

## an analytical study on the impact of virtual learning by the social and emotional intelligence skills of preschoolers

<sup>1</sup>Sameena Begum, <sup>2</sup>Dr. K Murali, <sup>3</sup>Shankar Goud Aerukala

<sup>1,3</sup> Assistant Professor, <sup>2</sup>Professor, <sup>1,2,3</sup>Department of English, Siddhartha Institute of Engineering and Technology, Hyderabad, India.

### Abstract

The Covid-19 epidemic swept the globe like a hurricane and had a significant impact on humanity on many fronts, including the economy, psychological and social issues, health, and education. The global education system, which has seen many changes, is one of the sectors that has been severely impacted. The epidemic has compelled higher education to switch from traditional classroom instruction to online instruction. Although forced learning is not a new concept, there are a number of issues that need to be acknowledged and resolved in the application of virtual learning. At this stage, the current study concentrated on how virtual learning affected students' cognition and their ability to acquire new skills. Additionally, studies have shown that soft skills may be efficiently acquired and enhanced in the classroom environment rather virtually (Thi Thu and Hong, 2021). In the post pandemic situation, we need to rethink about the teaching and learning process; especially in soft skills as a part of socializing and emotional intelligence skills with the virtual learning is questionable. The present paper aims to analyses the learning behaviour of the students and their opinion towards virtual learning related to socializing and developing emotional intelligence skills.

**Keywords:** Students' opinions, virtual and offline learning, social interaction and emotional intelligence skills

### 1. Introduction

The unexpected Covid-19 epidemic has altered the global landscape completely. Almost all commercial operations throughout the world have been halted by the epidemic, including those in the public sector and the education industry. Governments reacted to the outbreak with stringent lock downs and restrictions in order to save lives. And the globe soon transitioned to a virtual working and learning environment. As a result of the closure of schools, colleges, and universities, millions of students and instructors worldwide are attempting to embrace a new learning environment known as virtual learning or online learning (UN, 2020). Teachers and students spent a lot of time getting ready for virtual learning since the pandemic breakout in order to prevent becoming sick. Virtual platform such as Zoom, Micro Soft Teams, Webex, Google meet, etc is very popular for the community of teachers and students. To transfer the knowledge, virtual learning is regarded as flexible and user friendly and it is recognised as necessary transition for the beneficiaries.

Despite benefits of the virtual learning to teach and transfer knowledge to the students; there are practical problems such as difficulty in conducting online examination and assessing the performance of the students and practical assessment in laboratories found to be impractical with virtual flat forms. Moreover, a course like Soft Skills cannot be taught virtually because students need social interaction and sharing their emotional intelligence in Group Discussions, SWOC Analysis and JOHARI window. According to Vygotsky "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). It emphasizes child's knowledge and psychological development is connected with interaction in peers.

### 2. Review of Literature:

Soft skills are gaining momentum in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than hard skills; the skills are highly required for any undergraduate and post graduate students of universities to succeed in their career (Pew Research Centre, 2017; Dellot, 2017; Chute, 2012; Ellis, Kisling, & Hackworth, 2014; Rasul, Rauf, & Mansor, 2013; Robles, 2012; Wahl et al., 2012). At corporate level, companies are expecting the graduates professionally trained and ready to join on a job at entry level. Recognising importance of

the soft skills; Universities across the world incorporated soft skills as a course in their curriculum and training their students intensively to acquire certain soft skills and etiquettes and to enhance their job opportunities. Some of the soft skills, such as, group discussion, JOHARI Window, SWOC analysis, and team building tasks need peer and trainer support and interaction to get feedback to enhance their skill set.

Generally group discussion requires certain complex skill set like reasoning, analysing and critical thinking regarding the society and world. Knowledge also plays a crucial role in this regard. In addition to this, students require to exhibit appropriate body language and facial expressions appropriately and effectively. JOHARI window and SWOC analysis need introspection and retrospection of individuals and peers to reflect on others and self to receive and share feedback from them.

However, the unexpected outbreak of covid-19 forced the students' and teachers' community caused self or social isolation forced them to learn through virtually. Apart from the benefits of virtual learning, there are practical problems to enhance soft skills. The problems are lack of sensory immersion to interact with one and other, feeling isolation, lack of opportunity to understand emotional intelligence, lack of individualised attention from the trainer, virtual distractions and other potential problems may not be suitable to enhance students' social and emotional intelligence skills with virtual mode. Kunal Shah (2022), the founder of fintech company CRED, rightly said that "Impact of work from home on youth is the same as the impact of children who study at home. No real bonds. No real social or network skills. Illusion of understanding and learning. No osmosis. Comfortable but damaging in the long run," According to Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory social interaction is inevitable to between the various capacities of the children. It is an opportunity for the children learns from one and other than isolation or individualised learning. Essentially, virtual learning cannot provide better opportunity for the students to interact and understand their emotional intelligence unless they provided face to face facilities.

### **3. Research Questions:**

The following research questions are framed in order to understand the impact of virtual learning on the students' social, communication and emotional intelligence skills. Further, the present study tries to understand their opinions and experiences during the virtual learning.

1. What extend does the virtual learning impacted on the UG students to develop social and emotional intelligence skills?
2. What are the Students' opinions and experiences towards soft skills learning through virtual method?

### **4. Objectives of the Study:**

The present study aimed at analysing the impact of virtual learning on the students' social, communication and emotional intelligence skills. In this regard, the study directed to understand specific objectives of the following:

1. To analyse emotional intelligence of the students through feedback: Self awareness, recognizing strengths, self-confidence, emotional balance through JOHARI window and SWOC analysis topics
2. To find out students' social skills development: communication, discussion and decision making and teamwork
3. To understand students' opinions towards learning soft skills through Online Learning flat form

### **5. Method and tool:**

Internet survey method using Google forms well suits to carry forward this study and get the information from the students. A survey questionnaire was prepared as a tool collect the responses from the sample students. Later, the questionnaire was administered to the students through Google forms where the students responded immediately.

**6. Sample description:**

The samples of the study are under-graduates, studying 3<sup>rd</sup> year Bio-Technology Engineering at Vignans' Foundation for Science and Research Deemed to be University. Due to the Covid-19 in the first and second waves, the students underwent virtual learning mode and completed their course work. Apart from their regular subjects, the students also study one credit Soft Skills course. After completion of the Soft Skills course, the researchers collected the sample responses. About 43 students participated in the survey, consisting of both male and female students.

**7. Questionnaire:**

The present study followed a survey method to understand the research problem. The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions classified into three parts which reflects objectives of the study.

Part-1 consists of four questions and probes enhancement of the students' emotional intelligence skills through JOHARI window and SWOC analysis topics in virtual method

Part-2 framed with four questions and tries to analyse students' social and communication skills through Group Discussion activities.

Part-3 is dealing with three questions to understand students' opinion towards virtual learning.

**8. Data description and analysis:**

The data was obtained and analysed diagrammatically in the following areas:

- Emotional Intelligence skills: Self-awareness through JOHARI Window and SWOC Analysis Topics
- Communication skills, discussion, decision making and feedback through Group Discussion
- Students' opinions towards virtual learning

In addition to the above information the students were asked to share 'Any other points/issues' in order to get students' opinions related to virtual teaching and learning environment.

**9. Findings of the study:**

The students' response for the Questions 1 and 4; elevate that virtual mode is effective to understand the Soft Skills topics such as JOHARI Window, SWOC Analysis and Group Discussion. 97% of the students were positive towards their teacher explanation of the topics and found to be effective. In this regard, it was understood that virtual mode has created broader understanding of the topics. And the students were also comfortable to learn through virtual mode. However, the students strongly felt that virtual learning is not suitable to develop social, communication and emotional intelligence skills such as interaction with the classmates, getting feedback from the peers as well as teacher. Further, students also felt that virtual flat form is not a good choice to share their opinions and improve their communications skills. Because, a lot of confusion, and lack of personal care and attention from the teacher to learners. As a result, the students lacked attention, self recognition and interaction in the Group Discussion.

1. Though majority of the students were positive towards virtual teaching; 95% students opined that application part of building relations and social interaction through JOHARI Window has been missed out. Additionally, technical glitches and limitations such as one way communication and one person at a time are reasons for not receiving appropriate feedback from their classmates. In this regard, 97% of the students responded that they did not get enough time to interact with their classmates in order to get feedback from the peers.
2. Generally, group discussions are meant for understanding and to improve the students' body language, team, and communication skills and to receive individualised feedback from their teacher. However, 98% of the students felt that virtual learning did not help them to build their team skills and improve their body language as well as to maintain emotional balance in group discussion. As a result, students looking for sensory immersion to improve their emotional intelligence and social skills.
3. Finally, 97% of the students opined that virtual learning not suitable for the soft skills which can learn to improve their skills in the classroom with the support of the peers and teacher. 95% of

the students felt that they were isolated from their friends and learning environment in the classroom.

### Conclusion:

According to the students' comments, it was discovered that the virtual technique is more suited for information transfer than for teaching soft skills to students to enhance their social abilities, such as decision-making, teamwork, and communication skills in group discussions.

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