



**wojde.org**

International Women Online Journal of Distance Education

ISSN: 2147-0367



April 2021

Volume 10  
Number 1

<http://www.wojde.org>

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## **From the Editor**

### **Dear readers of intWOJDE**

**We present our Volume: 10, Number: 1 issue to our valuable readers.**

**In our intWOJDE online journal, articles, book reviews, conference reports, cases, literature reviews, news, editor notes, announcements of conferences and publications and letters to the editor, etc. publications are included. We would be very happy to publish your studies on women and distance education in our journal.**

**In this issue, there are two articles. The first article prepared by Dr. Belgin BOZ YÜKSEKDAĞ, Dr. Nejdett KARADAĞ and Ali İhsan İBİLEME and entitled "Raters' Views About Homework/Project Practice in the Open Education System". The purpose of this study is to evaluate the opinions of the raters who are involved in the homework-project practice in the Open Education System. The questions for which answers are sought in the study are "Do raters' views on homework / project practice differ by gender? Do the views of the raters about the assignment / project practice differ according to their academic titles? Do the opinions of the raters about the homework / project practice differ according to the courses they scored?"**

**The second article entitled "Online Teaching-Learning during COVID-19: Experience of Nursing Programmes of IGNOU" is written by Dr. Neerja SOOD. The study explores use of online learning platforms/tools for students enrolled in nursing programmes in the ODL programmes of Indira Gandhi National Open University. The questions for which answers are sought in the study are "Which platforms are preferred by the learners? What is the reaction of students regarding online learning? What will be the long term advantages to the university? What lessons are learned by the teacher?"**

**We hope to stay in touch and wish to meet in our next Issue, 1st of October 2021.**

**Cordially,**

**Prof. Dr. Emine DEMIRAY  
Editor in Chief of intWOJDE**

## **RATERS' VIEWS ABOUT HOMEWORK/PROJECT PRACTICE IN THE OPEN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to evaluate raters' views on homework / project practice in the Open Education System. The research is designed in scanning model, quantitative and singular design. The reliability coefficient of the data collection tool is 0.70. According to the result of the factor analysis performed to test the construct validity, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = 0.74 and Bartlett test  $\chi^2 = 305,253$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ; It was found with  $p = 0.000$ . Raters' views were analyzed in terms of gender, academic title and the course variables they scored. The findings showed that the views of the raters differed significantly according to the academic title and the course variables they scored. Most of the raters who answered open-ended in the measurement tool in the study had negative opinions about the homework project implementation.

**Keywords:** Open education system, homework/project, assesment, raters.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Because traditional assessment tools measure learner success in limited times, isolated from the real world, learners face problems in solving real-world problems (Belet&Girmen, 2007). With educational programs based on constructivism and multiple intelligences theory, the understanding of loading information on the individual was abandoned, an education approach in which knowledge was structured and learner-centered was adopted, and a number of innovations were introduced, including assessment and evaluation practices. Instead of approaches that rely solely on grade-based assessment practices, paradigms that allow learner and instructor to evaluate themselves have been adopted (Gömleksiz, Sinan & Demir, 2010; Güneş, 2007). As a result of this understanding, not only the learning product but also the learning processes of the learners are monitored and the methods and techniques used in the learning and assessment activities are changed when necessary (Aydın Yılmaz, 2007; Karadüz, 2009). According to this approach, assessment is a process that determines what learners know, not what they do not know.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The understanding of measurement and evaluation required by the age focuses on guiding the process in order to guide and create the most appropriate learning-teaching environment, rather than grading students. Observations, worksheets, self-assessment, short answer questions, multiple choice tests, matching questions, open-ended questions, student product files, concept maps, attitude scales, as well as performance and project assignments for measurement and evaluation in order to overcome the inadequacies of learners and to plan further learning (Göçer, 2007).

Assignments, which are an important tool in process evaluation, are written or oral studies given to learners by instructors and usually performed outside the classroom in order to ensure learner development. These are in the form of activities, projects, research and performance assignments (Chouinard et al 2006).

The aim of the assignments is to prepare learners for new subjects, to facilitate learning, to review what has been learned, to reinforce it, to transfer it to daily life, to provide active learning, to contribute to the development of learners' language, mental, social and physical skills (Corno, 2000). Homework is an important tool for developing responsibility in learners. In addition to developing skills such as goal setting, planning, decision making, using existing resources, independent work, self-confidence, communication skills, using resources, accessing and using information are also developed when doing homework. In this process, the habit of performing the task with care and delivering it on time also contributes to the feeling of success (Güneş, 2014).

Assignments are considered a mandatory assessment tool in the distance learning process. Students attend classes for a semester and prepare assignments for each course. In this way, distance learning is managed and made possible by the mandatory component of assignment work (Ali, Mehmood & Mahmood, 2011).

Assignments are an indispensable activity of the teaching and learning process, as most distance learning takes place with assignments and is a mandatory component of the formative evaluation process in the distance education system. It is stated that the assessment tool that has the most impact on the overall success of distance learners is assignments (Cabı, 2016). As a formative assessment tool, it is stated that the feedback provided to learners through homework has an important contribution to motivation and learning. Feedback on written assignments that include timely, realistic and forward-looking recommendations for improvement and help students prepare for the end-of-term or final exams is extremely important (Kofou, 2019). It is stated that the number of assignments and feedback received in distance education is much higher than the assignments and feedback received in traditional education (Gibbs & Simpson, 2005).

Assignments that measure a wide range of abilities allow learners to better regulate their work. On the other hand, homework can give fairer results than exams. This may require instructors to rethink grading assignments. It seems that designing, writing, and evaluating assignments in distance education are valuable skills for planners, organizers, tutorials, or learners. The competence and active of the staff involved in the homework preparation and evaluation process and the objective evaluation of the learners' assignments are important to provide learners with a quality education.

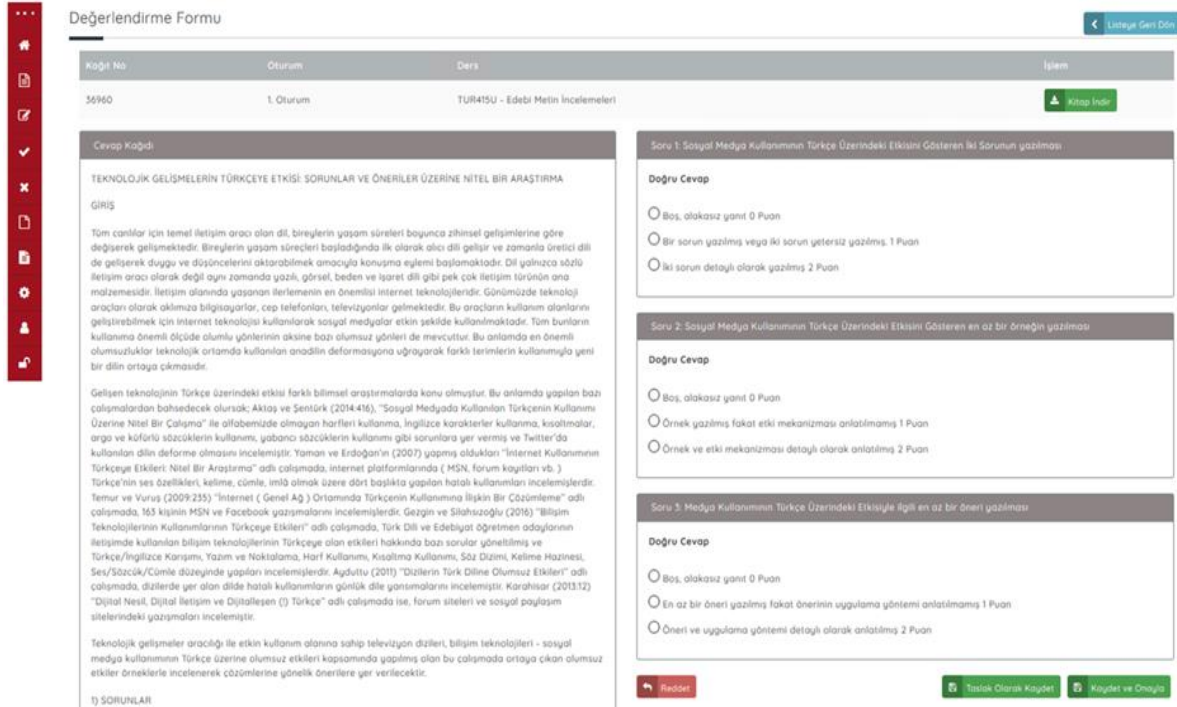
Assignment/project course practice in Anadolu University Open education system has started to be carried out within the scope of four courses (Literary Text Studies, Philosophical Research and Writing, Research and Applications in Sociology, and History Studies) since the 2017-2018 academic year. In this study, it is aimed to get the opinions

of the raters about the homework-project practices, considering that it will contribute to the studies for the development of the learner assessment system in the open education system.

### Anadolu University Open Education System Instructure of Homework/Project System

Within the scope of Anadolu University Open Education System, a term paper system is applied in four different departments at the undergraduate level. In this context, applications have been developed by the Computer Research and Application Center (CRAC) Web Group for loading and evaluating learners' assignments. During the homework loading phase, the homework subjects and necessary explanations are shown on the system according to the lessons learned. Learners are asked to upload a task consisting of a maximum of 1200 words that they have prepared within the reported time period to the system. The homework can be prepared either online on the system or on a word document and uploaded to the system. In order to prevent data loss on the system, data is automatically recorded every two minutes. In addition, the transactions made by the student are versioned and stored in the system.

After completing the task loading process, rubrics for each course are prepared at the evaluation stage. Through these rubrics, assignments are evaluated by different field experts. In the evaluation process, first of all, the number of field experts is determined according to the number of students who take the course. Each field specialist is assigned random assignments related to their field. Each assignment is evaluated by two field experts. If there is a conflict between field experts, the opinion of a third field expert is appealed. The chart shows a screen of the assignment evaluation process (Figure 1).



The screenshot displays the 'Değerlendirme Formu' (Evaluation Form) interface. At the top, there is a table with columns: Kağıt No, Oturum, Ders, and İşlem. Below the table, there is a section for 'Cevap Kağıdı' (Answer Sheet) containing the text of the assignment. To the right of the answer sheet, there are three evaluation questions (Soru 1, Soru 2, Soru 3) with radio button options for 'Doğru Cevap' (Correct Answer). The interface also includes a sidebar with navigation icons and a bottom bar with buttons for 'Geri Dön' (Back), 'İzlenim Olarak Kaydet' (Save as Feedback), and 'Kaydet ve Onayla' (Save and Approve).

Figure 1:  
Homework Evaluation Process in Open Education System



## METHOD

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the opinions of the raters who are involved in the homework-project practice in the Open Education System. The following questions were sought in the study:

1. Do raters' views on homework / project practice differ by gender?
2. Do the views of the raters about the assignment / project practice differ according to their academic titles?
3. Do the opinions of the raters about the homework / project practice differ according to the courses they scored?

## Research Pattern

The research is designed in scanning model, quantitative and singular design. The scanning model aims to describe the existing situation as it is. In the scanning model, the event, individual or objects subject to research are tried to be defined as they are in their own conditions (Karasar, 2013). Event, substance, individual, group, institution, subject, etc. variables belonging to the unit and state are tried to be described separately. In other words, what is the situation in each unit? answer is sought (Büyükoztürk, 2016).

## Participant Group

Participants in the study consisted of a total of 150 raters who worked in the courses of Literary Text Reviews; Philosophical Research and Writing; Research and Applications in Sociology; and History Studies at Anadolu University Open Education System. The distribution of the raters who participated in the study regarding the gender, academic title and the courses they scored are given in Table 1.

**Table 1:**  
**Gender, Academic Title and Scored Course Status of the Raters**

Course Title	N	%	Academic Title	N	%	Gender	N	%
Literary Text Reviews	34	22.7	Prof. Dr.	15	10.0	Female	75	50.0
Philosophical Research and Writing	7	4.7	Assoc.Prof.Dr.	15	10.0	Male	75	50.0
Research and Applications in Sociology	91	60.7	Assist.Prof.Dr.	19	12.7			
History Studies	18	12.0	Lecturer Dr.	5	3.3			
Total	150	100	Lecturer	38	25.3			
			Res. Assist. Dr.	7	4.7			
			Res.Assist.	51	34.0			

According to Table 1, the participants in the research are equal in terms of gender. The gender distribution of the participants of the study is 50% female and 50% male. 34% of those participating in the research are research assistants, 25.3% are lecturers; 12.7% of them are Assist.Prof.Dr., 4.7% Res. Assist. Dr. and 3.3% Lecturer Dr.

"Research and Applications in Sociology" course was mostly evaluated in the Homework/Project (60.7%). "Literary Text Reviews "(22.7%)," Historical Reviews "(12%) and" Philosophical Research and Writing " (4.7%) are the courses evaluated respectively.

## Data Collection Tool

The measurement tool developed to collect data was presented to the raters' application via Google Form. In the assessment tool prepared to get the opinions of the raters in the Homework / Project practice, there are 3 questions (1st, 2nd, 3rd) questioning the demographic information, 9 Likert-type questions where the opinions are collected and 4 short answer (Yes/No) questions. In addition, other opinions about the practice were collected with 1 open-ended question. According to the results of factor analysis conducted to test the structure validity of the measurement tool, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)= 0.74 and Bartlett test  $\chi^2= 305,253$ ;  $p= 0.000$  were found. This result shows that the structure of the measurement tool is formed with questions towards the goals. The reliability of the measurement tool was tested with Cronbach Alpha and its value of 0.70 was found to be reliable.

Questionnaire participation link and information letter were sent to 213 raters who participated in the 2020-2021 academic year Fall semester Homework / Project practice. In the information letter, the contributions of the study to improve the system were mentioned and it has been reported that participation is on a voluntary basis. 150 raters answered the measurement tool applied between 1-15 February 2021.

## Data Analysis

SPSS 20.0 was used in the analysis of the data collected in the study. Percentage-frequency tables and graphs were used for descriptive analysis, and F and t tests were used to find the differences between the means of variables for interpretive statistics.

## FINDINGS

In this section, the answers of 150 raters who answered the measurement tool were interpreted within the scope of the research questions.

### Findings regarding the first research question

Do raters' views on homework / project practice differ by gender?

The findings regarding whether there is a significant difference in the answers given to the questions in the measurement tool according to the gender variable are given in Table 2.

**Table 2:**  
**Average Scores of Raters for Homework/Project Practice by Gender**

Score	Groups	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t test t	df	Sig.
Before I started to score in the Homework / Project course, I had enough information about the scoring process.	Female	75	3,99	1,097	0,876	148	0,383
	Male	75	4,13	0,949			
I could easily access the papers assigned in the scoring software.	Female	75	4,81	0,562	0,404	148	0,687
	Male	75	4,77	0,649			
I think the rubric given for the evaluation of homework is understandable.	Female	75	4,07	0,972	0,797	148	0,427
	Male	75	3,93	1,07			
I think that saving as a draft in scoring contributed positively to the scoring process.	Female	75	4,27	0,704	0,845	148	0,4
	Male	75	4,15	1,009			

Table 2: Continued

I think that in homework/project courses, students' knowledge is better measured than in multiple choice questions	Female	75	3,67	1,097	1.703	148	0,091
	Male	75	3,36	1,301			
I think that students get more points than they deserve in the homework/project course.	Female	75	3,01	1,033	1.191	148	0,236
	Male	75	3,23	1,158			
I found the Homework/Project scoring software useful.	Female	75	1,56	0,858	1.627	148	0,106
	Male	75	1,35	0,744			
I find it necessary to apply a homework/project course.	Female	75	1,52	0,875	.692	148	0,49
	Male	75	1,43	0,744			
I was able to follow the system instantly via informative SMS/e-mail in the process with homework/project scoring software.	Female	75	1,27	0,664	1.386	148	0,168
	Male	75	1,13	0,502			
The time given for homework/project scoring was sufficient.	Female	75	1,12	0,327	-.244	148	0,808
	Male	75	1,13	0,342			
Did you feel the need to communicate with other raters while scoring the Homework/Project?	Female	75	1,69	0,464	1.105	146,6	0,271
	Male	75	1,77	0,421			
Did you feel the need to communicate with the referee while scoring the Homework/Project?	Female	75	1,69	0,464	1.302	146	0,195
	Male	75	1,79	0,412			
Did you feel the need to communicate with the coordinator while scoring the Homework/Project?	Female	75	1,79	0,412	-.617	148	0,538
	Male	75	1,83	0,381			

According to the t test given in Table 2, the difference between the mean scores obtained from female and male participants is not statistically significant. In other words, the views of both females and males on each statement are similar.

### Findings regarding the second research question

Do the views of the raters about the assignment / project practice differ according to their academic titles?

**Table 3:**  
**One-Way Variance Analysis Table According to Academic Titles**

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Before I started to score in the Homework / Project course, I had enough information about the scoring process.	Between Groups	7,919	6	7,919	1,271	0,275
	Within Groups	148,541	143	148,541		
	Total	156,46	149			
I could easily access the papers assigned in the scoring software.	Between Groups	1,973	6	0,329	0,894	0,501
	Within Groups	52,62	143	0,368		
	Total	54,593	149			
I think the rubric given for the evaluation of homework is understandable.	Between Groups	13,397	6	2,233	2,239	0,043
	Within Groups	142,603	143	0,997		
	Total	156	149			
I think that saving as a draft in scoring contributed positively to the scoring process.	Between Groups	4,946	6	0,824	1,095	0,368
	Within Groups	107,647	143	0,753		
	Total	112,593	149			
I think that in homework/project courses, students' knowledge is better measured than in multiple choice questions.	Between Groups	8,184	6	1,364	1,113	0,358
	Within Groups	175,289	143	1,226		
	Total	183,473	149			
I think that students get more points than they deserve in the homework/project course.	Between Groups	7,465	6	1,244	1,032	0,407
	Within Groups	172,375	143	1,205		
	Total	179,84	149			
I found the Homework / Project scoring software useful.	Between Groups	5,134	6	0,856	1,329	0,248
	Within Groups	92,039	143	0,644		
	Total	97,173	149			
I find it necessary to apply a homework/project course.	Between Groups	1,747	6	0,291	0,418	0,866
	Within Groups	99,646	143	0,697		
	Total	101,393	149			
I was able to follow the system instantly via informative SMS/e-mail in the process with homework/project scoring software.	Between Groups	2,886	6	0,481	1,401	0,218
	Within Groups	49,114	143	0,343		
	Total	52	149			
The time given for homework/project scoring was sufficient.	Between Groups	0,527	6	0,088	0,782	0,585
	Within Groups	16,066	143	0,112		
	Total	16,593	149			
Did you feel the need to communicate with other raters while scoring the Homework/Project?	Between Groups	1,796	6	0,299	1,554	0,165
	Within Groups	27,538	143	0,193		
	Total	29,333	149			
Did you feel the need to communicate with the referee while scoring the Homework/Project?	Between Groups	0,784	6	0,131	0,665	0,678
	Within Groups	28,076	143	0,196		
	Total	28,86	149			
Did you feel the need to communicate with the coordinator while scoring the Homework/Project?	Between Groups	0,564	6	0,094	0,589	0,739
	Within Groups	22,829	143	0,16		
	Total	23,393	149			

According to Table 3, "I think the rubric given for the evaluation of homework is understandable." A statistically significant difference was found between the averages of the answers given to the statement according to the academic title variable. This difference is due to the responses of "Assist.Prof.Dr." and "Lecturer" raters. While the raters with the

title of "Assist.Prof.Dr." were distributed with a standard deviation of 0.607 within the whole group, the standard deviation of the raters with the title of "Lecturer" remained behind the group average. According to this result, while the "Assist.Prof.Dr." group is located around the average with all titles, the average of opinion of the raters in the title of "Lecturer" on this statement is lower than the other titles of the group and farther from the average. On the other hand, raters' other opinions about the second research question about homework / project practice do not show a statistically significant difference according to their academic titles.

### Findings regarding the third research question

Do the opinions of the raters about the homework / project practice differ according to the courses they scored?

**Table 4:**  
**One-Way Variance Analysis Table According to Scored Courses**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Before I started to score in the Homework / Project course, I had enough information about the scoring process.	Between Groups	3,162	3	1,054	1,004	0,393
	Within Groups	153,298	146	1,05		
	Total	156,46	149			
I could easily access the papers assigned in the scoring software.	Between Groups	0,308	3	0,103	0,276	0,843
	Within Groups	54,286	146	0,372		
	Total	54,593	149			
I think the rubric given for the evaluation of homework is understandable.	Between Groups	1,581	3	0,527	0,498	0,684
	Within Groups	154,419	146	1,058		
	Total	156	149			
I think that saving as a draft in scoring contributed positively to the scoring process	Between Groups	4,743	3	1,581	2,14	0,098
	Within Groups	107,851	146	0,739		
	Total	112,593	149			
I think that in homework/project courses, students' knowledge is better measured than in multiple choice questions.	Between Groups	3,859	3	1,286	1,046	0,374
	Within Groups	179,615	146	1,23		
	Total	183,473	149			
I think that students get more points than they deserve in the homework/project course.	Between Groups	1,95	3	0,65	0,533	0,66
	Within Groups	177,89	146	1,218		
	Total	179,84	149			
I found the Homework / Project scoring software useful.	Between Groups	2,889	6	0,963	1,491	0,219
	Within Groups	94,284	143	0,646		
	Total	97,173	149			
I find it necessary to apply a homework/project course.	Between Groups	4,622	3	1,541	2,324	0,077
	Within Groups	96,771	146	0,663		
	Total	101,393	149			

Table 4: Continued

I was able to follow the system instantly via informative SMS/e-mail in the process with homework/project scoring software.	Between Groups	4,856	3	1,619	5,013	0,002
	Within Groups	47,144	146	0,323		
	Total	52	149			
The time given for homework/project scoring was sufficient.	Between Groups	0,234	3	0,078	0,697	0,555
	Within Groups	16,359	146	0,112		
	Total	16,593	149			
Did you feel the need to communicate with other raters while scoring the Homework/Project?	Between Groups	1,572	3	0,524	2,755	0,045
	Within Groups	27,762	146	0,19		
	Total	29,333	149			
Did you feel the need to communicate with the referee while scoring the Homework / Project?	Between Groups	1,54	3	0,513	2,743	0,045
	Within Groups	27,32	146	0,187		
	Total	28,86	149			
Did you feel the need to communicate with the coordinator while scoring the Homework / Project?	Between Groups	0,429	3	0,143	0,908	0,439
	Within Groups	22,965	146	0,157		
	Total	23,393	149			

According to Table 4, "I was able to monitor the system instantly through informative SMS/e-mail with the Homework / Project scoring software." a statistically significant difference was found between the averages of the answers given to the statement according to the scored courses variable ( $F = 5,013$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ). It has been observed that this difference is between the "Research and Applications in Sociology" and "Literary Text Studies" courses. In favor of "Literary Text Studies", it is seen that this course has a higher average than all other courses, especially the "Research and Applications in Sociology" course. In summary, it was observed that the scorers were able to follow the system instantly via informative SMS / e-mail mostly in the scoring of the "Literary Text Studies" course, and at least in the "Research and Applications in Sociology" course.

### Findings about answers to the open-ended question

The rate of raters who answered the open-ended question in the measurement tool is 31.3%. Approximately 32% of this rate found the application useful and stated that it should continue. 68% of them stated that they did not find the homework / project practice useful. The views of some raters who found the application positive are given below:

*"I think this practice should continue."*

*"It is a very nice and necessary application, I support it. The scoring key could be improved a little more. I wish conveniences. Thank you."*

*"I think that the application of "Homework / Project" in exams is important in terms of evaluating students' written expression skills."*

Some of the views of the raters who have a negative opinion about the practice are as follows:

*"I did not find the homework-project successful. Although it was aimed to increase the research knowledge of the learners, the learners got points with the copy and paste method."*

*"Homework / Project practice has never functioned properly. The only original and real homework I have ever seen was that of a student who introduced his mother's*

*local food. All of the others copy / paste and repeat Internet assignments. In my opinion, this lesson should be removed immediately. I always get seriously uncomfortable when grading. "*

Some of the raters who answered the open-ended question expressed their difficulties regarding the homework-project system and made suggestions. These suggestions were analyzed and grouped under the following headings:

- Formation of homework title by learners
- Clearer emphasis on expectations from learners
- Using different strategies in topic selection
- Using the plagiarism program
- Extension of the time given for evaluation

#### **Formation of homework title by learners**

*"In terms of scoring, it may be useful to emphasize more clearly that the title of the homework should be created by the students (the title should not be written in the same way), because this was the case with many assignments."*

#### **Clearer emphasis on expectations from learners**

*"In scoring, especially the subject of footnotes should be clarified. Bibliography and footnote responses indicate that learners do not understand this issue sufficiently. "*

*"I think a clearer scoring guideline should be prepared in order to enable the raters to make a similar assessment in the assignment / project reading task."*

*"The criteria given for scoring should be very clear and should be stated there. The learner also uses the synonyms of these words, then the rater hesitates in scoring. Also, the words given are too many. it should be reduced if there is a possibility."*

#### **Using different strategies in topic selection**

*"Similar texts have been loaded. This shows that cut and paste are made from certain sources. Therefore, different strategies should be developed in the choice of subject "*

#### **Using the plagiarism program**

*"When we identify plagiarists, there is no button to report it or a part to write a description. This is a significant shortcoming. If this is done, both referees understand why some papers are given low points, and objections from students can be answered quickly."*

*"I think most of the homework has been copied from the internet. However, it is difficult for the rater to determine this one by one and create evidence. Can homework be automatically checked for plagiarism during uploading to the system by notifying the student in advance? "*

#### **Extension of the time given for evaluation**

*"I think it would be better if the time given for evaluation could be extended a little bit."*



### System recommendations

*"I had difficulty when I decided to reject after the enrollment process. Reject button disappears after saving. There should be an opportunity to refuse recorded questions."*

*"The book of the course that was evaluated was not in the system. Assessment becomes difficult in courses where there is no subject matter expert"*

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this study, it was aimed to evaluate the views of the raters about the homework/project practice in the Open Education System. Within the scope of the study, the views of the raters about the assignment/project practice were examined according to gender, academic title and the course variables they scored. There were no significant differences between the views of the raters regarding the homework/project according to gender.

According to the academic title, a significant difference was found between the "Assist. Prof. Dr." and the "Lecturers" regarding the homework / project practice. The views of the "Assist. Prof. Dr." about the homework-project are more positive than the "Lecturers".

It was revealed that the views of the raters about the homework/project in terms of the course they scored differ only in receiving informative SMS/e-mails in the process. This difference emerged between the "Lecturers" who scored the "Literary Text Studies" and "Research and Applications in Sociology" course. The raters of the "Literary Text Reviews" course stated that they were able to follow the system more instantaneously via SMS/e-mail in the process.

In this study, most of the raters who answered the open-ended question in the measurement tool had negative opinions about the homework/project practice. The reasons for this negativity include the fact that learners have prepared their homework by copying and pasting from internet sources and the absence of a plagiarism program to detect this situation. In studies conducted at different levels of education, there are also some similar results that the assignments were not originally prepared (Arı, 2010; Kurak, 2009; Metin & Demiryürek, 2009).

In contrast to this result obtained in the study, the results of studies conducted at different levels of education in the literature show that assignments have a positive effect on the achievements of learners (Bal, 2013). On the other hand, increasing the interest of learners, strengthening the subjects, ensuring the permanence of the subject, gaining self-confidence, giving researcher identity are mentioned as the benefits of assignments (Çepni & Şenel-Çoruhlu, 2010; Çetin & Çakan, 2010; Yılmaz & Benli, 2011; Erdal, 2007).

It will be useful to conduct development studies by examining also the opinions of learners of homework/project practice.

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## ONLINE TEACHING-LEARNING DURING COVID-19: EXPERIENCE OF NURSING PROGRAMMES OF IGNOU

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### ABSTRACT

Commonwealth of Learning, on 13 March 2020, stated that countries in world are closing down institutions of learning due to COVID-19 pandemic and it is important to ensure that learners' time is not lost and they continue to learn from a location of their choice. In India, Ministry of Human Resource Development and University Grant Commission have recommended that the students get academic support on-line and have shared several ICT initiatives in the form of digital platforms for teaching-learning. Indira Gandhi National Open University also decided to use such I.T. platforms. This study explores a. use of online learning platforms/tools for students enrolled in nursing programmes in the ODL programmes of Indira Gandhi National Open University; b. platforms/tools preferred and used by the students; c. Students' responses and lessons learned by the teacher. In this study, exploratory study approach is used. The study highlighted that during lockdown period and while working from homes, the teacher learned and used the new technology to reach out to students all over India. One of the key challenge was to enrol students and to involve them in the online teaching-learning. Innovative ways to motivate the students to participate in learning were found; mentoring of students became a 24x7 activity as many of these nursing students were working with COVID 19 patient in hospitals as frontline workers. Students preferred to use facebook and WhatsApp platforms for sessions and were willing to participate in Google-Meet sessions as well but internet connectivity issues were the constraint and many students preferred facebook sessions. Reactions of students were positive after completing online theory sessions and participation in online practical sessions was also very good. During this initiative the teacher too learnt several lessons. In future, online teaching-learning offers huge potential for use in various health sciences programmes with some modification especially for practical activities and using a blended approach.

**Keywords:** Online Platforms, Online Tools, Open University, Teaching-Learning, Pandemic

### INTRODUCTION

The 'Commonwealth of Learning', on 13 March 2020, stated that most of the nations are closing down institutions of learning due to COVID-19 Pandemic and that learners' time should not be lost. If the students continue to learn at the convenience of their homes, around 363 million learners worldwide could benefit. Support is being offered to the learners through online platforms. Commonwealth of Learning emphasized that open, distance and online learning, if carried out rigorously and ensuring quality, can improve the outcomes despite lack of face to face contact between the teacher and the learners. Many universities are utilizing their full potential through available online approaches to reach out to the learners but there are many that are still not able to reach out the learners (COL, 2020). Colleges and universities can use available open educational resources and explore innovative ways to reach out and interact with the learners using various online platforms and using online tools. Even in India, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and University Grant Commission (UGC) ensured that students got academic support through online learning and shared several ICT initiatives of various organizations in the

form of digital platforms for teaching-learning during this pandemic period (UGC Order dated 25-03-2020). ITU News highlighted that education sector is also impacted during COVID-19 pandemic and many teaching institutions are closed. But easy to use digital tools are available to reach out to the learners. Even UNESCO listed down distance learning solutions including education applications, platforms, and resources to facilitate learning. All countries are introducing or scaling up distance education modalities based on different information communication technologies and few countries are sharing their digital education tools with others (ITU website, accessed on 18-04-2020).

Study by Sahu P, 2020, highlighted that as large number of institutions are closed due to COVID-19 pandemic, most of the universities in the world opted to cancel on the campus classes, examinations, and other activities and they moved on to online delivery mode. Based on MHRD/UGC order, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) also decided to use various platforms and ICT initiatives to reach out to the learners all over the country and internationally in partner institutions. School of Health Sciences, IGNOU, is offering programmes for doctors, nurses, and other health professionals who are in-service health professionals working in the hospitals and health institutions. As per guidelines, they have to attend compulsory theory and practical sessions for specified period in all the programmes. Diploma in Nursing Administration (DNA) and other programmes for in-service nurses also have specified hours of contact sessions. During this time, it was a challenge to reach out to the learners so that their time is not lost and they complete their programme. And motivating these learners who were working for nearly 12 hours in hospital under stress looking after COVID-19 patients was a second challenge. This study explores online platforms and tools to motivate learners enrolled in nursing programmes for online learning so that they complete their programme successfully.

Study by Krishna Ayu, 2020, highlighted that there are challenges in studying management online, difficulty to concentrate during pandemic and many tasks given by teacher to students are challenging; method of learning is dull and payment for internet is a burden on students. Another study by Agarwal and Kaushik (2020), stated that sessions were relevant as per need and tailored as per level of the students on online medium; they also perceived that sessions were interesting and material was easy to access and enjoyable; online sessions had broken monotony and the COVID pandemic made them realize importance of online learning.

## NEED IDENTIFIED

It was a challenge for the researcher to reach out to the enrolled learners under two courses of Diploma in Nursing Administration (DNA) all over India and conduct academic counselling as Course Coordinator. Besides this, academic counselling for two other courses under Post-basic B.Sc. Nursing Programme was to be done at a Delhi Study-centre while working from home during the lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic as per guidelines of the Government and University. It took some time for the researcher to acquaint with the online tools and platforms to take on the challenge to provide online teaching-learning experiences to learners.

**Description of the research** The purpose of this research was to reach and teach the learners from nursing discipline pursuing DNA in IGNOU ; conduct academic counselling for them and to Post Basic B.Sc. Nursing students in Delhi; provide requisite material and other resources for learning using online platforms and tools. As a teacher, the first issue for the researcher was to explore and select suitable online platform from amongst the several available free tools/platforms; to learn to use these platforms/tools so that learners can easily access and use them. Additionally, it was observed that several amongst these learners were working as frontline workers in Covid areas in hospitals under stressful conditions for 14 days at a stretch and it was a challenge to help them participate in

teaching-learning activities at their convenience. In this connection, the following main research questions are addressed:

1. Which platforms are preferred by the learners?
2. What is the reaction of students regarding online learning?
3. What will be the long term advantages to the university?
4. What lessons are learned by the teacher?

## METHODOLOGY

Exploratory study approach was used to obtain insight into an issue. 30 Post Basic Nursing and 120 DNA students participated in the study. Willingness of learners was taken into consideration. Few learners opted out but later were added in the group on their request. Permission from Programme In-Charge of Study Centre in Delhi for Post Basic B.Sc. Nursing was taken to conduct online sessions.

Two courses of DNA programme were also selected for which researcher was course coordinator. Regional Centres were informed through Facebook and e mail and included them in the dedicated Facebook page.

I. Searched various online platforms and tools which were freely available: Researcher explored the internet, various university websites, and discussed with colleagues who were well versed with online platforms and tools. Read the reviews in detail and reviewed experiences of others. Then shortlisted WhatsApp, audio books, Facebook, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom, Webex, Google Drive, YouTube, OER links, Kahoot, Hot Potato, GoSoapBox, PDF and PPTs. These were selected as few were used by the researcher in previous years for student support like WhatsApp, audio books, OER links, and others were selected as they were free, could be used for 100 plus learners, easy to use, feasible for the learner to access and use, and easy to learn in limited time period.

II. Learn the use of platforms/tools in short time: Used videos, attended webinars, and studied user guides to learn various platforms/tools. Participated in WhatsApp group with fellowship group on Medical Education and Research for learning use of advance features of various platforms. Started activities with WhatsApp group, audio books, OER links, PDF and PPTs which were used by the researcher since last 4 years. By the end of one month, could use Facebook, Google Classroom, Google Drive, Zoom, Webex, GoSoapBox and YouTube to facilitate learners.

III. Reach out to learners and motivate them for learning using online platforms and tools: Collected 132 DNA student data from Student Registration Division and 30 PB BSc. N from PIC; created two WhatsApp groups and invited the learners. Brief introduction about learners was taken, introduction of self, university, and programmes was given, and strategy to be used for teaching-learning activities was shared. Some active learners helped the peer group to understand the implementation and syllabi of the DNA programme. Advance information was given to the learners regarding Facebook sessions and they were requested to read the units and give questions in advance. Google Classroom was created and folders in Google Drive created to be shared with the group, and YouTube channel was created to upload the sessions. Mentoring by the teacher was done continuously, sending messages, answering to the questions and taking help of group leaders to motivate peer groups was very helpful to motivate students to learn.

**Tools:** Records of students were obtained from university records, Google form was designed for the feedback of the students, for preference of platform, reactions of students and online poll was also used for the preference of platform. Google form consisted of 12 questions and 1 open ended question for comments. Students were free to fill up the form



which was shared with them through link in WhatsApp group and Google classroom. Reactions of students were also obtained after each session on WhatsApp groups and facebook page using questionnaire.. Ethical issues related to informed consent, privacy of data and students were taken into consideration. Received 100 responses and nearly 110 students had given feedback on Facebook and WhatsApp group after the sessions. Benefits and lessons learned on online teaching-learning are personal views of the researcher based on the study experience. Analysis and interpretation was done.



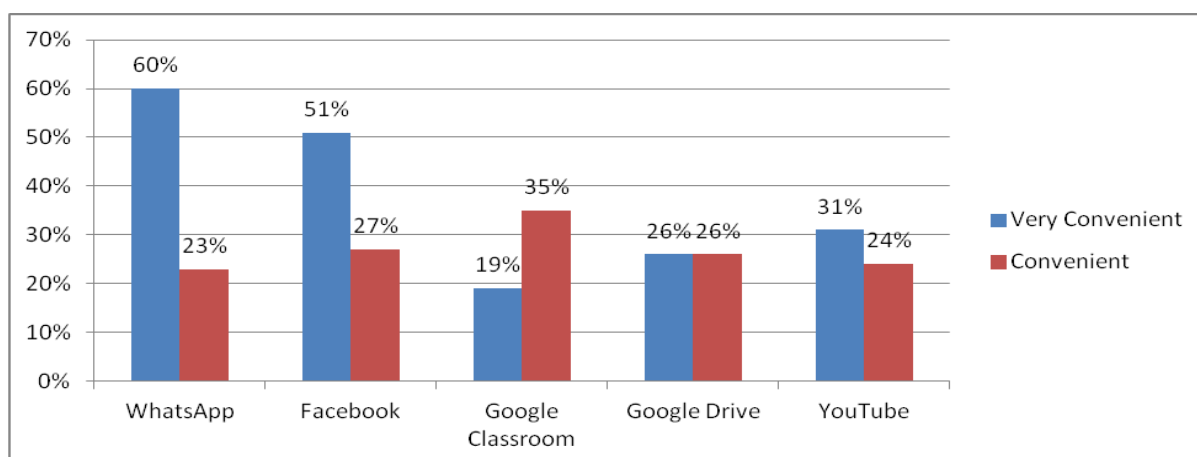
**Figure 1:**  
Showing types of platforms used for learner

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preferences and reactions of students were obtained in-between sessions through questionnaire and at the end of all the sessions through Google Form.

### 1. Platforms preferred by the students

WhatsApp and Facebook were the two most convenient platforms used by students for online teaching-learning activities. Google Classroom, Google Drive and YouTube were also preferred by the students. Facebook sessions were preferred by students as they could attend live and go through the sessions later also. They also expressed that these sessions can be reviewed before examination.

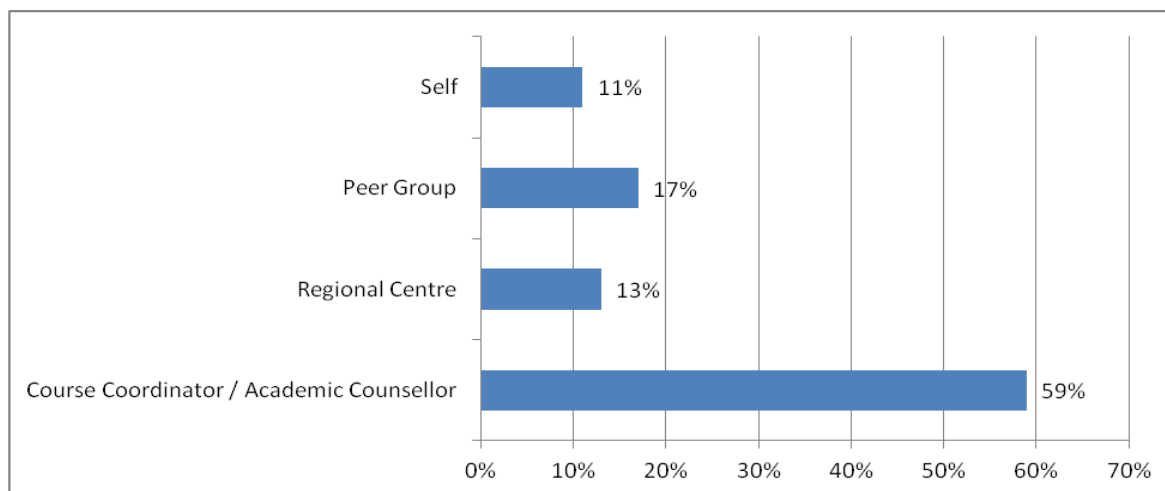


**Figure 2:**  
Platforms used by number of students as per convenience

## 2. Reaction of students regarding online learning

Reactions and experiences of students who participated in online learning of DNA and Post Basic B. Sc. N programmes are analysed below.

### A. Who contacted you about the online teaching sessions/support?

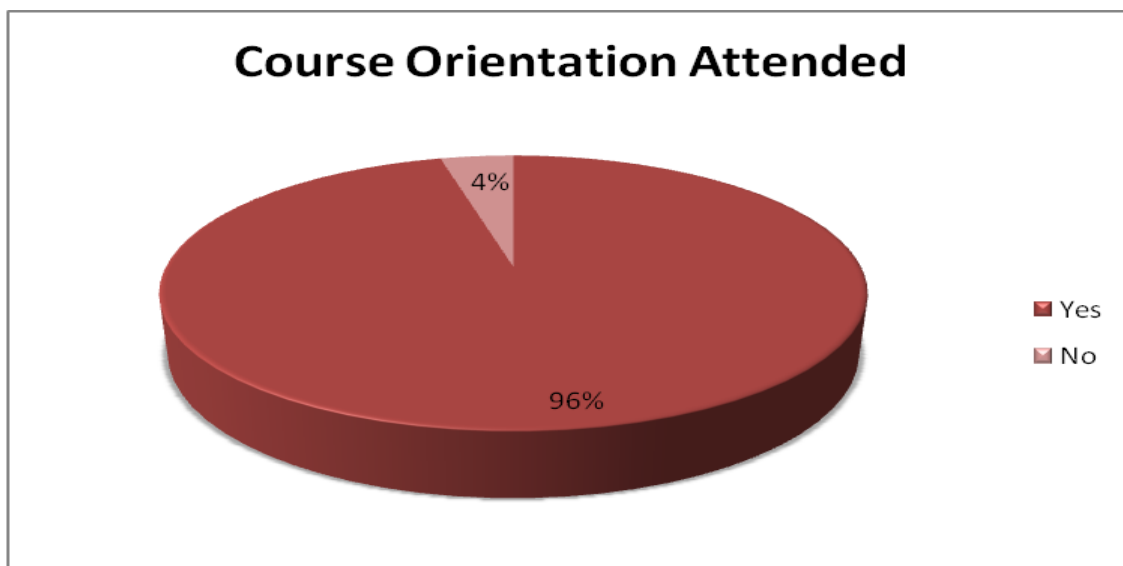


**Figure 3:**  
Percentage of students contacted by academic counsellor and others for online support

59 percent students were contacted by course coordinator and 28 percent students were contacted through their peer or self for online support. It was difficult to contact PBBSCN students for online academic support. Academic counsellor approached the previous year students as no phone numbers were available; Programme in-charge informed that all the records are in her office. Academic counsellor was able to get mobile number through students who passed in 2019 as many students were working in same hospital and were known to each other. For DNA courses, course coordinator contacted the Student Registration Division of IGNOU to get the names and mobile number of students enrolled in 2020 session.



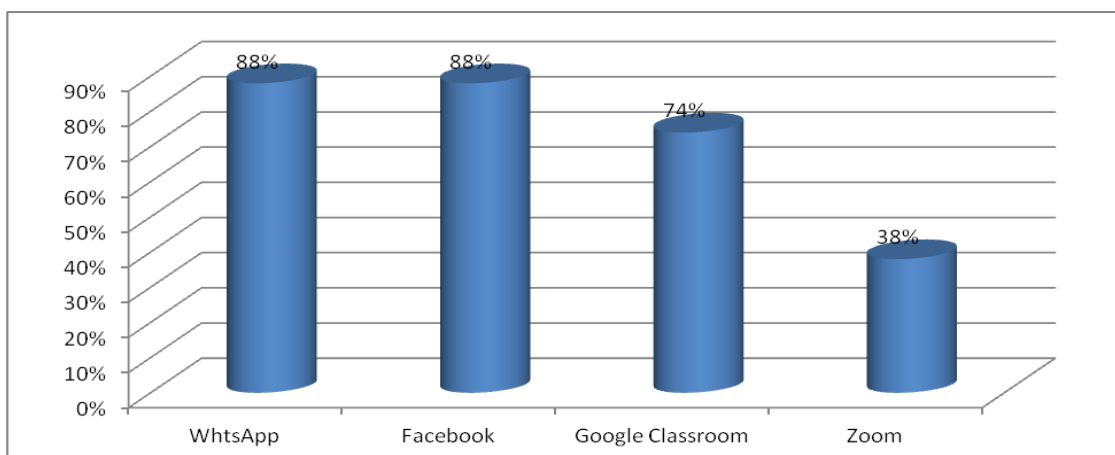
### B. Was course orientation provided by course coordinator?



**Figure 4:**  
Percentage of students who attended orientation training

Orientation/Induction sessions are conducted by Regional Centre in collaboration with the study centres on first day of contact session. But during lockdown period it was not possible to conduct induction/orientation session for the DNA students; therefore, Course Coordinator planned online session by recording an audio book regarding DNA programme and sharing it on WhatsApp group; PowerPoint presentation and programme guide was also shared with the students in the WhatsApp group. Students were requested to go through all the material and ask questions. Peer group was helping each other in WhatsApp group to understand few aspects. On first day of online sessions, orientation was also organised through live Facebook session which was recorded and was available on Facebook for future reference too and for students who could not attend.

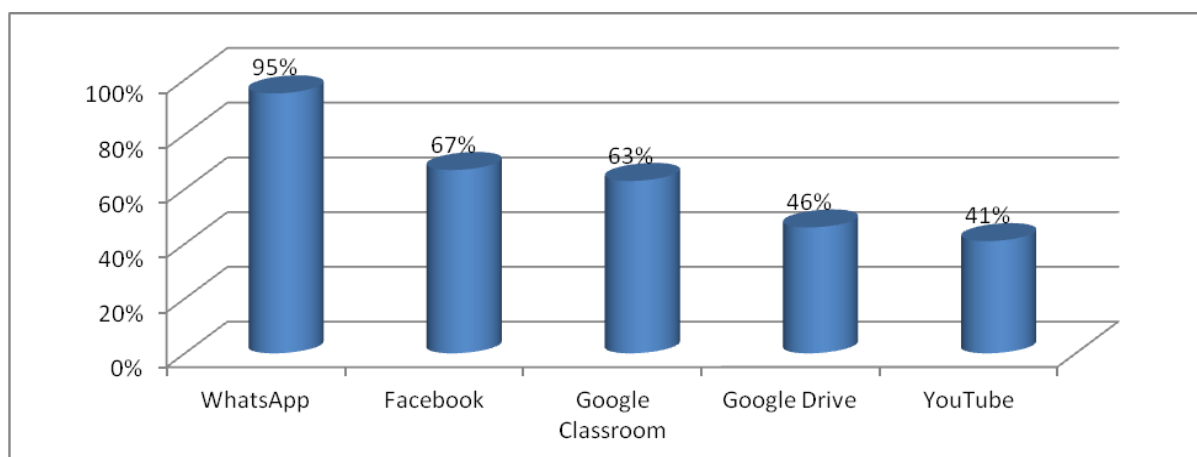
### C. Which online platform was used by the teacher to conduct sessions?



**Figure 5:**  
Platforms used for conducting sessions

Various platforms were used to reach out to the students for online sessions. Initiated the activities with WhatsApp group; then searched the feasibility of Facebook and Google Classroom. Zoom was tried but there were technical issues during the session. Therefore, it was not used for future sessions. Material was shared on three platforms i.e. WhatsApp group, Google Classroom and Google Drive, and sessions were organised through Facebook and Google Meet and recorded and shared, so that all the students could go through the sessions using some platform because many students had connectivity issues or were on COVID duty in hospital and had accessibility issue.

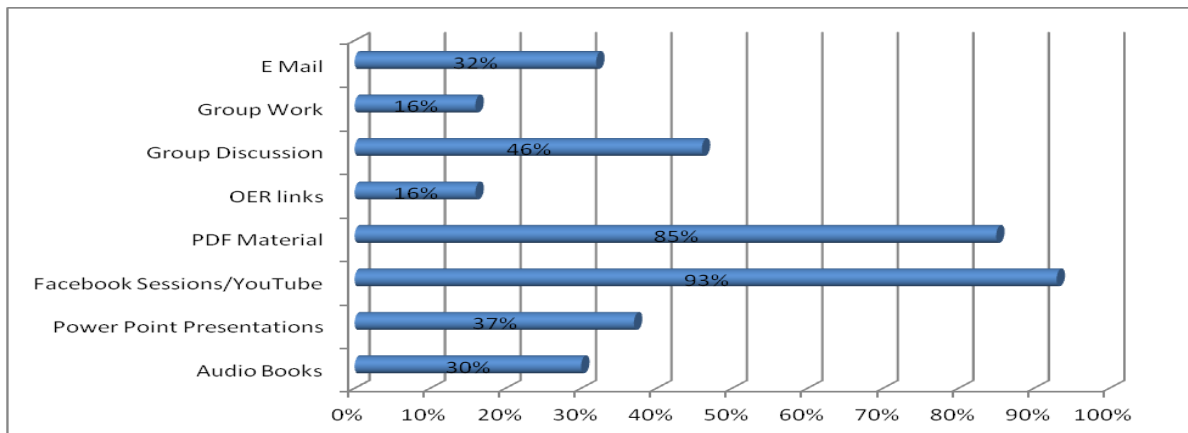
**D. Which online platform was used by the teacher to share material and provide academic support?**



**Figure 6:**  
**Platforms used for sharing material and providing academic support**

Course coordinator downloaded all the units of material from website of university and shared soft copy on WhatsApp and uploaded on Google Drive. Facebook sessions were available at FB page. YouTube channel was created and sessions were uploaded on YouTube too. All the material from IGNOU and other material provided by the course coordinator was uploaded on Google Drive, and links of YouTube and Google Drive were shared in Google Classroom and WhatsApp group. It was important to share material at various platforms because all students were not able to access any one or two specific platforms. As per their feasibility and connectivity, they could use any of these platforms. Facebook and WhatsApp group were also very useful to provide student support and to get feedback. Google Classroom was used for uploading assignment, its evaluation-feedback and grade-recording. Study by Sultana Anisa (2020) highlighted that 37 percent student had internet issues to get connected and access the classes and 97 percent students agreed that face to face teaching cannot be replaced by online teaching. But in present study, students agreed that there was no difference between face to face and online learning and attending sessions on Facebook.

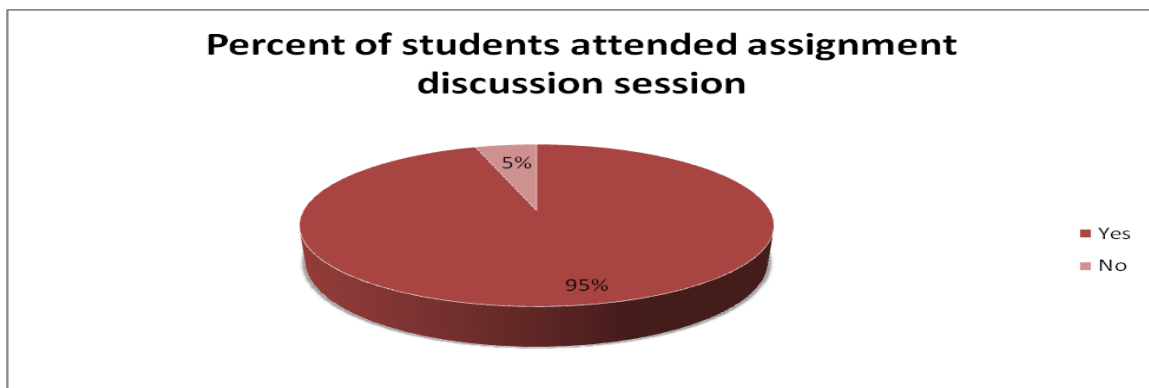
### E. Which methods/media were used by teacher for online teaching-learning?



**Figure 7:**  
**Methods/media used for online teaching-learning**

Various methods and media as shown in figure 7 were used to reach out to students so that they could participate in learning, group activities, and discussions, and for formative assessment. Students were divided into groups for discussions using WhatsApp, and GoSoapBox was used as a tool for conducting a pilot discussion. Notes shared by students during group discussion were shared in WhatsApp group and uploaded on Google Drive for future reference. Study by Krishna Ayu (2020) recommended that variety of methods of learning can be given like video, live stream, discussion, and using various apps and platforms.

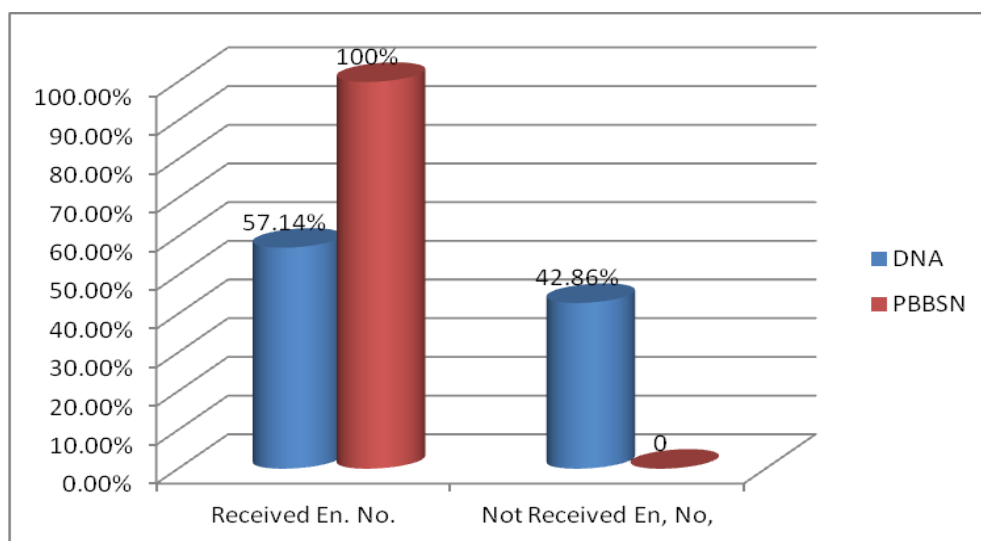
### F. Did you attend the assignment discussion session conducted by the teacher?



**Figure 8:**  
**Percent of students attended assignment discussion session**

Assignment guidelines and all assignments were discussed with the students during live Facebook session and audio book was also shared.

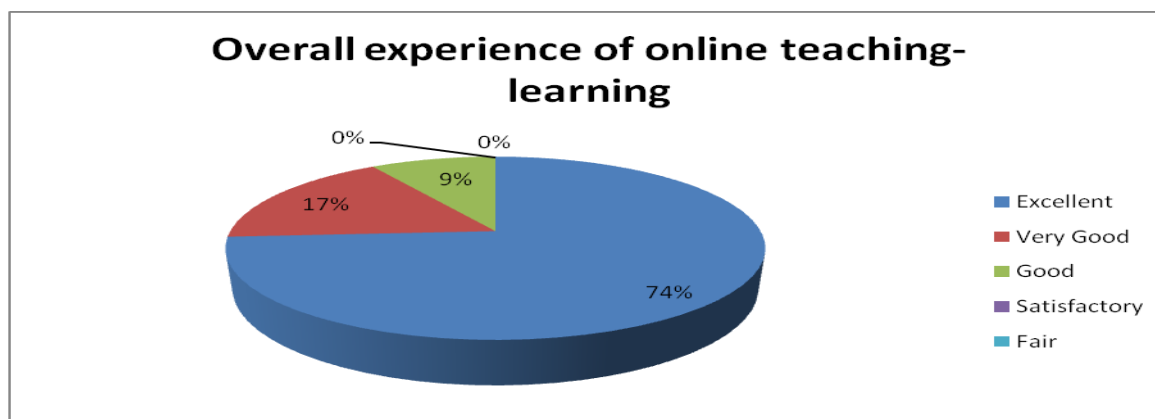
### G. Did you receive your enrolment number?



**Figure 9:**  
Percentage of students received enrollment number during 2020

Post Basic. B.Sc. Nursing (PBBSCN) students received the enrollment number because they were enrolled in 2018 for 3 years programme and at present they were enrolled in third year after re-registration. Only 57 percent Diploma in Nursing Administration (DNA) programme students received enrollment number as they were enrolled fresh during 2020; due to lock down period all the Regional Centres and HQ of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) were not functional from campuses. Therefore, few students could not get their enrollment number but course coordinator provided them enrollment number after the feedback from the list provided by the Student Registration Division, IGNOUH. How was your overall experience of online learning?

Majority of students had excellent and very good experience of online teaching-learning. They actively participated in live sessions, and in case they missed any session due to duty, they watched the recorded videos and gave feedback on the same day; participated in group discussions, and formative assessment questions were submitted on time. Study by Agarwal S (2020) also supports that online learning is feasible and student satisfaction is high.



**Figure 10:**  
Percent of students showing overall experience

Summary of students' reactions and feedback given after sessions in Google Form, WhatsApp groups and Facebook was also compiled.



**Figure 11:**  
**Sample of students' reactions and comments**

It was encouraging for the teacher to observe that students were interested to attend online sessions and give immediate feedback, ask questions, read the units in advance and send questions. Students were motivated to learn as sessions were taken in easy language and supported with examples from the hospital.

**Benefits observed and lessons learned by the researcher based on study experience**

Analysing reactions of students and drawing upon experience of the researcher in conducting online teaching learning, following benefits were observed for university and lessons for adopting online learning for other programmes in future are highlighted.

### 3. Long-term benefits to the University

In ODL University, study centres are established in traditional colleges and their faculty is appointed as academic counsellors for conducting contact sessions, and they are paid honorarium as per the university norms. In-house faculty is designing, developing, monitoring, and coordinating the program.

- This experience has shown that potential of in-house faculty can be utilised for conducting sessions for the students and providing academic support. This will help teachers to monitor the progress and take direct student feedback to effectively evaluate the programme.
- This is also a cost-effective model for the university, as it saves on the honorarium, payment to the study centres, and other expenses, which can be invested for the development of online infrastructure.

### 4. Lessons learned by the researcher and replication of the model

- Pre-planning regarding searching platforms and tools is very important.
- Background of students i.e., experience in using technology, internet availability need to be considered.
- Teacher's own capabilities to use online tools and platforms need to be accessed, and if required, training should be planned.
- Plan the sessions meticulously and make lesson plan with methods and media to be used for online teaching-learning.
- Collaborate with the students so that they also participate in planning activities as per their feasibility to use various tools and platforms for online learning.
- Use various platforms and tools so that all the students can access the material and participate.
- Motivate the students to participate and attend sessions and take immediate feedback.
- Be innovative and creative during sessions so that students attend live sessions or view recorded sessions.
- Give examples from related field so that students can relate to their experience and relate theory with practical.
- Group work can increase peer group learning and team building.
- Attendance can be increased as compared to face to face contact sessions by offering greater convenience to students as it saves their commute and does not necessitates leave from job.
- Assignment for formative assessment needs to be interesting and assessment gives motivation to students.
- Theory and practical sessions need to be modified.
- Teacher required to invest time and energy, and be creative and innovative in online teaching, mentoring and guiding.
- Model can be replicated by other teachers and for other courses too.

### CONCLUSION

Online teaching-learning can be organised for School of Health Sciences programmes; theory sessions can be organised using various platforms and using variety of methods and media. It is important to be creative and innovative and encourage students to participate in sessions and group activities. Mentoring, guiding and follow up with students is very crucial. More time is required for planning, implementing and monitoring the activities. Faculty development programs can be undertaken to make the teachers well-versed in the use of various online platforms and tools. Workload studies can be conducted for online

teaching-learning, and related policies can be modified accordingly for quality assurance in online teaching-learning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank Dr. Harinder Goyal, Programme In-charge of Delhi Study Centre for giving permission and all the DNA and Post Basic B.Sc. Nursing students for giving feedback and reactions. I am also thankful to Dr. R. C. Sharma to provide opportunity to publish the paper and Dr. Nisha Singh to encourage to complete it. I am thankful to Dr. Vijay Rai and Ms. Sukrithi Sood for editing my final draft and helping me to complete article.

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