

## Impact of Covid-19 on Hospitality Education in India: Students' Perspectives

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**Abstract:** *The covid-19 pandemic has disturbed the balance in the life of human beings. It has negatively impacted all spheres of life. Hospitality education is one of the highly affected areas in higher education because hospitality education focuses on developing service attitudes and service traits among future employees of the industry. The best results could only be achieved by continuous training and practice but after a complete lockdown in the country, all the education institutes were closed and online education was the new form adopted by academia to disseminate the knowledge. However, this helped in completing the theoretical part only, the practical part remained unattended. The study is purely based on the primary data collected through Google Forms that were distributed using various social media tools like WhatsApp. The study was based on the perspectives of students about the impact of Covid-19 on hospitality education. A total of 499 responses were recorded during the survey. The pie chart is used to describe the percentage of responses.*

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Hospitality Education, Hospitality and Tourism, Online Classes, Students' Perspectives

### Introduction

The impacts of Covid-19 are seen throughout the world. It has changed human life drastically. “The COVID-19 pandemic has spread with alarming speed, infecting millions and bringing economic activity to a near-standstill as countries imposed tight restrictions on movement to halt the spread of the virus” (worldbank.org). The world’s hardest-hit industry is the Hospitality and Tourism Industry, according to (ILO, 2020), the hospitality industry is highly affected due to the Covid-19 pandemic. RBI (Reserve Bank of India) said based on its Systematic Risk Survey (SRS), India’s Hospitality and Tourism sector is affected more severely due to Covid-19 Pandemic. Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) has estimated a loss of Rs. 10 Lakh Crore in the tourism sector of India. The effects of Covid-19 are worsening continuously in the hospitality and tourism sector by enlarging the unemployment rate. (Radhakrishna, 2020) in his study mentions 70 percent job loss of the hospitality and tourism manpower which counts to around 38 million.

It has impacted higher education in many ways, including shifting from physical presence in class teaching to online mode teaching and learning, cancellation of events and activities that require physical presence, and the formation of new normal in higher education (Tesar, 2020). Although it has brought new challenges in teaching hospitality education, it has also bought new opportunities to develop new methodologies of teaching and strengthening ICT among the teachers and students.

The influence of Covid-19 is significant in hospitality education as the training and learning involve more physical activities like role plays, cooking, serving, and room management. Apart from hard skills (technical skills), soft skills (behavioral skills) also need to be developed among the students as it is a service industry where a more personal touch is required to achieve consumer satisfaction. To inculcate industry-demanded skills among students’ physical presence in the class is required.

This study is set out against the context outlined above to examine how students of hospitality education in India respond to the crisis resulting due to Covid-19. A questionnaire instrument was used to collect the responses of hospitality students. First-year students were kept out because they have not attended offline/physical presence classes. Only second-year and final-year students were taken for the survey.

In March 2020, WHO announced the COVID-19 outbreak as a global pandemic. India was on a 14-hour voluntary public curfew on 22 March and On 23 March 2020; the Indian government announced the first lockdown for 21 days. Since then, most of the business activities, transportation, and all types of education institutes were shut down (India goes into 21-day lockdown, 2020). The academia was not prepared for such a shock, but it prepared itself very fast to handle the situation and face the challenges. Institutes started

organizing online Webinars to disseminate knowledge, they approached specialists in the field, and also classes were organized using various online portals like- Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams.

Apex institutes to teach hospitality education in India are Institutes of Hotel Management (IHM). For the study students of IHMs situated in different geographical areas were considered, however Admission to these IHMs is done through the All India Joint Entrance Exam, so the effect of regional Geography is minimal. The researcher of the study wanted to avoid any possibility of biases so IHM Bhopal, Gwalior from the center, IHM Dehradun from the north, IHM Hamirpur from the far north, IHM Ahmedabad from the west, and IHMs from South India were chosen.

## Method

The study was carried out in the month of January 2021, when the educational institutions started resuming physical classes. It was focused on hospitality education and students' experiences during the pandemic COVID-19. The purpose of the study was to assess the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on hospitality education from the student's perspective.

The study used previous relevant research papers/articles/reports as secondary data. The primary data was collected using a questionnaire on Google Docs (forms), and the link of the same was circulated among the students through WhatsApp and email-ids. A total of 499 responses were received. The responses were received randomly.

## Research Questions

The aim of this study was to consider the impact of COVID-19 on hospitality education from students' perspective. It is guided by four questions:

1. Whether the time of study due to online classes reduced or remained the same?
2. The motivation for learning in comparison to physical classes remained the same or reduced?
3. Did you face any issues attending the classes due to the internet network?
4. Did you find that physical classes helped you more in developing a service attitude than online?

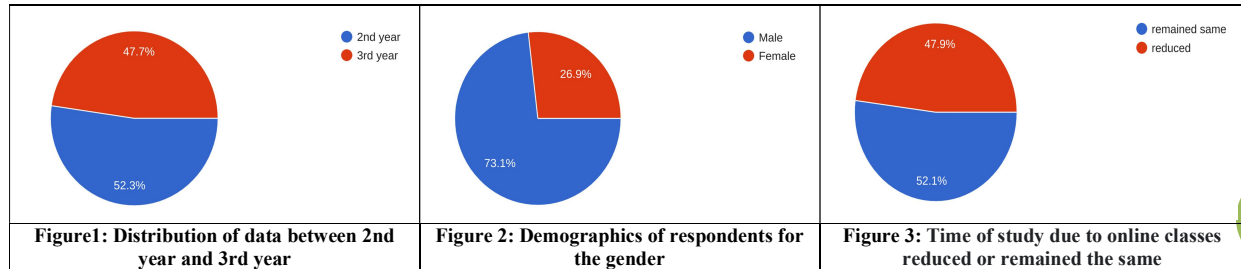
## Literature Review

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected academia in a drastic way. It has affected 90 percent of the student population around the world, and more than 1.5 bl students are out of school in over 190 countries (<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/education-response/global-coalition>). The situation is more critical in hospitality education but institutes are trying to bring the situation under control by adopting online platforms to meet the needs of the hour. The previous SARS outbreak also placed a strong negative impact on hospitality and tourism education in Hong Kong (Law, 2005).

(Shivangi Dhawan, 2020) expresses in her study that a pandemic like Covid-19, which is a natural disaster, creates more serious problems in the learning of students because of the closure of all the academic institutions as Covid-19 is very much communicative in nature. Due to the countrywide lockdown teaching face-to-face was suddenly turned into a system where dissemination of education was being done through online platforms. Online learning is based on collaborative tools such as blogs, wikis, and social media and it augments connectivity concepts and principles (M. Keramida,2020). The service approach helps transform higher education (L. Bunce et al.2017, M. Zhurba, et al, 2020, V.Okulich-Kazarin, 2020). By 27 March 2020, nearly 90 percent of the world's student population was out of class (WHO). (Zamira Hyseni Duraku and Linda Hoxha, 2020) believe that paying attention during online classes is a bit difficult for students due to a number of reasons like Noise, Distraction, too many assignments, Ambiguity about the results, Time management, etc. Students especially in countries like India are not prepared for such kind of sudden changes. The financial conditions and less ICT knowledge put extra stress on the students. Also, online platforms do not provide the same opportunities as offline classes for clearing doubts and raising inquiries. Staying home all the time also brings an uneasy situation for studies.

## Analysis

Primary data was collected using a questionnaire which was shared through social media platforms. Total responses received were 499 and the population chosen comprises 2<sup>nd</sup>-year and 3<sup>rd</sup>-year students' demographics of the data were as shown in figure-1 and figure-2.

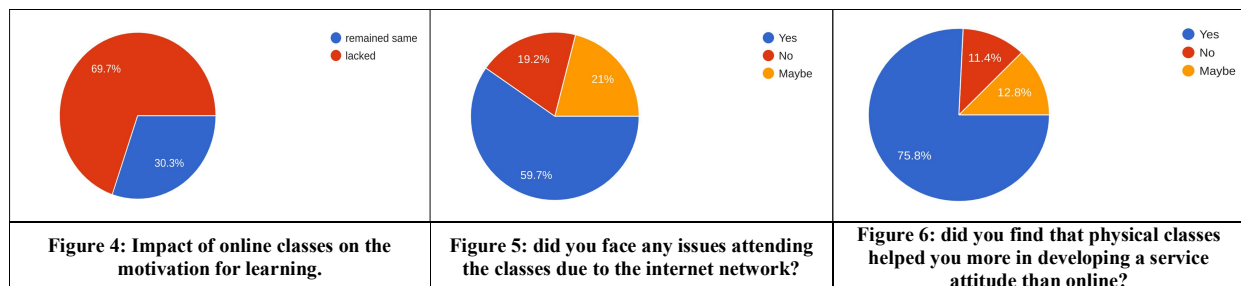


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As shown in figure-1 data was almost equally distributed between 2nd year and 3rd year. The responses received were 499 out of those from the 3rd year 238 (47.7%) and the 2nd year 261(52.3%). They were chosen for study because they have attended physical classes and can easily differentiate the impact on learning between physical and online classes.

As shown in the above figure male respondents were 365 (73.1%) and female respondents were 134 (26.9%). Figure-3 addresses the first question of the study. Whether study time was reduced due to online classes or it remained the same as physical classes?

The responses show a very ambiguous result as we can see 260 (52.1%) respondents said that there is no impact of teaching methods (online/offline) on study time. It remained the same as earlier. However, 239 (47.9%) respondents were of the thought that study time reduced due to online classes. From the results we can see that there was no significant difference between physical or online classes on the study time of students however there was an impact that reduced the overall study timing of the students. Figure-4 addresses the 2nd question of the study.



As shown in the above figure the motivation for learning in comparison to physical classes, 348 (69.7%) respondents believed that motivation was lacking in online classes and 151 (30.3%) respondents said that it remained the same. By seeing the outcome of the responses we come to conclude that in physical classes where teachers and students are present face to face, motivation for learning gets high. The encouragement and motivation for learning by teachers, helps students to modify their attitude positively. As hospitality education requires more and more training to inculcate a service attitude, the environment of motivation helps them achieve that. Figure-5 addresses the 3rd question of the study.

India ranked 131 out of 138 countries in mobile internet speed (Economic Times, 2020) which is based on Ookla's report. According to Newzoo's 2019 Global Mobile Market Report, India ranked 18, and 502.2m people were active smartphone users. Most of these students were attending their classes on their smartphones. On the question about the issues during online classes, 298 (59.7%) students admitted that they faced an issue attending classes due to the internet /network; only 96 (19.2%) students said that there was no issue however 105 (21%) students were not clear in their response and their responded in Maybe. Figure-6 addresses the 4th question of the study.

The hospitality industry is a service industry that needs people working, with a service attitude. When the question was asked the students about their experience of developing a service attitude in different styles of teaching then 378 (75.8%) students accepted that they learned more and developed more in terms of service

attitude in physical classes in comparison to online classes. Only 57 (11.4%) students found no difference and 64 (12.8%) students answered Maybe.

## Result

The result of the survey indicates that for almost half of the students, online classes have no impact on study time it remained the same but the rest half accepted that their study time was reduced which is a negative side of online classes. The reason could be the answer to the second question about motivation. Maximum (69.7%) students agreed that physical classes had more motivation for their studies than online classes. During physical classes face to face presentations and assignments kept them motivated. Another thing that was serious to be addressed was the internet network issue. Students faced the issue because of rural areas or deep countryside areas where connectivity was not good. Students also answered in favor of physical classes in terms of developing a service attitude. They find that a service attitude can be developed by physical training and practice which was lacking during online classes. They were able to differentiate because they had earlier attended offline classes also.

## Conclusion

Based on the analysis and results researchers conclude that online classes were the only option left with academia to keep the dissemination of knowledge continuous as the whole country was under lockdown, and all educational institutes were closed. However, the results were not very fruitful or positive towards online classes in hospitality education where attitude and traits are developed by continuous practice. The theoretical part was covered well by the faculties, new methods and techniques were adopted to make students learn, and online presentations and assignments were completed. As India is a country where 70% area is a rural area and internet network connectivity is still an issue especially if we talk about the mobile network. Most of the students were using their smartphones to attend classes because not all could afford the Laptop and broadband service. It was also an increased cost during the pandemic to purchase the data for attending day-long online classes. The experience of the students based on their answers in the survey found mixed however it was more inclined towards the uneasiness and lacked in terms of developing high-quality future employees. The required technical skills for the hospitality industry cannot be learned theoretically, students need to apply their theoretical knowledge in real practice or environment to adopt them.

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