

## **Post Pandemic Assessment of Reception of Online Classes: A Survey Study Among the School Students in Kolkata**

\*Arya Hrishi Dey, Soumyadeep Ray, Hrithik Das Gupta, Dwaipayan Dey, Tapas Sarkar,  
Shekhar Mallick, Anirban Tarafder, Indranil Sarkar, Dr. Nitesh Tripathi

### **Abstract**

*In March, 2020 when a lock down was announced due to COVID-19 pandemic, all of a sudden, every domain of life came to a halt. Business, commerce, entertainment venues, events, markets, and education institutes suffered severely as they were forced to shut down. Under such circumstances, Education sector underwent drastic change where due to closure of institutes, classes started happening Online. It is in this context, there is a need to understand what kind of situation students went through and how did they cope up with this situation. For this purpose, research was carried out in order to find out the reception of Online classes among school students. The study utilized Survey Method where Questionnaire was prepared and distributed among the school students of Kolkata. The study concluded that even though the online classes were happening everywhere around the city, yet the learning and understanding level of students was merely average which points out to the poor reception. The study helped in understanding the plight of students who had to bear the forced decision of Online classes during the pandemic. Also, it aided in highlighting the various issues that arise from use of technologies. Such insights would surely help researchers in understanding this phenomenon and they might come up with certain solutions to issues that were pointed out in this study.*

**Keywords:** Online Classes, COVID-19, school students, learning, reception

\* Arya Hrishi Dey, Soumyadeep Ray, Hrithik Das Gupta, Dwaipayan Dey, Tapas Sarkar,  
Shekhar Mallick, Anirban Tarafder, Indranil Sarkar (BBA, Fifth Semester, Adamas University,  
Kolkata)

Dr. Nitesh Tripathi (Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, St. Xavier's  
University, Kolkata)

## **Introduction**

Online learning which is defined as the learning through use of digital technologies became the savior when the entire world was going through COVID-19 pandemic mandated lockdown. Students throughout the world were attending classes through Online mode. (Li & Lalani, 2020) Online classes had several advantages like- cost effective, time saving, convenience, easy access etc. But they also came with several drawbacks as well such as- unaffordable digital technology and Internet connection, Network error/Signal drop, non-readiness of teachers and institutes for adoption, monotonous lectures etc. And that is why rather than embracing, Online classes were forcefully adopted by educational institutes. E-learning tools were crucial during the pandemic as they helped schools and universities facilitate students when they were facing closure due to lockdown. (Subedi, Nayaju, Subedi, Shah, & Mathias , 2020) The usage of ICT and Online platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Canvas allowed teachers to create educational courses which in turn helped them in coping up with the pandemic mandated restrictions. (Petrie, 2020).

As physical interactions stopped and all interactions were taking virtually, there was an initial confusion on how to adapt with the online mode. Neither the students nor the teachers had prior experience with digital technologies and that is why online learning didn't happen as was intended. There were several hurdles and issues that kept springing up throughout the pandemic in terms of learning, understanding, and assessment of students. Thus, a need arises to study these challenges and issues in depth from the perspective of students. Their perspective is necessary as they are the one for whom this entire exercise was done. A study on reception of online classes among students can help in clarifying various questions related to Online classes.

## **Review of Literature**

*Chandra* in her paper analyzed the perception of academic stress experienced by students during current online education and coping strategies using emotional intelligence adopted by them. The findings of her study indicated that there was a significant difference in terms of fear of academic failure among male and females. They were using emotional intelligence and distancing from boredom and depressing thoughts in order to cope with negative effect arising out of pandemic. (Chandra, 2021) *Asgari et al.* in their study analyzed the challenges that students faced during

online classes. They identified that several issues such as logistical/technical negatively influenced online education. Not just this- teaching/learning challenges, privacy and security concern and lack of hands-on training were some other issues as well. The results indicated that students lacked engagement in class, had a difficult time in maintaining focus, and faced fatigue due to several online sessions. (Asgari, et al., 2021)

*Mishra et al.* in their study addressed the required essentialities of online education. They divulged how existing resources of educational institutes can transform formal education into online mode of education. The paper apart from highlighting various issues arising from online mode of education also made a humble attempt to provide solution as well. The review of literature led to an understanding that Online classes do affect students and their learning and so there is a need to conduct study in Indian context so as to understand reception, problems/issues, and overall learning through Online classes. (Mishra, Gupta, & Shree, 2020) Pokhrel and Chhetri did a comprehensive review of impact of COVID-19 on Online learning where they concluded that low Internet penetration and its non-affordability is one of the major reasons that is obstructing smooth implementation of Online classes. They suggested various pedagogy and platforms which could be used for carrying out Online classes. Teachers and students' orientation in getting familiar with online learning tools was another solution they pointed out. (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021) In another research, it was found that educational institutes became more resilient with online learning after few seismic activities which provides a hope that in future educational institutes will be more prepared and aligned with the arising students' need related to learning. (Arthur , 2017)

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objective of the study was to assess the reception of Online classes among school students which includes- level of learning, understanding and clarity of concepts, and problems during classes.

### **Research Methodology**

Descriptive Research Design that helps in providing details about a particular phenomenon was used in this research. Survey Research Method was used for assessing reception of Online classes among the school students during the COVID-19 pandemic. School students were considered as sample for the purpose of data collection. The rationale behind choosing school students was to understand the hurdles and levels of acquaintance with digital technologies school students were

able to get post closure of schools (as most of them were new to digital technologies unlike college students who to a great extent knew various aspects of it due to possession of smartphones for at least couple of years).

The sample for the study was 195 students that were taken from 53 schools of Kolkata, West Bengal. These schools were randomly selected after preparation of list of government and private schools in Kolkata. The classes that were considered for data collection was from Class 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>. Questionnaire tool was utilized for collecting response of students on their opinion regarding Online classes.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

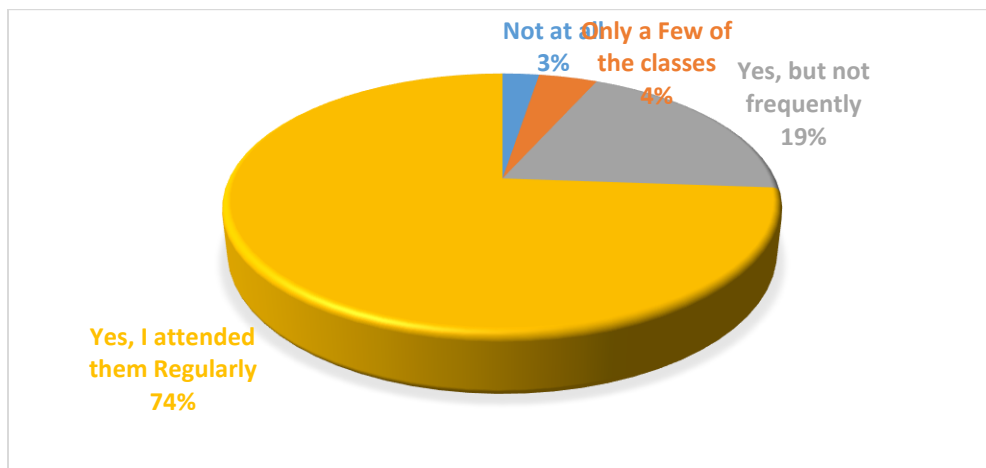
**Demography Data-** For purpose of data collection, the students were selected from 53 schools across Kolkata. Only 0.5% of the respondents were from Class 4<sup>th</sup>, while 7.6% of the participants were studying in 7<sup>th</sup> class. 14.3% were from Class 8<sup>th</sup>, 13.3% from Class 9<sup>th</sup>, 23.5% from 10<sup>th</sup>, 19.4% from 11<sup>th</sup> and 21.0% from 12<sup>th</sup> Class. As far as age is concerned, 4.6% of the students were aged 7 years, 0.5% were 10 years old, 8.2% 13 years old, 10.8% aged 14 years, 13.3% aged 15 years, 16.9% were 16 years old, and 21.5% were 17 years old. The rest, 11.8% were 18 years old, 8.7% were 19 years and 1.5% were 20 years old. On the basis of the data collected from the schools, following tables were generated:

**Table 1- Response of Participants on Attending Online Classes**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not at all	5	2.5
Only a Few of the classes	8	4.1
Yes, but not frequently	38	19.5
Yes, I attended them Regularly	144	73.8
Total	195	100.0

When participants were asked about frequency of attending Online classes, 2.5% said that they didn't attend at all, 4.1% acknowledged that they attended only few of the class, and 19.5% attended but not frequently. Majority i.e., 73.8% attended the Online classes regularly as it was made mandatory by all the schools.

**Figure 1**



**Table 2- Online Platform used by Students for Attending classes**

Platform	Frequency	Percent
Canvas	7	3.5
CISCO Webex	6	3.0
Google Meet/Google Classroom	66	33.8
Zoom	94	48.2
MS Teams	22	14.6
Total	195	100.0

The participants were asked about the platforms which they used to attend Online classes. 3.5% were using Canvas, CISCO Webex was used by 3.0%, Google Meet by 33.8%, Zoom by 48.2%, and MS Teams by 14.6%.

Figure 2

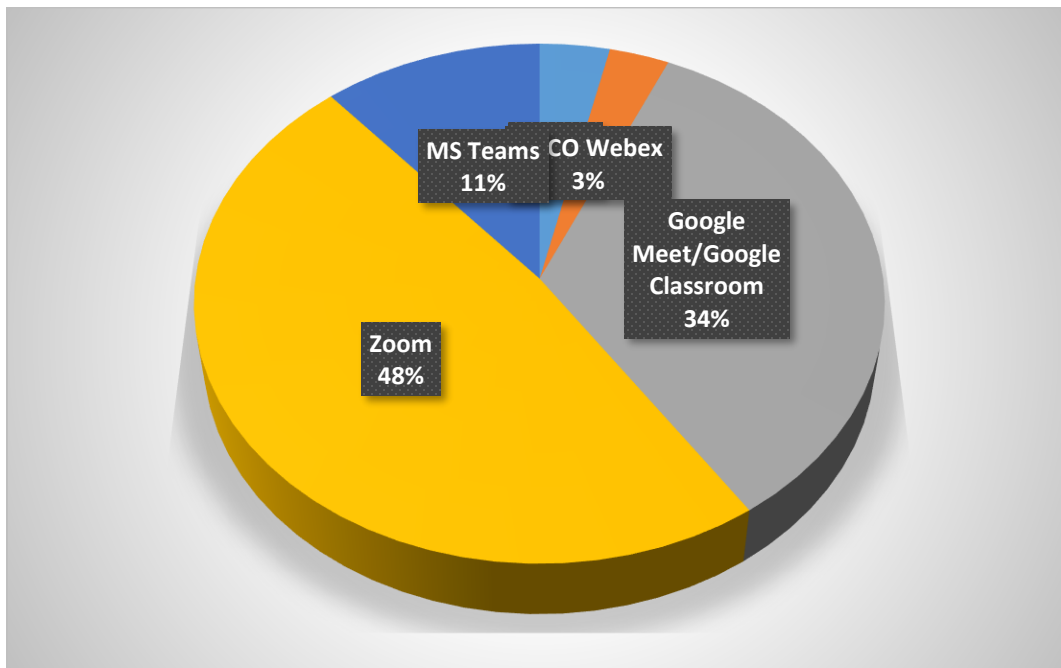
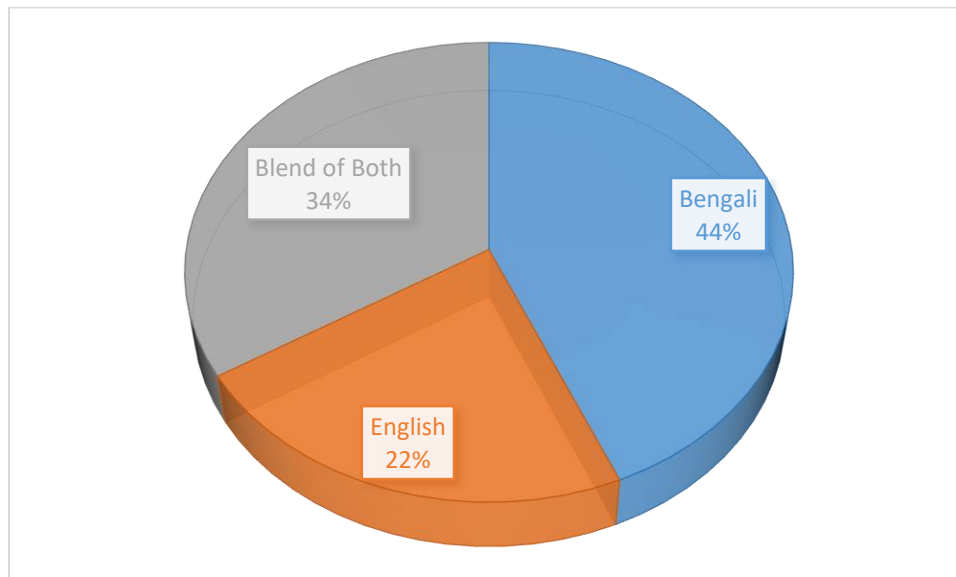


Table 3- Mode of Language During Online Classes

Language	Frequency	Percent
Bengali	85	43.6
English	44	22.6
Blend of Both	66	33.8
Total	195	100.0

As far as mode of language used by teachers during Online classes is concerned, 43.6% were using Bengali, 22.6% were using English while 33.8% were using a mix of both Bengali and English.

**Figure 3**

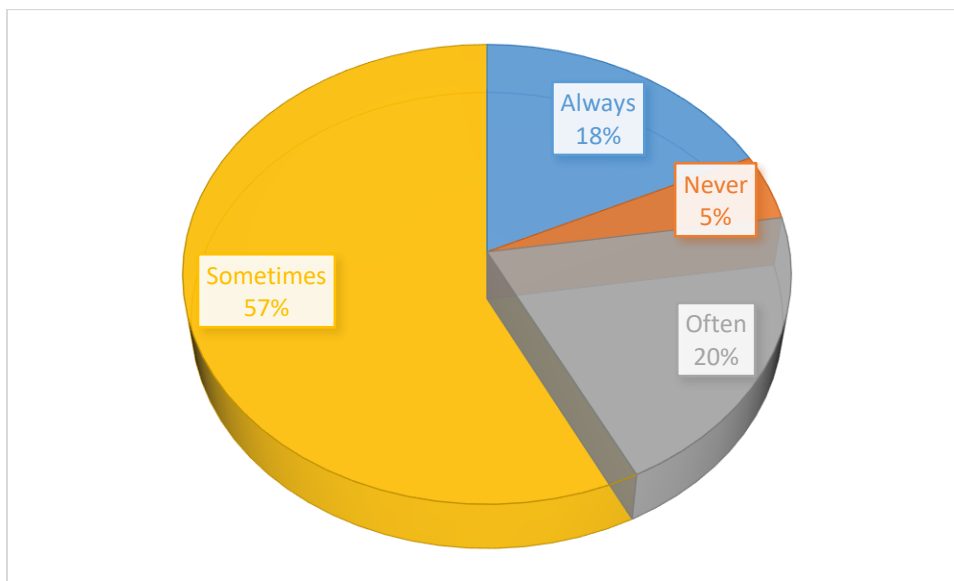


**Table 4- Frequency of Technical Errors faced by the Students**

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always	35	17.9
Never	9	4.6
Often	39	20.0
Sometimes	112	57.4
Total	195	100.0

When it comes occurrence of technical error which hampers Online learning, 17.9% students acknowledged that it always occurred, 4.6% said that it never happened, 20.0% agreed that it happened often, and 57.4% said that it happened only sometimes.

**Figure 4**

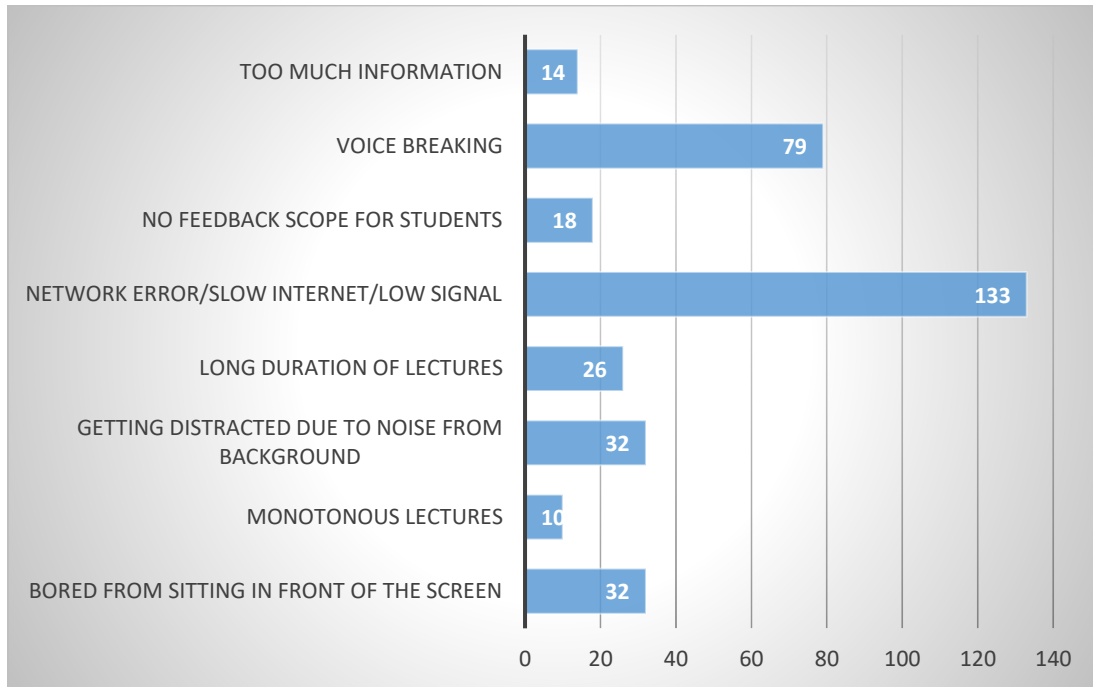


**Table 5- Issues Faced During Online Classes**

Issues	Frequency	Percent
Bored from sitting in front of the screen	32	16.4%
Monotonous lectures	10	5.1%
Getting distracted due to noise from background	32	16.4%
Long Duration of Lectures	26	13.3%
Network error/slow Internet/Low Signal	133	68.2%
No Feedback scope for students	18	9.2%
Voice breaking	79	40.5%
Too much Information	14	7.1%

Several issues were faced by students while attending Online classes. 16.4% were bored from sitting in front of the screen, 5.1% said that the lectures were monotonous, 16.4% were getting distracted due to noise from background, 13.3% felt that the duration of lectures was very long, 68.2% faced network error, and 9.2% felt that the feedback system was not functioning. 40.5% students said that the voice broke a lot during online class and 7.1% felt that too much information was being bombarded on them during the classes.

**Figure 5**

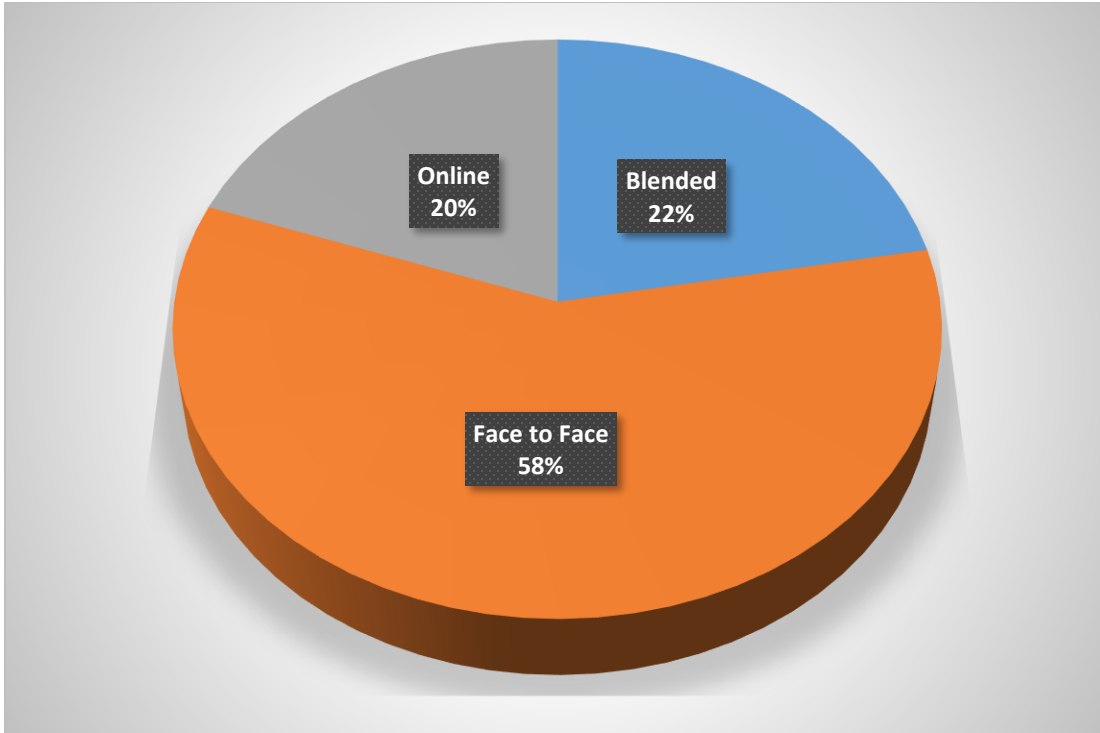


**Table 6- Mode of Class Prefer by Students**

Mode	Frequency	Percent
Blended	43	22.1
Face to Face	114	58.5
Online	38	19.5
Total	195	100.0

When the students were asked about their preference for class, 22.1% said that they would want blended mode of classes, 58.5% wanted face to face interaction while 19.5% wanted Online classes.

**Figure 6**

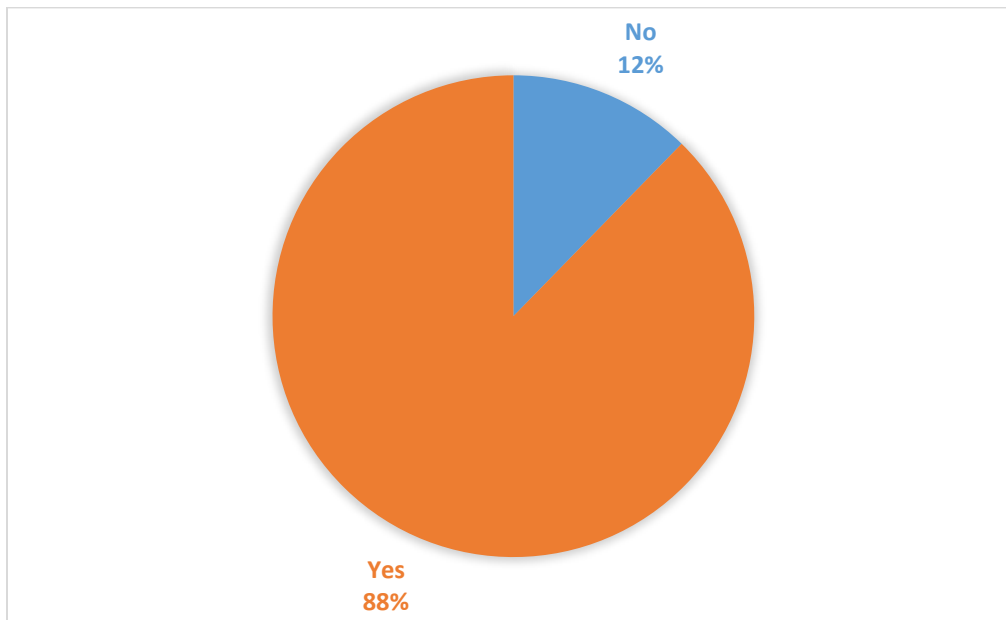


**Table 7- Response on being if Attending Online Classes was Compulsory or not**

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	24	12.3
Yes	171	87.7
Total	195	100.0

The students were asked whether attending the Online classes was made compulsory by their school or not to which 12.3% replied in negative while 87.7% affirmed that the classes were made compulsory.

**Figure 7**



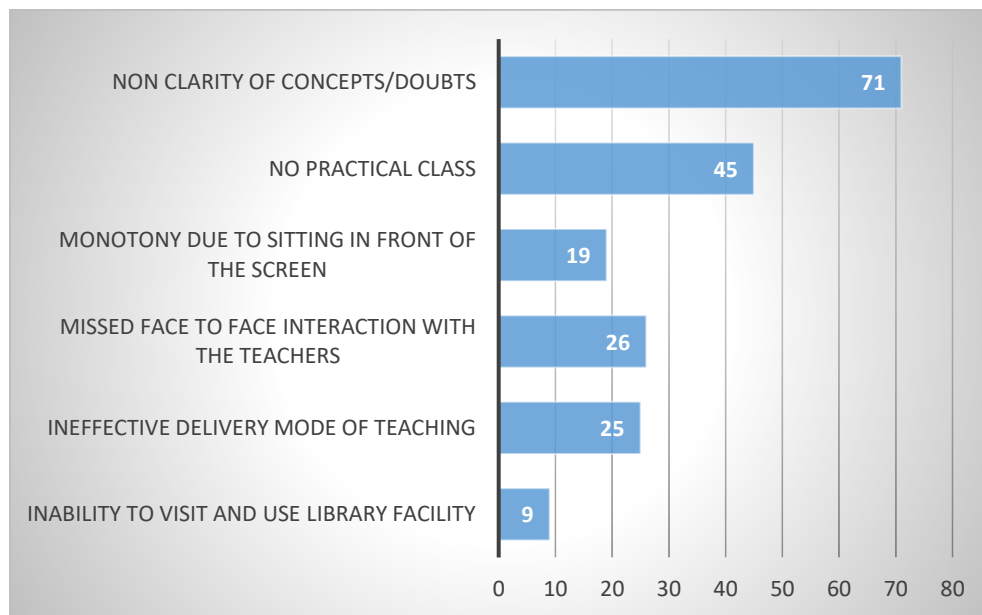
**Table 8- Aspects Lacking in Online Learning**

Aspects	Frequency	Percent
Inability to visit and use Library facility	9	4.7
Ineffective delivery mode of teaching	25	12.8
Missed Face to Face interaction with the teachers	26	13.3
Monotony due to sitting in front of the screen	19	9.7
No practical class	45	23.1
Non clarity of concepts/doubts	71	36.4
Total	195	100.0

Several aspects were lacking in Online learning which were highlighted by the students, 4.7% expressed inability to visit and use library, 12.8% said that the ineffective delivery mode of teachers was causing problem, 13.3% were merely missing face to face interaction with the teachers, 9.7% felt that classes were monotonous as they had to sit in front of the screen, 9.7%

pointed out lack of practical exposure, and 36.4% complained about non clarity of concepts/doubts.

**Figure 8**

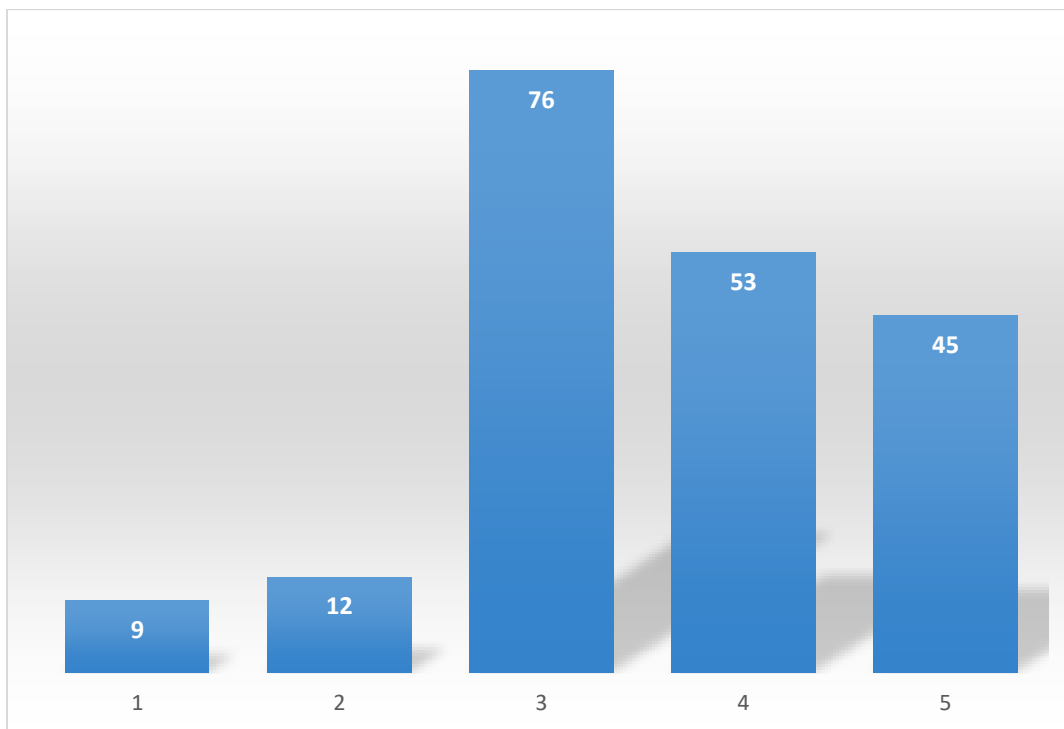


**Table 9- Rating given by Students to Level of Interactivity in Online Classes**

Rating	Frequency	Percent
1	9	4.6
2	12	6.2
3	76	39.0
4	53	27.2
5	45	23.1
Total	195	100.0

The students were asked about level of interactivity of Online classes to which 39.0% gave 3 points, 27.2% gave 4 points and 23.1% gave full 5 points while 6.2% gave 2 points and 4.6% gave just 1 point.

**Figure 9**

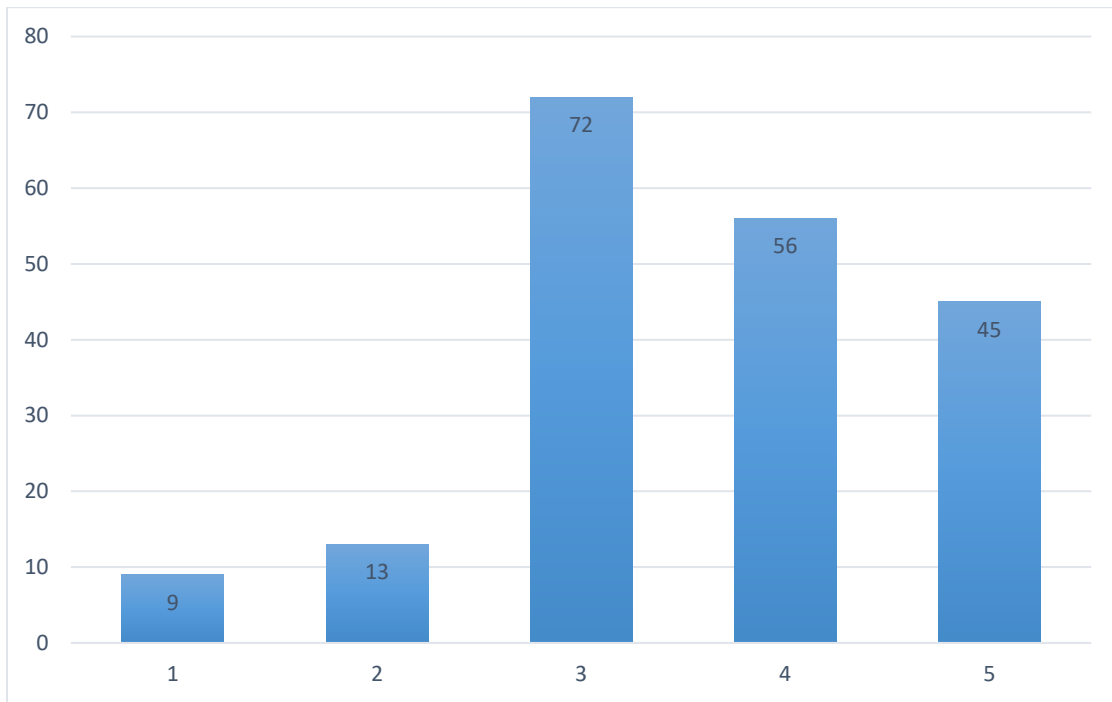


**Table 10- Rating given by Students to Level of Understanding in Online Classes**

Rating	Frequency	Percent
1	9	4.7
2	13	6.7
3	72	36.9
4	56	28.7
5	45	23.1
Total	195	100.0

The students were asked about level of understanding in Online classes to which 36.9% gave 3 points, 28.7% gave 4 points and 23.1% gave full 5 points while 6.7% gave 2 points and 4.7% gave just 1 point.

**Figure 10**

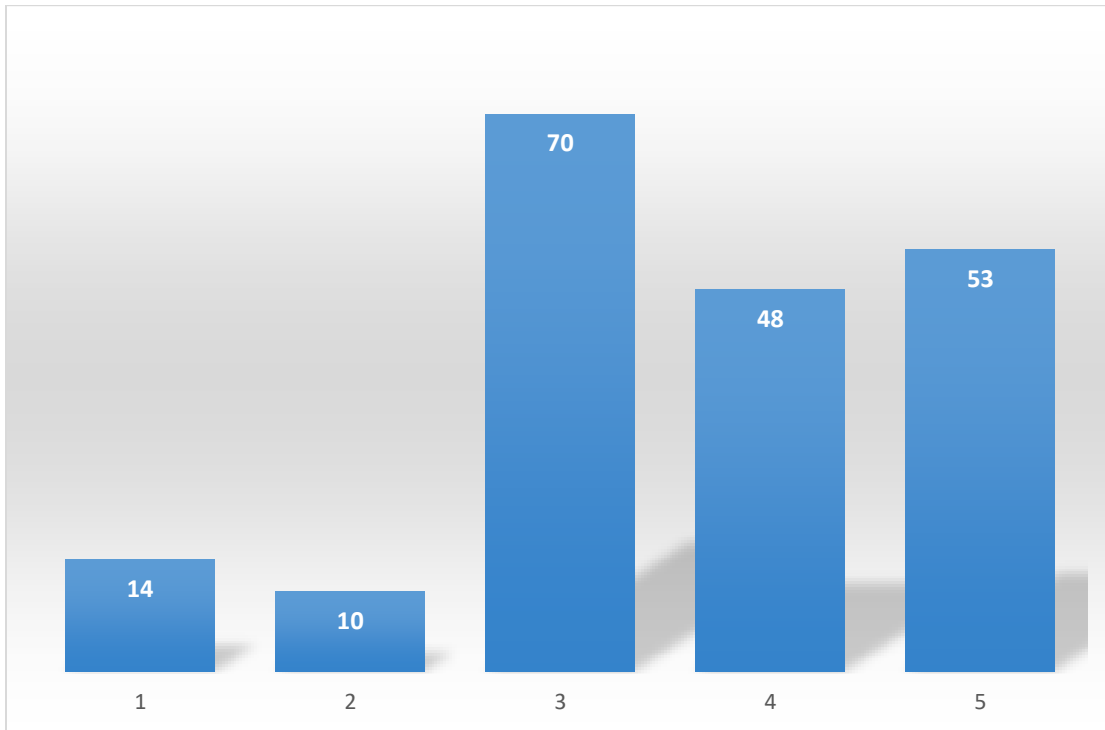


**Table 11- Rating given by Students to Comfort Level in Attending Online Classes**

Rating	Frequency	Percent
1	14	7.2
2	10	5.1
3	70	35.9
4	48	24.6
5	53	27.2
Total	195	100.0

The students were asked about level of understanding in Online classes to which 35.9% gave 3 points, 24.6% gave 4 points and 27.2% gave full 5 points while 5.1% gave 2 points and 7.2% gave just 1 point.

**Figure 11**

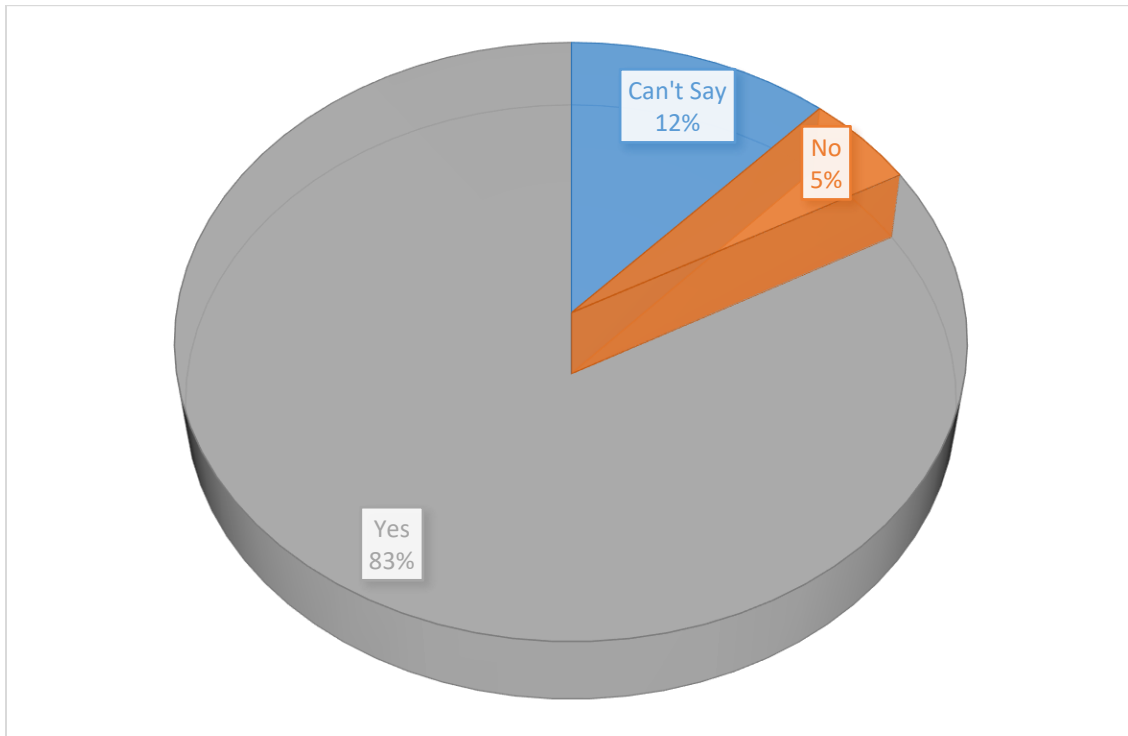


**Table 12- Response of Students on Being Asked if the teachers were Cooperative and Empathetic During Online Classes or not**

Response	Frequency	Percent
Can't Say	23	11.8
No	10	5.1
Yes	162	83.1
Total	195	100.0

83.1% students agreed that their teachers were cooperative and empathetic during Online classes while 5.1% said that their teachers were not so.

**Figure 12**

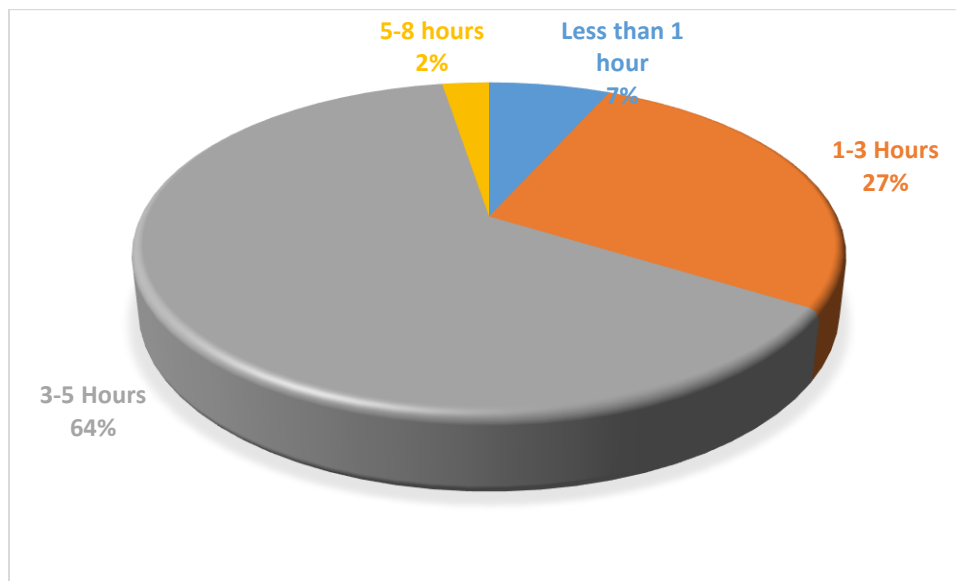


**Table 13- Duration for Which Students can Sit and Attend Online Class Attentively per Day**

Duration	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 hour	13	6.6
1-3 Hours	53	27.1
3-5 Hours	124	63.5
5-8 hours	5	2.5

The above table provides data on duration for which students can sit attentively for Online classes. 6.6% said that they can attend class for not even 1 hour attentively, 27.7% were able to attend for 1-3 hours, 63.5% for 3-5 hours and only 2.5% were able to attend online classes for 5-8 hours.

**Figure 13**



A descriptive question was asked in the end on how Online classes are different from physical classes. The response was overwhelmingly negative. Lots of students pointed out that online classes were ‘boring’, ‘long’, had lots of noise, they didn’t understand the concepts taught Online and called them the ‘worst’ experience. A few students also mentioned that they didn’t attend these classes and felt that self-learning is better. But there were some students who felt Online classes were ‘awesome’ and ‘innovative’. They spoke highly in favor of Online classes.

### **Conclusions and Discussions**

In order to find out reception of Online learning among school students of Kolkata, West Bengal, a Survey was conducted where 195 students were taken from various school across Kolkata. The study concluded that majority of the students attended the online classes regularly but it was mainly due to online classes being made mandatory by schools. And that is why there were some who didn’t attend them on regular basis due to certain reasons. There were several reasons for this, such as- network error, slow internet, drop in signal, breaking of teacher’s voice etc. Apart from this, other reasons such lectures being monotonous, distraction from background, too much information, no feedback scope were reasons for inability to pay attention to classes.

As far as platform for online classes is concerned, Zoom app was prominently used by school students, followed by other apps such as Canvas, Google, Meet, MS Teams and Cisco Webex. The mode of language was mostly Bengali during online classes which is logical given that the students understand concepts better when taught in mother tongue. The conduction of classes was not always smooth as many technical errors were faced by the students while attending them. Many students complained regarding long duration of Online classes and that was the reason why most of them acknowledged that they can attend only 3-5 hours of online class attentively in a day.

When students were asked about their preference on mode of class, more than half of the students indicated their liking for face-to-face interaction which shows that Online experience was not enjoyable for the students. In fact, some of them detested it. This could be pointed to various aspects that were lacking in Online learning such as- inability to use library, ineffective delivery by teachers, monotony arising due to sitting in front of the screen, no practical classes as supplement for theoretical class, and non-clarity of concepts.

The same was reflected in the ratings of online classes on basis of interactivity, comfort level and level of understanding where most of the students gave it average ratings. The only consoling part of online classes was that the teachers were sympathetic towards students and helped them in every possible way in terms of learning and understanding concepts. Overall, it can be established that even though reception of online classes was merely average, yet the study provides insights on aspects that were lacking in the classes. This data could be used by researchers and policy makers to make online experience better. Also, the study points out how forced adoption of an innovation is problematic and hence adoption of such initiatives should be done in a phased manner.

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