RESEARCH ARTICLE

Veterinary Students' Preference for Online Education in Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

The sudden outbreak of deadly disease called COVID-19 caused by a Corona Virus (SARS-CoV-2) shook the entire world. The wide and rapid spreading of COVID-19 has forced almost all educational institutions across the nation with no choice. Present study was undertaken to explore veterinary students' preferences for various attributes of online classes and relationship between preference and 6 selected independent variables. Ex-post-facto research design was opted for the study and was conducted in three constituent colleges of Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University, Andhra Pradesh which have moved their academic activities onto online mode through zoom platform as a part of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). The findings of the study revealed that most of the students (85%) had high preference for online education. With regarding veterinary students' preferences for various attributes of online classes the findings confirmed that majority of the veterinary students preferred to have online classes supported with reading material having online classes on alternate days, for 2-4 hours per day with 45 minutes duration for each session along with 15 minutes break in between the two sessions. Majority of the students preferred WhatsApp for clarifying their queries and expected to clarify their queries by instructor within next class. Most of the students preferred to have quiz and assignments at end of every class for effective learning and preferred to submit their assignments before the next scheduled class. The findings also revealed that, computer efficacy and benefits had significant positive relationship, while bottlenecks had significant negative relationship with the Veterinary student's preference for online education at one percent level of significance. Remaining three variables like gender, socio-economic status and technical accessibility had no significant relationship at both one per cent and five per cent level of significance.

Key words: Veterinary students; Preference; Online education.

The sudden outbreak of a deadly disease called COVID-19 caused by a Corona Virus (SARS-CoV-2) shook the entire world. The World Health Organization declared it as a pandemic (*Dhawan, 2020*). India declared COVID-19 pandemic as a national public health emergency and WHO also declared as a global health emergency on 30th January 2020 as well as a pandemic on 11th March 2020 (*Veerakumar et al., 2020*). COVID-19 has its impact on everything with no exception to the education system. So, the outbreak of Corona virus across the country has forced educational institutions to shut down to control the spread of this virusbecause the chances of getting infected by this virus are high, especially when people are in crowded places. This happening made the teaching professionals think of alternative methods of teaching during this lockdown. And thus, it paves the way towards online learning (*Neelavathy, 2020*). Online education was completely new to most of the educational institutions but the spread of COVID-19 pandemic routed many academic institutions towards online education in order to complete their prescribed syllabi in the stipulated time frame in line with the academic calendar. Since it was new to many educational institutions it was challenging to shift the education completely to online teaching platforms.

Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University, Andhra Pradesh offering Under-graduate, Post-graduate

and Ph.D programs in Veterinary Sciences, Dairy Sciences and Fisheries Sciences. The university has four sophisticated campuses located in Tirupati, Proddatur, Gannavaram and the recent one at Garividi offers only undergraduate program. Due to COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide lockdown in India from 25th March 2020 has disrupted teaching-learning process and created the need for alternative ways to continue learning process.The academic program of the university purely based on intense classroom and laboratory-based activities but, due to sudden emergency, the university re-strategized its teaching-learning process, and the academic activities were moved onto online mode through zoom platform as a part of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) and started online classes to the students from May 2020 to ensure uninterrupted educational delivery.However, the major concern is about the quality of learning which is closely related with how well the content is designed and executed. Effectiveness of learning also depends on how the content is curated to online environment and also in understanding and addressing the constraints faced by the students (*Muthuprasadetal., 2021*). In this line, research uncovering students' feedback may offer valuable data for improving possible learning strategies and a better road map foronline education. This study is even more relevant considering that the system of online education has never been tried by the university before. Thus, the present study was conceived to document Veterinary student's preference for online education.

METHODOLOGY

Ex-post-facto research design was followed in this study. This study was conducted in purposively selected, Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University of Andhra Pradesh state. Out of four, three veterinary colleges under Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University, Andhra Pradesh viz. College of Veterinary Science, Tirupati; College of Veterinary Science, Proddatur and NTR College of Veterinary Science, Gannavaram were selected purposively for the study. Simple random sampling technique was followed for selecting the respondents each 40 from Tirupati, Proddatur and Gannavaram veterinary colleges thus making a sample size of 120. The data was collected through structured interview schedule and the same was pre-tested in non-study area through google form.

In this study the preference was measured using the schedule developed for the study. The schedule consisted of 10 criteria and the response continuum was Preferred (P) and Not Preferred (NP) with weightage of scores assigned 1, 0 respectively. The minimum possible score was '0' and maximum was '10'. Based on the total score obtained by the respondents they were grouped separately into three categories i.e., less, medium, and high preference towards online education by using mean and standard deviation. For analyzing veterinary students' preferences for various attributes of online classes all the questions were assigned with the scores for the respective given options separately in ascending order starting from 1 and was finally presented in terms of frequency and percentage. The data thus collected was coded, tabulated, tested statistically and suitably interpreted. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 22.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the Table 1, it was inferred that most of the students (85%) had high preference towards online education, and the remaining 15 per cent students had less preference towards online education.

This may be due to considering positive attributes of online learning and also online education provided scope for the students to continue their process of education during the unnatural situations like COVID-19 pandemic, which has indirectly imposed positive thinking towards online education among the veterinary students.

Table 1. Distribution of veterinary students according to their preference towards online education

Preference	No.	%
Less	18	15.0
Medium	00	0.00
High	102	85.0
Total	120	100
Mean=0.49;	SD=0.29	

Attributes of online education :

Structure of online classes : From the Table 2, it was evident that majority of the veterinary students preferred online classes supported with reading material maybe because the availability of the reading material besides online class make the students more confident and makes easy for them to understand the course content. The findings revealed that majority of the students preferred both PowerPoint and whiteboard which may be because of explaining the content on

Table 2. Distribution of veterinary students according to their preferred structure of online classes

Structure of online classes	No.	%
Preferred online class format		
Live online classes	32	26.7
Live classes that can be recorded	21	17.5
Recorded classes that are uploaded at university website/ YouTube/ other application	21	17.5
Online classes supported with reading material	46	38.3
Preferred nature of video content		
Lecture only	1	0.8
Course instructor should use power point	45	37.5
Course instructor should use whiteboard	7	5.9
Both PowerPoint and whiteboard	67	55.8
Preferred nature of course material		
Reading material	15	12.5
Video content	2	1.7
Video content supplemented with reading material	103	85.8

Table 3. Distribution of veterinary students according to their preferred frequency and duration of online classes

Frequency and duration of online classes	No.	%
Preferred frequency of online classes		
Daily	48	40.0
Alternate days	69	57.5
Weekly once	3	2.5
Preferred duration of online class (per class)		
30 minutes	14	11.7
45 minutes	84	70.0
60 minutes	22	18.3
Preferred duration of online class (per day)		
Less than 2 hours	17	14.2
2-4 hours	93	77.5
4-6 hours	10	8.3
Preferred break time between two online classes		
5 minutes	15	12.5
10 minutes	51	42.5
15 minutes	54	45.0

Table 4. Distribution of veterinary students according to their preference in addressing queries

Addressing the queries	No.	%
Preferred way for clarifying queries		
Live chat	37	30.8
WhatsApp	46	38.3
E-mail	2	1.7
Platform for posting queries	35	29.2
Expected time for clarifying the queries		
Within few hours	35	29.2
Within a day	30	25.0
Within next class	49	40.8
Within a week	6	5.0

whiteboard besides PowerPoint make the students to understand the content clearly and easily, may be due to which majority of the students preferred PowerPoint in combination with whiteboard. It was evident that majority of the students preferred video content supplemented with reading material, this may be due to the fact that supplementing video content with the reading material will enhance the student learning skills and allows them to have proper knowledge about the course content by reading the supplemented reading material after completion of a class.

Frequency and duration of online classes : It was evident from the Table 3 that majority of the students preferred to have online classes on alternate days, for 2-4 hours per day with 45 minutes duration for each session along with 15 minutes break in between the two sessions. These results may be based on students' convenience.

Addressing the queries : The findings from the Table 4 confirms that majority of the students preferred WhatsApp for clarifying queries maybe because WhatsApp is the one of the most commonly used apps for communicating with the other people as it is easy to access and use. Majority of the students preferred to clarify the queries by instructor within next class may be due to clarification of their doubts within next class by instructor will enable them to have a clear perspective about the course content which helps them in building better learning skills among themselves.

Plan and criteria of evaluation : It could be inferred from the Table 5 that majority of the students preferred to have quiz and assignments at the end of every class for effective learning as these may enhance the students' performance and learning ability of course content.

Table 5. Distribution of respondents according to their plan and criteria of evaluation

Plan and criteria of evaluation	Category	No.	%
Quiz during each class is necessary to achieve better results	Yes	97	80.8
	No	23	19.2
Assignments at end of every class are necessary to achieve effective learning	Yes	83	69.2
	No	37	30.8

The results in Table 6 confirms that only variables such as computer efficacy and benefits had significant positive relationship, while bottlenecks had significant negative relationship with the preference of veterinary

Table 6. Relationship between preference towards online education with selected independent variables of veterinary students

Variables	Preference
Gender	0.024
Socio-economic status	0.038
Computer efficacy	0.279**
Technical accessibility	0.077
Benefits	0.588**
Bottlenecks	-0.284**
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)	

students towards online education at one percent level of significance. This might be due to the fact that having high computer efficacy makes easy for the students to attend online class, besides experiencing benefits of online education increases the preference among the students towards online education. On the other hand, experiencing bottlenecks while attending online classes make the students not to prefer online education.

CONCLUSION

The present study is an effect of sudden onset of COVID-19 and to provide continuous education system through Emergency Remote Teaching.In presentday context, online learning finds to be individualised, flexible, interactive, user-friendly and easily accessible. Any institution opting for online environment should therefore give priority to meeting all those students' preferences and needs. It is believed that high quality online learning environment can be designed through early interventions. Online education of veterinary students' preferences might change according to their aim of the course they have registered.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest.

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