



PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS TOWARDS ON-LINE EDUCATION WITH SPECIFIC CONTEXT TO HOSPITALITY EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Background: *On-line education in a way was a forced introduction in our education system in wake of COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers as well as students became a part of this shift in education delivery mostly by force and rather by choice. However, in the short run itself it was realised that while shifting to this new-medium has its own challenges it also comes with its own set of advantages.* **Objective:** *This research paper attempts to study and analyse the perception of teachers in hospitality education towards on-line education. Objective of study is to identify the major challenges and benefits of hospitality education as perceived by faculty members.* **Methodology:** *Descriptive research design was employed. The study was conducted by administering a structured questionnaire among faculty members of various IHMs and analysis of data was done. Locale is pan-India reached through google questionnaire method with a sample size of 50 faculty members from different IHMs in the country. Data was analysed with the help of excel tools, bar diagrams and graph.* **Results:** *Research revealed that in spite of the sudden paradigm shift in the macro environment faculty members responded well to the challenge of optimising learning for students in an on-line mode. Initially 80 % faculty members found this shift challenging but now 80 percent believe that blended learning is future. Assessments and sustaining interest of students however are major challenges with 82 and 84 percent of faculty members respectively agreeing to this being a major issue.* **Conclusion:** *Teachers perceive blended learning to be a norm in future. It is perceived that while it's very difficult to impart skill training in an on-line mode, for theoretical classes this could be a preferred mode*

Key Words: *Online Education, Hospitality Education, Challenges, Advantages.*

INTRODUCTION

Last two years have seen the world turn upside down. The pandemic and its devastating global impact is not only a health hazard with loss of millions of precious life but it is also a situation which has affected all walks of life. The lock down, social distancing and the new-normal behaviour forced us or challenged us to think differently, work differently and achieve differently. Hospitality industry in particular is greatly affected by this pandemic with business and employment opportunities taking a massive hit (Rawat & Nandwani, 2020).

One of the fields in which this challenge posed difficult questions was the field of education. Conventionally speaking, the process of teaching –learning almost always involved a teacher, one or more pupils and a physical setup with required paraphernalia to facilitate the process. With the onset of covid-19 pandemic and the resultant curbs, the three elements of education namely the teacher, the learner and the enabling infrastructure were left locked at three different places. Once the initial shock subsided, the education fraternity responded brilliantly to the challenges. The answer was found in online education. Online education as a solution to the problem was easier said than done. The technical competence of teachers to handle this new medium, the required changes in pedagogy, the unstable networks, non-availability of devices particularly in rural set up, the motivation & attention span of learners in an online medium were some of the issued to name a few. However the credit must go to the teaching community who overcame all these challenges and ensured that the havoc caused by COVID-19 doesn't impede the education of our gen next. Here it is pertinent to mention that in past also when training reforms and skill upgradation have been offered, IHM faculty members have responded to it with great deal of positivism (Ghosh & Mishra, 2019). Similar results are also the outcome of a study on mapping the effectiveness of facilitator based training program at NCHMCT Noida, in which teachers have shown positive results in response to the faculty development inputs (Kumar & Singh, 2019). Arguably, the advantages of on-line education are more than its disadvantages and it's only because of the availability of on-line technology that education of our young generation was not entirely jeopardised during the times of curbs and restrictions. Teachers as well as students responded to varying degree of enthusiasm and acceptance to on-line mode. In hospitality education challenges are even more complex due to the fact that the course is quintessentially a skill based course and the issue of imparting skills through a distant on-line mode was hitherto largely unheard of.

Hospitality education in India is largely under the umbrella of National Council for Hotel Management, an autonomous institute under Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. NCHMCT has about 80 institutes under its fold including Central, State and Private institutes besides some of the Food Craft Institutes. The mandate of NCHMCT includes coordinated and concerted effort towards development



and standardisation of hospitality education in country. Some of the courses offered by NCHMCT include Masters, Bachelors and Diploma level programmes (nchmct.nic.in, 2021). Besides NCHMCT there are various good private institutes under different universities or AICTE who are involved in hospitality training. As per the research paper published by Naick (2020) COVID- 19 brought along challenges like limitations of online education with regard to andragogy techniques such as group work, the sensory involvement of learning process cannot be fully utilised in on line mode and the fact that hospitality education is mainly a skill transfer issue which in an online set up is difficult to achieve. In a similar research by Pandey (2020), the authors on basis of survey concluded that students preferred face to face learning. The reason is the practical orientation of the hospitality course and hence relating with online education is difficult in an online set-up. However, the study also enumerates the advantage of online learning and specifically highlights the fact that webinars can bring in current trends of industry as well as more interaction with practitioners who are actually working in industry. In a study titled scenario of hospitality education post COVID19 authored by Singh and Srivastava (2020) it was recommended that online courses to upgrade the students with hard and soft skills will enable students to stay relevant in the changing paradigm. It also stated that attending webinar sessions with industry experts not only keeps one updated but also helps in networking which is much needed once the industry starts its revival. A study by Priyadarshini (2021) with specific context to teacher's perception provides insight into online education and mindset of teachers. Study provided information that there are more advantages of online education than the disadvantages. It explores areas which are not covered in too many studies such as reach of online education in rural areas, digital divide, ways to overcome the challenges and the possible continuance of online education in future. Research publication by Rajab et al. (2020) about perception of students and teachers towards on-line education in medical studies stated that on line education is less effective compared to off line classes due to several challenges. Lack of student to student interaction, lack of teacher- student interface, adaptation to different platforms and data security are some of the big challenges which will take time to completely overcome. With regard to availability of on-line material, Burns (2013) in her research pointed out that in past few years material has significantly improved in quantity quality since there are lot of takers for blended learning mode. There are also studies in other academic fields in this context. According to a study in Dakshin Kannada and Udipi district schools, students were comfortable with online classes and are getting enough support from teachers but they did not believe that online classes will replace traditional classroom teaching. It also found that teachers are facing difficulties in conducting online classes due to a lack of proper training and development for doing online classes. Technical issues are the major problem for the effectiveness of the online classes (Kulal & Nayak, 2020). According to a similar study in the field of nursing to study faculty perceptions and indicators of quality in on-line teaching it was found that there are effective teaching strategies for online education;

however, there is disconnect in the application of these strategies and faculty perceptions of associated outcomes (Frazer & Sullivan, 2017).

It was found after review of literature that research gap exists in two forms. First of all, the research that exists about hospitality education and online teaching is largely from the perspective of students' perception rather than that of teachers. The research and studies about teachers' perception towards on line education is more with context to other fields of academics rather than hospitality education. To fulfil this gap, this research is expected to be a good resource. This research studies the perception of hospitality educators towards on-line education and its effectiveness. The research focused on analysing the perception of teachers about online education and also looked at the challenges faced in online education. It explored the benefits or advantages of on-line education viz-a-viz the conventional form of education.

Significance of this work lied in the fact that it's much more challenging to impart hospitality training through online mode in comparison to online training in other streams. The challenge lies in the fact that it's a highly skill oriented course. Also the fact that peer to peer interaction is important in hospitality for developing people skills and to improve upon the soft skills. This study tried to find out through primary research whether these challenges have been overcome up to some extent and what the other key challenges are perceived by faculty members with regard to on-line education. Study is significant because Indian eco-system with regard to availability of IT infrastructure and with regard to digital divide is far more complex in comparison to western world. So, a study in Indian context to gauge the effectiveness, challenges and future course of action is very pertinent rather than relying upon the western studies which are contextually very different. Significance of study also lies in the fact that perception of teachers towards on-line education needs to be studied as their concerns if not addressed will lead to poor learning outcomes. Study is important for the fact that major challenges in on-line education needs to be listed and also the benefits of the same, as perceived by teachers, are to be identified for the most effective usage of this new normal tool. This research will have significant contribution towards analysing the effectiveness of on-line teaching in hospitality education from the perspective of hospitality trainers.

The objectives of the paper were:

- To study the perception of teachers in India in hospitality education towards on-line education.
- To analyse the effectiveness of on line teaching in hospitality education from a trainer's perspective.
- To identify the major challenges in on-line hospitality education.
- To list the benefits of on-line hospitality education.



METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Descriptive research design was adopted to analyse the perception of faculty members towards online education.

Locale: The study was done at Pan India level. Faculty members of different Institute of Hotel Management in the country were sent the questionnaire to collect responses, IHM's included were the NCHMCT affiliated government institutes in the country with IHM Goa, IHM Jaipur, IHM Gurdaspur, AIHM Chandigarh and IHM Mumbai being the major contributors.

Sampling Design: Convenience sampling was done. 50 faculty members from different IHMs' in the country participated in the study.

Tools and Technique: A structured questionnaire was prepared to get response of the perception of teachers towards online education and resultant challenges. The structured questionnaire to get the response of the faculty members consisted of three parts. Part A related to demographic and professional details of faculty members such as their names, institute affiliation, professional experience, gender, subject expertise, etc. Part B related to their extent of agreement or disagreement with various aspects of on-line education. Part C listed the challenges and advantages of on-line education. Respondents were asked to give a sequence to the challenges as well as to the advantages by marking the biggest challenge according to their perception as the highest number and coming down in sequence depending upon the listed challenge. Similar method was followed for advantages of on-line education as well. The questionnaire was administered with the help of Google Form. Link of the Google Form was sent to various faculty groups and also to relevant personal contacts in the field.

Data Analysis and Statistical Analysis: It is based on frequency of data responses and percentage based representation with the help of Likert Scale. Some data components were also analysed on mean basis. Graphical representation was done with the help of Excel Software and data interpretation thereof.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data with regard to designation, experience and gender shows that sample is more or less well represented by different demographic profiles and hence gave an unbiased picture of the overall perception of faculty members towards on-line education.

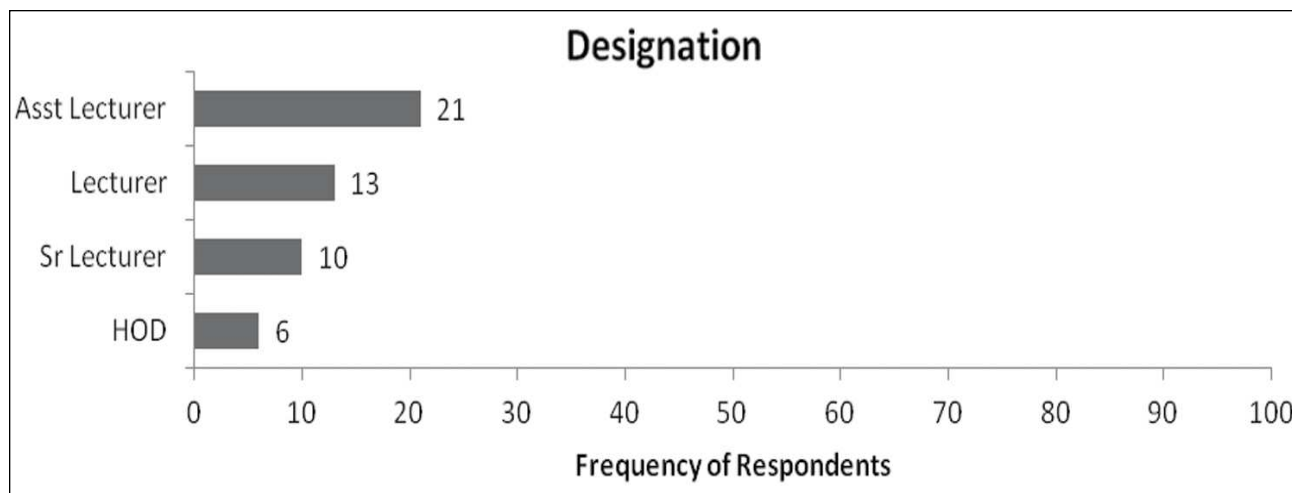


Figure 1: Designation

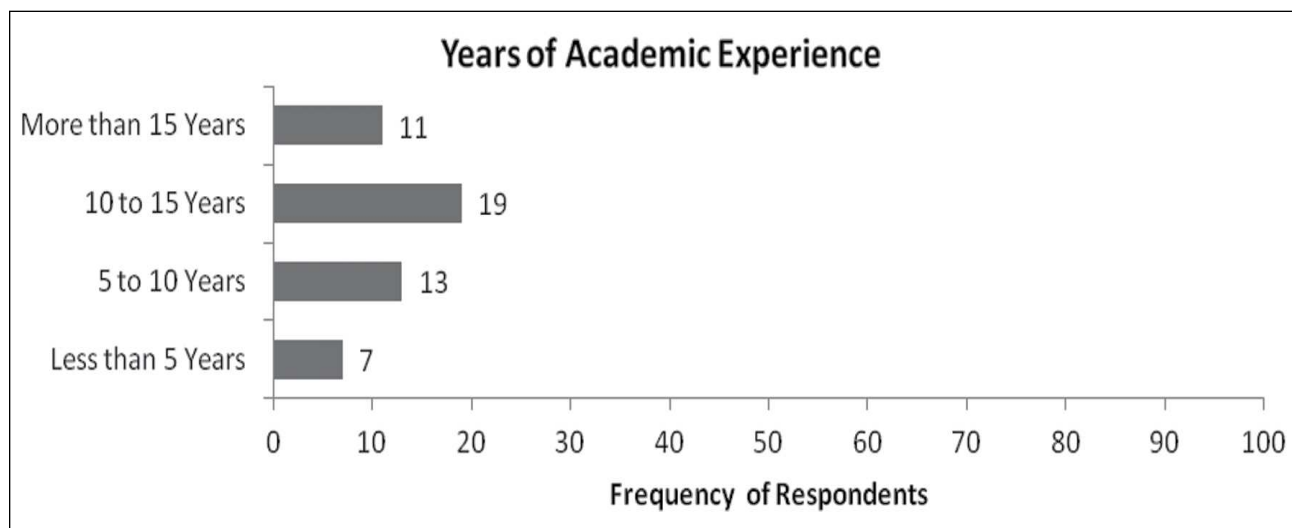


Figure 2: Years of Academic Experience

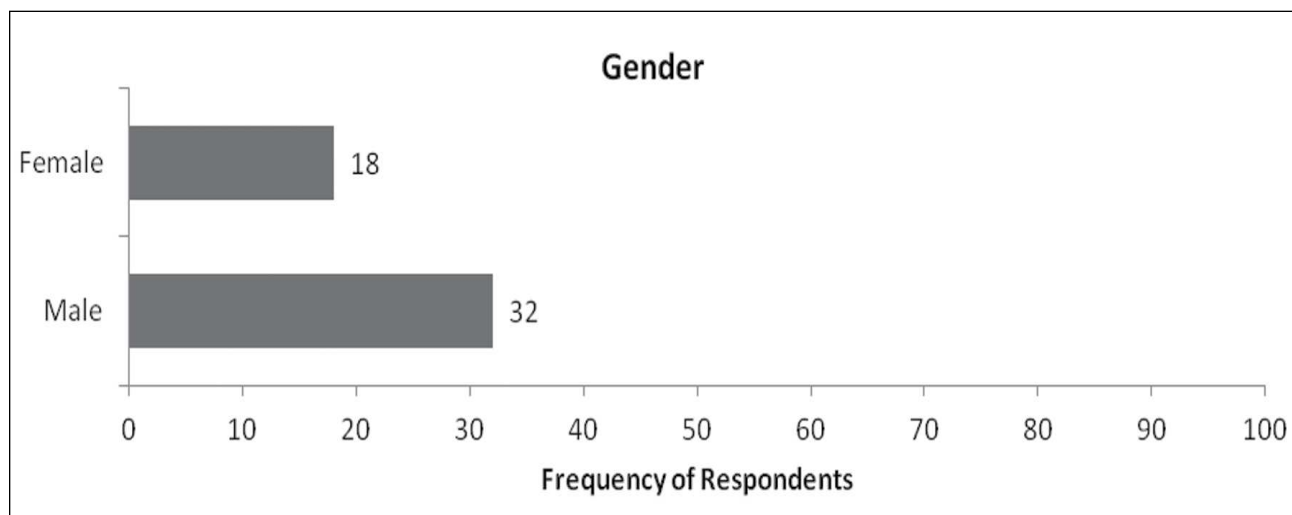


Figure 3: Gender

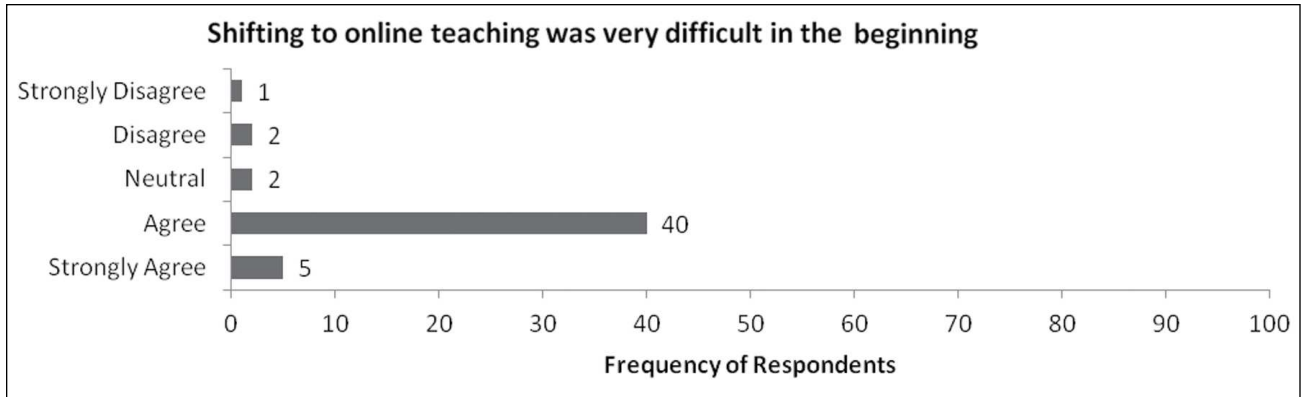


Figure 4: Shifting to online teaching was very difficult in the beginning

An overwhelming majority of 80 percent agreed to this statement that shifting to online teaching was very difficult in the beginning. This clearly states that on-line teaching brought significant challenge and teachers were not prepared for this medium.

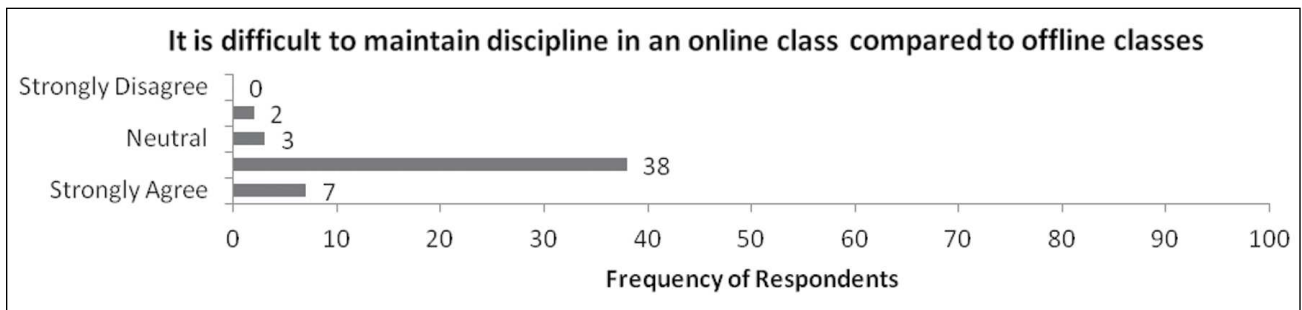


Figure 5: Discipline in an online class compared to offline classes

A significant majority of the 76 percent agree to this statement that maintaining discipline in an online class was difficult as compared to offline classes. It may be stated that lesser engagement of students, advantage of anonymity in some cases, relatively less technical knowledge of teachers with regard to on-line platform has made it difficult to maintain discipline in class when compared to conventional medium.

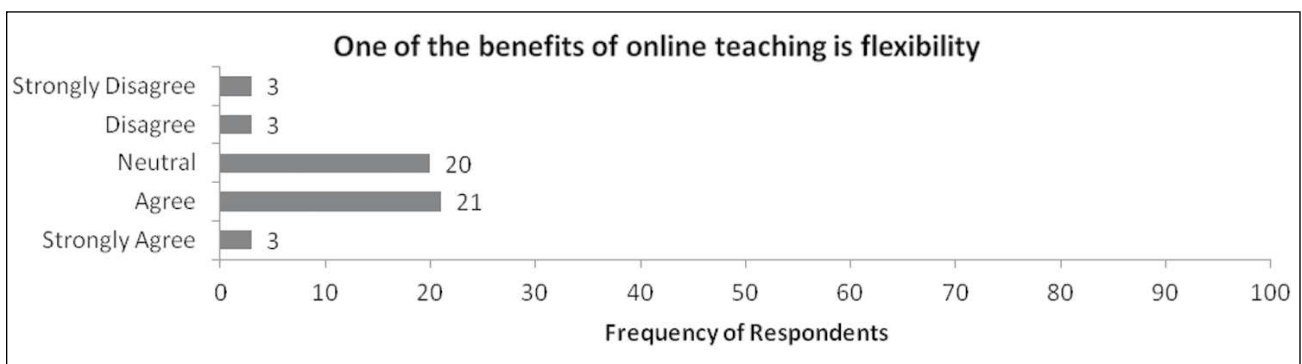


Figure 6: Flexibility

In this context of flexibility as benefit of online teaching, 40 percent faculty members have a neutral opinion about on-line teaching as flexible while 42 percent agreed to it. There are only 6 percent who strongly agree. It may be given as analysis that somewhat general belief that on-line education provides lot of flexibility is not perceived to be the same by teaching practitioners and it doesn't seem to offer too much advantage in comparison to conventional education in this regard. In a study, hybrid learning will form the future as student can upgrade his skill at any point of time with flexibility (Singh & Srivastava, 2020). The results of this study partly corroborates with this analysis.

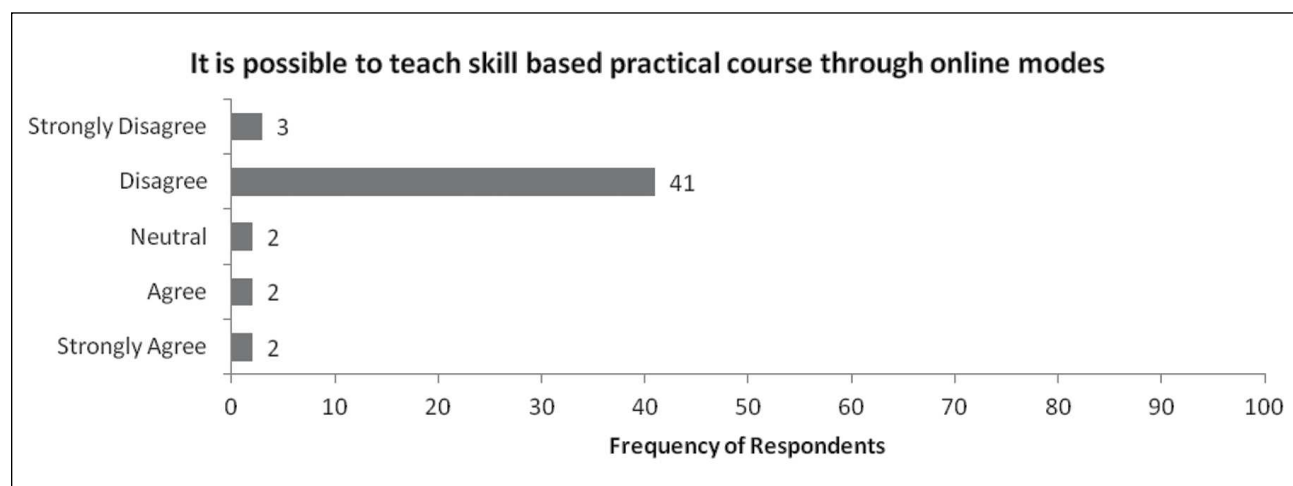


Figure 7: Skill based practical course through online modes

As its evident from the result that 88 percent of faculty members either disagree or strongly disagree on the point that on-line education can be used for skill based practical courses in hospitality education. This puts a strong argument for conventional education in practical classes of hospitality management courses. In a study by Pandey (2020) a similar finding says that students prefer face to face learning in a skill based course because of the practical learning orientation aspects.

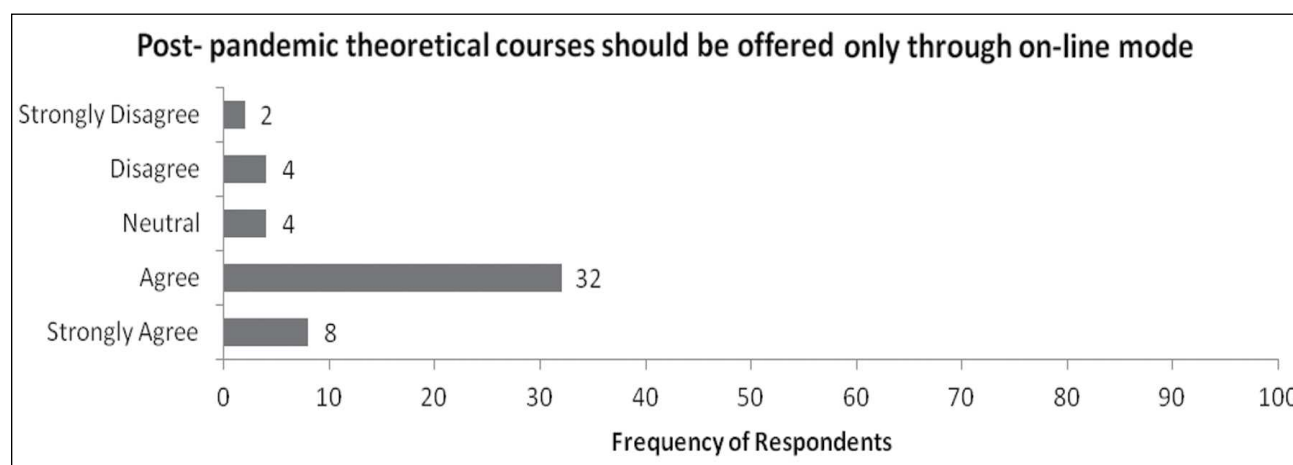


Figure 8: Post- pandemic theoretical courses through on-line mode

In continuation to the previous question, teachers perceive that blended learning is the future. While they believe it's not possible to teach practical courses through on-line mode, 80 percent either agree or strongly agree to continuation of theoretical courses on on-line mode. This is a significant indication toward how future of hospitality education is going to play.

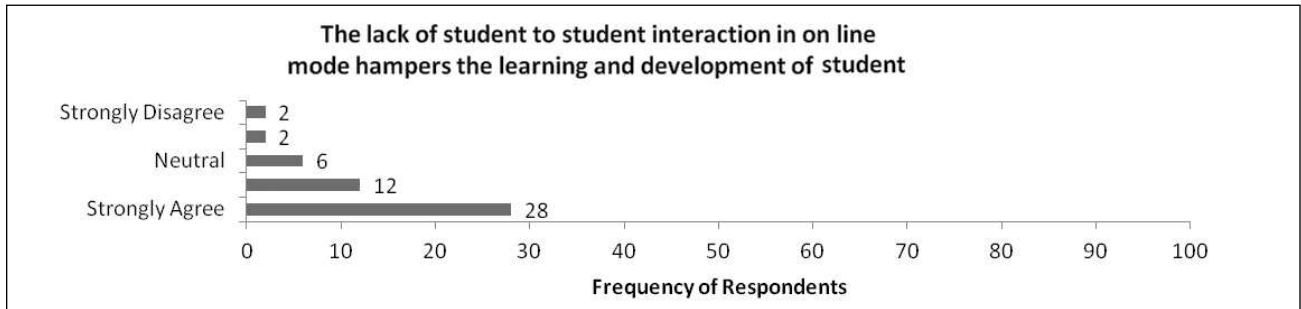


Figure 9: The lack of student to student interaction

An overwhelming majority agreed that student to student interaction is an integral part of learning process. As its lacking in on-line education so it has a negative impact on the learning and development of students.

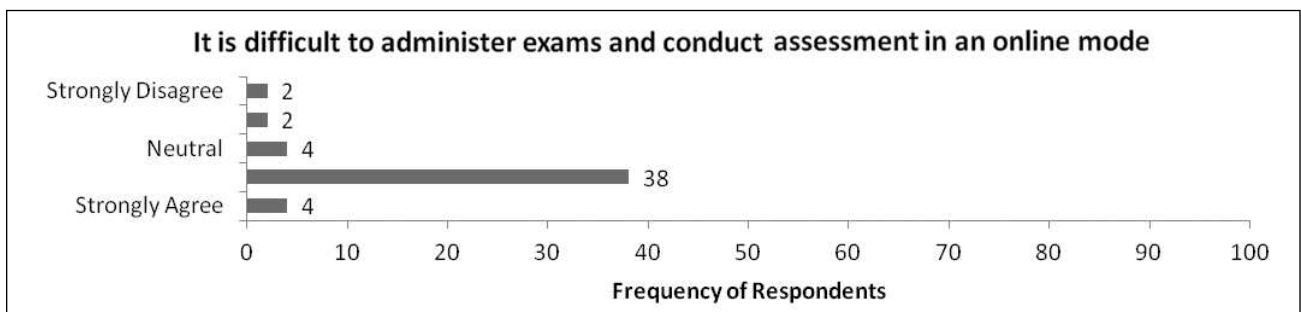


Figure 10: Assessment in an online mode

Exams and assessment has been an Achilles' heel issue in on-line education with 76 percent teachers agreeing and 8 percent strongly agreeing to the fact that it's difficult. The sanctity of exam process as well as its effectiveness has been considered to be in question and either improved technological intervention or return to conventional examination system can only salvage this situation.

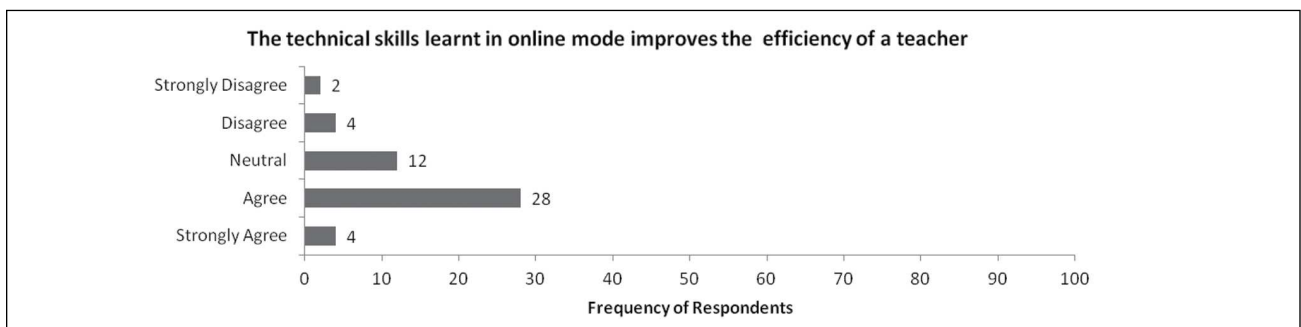


Figure 11: The technical skills learnt in online mode improves the efficiency of a teacher

There is a general agreement that technological skills acquired through the process of on-line teaching are a boost for efficiency of the teacher. However, there were 24 percent who were neutral about this issue.

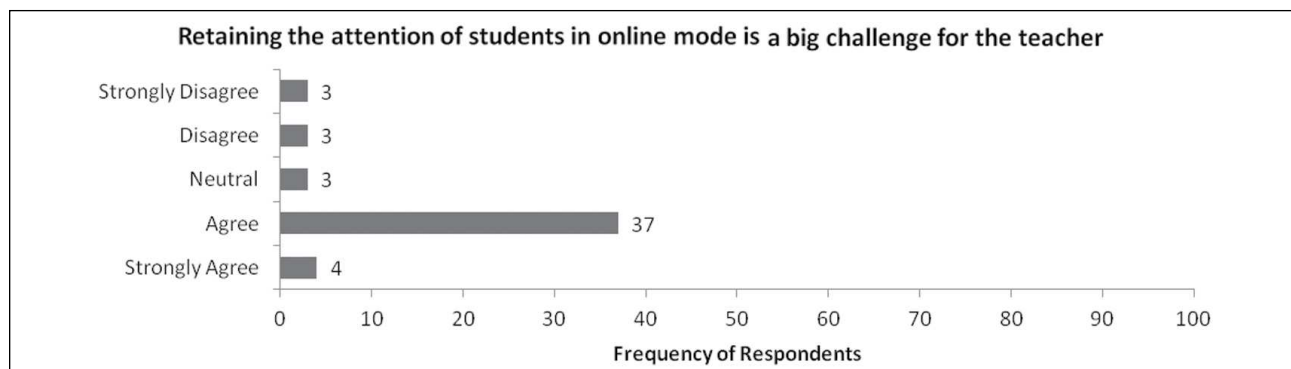


Figure 12: Retaining the attention of students

As commonly observed and also as per the result of the survey teachers consider retaining the attention of students as a big issue in on-line learning. Student attention is extremely difficult to retain when a face-to-face interaction is not there. 82 percent of the faculty members opine an agreement or strong agreement to it

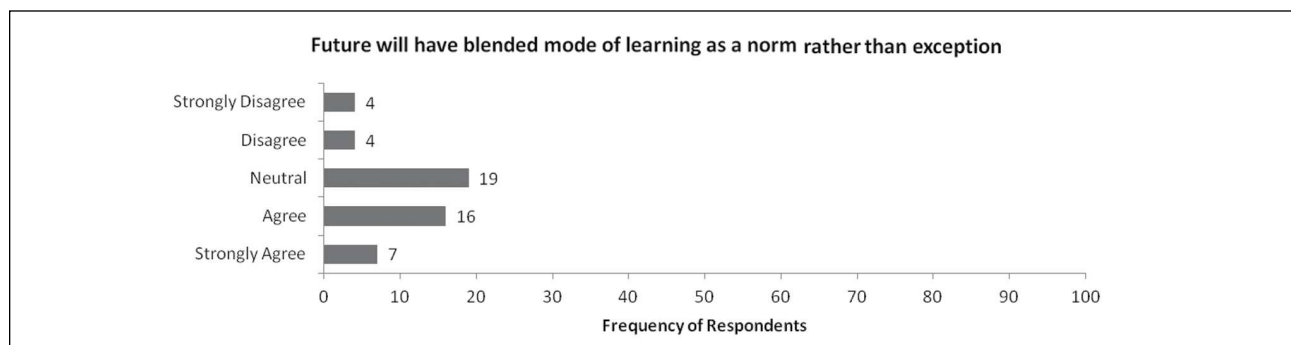


Figure 13: Future will have blended mode of learning

As learnt on the analysis of earlier questions as well majority faculty members perceive that blended learning is the future of education with practical sessions in off-line mode and theoretical courses in on-line mode. This is a situation which is perceived to continue even after the pandemic abates.

Table 1: Result of extent of challenges faced in on-line learning

S. No.	Challenge	Mean Value
1	Unstable internet of teacher	8.8
2	Connectivity issues or device related issues with student	9.6
3	Limited technology skills of teacher	5.4
4	Engagement and motivation issues of student	7.0

S. No.	Challenge	Mean Value
5	Difficulty in imparting skill based learning	8.2
6	Health issues with regard to eyes, headache, backache, cervical etc.	4.2
7	Lack of suitable learning environment, e.g. disturbance of kids, parents etc. at home	5.6
8	Lack of specialised e-material for online classes	2.0
9	Resistance and negative attitude of teacher towards online education	2.8
10	Resistance and negative attitude of learner towards online education	1.4

According to the survey, connectivity or device related issues with students was the biggest challenge faced by teachers in on-line education with 9.6 on a scale of 10 being its score. This points out to the digital divide in the country as well as the difference between resources owned by affluent and not so rich. This is followed by the issue of internet stability of teacher. Internet being the single most important aspect of on-line education is required to be strong and continuous at both ends to have effective and uninterrupted learning. The present infrastructure in the country creates a challenge in this context particularly in rural belt. Difficulty in imparting skill based learning and engagement issue of students are other two issues which are perceived to be significant challenges. Health issues are perceived as the least of challenge however it may also be attributed to the fact that on-line education is at a nascent stage in the country and impact of excess screen time and effect of posture may cause health issues with prolong usage. This is something to be seen and analysed in future.

Table 4: Extent of benefits / advantages in on-line learning

S.No.	Benefit	Mean Value
1	Flexibility for learner	2.6
2	Saves time as the travel is reduced	4.8
3	Continued education even in time of pandemic/curfew/natural disaster etc.	2.6
4	Reduces the cost of education thereby benefitting the underprivileged section of society	2.2
5	Introvert or students who are under confident feels more inclined towards learning in an online environment	4.0

Given above is the result of table about the perceived degree and extent of benefits/ advantages in on-line learning. As evident from the graphical representation above, time- saving due to reduced travel time is perceived to be the biggest advantage of on-line education. The other significant advantage according to the perception of teachers was the fact that students who are introvert and shy in a conventional class room set-up tends to behave more confidently in on-line mode presumably due to

the fact that they feel the comfort of familiar environment and sense of more security in their familiar physical setting. This was followed by the acknowledgement that in the time of pandemic and similar situations when the movement is restricted, on-line education enabled continuation of teaching process.

CONCLUSION

On-line education in the time of pandemic threw open a challenge for teachers to provide optimum learning to the students without the comfort of conventional face to face methods and availability of physical infrastructure. Teachers responded well to the challenge by quickly adapting to the technology and by developing resources and handouts which are customised for on-line education. Hospitality education being a practical skill oriented course had myriad of challenges in this regard however the teaching-learning community didn't get bogged down by these challenges and everyone has made his/her best effort to ensure that the show goes on. This research paper has studied and analysed the responses of faculty members of hospitality education towards their perception about on-line education in hospitality courses. Survey reveals that initially the teachers were not prepared for this medium and they subsequently learned the process and implemented it. Significant finding is that teachers perceive blended learning to be a norm in future. It is perceived that while it's very difficult to impart skill training in an on-line mode, for theoretical classes this could be a preferred mode. One significant concern is with regard to administering the assessments in this mode. Teachers also agree in majority to the fact that to maintain attention of students and discipline are some of the factors which are affecting the quality of on-line education. Stability of internet and the digital divide in country are the prime challenges at this stage. However, teachers are positive about the several benefits on-line education offers including time-saving and continued education at a time when movements are restricted. It is concluded that blended learning is here to stay. Teachers in hospitality education have responded well to the challenges of on-line teaching. With time and improvement of technology the effectiveness of on-line teaching will also keep on increasing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the fact that assessment is a major challenge in on-line education, it is recommended that NCHMCT should move to an open book exam process in future like followed by international universities to remain prepared for any eventuality of this nature. With regard to limited attention span of students in online mode and issues related to discipline, the author recommends that NCHMCT as well as institutes should collaborate to create material specially customised for online education in the form of animation, case studies, videos etc. so that it can be made more interesting. It is also opined that institutes should focus on training faculty members with specific reference to on-line training so that usage of technology can be optimised.



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