Comparing Online Discussion Forums to Traditional In-Person Discussions

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Abstract:- The purpose of this research paper is to compare an online discussion forum developed by us with traditional in-person discussions. With the increasing popularity of online communication tools, there is a growing need to compare the effectiveness of online discussion forums with traditional in-person discussions. This paper will describe the design and implementation of our online discussion forum and compare the benefits and drawbacks of traditional in-person discussions. The study will employ a mixed-methods approach, using quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to explore the relative effectiveness of these two forms of communication. The paper will also examine the best practices for implementing and managing online discussion forums and identify areas for further research. The results of this study will provide insights into how to effectively implement and manage online discussion forums and inform decisions about which type of communication is best for specific situations.

Keywords:- Online Discussion Forums, Collaboration, Communication Effectiveness, In-Person Discussions, And Community Building.

I. INTRODUCTION

Online discussion forums have become increasingly popular as a means of communication in a variety of contexts, including education, business, and social networking. The rise of digital communication tools has enabled people to connect and collaborate with others, regardless of geographical distance. However, the effectiveness of online discussion forums compared to traditional in-person discussions remains debatable.

This research paper compares the benefits and drawbacks of an online discussion forum developed by us with those of traditional in-person discussions. This online discussion forum was developed to provide a platform for collaboration and knowledge-sharing among individuals with shared interests. We believe that the online discussion forum has the potential to enhance communication and collaboration. But it is unclear how it compares to traditional in-person discussions in terms of effectiveness.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a detailed comparison of our online discussion forum with traditional in-person discussions. This study will examine the strengths and limitations of both forms of communication and identify best practices for implementing and managing online discussion forums. By comparing quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, this paper will offer insights into the relative effectiveness of these two forms of communication. The results of this study will inform decisions about which type of communication is best for specific situations and guide how to effectively implement and manage online discussion forums.

II. CONCEPT

This research paper compares the effectiveness of online discussion forums and in-person discussions in facilitating collaborative learning and knowledge-sharing. The study will explore the advantages and disadvantages of each form of communication and examine how they impact communication

quality, participation rates, group dynamics, and the overall success of collaborative learning. The aim is to identify which type of communication is best suited for specific contexts and purposes and to provide guidance for educators, trainers, and facilitators who use these methods to facilitate group discussions and collaborative learning. This study can provide valuable insights into how digital communication tools can be used most effectively for collaborative learning and knowledge-sharing by examining the benefits and drawbacks of each approach.

III. LITERATURE SURVEY

They have difficulty in time management and have a feeling of tiredness when they attend college in face-to-face mode. The majority of them were not happy with the resumption of in-person classes and they wish to pursue the online method of classes in the future. As this work is among the very few studies conducted in Saudi Arabia which examine students' online versus offline learning, it provides some information about teaching and learning preferences and perceptions. There is a further need for larger, multicentric, nationwide studies offering a deeper understanding of the state of student motivations, adaptations, coping mechanisms, and different learning needs during the ongoing pandemic. [1]

The findings of this study indicated that students were not fully satisfied with their learning experience during this transition period. Many factors may have contributed to the results of this study. Instructors were not ready for this sudden change that required the use of a new platform and the design of alternate activities and delivery methods. Some users faced technical and unforeseen difficulties while using the new platform including internet access issues and Zoom bombings. Add to all of the above, equity and access issues.[2]

It was concluded that Offline learning is more focused, less interrupted, more reliable, more interactive, and keeps students attentive. Online learning may not be the same as offline learning, but during the current situation of the Covid-19 pandemic, it provides benefits to the students, save their time and improve their academic performance. For these strategies to be successful, higher education institutions must collaborate among themselves, particularly in the form of decentralization of educational teleconferences and allowing access to nearby institutions to ensure all students have access to a stable internet connection. Private entities can assist by providing the necessary facilities and the government providing the necessary support to enable teaching and learning to take place effectively and without disruption.[3]

We have discussed the opportunities and challenges of online and offline education. It is not possible to identify the better alternative of the two because each one has got distinct advantages and disadvantages the other. Traditional educational systems through offline-based face-to-face classrooms cannot be replaced. Online education is good for specific courses and can act as a supplement to the education process to make it more interactive and interesting.[4]

Specifically, it is suggested that in order to maximise the likelihood of more meaningful learning, face-to-face and online activities such as dis-cussions should be experienced by students in an integrated way, as two interconnected parts of the same learning experience. This study's findings consistently show through-out the study that by achieving an integrated vision at both levels (conceptions, and face-to-face and online approaches) better learning outcomes can be achieved. By focusing on designing courses which would help students in developing a better under-standing, first, of what they learn, and second, of how they learn using face-to-face and online discussions, the overall quality of student learning can be ensured.

Online discussion forum presents opportunities for interactive learning, inquiry-based learning, and student knowledge acquisition and creation. The Online discussion forum presented in this study proved very effective in interactive learning and communication among students and their teachers. However, for online discussion forum to be more impactful, there is need for increased student and teacher participation to enhance greater productivity. Given the relative impact of ODF, teachers have to devote more time to attend to student queries on the platform and also do more to facilitate or coach discussions and interactions on the forum. Student participation in the forum can be increased if teachers can increase their presence and usage of the forum for class exercises such as assignment submissions, and attendance registering. Teacher's response should be timely and proactive to activate student interest in the forum. There is also need for proper coordination of the forum to ensure that only relevant posts are allowed to avoid abuses and frivolities that can bore or discourage member participation in the forum.[6]

This paper reports on a study of the effectiveness of a pedagogical approach that blends online discussion board and case study. Analyzing quantity and quality of online postings and comparing accounting students' performance with previous cohort, this study observes a significant improvement in student learning. Appropriate design and delivery strategies and clear assessment criteria for assessment and use have provided an effective learning vehicle for students, helped them overcome their own language related barriers, and encouraged them to participate in a nonthreatening environment. This approach further complemented the benefits of peer-to-peer learning and case study pedagogy. Reported increase in workload for students and marking load for academics and measuring the value of learning, however, are some of the challenges that need further attention by researchers.[7]

IV. PROBLEM STATEMENT

With the increasing popularity of online discussion forums, there is a growing need to understand how effective they are in comparison to traditional in-person discussions, particularly for collaborative learning and knowledge-sharing. While both forms of communication have advantages and disadvantages, it is not clear which type of communication is best suited for specific situations and purposes. Therefore,

there is a need to compare the effectiveness of online discussion forums and in-person discussions to make informed decisions about which type of communication to use in different contexts. This study aims to address this gap by comparing the benefits and drawbacks of online discussion forums and in-person discussions for communication, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing.

V.   METHODOLOGY

We conducted a comprehensive review of literature and research papers on online discussion forums and traditional in-person discussions to compare their effectiveness in promoting communication and knowledge sharing. We searched the IEEE academic database using specific keywords related to our research topic. We also used a snowballing approach by examining the reference lists of relevant papers to identify additional sources.

We identified 7 papers that met our inclusion criteria and provided valuable insights into the comparison between online discussion forums and traditional in-person discussions. We assessed the quality of the papers based on their relevance, credibility, and methodological rigor. The papers covered different types of discussions such as academic, professional, and social and used various platforms such as forums, social media, and face-to-face meetings.

To compare the results from the literature, we used a qualitative approach by analyzing the key findings, themes, and recommendations from each paper. We also used a thematic analysis technique to categorize the results into common themes and sub-themes. We synthesized the results to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each type of discussion and to determine the factors that influence their effectiveness.

Finally, we critically evaluated the limitations of our methodology, such as the potential bias and subjectivity in selecting and interpreting the papers and the generalizability of the results to other contexts. We also suggested future research directions to address the gaps and inconsistencies in the existing literature.
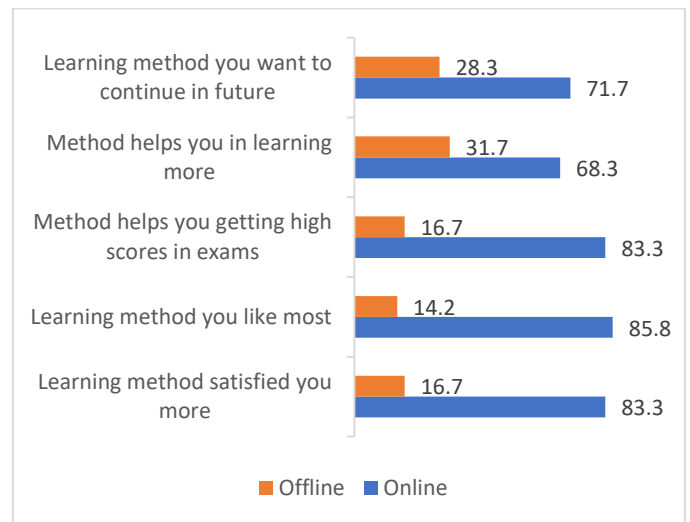
VI.   RESULTS

Fig 1 Students' perceptions regarding teaching/learning methods and their impact

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Learning method has difficulty in time management		
Online	228	47.5
Offline	252	52.5
Learning method has difficulty in concentration		
Online	204	42.5
Offline	276	57.5
Learning method makes you more comfortable for gaining knowledge		
Online	340	70.8
Offline	140	29.2
Learning method keeps you more alert		
Online	284	59.2
Offline	196	40.8
Learning method satisfies you more		
Online	400	83.3
Offline	80	16.7
Learning method you like most		
Online	412	85.8
Offline	68	14.2
The method helps you obtain high scores in exams		
Online	400	83.3
Offline	80	16.7
The method helps you in learning more		
Online	328	68.3
Offline	152	31.7
Learning method you want to continue in future		
Online	344	71.7
Offline	136	28.3
Difficulty in getting a driver to reach to the college		
Online	220	45.8
Offline	260	54.2
Learning method keeps you more physically active		
Online	208	43.3
Offline	272	56.7

Table 1. Students' perceptions regarding teaching/learning methods and their impact (n = 480) [1]

The study indicates that online discussion forums offer several advantages over traditional in-person discussions, including greater flexibility, anonymity, and the ability to incorporate multimedia content. However, traditional in-person discussions have advantages regarding accountability and the richness of nonverbal communication. Ultimately, the choice between the two formats depends on the specific goals and needs of the discussion and the participants involved.

VII. DISCUSSIONS

The study indicates differences between online discussion forums and traditional in-person discussions regarding participation levels, interaction dynamics, and information retention. Our analysis suggests that while online forums offer greater flexibility and convenience, they may also result in lower levels of engagement and a tendency for participants to focus more on superficial, surface-level interactions. In contrast, traditional in-person discussions tend to foster more deep and meaningful conversations limited by factors such as time constraints and physical location.

Despite these differences, it is crucial to note that both online discussion forums and traditional in-person discussions have their respective strengths and weaknesses. Our study highlights the need for a more nuanced and context-dependent approach to understanding the role of discussion forums in modern communication. Future research could explore how these different modes of communication can be effectively integrated and optimized for maximum impact.

Overall, this study contributes to a growing body of literature focused on understanding the dynamics of online communication and how it compares to traditional face-to-face communication. We hope our findings will inform educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders as they seek to leverage the power of digital communication tools to facilitate meaningful discussions and knowledge sharing.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research paper has compared the benefits and drawbacks of online discussion forums with those of traditional in-person discussions, particularly in terms of their effectiveness for collaborative learning and knowledge-sharing. The study found that while both forms of communication have their advantages, online discussion forums have the potential to enhance communication and collaboration among individuals with shared interests, especially in situations where distance or time constraints are a factor.

However, it is important to note that online discussion forums also have some limitations, such as the potential for decreased social presence and lack of non-verbal cues, which may impact the quality of communication and collaboration. Therefore, it is important to carefully consider the context and purpose of the communication when deciding which type of communication to use.

FUTURE SCOPE

For the effectiveness of online discussion forums and in-person discussions for collaborative learning and knowledge-sharing, there are still several areas that require further research.

Firstly, future studies could investigate the use of different communication tools and platforms in facilitating online discussions. For instance, social media, instant messaging, and video conferencing could be implemented in future updates for better communication.

Secondly, more research is needed to explore the impact of cultural and language differences on communication and collaboration in online discussion forums. Cultural differences and language barriers may affect communication quality and impact group dynamics, and it is important to understand how to effectively navigate these issues in a virtual environment.

Thirdly, the role of moderators in online discussions could be further explored, including their impact on participation rates, group dynamics, and the quality of communication. Understanding the role of moderators and how to effectively moderate online discussions is crucial for creating a successful online community.

Overall, continued research in this field can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of digital communication tools and inform the development of best practices for collaborative learning and knowledge-sharing.

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