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Awareness on Online Degree Programmes Offered by Universities in India, in Coimbatore City

Dr. S. Kamalaveni, Ms. G. Aarthi, Mr. S. Abhishek

Professor, Department of Commerce (IT), Dr. N. G. P. Arts & Science College, Coimbatore, India

Student of B. Com, Department of IT., Dr. N. G. P. Arts & Science College, Coimbatore, India

Student of B. Com, Department of IT., Dr. N. G. P. Arts & Science College, Coimbatore, India

ABSTRACT : This research investigates the awareness of online degree programs offered by universities in India. As online education continues to grow globally, many Indian universities have introduced digital learning opportunities to meet the demands of diverse learners. However, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the extent to which prospective students are aware of these offerings. The study employs a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather insights from students across different demographic profiles, including age, location, and educational background. The objective is to explore students' knowledge of available online degree programs, their perceptions about the quality and credibility of these programs, and the factors influencing their awareness. By identifying gaps in awareness and the challenges faced by students, the study aims to provide valuable recommendations for universities and policymakers to enhance the visibility and accessibility of online education in India.

KEYWORDS: Digital learning, E-learning, Online education

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the cornerstone of progress in any society, and its evolution reflects the changing needs and aspirations of people. In recent years, the landscape of education has undergone a paradigm shift, driven largely by advancements in technology and the widespread accessibility of the internet. One of the most transformative outcomes of this shift has been the rise of online education and, more specifically, online degree programmes. This project aims to delve into the awareness of online degrees offered by universities in India, their evolution, and their growing importance in shaping the future of learning.

Online degrees are formal academic qualifications awarded upon the successful completion of a program conducted entirely or predominantly online. These degrees are offered by accredited universities and institutions, ensuring that they meet the same standards as traditional, campus-based programmes. Online degree programmes cover a diverse range of disciplines, including arts, science, commerce, technology, and management, catering to the varied interests and career aspirations of students.

One of the key features of online degrees is their flexibility, which allows students to balance their studies with personal and professional commitments. This is particularly beneficial for working professionals, homemakers, and individuals residing in remote areas who may find it challenging to attend on-campus classes. Furthermore, online degrees often come with cost advantages, as they eliminate expenses related to commuting, accommodation, and physical infrastructure.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the rapid growth and increasing acceptance of online degrees in India, significant challenges persist in ensuring their accessibility, quality, and recognition. Limited digital infrastructure, skepticism about the credibility of online programmes, and a lack of awareness among students and employers hinder the widespread adoption of online education. As online degrees emerge as a crucial alternative to traditional higher education, particularly in a country with a large and diverse learner base, it is essential to address these barriers. This study seeks to analyze the current state of

online degrees in India, identify the factors affecting their adoption, and explore strategies to maximize their potential in meeting the educational and skill development needs of the country.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the level of awareness of online degree programmes among individuals in Coimbatore
2. To know how the demographic factors influence awareness and interest in online education
3. To explore the primary sources of information influencing awareness of online degrees.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH AREA

The research is conducted in Coimbatore.

RESEARCH PERIOD

The research is conducted over a period of 4 months from December 2024 to March 2025.

NUMBER OF SAMPLES

Sample size taken for the study is 107

RESEARCH TOOLS

For this study

1. Simple Percentage analysis

$$\text{PERCENTAGE} = \frac{\text{Number of respondents}}{\text{Total respondents}} \times 100$$

2. Likert scale analysis

$$\text{LIKERT SCALE} = \frac{\sum fx}{\text{Number of respondents}}$$

3. Chi-Square analysis

$$\chi^2 = \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. A Study of Awareness and Perception Regarding MOOC Courses, 2021, A. K. Gupta, N. R. Mishra

This research assesses students' awareness of NPTEL MOOCs and their reasons for enrolment or non-enrolment. It reveals varying levels of awareness and highlights factors influencing students' decisions, such as course relevance and perceived benefits. The study suggests enhancing promotional strategies to increase MOOC participation among students.

2. Students' Awareness about Online Classes during the COVID-19 Pandemic, 2020, P. Agarwal, S. S. Patel

This research focuses on students' awareness and experiences with online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. It discusses challenges faced, such as technological barriers and adaptability issues.

3. Online Teaching Effectiveness: Lessons from Indian Universities during COVID-19, 2020, A. Verma, P. Sharma

This study evaluates the effectiveness of online teaching from both student and faculty perspectives during the pandemic. It highlights challenges in engagement and technology use, offering lessons for enhancing online education. The research suggests incorporating interactive tools and training to improve teaching outcomes.

4. Students' Perception and Preference for Online Education in India during COVID-19, 2021, S. R. Choudhary, M. K. Yadav

This paper examines agricultural students' perceptions and preferences towards online learning through a survey of 307 students. It reveals insights into their adaptability, challenges faced, and the effectiveness of online education during the pandemic.

5. Awareness and Usage of SWAYAM Courses among Library and Information Science Students, 2019, S. K. Patel, A. J. Mehta

This survey investigates the awareness and utilization of SWAYAM courses among Library and Information Science students. It identifies levels of engagement and factors influencing course selection. The study recommends strategies to increase participation and enhance the relevance of SWAYAM courses for these students.

V. DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION & INFERENCE**TABLE 1 RATING THE GENERAL KNOWLEDGE OF ONLINE DEGREES**

SCALE	NO.OF.RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE	LIKERT SCALE ANALYSIS
1	8	6.3	8
2	13	10.2	26
3	70	55.1	210
4	26	20.5	104
5	10	7.9	50
TOTAL	127	100	398

INTERPRETATION

Table 1 shows that, the 6.3% of the respondents rate their knowledge about online degrees as 1, 10.2% as 2, 55.1% as 3, 20.5% as 4 and 7.9% as 5. It indicates that, score of 3.13 suggests that most respondents have a moderate level of knowledge about online degrees. Thus, most of the respondents were having the knowledge level of 3 about online degrees.

TABLE 2 TRUST ON THE RESOURCES FROM WHICH YOU GET INFORMATION ABOUT THE ONLINE DEGREES

TRUST SCALE	NO.OF.RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE	LIKERT SCALE ANALYSIS
1	4	3.1	4
2	19	15	38
3	67	52.8	201
4	26	20.5	104
5	11	8.7	55
TOTAL	127	100	402

INTERPRETATION

Table 2 shows that, 3.1% have very low trust (1) in the resources providing information about online degrees, 15% have low trust (2), 52.8% have moderate trust (3), 20.5% have high trust (4), and 8.7% have very high trust (5). It indicates that the score of, 3.16 suggests that respondents have moderate trust in the information sources about online degrees. The majority (52.8%) have a moderate level of trust in the sources of information about online degrees.

TABLE 3 AWARENESS OF ONLINE DEGREES

AWARENESS	NO.OF.RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	89	70.1
NO	38	29.9
TOTAL	127	100
\bar{x}	63.5	
σ	36.06	
CV	56.79%	

INTERPRETATION

Table 3 shows that, 70.1 % were aware of the online degrees offered by Indian universities and 29.9 % were not aware of the online degree programmes. Mean indicates that, on average, respondents are 63.5 aware. S.D shows that the aware of respondents vary from the mean is 36.06. C.V tells that the variation exists in aware relative to the mean is 56.79%. Thus, most of the respondents were aware of the online degree programmes offered by Indian universities.

TABLE 4 CONSIDERING IN ENROLLMENT OF ONLINE DEGREE PROGRAMMES

CONSIDERED	NO.OF.RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	63	49.6
NO	64	50.4
TOTAL	127	100
\bar{x}	63.5	
σ	0.71	
CV	1.12%	

INTERPRETATION

Table 4 shows that, 49.6% have considered about registering in online degree programmes and 50.4% have not considered about registering in online degree programmes. Mean indicates that, On average number of respondents across the two categories ("YES" and "NO") is **63.5**, which aligns closely with the actual numbers. S.D shows that the enrolment of respondents vary from the mean is 0.71. C.V tells that the variation exists in enrolment relative to the mean is 1.12%. Thus, most of the respondents have not considered about enrolling in online degree programmes

TABLE 5 ATTENDED EDUCATIONAL FAIR OR SEMINARS ON ONLINE LEARNING

ATTENDED	NO.OF.RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
YES	64	50.4
NO	63	49.6
TOTAL	127	100
\bar{x}	63.5	
σ	0.71	
CV	1.12%	

INTERPRETATION

Table 5 shows that, 50.4% of them have attended the educational fairs and seminars on online learning and 49.6% of them have not attended any seminars and educational fairs. Mean indicates that, on average, respondents are 63.5 attended educational seminars. S.D shows that the attended seminars of respondents vary from the mean is 0.71. C.V tells that the variation exists in enrolment relative to the mean is 72.51%. Thus, most of the respondents have attended the educational fairs and seminars.

CHI- SQUARE ANALYSIS**HYPOTHESIS:**

H₀. There is no significant relationship between gender and awareness of online degree programmes.

H₁ - There is a significant relationship between gender and awareness of online degree programmes.

Formula:

$$\chi^2 = \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

O = Observed frequency

E = Expected frequency

OBSERVED FREQUENCY TABLE

GENDER	AWARE	NOT AWARE	TOTAL
MALE	45	17	62
FEMALE	21	44	65
TOTAL	66	61	127

EXPECTED FREQUENCY

GENDER	E(AWARE)	E(NOT AWARE)	TOTAL
MALE	32	30	62
FEMALE	34	31	65
TOTAL	66	61	127

INFERENCE:

- Since the **Chi-Square statistic (21.93)** is **greater** than the **critical value (3.841)**, we **reject the null hypothesis**.
- Based on the Chi-Square result, we conclude that gender has an impact on awareness of the respondents.
- Therefore it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between gender and awareness of online degree programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Financial Accessibility:** To increase participation, universities should focus on making online degrees more affordable by offering flexible payment plans, scholarships, or financial aid options. Additionally, emphasizing the cost-effectiveness of online programs can attract students looking for affordable higher education solutions.
- **Increase Transparency and Credibility of Information Sources:** Universities and platforms providing information about online degrees should focus on enhancing transparency. They can achieve this by clearly outlining the credentials of faculty, accreditation of programs, and success stories of graduates. Providing verifiable data, such as employment rates of graduates or testimonials from alumni, can boost trust in the resources.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study reveals significant insights into the awareness and perceptions of online degree programmes in Indian universities, particularly in Coimbatore. A large majority are aware of these programmes, highlighting expanding opportunities in online education. Social media and university websites serve as key information sources, emphasizing the role of digital platforms. Despite high awareness, credibility concerns persist, with many questioning academic value and employer recognition. Urban, suburban, and rural residents show interest, but awareness can be improved in rural and outer areas. Enhancing trust, providing transparent information, and offering flexible learning formats can boost engagement. Overall, strengthening credibility and accessibility can further attract potential students.

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