



GENDER BASED INFLUENCE ON THE ATTITUDE OF IN-SERVICE SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS BLENDED LEARNING DURING THE PREVAILING PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The impact of the pandemic has not only been felt in the field of education but has affected all sectors of the global society. The pandemic is a strong indication of the fact that things will not be the same as they were before even though this will end. Closures of the educational institutes in India due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to online learning have affected not only learning of students but also professional growth of teachers as well. The incorporation of technological resources effectively and innovative educational pedagogies have transformed the teaching and learning processes. Post-pandemic things will not be the same because of which many research scholars, policy makers and educationalists believe that a blended learning approach will become the future reality, the new normal and sustainable pedagogy. During this time, teachers working in various types of educational institutions are getting an opportunity of being learners. The current paper emphasizes a proactive strategy where not only students but teachers are also considered as learners while talking about their professional growth through various seminars, conferences and refresher courses. The present study was undertaken to find out the readiness of in-service school teachers in order to adapt blended learning when related to gender and medium of instruction of their educational institute. Total respondents consisted of 169 in-service school teachers from India belonging to various schools having English, Hindi, Marathi, Telegu, Kannada, Urdu etc as their medium of instruction. The results indicated that both male and female in-service school teachers have similar attitudes towards blended learning but their attitudes varied while considering the six dimensions. Similarly, male and female school teachers belonging to institutes having English as medium of instruction and other languages as medium of instruction had the same attitude towards blended learning but varied in dimensions of blended learning.

Key Words: *Blended Learning, Online Learning, Classroom Learning, Online Interaction, In-Service School Teachers*



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The prevailing era is digitalized where all the information required is just a touch away. Even the educational system in the entire world inclusive India is not untouched. The prevailing pandemic that has affected the globe drastically has added fuel to fire and the need of hour is to modify the learning environment not only for students but for teachers



as well, where the tables have turned round and the role of teachers has now become that of learners which incorporates the benefits of online and offline learning. Thus, the concept of blended learning arises which proves to be the future of tomorrow and the most sustainable pedagogy post pandemic. Blended environment therefore is the best possible solution for continuous and meaningful learning where teachers irrespective of their location can develop their careers which will help them prosper professionally. (Shivam & Singh, 2015)

Blended learning as a learning process in which more than one delivery mode that can be online-offline is used with the objective of successfully reaching the learning outcome (Singh & Reed 2001). The concept of blended learning has been rooted in the idea that learning is not a one-time event, in fact it is a continuous process that occurs throughout lifetime (Singh, 2003). This makes it clear that the main objective of blended learning is to focus on lifelong learning which is the major aim of Indian educational society irrespective of age, gender, tribe, caste, creed, language, etc.

The sudden outbreak of the pandemic declared by the World Health Organization which has arisen by the Corona Virus (SARS-CoV-2) which is called Covid-19 which has shaken the entire world drastically. This situation has challenged all the sectors of the society including the education system across the world and has forced the educators to shift to an online mode of teaching overnight which is the only best fit option available till the pandemic doesn't end. Many educational institutions that were previously reluctant to change their traditional method of teaching-learning had no other option but to shift entirely to online mode. (Dhawan, 2020)

The future is very uncertain as anything can happen at any moment with the new strain of COVID-19 and lockdowns looming, educational institutes are reviewing, analysing and rethinking the best pedagogical approaches that can be adopted for future learners which are safe, sustainable, stimulating and at the same time help in achieving learning objectives of the prescribes courses. Jessop (2020) acknowledges that the pandemic has provided the opportunity to re-imagine and re-construct the pedagogical approaches being used and calls for action that will help change the perspective of education soon. Fullan et al. (2020) also lays emphasis that the disruption that has been caused to the educational field like schools, colleges, etc being shut down because of the lockdown has required quick thinking and actions that can help to navigate uncertainty.

Teaching and learning are the processes that cannot be separated from each other, in fact are linked together. Teachers as correctly quoted are professional learners. Teachers must transfer their abilities of learning to their students continuously and also be updated with the emerging trend in field of education. For continuous learning teachers normally attend seminars, refresher courses offline and utilize the opportunities provided by the educational institutes for their professional growth. Due to the pandemic various webinars, online conferences, workshops were organized in order to make teachers familiar with the web-based platforms, mobile apps, software's etc. that can be utilized by them in order to teach their students. The role of teachers has switched from teachers to learners where learning is the priority.

The current paper reflects the role of teachers as learners where blended approach is the ultimate option that will be adopted for their professional growth involving online and offline mode which will not require them to be physically present all the time, thus the social norms will be obeyed and learning will be achieved. Before considering the blended learning approach as the best fit approach it is necessary to understand the readiness and attitude of teachers towards blended learning. The present paper takes into consideration the attitude of male and female school teachers towards blended learning and its six dimensions viz. learning flexibility, online learning, study management, technology,



classroom learning and online interaction. Also, the medium of instruction of the schools was taken in consideration for the present study.

Background

Several researches globally including that of Hirata Yoko and Hirata Yoshihiro (2008) identified that most of the learners had more inclination towards online learning than the traditional classes. Hence, a combination of online learning and face-to-face learning was advantageous for learners. The study identified that some instructional factors, such as flexibility, goal-focused approach, as well as closely connected relationships between in-class and online instructions are indispensable for students to learn a set of skills and strategies that are important for successful language learners in hybrid learning environments.

When considering the blended form of learning, the teacher's role plays an important factor for learners' successful and enriching learning experiences. Teaching presence and teaching immediacy are important factors affecting traditional methodology like face-to-face class settings (Witt et al, 2004). It becomes prudent to study the influences of these two factors in an online class environment (Baker, 2010). Another aspect that one should consider is the engagement of students in activities which are usually easily done in the face-to-face set-up but are equally challenging in online form of learning.

According to La Roche and Flanigan (2012) student engagement are those activities that involve students' cognition processes that are active. This, developing and delivering instruction along with learning activities and assignments aimed towards involving learners in online class environments. This is required for student engagement in an online class context. The challenge of keeping the students engaged and motivated is common across grade levels, subject matter, and all types of institutions and courses. Online courses, however, present a special concern where students and faculties are in contact only through the Internet because of which several new challenges arise. Grandzol (2006) discussed that empirical evidence of best practices are the most effective in finding pedagogies that help create virtual, engaging and interesting online courses with a tech savvy environment. Garrison suggests that teaching in the presence of online learning environments is an important factor influencing learners' experiences. He states that the consensus is that teaching presence acts as a significant determinant of students personal satisfaction, perceived learning and also develops a sense of community" (Garrison, 2007).

These challenges and conditions are faced globally by apex institutions of the first world countries where the high-speed internet, tablet/laptop are basic essentials. Several Indian institutions are following global curriculums and have picked up the cut of blended learning form their international parent set-ups. For the local schools, in the present situations, a new mode of learning environment is a need of the hour. Blended Learning is yet an emerging trend of teaching where the teachers themselves have not thoroughly experienced it. Blended learning in Indian context lays emphasis on a strategic and systematic approach which combines times and various modes of learning, integrating the best aspects of face-to-face traditional methods and online interactions for each discipline individually, using appropriate ICTs (Pandey, 2019). In essence, there is a blending of flexible learning and teaching experiences that may involve assessment, teacher/student communication, student activities, teaching activities and students' resources. For this, understating the readiness of teachers is pivotal for the success of this change.

Research Methodology, Sampling And Tool

The present study adopted a descriptive survey method for collecting data. The sample consisting of 169 school



teachers teaching at pre-primary, primary and secondary sections from all over India was selected by simple random technique. Data was collected by circulating google forms in order to collect data during COVID 19 pandemic. Out of the total sample which consisted of in-service school teachers 24 were male teachers and 145 were female teachers. 131 female teachers and 14 male teachers belonged to English medium schools and 14 female school teachers and 10 male teachers were from other mediums. The questionnaire for the present study was adapted from Birbal et al. (2018) study on learners' readiness for blended learning. The instrument consisted of 34 items that measured learners' attitudes towards six different aspects of blended learning: 4 items were pertaining to learning flexibility; 8 items were pertaining to online learning; 6 items were pertaining to study management; 4 items were pertaining to technology; 5 items were pertaining to classroom learning and 7 items were pertaining to online interaction. Relevant descriptive and inferential analysis were used for hypothesis testing. The table below represents the sample size of the study based on gender and medium of instruction of educational institutes where the teachers are presently teaching.

Table 1: Sample Size for the Present Study

	Variables		N	Total	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male		24	169	14.21
	Female		145		85.79
Medium of instruction of Schools	Male	English	14	24	58.33
		Others	10		4.17
	Female	English	131	145	90.34
		Others	14		9.66

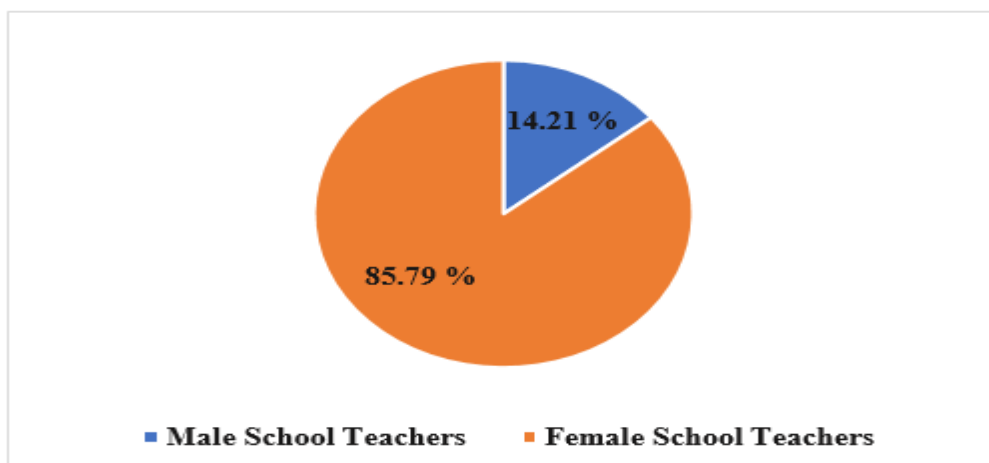


Figure 1: Pie Chart Representing Sample Size Based on Gender

The above figure 1 represents the pie chart of sample size of in-service school teachers based on gender. Out of 169 teachers 85.79% were Female teachers and 14.21% were Male teachers.


Hypothesis testing and interpretation:

t test was used for testing the null hypothesis. The following null hypothesis were framed for the present study:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female in-service school teachers towards blended learning and following six factors affecting it:

- Learning Flexibility
- Online Learning
- Study Management
- Technology
- Classroom
- Online Interaction

Table 2 represents the Attitude of Male and Female In-Service School Teachers towards Blended Learning and its Dimensions.

Table 2: Attitude of Male and Female In-Service School Teachers towards Blended Learning and its Dimensions

	Gender	Mean	t value	Sig. (2-tailed)
BL	Female	125.55	1.54	0.12
	Male	133.58		
F1	Female	14.81	0.41	0.67
	Male	14.46		
F2	Female	27.54	2.66	0.01*
	Male	30.88		
F3	Female	19.32	2.60	0.01*
	Male	21.67		
F4	Female	14.58	1.08	0.27
	Male	15.46		
F5	Female	18.93	0.14	0.88
	Male	19.08		
F6	Female	30.38	1.14	0.25
	Male	32.04		

(BL= Blended Learning, F1= Learning Flexibility, F2= Online Learning, F3= Study Management, F4= Technology, F5= Classroom Learning and F6= Online Interaction)

The t value for attitude of male and female in-service school teachers towards blended learning was found to be 1.54 and p value was found to be .124 which is not significant at 0.05 level and 0.01 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted for BL.

The t value for attitude of male and female in-service school teachers towards Learning Flexibility, Technology, Classroom Learning and Online Interaction was found to be .416, 1.086, .149 and 1.140 respectively and the p value was found to be .678, .279, .882 and .256 respectively which is not significant at 0.05 level and 0.01 level. Therefore,



the null hypothesis is accepted for the above dimensions of blended learning.

The t value for attitude of male and female in-service school teachers towards Online Learning and Study Management was found to be 2.666 and 2.601 respectively and p value was found to be 0.008 and 0.010 respectively which is significant at 0.01 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected as far as the above two dimensions of blended learning are considered. The mean value for female in-service teachers towards online learning was 27.5379 and for males it was 30.8750. The mean value for female in-service teachers towards study management was 19.3172 and for males it was 21.6667. The mean score for male in-service teachers is greater than that of female in-service teachers with respect to online learning and study management. This indicates that male in-service school teachers have a higher attitude towards online learning and study management as compared to female teachers.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female school teachers who belong to educational institutes having English and other languages as medium of instruction towards blended learning and following six factors affecting it:

- Learning Flexibility
- Online Learning
- Study Management
- Technology
- Classroom
- Online Interaction

Table 3: Attitude of School Teachers who Belong to Educational Institutes having English and Other Languages as Medium of Instruction towards Blended Learning and its Six Dimensions

	Medium of Instruction of Educational Institutes	Mean	t value	Sig. (2-tailed)
BL	English Medium Male	138.00	0.45	0.66
	Other Mediums Male	131.50		
	English Medium Female	125.07	1.3	0.19
	Other Mediums Female	132.78		
F1	English Medium Male	16.21	1.95	0.06
	Other Mediums Male	12.10		
	English Medium Female	14.76	0.42	0.67
	Other Mediums Female	15.14		
F2	English Medium Male	30.36	0.46	0.65
	Other Mediums Male	32.00		
	English Medium Female	27.49	1.41	0.16
	Other Mediums Female	29.50		
F3	English Medium Male	22.36	0.55	0.59
	Other Mediums Male	21.00		
	English Medium Female	19.17	1.98	0.04*
	Other Mediums Female	21.14		



F4	English Medium Male	16.43	0.64	0.53
	Other Mediums Male	15.30		
	English Medium Female	14.53	0.18	0.85
	Other Mediums Female	14.71		
F5	English Medium Male	18.93	0.16	0.87
	Other Mediums Male	19.30		
	English Medium Female	18.82	1.29	1.99
	Other Mediums Female	20.43		
F6	English Medium Male	33.71	0.49	0.62
	Other Mediums Male	31.80		
	English Medium Female	30.29	0.92	0.35
	Other Mediums Female	31.86		

(BL= Blended Learning, F1= Learning Flexibility, F2= Online Learning, F3= Study Management, F4= Technology, F5= Classroom Learning and F6= Online Interaction)

The t value and p value for the attitude of male school teachers belonging to English and other mediums of instruction towards blended learning was found to be 0.45 and 0.66 respectively which is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, both male teachers belonging to educational institutes having English and other languages as means of instruction have similar attitudes towards blended learning.

The t value and p value for the attitude of female school teachers belonging to English and other mediums of instruction towards blended learning was found to be 1.30 and 0.19 respectively which is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, both female teachers belonging to educational institutes having English and other languages as means of instruction have similar attitudes towards blended learning.

The t value and p value for the attitude of male school teachers belonging to English and other mediums of instruction towards learning flexibility was found to be 1.95 and 0.06 respectively which is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, both male teachers belonging to educational institutes having English and other languages as means of instruction have similar attitudes towards learning flexibility dimension of blended learning.

The t value and p value for the attitude of female school teachers belonging to English and other medium of instruction towards learning flexibility was found to be 0.42 and 0.67 respectively which is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, both female teachers belonging to educational institutes having English and other languages as means of instruction have similar attitudes towards learning flexibility dimension of blended learning.

The t value and p value for the attitude of male school teachers belonging to English and other mediums of instruction towards online learning was found to be 0.46 and 0.65 respectively which is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, both male teachers belonging to educational institutes having English and other languages as means of instruction have similar attitudes towards online learning dimension of blended learning.

The t value and p value for the attitude of female school teachers belonging to English and other mediums of instruction towards online learning was found to be 1.41 and 0.16 respectively which is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, both female teachers belonging to educational institutes having English and other languages as means of instruction have similar attitudes towards online learning dimension of blended learning.



The t value and p value for the attitude of male school teachers belonging to English and other mediums of instruction towards study management was found to be 0.55 and 0.59 respectively which is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, both male teachers belonging to educational institutes having English and other languages as means of instruction have similar attitudes towards studying management dimension of blended learning. The t value and p value for the attitude of female school teachers belonging to English and other mediums of instruction towards learning flexibility was found to be 1.98 and 0.04 respectively which is significant at 0.05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, female teachers belonging to educational institutes having other languages as medium of instruction have a higher attitude towards studying management dimension of blended learning as compared to English medium female teachers.

The t value and p value for the attitude of male school teachers belonging to English and other mediums of instruction towards technology was found to be 0.64 and 0.53 respectively which is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, both male teachers belonging to educational institutes having English and other languages as means of instruction have similar attitudes towards technology dimension of blended learning.

The t value and p value for the attitude of female school teachers belonging to English and other mediums of instruction towards learning flexibility was found to be 0.18 and 0.85 respectively which is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, both female teachers belonging to educational institutes having English and other languages as means of instruction have similar attitudes towards learning flexibility dimension of blended learning.

The t value and p value for the attitude of male school teachers belonging to English and other mediums of instruction towards classroom learning was found to be 0.16 and 0.87 respectively which is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, both male teachers belonging to educational institutes having English and other languages as means of instruction have similar attitudes towards classroom learning dimension of blended learning.

The t value and p value for the attitude of female school teachers belonging to English and other mediums of instruction towards classroom learning was found to be 1.29 and 1.99 respectively which is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, both female teachers belonging to educational institutes having English and other languages as means of instruction have similar attitudes towards classroom learning dimension of blended learning.

The t value and p value for the attitude of male school teachers belonging to English and other mediums of instruction towards online interaction was found to be 0.49 and 0.62 respectively which is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, both male teachers belonging to educational institutes having English and other languages as means of instruction have similar attitudes towards online interaction dimension of blended learning.

The t value and p value for the attitude of female school teachers belonging to English and other medium of instruction towards online interaction was found to be 0.92 and 0.35 respectively which is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, both female teachers belonging to educational institutes having English and other languages as means of instruction have similar attitudes towards online interaction dimension of blended learning.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results from the present study indicates that both Male and Female school teachers had no difference in their attitude towards blended learning. While considering the six factors affecting blended learning a difference in attitude was observed. Male and Female in-service school teachers had a similar attitude towards Learning Flexibility, Technology, Classroom Learning and Online Interaction. On the other hand, male in-service school teachers had a



higher attitude towards online learning and study management as compared to female teachers. The reason could be that in an ideal Indian household, the time to explore new things is comparatively more with men of the house than that with women. The study also reflected upon the attitude of male and female school teachers from schools having English language and other languages as medium of instruction towards blended learning and the factors affecting it viz. learning flexibility, online learning, study management, technology, classroom and online interaction. It was found that all the male and female teachers irrespective of different languages used as medium of instruction in their schools did not differ in their attitude towards blended learning and its five dimensions i.e. Learning Flexibility, Online Learning, technology, Classroom Learning and Online Interaction. The study material dimension was found to be significant as far as male school teachers teaching in English medium schools and other language medium schools. Male teachers belonging to schools having other languages like Marathi, Gujrati, Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, Urdu etc had a positive attitude towards studying management dimension as compared to those male teachers teaching in English medium schools. This could be because they have more inclination in taking up management positions/profiles in their schools and would explore the role of an administrator as compared to the male teachers working in English medium schools. The learning landscape is rapidly changing and the need of using a blended learning approach for teaching and learning has become the need of the hour where obeying social norms laid by the government of our country, taking precautions and also focusing on lifelong learning where learning should not be paused irrespective of the hardships faced. Blended Learning will in fact provide an opportunity for not only school teachers but all teachers to come together irrespective of their geographical differences and cultures, collaborate and learn together.

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