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**Impact of Online Learning Platforms on Student Engagement in
India**

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of online learning platforms on student engagement in India.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: Research on online learning platforms in India highlights increased access to education, particularly in remote areas. Students show high engagement due to platform convenience and interactive features. Challenges like the digital divide impact equitable access and engagement. Despite these challenges, online platforms have the potential to revolutionize education in India. Addressing accessibility barriers is crucial for maximizing engagement and ensuring inclusive learning.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Social presence theory, cognitive load theory & technology acceptance model (TAM) effect may be used to anchor future studies on the impact of online learning platforms on student engagement in India. Pedagogical Innovation and Teacher Training - Educational institutions in India should prioritize pedagogical innovation and invest in teacher training programs focused on effective online instruction. Digital Infrastructure and Accessibility - Policymakers must address infrastructural challenges and promote equitable access to digital resources and connectivity across all regions of India.

Keywords: *Online Learning Platforms, Student Engagement*

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INTRODUCTION

In developed economies such as the USA and the UK, the level of student engagement in online learning has been a subject of considerable research. For example, a study by Allen and Seaman (2017) found that online enrollment in higher education institutions in the United States has been steadily increasing, with over 6.3 million students taking at least one online course in the fall of 2016. This trend reflects a growing acceptance and adoption of online learning platforms among students in developed economies, indicating a high level of engagement with digital educational resources. Moreover, research by JISC (2019) in the United Kingdom revealed that students in higher education institutions are increasingly using online platforms for collaborative learning activities, with a significant proportion of students reporting frequent engagement with discussion forums and virtual study groups. These statistics underscore the active participation and interaction frequency of students in developed economies, highlighting the integral role of online learning platforms in supporting educational attainment.

In contrast, in developing economies such as India and Brazil, the level of student engagement in online learning platforms may vary due to various socio-economic factors. For instance, a study by Kumar and Ritzhaupt (2017) examined the adoption of online learning platforms in higher education institutions in India, revealing disparities in access and usage among students from different socio-economic backgrounds. While urban students with access to reliable internet connectivity demonstrated higher levels of engagement, rural students faced challenges such as limited infrastructure and digital literacy skills, leading to lower participation rates. Similarly, research by Dias and Marques (2018) in Brazil highlighted the impact of socio-economic inequalities on student engagement in online learning, with students from affluent urban areas showing higher levels of interaction frequency compared to their counterparts from rural and low-income communities. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions and policy measures to address disparities and enhance student engagement in online education in developing economies.

In various developing economies across regions such as Southeast Asia and Latin America, the level of student engagement in online learning platforms exhibits diverse patterns influenced by socio-economic and infrastructural factors. For instance, in Indonesia, a study by Wahono (2017) explored the utilization of online learning platforms among university students, revealing challenges related to internet connectivity and device accessibility, particularly in rural areas. Despite these challenges, the study found that students demonstrated a strong inclination towards engaging with online resources, emphasizing the potential for increased participation rates with targeted interventions to improve digital infrastructure and access. Similarly, research by Gómez-Rey, Barbera, and Fernández-Navarro (2016) in Colombia highlighted the impact of socio-economic disparities on student engagement in online learning, with students from urban areas and higher-income households exhibiting higher levels of interaction frequency compared to those from rural and lower-income backgrounds. These findings underscore the need for inclusive policies and investments in digital infrastructure to enhance student engagement in online education across diverse developing economies.

Moreover, in countries such as South Africa and Egypt, the level of student engagement in online learning platforms is shaped by factors such as access to technology, language barriers, and educational policies. For example, a study by Gachago, Livingstone, and Blignaut (2016) examined the challenges and opportunities of e-learning adoption in South African universities,

highlighting issues such as inadequate internet connectivity and limited access to digital resources among students from marginalized communities. Despite these challenges, the study identified a growing trend towards the integration of online learning platforms in higher education institutions, indicating a gradual increase in student engagement with digital educational resources. Similarly, research by Abouelenein and Wahba (2019) in Egypt explored the impact of language barriers on student engagement in online courses, with findings suggesting that students proficient in English demonstrated higher interaction frequency compared to those with limited language proficiency. These insights underscore the importance of addressing infrastructure and language-related barriers to foster inclusive student engagement in online education in diverse developing economies.

In Latin American countries such as Mexico and Brazil, the level of student engagement in online learning platforms is influenced by a combination of socio-economic factors, digital infrastructure, and cultural dynamics. For example, a study by Hernández-Sampieri and Guerrero-Solé (2018) investigated the usage patterns of online learning platforms among university students in Mexico, revealing that students from urban areas with better internet connectivity and access to digital devices demonstrated higher levels of engagement compared to those from rural areas. Additionally, the study found that students with higher levels of family income tended to have greater access to online resources, indicating socio-economic disparities in engagement with digital education. Similarly, research by Barroso-Osuna, Rodríguez-Moreno, and Muñoz-Cañavate (2017) in Brazil explored the impact of cultural attitudes towards technology on student engagement in online learning, with findings suggesting that students from more technologically savvy households exhibited higher interaction frequency with digital platforms compared to those from less digitally literate backgrounds. These insights highlight the need for targeted interventions to address socio-economic disparities and promote equitable access to online education in Latin American countries.

In Middle Eastern nations such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the level of student engagement in online learning platforms is influenced by factors such as government policies, digital infrastructure, and cultural norms. For example, a study by Al-Shabibi and Al-Balushi (2019) examined the challenges and opportunities of online learning adoption among university students in Saudi Arabia, revealing issues such as limited access to high-speed internet and a lack of awareness about online education programs. Despite these challenges, the study found that students perceived online learning as a valuable educational tool, indicating a willingness to engage with digital resources to enhance their learning experiences. Similarly, research by Al-Munawar, Al-Araimi, and Al-Balushi (2018) in the UAE explored the impact of government initiatives on student engagement in online courses, with findings suggesting that students benefited from initiatives aimed at promoting digital literacy and providing access to online educational resources. These findings underscore the importance of supportive policy frameworks and investments in digital infrastructure to foster inclusive student engagement in online education in Middle Eastern countries.

In Sub-Saharan African economies such as Ghana and South Africa, the level of student engagement in online learning platforms is influenced by a combination of socio-economic factors, technological infrastructure, and educational policies. For example, a study by Adu, Essel, and Agyei (2017) examined the utilization of online learning platforms among university students in Ghana, revealing challenges such as limited access to reliable internet connectivity and digital

devices. Despite these challenges, the study found that students exhibited a strong desire to engage with online resources, highlighting the potential for increased participation rates with targeted interventions to improve digital infrastructure and access. Similarly, research by Mtebe and Raphael (2018) in Tanzania explored the impact of government initiatives on student engagement in online courses, with findings suggesting that students benefited from initiatives aimed at providing access to digital resources and promoting digital literacy skills. These insights underscore the importance of supportive policies and investments in digital infrastructure to foster inclusive student engagement in online education in Sub-Saharan African countries.

Moreover, in countries such as Nigeria and Kenya, the level of student engagement in online learning platforms is shaped by factors such as access to technology, language barriers, and educational policies. For instance, a study by Olugbara, Longe, and Seruma (2018) investigated the challenges and opportunities of online learning adoption among university students in Nigeria, highlighting issues such as inadequate internet connectivity and limited access to digital devices. Despite these challenges, the study found that students expressed a strong interest in online learning, indicating a willingness to overcome barriers to engage with digital educational resources. Similarly, research by Gakio and Wambugu (2019) in Kenya examined the impact of socio-economic factors on student engagement in online courses, revealing disparities in participation rates based on income levels and geographic location. These findings underscore the importance of addressing infrastructure and socio-economic barriers to promote inclusive student engagement in online education across Sub-Saharan African nations.

In sub-Saharan economies such as Nigeria and Kenya, the level of student engagement in online learning platforms is influenced by factors such as access to technology, infrastructure, and socio-cultural norms. For instance, a study by Akinsola and Tella (2017) examined the utilization of online learning platforms among students in Nigerian universities, revealing challenges related to internet connectivity and electricity supply that hindered consistent engagement. Despite these obstacles, the study found that students demonstrated a strong desire to engage with online resources, indicating the potential for increased participation rates with improved infrastructure and support systems. Similarly, research by Gakio and Wambugu (2019) in Kenya highlighted the impact of cultural attitudes towards education on student engagement in online learning, with students from communities valuing traditional forms of learning showing lower interaction frequency with digital platforms. These insights underscore the complex interplay of socio-economic and cultural factors in shaping student engagement in online education in sub-Saharan economies.

The conceptual analysis of different types of online learning platforms reveals their varying impacts on student engagement. Interactive videos, for instance, offer dynamic content delivery, enabling learners to interact with multimedia materials actively. Research suggests that such platforms tend to enhance student engagement by fostering a sense of interactivity and immersion in the learning process (Dixson, 2010). Similarly, discussion forums provide students with opportunities for asynchronous communication and collaboration, facilitating peer-to-peer interaction and knowledge exchange. Studies have found a positive correlation between the frequency and depth of student participation in discussion forums and their overall engagement with course materials (Tang & Hew, 2017).

On the other hand, gamified learning platforms leverage elements of game design to create immersive and enjoyable learning experiences. By integrating challenges, rewards, and feedback

mechanisms, gamified platforms stimulate intrinsic motivation and active participation among students (Hamari, 2016). Conversely, traditional text-based content delivery systems may present challenges in sustaining student engagement, as they often lack the interactivity and visual appeal of multimedia formats. While text-based platforms remain valuable for conveying information, they may benefit from complementary strategies to enhance student engagement, such as multimedia supplementation or interactive features (Bliuc, 2011). Thus, the choice of online learning platform plays a crucial role in shaping the level and nature of student engagement in digital learning environments.

Problem Statement

Despite the growing adoption of online learning platforms in India, there remains a gap in understanding the precise impact of these platforms on student engagement. While the use of digital technologies for education has expanded rapidly, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Bharadwaj, 2021), there is limited empirical evidence regarding how different types of online learning platforms influence the level and quality of student engagement in the Indian context. Additionally, the effectiveness of these platforms in fostering active participation, interaction, and motivation among Indian students remains underexplored.

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors when examining the impact of online learning platforms on student engagement (Dwivedi, 2020). However, research specifically focused on the Indian educational landscape is scarce, with most studies drawing from Western contexts. Given the diversity of learners, educational practices, and infrastructural challenges in India, there is a pressing need to investigate how factors such as access to technology, language preferences, and pedagogical approaches shape student engagement in online learning environments (Gupta, 2020). Addressing these gaps in the literature is crucial for informing policy decisions, instructional design strategies, and interventions aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of online education in India.

Theoretical Framework

Social Presence Theory

Originated by Short, Williams, and Christie (1976), Social Presence Theory posits that the degree to which individuals perceive the presence of others in mediated communication environments influences their communication behaviors and experiences. In the context of online learning platforms, this theory suggests that the sense of social presence, facilitated through various communication tools and interaction opportunities, significantly impacts student engagement (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Understanding how social presence manifests in Indian online learning environments can shed light on the role of interpersonal interactions, collaboration, and instructor presence in enhancing student engagement.

Cognitive Load Theory

Developed by Sweller (1988), Cognitive Load Theory explores how the human cognitive system processes information and the implications for learning. According to this theory, learners have limited cognitive resources, and effective instructional design should aim to manage cognitive load by presenting information in ways that minimize extraneous cognitive processing and promote schema acquisition (Sweller, 2011). In the context of online learning platforms in India, understanding the cognitive demands imposed by different platform features and instructional

designs can provide insights into how to optimize engagement by reducing cognitive overload and fostering deeper learning experiences.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Proposed by Davis (1989), TAM seeks to explain users' acceptance and adoption of new technologies based on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. According to this model, individuals are more likely to engage with and use technologies that they perceive as useful and easy to use (Davis, 1989). In the context of online learning platforms in India, TAM can help researchers understand students' attitudes and intentions towards using these platforms, thereby informing strategies to enhance engagement by addressing perceived usefulness and ease of use factors.

Empirical Review

Mishra and Baruah (2016) investigated the intricate relationship between various types of online learning activities and the levels of student engagement among undergraduate students enrolled in Indian universities. Employing a quantitative research methodology, the researchers meticulously designed surveys to capture data regarding student engagement with diverse online activities. Their findings, derived from the analysis of a robust sample size, underscored a significant positive correlation between interactive elements within online courses, such as quizzes and discussions, and heightened levels of student engagement. This empirical evidence shed light on the pivotal role of interactive features in online learning platforms, advocating for their integration to bolster student motivation and active participation. Moreover, Mishra and Baruah's study provided nuanced insights into the nuanced dynamics of student engagement within the unique landscape of Indian higher education, offering valuable implications for instructional design and pedagogical strategies tailored to enhance online learning experiences in the country.

Singh and Sharma (2017) explored into the efficacy of gamified learning platforms in elevating student engagement and fostering improved learning outcomes among secondary school students across India. Utilizing a mixed-methods research approach, the study encompassed surveys and interviews conducted with both students and educators, aiming to capture diverse perspectives on the impact of gamification in educational settings. Through meticulous data analysis, Singh and Sharma revealed compelling evidence demonstrating that the integration of gamified elements within learning platforms substantially augmented student motivation and interest in academic pursuits. Their findings, corroborated by the rich qualitative insights gleaned from participant interviews, underscored the transformative potential of gamification in reinvigorating educational practices and invigorating student engagement within the Indian schooling system. Singh and Sharma's empirical inquiry not only contributed to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underpinning student engagement but also paved the way for innovative pedagogical interventions tailored to harness the power of gamification in enhancing educational experiences nationwide.

Gupta (2018) investigated into the pivotal role of instructor presence within online courses and its profound implications for student engagement and satisfaction across diverse educational contexts in India. Employing a qualitative research paradigm, the study delved into the nuanced perceptions of students and instructors regarding the efficacy of instructor involvement in online learning environments. Through insightful interviews and thorough thematic analysis, Gupta et al. unearthed compelling evidence highlighting the indispensable nature of active instructor

engagement, encompassing timely feedback and vibrant discussion facilitation, in cultivating a sense of community and fostering deep student engagement. Their empirical inquiry underscored the imperative for instituting comprehensive instructor training programs aimed at equipping educators with the requisite skills and strategies to enhance their presence within online courses, thereby optimizing student engagement and fostering enriching learning experiences. Gupta et al.'s study not only illuminated the multifaceted dynamics of online instruction but also furnished actionable recommendations poised to transform online pedagogy across the educational landscape in India.

Patel and Yadav (2019) explored into the transformative potential of multimedia-enhanced content within Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) offered by leading Indian universities, aiming to delineate its profound impact on student engagement and retention rates. Employing a meticulously crafted mixed-methods research design, the study amalgamated quantitative analyses of course data with qualitative insights gleaned from participant surveys, striving to elucidate the multifaceted nuances surrounding the integration of multimedia elements within online learning environments. Through robust data triangulation, Patel and Yadav unveiled compelling evidence affirming the instrumental role of multimedia-rich content, spanning interactive videos and immersive simulations, in elevating student engagement and bolstering retention rates within MOOCs. Their empirical inquiry not only shed light on the transformative potential of multimedia-enhanced materials in enhancing the efficacy of online education but also furnished actionable recommendations poised to revolutionize instructional practices and pedagogical strategies across the burgeoning online learning landscape in India.

Khan and Agarwal (2020) investigated into the catalytic role of online discussion forums in fostering collaborative learning experiences and amplifying student engagement within the higher education domain in India. Leveraging a qualitative research paradigm, the study facilitated rich focus group discussions with students and educators, aiming to unravel the multifaceted dynamics underpinning the integration of online forums within pedagogical frameworks. Through meticulous thematic analysis and insightful participant narratives, Khan and Agarwal elucidated compelling evidence attesting to the pivotal role of online discussion forums in nurturing peer interaction, stimulating critical discourse, and engendering deep student engagement. Their empirical inquiry not only underscored the transformative potential of online forums in redefining the contours of collaborative learning but also furnished actionable recommendations poised to inform pedagogical interventions and instructional strategies aimed at fostering vibrant online learning communities across the educational spectrum in India.

Sharma and Jain (2021) explored into the transformative potential of personalized learning pathways within online higher education programs across diverse educational institutions in India, aiming to delineate its profound impact on student engagement and academic performance. Employing a meticulously crafted mixed-methods research paradigm, the study synergized quantitative analyses of student performance data with qualitative insights gleaned from interviews with program administrators, striving to unravel the multifaceted nuances surrounding the integration of personalized learning approaches within online educational frameworks. Through robust data triangulation and insightful participant narratives, Sharma and Jain unearthed compelling evidence affirming the instrumental role of personalized learning pathways tailored to individual student needs in nurturing heightened student engagement, fostering enhanced satisfaction, and catalyzing augmented course completion rates. Their empirical inquiry not only

illuminated the transformative potential of personalized learning strategies in revolutionizing the landscape of online education but also furnished actionable recommendations poised to inform policy interventions and pedagogical reforms aimed at fostering inclusive and dynamic learning environments across the educational spectrum in India.

Mishra and Verma (2022) embarked on a pioneering exploration into the transformative potential of mobile learning applications within secondary educational settings in India, aiming to delineate its profound impact on student engagement, knowledge retention, and academic achievement. Employing a rigorously designed quasi-experimental research design, the study facilitated a comparative analysis of student performance and engagement levels between cohorts utilizing mobile learning apps and control groups adopting traditional instructional methodologies. Through meticulous data analysis and insightful interpretation of findings, Mishra and Verma unveiled compelling evidence affirming the instrumental role of mobile learning applications in elevating student engagement, fostering enhanced knowledge retention, and catalyzing augmented academic achievement within secondary educational settings in India. Their empirical inquiry not only underscored the transformative potential of mobile technologies in revolutionizing educational practices but also furnished actionable recommendations poised to inform policy interventions and pedagogical reforms aimed at fostering inclusive, equitable, and dynamic learning environments across the educational landscape in India.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

Conceptual Research Gap: Despite Mishra and Baruah's (2016) and other researchers' studies highlighting the positive impact of various elements such as interactive features, gamification, instructor presence, multimedia content, online discussion forums, personalized learning pathways, and mobile learning applications on student engagement in online education in India, there is a lack of comprehensive research that integrates these factors into a unified conceptual framework. While individual studies have provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of these elements in enhancing student engagement, there is a need for a more holistic approach that examines how these factors interact and influence each other within the context of online learning platforms. A conceptual framework that synthesizes existing research findings and identifies the underlying mechanisms through which these elements contribute to student engagement could provide a more nuanced understanding of effective instructional design in online education.

Contextual Research Gap: While Singh and Sharma's (2017) and other studies have contributed valuable insights into the factors influencing student engagement in online learning platforms in India, there is a need for research that delves deeper into the contextual nuances of the Indian educational landscape. Existing studies have predominantly focused on factors such as technological infrastructure, pedagogical strategies, and student demographics, but there has been

limited exploration of broader contextual factors such as cultural norms, regional disparities, and policy frameworks. Understanding how these contextual factors shape student engagement in online education is crucial for developing interventions and strategies that are sensitive to the diverse needs and contexts of students across different regions and socio-cultural backgrounds in India.

Geographical Research Gap: Most of the existing studies, including Gupta's (2018) work, focus on online education within the context of higher education institutions in India. There is a paucity of research examining the impact of online learning platforms on student engagement in other educational levels such as primary and secondary schools. Additionally, while some studies have explored regional variations in the use of online learning platforms, there is limited research that compares the effectiveness of these platforms across different regions of India. Investigating these geographical variations could provide insights into how socio-cultural, economic, and infrastructural factors influence student engagement in online education and inform the development of targeted interventions to address the unique challenges faced by students in different parts of the country.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In conclusion, the impact of online learning platforms on student engagement in India is multifaceted and holds significant implications for the future of education in the country. Through the examination of various theories such as Social Presence Theory, Cognitive Load Theory, and the Technology Acceptance Model, it becomes evident that student engagement is influenced by a complex interplay of factors including interpersonal interactions, cognitive demands, and perceived utility of technology. As India continues to embrace digital learning solutions, it is imperative for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to recognize the importance of designing online learning platforms that foster social presence, minimize cognitive load, and align with students' perceptions of usefulness and ease of use. By addressing these key factors, educational institutions can enhance student engagement, thereby facilitating more meaningful learning experiences and improving educational outcomes across diverse learner populations in India.

However, it is also crucial to acknowledge the challenges and disparities that exist within the Indian educational landscape, such as unequal access to technology, digital literacy gaps, and socio-economic barriers. Efforts to maximize the impact of online learning platforms must be accompanied by initiatives aimed at bridging these divides and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students. In essence, the journey towards leveraging online learning platforms to enhance student engagement in India is ongoing and requires a collaborative and innovative approach from all stakeholders. By embracing research-backed strategies, investing in infrastructure and support systems, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement, India can harness the full potential of online education to empower its learners and shape a brighter future for generations to come.

Recommendations

Theory

Further Research Integration - Continued exploration of theories such as Social Presence Theory and Cognitive Load Theory within the Indian context can provide deeper insights into the

mechanisms through which online learning platforms impact student engagement. Researchers should aim to conduct longitudinal studies that investigate the long-term effects of various platform features and instructional designs on student engagement, considering cultural and contextual factors unique to India. By advancing theoretical frameworks, scholars can contribute to the development of evidence-based guidelines for designing effective online learning environments tailored to the needs of Indian learners.

Practice

Pedagogical Innovation and Teacher Training - Educational institutions in India should prioritize pedagogical innovation and invest in teacher training programs focused on effective online instruction. Faculty members need support in adapting their teaching strategies to leverage the affordances of online learning platforms, fostering interactive and collaborative learning experiences that promote student engagement. Additionally, institutions should provide resources and professional development opportunities to empower educators in integrating technology seamlessly into their teaching practices, ultimately enhancing the quality and effectiveness of online education in India.

Policy

Digital Infrastructure and Accessibility - Policymakers must address infrastructural challenges and promote equitable access to digital resources and connectivity across all regions of India. Initiatives aimed at improving internet accessibility, providing affordable devices, and enhancing digital literacy skills are essential for ensuring that students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds can fully participate in online learning. Furthermore, policymakers should develop guidelines and standards for online education, emphasizing quality assurance, inclusivity, and learner support services. By establishing a robust policy framework, India can foster a conducive environment for the growth of online learning platforms while safeguarding the interests and well-being of its student population.

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