



## EXPLORING STUDENT ACADEMIC FREEDOM DURING ONLINE LEARNING: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Universities have a long commitment to respond to academic freedom. But it remains ambiguous and not well understood. It is under attack in many places. Therefore, a mixed methods study was undertaken to explore the academic freedom of university students to know the level of academic freedom of online learners in the dimensions of personal learning space access and freedom in learning and find out the significant difference in academic freedom between students with reference to their stream of education and gender. There was a moderate level of academic freedom during online learning of students with respect to personal learning space access and freedom in learning. This statistical analysis found that there is no significant difference in academic freedom during online learning across genders and streams of education. It is also evident that the mean score of male students is slightly more than the mean score of female students concerning their academic freedom during online learning. It is concluded that male students found more access to personal learning space and in carrying out their learning than their counterparts.*

**Keywords:** Student Academic Freedom, Online Learning, Freedom to Learn, Learning Space



## INTRODUCTION

Academia follows the logic of functions, which includes academic freedom. They have to adapt to social norms and values. Academic platforms nowadays have been brought forward against specific academic values about educational claims, texts, questions and figures of thought by scientific community members (students, teachers, researchers and leaders of academic organisations) (Ozmen, 2024). These do not comply with certain norms. Freedom in teaching and research has extended implications not only in academics but also in other fields. So, it has become a matter of concern for educational institutions.

Educational institutions play an essential role in providing social education. Universities' physical-social arrangements require sensitive and intelligent attention to provide good citizenship. The students have a positive role in society and social responsibility. The students are therefore allowed the freedom to decide their work towards the progress of society. It involves responsibility for their actions. Freedom needs to be viewed as academic self-regulation (Trigwell, 2010). Therefore, academic freedom is not only considered to be the goal of higher educational institutions but also important for educational research and teaching. The twenty-first century's goal is the prospect of academic freedom. Academic freedom refers to societal expectations that one can articulate in research and classroom teaching. Ironically, it is not always clear what it means, how far it goes, to whom it is applied, and how it is applied.

According to the fundamental principles of National Education Policy 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2020), students should be given the freedom to choose their learning tracks and programs. This freedom comforts them in selecting their paths in life based on their talents and



interests. Flexibility in the choice of subjects of study and research leads to their empowerment. It focuses on out-of-the-box ideas through autonomy and empowerment. The condition for outstanding education and development is to promote research. Students should be allowed to freely exchange ideas and upgrade their worldly knowledge as per their interests and ambitions. So, the university reorganised the issues of students' and faculty members' academic freedom. The students should be clear about their creative work, which will empower them.

Academic freedom concerns human dignity and freedom from academic disintegrity and harm. The robust defensive right of academic freedom protects educational practices, institutions engaged in scientific research and publications from jeopardising insight-oriented academic practice (Quinn and Levine, 2014). Academics should follow a rational way of forming knowledge. It should ensure the quality of research and scientific rigour (Spannagel & Kinzelbach, 2022). Academic freedom of students entails providing opportunities to get direct feedback from teachers. They can discuss their problems with peers and learn from them. They can use the university facilities and engage in various social and educational activities. Students can select how and where to learn to use the library and need autonomy (Altbach,2001). Teaching-learning practices should follow internal consistency, verifiability, and other elements of ethos that guarantee honesty, independence, ethical values, and virtues. However, this online learning limits their access to various activities. Now, offline classes are being replaced by online lectures at the centres of higher learning.

Academic freedom generally refers to the freedom or autonomy provided to the learner to share their ideas without any interruption or professional disadvantage. Academic freedom is a right



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that belongs to everyone, essential for quality education, teaching, and research. It is human dignity, interpreted as the democratic conception of freedom (Macfarlane, 2016). It drives innovation. It enhances the capacity of scholars to create knowledge. Universities have a long commitment to respond to academic freedom. However, it remains ambiguous and perhaps poorly understood, so it is under attack in many places. Higher educational institutions have tried to adopt virtual collaboration. However, this has also steered threats to academic freedom. Among notable factors, opportunities for learning and discourse and the isolation of scholars are the problems that hinder academic freedom. Thus, academic freedom is a challenge (Gibbs, 2019).

Scholars should be original and spontaneous in expressing their thoughts, views and ideas. They should be independent of others and themselves. In this regard, freedom in academics is important for professional exploration. So, academic freedom is broader in scope with respect to the liberties. It includes not only the freedom to make scientific claims but also the freedom of selecting topics and methods of research, the freedom to decide on the duration of research and evaluation of the results, and the freedom to decide about their publications (Bayertz, 2006). Academic freedom ensures integrity in learning and research. So, academic honesty is linked to academic freedom (Behera, 2022).

The concept of academic freedom can be represented in two different ways:

1. It entails positive freedom by enabling conditions to exercise one's freedom for free research.



2. It involves negative freedom from violation of authorities of academic, political and economic sectors. This aspect is regarded as an important aspect of academic freedom.

Thus, academic freedom refers not only to the presence of conditions which enable scholarly work but also to the absence of conditions which hinder their academic progress. Academic freedom is vested in individuals, making individual researchers or the community of researchers. It may be at the institutional level that autonomy is brought to universities. Above all, academic freedom includes the autonomy for conducting research and teaching, transfer of knowledge, institutional integrity, and academic and cultural expression.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The concept of academic freedom has existed since time immemorial. Academic freedom is integrated with a democratic society. Academic freedom means having the main focus on academics. It includes the autonomy of students to grasp knowledge without any external involvement. The importance of this right of academic freedom for university students is to enable them to inquire, study, evaluate and protect the sources of information (Oleksiyyenko & Jackson, 2021).

Academic freedom has no fixed definition because a single definition cannot cover all the complications related to the concept. Academic freedom is understood as freedom to research and teaching, freedom of academic collaboration and dissemination, freedom of academic expression and institutional autonomy (Spannagel & Kinzelbach, 2022). There are definitions based on the contexts of academic culture. Academic freedom can be defined as an absence of discriminatory behaviour based on religion, race, and caste. It is the student's right to practice



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freedom of expression. It allows them to participate in social and political activities. Students should be given the right to express their ideas and opinions freely. It helps them find their study area and participate in decision-making. Academic freedom allows researchers to collect, compile, and present data (Karran, 2009).

Academic freedom is often considered a 'cornerstone' of higher education (Davies, 2015). Academic freedom is freedom with responsibility but not from responsibility (Abdel Latif, 2014). Academic freedom includes four important freedoms: what may be taught, who may learn, how to learn, and who may be allowed to study. Academic community safeguards academic freedom. The academic community comprises all the teachers, students, researchers, and others working in the higher education institution. The university should ensure the academic freedom of the students. It is crucial for teaching and learning (Altbach, 2001).

## **STUDENT ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

Academic freedom is vital to the scholarly growth of individuals. Ekwueme et al. (2016) mentioned that academic freedom protects scholars from moral and intellectual integrity. Nevertheless, if freedom is not granted in research, society cannot flourish. So, academics should be independent with a focus on intellectual creativity. Academic freedom is an exposure to learn, create, and contribute freely in an academic context (Osman, 2013). This kind of freedom aims to create sound and productive learners. Hence, student academic freedom guarantees other fundamental human rights (UNESCO, 2014). One can be free to conduct research and disseminate and publish the results. So, students are free to give their views about the society or system where they get knowledge. They are free to opt for any course of study,



and freedom to make decisions. The extent to which students are free to carry out research is freedom of research. The students need to share and exchange research ideas and findings with others. This includes freedom of academic collaboration (Spannagel et al., 2020). One should not be afraid of suppression by any other sources.

Any university or educational institution's curriculum contributes significantly to students' autonomy. It helps the students to resolve their problems logically. It has been stated that the university curriculum should support general education. It is enough to develop critical skills and to be independent. It will enable the students to play an informed role as citizens (Macfarlane, 2011). Universities are solely responsible for students' academic freedom. It is said that universities are the holders of rights that assure academic freedom, while students benefit from those rights. Academic freedom is an essential requirement for students to learn as citizens and members of an experienced profession. So, they should be provided with the freedom of speaking and writing. As responsible learners and citizens, students should obey the rules adequately and should respect the opinions of others. Hence, the university authorities should exercise institutional autonomy in practice (McMann et al., 2022).

Academically successful universities develop a strongly self-motivated academic community. Jackson (2021) provided that academic freedom positively impacts research productivity and university excellence. Hutchens & Fernandez (2023) stated that academic freedom provides both functional and aspiration norms of the university. Academic freedom is linked to the shifting role of higher education in society. It maintains a culture where scholars pursue living knowledge with rigour and grace. It is not only a safeguard to the aims of the university but



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also a reflection of society's commitment towards free speech. Democratic values are indicated by academic freedom at the societal level. The growth of academic freedom is closely associated with the level of democracy (Kratou & Laakso, 2022). Thus, it is intended to provide an advantage to society at a large level, not for the benefit of the academic or the institution. Van Ginkel (2002) believed that academic freedom is a practical exercise in learning and advancing democracy. Hence, this is the facet of freedom in a democratic society. The dilution of academic freedom is a crisis for the society.

## **ONLINE LEARNING**

Online education has become easy with the development of technologies. Online learning, mobile learning, blended learning, web-based learning, etc., offer the possibility to learn anywhere and anytime (Cojocariu et al., 2014). Online learning refers to learning experiences with internet access in face-to-face or distant situations using various devices like mobile phones, laptops, etc. During such learning experiences, the students can learn anywhere and are free to interact with their teachers and peers (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Online platforms are required to fulfil essential conditions. These conditions are (a) video conferencing for 30 to 40 students, (b) timely discussions with students during class, (c) proper internet connections, (d) Easily accessible lectures on mobile phones, (e) availability of recorded lectures, and (f) immediate feedback from students (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). The benefits of online learning are increasing learning opportunities, expanding access to education, and providing choices to learners in education. The teaching-learning process becomes easy and accessible for learners with online learning. It is a student-centred approach that is more flexible,



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innovative and helpful for the students (Moore et al., 2011). Freedom for students enables them to achieve higher grades in online learning classes. It helps them to understand & assume control of learning the online materials with little support from teachers (Vrieling et al., 2011). Working in collaborative groups in an online course is easier since there is less need to rearrange everyone's schedule. Everyone can listen to the lectures in their own time.

Digital transformation has ushered in a change from face-to-face interaction to online classes. Flexibility is the positive point of online learning. Blended learning and flipped classrooms are focused on developing students' learning capacity. Students can learn at their own pace. According to students, technical difficulties and problems in understanding are the significant barriers to online classes. However, many students are unaware of using online learning platforms for their studies (Aung & Khaing, 2016). The use of technology is an essential factor for the satisfaction and retention of students. One of the main problems for student participation is motivation towards online learning (Bisht et al., 2020). Various learning activities should be included to increase students' presence in online classes. These are practice-related scenarios, video lessons, self-assessment activities, and exercises (Rensburg, 2018). Higher education institutions focus on changing teaching approaches as technology changes. The methods should be student-centred and more flexible. Active learning (Wei, 2023), flipped classrooms, blended learning (Kintu et al., 2017), and virtual technologies (Tang et al., 2020) are the focus. However, these methods depend on attending the classes face-to-face by students. However, online-supported teaching methods are used to increase students' learning.



## **The Rationale of the Study**

University corresponds with the ability of citizens to express their opinions individually without losing the moral framework of autonomy. It introduces a scientific way of thinking among the young learning minds in different disciplines of study. They develop their capability to create new knowledge after learning various scientific theories and research methods. So, the institutional environment allows a high degree of academic freedom (Yingling, 2023). Academic freedom is an essential aspect of liberty which guarantees practicality. It includes the freedom to make specific pedagogical and research-based claims and the freedom to select topics and research methods. Academic freedom is the freedom to undertake research activities in identifying a problem, reviewing related literature, developing research tools, sharing research findings, and deciding about their publication.

The benefit of academic freedom to university students is freedom of academic thought. It commands a robust and self-confident independence toward academic freedom. Self-governance is the freedom to teach research and the right of institutions. It depends on the higher education system. To conduct scientific research of high quality, free-thinking, free speech, and critique are required. This shapes academic freedom (Vogtle & Windzio, 2022). Students generate new knowledge by challenging the status quo. Freedom of debate significantly impacts the generation of knowledge, which involves freedom of speech. Academic freedom rests on ideological building. It can also refer to 'learning freedom'. Students should have control throughout the study to prepare them for professionals. Academic freedom is a professional privilege in science and teaching, speech and independence (Beaud, 2020). They can be liberated from the course grades to become self-reliant. Academic freedom



deals with aspects of academic self-governance and institutional autonomy. Thus, for protecting the freedoms of teaching, learning, and research, academic freedom is essential.

Teaching, learning, research, and student collaboration are central to academic freedom. Scientific research needs collaboration among scholars. Students' intellectual passion arises. Students will have a common pursuit of knowledge. In sum, academic freedom emphasises the aspect of teaching and research; consequently, students enjoy academic freedom. The aim of the university is to strive to disseminate knowledge. Academic freedom should be the cornerstone principle of universities (Cole, 2021). Therefore, the academic freedom of university students was explored with the following research questions:

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This piece of research is guided by the following questions:

1. What is the level of academic freedom of online learners in the dimensions of personal learning space access and freedom in learning?
2. Is there a significant difference in the academic freedom of online learners between the Arts and Science streams?
3. Is there a significant difference in the academic freedom of online learners between males and females?
4. What are the experiences of online learners in terms of challenges of academic freedom?



## **HYPOTHESES**

H<sub>1</sub>: Online learners have a high level of academic freedom with respect to personal learning space access.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a moderate level of academic freedom of online learners concerning freedom in learning.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference between the academic freedom of Arts and Science students.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference between the academic freedom of male and female students.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The essentiality of freedom of inquiring, analysing and reaching conclusions was examined in this paper.

### **Research Design**

Academic freedom in relation to personal learning space and freedom in learning was explored. The level of academic freedom among university students was categorised quantitatively. Experience with academic freedom was documented through identifying challenges faced by university students. The data was collected qualitatively. Thus, the study used a mixed methods design.



## Sample

This was a survey-based study of the 122 postgraduate students of a Central University of India. Informed consent was obtained for participation in the online survey. The participants who have access towards individual learning space were selected for the interview. The subject teachers' recommendation to select the participants was sought, and their participation was confirmed. Three female students were the participants of the interview.

## Tools Used

### 1. Academic Freedom Survey Questionnaire

A survey questionnaire was the research tool. The items of the questionnaire were validated considering the review comments of the experts. The tool comprised two main sections. The first section collected information about the learners' profiles online. The academic freedom survey was intended to determine the level of independence to learn content. The second section is about the questionnaire on academic freedom. The questionnaire was developed considering two dimensions of academic freedom: personal learning space access and freedom in learning. It was measured using the five-point scale in which the most negative response had an assigned value of 1 while the most positive response had a value of 5. The survey questionnaire solicited data on the academic freedom of online learners.

### 2. Interview Schedule

Google Meet was used as a platform for conducting interviews. Participants were interviewed one by one. This was scheduled according to their pace of time. The students were asked about

their learning styles and study practices during online classes. Data on their perception towards the improvement of online learning was collected.

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The mean and standard deviation values on each dimension of academic freedom are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Summary of Statistics on Dimensions of Academic Freedom**

| Variable         | Dimension                      | N  | Mean  | SD   |
|------------------|--------------------------------|----|-------|------|
| Academic Freedom | Personal Learning Space Access | 61 | 53.51 | 5.68 |
|                  | Freedom in Learning            | 61 | 53.07 | 6.12 |

**H<sub>1</sub>: Online learners have a high level of academic freedom with respect to personal learning space access.**

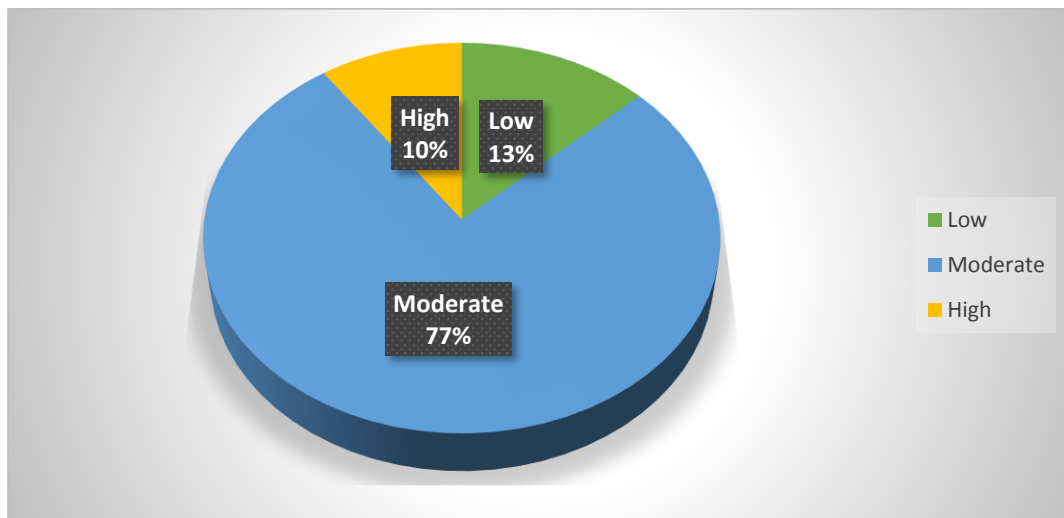
The three levels of academic freedom and access to personal learning space were categorised. The limit of scores on the personal learning space access dimension is determined based on the principle of the normal probability curve. Scores below 47.83 were considered low level, 47.83 to 59.19 as moderate and above 59.19 as high level. The result is given in table 2.

**Table 2: Level of Academic Freedom in terms of Personal Learning Space Access**

| Level | Limit of Scores | % of Students |
|-------|-----------------|---------------|
| Low   | Below 47.83     | 13.12         |

|          |             |       |
|----------|-------------|-------|
| Moderate | 47.83-59.19 | 77.05 |
| High     | Above 59.19 | 9.83  |

Table 2 depicts students' academic freedom level with respect to personal learning space access. It is clear from the data that a major percentage of students' scores lie between 47.83 and 59.19. So, there is a moderate level of academic freedom during students' online learning with respect to personal learning space access. Thus, the hypothesis stating a high level of academic freedom for online learners with respect to personal learning space access is rejected.



**Figure 1: Academic Freedom in Relation to Personal Learning Space Access**

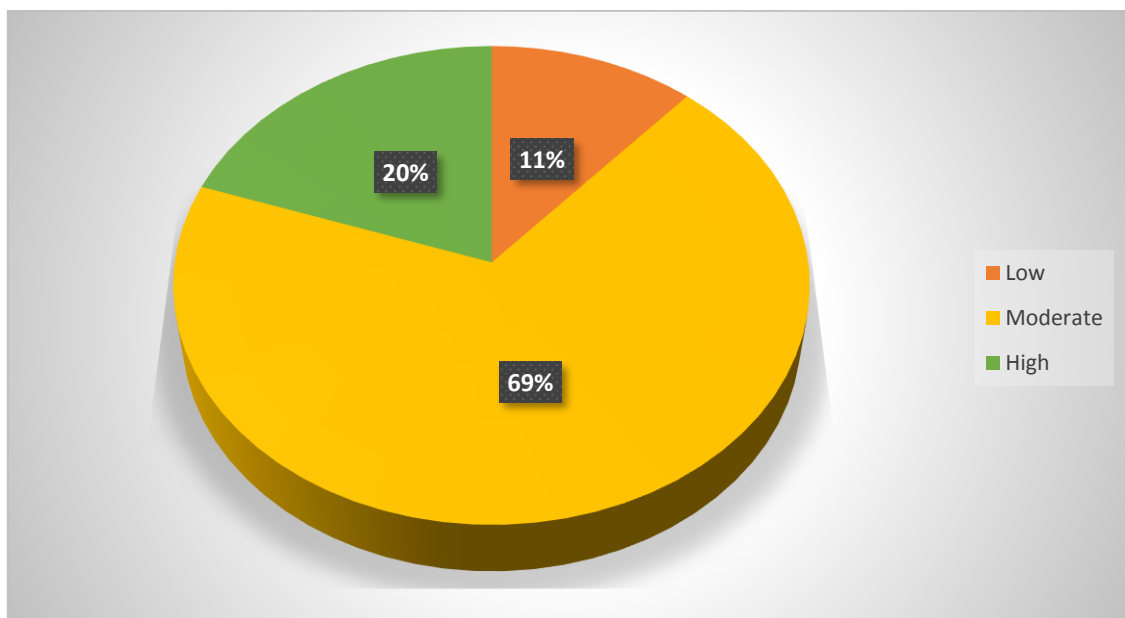
**H<sub>1</sub>: There is a moderate level of academic freedom of online learners concerning freedom in learning.**

The mean and standard deviation of academic freedom in the dimension of freedom in learning are shown in Table 1. The level of science students based on scores on academic freedom are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Level of Academic Freedom in Relation to Freedom in Learning**

| Level    | Limit of Scores | % of Students |
|----------|-----------------|---------------|
| Low      | Below 47.74     | 11.48         |
| Moderate | 47.74-58.40     | 68.85         |
| High     | Above 58.40     | 19.67         |

It is clear from the data that most of the student scores vary between 47.74 and 58.40. There is a moderate level of academic freedom during online learning in relation to freedom in learning. Thus, the hypothesis stating a moderate level of academic freedom of online learners with respect to freedom in learning is accepted.



**Figure 2: Level of Academic Freedom in Relation to Freedom in Learning**



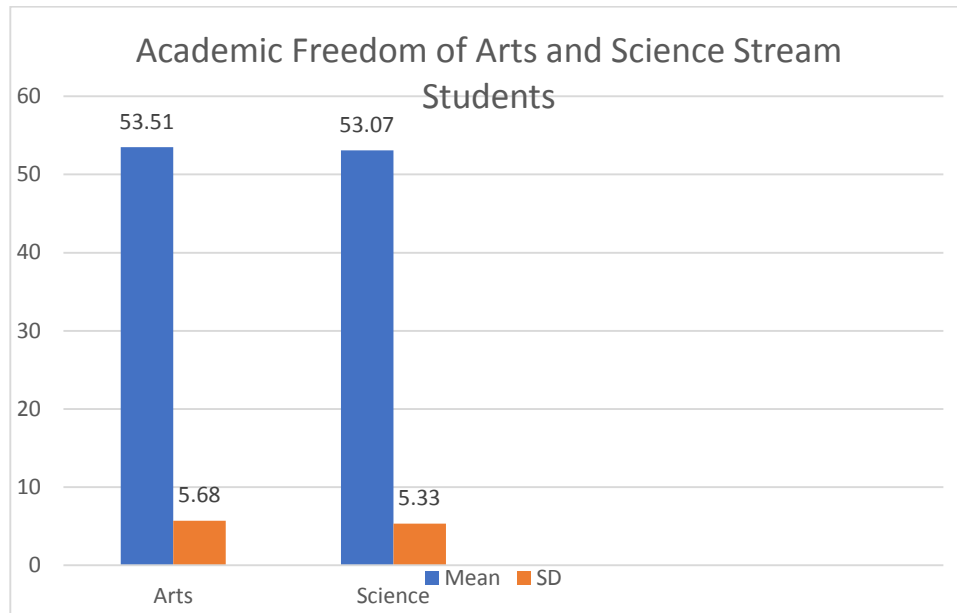
**H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference between the academic freedom of Arts and Science students.**

The summary of scores on Academic Freedom of Arts and Science students is given below: (Table 4).

**Table 4: Academic Freedom of Arts and Science Students**

| Stream  | N  | Mean  | SD   | df  | t-test<br>(Calculated) | t-test<br>(Table value) | Result          |
|---------|----|-------|------|-----|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Arts    | 61 | 53.51 | 5.68 | 120 | 0.444                  | 1.98<br>(0.05 Level)    | Not Significant |
| Science | 61 | 53.07 | 5.33 |     |                        |                         |                 |

Table 4 depicts the value of Mean, SD, and *t* -test of Academic Freedom of Arts and Science students. The calculated value is less than the table value at a 0.05 significance level. This shows no significant difference between the academic freedom of arts and science students. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.



**Figure 3: Academic Freedom of Arts and Science Students**

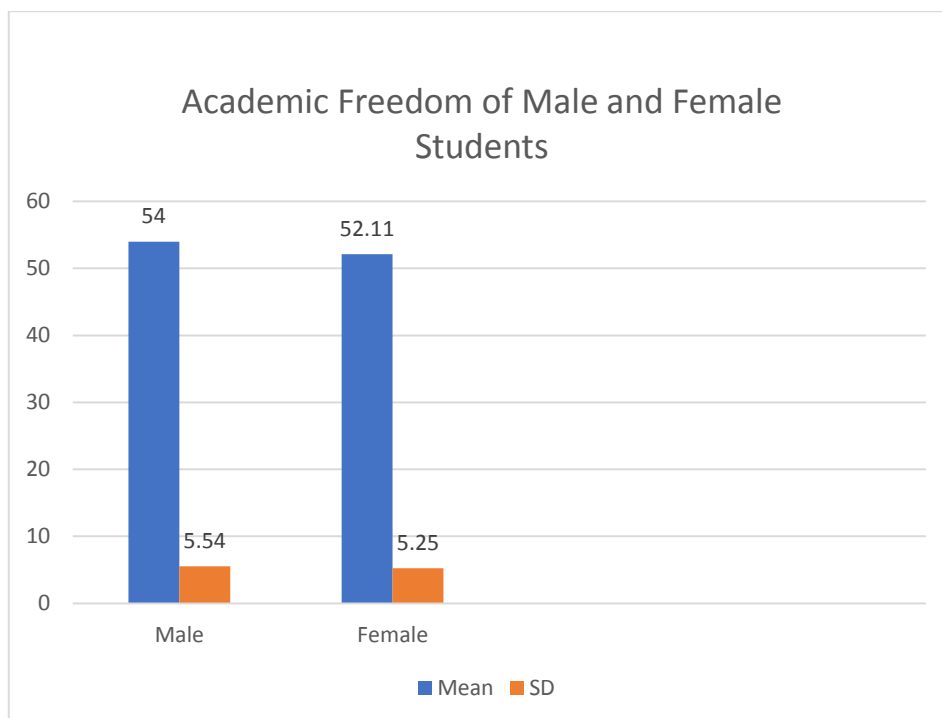
**H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference between the academic freedom of male and female students.**

The scores of Academic Freedom of male and female students are given in Table 5.

**Table 5: Academic Freedom of Male and Female Students**

| Gender | N  | Mean  | SD   | df  | t-test<br>(Calculated) | t-test<br>(Table value) | Result          |
|--------|----|-------|------|-----|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Male   | 76 | 54    | 5.54 | 120 | 1.89                   | 1.98<br>(0.05 Level)    | Not Significant |
| Female | 46 | 52.11 | 5.25 |     |                        |                         |                 |

Table 5 depicts the mean, SD, and *t* test values on Academic Freedom of male and female students. The calculated *t* test is 1.89, which is less than the table value at 0.05 levels of significance. So, the *t*-test value is not significant at 0.05 levels. This shows no significant difference between male and female students in academic freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.



**Figure 4: Academic Freedom of Male and Female Students**

Based on this statistical analysis, we can conclude that the null hypothesis is accepted. We can say that there is no significant difference in academic freedom during online learning across gender and streams of education. It is also evident from the table that the mean score of male students is slightly higher than that of female students in terms of their academic freedom during online learning. The finding is also confirmed by the study of Al-Saeed HRM (2021).



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Gender inequality affects academic freedom with females facing more barriers than males (Fakhr & Messenger, 2020). Hence, it can be concluded that male students found more access to personal learning space and their learning than their counterparts.

### **Qualitative Findings**

Qualitatively, individual interviews were conducted with the three students at the postgraduate level to elaborate the study's findings further. The interviews were transcribed, and frequencies were tabulated. The tabulated results were checked to find consistency between experience(s)/ how far other students had the same experiences. The experience(s) shared by one were verified by another student. The identity of the participants was kept confidential during the interview. Students were asked to agree/disagree with the experiences of others, which were collected during the interview. This was how responses and experiences were validated.

These responses were coded and categorised as per the emerging classification. The coding was keywords that illustrate the access to online academic activities. The keywords (codes) were then assigned to themes (access to online academic activities). The process continued till all keywords were assigned theme(s). The themes were checked to see their suitability. The authors and one external expert validated the themes. A consensus about the themes was reached and hence finalised. The research questions are answered in the following:

**RQ:** Level of academic freedom of online learners in terms of personal learning space access

It was found that 98% of the online learners owned a single or double set of computer facilities. Fifty-two per cent (above half) of the respondents indicated that the online learning sessions



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do not allow them to have personal learning space. Seventy per cent of the participants reported severe internet connection during online learning. This led them to believe that online platforms are difficult to learn compared to face-to-face setups.

**RQ:** Level of academic freedom of online learners in terms of freedom in learning

More than an average percentage of online learners (59%) rely on lectures from teachers or peers to help them learn concepts. Fifteen per cent of online learners rely on their teachers' or peers'/friends' tutorials to understand those concepts. On the other hand, fourteen per cent of students did not understand the concepts and sought consultancy for further explanation. Overall, it was found that a small percentage of students (around 12%) could understand the contents by self-learning or seldom consultancy with seniors/peers.

**RQ:** Experiences of the online learners in terms of challenges of academic freedom

All the participants agreed that they experienced challenges. Internet connectivity was one of the major problems they faced in executing activities such as using online materials, reviewing literature and learning materials, and participating in online discussions. The participants could refer to these materials with the consultation of other peers. They could collaborate with teachers and peers by sharing their content during and after online discussions. They explained that they completed online assignments in a deadline submission. They raised their concerns about feedback from teachers. They requested feedback on their activities, such as online assignments and quizzes. This helped to remove their alternative conceptions and complex concepts. The participants further noted that they need more time and flexible durations to familiarise themselves with difficult concepts.



Understanding the research activities was another issue. This was accumulated due to a lack of the personal space of learning (Baticulon et al. 2021). They preferred a combination of PPT slide presentations and teachers' online lectures. They understood their responsibilities to attend online classroom sessions. They were unable to understand how to develop their research tools by self-effort. They consulted teachers and peers many times. During online learning, only answers were not input; instead, the participants were required to develop practical thinking insight. Participants' collaboration in pedagogical and research issues improved their space of learning and freedom in learning. This is argued in favour of experiencing freedom in academics (Zain-Al-Dien, 2016).

## **DISCUSSION**

This study investigated academic freedom in one's learning space and freedom of learning among university students. Quantitative and qualitative data were integrated to answer the research questions. Access to internet facilities was a challenge to the participants, which determined the digital divide issue. Inequalities in the availability of technology and internet access in different parts of the country are significant considerations of the digital divide (Behera, 2021). Almost half of the participants were lacking personal learning space during online classes. This caused their incompleteness of assignments and blocked their maximum attainment. The results from the interview support the findings related to the challenges of freedom. This result confirms the findings of Bhuasiri et al. (2012).

This study investigated the level of freedom in academic practices quantitatively. The quantitative results provide insights to address teaching and research issues during online sessions regarding understanding the lessons, solving the assignments, online reviewing the



literature, and collaborating on the work. The state of online in higher education aids students to acquire skills which broaden an individual's knowledge and experience (Karran & Mallinson, 2019). There was a moderate level of academic freedom during students' online learning with respect to personal learning space access. This is consistent with the findings of Baticulon et al. (2021).

Physical learning space is the first condition to create a learning environment. This may be one of the hindrances of freedom in learning. The learning members must, therefore, understand that a physical learning space that is free from distractions is required for online learners. The teachers should focus to this on line learning component to create learning environment. Therefore, teachers should dedicate a physical learning space for online learners.

Learners' freedom of learning was judged while choosing the research topic, accessing online materials, reviewing the literature from multiple databases and sharing the findings with readers. There was a moderate level of academic freedom during online learning in relation to freedom in learning. Khan et al. (2021) support freedom during online learning.

## **CONCLUSION**

Freedom to learn is essential in higher educational institutions. The freedom of learning includes the right to select courses freely, set one's study focus within a degree program, and work out and express one's scientific opinion. The university has the right to make decisions on academic freedom. University's commitments towards freedom are ubiquitous. Therefore, we must examine context-specific experiences in teaching-learning, assessment and evaluation, and conducting research projects and dissertations. Freedom among students



increases the standard and quality of learning. This supports innovation aligned with authentic academic work. Attempts should be made to recognise common factors in low and high academic freedom. A student-centred learning space should be provided in the digital space for effective interactions. Further research in the direction of democratic learning space toward the development of academic freedom can be undertaken. Educational institutions should be regulated to address student freedom in research and publications, report writing, conversations on a topic and classroom discussions.

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