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ONLINE LEARNING: A STUDY OF LEARNER SATISFACTION IN MOOCs

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Abstract:

The digital revolution has significantly reshaped the educational landscape, with online learning emerging as a mainstream alternative to traditional classroom instruction—especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In India, platforms like SWAYAM, NPTEL, Coursera, and Google Classroom have democratized access to education across socio-economic backgrounds. However, despite the accessibility and flexibility offered, learner satisfaction varies considerably based on factors such as course content, instructional clarity, platform usability, and support mechanisms.

This study investigates learner satisfaction by surveying 140 respondents from diverse age groups, income brackets, academic streams, and professional backgrounds. Quantitative data were collected on several dimensions of satisfaction, such as course organization, pacing, faculty support, and knowledge gained. The findings reveal that while many learners appreciate the relevance of course material and platform navigation, significant dissatisfaction exists concerning timely faculty support, clarity of instruction, and fairness of assessments. The study concludes that learner satisfaction in online environments is multidimensional and hinges on both technological and pedagogical factors. To enhance learner experiences, a learner-centric, interactive, and feedback-rich approach is essential.

Key words: Online Learning Learner Satisfaction Digital Education Platforms

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of online learning has brought about a fundamental transformation in the global education landscape. Traditionally, education was confined to physical classrooms, limited by time, location, and infrastructure. In India, prior to 2010, digital learning was primarily confined to distance education offered by open universities. However, the introduction of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and government-led initiatives like SWAYAM and NPTEL marked a significant shift toward more accessible, flexible, and scalable learning models (Agarwal, 2014).

This transformation gained unprecedented momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sudden closure of schools and colleges impacted over 250 million students across India (Ministry of Education, 2021), triggering a nationwide shift to online education. Platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams became vital tools for ensuring academic continuity. While this digital transition provided an immediate solution, it also exposed challenges related to learner engagement, instructional quality, and satisfaction with the online learning experience.

Early research highlighted several limitations of online education, including reduced interaction, lack of motivation, and technical barriers (Moore & Kearsley, 2005). More recent studies have emphasized that these challenges can be mitigated through well-structured content, interactive delivery, and prompt instructor support, all of which contribute positively to learner satisfaction (Singh & Thurman, 2019; Dhawan, 2020). The growing popularity of platforms such as Coursera, Udemy, SWAYAM, and NPTEL further reflects a rising acceptance of online learning among Indian learners. Bharathi (2024) found that SWAYAM and NPTEL are the most preferred platforms due to their affordability, certificate offerings, and user-friendly formats. Another study by Bharathi (2025) revealed that 88.09% of learners recommended online courses, citing flexibility and the ability to balance learning with other responsibilities.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to evaluate learner satisfaction across core dimensions of online education, including content relevance, instructional clarity, platform navigation, and outcome-based learning. By tracing the evolution of online learning from its early limitations to its current strengths, this study offers valuable insights for educators, institutions, and

policymakers striving to create more learner-centric, effective, and sustainable digital education systems.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Singh and Thurman (2019) explored how faculty presence and course design influence student satisfaction in online learning environments. Their research found that learner satisfaction is significantly affected by the clarity of instructional content, the level of faculty support, and the inclusion of interactive elements such as discussions and multimedia. The study also highlighted that students responded positively to timely feedback and well-organized modules, whereas poorly designed courses and low interaction levels contributed to dissatisfaction.

Kuo et al. (2014) conducted a predictive study to identify the factors influencing student satisfaction in online education programs. The research revealed that interaction with instructors, internet self-efficacy, and learner autonomy were strong predictors of satisfaction. Students who were confident in navigating online platforms and who experienced meaningful engagement with faculty and peers reported higher satisfaction levels. Conversely, technical challenges and lack of personalized interaction negatively impacted their learning experiences.

Moore and Kearsley (2005), in their foundational work on distance education, presented a systems view that remains relevant today. They highlighted recurring issues such as learner isolation, inadequate feedback, and technological barriers. Their study argued that satisfaction in distance learning depends not only on access to content but also on the broader system—including communication channels, support services, and instructional design—that enables effective learning.

P. Divyabharathi (2024) in her study titled *"Exposure of MOOCs Platforms among Learners"* investigated how learners are introduced to various MOOCs platforms and what factors influence their engagement. The study, based on data from 117 learners, found that platforms like SWAYAM and NPTEL were most preferred due to their flexibility and certificate-based learning. Institutional promotion and peer influence emerged as key drivers of awareness. A notable finding was that most learners enrolled in MOOCs to gain knowledge beyond their primary academic field, especially due to their affordability and ease of access.

P. Divyabharathi (2025) explored *"Learners' Attitude towards Online Learning Platforms"*, focusing on motivational factors and digital engagement. Based on a survey of 270 users in Coimbatore, the study revealed that a majority of learners had a positive attitude towards online learning, particularly valuing the flexibility, convenience, and informative content. However, the lack of interactivity compared to traditional classrooms was highlighted as a drawback. The study also emphasized that learners frequently used mobile phones, preferred user-friendly interfaces, and maintained structured learning plans, indicating active digital engagement.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS:

The rapid expansion of online learning, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, has reshaped the educational landscape by offering learners flexible and accessible alternatives to traditional classroom instruction. Platforms such as SWAYAM, NPTEL, Coursera, and Google Classroom have enabled millions of students to continue their education remotely. While these digital platforms have gained widespread acceptance, they have also introduced new challenges that directly impact learner satisfaction.

Despite the convenience and reach of online learning, various studies and survey data reveal that many learners experience dissatisfaction in areas such as course content quality, instructor clarity, platform usability, and faculty support. The shift from traditional face-to-face learning to digital formats has often resulted in reduced engagement, feelings of isolation, technical barriers, and concerns over the fairness of assessments. In particular, although many learners appreciate the flexibility and certification benefits of MOOCs, significant portions express dissatisfaction with low interactivity, inconsistent support, and unclear course organization.

The mixed levels of satisfaction reported by learners highlight a critical need to evaluate the effectiveness of online education more comprehensively. While some students find the digital

environment enriching and accessible, others struggle with poorly designed platforms, lack of personalized attention, and inadequate feedback mechanisms.

Therefore, the central problem this study addresses is: To what extent are learners satisfied with the key components of online courses—namely course material, teaching effectiveness, platform usability, and outcome-based learning—and what areas require strategic improvements to make online learning more learner-centric and effective?

By identifying gaps in learner satisfaction and understanding the factors influencing their experiences, the study aims to provide actionable insights for educators, platform developers, and policymakers to enhance the quality and effectiveness of online education.

Objectives:

- To assess learner's satisfaction with various aspects of online courses, including course material, teaching methods, and platform usability.
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FINDINGS:

A) SOCIO ECONOIC PROFILE

TABLE: 1

Category	Sub-Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	69	49.29%
	Female	71	50.71%
Age Group	Below 20 years	40	28.57%
	21–30 years	43	30.71%
	31–40 years	37	26.43%
	Above 40 years	20	14.29%
	Total	**140**	**100%**
Stream of Study	Professional Course	71	50.71%
	Non-Professional Course	69	49.29%
	Total	**140**	**100%**
Occupation	Student	32	22.86%
	Faculty Member	24	17.14%
	Job Seeker	20	14.29%
	IT Professional	16	11.43%
	Research Scholar	15	10.71%
	Others	33	23.57%
	Total	**140**	**100%**
Broad Specialization	Arts & Humanities	42	30.00%
	Health & Medicine	16	11.40%
	Education	14	10.00%
	Business & Management	29	20.70%
	Science & Technology	34	24.30%
	Total	**140**	**100%**
Income Range	Below ₹2,00,000	47	33.57%
	₹2,00,001 – ₹5,00,000	43	30.71%
	₹5,00,001 – ₹8,00,000	33	23.57%
	Above ₹8,00,000	17	12.14%
	Total	**140**	**100%**

The demographic analysis in table 1 reveals a well-balanced representation in terms of gender, with 50.71% female and 49.29% male respondents. The age distribution is diverse, with the highest participation from the 21–30 years group **(**30.71%**),** followed by those below 20 years **(**28.57%**)** and 31–40 years **(**26.43%**),** indicating a predominantly young respondent base.

In terms of academic background, respondents are nearly evenly split between Professional Courses (50.71%) and Non-Professional Courses (49.29%)**.** Occupation-wise, the largest groups are Students (22.86%) and others (23.57%)**,** including diverse roles beyond the standard academic or professional titles.

Regarding specialization, the highest representation is from Arts & Humanities (30.0%)**,** followed by Science & Technology (24.3%) and Business & Management (20.7%)**,** showing a strong mix of both theoretical and applied disciplines.

The income profile indicates that 33.57% of respondents earn below ₹2, 00,000, and 30.71% fall within the ₹2–5 lakh range, reflecting a majority from lower to mid-income categories, which is typical for students, early-career professionals, and academic respondents.

II) LEARNER SATISFACTION TOWARDS VARIOUS MOOCs PLATFORMS

TABLE: 2

Variables	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Are you satisfied with the course material?	25 (17.86%)	25 (17.86%)	32 (22.86%)	33 (23.57%)	25 (17.86%)
Was the instructor clear and understandable?	14 (10.00%)	30 (21.43%)	36 (25.71%)	28 (20.00%)	32 (22.86%)
Did the course meet your expectations?	29 (20.71%)	26 (18.57%)	36 (25.71%)	39 (27.86%)	10 (7.14%)
Was the content well organized?	23 (16.43%)	33 (23.57%)	30 (21.43%)	35 (25.00%)	19 (13.57%)
Was the pace of the course appropriate?	22 (15.71%)	33 (23.57%)	30 (21.43%)	36 (25.71%)	19 (13.57%)
Was the platform easy to navigate?	22 (15.71%)	31 (22.14%)	31 (22.14%)	36 (25.71%)	20 (14.29%)
Did you receive timely support from faculty?	25 (17.86%)	35 (25.00%)	32 (22.86%)	30 (21.43%)	18 (12.86%)
Was the assessment method fair?	27 (19.29%)	35 (25.00%)	27 (19.29%)	23 (16.43%)	28 (20.00%)
Did you gain useful knowledge or skills?	25 (17.86%)	27 (19.29%)	32 (22.86%)	37 (26.43%)	19 (13.57%)

The above table: 2, Offer valuable insights into learners' satisfaction across various aspects of online learning. By analysing the most frequent responses for each variable, it is evident that while many participants had favourable experiences, several critical areas still require attention.

Satisfaction with course material was the most frequently reported response, with 33 out of 140 respondents (23.57%) selecting Satisfied. This suggests that the course content was generally perceived as relevant and appropriate. However, the relatively moderate percentage indicates that improvements in content depth, clarity, or alignment with learner goals could further enhance the experience.

When evaluating instructor clarity, the highest response was *Neutral*, reported by 36 respondents (25.71%). This finding suggests that while instructors were not seen as ineffective, many learners did not find the delivery exceptionally clear either. This neutrality reflects the need for consistency in communication style, use of examples, and opportunities for real-time clarification.

Regarding whether the course met expectations, 39 learners (27.86%) marked Satisfied, indicating that a considerable proportion of participants found the course aligned with what they

anticipated. Still, the relatively even spread of other responses points to a need for clearer pre-course communication about objectives and learning outcomes.

Content organization was another area that received a strong response, with 35 learners (25.00%) identifying as Satisfied. This affirms that many found the course structure coherent and easy to follow. Yet, the presence of nearly equivalent levels of dissatisfaction suggests the need for better module sequencing, clearer instructions, and more logical progression.

In terms of course pacing, the highest rating was also satisfied, chosen by 36 respondents (25.71%). This indicates that the majority of learners found the speed of content delivery acceptable. However, pacing preferences often vary significantly, and offering flexible timelines or self-paced modules could increase satisfaction further.

When analyzing platform-related aspects, platform navigation was rated as *Satisfied* by 36 out of 140 learners (25.71%), showing that a significant portion found the user interface manageable. Nonetheless, digital learning environments must continuously evolve in terms of accessibility, loading speeds, mobile compatibility, and intuitive design to meet broader user expectations.

A major area of concern emerged in faculty support, where the most frequent response was Unsatisfied, with 35 learners (25.00%) indicating disappointment. This suggests that timely academic support, feedback, and responsiveness were insufficient for a significant number of participants, emphasizing the importance of regular interaction and mentoring in virtual classrooms.

Similarly, assessment fairness received its highest response under Unsatisfied (35 respondents, 25.00%), reflecting learner dissatisfaction with the transparency, consistency, or relevance of evaluation methods. This finding underlines the need for more clearly defined rubrics, diversified assessment formats, and opportunities for feedback and reassessment.

On a more positive note, knowledge and skill acquisition was led by the satisfied category, with 37 respondents (26.43%). This result confirms that, for many learners, the course was effective in delivering meaningful learning outcomes. However, since a substantial percentage did not report high satisfaction, educators must continue to align content with real-world applications and learner goals.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that while online learning has become an integral part of modern education, achieving high levels of learner satisfaction remains a complex challenge. Learners generally expressed positive feedback toward content organization, platform accessibility, and flexibility of learning. However, key areas such as instructor clarity, timely academic support, and fairness of assessment emerged as significant pain points. Notably, the lack of personalized interaction and delayed feedback from faculty negatively influenced the learning experience.

The demographic analysis shows that online learning attracts a wide spectrum of users—from students to professionals—yet satisfaction levels vary depending on their expectations and digital fluency. The study reinforces the idea that technological platforms alone are not enough; rather, the effectiveness of online education depends on how human-centered, responsive, and pedagogically sound these systems are.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Enhance Faculty Engagement and Responsiveness
2. Improve Course Design and Assessment Transparency
3. Invest in Platform Usability and Mobile Compatibility
4. Promote Learner Autonomy and Flexibility and Ensure Inclusive Digital Access**.**

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