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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION OF PHYSIOTHERAPY ACADEMICIANS ABOUT ONLINE TEACHING DURING COVID-19 LOCK-DOWN

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ABSTRACT

Background: There is a huge shift in education from traditional classroom learning to online teaching, due the pandemic. Physiotherapy is a practical, hands-on field which makes online teaching a challenge. **Objective:** The study investigated the attitude and perception of physiotherapy academicians about online teaching during COVID-19 lock-down. Descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted for the study. **Method:** A validated self - administered questionnaire was used to conduct this cross-sectional study. Hundred and one people participated in this study. **Results:** From the entire sample analyzed 48.5% were females and 50.5% were males the remaining 1% choose to not reveal the gender. 79.2% of the participants had agreed that online teaching was essential during this phase of pandemic. From the total population surveyed 23.8% of the participants perceived online teaching as a stressor. In the population screened it was found that 66.3% faced some or the other barriers during online teaching. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that online teaching is a positive stroke to the success of the teaching profession in such a critical situation and majority of physiotherapy academicians have accepted this method of teaching with ease.

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INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a newly discovered infectious disease caused by a virus named "coronavirus." The lockdown due to COVID 19 has largely affected the education methodology in India . There is a huge shift in education from traditional classroom learning to online teaching, this is one of the largest educational experiments to date. As the online teaching-learning process has become more prevalent in India due to COVID 19 pandemic, it becomes particularly important to know the attitude and perception of academicians about online teaching during COVID-19 lock-down. The urgent imperative to 'move online', caused by the recent Covid-19 pandemic, has added to the stresses and workloads experienced by university faculty and staff who were already struggling to balance teaching, research and service obligations, not to mention the work-life balance. Teaching staff of all backgrounds and ages have had to prepare and deliver their classes from home, with all the practical and technical challenges this entails, and often without proper technical support.

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Studies have been conducted on university students' continuous intention to learn online from the perspectives of learning motivation and capability, perceptions or attitudes, and online learning experiences. However, few have examined the above factors among academicians. This cross study was conducted with the aim to analyze the attitude and perception of physiotherapy academicians about online teaching during COVID-19 lock-down in India.

METHODOLOGY

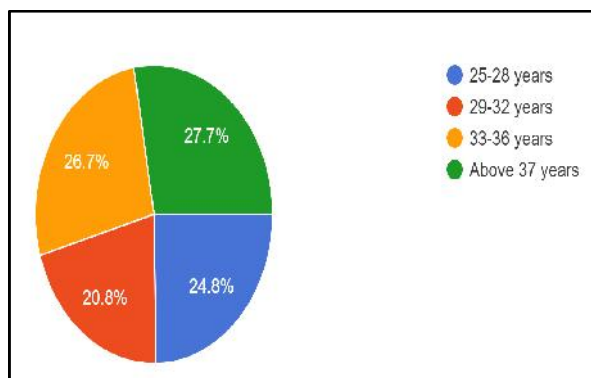
A non-experimental and cross-sectional study methodology was employed, an electronic survey being used to collect the data. A self administered questionnaire was designed based on an extensive literature review. It was validated by subject experts and was then circulated among various academicians through social media platforms. The study was conducted for a duration of two weeks. Teacher perceptions were investigated in terms of three aspects: Effects of the use of this online teaching platform in teachers' perceived motivation towards their educational activities, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

RESULTS

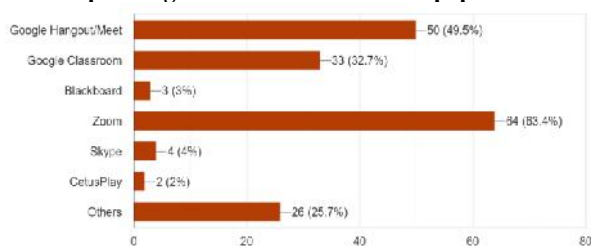
The survey was conducted on hundred and one physiotherapy academicians. From the entire sample analyzed 48.5% were females and 50.5% were males the remaining 1% choose to not reveal the gender. Graph 1 shows the age wise distribution of the sample analyzed. From the total population screened it was found that 32% of the respondents were taking seven or more lectures per week using online teaching methods. 79.2% of the participants had agreed that online teaching was essential during this phase of pandemic. From the total population surveyed 23.8% of the participants perceived online teaching as a stressor. For 56% of the population use of online teaching methodology was exciting. In the population screened it was found that 66.3% faced some or the other barriers during online teaching. The common barriers faced by them are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Barriers faced during online teaching

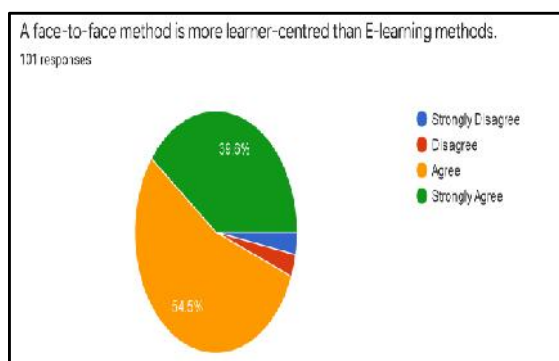
Barriers Faced	Percentage of Population facing the barrier (%)
Limited knowledge about technology	19.8
Non-cooperation of students	50.5
Expensive	17.8
Network issues in regions	78.2



Graph 1: Age wise distribution of the population



Graph 2. Prevalence of use online teaching platforms



Graph 3. Perception regarding online teaching method in comparison to conventional method

DISCUSSION

Dumford and Miller (2018) point out that the maintenance of student's retention and their attitudes towards online learning is a key challenge. But Sheffield et al (2015) supported online learning and the student's positive attitudes and they concluded that online learning improves their retention of subjects. The transition to online teaching in rather different ways. Of the eight conditions that facilitate faculty involvement in online education identified by Ely (1999), the three conditions that are perceived by faculty to have the greatest impact on the implementation of new online programs include adequate institutional resources, appropriate knowledge and skills, and a general dissatisfaction with the status quo. In the current study it was found that 78% were at ease with the use of online teaching.

The findings from this study are in line with the barriers that have been previously documented in the literature, which include intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to online teaching (reviewed in Maguire, 2005). Most common barrier faced by the population (78.2%) was network issues in the region they reside. This study demonstrated that faculty age impacts perceived institutional barriers. Faculty participants in the older age group (above 37 years of age) stated more barriers than their younger colleagues.

Conclusion

The study concludes that online teaching is a positive stroke to the success of the teaching profession in such a critical situation. Future research could explore the perceived benefits and barriers as perceived by students as well as formally linking student learning outcomes with online teaching skills of faculty.

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Conflicts of Interest: None declared

Key points:

-) This paper brings forth the barriers faced by the academicians during online teaching, effective measures can be now made to combat these.
-) The positive attitude of physiotherapy academicians as reflected in this paper shows a bright future of digitalized education system.
-) Tele-rehabilitation by physiotherapists can be undertaken by similar digital platforms which can be helpful for public health.
-) This research reflects the way physiotherapy academicians carry out online teaching, through different digital platforms, the barriers they faced during this endeavor.

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