students career.

Keywords: Perception, e-learning.

Introduction

The electronic learning [e-learning] can be defined as a means of education that incorporates electronic equipments and tools and the interactivity that occurs between these and the people involved in the educational process (i.e.: instructors and learners). More and more E-Learning projects are being developed lately and some spectacular successes are recorded.¹ With the hurried pace of technological and economic developments² and its humongous penetration within the educational systems has lead to greater demands of making automated learning systems available to learners. Electronic learning (e-learning) is changing the way teaching and learning is taking place on university campuses.³ As e-learning is a relatively new phenomenon, currently both the educators and students are struggling with the idea of its implementation and adaptation respectively. In the our Institute, at present, traditional teaching is only followed, thus the main aim of the study was to understand the students perception towards this new concept of e-learning by determining their knowledge of e-learning along with the usage of technology, determining the usefulness as well as its benefits and challenges from student's view. Hence this study was needs assessment study to understand the perception about e-learning from students point. The results can thus be utilized to bring about the necessary changes by incorporating the newer techniques and tools into the students learning environments. This study would help in guiding the educators to take the necessary steps in incorporating these newer learning styles for the benefit of the learner as well as incorporating higher e-learning strategies, tools and technology at Institutional and university level.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in a Private Pharmacy College in Pune Rural area . IEC clearance was obtained. 150 Pharmacy students [n=150, Male (M)=72, Female (F)=78] of age group 19-21yrs, were participants and from different socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds. They were briefed about the study and informed consent was taken. A semi structured validated feedback questionnaire (18 closed ended and 6 open ended sub-questions) focusing on the students perception about e-learning which was tested for internal validity, was given to them. The questionnaire was designed in three parts. Table 1 provides data about the students perception relating to use of internets and their knowledge about e-learning, Table 2 gives data about the benefits and Table 3 gives data about the challenges of e-learning from student's perception. The responses were collected from the students along with their suggestions. The data derived was tabulated and statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics.

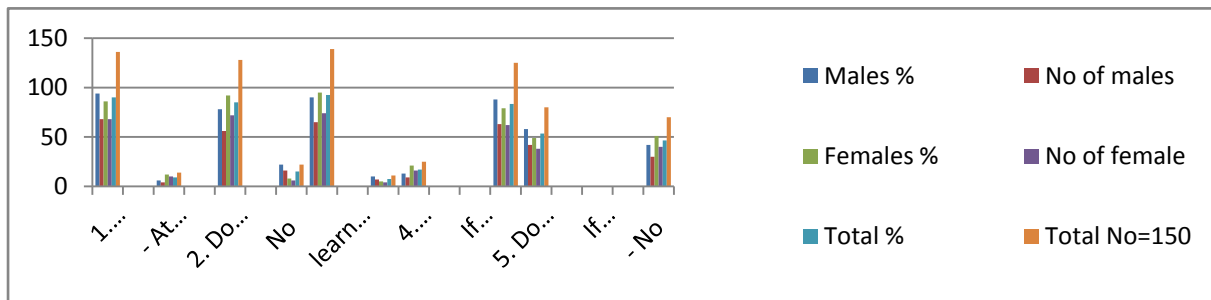
The following results were obtained

Results

:Table 1: Student's usage of internet and knowledge of e-learning

	Males %	No of males	Females %	No of female	Total %	Total No=150
1. How often do you use the internet -At least Once/Day	94	68	86	68	90	136
- At least Once/Week	6	4	12	10	9	14
- At least Once/month	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Do you have any idea about e-learning -Yes	78	56	92	72	85	128
No	22	16	8	6	15	22

3. Are you interested in guidance on e-learning- Yes	90	65	95	74	92.5	139
No	10	7	5	4	7.5	11
4. Does your Institute have a e-learning facility – Yes	13	9	21	16	17	25
If yes, in what form	Computer labs with internet, access to e-journals, educational sites					
- No	88	63	79	62	83.5	125
5. Do you use e-learning forms to communicate with your faculties - Yes	58	42	49	38	53.5	80
If yes, what form of communication- Email, Chats, Blogs, Face book, WhatsApp, Instant Messaging Etc.	42[23 M and 19 F] use WhatsApp, 29[16 M and 13 F] use face book and 9[2M and 7 F] use instant messaging.					
- No	42	30	51	40	46.5	70



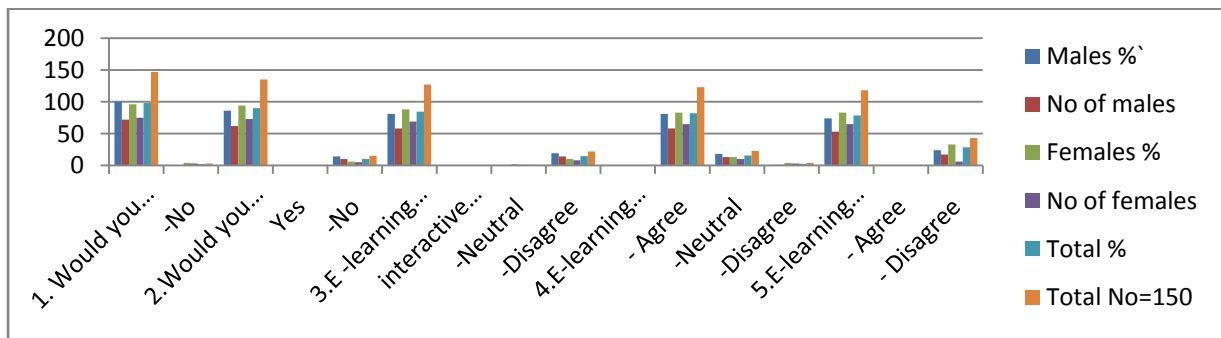
Thus least once a day. 85% [128] students were aware about it, 92.5% [139] wanted further guidance on e-learning with 7.5% [11] showing reluctance to embrace the

Table 2: Student's perception on benefits of e-learning

	Males %`	No of males	Femal es %	No of females	Total %	Total No=150
1. Would you find it useful- Yes	100	72	96	75	98	147
-No	0	0	4	3	2	3
2. Would you be motivated to use it- Yes	86	62	94	73	90	135
-No	14	10	6	5	10	15
3.E -learning is beneficial as it is an interactive mode - Agree	81	58	88	69	84.5	127
-Neutral	0	0	2	1	1	1
-Disagree	19	14	10	8	14.5	22

4.E-learning is useful as courses are readily available online - Agree	81	58	83	65	82	123
-Neutral	18	13	13	10	15.5	23
-Disagree	1	1	4	3	2.5	4
5.E-learning is cost effective - Agree	74	53	83	65	78.5	118
- Disagree	24	17	33	6	28.5	43

If you disagree, then why	Charges to be incurred for the use of services and if services are not proper, further change of service provider may be required which can incur further charges.					
- Neutral	2.7	2	1.2	1	2	3
6.Implementing e-learning would improve performance - Yes	99	71	99	77	99	148
- No	1	1	1	1	1	2
7.E-learning enabled training would help in better understanding of the course than formal teaching methods -Agree	74	53	53	41	63.5	94
- Neutral	6	4	5	4	5.5	8
-Disagree	21	15	42	33	31.5	48
8. E-learning would help to learn on your own at your own pace - Agree	55.5	40	54	42	54.6	82
- Neutral	4	3	5	4	4.4	7
- Disagree	37.5	27	41	32	39	59



Thus from Table 2, it is observed that 84.5% [127] agreed that e-learning was beneficial as it would be an interactive session and courses are readily available online. 78.5% [118] students think it is cost effective but 28.5% [43] students expressed their fear over its cost effectiveness. 63.5% [94] feel that web enabled training would help in better understanding of the course than formal teaching methods. 54.6% [82] felt that e-learning would help them to learn on your own at your own pace.

Table 3: Students perception about challenges of e-learning

	Male s %	No of males	Female s %	No of females	Tota l %	Total No=15 0
1. Availability of ready access to e-learning courses - Yes	73	53	75.6	59	74.6	112
-No	26.3	19	37.2	29	32	48
If no, then why	Lack of constant net connection, charges for the services					
2. Its disadvantages as it would replace faculties - Agree	38	27	38	30	38	57
If agree, why	At ease with traditional teaching, can interact in person the faculties.					
- Neutral	35	25	37	29	36	54
- Disagree	28	20	24	19	26	39
3. It would make students to skip traditional classes- Yes	58	42	64	50	61	92
-No	42	30	36	28	39	58
4. Distracted on using e-learning -Yes	39	28	35	27	37	55
If yes, then why	Singled out, no monitoring, no friends around or if present, constant interaction would be there					
-No	61	44	65	51	63	95
5. Adapting difficulties On implementing newer e-learning modules and tools. - Yes	14	10	5	4	9.5	14
-No	86	62	92	72	89	134

Thus from Table 3, it is observed that 32% [48] fear the challenge of ready access to the e-learning courses. 38% fear that e-learning can replace faculties which was a disadvantage to those students who prefer the traditional teaching method and 37% of the students feels that they would be distracted while using such high end technologies as a check on them will not be

there. Though 98% have not adapting difficulties, yet 9.5% claim that they can have challenges.

Suggestions/Comments: Few students expressed that there should be a platform where educative videos and important case based presentations be shared. Learning course materials should be an interactive session with the faculties. Online discussions and online work submissions should also be incorporated.

Implementation, both at Institutional and university level should also be done. These facilities should be for free or for a very nominal cost. Yet, some mentioned that they would prefer the traditional teaching method as they felt that they will get bored in a virtual environment, they are not at ease with use of technology and their studies may get hampered due to interrupted internet connection.

can accommodate the various suggestions and comments.²⁴⁻²⁶

A further extended study can be obtained by incorporating proper e-learning modules along with a well managed LMS and good infrastructure. Further information can be obtained as

to why majority are eager to adapt earlier while some of them trail down, some improve and yet some are stagnant in training. The study should also be conducted for a longer periods in phases to see the after effects of introducing virtual learning strategies. It can also be evaluated at various stages so as to explore the changes in the learning experiences of the students. Data of student experiences on usage various tools other than just the learning materials such as discussions, submissions and assessments, can also be procured.

Conclusion

The students do find e-learning to be useful and beneficial in increasing their performances. Thus e- learning should be further utilized in a blended learning environment to support face-to-face teaching and allow for flexibility in delivery of pharmacy education. The results obtained from this study shows the need of implementing a properly designed LMS which should be designed according to the learning curricular needs of the students thereby reaping the potential benefits of e-learning tools and further stimulating and motivating them for its increased use and a better teaching - learning experience.

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