
NAVIGATING THE TRANSITION: ASSESSING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON NEP 2020**Asst. Prof. Sneha Sudhir Gokarnkar**

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has emphasized a multidisciplinary approach in its curriculum framework by integrating vocational and skill enhancement courses with major, minor, and open electives. The aim of this study is to know the students' awareness of mandatory administrative components like the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), Multiple Entry and Multiple Exit (MEME), and various verticals of the NEP framework towards the adaptation of NEP 2020 while studying undergraduate degree courses at autonomous and non-autonomous colleges under Mumbai University. Study also focuses students' academic satisfaction by learning interdisciplinary subjects under minor and open elective verticals. This research also analyzes the students' barriers to pursuing a 4th-year Honours/Honours with Research degree, considering factors like time, cost, and career goals. In relevance to these factors, academic workload under the NEP 2020 framework is compared to the previous CBCS system. A structured questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection, and it was distributed randomly to undergraduate students across various disciplines to gather quantitative and qualitative data in Mumbai and Palghar region. The critical result of research indicates the choice of multidisciplinary subjects leads to their academic satisfaction. This study is timely and essential, as the first batches of students from Mumbai University, under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, are reaching critical milestones in their undergraduate journey, making it highly significant for understanding the policy's ground reality for policymakers and educators.

Keywords: Academic Satisfaction, Higher Education, Honours with Research, Multidisciplinary Education, Mumbai University, NEP 2020, Student Perception.

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a new forward-thinking strategy for India's higher education system. This policy envisions a shift from a compartmentalized academic system to a thriving multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching and research community (Ministry of Education, 2020). It aims to shift away from 'rote learning' and rigid divisions between Arts, Science, and Commerce. Instead, it supports a heterogeneous, flexible, and skill-based approach. At the undergraduate (UG) level, academic transformation is characterized by the introduction of a four-year degree structure, the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), and a Multiple Entry and Multiple Exit (MEME) system. These changes aim to provide students with the creative freedom to design their own academic journeys, integrating vocational training with traditional theoretical knowledge.

Mumbai, being the 'Education Hub' presents a unique landscape for the implementation of NEP 2020. Consequently, the entire NEP 2020 was implemented in autonomous colleges during the academic year 2023-24 and in affiliated colleges during the academic year 2024-25 across Mumbai University. With a massive student population under the University of Mumbai (MU) and an increasing number of high-performing autonomous colleges, the city serves as a microcosm for the policy's national success. However, the sheer density of the student population and the diversity of socio-economic backgrounds in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) bring unique challenges—ranging from administrative hurdles in credit mapping to student concerns regarding the financial implications of an additional year of study.

This study tries to reveal that despite the theoretical benefits of NEP 2020, its success depends solely on the perception and acceptance of its primary stakeholders: the students. In a fast-paced corporate environment like Mumbai, students often prioritize immediate employability and professional certifications. There is currently a visible gap between the policy's "idealistic framework" and the "ground reality" of its execution. Students are often caught between the excitement of new subjects (like IKS and electives) and the confusion surrounding credit accumulation, the utility of a 4-year degree, and the practical value of vocational courses.

This research seeks to bridge this gap by documenting the lived experiences and perceptions of UG students in Mumbai during this critical transition period. While NEP 2020 promotes a multidisciplinary approach, many colleges in Mumbai face infrastructure and faculty constraints, leading to a 'forced choice' of electives. This study investigates whether the mere introduction of these subjects leads to academic satisfaction, or if it is perceived as an additional academic burden. Six verticals of NEP 2020 under Mumbai University are as follows (<https://mu.ac.in/old/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/5-NEP-GR-20.4.2023.pdf>):

1. Vertical 1: Major Courses, to be compulsorily studied by a student as the requirement of core subjects.
2. Vertical 2: Minor Course, a subject to be studied by the student with lesser number of courses than the two core subjects.
3. Vertical 3: Open Electives focus on diversified, interdisciplinary, or emerging technology courses.
4. Vertical 4: Vocational Skill Course (VSC) and Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC).
5. Vertical 5: Ability Enhancement (AEC), Value Education Courses (VEC) and Indian Knowledge System (IKS)
6. Vertical 6: On-Job-Training (OJT), Field Project (FP), Community Engagement (CEP), Co-Curricular (CC), Research Project (RP)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bai (2022) explored the critical role of multidisciplinary studies in transforming Indian higher education as outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, advocating for a shift from rigid, single-stream institutions to large, flexible multidisciplinary universities, colleges, and clusters by 2030. The author concludes that emphasizing holistic curricula, multiple entry-exit options, research integration, and compliance with regulators will encourage intellectual growth, employability, innovation, and India's emergence as a global knowledge superpower, ultimately benefiting students, industry, and national development.

Baidya (2025) investigated first-semester undergraduate students' perceptions of newly introduced Multidisciplinary Courses (MDC) under West Bengal's Curriculum and Credit Framework aligned with NEP 2020. Study examined difficulty level, institutional infrastructure, academic importance, student motivation, and career opportunities, and results showed that a large population had negative perceptions of MDC due to the complex course structure, high number of papers, and difficulty focusing on preferred subjects. However, students expressed satisfaction with classrooms, library resources, and laboratory facilities and recognised that MDC offers exposure to multiple disciplines and potential career advantages.

Banerjee and Mete (2025) found that the transition to NEP-2020 is marked by a significant gap between policy vision and ground reality. While students benefit from increased subject choice and multiple exit options, these advantages are often overshadowed by curriculum overload and a lack of digital resources. The implementation of NEP in Gujarat suggests that policy monitoring is essential for success (Chauhan & Ramchandani, 2024).

Researcher Handique (2025) study focused on investigating the barriers to NEP 2020 implementation in rural higher education institutions (Assam). Author argues that the 'high awareness/low execution' paradox is driven by digital poverty and a lack of trained faculty, suggesting that infrastructure must precede innovation.

The study by Gaikwad et al. (2024) examined the perception and implementation of NEP 2020 among academic stakeholders in the Mumbai and Thane regions. According to the authors, strong knowledge levels exist but insufficient confidence in practical execution. The major obstacles, according to stakeholders, are infrastructure and employment clarity.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study intends to assess how much undergraduate scholars know about the essential aspects of NEP 2020, like the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) and the Multiple Entry – Multiple Exit System (MEME). It further seeks to analyze students view on the multidisciplinary approach, particularly the importance of selecting Open Electives and Minor subjects that are outside their main field of study. This research is to explore how students perceive the influence of Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC) and Vocational Studies on their employability and readiness for the job market. The research is necessary to examine the interest and intention of students to opt for the optional fourth-year "Honors with Research" degree, considering factors such as time, cost, and career aspirations. Finally, compare the academic workload experienced by students under the NEP 2020 framework with that under the previous CBCS system.

Null Hypothesis (H0): "The students' level of academic satisfaction is not connected to their selection of multidisciplinary subjects."

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): "The students' level of academic satisfaction is strongly connected to their selection of multidisciplinary subjects."

SCOPE OF STUDY

The study focuses on students enrolled in several autonomous colleges and institutes affiliated with the University of Mumbai. As Mumbai is the educational hub and has a large student population studying across

science / Commerce / Arts streams at the undergraduate level, the outcome of this study is helpful for students, policy makers, and educators to make timely decisions.

3. Research Methodology:

Data Collection: The present research is based on primary data acquired via a questionnaire from students residing in the Mumbai and Palghar. The data is gathered using a Google Form. A random sampling procedure was utilized. Data duplicacy is checked using Excel features. The acquired data were evaluated using statistical techniques like the Chi-square test to reach appropriate research conclusions.

Data Analysis and Interpretation: Python and built-in Python tools like Pandas, NumPy, Matplotlib, Seaborn, and SciPy are used to visualize data in Google Colab.

Table 1: Demographic data of Respondents (N=280)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	17 – 18 years	83	29.60%
	19 – 20 years	170	60.70%
	21+ years	27	9.70%
Class	First Year (FY)	107	38.20%
	Second Year (SY)	122	43.60%
	Third Year (TY)	51	18.20%
Academic Stream	Science	171	61.10%
	Commerce	96	34.30%
	Arts	13	4.60%
College Category	Non-Autonomous	227	81.07%
	Autonomous	53	18.92%

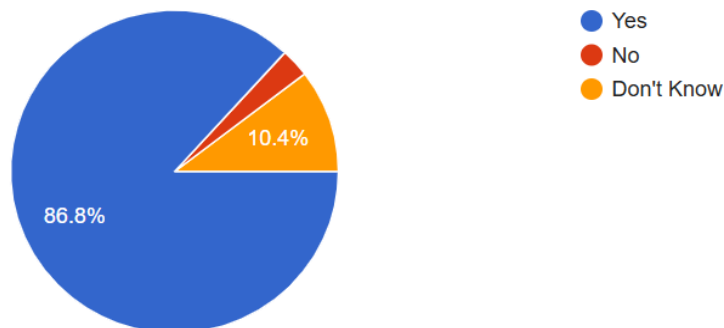


Figure 1: Students registration on the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) portal

Students are polled about their registration on the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) portal to evaluate the administrative integration of NEP 2020. 86.8% of respondents are registered, according to Figure 1, indicating high adherence to UGC regulations. Still, the 2.9% of scholars who said they were not registered and the 10.4% of scholars who indicated they were ignorant (answering "Do not know") emphasize the critical need for institutions to hold further thorough exposure sessions on the digital aspects of the new policy.

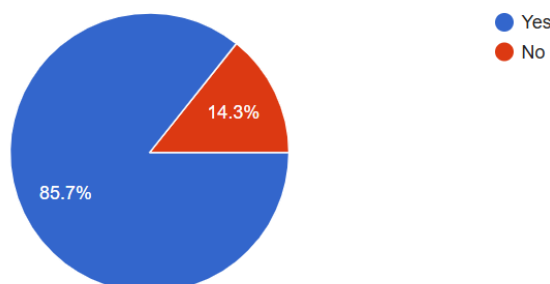


Figure 2: Student Understanding of the NEP 2020 Credit Structure

Figure 2 depicts the cognitive awareness level of respondents towards the new credit-based framework. 85.71% voted that they have a clear understanding of the NEP credit system. But 14.29% gave response saying not understanding the credit system indicating a small student population required academic counselling.

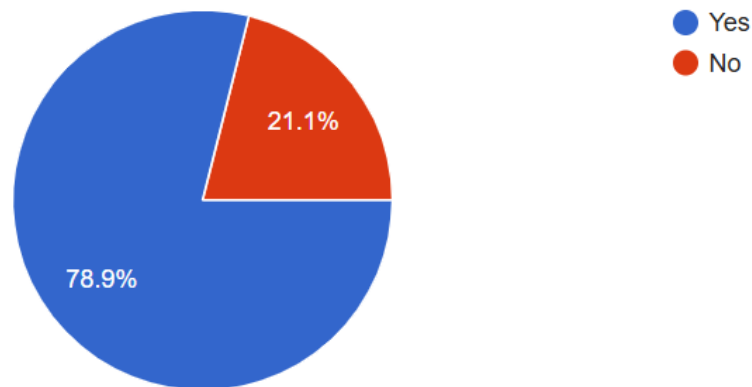


Figure 3: Student Awareness of NEP 2020 Verticals (Mumbai University)

According to Figure 3, 78.93% of respondents said they were familiar with all six verticals of the University of Mumbai’s NEP structure, whereas 21.1% said they were unfamiliar with them. These verticals include Major, Minor, Open Electives, VSC and SEC, AEC and VEC, and CC/FP.

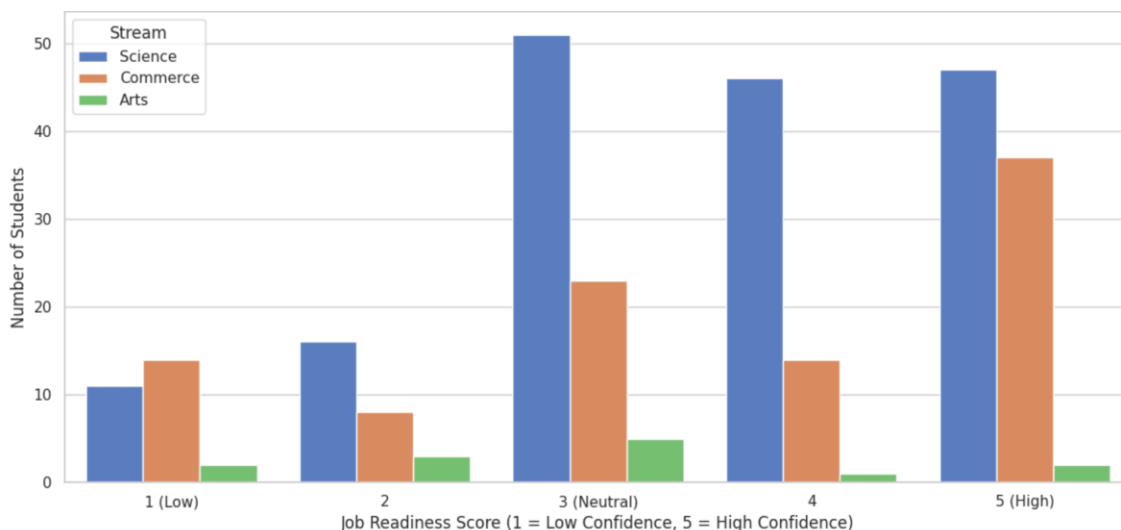


Figure 4: Job Readiness Perception by Academic Stream

The study looked at Job Readiness scores across the three main streams to see if academic background affects how students view employability (Figure 4). Students in Science and Commerce can clearly see how these courses lead to jobs. However, responses from Arts students show that the available options do not completely meet their needs. This suggests that the current NEP skill curriculum may be more aligned with commercial and technical industry requirements than with the creative or social science sectors. This issue required to be addressed so that Arts students will also experience the job readiness in creative sectors.

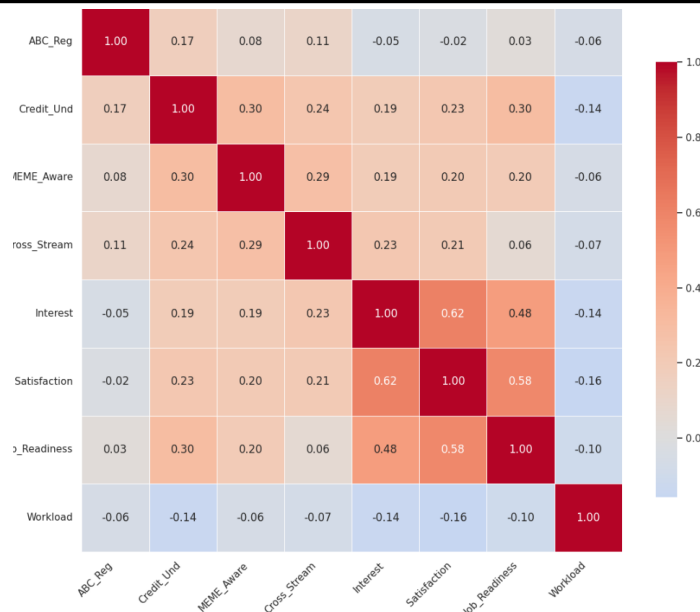


Figure 5: Correlation Heatmap illustrating the relationship between NEP 2020 Awareness, Academic Satisfaction, and Perceived Workload among Undergraduate Students

From Figure 5 show the heatmap deriving the relationship between NEP awareness, academic satisfaction, and academic workload of students. The heatmap's positive coefficients, ranging from 0.48 to 0.62, suggest that the multidisciplinary approach is the main aspect of the new strategy that promotes career confidence and student involvement. This suggests that students become more excited about their studies when colleges provide a wide selection of disciplines. On the other side, the negative connection between workload and satisfaction, which runs from -0.14 to -0.16, implies that when academic obligations are stronger, enjoyment in learning and general contentment diminish.

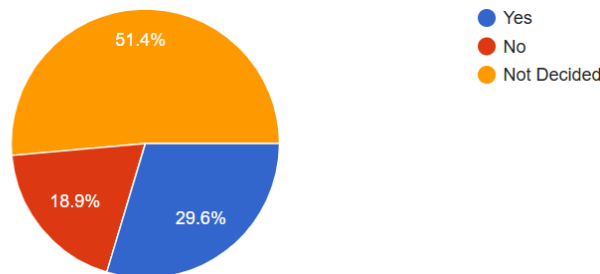


Figure 6: Student Intention: 4th Year Honours / Research Degree

The above figure provides a clear insight into the 4th-year "Honors with Research" dilemma. Over 51% of students are "Not Decided." Only about 30% are committed to the 4th year, while 19% have already opted out.

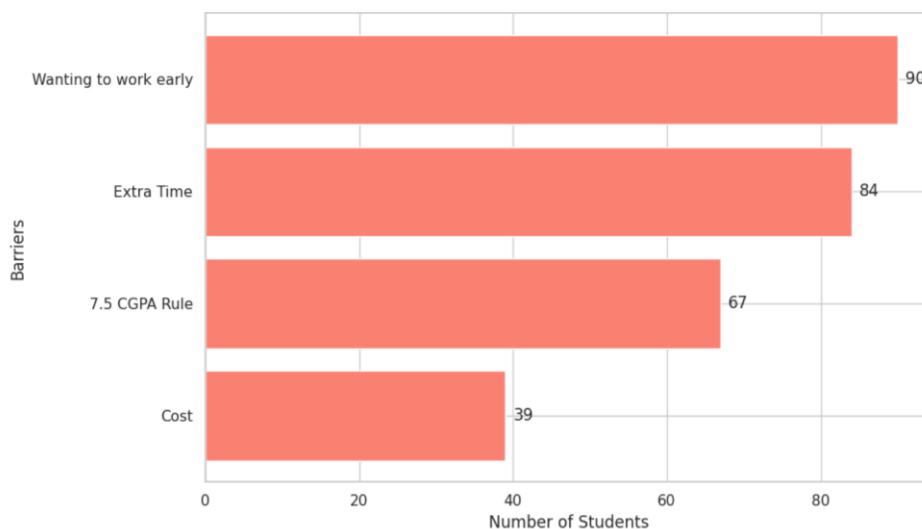


Figure 7: Barriers to Pursuing 4th Year

A horizontal bar chart that ranks the obstacles preventing students from continuing 4th year. Students wanting to work early sentiment (90 responses) and the concern over 'extra time' (84 responses) dominate the conversation. This suggests that students are making pragmatic, career-first decisions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chi-square method is used to find out the relation between the selection of Multidisciplinary subjects (Open Electives/Minor subjects) and students level academic satisfaction. The Formula used is:

Chi-square(χ^2) Test in r x c Contingency Table $= \sum_i \sum_j \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$; with $E_{ij} = \frac{a_i b_j}{N}$ - (1)

Where O= Observed Values, E=Expected Values.

Table 2 : Observed Data

Independent Variable (Choice of subjects)	Dependent Variable (Satisfaction)	Not satisfied	Satisfied	Total	% Satisfied
No	Satyed within Major Stream	88	39	127	30.7%
Yes	Chose Different Stream	81	72	153	47.1%
Total		169	111	280	39.6%

Table 3: Calculation of Chi square Variate χ^2

O_{ij}	E_{ij}	$O_{ij} - E_{ij}$	$(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2$	$(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2 / E_{ij}$
88	76.65	11.35	128.8225	1.680658839
39	50.35	-11.35	128.8225	2.558540218
81	92.35	-11.35	128.8225	1.394937737
72	60.65	11.35	128.8225	2.124031327
Total				7.758

To test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance, deduce the p-value generated using the formula;

p-value = CHISQ.DIST.RT(χ^2 , Degree of Freedom) - (2)

Where Degree of Freedom = (Total number of Rows - 1) * (Total number of Columns - 1) Therefore, Degree of Freedom = (2-1) * (2-1) = 1

Using Formula (2) p-value is calculated.

p-value = CHISQ.DIST.RT(7.758, 1) p-value = 0.00534

FINDINGS

The p- value of 0.00534 is significantly lower than the 0.05 significance position, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternate hypothesis. This indicates a strong connection between scholars' selection of multidisciplinary subjects and their level of academic satisfaction. The data shows that scholars who named Open Elective or Minors outside their main academic stream reported advanced satisfaction(47.1) compared to those who stayed within their traditional stream(30.7). This suggests that " Cross Stream" literacy enhances pupil engagement.

In line with the first objective, the research estimated respondents awareness Academic Bank of Credits (86.79%), is a good sign of policies success. And it is also necessary for examination eligibility. On the other knowledge on Multiple Entry and Exit (MEME) option, which embody the core idea of academic freedom under NEP 2020, is lower at 61.07%. This indicates that while students are integrated into the policy’s digital frame, institutional communication about the long-term flexibility and benefits of these options needs enhancement.

The alternate ideal was met by establishing a statistically significant link($\chi^2 = 7.758$, p = 0.00534) between choosing multidisciplinary subjects and increased academic satisfaction. While over 54% of scholars have decided on cross-stream literacy, 60.4% are not satisfied with the variety of multidisciplinary subjects offered by their institution. This shows that although students value the multidisciplinary approach, they have not been offered many subjects because of institutional limitations.

Regarding the third objective, research on Vocational Skill Courses and Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC) reveals that 52.5% of participants think these courses will help them connect with the workforce. Even still, 47.5% express neutrality or uncertainty, indicating that although these courses are intended to promote career preparation, students believe they might not be adequate to establish a connection with the sectors.

The fourth objective was addressed by identifying that the 4th-year option is not gaining much support due to low awareness about the 7.5 CGPA requirement to enter the 4th-year "Honours with Research" program (<https://mu.ac.in/old/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/4-Cirucum-and-Credit-Fremwork-for-U.G.-Programe.pdf>) and the benefits of specialized research. The findings also show that students resist the 4th-year program due to a desire to start working early. According to Figure 7, the major challenge in continuing the 4th-year undergraduate program is students wanting to settle into a job.

When NEP students' academic workload is compared with the CBCS system, it is observed that a significant population of respondents voted for slightly heavier, which may put them into academic stress, leading to diminishing their interest in studies. Hence, the last objective proof gives a warning sign to be addressed in the future.

4. CONCLUSION

This qualitative and quantitative study highlights that the multidisciplinary approach promotes students to get engaged with their studies with the better interest. When students are permitted to take up interdisciplinary subjects such as science student learning economics or a commerce student learning creative arts, makes more meaningful explanation to the NEP system. Though students are well-informed about generating ABC ID, credit structure of NEP, their degree of satisfaction with the variety of choices offered by the institutions is less. It is also noted that a large population of students do not have the knowledge required to continue the 4th-year Honours or Honours with Research program at the undergraduate level under NEP. This proves that institutions are struggling to give quality services with vast diversified subjects to students and not making any efforts towards 4th year graduation program. Another concern brought into notice is the students feeling slightly heavier workload in the current pattern of studies may slowly make them to terminate studies after 3 years degree. Also students backing out from going to 4th year may be with the urge to start earning at the earliest. NEP 2020 could be more successful, when students start taking the benefits provided by the system with no hurdles. The study concludes that educational institutions must balance academic demands with pupil well-being.

Recommendation:

NEP being a visionary policy, it is time to focus on career-ready qualities. Institutions must give targeted orientation at the time of admission to first-year UG program students about ABC ID, MIME options, and all vertical knowledge to make them aware of the system. The credit structure of NEP must be told to students to prevent credit-related discrepancies in their final degree certifications. It is essential to monitor the implementation process by designing some metrics to measure its credibility. More inputs are required towards the social science sector by policymakers as far as employability is concerned. All topics undergo continuous internal evaluations that are based on a variety of factors and may cause students to experience stress that can be addressed. Timely efforts from both the University of Mumbai and colleges are essential to ensure students appreciate the value of the 4th-year UG program and enroll in it.

Limitations of the Study

Only undergraduate students enrolled in autonomous and affiliated colleges under the University of Mumbai are eligible to participate in the study. Findings may not apply to other universities or postgraduate programs. External factors like faculty readiness, institutional infrastructure, and stakeholder engagement were not explored in depth. These factors might affect the outcomes.

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Ethical Statement

There are no studies conducted on animals during this research.

Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest related to this research.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be provided by the author on request basis.

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