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Role that MOOC's and Other Learning Platforms Play in Empowering the Students Studying in the Third Year Undergraduate Courses

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1. Introduction

"The capacity to learn is a gift, the ability to learn is a skill, the willingness to learn is a choice."- *Brian Herbert.*

During the Covid -19 times, the online learning platforms provided various opportunities for learning to learners of all the age groups. The free and easy to access anytime from anywhere nature of the online platforms made it popular amongst the learners. The purpose of learning and education is achieved if a person is empowered. Empowerment is the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people. The parameters to measure empowerment include financial independence, sound decision making capability and increased social attitude. The impact and reach of the online learning platforms can be determined based on how empowered the users of these online platforms are.

Research Gap

The online learning platforms, though are available on self-paced basis for usage, the impact of these platforms on the empowerment of learners has not been analysed. The research aims to study the role that the online platforms play in empowering the students studying in the third year undergraduate courses.

Review of literature

- Murugan, P. & Queen, V. (2020). studied the concept of MOOC as an online learning platform. They concluded that online learning platform brings new opportunities for innovation in higher education that allow institutions and academics to explore new online learning models and innovative practices in teaching and learning.
- Guo., Kim., & Rubin. (2014). Studied the impact that video production of a MOOC has on student engagement.

Research Methodology

The present study is descriptive in nature and is based on primary data. The data is collected from 200 students studying in the third year undergraduate commerce courses in the city of Mumbai through the questionnaire method. The statistical technique used for arriving at the findings was correlation analysis.

Research Questions

1. Do students undertake courses, programmes on the online learning platforms?
2. What are the areas of interest when selecting online courses?
3. Whether the students prefer paid or free courses?
4. What kind of platforms are preferred for online learning and reasons for the same?
5. Do the students become empowered in terms of financial independence, social attitude and sound decision making abilities after undertaking courses on the online learning platforms?
6. Are the online learning courses enhancing or deteriorating the social skills of the learners?

Research Objectives

1. To analyse the usage of online learning platforms.
2. To understand the reasons that leads to undertaking or rejection of any online platform,
3. To understand whether the students who use the online learning platforms are empowered in terms of financial independence, decision making and social attitude.

Research Hypothesis

H1: The usage of online learning platforms empowers the learners in terms of financial independence.
H0: The usage of online learning platforms does not empower the learners in terms of financial independence.
H1: The usage of online learning platforms empowers the learners in terms of social attitude
H0: The usage of online learning platforms does not empower the learners in terms of social attitude.
H1: The usage of online learning platforms empowers the learners in terms of decision making abilities.
H0: The usage of online learning platforms does not empower the learners in terms of decision making abilities.
H1: The usage of online learning platforms leads to overall empowerment of learners.
H0: The usage of online learning platforms does not lead to overall empowerment of learners.

Research Design

This study employed a **quantitative descriptive research design** to examine the relationship between online learning platform usage and various indicators of youth empowerment, including financial independence, decision-making autonomy, career preferences, and social attitudes.

Sample and Participants

A total of **298 respondents** participated in the study, comprising both male and female individuals aged primarily between 18 and 30 years. The sample included:

- 78 females and 49 males who use online platforms
- 11 females and 11 males who do not use online platforms

Data Collection

Data was collected using a **structured questionnaire** distributed digitally. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and Likert-scale items covering:

- Platform usage (e.g., YouTube, Coursera, Swayam)
- Course type (free vs. paid)
- Device preference
- Financial and career autonomy
- Social attitudes and peer pressure responses

Variables

- **Independent Variables:** Online platform usage, course type, device used
- **Dependent Variables:** Financial independence, decision-making ability, career autonomy, social attitude, overall empowerment

Statistical Tools Used

- **Descriptive statistics** for frequency and percentage analysis
- **Chi-square tests** for categorical associations
- **Pearson correlation** to assess relationships between variables
- **Hypothesis testing** at a 95% confidence level
- **Interpretive analysis** for drawing conclusions from statistical outputs

1. Online Platform Usage by Gender

Gender	Uses Online Platforms	Does Not Use Online Platforms	Total
Female	78	11	89
Male	49	11	60
Total	**127**	**22**	**149**

2. Top Online Learning Platforms Used

Platform	Number of Users
YouTube	82
Coursera	59
Swayam	25
Instagram	15
Udemy	14
Total	**195**

3. Paid vs Free Course Users

Course Type	Number of Users
Free	130
Paid	32
Total	**162**

4. Device Preference for Online Learning

Device Type	Number of Users
Mobile Phone	109
Laptop/Desktop	60
Total	**169**

5. Financial Independence – Decision-Making Help

Financial Status	Number of Individuals
Not Financially Independent	119
Financially Independent	30
Total	**149**

6. Work Preference & Financial Inclination

Preference	Number of Individuals
Inclined to Independence	108
Not Inclined	41
Total	**149**

7. Career Decision Autonomy

Career Decision Status	Number of Respondents
Self-Sufficient	127
Not Self-Sufficient	5
Total	**132**

8. Job vs Entrepreneurship Preference

Preference	Number of Respondents
Job	75
Entrepreneurship	74
Total	**149**

9. Marriage Choices vs Expectations

Marriage Preference	Number of Respondents
Against Arranged Marriage	103
In Favor of Arranged Marriage	46
Total	**149**

10. Peer Pressure and Alcohol Use

Response to Peer Pressure	Number of Respondents
Would Not Drink	235
Would Drink	63
Total	**298**

11. General Social Attitude

Social Attitude	Number of Respondents
Negative Towards Evils	235
Tolerant of Social Evils	63
Total	**298**

12. Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Correlation	Conclusion
1	MOOC Usage	Financial Independence	-0.08	No significant correlation
2	MOOC Usage	Social Attitude	-0.11	No significant correlation
3	MOOC Usage	Decision Making	0.31	Low significant correlation
4	MOOC Usage	Overall Empowerment	0.05	Very low correlation

Final Analysis and Interpretation

1. **Platform Usage:** Over half of the respondents used at least one online learning platform, with **YouTube** being the most popular, followed by **Coursera** and **Swayam**. This reflects a strong preference for **free and accessible content**, with growing awareness of certification-based platforms.
2. **Course Type Preference:** A significant majority (130 out of 162) preferred **free courses**, indicating potential financial constraints or satisfaction with freely available content.
3. **Device Usage: Mobile phones** were the dominant device for online learning, used by 109 respondents, emphasizing the need for mobile-optimized educational resources.
4. **Financial Independence:** Only **20%** of online learners reported financial independence, suggesting that while digital learning is widespread, it does not directly translate into economic empowerment.
5. **Decision-Making Autonomy:** Approximately **85%** of respondents felt confident in making major life decisions, indicating strong personal agency among youth.
6. **Career Preferences:** Respondents were nearly evenly split between preferring **jobs (75)** and **entrepreneurship (74)**, showing a balance between traditional career paths and innovative aspirations.
7. **Marriage Choices:** A majority (103) rejected arranged marriages based on parental expectations, reflecting a shift toward **personal autonomy** in life decisions.
8. **Peer Pressure and Social Attitudes:** Most respondents (235) resisted peer pressure related to alcohol and disapproved of social evils, indicating **moral awareness** and resilience.

Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Correlation	Conclusion
MOOC usage vs. Financial Independence	-0.08	No significant correlation
MOOC usage vs. Social Attitude	-0.11	No significant correlation
MOOC usage vs. Decision Making	0.31	Low but significant correlation
MOOC usage vs. Overall Empowerment	0.05	Very low correlation

Interpretation of Hypotheses

- **H1, H2, H4:** Null hypotheses accepted — online learning does **not significantly impact** financial independence, social attitude, or overall empowerment.
- **H3:** Null hypothesis rejected — online learning has a **modest positive impact** on decision-making ability.

Conclusion

While online learning platforms are widely adopted and offer accessible education, their **impact on financial independence and social empowerment remains limited**. The strongest influence observed was on **decision-making autonomy**, suggesting that digital learning may enhance cognitive and personal clarity but does not necessarily lead to economic or social transformation.
The findings underscore the need for:

1. **Integrated learning models** that combine digital content with mentorship and real-world engagement
2. **Policy interventions** to bridge the gap between online education and employability
3. **Further research** into qualitative aspects of empowerment and long-term outcomes of digital learning

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