

ESSAY

online education has given more opportunities than challenges

Outline:

1. Introduction

Thesis statement: Online education has become a viable alternative to the conventional methods due to its flexibility, cost reduction and remote access to quality education however, it also poses challenges like technical issues, digital literacy access and feelings of isolation. These obstacles can easily be overcome by technological upgrading, greater investments by governments in IT and self discipline.

2. Online learning has more advantages than disadvantages

- ③ Significance of online learning
- i. It provides greater flexibility to students and saves time
 - ii. Remote learning allows access to quality education
 - iii. Provides greater affordability to students as well as institutes
 - iv. Skilling and re-skilling is made easier which enables entrepreneurship
 - v. Personalized ~~an~~ education environment enables students to learn at their own pace
 - vi. It saves time for other activities
 - vii. Gives equal opportunity and empowers women

④ Challenges posed by Remote learning

- i. Technical issues and glitches may disrupt lectures
- ii. Requires access to internet which is not available in all areas
- iii. Creates confusion and distractions due to a wide array of choices

iv. Creates feelings of isolation and depression due to lack of socialization

5. Overcoming the obstacles of online learning

i. Technical issues can be resolved by technological upgrades

ii. Government need to invest more in IT sector in order to provide greater access to internet

iii. Greater self-discipline and training can improve one's focus

iv. Online study groups can compensate for the need to socialize

6. Conclusion.

In 2019, the outbreak of the COVID pandemic had brought the world to a standstill. All the activities involving physical interactions like businesses, social gatherings, and educational institutes were shutdown. Such stringent regulations caused tremendous losses to the economy and also ^{fundamentally} changed the way people lived their lives. The education sector was also affected initially due to COVID restrictions but it managed to survive due to the facility of online education. Online education has had a positive impact as it has allowed society to resume its educational activities. Its flexibility and convenience which allows the students to chose the time and place of their liking has made it highly popular. It has significantly reduced the costs

of learning as educational institutes no longer require a physical space to accommodate students.

It also enables people to learn new skills, at the convenience of their homes, from a wide array of resources present online.

On the other hand, there are also obstacles in the way of learning remotely. Users experience technical glitches which disrupt their lectures, internet access is not available in many areas which deprives many people of this facility, users get distracted and confused due to a vast array of learning resources. Also there is a feeling of isolation due to lack of socialization and physical contact. Undoubtedly, online education has emerged as a viable alternative to conventional mode of education due to its greater convenience, flexibility and cost reduction. However, it

few challenges of isolation, distractions, technical issues and low internet penetration. These can be overcome by technological upgrades, greater government spending in IT sector and individual self discipline.

The prospects of online learning are far greater than the challenges it poses. Since the pandemic, online education has become increasingly popular. It has not only provided students in remote areas with quality education but it has also become more affordable with time.

The global E-learning market is expected to grow by reach \$325 billion by 2025 (E Service Report 2023). On the other hand, it presents challenges to the users as well. The lack of internet penetration and digital illiteracy create hurdles in realizing

its full potential. A recent report titled "Pakistan's internet landscape" by advocacy group "Bytes for all" claimed that 15% of the population still lacked access to mobile or internet.

The unlimited opportunities that E-learning provides is making it a viable alternative to conventional learning. Some of ~~the~~ ^{its} prospects are given below

Online learning provides greater flexibility to students as well as instructors. Students can choose the time of learning at their own convenience. Moreover there is no need to be physically present in the class. Students can attend classes from their homes, hostels etc. For example, a person who is employed cannot manage to find time for enhancing and upgrading his skill. E-learning gives such persons the opportunity.

to educate themselves at the time of their choosing. Flexibility and convenience are particularly beneficial for working professionals and people with busy schedules. Access to quality education is another advantage of online education. People who live in far flung areas can avail quality education at the comfort of their homes which otherwise is not available in their town/city. For example a person living in Khuzdar Balochistan, can get enrolled in an online program of any reputed university situated in Lahore or Islamabad. Such initiatives aid in alliviating the feeling of deprivation among smaller provinces and also help in uplifting rural communities.

The cost of education can be drastically reduced by employing online education. E-learning platforms do not require a physical space - which is usually rented out or purchased - to accommodate students. This results in significant reduction in the cost of education. Such cost reductions are in ~~turn~~ ^{turn} trickled down to receivers of the service, thereby providing affordable online courses. Cheaper education can lead to greater number of enrolled students which can increase the literacy rate of a country. For example the government of India has integrated e-learning into its education system with programs like E-Gyan, which has increased the access to education and has contributed in the uptick of its literacy rate.

E-learning also provides a chance for the working class to learn new skills. The rise of automation and 4th industrial revolution has rendered many jobs obsolete. There is a huge contingent of workers who have lost their jobs in the wake of technological advancements. According to Alvin Toffler, "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn." (Future Shock 1996). Online education provides the working class to relearn new skills which can enable them to find new jobs.

One of the key features of e-learning is the personalized learning environment. All students have different capacities of

learning. Some students are quick learners while others take their time to understand a topic. With online education students can select the pace and type of instruction which best suits their capability. For example, Given the huge variety of online resources, students can view lectures from a variety of instructors in order to understand a given topic. Such personalized education enhances their understanding and also improves their conceptual ability.

In conservative countries like Pakistan, patriarchy is deeply entrenched. Women and girls in some areas are reduced to the confines of their homes. Although article 25 of the constitution provides for equal rights to education for all, But due to cultural backwardness

The males of the community don't allow women to go to schools, colleges and universities. E-learning gives an opportunity to women and girls of such communities to acquire education. According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics women and girls literacy in Pakistan stands at 42%. If ~~women~~ online programs for women are provided in underprivileged community, women literacy rate can improved exponentially. This will not only empowers girls and women but also pave the way for their participation in the workforce.

While online education has provided numerous opportunities it also faces many obstacles which hinders its adaptability

Internet access in developing countries is the biggest roadblock in the way of ~~and~~ greater adaptability of online education. Most peripheral areas of the country still do not possess access to internet. For example in North Waziristan 3g connectivity is still not available. The overall internet penetration in Pakistan stands at 36.7% (Global Digital Overview Report 2023). This means that almost 64% of Pakistanis do not have access to internet. Therefore low internet access makes the adaptability and acceptability of online education difficult. Online education systems are not error free and may experience glitches and technical issues. This may happen due to a whole host of reasons. For example, an error

at the receiver or sender end may impede the flow of the transmission, a slow internet connection may make the sound choppy or may lead to a lag between audio and video. Such technical issues disturb and disrupt the lectures and may result in lack of understanding on part of the students. This puts a question mark on the reliability of online education.

One of the biggest strengths of online education is also its biggest weakness. Given the immense variety of resources available online, a student may get confused or distracted. For example, a pupil wants to solve a math problem, he goes online to search for a solution. The student finds out

that the said problem can be solved by multiple methods.

The multiplicity of methods of solving the problem adds to his confusion. Therefore, he falls down the rabbit hole and gets distracted. ~~Therefore~~

Another grim aspect of E-learning is the feeling of isolation which is leading to depression and anxiety. Human beings are social animals, who require a sense of community, socialization and reassurance. Due to the absence of these factors

remote learning becomes a lonely affair. According to a WHO report (2022), cases of anxiety and depression have increased by 25% since 2019.

Drawing parallels to the Covid pandemic it can be ascertained that online education can have a similar effect on human

psychology and emotional wellbeing. Despite the challenges, online education has given far greater opportunities. The negative effects or challenges can be overcome by making certain adjustments.

The problem of low internet penetration can easily be overcome by enhancing investments in the IT sector. The government and the private sector can collaborate in this venture.

Example of such a program is "Digital Bangladesh", which was launched in 2009. The aim of this program was to transform Bangladesh into a knowledge based society by increasing digital literacy and internet penetration. By employing such program the problem of low accessibility to internet can be resolved.

Technical issues such as glitches tend to distract the users and question the reliability of the system. It must be acknowledged that online education adoption is in its nascent stages. As it goes through advancements and technical upgrades ~~like~~ (firmware upgrades), the system will eventually improve. For example, Windows 2000 operating system was susceptible to access glitches and crashes. But with the advancements in technology overtime, the new Windows 11 has come a long way and has proven to be a much reliable and stable operating system. Similarly the softwares and hardwares used for online learning will also improve and become more reliable.

It is often criticized about e-learning, that mostly people get distracted and confused while using the internet for the purpose of education. One reason for it being the variety of resources leads to puzzlement and secondly the lack of digital literacy. Both of these problems can be resolved by frequent usage. Learning the importance of focus and self discipline reduces the occurrence of distraction.

Feeling of isolation is natural because of the absence of interactions with colleagues and classmates. This often leads to increased cases of anxiety and depression. However, by creating study groups with classmates, whether online or offline, can ~~ed~~ can allay the sense of isolation.

For example classmates of an online course can create whatsapp groups, or join groups on platforms like Facebook.

to help each other in their studies. Moreover, if they live in the vicinity, they can meet each other physically and socialize.

In a nutshell, online education helped the resumption of education during the pandemic, since then it is becoming increasingly popular due to its pliability, convenience cost effectiveness and unlimited library of knowledge. Its ability to provide high quality education and remote access are helping in providing equal access to education for all citizens. This can result in empowerment of women and increased literacy rates in developing countries. On the other hand it also

poses challenges to the capacity of the government to provide internet facility to its citizens

In addition to that technical issues, emotional and psychological issues may also stem from the use of online education.

By acting out the remedies mentioned in the essay, these small hiccups can be overcome.

The opportunities it provides far outweigh the challenges it poses, making online education a mainstay in global educational policies.