



VIRTUAL EDUCATION AND SELF-CONFIDENCE: AN ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS IN JAMMU DIVISION OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR UNION TERRITORY

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Abstract

The sudden shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic transformed educational environments, influencing students' self-confidence. This study investigates the impact of online learning on the self-confidence levels of school and college students in the Jammu division of Jammu & Kashmir (UT). A total of 400 students (200 school and 200 college) participated, with equal representation of male and female students across both groups. Using Rekha Gupta's Self-Confidence Inventory, the study measured self-confidence across educational levels and analysed gender-based variations. Results show that college students reported higher self-confidence than their school counterparts, reflecting the developmental and experiential differences between the two groups. However, school students exhibited more consistent self-confidence levels, while college students demonstrated greater variability. The study highlights how peer interaction, technological access, and institutional support during online learning influenced students' self-assurance.

Keywords: Self-confidence, Covid-19, online learning, School and College students.

Introduction

Self-confidence is an individual's belief in their capacity to accomplish objectives and complete activities. It affects behaviour, motivation, and academic achievement. Higher self-confidence encourages students to take on tough assignments, persevere through setbacks, and participate fully in class—all of which enhance learning and communication abilities (Pajares & Schunk, 2001). Studies indicate that academic achievement is predicted by self-confidence, which is strongly correlated with self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Lane et al., 2004). Additionally, it develops intrinsic motivation, which inspires students to take on academic difficulties for their own pleasure and personal development (Deci & Ryan, 2000). As a result, having self-confidence is critical for overall success in school. A number of elements, such as peer interaction, perceived teacher support, and technological competency, impacts self-confidence in the context of online learning. Technically weak students often have lower involvement rates (Wang & Chen, 2020), but encouraging teachers and stimulating peer interactions help them feel more confident (Moore et al., 2021). These elements play a crucial role in determining learners' self-assurance and general performance in virtual settings.

The abrupt transition to online learning during the COVID-19 epidemic significantly changed educational systems all around the globe. Around 1.6 billion students globally were impacted by the disruption to conventional classroom-based education by the beginning of 2020. In order to tackle this issue, educational establishments implemented digital platforms, using

techniques such as asynchronous modules, mixed learning methods, and live virtual courses (UNESCO, 2020). Learning Management Systems (LMS) are vital for communication and material delivery, and platforms like Zoom, Google Classroom, and Microsoft Teams have become indispensable tools for distant learning (Dhawan, 2020).

Some children adjusted well, while others had trouble with technology and had less social connection, which had an impact on their general well-being and performance in school (Kumar & Nair, 2021; Xu & Jaggars, 2014). Due to differences in digital infrastructure, especially in rural regions, the shift to online learning in India proved particularly difficult. To encourage remote learning, the Ministry of Education introduced programs like DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) (Government of India, 2020). Nonetheless, notable disparities in digital literacy and resources continued to exist, particularly for students in rural areas who encountered obstacles including unstable power supplies, inadequate internet connection, and restricted access to smart gadgets (Jena et al., 2020).

Traditional teaching techniques suffered by the worldwide crisis, which had a variety of repercussions on students' academic performance, engagement, and mental health. Students' perceptions of their own skills and accomplishments have changed as a result of the shift to digital learning, which had differing effects on their general self-confidence. According to research, students who successfully self-managed their learning and adapted to online platforms had higher levels of self-efficacy (Cavanaugh et al., 2020). However, many students experienced a decline in self-confidence as a result of technical difficulties and isolation (Li and Lalani et al., 2020). Self-directed learners have been shown to retain or even increase their confidence (Martin and Parker et al., 2022); however, other researchers have found that self-confidence varies within academic subjects (Stott and Neumann et al., 2021).

Building on this context, the present study's goal is to investigate level of self-confidence among school and college students in the Jammu division (Jammu and Kashmir, UT) during the COVID-19 era of online learning. It seeks to analyze how the shift to online education impacted students' self-confidence across different educational levels and environments. In particular, the research aims to determine if students' confidence is strengthened or weakened by online education.

To assess the level of self-confidence among school and college students in Jammu Division during the online learning period of the COVID-19 pandemic is the central intension that this research paper seeks to investigate.

Literature Review

Self-confidence refers to an individual's belief in their ability to complete tasks and achieve goals. It is closely tied to the concept of self-efficacy, which Bandura (1977) describes as the belief in one's capacity to perform actions necessary to handle future situations. Self-confidence plays a key role in shaping motivation, resilience, and how individuals face challenges (Bandura, 1997). It is often understood as a multidimensional construct, involving emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects (Beck & McKeown, 2009).

Several theoretical models explain self-confidence, with one of the most influential being Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. This model suggests that self-confidence is built through mastery experiences, observing others, verbal encouragement, and managing physiological states (Bandura, 1986). Another notable framework is the Cognitive Behavioral Model, which argues that self-confidence is influenced by an individual's thoughts and beliefs, which in turn affect their emotions and behaviors (Beck & Emery, 1985).

The COVID-19 pandemic's rapid transition to online learning has revolutionized education, bringing both challenges and successes. With the emergence of virtual platforms that allowed for remote training, technology became significant. Blizak et al. (2020), on the other hand, discovered that students who were not experienced with online forms had unfavorable opinions, highlighting the need of improved planning and institutional support for successful online learning throughout the pandemic. The epidemic had a major psychological effect on students. According to Klímová (2021), social separation and the isolation, that come with distance learning caused many students to feel less motivated and satisfied with their online education. However, Pasion et al. (2020) discovered that students' academic motivation and sense of belonging to their institutions were steady even in the absence of face-to-face contact. This rejects presumptions that isolation would always result in a decline in student participation by highlighting the complicated connection between institutional support and individual resiliency that influenced students' transitional experiences. Adaptability emerged as a major feature in effective online learning settings. According to Besser and Zeigler-Hill (2022), students who rapidly adjusted to the new format showed higher levels of motivation and engagement. This flexibility was critical in getting past the obstacles that distance learning presented.

The effects of online learning were also uneven in India. According to a poll, 48.08% of students said they learned anything by taking courses online, while 34% said they were not happy (Mane et al., 2021). This demonstrates the range of experiences that students had; many discover benefit in digital platforms, while others encounter serious difficulties. The efficacy of virtual education had been examined in a number of different educational settings. Kiran et al. (2022) draw attention to the difficulties in upholding medical education standards while guaranteeing patient safety throughout the pandemic. Even though it was the only practical alternative available, Mukhtar et al. (2020) observed that online instruction presented resource management challenges and had difficulty imparting practical skills. These issues were made worse by the digital divide, especially in disadvantaged communities where learning was hampered by inadequate internet connections and a lack of critical technology tools (Karingada & Sony, 2021).

This digital gap had a big impact on students in India. Many people did not have access to the internet and technology needed to fully participate in online learning (Swargiary, 2023). This discrepancy not only harmed academic achievement but also led to feelings of inadequacy and diminished self-confidence among learners striving to keep pace with their classmates. Since hybrid or very online models exist in the future, closing these technical and psychological barriers is essential to creating an online education system that is equal and successful.

Self Confidence

A crucial psychological concept that has a significant impact on students' motivation, engagement, and academic achievement is self-confidence. The fundamental aspect of education is students' self-belief in their ability to achieve. According to Artino (2012), this notion is intimately associated with self-efficacy, referring to the idea that one can accomplish certain performance objectives. These beliefs are essential for maintaining motivation and tenacity while completing academic assignments (Namdaran & Akbari, 2021).

In a school context, peer interactions can play a role in developing self-confidence. Collaborative learning models, which were frequently absent from conventional classroom settings, had been shown to considerably improve students' learning experiences as well as their self-confidence (Markowski et al., 2021). Students were encouraged to share ideas, provide feedback to one another, and assist one another in these peer-supported environments. This fosters

a feeling of connection and self-efficacy. Conversely, students that learn alone in more rigorous, conventional classrooms feel unsupported and unsure of their skills, which causes their confidence to decline (McCabe et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Shu et al.'s study from 2022 emphasizes how important social support was in helping university students feel less anxious during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to their research, resilience is predicted by self-esteem, which includes competence and self-worth. This increases self-confidence. Throughout the outbreak, students who felt they had more social support were able to retain their confidence and sense of self.

The pandemic's increase in online education also presented new difficulties for self-confidence. Online social contacts had been shown to reduce loneliness and boost self-esteem (Luo et al., 2022), but they did not entirely mimic the advantages of in-person interactions. The emphasis on digital communication brought to light the variations in the standard of social support, which subsequently affected the confidence and self-worth of the students.

It is critical to comprehend the pandemic's long-term impacts on students' self-confidence as it develops. Some students showed perseverance and maintained high levels of confidence, whereas others saw noticeable drops in their self-worth (Catling et al., 2022). The variety of these experiences highlights the need for specialized treatments, especially when it comes to addressing the various difficulties that various student demographics encounter.

According to research by Alka Chouhan and Dr. Suman Audichya, there were substantial differences in the social and educational domains between teenagers living in rural and urban areas, but there were no significant differences in the psychological and emotional aspects of self-confidence levels. Teens from urban areas often do better academically, which emphasizes how important it is to build social networks and improve academic assistance in order to boost self-confidence, especially for those from rural areas. The study's surprising lack of substantial gender differences in self-confidence levels.

Research by Shagufta Faiyaz, Sushmita Kumari, and Ashok Malhotra (2022) further supports these results by showing that children in urban schools who do well have far greater levels of self-confidence than their counterparts in rural and low-achieving schools. High achievers often have more optimism, independence, and pride, which gives them the courage to face difficulties and hardship. This self-assurance in their skills gives them a stronger feeling of control over their lives, which enhances their sense of security and drives them to do well in school. These characteristics highlight how important it is to develop both academic abilities

While many studies explore the impact of online learning on academic performance, motivation, and well-being during COVID-19, limited attention has been given to its effect on self-confidence across educational levels. Research often emphasizes academic outcomes or constructs like self-efficacy, neglecting the role of self-confidence in students' ability to adapt to virtual learning. The sudden shift to remote education presented unique challenges, particularly for the students of Jammu Division, where digital literacy and infrastructure gaps intensified the difficulties. This study, *Self-Confidence in the Era of Online Learning: A Study of School and College Students in Jammu Division (Jammu and Kashmir, UT)*, examines how educational level influenced students' self-confidence during this transition.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Quantitative Methodology

Quantitative research focuses on numerical data collection and statistical analysis to identify patterns, relationships, and trends. In present study, the study aims to measure self-confidence levels among students and examine any differences across educational levels using structured tools and objective metrics.

Mean: The mean is the average value of a dataset.

In present study, the mean self-confidence scores for school and college students were calculated to show overall levels of self-confidence.

Standard Deviation (SD)

SD measures the spread or variability of data around the mean. It tells us how much individual scores differ from the average.

SD was used to understand the variability of self-confidence within each group (e.g., college students showing more variability than school students).

Z-Score

A Z-score indicates how far a particular score is from the mean in terms of SD.

Z-scores were applied to standardize the data, making it easier to interpret differences across students and educational levels objectively.

Sample

The study sample involved 200 school and 200 college students from the Jammu division of Jammu & Kashmir (UT), with equal representation of 100 male and 100 female participants at each educational level. Students, aged between 16 and 22, were selected using a simple random sampling method from five schools and five colleges in the region. Each institution contributed 40 students, equally divided into 20 males and 20 females. This balanced sampling strategy ensured gender equity and allowed for a thorough analysis across diverse educational settings.

Educational Level	Total Participants	Male Participants	Female Participants	Age Range	Sampling Method	Number of Institutions	Participants per Institution
School	200	100	100	16-18	Simple Random Sampling	5	40 (20 males, 20 females)
College	200	100	100	18-22	Simple Random Sampling	5	40 (20 males, 20 females)
Total	400	200	200	16-22	Simple Random Sampling	10	40 (20 males, 20 females)

Tool Used in the Study

In the current study, the primary tool used for data collection was the Self-Confidence Inventory (Adolescents and Adults) developed by Rekha Gupta. This standardized inventory consists of 56 items and is specifically designed to assess self-confidence levels in adolescents and adults. The scale has a test-retest reliability index of .91, and split-half reliability index of .78.

Collection of data

The data collection was taking place in a classroom setting across five schools and five colleges in the Jammu division of Jammu & Kashmir (UT). A questionnaire was administered to the students to gather data. At the beginning of the study, participants received a comprehensive overview of the research objectives and clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire. They were encouraged to ask questions to ensure clarity and understanding of the process. Students from each institution participated thoughtfully, ensuring careful responses. Their answers were scored using a predefined answer key for consistency and accuracy. The collected data were then analyzed systematically to address the study's research objectives and provide meaningful insights.

Data Analysis:

The raw scores were converted into Z-scores to interpret the levels of self-confidence. Data analysis was then performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software.

Report

	Self-confidence college students	Self-confidence school students	Self-confidence College and school students
Mean	.4899	.3298	.4098
N	200	200	400

Std. Deviation	.81811	.59651	.71952
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Results

Self-confidence is an important psychological trait that significantly influences academic performance, social interaction, and personal development among students. The transition from school to college often comes with increased responsibilities, autonomy, and social expectations, which may influence a student's self-confidence. This analysis examines the self-confidence levels of college and school students, to explore the potential differences in self-assurance between these two educational groups.

Analysis of Self-Confidence Levels

Mean Self-Confidence

The mean self-confidence score for college students is 0.4899, which is notably higher than the mean score of 0.3298 for school students. This indicates that, on an average, college students report higher levels of self-confidence compared to school students. One possible explanation for this is the developmental stage of college students, who are generally older and have developed greater self-efficacy through academic and personal experiences. Moreover, the autonomy and independence that college students typically experience contribute to increased self-assurance.

In contrast, school students be at a stage of adolescence where self-confidence is still forming, and their environment is more structured and dependent on external validation from teachers and parents. This transitional phase result in lower reported levels of self-confidence compared to their older college counterparts.

Variability in Self-Confidence

The standard deviation measures the dispersion of self-confidence levels within each group. College students show a higher standard deviation (0.81811) compared to school students (0.59651). This suggests that self-confidence among college students is more variable, meaning that while some college students may possess high levels of self-confidence, and others still struggle with self-assurance. This greater variability attributed to diverse factors such as differing academic challenges, social networks, or personal experiences during the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

In contrast, the lower standard deviation for school students (0.59651) indicates that their self-confidence levels are more consistent, though generally lower on average. The relatively more structured and less autonomous nature of school environments contribute to more uniform self-confidence levels.

Overall Self-Confidence

When combining both groups, the overall mean self-confidence score is 0.4098, with a standard deviation of 0.71952. These overall statistics provide a general sense of the self-confidence levels across both educational stages, indicating a moderate level of self-confidence among the entire student sample. However, the distinction between the two groups remains clear, with college students generally reporting higher self-confidence.

Conclusion and Implications

The observed differences in self-confidence between college and school students reflect the varying psychological and social challenges encountered at each stage of education. College students, who are typically navigating increased independence and new responsibilities, report higher self-confidence on average, but with more variability. School students, still within a more structured and supervised environment, report lower but more consistent self-confidence levels.

This analysis suggests that the development of self-confidence is closely linked to the transition from adolescence to early adulthood and influenced by the demands and opportunities provided at different educational stages. Future research could explore the specific factors that contribute to these differences, such as peer relationships, academic expectations, and extracurricular involvement, as well as interventions to support the development of self-confidence across both educational levels.

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