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Comparison of BA and MA students' attitudes toward virtual education

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Abstract

Virtual schooling offers a wealth of tools and services that give users information and education. The opinions of students about this schooling are diverse. Each of them is passionate about a certain form of education, and their studies are overshadowed. The purpose of this research is to compare the attitudes of BA and MA students in virtual education. A total of 50 students in Tehran participated in this research. The study's statistical population is comprised of all Tehran students. The field data was gathered using the Attitude to Virtual Education Questionnaire. The analysis was conducted using SPSS software and included descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) as well as inferential statistics (independent t-test). The findings revealed that there was a considerable difference in performance between BA and MA students. Graduate students have a more favorable view toward virtual education than undergraduate students, although the difference is minor. Based on the outcomes of this research, virtual education seems to be a viable alternative to face-to-face learning.

Keywords: Attitude, e-learning ; Virtual Education.

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1. Introduction

Due to worldwide situations such as coronary heart disease and limits imposed in various nations, virtual or e-learning is becoming more popular in today's globe, in addition to conventional and regular education. With the growth of the Internet and cyberspace, as well as the construction of web pages and e-mail, a new doorway to newer education for learners may be created so that they can get familiar with new and emerging technologies of virtual environment information and improve their usage. Social factors and the environment, according to research, have affected these alterations and transformations. There are links between Internet usage and new instructional approaches and educational exchanges, according to preliminary investigations and current literature (Karami, 2017).

Virtual education refers to any course or training that is delivered via techniques other than face-to-face instruction. Lesson materials may be delivered over the Internet or by active and interactive video and graphics (Dakhi, Jama & Irfan, 2020). Also, these materials may be broadcast on cable or satellite television, or they may be accessible on CDs, DVDs, videotapes, or a mix of the aforementioned. Computer-based learning, online learning, network-based learning, and network education are all examples of virtual education, which is the most significant use of information technology (Karami, 2017). Distance learning has a long history, and it has progressed beyond school and postal learning to include radio and television instruction, as well as an interactive technology.

Virtual education is one of the country's new forms of education. This style of schooling grew in popularity as the country's corona pandemic spread. Students at various levels have different perspectives on schooling. They have a negative attitude toward virtual education and have failed to obtain the anticipated educational outcomes.

1.1. Related studies

Many studies have been conducted on this subject, with Means et al.'s (2010) study being one among them. They looked at the efficacy of face-to-face training against e-learning in a meta-analysis. The findings revealed that, on average, online learning students performed better than those who got face-to-face training; however, students who received hybrid education performed best. Callister and Love (2016), on the other hand, found that e-learning is not a viable instrument for teaching skills courses and that students who take face-to-face courses gain more from them.

McCutcheon, Lohan, Trainor, and Martin (2015) conducted a meta-analysis to compare e-learning with face-to-face training in nursing students' clinical skills training. They concluded that both strategies are equally successful, and none is preferable to the other. In a descriptive and analytical research, Pakseresht et al. (2017) compared and contrasted the attitudes of virtual and non-virtual students. The study's findings revealed that students in both groups had a limited degree of awareness about virtual education and have good sentiments about it. The need for efforts to enhance the level of students' knowledge and culture in this sector is felt based on their wants and preferences to create a proper platform for the creation, development, and optimum use of e-learning.

The usefulness of a combined e-learning system in the education of nursing university students was investigated by Zolfaghari et al. (2010), and the findings revealed that virtual e-learning is a novel mechanism that integrates a range of learning and teaching approaches. Nursing students and teachers have expressed pleasure in it. Gilbert et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative study to assess the tool's usability. If students pursue virtual education regularly, they will see fascinating effects.

In general, the goal of e-learning or e-learning is to give equitable, free, and searchable access to courses, to provide a unified learning environment for all groups, and to optimize the presentation of

course materials so that students may learn more thoroughly. People profit as much as they can from the topics in such an educational atmosphere, as opposed to conventional (teacher-centered) teaching approaches. Maximum learning efficiency may be attained in e-learning by mixing various learning modalities such as text, audio, video, and so on (Kim et al., 2022).

1.2. Purpose of study

Following the establishment of e-learning centers in Iran and the welcoming of people into the sensitive corona conditions of organizations and educational systems, researchers debated the effectiveness of this new method of education, and over the past decade, various researchers in various fields of E-learning or virtual learning, including comparisons with other forms of education such as face-to-face training, were conducted, yielding various results. The current research examines undergraduate and graduate students' perceptions of virtual education. The purpose of this research is to find out whether there is a difference in views about virtual education between BA and MA students.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

This is a descriptive study using a post-event technique (causal and comparative). For the academic year 2021-2022, the statistical population of the research included all students in Tehran who utilized virtual education. The sample group comprised 50 persons ranging in age from 18 to 35. Based on admission and exit criteria, the sample group was chosen at random.

2.2. Data collection instrument

The 20-item attitude to virtual education questionnaire was used to gather data for the study. The goal of this questionnaire, which consists of 20 questions, is to measure students' views about virtual education (auditory, emotional, action orientation). It has a Likert scale response range. I disagree with a score of 2, absolutely has a score of 1, the middle has a score of 3, I agree with a score of 4, and I completely agree with a score of 5. Of course, this scoring procedure has been inverted for problems 2, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, and 17.

2.3. Data analysis

There are three aspects to the aforementioned questionnaire (interest in working in the virtual environment, anxiety about working in the virtual environment, and the importance of virtual education). Add the total points from all of the questions in that dimension to obtain the total points for that dimension. Add the total scores of all the questions to obtain the questionnaire's overall score. The face and content validity of this questionnaire was validated utilizing the views of academics and professionals. The reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha test, which yielded a value of 0.85.

3. Results

The three components of the Attitude to Virtual Education Questionnaire are interested in working in a virtual environment, anxiety about working in a virtual environment, and the relevance of virtual education. Virtual Education Attitude Questionnaire mean, and standard deviation were 57.80 and 13.95, respectively. In working in a virtual environment, the mean and standard deviation of the interest component, and the mean and standard deviation of the anxiety component of working in a

virtual environment are 23.16 and 6.56, respectively. The mean and standard deviation of the component of virtual education relevance are 29.04 and 07.01, respectively. The significance of virtual education has the highest average in the component.

The attitudes of BA and MA students about adopting virtual education were studied in this research. The differences between the two groups of undergraduate and graduate students were investigated using independent t-test analysis. The Leven test was used to assess the prediction of the t-test on the assumption of the equality of variance in postgraduate and graduate students' views toward virtual education. The variance of the analyzed means is the same, according to the table $P > 0.05$, thus the values connected to the assumption of the equality of variance are employed.

Table 1

Independent t-test results to compare attitudes toward virtual education for graduate and undergraduate students

95% Difference		T	Degrees of freedom	Error difference	Mean difference	Sig(2-tailed)	Groups
Upper	Lower						
6.32	-0.422	-28.43	48	3.98	-1.68	0/02	BA
6.32	-0.422	-28.43	47.51	3.98	-1.68	0/02	MA

Samples from different people Undergraduate and graduate students' perceptions about virtual education were compared using a t-test. Between BA and MA students, there was a considerable disparity in results.

4. Discussion

The purpose of this research was to examine students' perceptions regarding virtual education in a sample of BA and MA students. There was a considerable difference in the scores of BA and MA students, according to the findings. BA students had a more favourable view toward virtual education than MA students, although the difference is minor. Berteau (2009), Al-Doub et al. (2009), Mohammadi et al. (2011), Mirzaei et al. (2012), and Zolfaghari et al. (2011) all came up with similar conclusions.

According to research, the majority of students and instructors are pleased with new educational technology, including a blend of virtual and traditional schooling. This conclusion is in line with the findings of the current investigation. Kim et al. (2013) found that virtual education and the use of interactive animations have a larger influence on a better grasp of scientific information and improve knowledge since students are actively participating in learning. It's not the same as Riner's research. Furthermore, the findings of Borhani et al. (2017) research revealed that there is a statistically significant association between virtual and non-virtual nursing, which did not exist in either group before the adoption of the virtual education program. The findings also revealed that nursing students had a favorable attitude toward virtual education.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this research revealed that virtual and non-virtual students had similar levels of knowledge about e-learning and have a good attitude toward it. As a result, attempts to enhance the level of students' knowledge and culture in this sector based on their wants and wishes are felt to create a proper platform for the invention, growth, and optimum use of e-learning. To accomplish

these objectives, it is recommended that educational programs such as workshops be designed to promote awareness and capacity to utilize e-learning as an effective instructional tool, as well as to improve the quality of the hardware.

Despite the absence of computer facilities and technology, students showed a good attitude toward e-learning. As a result, in addition to cultivating a culture in this subject, efforts should be made to increase understanding and the quality of facilities and equipment required. As a result, given the vast range of subjects covered in university courses and the complexity of the themes, virtual education should be considered alongside face-to-face education at the country's institutions. Based on the findings of this research, it is suggested that more comprehensive studies be conducted based on the adoption of e-learning methods and that knowledge and attitudes in various university fields be compared and contrasted.

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