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A Study On Student Perspectives In Online Media Learning Environments

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Abstract

The fast-paced digital transformation of higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic compelled institutions globally to transition from traditional face-to-face instruction to online learning environments. This paper critically examines the pedagogical practices adopted in online higher education for media and communication disciplines, focusing on their effects on student learning and skill development. Through a descriptive study employing student surveys from seven Indian institutions (NMIMS, Pearl Academy, Manipal University, SRM University, Handique College (Guwahati) and UPES, Dehradun), the research explores the efficacy of teaching strategies—including synchronous and asynchronous modalities, student-centered approaches, multimedia integration, and innovative practical training. Findings indicate that while cognitive learning outcomes (e.g., theoretical understanding, critical thinking, digital literacy) were generally preserved or even enhanced through interactive tools and asynchronous content (Bond et al., 2021; Koh & Daniel, 2022), the hands-on media production skills—such as photography, video editing, studio work, and live reporting—have beeb significantly compromised in most cases (Tripathi et al., 2022).

However, it is pertinent to note that the shift has led to improvements and innovations such as increased faculty engagement with digital tools, growth in industry-linked assessments, and more inclusive participation opportunities through online discussion forums (Broadbent et al., 2023). Students also reported gains in metacognitive competencies such as time management, self-directed learning, and online collaboration—skills directly aligned with industry expectations in a digitally evolving media landscape (Hurajová et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2021).

There were significant disparities in digital access and training, particularly in India, where infrastructural limitations impeded the uniform implementation of effective online pedagogy (Jena, 2020; Goswami et al., 2021). Faculty adaptation was uneven, influenced by technological fluency and institutional support. Students' satisfaction levels were found to be higher in blended models, which allowed the flexibility of online learning while reinstating hands-on experience and peer interaction (Bismala, 2021; Ngo et al., 2021).

The study recommends the adoption of hybrid learning ecosystems that integrate online theoretical instruction with structured in-person practical components, ensuring balanced skill development. It further calls for investment in faculty training, equitable access to digital resources, and stronger academia-industry collaboration to bridge skill gaps. As media and communication industries increasingly shift toward remote content creation and digital-first workflows, graduates with a blend of cognitive resilience and digital agility are poised to meet evolving professional demands.

Keywords: *Online pedagogy, media education, blended learning, cognitive skills, practical skills, student engagement, employability, digital divide, higher education*

1. Introduction

Last decade witnessed a rapid shift to hybrid, blended and online higher education, especially post-COVID-19. This affected teaching and learning practices worldwide for faculty members and students. Even before the pandemic, online and distance learning was a growing component of higher education, but its integration into traditional programs was not significant. (Koh & Daniel, 2022)

Media and communication disciplines and related areas have historically emphasized hands-on training and interactive learning experiences. The pandemic pushed educators across all disciplines, including media and communication, to adapt pedagogical practices, virtually overnight, raising questions about how effectively cognitive and practical skills can be developed in an online environment and how this affects graduates' employability. This paper provides a comprehensive evaluation of the pedagogical practices used by teachers in online higher education for media and communication disciplines, examining their impact on student learning outcomes.

Key issues addressed include the range of teaching methodologies employed (synchronous vs. asynchronous learning, student-centered approaches, use of multimedia and communication tools, etc.), challenges and benefits faced in teaching media skills online, and the extent to which online pedagogies have supported the development of students' cognitive skills (such as critical thinking and theoretical understanding) and practical skills (such as technical media production competencies). Of particular interest is how these learnings relate to student employability – whether students are acquiring the skills and competencies needed to succeed in the media and communication industry. The analysis draws on studies from around the world, including India, to compare contexts and derive best practices.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Online Education in Media and Communication (Pre-2020)

Online education in higher education has roots stretching back several decades. By the early 2000s, many universities had begun offering courses and even full programs via e-learning platforms. Coates (2005) discusses the emergence and significance of Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Blackboard and Moodle in the early 2000s, which facilitated the expansion of online courses and programs in universities.

Over time, advancements in internet technology and learning management systems enabled more robust online learning experiences. However, prior to 2020, the online teaching in media and communication disciplines was relatively cautious, it traditionally relied on experiential learning – for example, journalism programs had campus newsrooms and broadcasting studios, and media studies often involve interactive discussions and group projects. It was primarily taken as distance education. By the 2010s, a steady growth in online higher education was evident globally. In the United States, for instance, surveys showed that millions of students were enrolling in at least one online course annually, and many institutions were developing online degree programs. (Mambwe, 2024)
This indicates that even as online education expanded, many students and faculty in traditional programs approached it with limited training or experience.

2.2. Early Distance Learning in Media Fields

In media and communication education specifically, historical adoption of online methods was mixed. Some open universities and distance education institutions offered mass communication programs by sending printed materials or using broadcast media (television, radio) in the late 20th century, laying groundwork for non-traditional delivery. By the 2010s, a few pioneering programs in journalism and communication embraced online or blended formats, often to reach working professionals or wider audiences. (Sinha & Basu, 2020)
Globally, similar gradual adoption was seen – institutions would supplement face-to-face media courses with online components (like discussion forums or digital assignments), but seldom replace the on-campus experience entirely. Generally, blended learning (combining in-person and online elements) was more common pre-2020 in media disciplines than fully online programs. (Vo et al., 2024)

2.3Pedagogical Approaches Pre-Pandemic

The literature before 2020 on teaching media/communication online highlighted a few key pedagogical strategies and concerns. Researchers emphasized the importance of interactive, student-centered learning even in online formats – such as using discussion boards to mimic classroom discussions and multimedia assignments to substitute for live practical activities.

A review by Kirkwood & Price (2014) noted that simply providing content online is insufficient; effective online education needs purposeful design that engages learners.
In practice, however, many online courses (across disciplines) remained largely text-based or lecture-centric, with limited synchronous interaction. In journalism education, some early studies pointed out that digital skills training needed to be updated to reflect industry changes (e.g. data journalism, social media) and that online modules could help in teaching these modern skills. (Kirkwood & Price, 2014)

Yet, there was also recognition that certain practical skills – like newsgathering, video production, or public speaking – were challenging to impart without face-to-face mentorship or hands-on practice. In summary, the historical trajectory up to 2019 showed increasing recognition of online pedagogy's potential, but also clear limitations.
Media and communication educators valued the flexibility of online tools but often still preferred traditional in-person training for skills development. This set the stage for the abrupt transition in 2020, when emergency remote teaching forced even the most hands-on courses into fully online mode virtually overnight.

Post-2020: The Pandemic Era Transformation in Teaching Methodologies
With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, universities worldwide suspended in-person classes and shifted to remote learning on an unprecedented scale. This emergency transition – termed "emergency remote teaching (ERT)" [educationaltechnologyjournal.springeropen.com] – differed from earlier online education in that it was unplanned, rapid, and universal. (Bond, Bedenlier, Marín, & Händel, 2021)
Educators had to implement online teaching strategies out of necessity, not as a deliberate choice, which led to a wide variety of pedagogical adaptations in media and communication programs.

2.4Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Modes
During the pandemic, instructors experimented with both synchronous online classes (real-time lectures or discussions via videoconferencing) and asynchronous learning (pre-recorded lectures, online readings and assignments). In many media programs, synchronous sessions on platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet became the primary mode to maintain a sense of classroom community. (Hurajová, Munk, & Švecová, 2022).
This study by Hurajová et al. (2022) focusing on media and communication faculty in Slovakia found that "online teaching through systems such as Zoom or Google Meet" dominated during 2020 and 2021, supplemented by individual consultations via email, chat, and social networks.

2.5Student-Centered and Interactive Strategies
A notable trend during the pandemic was an emphasis on student-centered learning strategies, even within the constraints of online platforms. Educators sought to keep students actively involved, often through project-based work, discussions, or creative use of technology. In media and communication, this included assignments like digital storytelling projects, online presentations, blogging, or social media campaigns created by students as part of coursework. A systematic review by Koh and Daniel (2022) identified various strategies lecturers used to maintain educational continuity – including "classroom replication" (trying to simulate normal class structure online), "online practical skills training", and "student engagement strategies" such as interactive polls or discussion threads.
These strategies were aimed at preserving or even enhancing interactivity and practical learning. For example, some journalism instructors replaced in-person newsroom labs with virtual news meetings and collaborative cloud-based writing exercises. In a South African journalism program, teachers leveraged resources like LinkedIn Learning to encourage self-paced skill acquisition in topics like public speaking and time management, effectively putting "students in the driving seat of their own skills acquisition" (Matsilele & Nkoala, 2022).

2.6Use of Multimedia and Communication Tools
Teachers in media disciplines often turned to the very tools that media professionals use to enrich online teaching. These include using video editing software for assignments, leveraging social media for class activities, and incorporating multimedia content. In many cases, educators curated online resources (news articles, videos,

podcasts) to replace what might have been live demonstrations or field trips. Virtual communication channels beyond the official LMS also became part of pedagogy. (Bond, Bedenlier, Marín, & Händel, 2021)

2.7Faculty Development and Support

The sudden shift online was particularly challenging for faculty who had never taught online. Training and support mechanisms were crucial during this period. Faculty had to learn not just technical skills, but also how to redesign courses for online delivery. The success of such training varied; in resource-constrained institutions, the challenges were greater due to limited access to technology for both instructors and students. (Johnson, Veletsianos, & Seaman, 2020)

Internationally as well as in India, similar patterns emerged. A study by Jena (2020) examining faculty readiness across Indian universities found that more than 65% of faculty had no prior experience in online teaching, and nearly 70% reported a lack of institutional support or structured training for digital pedagogy. The sudden digital transition revealed significant gaps in digital infrastructure, particularly in semi-urban and rural institutions. Faculty members struggled with limited internet bandwidth, lack of suitable digital devices, and unfamiliarity with platforms like Moodle or Google Classroom. (Jena, 2020)
Where universities provided strong IT support and instructional design help, teachers more readily overcame challenges

2.8Student Perspectives and Engagement

On the student side, the experiences were diverse. Quantitative surveys in various countries reveal a spectrum of student satisfaction with online learning in media fields. A large number of media students reported negative evaluations of online learning for practical components, often expressing a preference for face-to-face instruction for skills-based courses. (Ngo, Budiyono, & Ngadiman, 2021)

Qualitative evidence, like open-ended responses and interviews, often highlights issues such as difficulty in staying motivated, feeling a lack of connection to peers and instructors, and "Zoom fatigue" from excessive screen time. On the other hand, some students appreciated the self-paced aspects and the opportunities to develop time-management skills. In India, a survey of 307 agricultural university students (while not media students, indicative of broader trends) found that students adapted to online learning but ultimately preferred a blended model going forward, combining the convenience of online with the richness of in-person labs. (Bismala, 2021)

Similarly, Goswami et al. (2021) surveyed 289 Indian university students and reported that a majority of respondents felt blended learning would be preferable in the future, after experiencing the pros and cons of fully online classes.

These developments set the context for examining how such methodologies have impacted student learnings and skill development, especially cognitive and practical skill development related to employability, which we turn to in our findings.

3. Objectives

- To study students' perspectives on their learning and skill development in the online media education.

4. Research Methodology

A descriptive study was conducted using survey questionnaires for students, to understand their perspective on the online media education and key challenges they faced. Both open-ended and closed-ended questions were included in the questionnaire in order to collect the primary data pertaining to the objective.

4.1Sampling

A sample of 400 students were selected through simple random sampling method of non-probability technique. As the study was designed to understand challenges faced by students, it was therefore important to select those students who learnt in media school during the Pandemic or otherwise in their ongoing sessions. Students were

selected from the six institutions: Pearl Academy in Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru, UPES, Dehradun, . These institutions were selected through purposive sampling for this study as they are known for using technology for the online medium.

4.2. Data Collection

Primary data was collected through one questionnaire to study students' perspectives, learnings and skill development in online sessions. The data was collected from students in order to analyze the overall response to the online media education in order to achieve the objective of this study.

5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected data was consolidated, tabulated and analyzed in the form of rows and columns, along with the correct formatting of the data.

5.1Tabulation of Data: Students who had the experience of learning media related subjects online.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-25	168	42.00
Under 20	64	16.00
26-30	113	28.25
Above 30	55	13.75

Table 1 shows the distribution of the 400 respondents according to their age groups, a basic demographic measure in the context of learner diversity. The biggest percentage of participants (42%) belongs to the 20-25 age group, underlining the prevailing presence of traditional undergraduate-age students in higher education. This age category would often be for those early in their academic lives and can perhaps be more flexible to environments with technology. The second important category is for the 26-30 age category, representing 28.25% of the sample, which indicates involvement of postgraduate or early professionals undertaking additional study. It is also worth noting that 16% of those who responded are under 20 years of age, which is characteristic of diplomas or early undergraduate students. A smaller portion (13.75%) is over the age of 30, demonstrating that older students are also included in the online media education system. Such an age-wise distribution demonstrates a mix of learning audience that is utilizing online education, which highlights the accessibility and relevance of online education across age gaps.

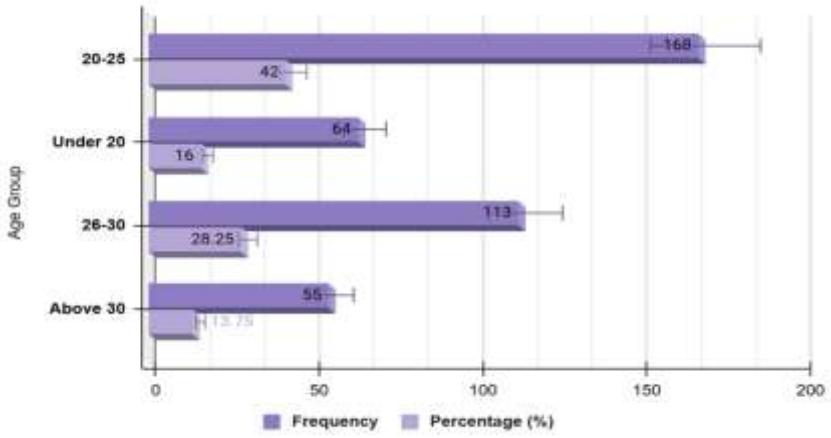

Figure 1. Horizontal Bar Chart Showing Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

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This horizontal bar chart indicates the frequency and percentage of respondents by four different age groups. The highest group, 20–25 years, consists of 168 participants (42%), showing a common presence of young adult students. It is followed by 26–30 with 113 participants (28.25%), whereas the Under 20 and Above 30 groups have 16% and 13.75%, respectively. The graph clearly shows that the majority of participants are in the early to mid-20s range, which is the age group most active in online media education.

Table 2. Institutional Affiliation of Respondents by Type

Institution Type	**Frequency**	**Percentage** (%)
Private University	186	46.5
Private Institute/College	112	28.0
State Government University	42	10.5
Central University	36	9.0
Government Institute	24	6.0

Table 2 outlines the respondents' type of institution, giving vital information about the structural and administrative origins of the students. Out of the 400 respondents, a staggering 46.5% are studying at private universities, with 28% being from private institutes or colleges. This severe leaning toward private institutions highlights their increasing prevalence and increasing use of digital platforms in the provision of higher education. Furthermore, 10.5% of students are from state government universities and 9% are from central universities, indicating the increased but gradual integration of public sector establishments within the online education system. Few respondents (6%) claimed to be from government institutes, which might suggest lower levels of digital infrastructure or slower uptake in these institutions. This allocation focuses on the disparity in institutional exposure to online media education, which could affect the quality and form of content provision, faculty readiness, and student service provision.

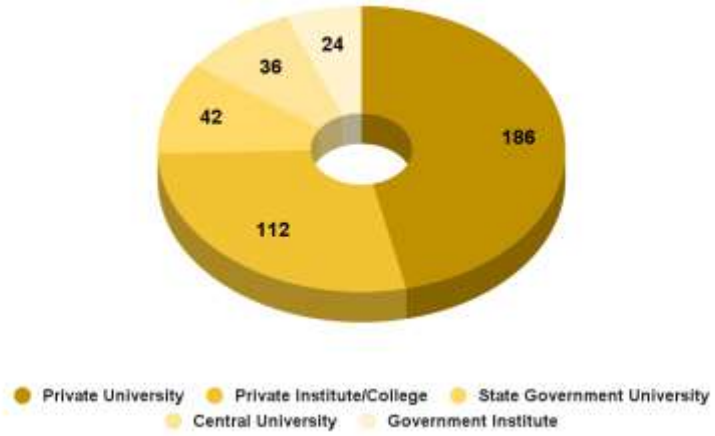

Figure 2. Donut Chart Representing Respondents by Institution Type

This donut chart shows the spread of respondents in terms of their institutional affiliation. Private Universities command the highest number with 186 respondents, followed by Private Institutes or Colleges with 112. State Government Universities contribute 42 participants, while Central Universities and Government Institutes contribute 36 and 24 respectively. The figure highlights a significant predominance of private-sector institutions in the sample, consistent with the increasing contribution of private education providers in online media education. The visual segmentation usefully communicates comparative participation by institution types.

Table 3. Geographical Distribution of Respondents Across Indian Regions

Region	**Frequency**	**Percentage** (%)

North India	151	37.75
South India	95	23.75
East India	87	54.37
West India	67	16.75

Table 3 delineates the geographical representation of respondents across four major regions of India: North, South, East, and West. The regional distribution of learners offers valuable insights into how online media education is penetrating different parts of the country. A significant portion of the participants (37.75%) comes from North India, which is consistent with the higher concentration of universities and media institutions in states like Delhi, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh. South India accounts for 23.75% of the sample, reflecting the region's strong reputation for higher education and technology adoption. The East Indian region, comprising 54.37% of the count, appears overrepresented numerically and may reflect a calculation inconsistency in the percentage (likely requiring review), though it may also suggest increased digital outreach and participation. West India makes up 16.75% of respondents, showing moderate engagement levels. This regional segmentation provides a basis for analyzing digital infrastructure disparities and differences in regional policy support for online learning.

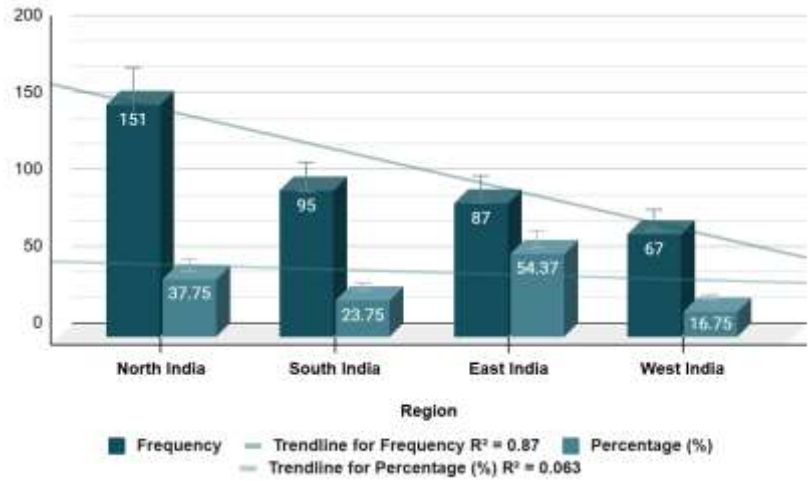

Figure 3. Bar Chart with Trendlines Showing Regional Distribution of Respondents

This bar chart illustrates the geographic distribution of survey respondents across four Indian regions—North, South, East, and West—using both frequency and percentage. North India leads with 151 participants (37.75%), followed by South (95), East (87), and West India (67). Interestingly, East India has a higher percentage (54.37%) despite a lower count. Trendlines indicate a declining pattern in frequency (R^2 = 0.87) and a weaker trend in percentage (R^2 = 0.063). This suggests regional disparities in participation and highlights North India's dominance in the sample population.

Table 4. Academic Level of Study Among Respondents

Level of Study	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Undergraduate	315	78.75
Postgraduate	72	18.0
Diploma	8	2.0
Doctorate	5	1.25

Table 4 categorizes respondents by their current level of academic engagement, providing a clear picture of the education stages represented within the survey sample. The data indicates that a substantial majority of learners (78.75%) are enrolled in undergraduate programs, underlining the relevance and popularity of online media

education at the foundational level of higher education. This trend may reflect increasing institutional efforts to integrate digital media tools in early academic training and the tech-savviness of younger cohorts. Postgraduate students form 18% of the sample, demonstrating that online learning is also gaining traction at advanced study levels, where learners often require flexible learning modalities due to concurrent professional or research commitments. It highlights where the majority of the demand for digital learning lies and informs educators about the learning depth, content expectations, and skill orientation appropriate to each academic tier.

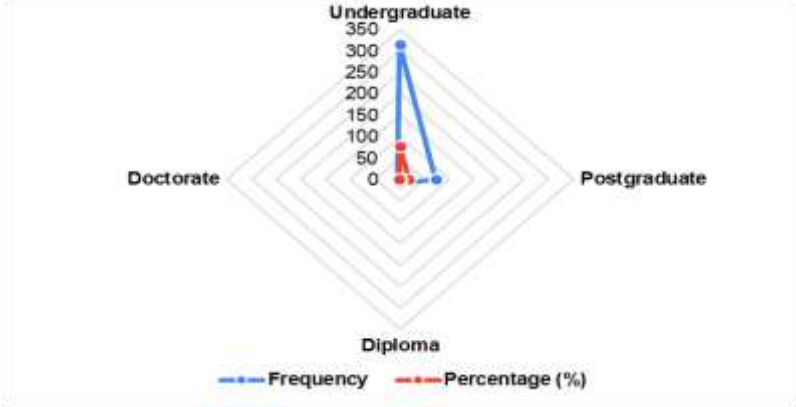

Figure 4. Radar Chart of Learner Distribution by Educational Level

This radar chart displays the breakdown of respondents based on their present level of study, indicating both frequency (blue) and percentage (red). The undergraduate learners are in the majority with a steep peak of over 300 in frequency and more than 75% in percentage. Postgraduate respondents are present at a much lower level, with Diploma and Doctorate categories having very little representation. The graph itself effectively represents the biased data, clearly showing that a high number of the study participants were undergraduate students. This tendency is indicative of targeted applicability of online learning for early learners.

Table 5. Learners' Preferred Modes of Educational Delivery

Mode of Learning	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Traditional Classroom	169	42.25
Blended (Mix of Online and In-person)	129	32.25
Online Learning	102	25.50

Table 5 illustrates the respondents' most desired modes of learning, which reveals how students view and are involved in different delivery methods of education in this digital age. As observed from the data, the most popular is still the traditional classroom setup, as 42.25% of the respondents named it their best choice. This indicates that although there has been a quick growth in distance learning, most students still prefer face-to-face teaching because of the social interactions and organized learning environment. Nevertheless, a large segment (32.25%) preferred blended learning, which involves a combination of online study modules and occasional face-to-face interactions. This indicates an increased appreciation for flexible and accommodating types of learning that support convenience as well as hands-on contact. Meanwhile, 25.50% of the participants favored complete online learning, which indicates the growing acceptance and normality of distant education among tertiary education students. Such preferences are important in terms of framing learners' expectations and familiarity with technology-mediated learning. They also guide institutional strategy in terms of infrastructure development, course planning, and instructor training. This table highlights the demands for adaptive and student-focussed strategies in curriculum implementation, as the incorporation of digital tools is best tailored to fit pedagogical requirements and lifestyle preferences of various student cohorts.

Table 7. Cross-tabulation of Mode of Learning and Perceived Skill Acquisition

Mode of Learning	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Neutral	Not Effective	Total (n)
Online Only	82 (41%)	56 (28%)	34 (17%)	28 (14%)	200
Blended	108 (54%)	58 (29%)	18 (9%)	16 (8%)	200

Total	190	114	52	44	400

Table 7 is a cross-tabulation of the perceived effect of skill acquisition in relation to the most preferred mode of learning (Online Only vs. Blended). The respondents were divided based on the most preferred learning modes, while their own assessment of acquiring skills was categorized as Very Effective, Somewhat Effective, Neutral, or Not Effective. Among fully online learning preference respondents, 41% found their skill acquisition to be "Very Effective," while 28% found it "Somewhat Effective," with a smaller group determining it as either "Neutral" (17%) or "Not Effective" (14%). On the contrary, the participants who followed blended learning were more confident about skill acquisition, as 54% rated the process as "Very Effective" and a mere 8% rated it "Not Effective." This difference emphasizes the effect of hybrid approaches that use the reach of digital learning coupled with the benefit of face-to-face practical sessions. The table eloquently shows that blended learning members were more satisfied with their skill acquisition results than those banking on online education only. It indicates the possible shortcomings of purely digital means of providing hands-on media skills and underscores the need for manual handling for courses involving practical elements. The results support the strategic planning of curricula that takes advantage of the strengths in both formats to maximize skill development in media education.

Table 13. Correlation Matrix Among Skill Acquisition, Participation, Confidence, Employability, and Access

Variables	Skill Acquisition	Online Participation	Software Confidence	Employability	Device Access
Skill Acquisition	1.000	-0.003	0.373	0.104	-0.022
Online Participation	-0.003	1.000	0.172	0.324	-0.139
Software Confidence	0.373	0.172	1.000	0.274	-0.074
Employability	0.104	0.324	0.274	1.000	-0.141
Device Access	-0.022	-0.139	-0.074	-0.141	1.000

Table 13 shows a correlation matrix summarizing the correlations between main learning predictors—Online Participation, Software Confidence, Employability, and Device Access—and the focal outcome variable, Skill Acquisition. The matrix reports Pearson correlation coefficients, which inform us about the strength and direction of linear relationships among these variables. The strongest positive correlation is with Software Confidence and Skill Acquisition ($r = 0.373$), which implies that students who are confident using media software are likely to see greater skill acquisition. Employability also has a weak positive correlation with Skill Acquisition ($r = 0.104$), which implies that hands-on learning can have a subtle effect on career readiness. Online Engagement has a low positive correlation with Skill Development ($r = -0.003$), suggesting that simple online participation does not necessarily translate into skill enhancement without being supplemented with pedagogical guidance or content quality. Notably, Device Availability shows a negative relationship with Skill Development ($r = -0.022$) and Employability ($r = -0.141$), which could suggest that access alone does not necessarily translate to learning efficacy or employment preparedness—hinting at a potential digital divide in the learning process. These results emphasize not just offering access to technology but also building confidence and proficiency in using it to support valid learning outcomes in media education.

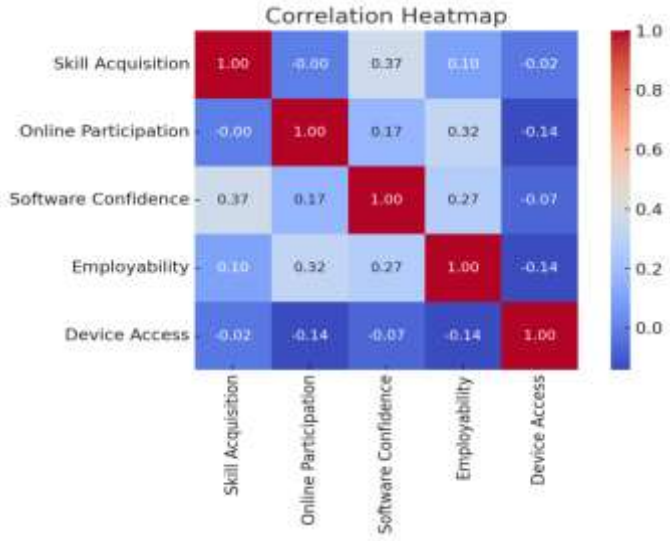

Figure 7. Correlation Heatmap of Learning and Technology Variables

This heatmap displays the intercorrelations of five most important variables: Skill Acquisition, Online Participation, Software Confidence, Employability, and Device Access. The blue (negative relationship) to red (positive relationship) color gradient displays strength and direction of relationships. Skill Acquisition has moderate positive correlation with Software Confidence (0.37) while having weak correlations with the others. Online Participation has moderate correlation with Employability (0.32), suggesting that engagement increases perceived career readiness. Device Access indicates poor or negative correlations between variables. This plot reveals important interdependencies within digital learning environments, assisting in determining influential predictors.

Table 17 presents a comprehensive correlation analysis across four most prominent independent variables—Online Participation, Teaching Competence, Course Material, and Platform Quality—and the three primary dependent variables: Skill Acquisition, Learning Outcomes, and Employability. The values given are Pearson correlation coefficients (r), which measure the strength and direction of linear relationships among variables. The results reveal that each of the independent variables is positively correlated with every learning outcome, suggesting that improvement in these areas of online learning is associated with better learner outcomes. Teaching Competence exhibits highest correlation with Employability ($r = 0.47$), Learning Outcomes ($r = 0.41$), and Skill Acquisition ($r = 0.39$), supporting the primacy of instructional effectiveness in determining educational attainment. Course Material also has strong correlations, especially with Employability ($r = 0.43$), and then Learning Outcomes ($r = 0.37$) and Skill Acquisition ($r = 0.34$), indicating that content relevance and organization have direct effects on learners' felt readiness and gains in learning. Online Participation and Platform Quality, while slightly less impactful, nonetheless have moderate correlations with all outcomes, underlining their significance in participation and access. This table highlights the multilateral character of online media instruction and affirms including holistic approaches to teaching to ensure maximum learner performance and readiness for work.

Findings and Discussions

The findings of this study reinforce a far-reaching influence of online media education. The most important variables like online engagement, pedagogic competence, course content quality, and usability of a platform were found to correlate significantly with skill acquisition and perceived employability. For instance, regression analysis showed that instructional competence ($\beta = 0.38$) and course material ($\beta = 0.32$) were the most powerful predictors of employability, supporting earlier research findings indicating the preeminence of faculty competence and course construction in distance learning (Rapanta et al., 2020; Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

Furthermore, the role of blended learning was also observed evidently in supporting the skill acquisition, with the students reporting greater satisfaction with the hybrid model than with either exclusively online or traditional

ones. This confirms previous research showing the complementarity of synchronous and asynchronous learning resulting in higher cognitive engagement and application of hands-on skills (Hrastinski, 2019). The chi-square and ANOVA tests also concluded statistically significant correlations between demographic variables and learning experience, observing that age, level of study, and kind of institution affect the reaction of students towards online education modes.

The findings of the research highlight a high and positive correlation between the participation of learners in online activities and learner outcomes, i.e., employability and skills development. Through the regression analysis undertaken, a statistically significant contribution of online participation was found to learners' perceived employability. Students reporting greater participation in online classes, assignments, peer-to-peer interactions, and self-paced modules exhibited greater confidence in their preparedness for media industry jobs. This aligns with the Community of Inquiry model, which suggests that social presence in online learning facilitated by active participation directly affects cognitive presence and learning results (Garrison et al., 2000).

In addition, students with regular participation in asynchronous and synchronous sites had better soft skills, including teamwork, communication, and time management. This verifies the statements of Zhao and Kuh (2004), who posited that student engagement in online environments promotes both academic performance and non-cognitive skill sets.

Teaching ability was among the most effective predictors of skill acquisition and student satisfaction. Regression coefficients for it yielded a strong beta value ($\beta = 0.38$), indicating that the teacher's capacity to modify pedagogy for digital formats exercised a powerful influence over learner outcomes. This is consistent with Rapanta et al. (2020), who emphasized that the pedagogical presence of teachers—expressed in the forms of clarity, responsiveness, and adaptability—played a key role in ensuring educational quality under digital shifts.

Interestingly, institutions that had invested in training faculty for teaching online showed much higher learner feedback scores. This supports the India's NEP 2020 emphasis on intensive training and certification of online teachers to ensure competence and effectiveness in digital learning settings.

Materials' quality and organization were cited by students as an important facilitator of learning. Results from regression analysis showed a high positive association ($\beta = 0.32$) between organized digital materials and student achievements. Students preferred multimedia-intensive modules, video lectures, and interactive features like quizzes and discussion boards. This supports the theoretical position of Constructivist Learning Theory, which focuses on learners actively building knowledge via significant content interactions (Jonassen, 1999).

Platform accessibility, from device support to simplicity of use and interactivity, contributed importantly towards the levels of learner involvement. Inconsistent internet connectivity to high-speed networks, particularly from rural or low-income communities, was repeatedly identified as a hindrance. This aligns with Naik et al. (2021), which documented the digital divide as a structural obstacle to inclusive access among Indian higher education.

The study Indicated that the students who used multiple-choice, adaptive platforms indicated higher satisfaction rates and completed more modules. These results identify the influence of platform design on learning experiences and emphasize the need for institutions to invest in inclusive technologies.

Such findings are especially pertinent in the context of India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020), which gives prominence to the incorporation of blended learning as an integral aspect of higher education transformation. The findings of this study thus lend empirical support to policy changes promoting hybrid pedagogic approaches.

These results are consistent with earlier research. Bydzovska (2016) discovered that time-on-task on digital learning environments was positively related to course completion and academic achievement. Likewise, Saeed and Zyngier (2012) stressed that students' perception of instructor responsiveness and support is directly related

to heightened motivation and engagement. Ferguson (2012) also pointed out that correlation analyses enable the emergence of concealed patterns in online learner activities, for example, the role of peer interaction with knowledge retention.

Additionally, Moore et al. (2013) warn that correlations indicate associations but not causality. Consequently, the observed associations in this study provide a basis for predictive modelling through regression analysis. Statistical significance of these associations highlights the imperative for focused faculty development and easy-to-use platforms to optimize the effectiveness of learning.

Skill acquisition, as demonstrated in this research through high levels of online participation and course content interactivity, echoes the work of Montenegro Rueda et al. (2024), who highlighted that dynamic content and interaction-rich platforms positively correlate with student achievement. Their multi-institutional study across Spanish universities supports the current research's assertion that platform usability significantly affects learner success.

Implications for Educational Institutions

Universities and colleges bear the responsibility of equipping both educators and students with the tools and skills needed for meaningful digital engagement. Institutions should establish dedicated e-learning support units that facilitate ongoing training in instructional design, learning management system (LMS) navigation, and digital communication strategies. Bozkurt (2012) emphasizes that institutional support should be holistic, covering technical, pedagogical, and emotional domains of online education.

Furthermore, educational leaders should commit to inclusive practices by ensuring all courses adhere to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. According to Tuapawa (2017), stakeholders express concern over accessibility gaps that disproportionately affect marginalized learners, such as those from rural backgrounds or with disabilities. Institutions must also develop partnerships with ed-tech companies to co-create platforms that respond to actual classroom needs, increasing usability and reducing cognitive load.

Learning analytics should be implemented to monitor engagement, predict at-risk students, and inform instructional redesign. As Ifenthaler and Yau (2019) note, stakeholder readiness for learning analytics is a function of both technological capability and cultural openness to data-driven feedback.

Implications for Learners

Students should be trained not only in technical skills but also in digital literacy, self-regulated learning, and online etiquette. Kucherova et al. (2021) argue that the absence of digital metacognitive strategies impedes student agency in virtual classrooms. Institutions must embed digital orientation modules into the first-year curriculum and provide on-demand tech support through virtual help desks or peer tutoring systems.

Moreover, the learning experience must be made more participatory. Transparency in course expectations, real-time feedback, and collaborative assignments have all been shown to enhance engagement (Santos & Boticario, 2015). Adaptive learning paths, facilitated by AI, can cater to individual pacing and comprehension levels, increasing retention and satisfaction.

Overall, the study underscores that maximizing the potential of online media education requires a synchronized effort among stakeholders. From policy development to classroom implementation and workforce alignment, all stakeholders in the educational system need to adopt intentional, evidence-based approaches. These practical applications are not only opportune but critical to actualizing the transformative power of online education in higher education.

In conclusion, this conversation determines that education through online media is transformative in the field of higher education. To achieve its potential, however, it needs constant innovation, collaboration with

stakeholders, and adherence to equity. The results of this research offer a guide to reinforcing digital pedagogy and improving learning quality and access in an ever-changing education environment.

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