Exploring the Perceptions and Experiences of E-Learning in Consultancy Organizations: A qualitative study with a focus on the Indian context

A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts by Dissertation (MAD) in Management Studies

to

Essex Business School

University of Essex

Colchester, United Kingdom

by

Srikanth Mandela

PRID: MANDE51311 REG No: 2111817

Date of Submission for Examination October 2023

Acknowledgements

I extend my deepest gratitude to a constellation of individuals whose support, guidance, and encouragement have been my beacon throughout this research journey, illuminating my path and shaping this thesis into its current form.

My sincere thanks and regards to my supervisor, Dr Marina Michalski. Her unwavering support, insightful feedback, and scholarly guidance have been instrumental in refining my thoughts and navigating the complexities of the research process. Her belief in my capabilities has been a source of strength and inspiration, driving me to aspire for excellence. I extend my gratitude to Dr Louise Nash and Dr Anita Hammer, who have been a beacon of support during my research endeavour. Dr Maria Hudson, the chair of my board panel has guided me in multiple facets during my research work and I am deeply grateful to her.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the faculty and staff at Essex Business School, University of Essex, whose knowledge, expertise, and dedication have fostered an enriching learning environment. The exposure to diverse perspectives and the encouragement to question and explore have been pivotal in my academic journey and professional growth.

I express my profound thanks to all the participants of this study, whose willingness to share their experiences and insights was the linchpin for this research. Their openness and thoughtful reflections have been invaluable, adding depth and richness to this work. Without their contributions, the exploration of e-learning perceptions and experiences within Indian consultancy organizations would not have been possible.

My heartfelt thanks go to my family , whose unwavering support, patience, and love have been my anchor. Their sacrifices, encouragement, and belief in my aspirations

have been the driving force behind my pursuits. The strength drawn from their support has been immeasurable, and I am eternally grateful for their boundless love and unwavering faith in my abilities.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my friends and peers for their camaraderie, constructive critiques, and encouragement. The discussions, debates, and shared experiences have enriched my perspectives and added to the vibrancy of my journey.

I am thankful to the librarians and administrative staff whose diligence and commitment have ensured a seamless research process. Their support in accessing resources and managing logistical aspects has been crucial in the timely completion of this thesis.

Lastly, I am grateful to every individual, known and unknown, who has contributed, directly or indirectly, to this journey. The learnings, experiences, and reflections gained through this process have been transformative, and I am deeply thankful for the opportunities and challenges that have shaped this research.

In conclusion, this journey has been a tapestry woven with the threads of support, encouragement, and insights from numerous individuals. Their collective wisdom, guidance, and goodwill have been the pillars supporting my academic endeavour, and I extend my sincere appreciation to all. This thesis is not just a culmination of my efforts but a reflection of the collective contributions of all those who have touched this journey.

Abstract

This research provides an in-depth exploration into the perceptions and experiences of e-learning within consultancy organizations in India, focusing on the interplay between organizational contexts and learning paradigms. The study aims to unveil the multifaceted dimensions of e-learning, examining employee experiences, motivations, expectations, and the challenges encountered, offering a nuanced understanding of the acceptance and efficiency of e-learning in diverse organizational landscapes. Employing a qualitative approach, online interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed, and thematically analysed within the framework of Constructivism, allowing for a detailed examination of patterns, themes, and categories specific to the Indian consultancy sector. The findings illuminate the varied motivations and expectations, highlighting the flexibility and economical advantages of e-learning amidst the prevalent challenges of technical issues in organisational contexts. The insights garnered hold significant implications for shaping learner-centric e-learning strategies and interventions, fostering the development of conducive learning environments, and contributing to the broader discourse on e-learning practices and strategies within diverse and dynamic organizational settings. The research stands as a pivotal contribution to the understanding of e-learning in consultancy organizations and serves as a catalyst for future studies in the realm of e-learning and its correlation with organizational dynamics.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Introduction

E-learning's evolution as a viable mode for human resource development has garnered much attention in the academic and professional realm, because of its profound implications for various sectors, including employee training (Brown et al., 2006). At its core, e-learning revolves around leveraging technology and the internet for educational dissemination (Sangrà et al., 2012). Horwitz (2013) contrasts its myriad advantages of heightened educational accessibility, cost-effectiveness, flexibility, quality enhancement, and innovative prowess with the significant challenges it poses, particularly in developing nations like India. Such nations grapple with daunting skill gaps, exacerbated by the dire need for accelerated, large-scale skill cultivation (Batra, 2009).

Delving deeper into the niche of e-learning for employee training, Noesgaard and Orngreen (2015) note its global ascendancy across diverse sectors and regions. Yet, the very universality of e-learning for employee training underscores stark regional and sectoral discrepancies, informed by an array of determinants like cultural, economic, educational, and systemic (Giannakos et al., 2022). India, with its unique confluence of demographic and economic factors, exemplifies this complexity. Currently holding the title of the world's most populous nation, India's workforce diversity is as pronounced as its need for swift skill augmentation to stay globally competitive (World Population Review, 2023). Post the economic liberalization in the 1990s, the nation experienced a surge in growth, notably in the manufacturing and service sectors (Agrawal, 2014; Mehrotra & Ghosh, 2014). A discordant pace of skill evolution led to a labour market misalignment, with concomitant unemployment, reduced productivity, and suppressed wages. Despite India's rapid IT boom, a significant gap persisted between the burgeoning demand for skilled IT professionals and the educational

system's capacity to fulfill this demand, largely due to outdated curricula, limited access to quality resources, and a lack of alignment with industry needs. This disconnect underscores a critical challenge for the nation in leveraging its full potential in the global digital economy (Davies, 2018). Batra's (2009) cautionary statement resonates profoundly here, positing the dire consequences of neglecting robust skill development endeavours. E-learning emerges as a potential panacea but comes tethered to imperatives for meticulous strategizing, execution, and continual appraisal (Alshahrani et al., 2020). Its successful implementation is tethered to a multitude of variables, from technological preparedness and organizational ethos to course structuring (Al-Azawei et al., 2016) and the intricate interplay of learner profiles, instructional dynamics, and assessment strategies (Gupta & Bostrom, 2009).

Specifically, the consultancy sector in India, amidst rapid growth, faces an urgent imperative for employee skill development, driven by burgeoning demand for specialized, tailored consulting across diverse industries (Deloitte, 2019). Challenges abound, from intense market competition and technological disruptions to talent nurturing and retention complexities (McKinsey & Company, 2018). E-learning holds the transformative potential for consultants by offering customized, scalable learning solutions that can efficiently bridge the skill gap. Its adaptability enables consultants to stay abreast of rapidly evolving industry standards and methodologies, fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation. For consultants, e-learning can be transformative. Yet, its design needs to mirror real-world exigencies and foster engagement, given consultants' potential preference for traditional, interpersonal learning modes.

Central to this discourse is this study's intent, which is a deep dive into e-learning perceptions and experiences within Indian consultancy firms. Adopting a qualitative

lens tailored to the Indian milieu, the study embarks on a thematic exploration to address the salient research questions:

- What are the barriers and enablers for acquiring valuable competencies through e-learning in the studied organizations?
- What is the role of technology enhanced learning (TEL) in promoting a culture of continuous learning in the studied organizations?
- What are the social mechanisms affecting the influence of e-learning among employees?

This thesis consists of six chapters and collectively aims to explore employees' experiences with e-learning in Indian consultancy organizations. Chapter one provides a comprehensive literature review, analysing key themes related to e-learning globally and in the Indian context. It examines e-learning practices, outcomes, challenges, and future trends, focusing on the corporate sector. Chapter two outlines the theoretical framework grounded in constructivism that guides the study. It explains key tenets of constructivism and justifies its relevance as the lens for this research. Chapter three delineates the methodology, describing the qualitative approach, data collection through interviews, and analysis using thematic analysis. Chapter four presents the key findings that emerged from the thematic analysis of interview data. It identifies major themes and sub-themes related to employees' perspectives on e-learning. Chapter five contains the summary of findings and recommendations and the final chapter six contains the limitations, areas for future research and my reflections on the entire study and along with my future plans.

Chapter 1 : Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter explores e-learning in organizational settings, emphasizing its global trends, challenges, and future prospects. It highlights the shift towards virtual training, the role of emerging technologies like VR, AR, and AI, and the importance of collaborative learning. Key barriers identified include resource limitations, lack of strategic clarity, and the need to align e-learning with learner preferences. Future trends point to the increasing role of technology in creating personalized learning experiences and the significant shift in instructor roles towards facilitation. The review pays special attention to India's unique challenges in e-learning adoption, such as infrastructural and digital literacy gaps, while noting the potential of localized content and public-private partnerships.

In the consultancy sector, the necessity for adaptive e-learning designs is discussed, alongside addressing cultural and infrastructural barriers. The effectiveness of e-learning is linked to factors like content quality, technological support, and organizational culture. Conclusively, the chapter emphasizes the critical role of technology in promoting continuous learning and examines social mechanisms impacting e-learning effectiveness. This foundation supports the study's aim to refine e-learning strategies in organizations, focusing on India's consultancy sector.

1.1 eLearning in Organizations

1.11 Global Adoption and Trends

The landscape of e-learning for employee training has evolved into a global phenomenon, underpinned by advancements in technology, yet fraught with complexities that traverse cultural, infrastructural, and policy contexts (Chen et al.,

2018; Alenezi, 2018). As we approach the year 2024, it becomes imperative to critically examine the emerging trends that characterize e-learning on the global stage, while also evaluating the inherent challenges and barriers that can impede its effectiveness.

A dominant trend that has emerged is the shift towards remote work and virtual training, which has been propelled by the COVID-19 pandemic (Greany & Zetlitz, 2022). While remote work offers advantages like flexibility and potential cost savings, it also surfaces drawbacks like digital fatigue, isolation, and communication challenges that warrant careful attention (Alshammari et al., 2020). The discourse thus needs to progress beyond mere adoption of virtual training to encompass issues of engagement, community, and communication in online environments (Greany & Zetlitz, 2022). In this regard, while emerging technologies like Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Artificial Intelligence (AI), discussed in detail in the next subsection on ‘Future trends in eLearning’, hold promise, their integration must be purposeful and aligned with sound pedagogical objectives (Huang et al., 2020). Furthermore, the role of collaborative and social learning has come to the forefront, with its potential for deeper engagement and motivation (Wenger et al., 2009). However, nurturing positive interdependence and trust in online communities requires meticulous design and facilitation of interactions that respect diverse learning styles and needs (Garrison et al., 2000; Kaur & Abas, 2004). This poses a multidimensional challenge of how to effectively incorporate collaboration and community participation in e-learning activities.

1.12 Challenges in Implementation

On the other hand, lack of resources, skills, clear strategies, and learner engagement have been identified as persistent barriers that can undermine the success of e-

learning initiatives (Al-Azawei et al., 2017; Alshammari et al., 2020). This suggests the need for greater investments in capacity building, aligning e-learning with organizational goals, and improving content quality and delivery for enhanced motivation and participation (Alenezi, 2018). However, regional and sectoral differences also warrant consideration, as e-learning solutions cannot be universally applied across diverse cultural and infrastructural landscapes (Zhang et al., 2019). While e-learning potentially presents opportunities for employee training on a global scale, its effective implementation necessitates a nuanced understanding of inherent challenges across diverse contexts, posing the question of how to address the challenges that are in need of immediate attention. In this regard, good planning and design of eLearning courses has been observed as both an important challenge and a great opportunity to disseminate eLearning within organizations. Furthermore, this requires understanding the learner needs, perceptions and characteristics first.

In this direction of discussion, the first requirement is analysing the target audience learning needs and preferences is key (Nakayama & Santiago, 2012). Data collection methods like surveys, interviews and observations, though offer a solution, they have limitations like time constraints and data quality issues (Al-Adwan et al., 2018). Moreover, these practices alone may not suffice across varying contexts and sectors. For instance, in the context of Indian eLearning programs, considering socio-economic factors affecting participation becomes necessary, given the diversity of Indian learners (Sangrà et al., 2012). Likewise, sectoral programs would need an examination of domain-specific engagement factors (Muthuprasad et al., 2021). These learnings about the learner preferences and characteristics need to be then translated into sound planning and eLearning design. Good planning and robust eLearning course design needs to be learner centric and lays a path towards higher learner

engagement. E-learning to train employees along with careful planning and design aligned with learning objectives, outcomes, and organizational goals can potentially get learners to be mindfully interested in eLearning (Al-Adwan et al., 2018; Sangrà et al., 2012). However, different approaches like having clear purpose and objectives (Docebo, 2016) or using SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Targeted) criteria (Srivastava et al., 2019) have tradeoffs. While clear purpose provides direction, it may overlook regional and sectoral differences (Docebo, 2016). Similarly, SMART criteria enable monitoring, but do not address learner diversity or organizational alignment (Srivastava et al., 2019). Critical examination of assumptions of selected approaches for their specific contexts is important. This is a blended exercise between the organizational and individual level, that is the learner, to achieve the desired eLearning outcomes.

At this conjunction between the organisational and the individual level, there are challenges and features to be addressed at the individual level. For instance, e-learning is also affected by the forgetting curve phenomenon. Overcoming the forgetting curve is another aspect, where different course templates like spaced repetition and microlearning are proposed (Khaldi et al., 2021; Murre & Dros, 2015). However, templates have varying effects and suitability. While spaced repetition improves retention (Murre & Dros, 2015), microlearning enhances engagement (Khaldi et al., 2021), discussed in detail in the next subsection on ‘Global future trends in eLearning’. Additionally, social learning enables collaboration (Liu & Yu, 2022), but adaptive learning, wherein the learning content adapts to the learner's pace, provides personalized guidance (Chen et al., 2022). Furthermore, templates like multilingual delivery may suit the Indian context (Sangrà et al., 2012) but not others. This

necessitates the need to appropriately adopt suitable templates based on contexts and objectives, while evaluating impact.

Continuing on the individual front, the nature of learning varies from individual to individual, a concept that becomes especially evident when examining e-learning delivery methods from the learner perspective. While some individuals have a natural inclination towards visual content such as images or videos, others may find auditory content like podcasts more effective. Yet, there's also a significant portion of learners who benefit from kinesthetic content, such as quizzes, questions and reality based scenarios (Visme, 2020). This diversity necessitates the integration of a variety of content formats in e-learning courses. Contrasting this with traditional learning methods, e-learning particularly shines in its ability to offer flexibility, expanding on the aspect touched upon in the discussion before. It empowers learners with the autonomy to navigate their educational journey at a pace that suits them, underscoring its modern approach (Talent LMS, 2018). This is not just about choosing the type of content but also the freedom to skip, revisit, and delve deeper into modules based on personal interest. However, another prominent challenge of eLearning, in addition to the challenge of planning and eLearning course design discussed above is, quantifying the return on investment from these programs. How does one measure the tangible impact on employee performance or client outcomes? To address this, it's vital to employ a multifaceted approach, collecting data through various metrics like completion rates, test scores, and even behavioral changes (eLearning Industry, 2019). But it's not just about gathering data, presenting this information in a coherent manner to stakeholders is equally crucial. Return on investment on eLearning programs has been briefly touched upon, because it is one of the important aspects that comes up during discussions around eLearning, though not the focus of this study.

On the logistical front, e-learning offers a substantial advantage by significantly reducing the administrative burden. Instead of grappling with physical materials and records, everything can be streamlined and stored in a database. They not only hold content but also track learner progress, automating many tasks that were previously manual (eLearning Industry, 2019). A driving force behind the push for e-learning is the ever-evolving business landscape. As businesses grapple with rapid changes, e-learning can swiftly adapt, offering up-to-date content that addresses current challenges. From leveraging cutting-edge technologies like AI and AR to fostering a sense of community and collaboration, e-learning is at the forefront of innovative educational solutions (Talent LMS, 2018). This discussion showcases that e-learning programs for employees need context-specific planning, learner analysis, and suitable course templates along with understanding the nuances on the learner side to achieve desired objectives and outcomes. This makes it pivotal to understand what the future holds for eLearning delivery. The next subsection addresses the upcoming trends that showcase promise for the eLearning domain.

1.2 Organizational Strategies and Technologies

1.21 Emerging Technologies

As e-learning continues to evolve on the global stage, several emerging trends hold promise for enhancing employee training and development. Aspects briefly touched upon in the previous subsection such as microlearning, AR, VR and AI are discussed in further detail in this subsection. A predominant area of focus is reinventing social learning through innovative technologies like virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) which can simulate immersive environments and scenarios for deeper learning and engagement (Saltan & Arslan, 2017; Radianti et al., 2020). However, while the hype around VR/AR is substantial, critical examination is warranted on aspects like usability,

learner differences and alignment with objectives to realize their full potential (Jensen & Konradsen, 2018; Radianti et al., 2020). Another emerging technology is artificial intelligence (AI) which can enable adaptive and personalized learning experiences by analyzing individual progress and providing customized feedback and content (Gamage et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2021). However, ethical implications regarding data privacy, bias in algorithms, and human-AI interaction require careful evaluation (Gamage et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the concept of self-directed microlearning is gaining prominence, wherein learners take agency in selecting bite-sized learning modules to build knowledge and skills (Hug, 2005). It promotes learner autonomy and flexibility. However, concerns around sustaining motivation and ensuring knowledge integration necessitate scaffolding support structures from instructors (Hug, 2005; Kovachev et al., 2011). This underscores the evolving role of instructors from content providers to facilitators and mentors, guiding learners' metacognitive development and self-regulation skills for lifelong learning (Kop & Fournier, 2011). Additionally, as remote work and mobility increase, mobile learning is forecast to grow, enabling just-in-time learning unconstrained by geography (Almaiah & Alyoussef, 2019). However, barriers like small interfaces of mobile devices, limited social presence, and technical challenges need resolution (Liu et al., 2021). On similar lines, wearable technologies and Internet of Things (IoT), which are devices with the processing ability, sensors and software that connect and exchange information with multiple other devices and systems via the internet are emerging domains with potential for workplace learning through hands-on experimentation (Bower & Sturman, 2015; Pimmer et al., 2019). However as novelty effects wear off, the educational value of wearables/IoT warrants examination (Bower & Sturman, 2015).

1.22 Strategic Implementation and Organizational Goals

As this technological transformation unfolds, one of the major priorities is in nurturing digital literacy competencies in organizations through faculty training programs on online pedagogy and instructional design and employee training on emerging tech tools (Darby, 2019; Dhawan, 2020). Building this digital capacity is vital or the switch to e-learning could be counterproductive. Promoting collaboration between academics and industry can also foster innovation and alignment with dynamic workplace needs (Fuad et al., 2022). While the e-learning landscape is rapidly evolving with emerging innovations, their integration needs careful evaluation regarding utility, effectiveness, and ethical implications across diverse contexts. The role of teachers and trainers is evolving as e-learning becomes more ubiquitous in organizational training worldwide. Whereas instructors previously functioned mainly as disseminators of information, the growth of e-learning has highlighted the need for them to also serve as guides, mentors, and facilitators in the learning process. This reflects a broader shift in perspectives on learning, from a focus on the transmission of information to a recognition that effective learning requires active participation, engagement, and support (Bates, 2015; Siemens, 2005). Though facilitative instructional approaches existed before e-learning, the scalability and wide reach of technology-enabled training has increased the importance of instructors developing these skills (Garrison, 2017). As e-learning platforms become more prevalent across organizations globally, it will be critical for instructors and trainers to continuously upgrade their abilities to motivate, engage, and empower learners in digital environments (Fabian et al., 2018). Situating e-learning within the context of broader developments in learning theories and best practices will allow instructors to fully leverage the affordances of technology for impactful teaching and training (Anderson, 2004; Clark & Mayer, 2016). The wise adoption of trends aligned with strategic objectives and learner needs, while

addressing inherent challenges, would shape the promising future of e-learning worldwide. This discussion will progress in detail into eLearning in the Indian context (Chawla et al., 2018) and eventually to the consultancy sector in India which is the context of this study, leading to the research questions as an outcome of this discussion so far.

1.3 Elearning in the Indian Organizational Context

1.31 eLearning for employee training and Digital Infrastructure

The landscape of e-learning for employee training in India has expanded rapidly in recent years, underpinned by the growth of internet connectivity, digital infrastructure, and acceptance of online education (KPMG, 2017). However, regional, sectoral and organizational differences shape the implementation and outcomes of e-learning initiatives across the diverse Indian context (SHRM, 2020; Technavio, 2020). India faces some unique challenges in adopting e-learning on a national scale. Infrastructural deficits such as unreliable electricity, bandwidth limitations and lack of digital access remain pressing concerns, especially in rural areas (Gaba & Bhattacharya, 2016). This widens the digital divide, making e-learning inaccessible for many. Literacy levels also vary widely, necessitating content localization and delivery in vernacular languages (Mehra & Mital, 2007). Moreover, low digital literacy among employees, particularly in government sectors, hinders e-learning proficiency (Sharma, 2019). Government policies and initiatives remain pivotal in addressing these challenges. Schemes like Digital India, Skill India and Startup India, alongside digital infrastructure investments, are enhancing technological readiness (Anurag, 2021). However, bureaucratic delays, coordination issues across central and state agencies, and monitoring challenges impede optimal implementation (Sharma, 2019).

Public-private partnerships can accelerate digitization and e-learning adoption with private sector agility and public sector scale (Mehra & Mital, 2007).

According to KPMG (2017), the Indian online education market was valued at $247 million in 2016, with projections to reach $5.5 billion by 2024 (Redseer, 2022), representing a compound annual growth rate of over 50% since 2016. Key drivers spurring this growth include rising internet and smartphone penetration, growing awareness of e-learning benefits, and demand for reskilling and upskilling workers for the knowledge economy (KPMG, 2017). However, Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) (2020) highlights infrastructural challenges like unreliable bandwidth in rural areas, lack of digital skills among employees, and absence of quality standards as barriers to adoption. Furthermore, there are significant differences across industrial sectors. According to projections by Technavio (2020), the education sector had the largest share of the online learning market in India at 25% in 2019, but faces constraints like insufficient funding and high regulation. Meanwhile, the corporate sector was projected to be the fastest growing segment with a 22% compound annual growth rate between 2019-2024, but is plagued by high attrition rates. The government sector was estimated to grow at 18% between 2019-2024, yet is impeded by bureaucracy and red tape. The healthcare sector had 16% expected growth for 2019-2024 given urgent training needs, but is bound by compliance requirements.

According to Sangrà et al. (2012), e-learning strategies need to align with socio-economic realities in India, emphasizing affordability, accessibility and overcoming the digital divide between urban and rural areas. González-Sanmamed et al. (2014) add that content must be customized and translated into local languages to enhance adoption across diverse cultural settings. Organizational factors also influence e-

learning outcomes. As evidenced in the cases of Mahindra and Tata Communications, companies that invest in building customized, gamified (Hamari, 2017) and experiential e-learning platforms see improvements in employee motivation, satisfaction, productivity and retention (Goyal, 2020; SKILLDOM, 2020). However, Bhat et al. (2017) caution that success hinges on managerial support, alignment with goals, and perceived benefits outweighing effort required. While e-learning holds promise for training India's large workforce, strategic implementation attuned to regional, sectoral and organizational contexts is vital. As Anurag (2021) summarizes, personalized and localized solutions, public-private partnerships, policy reforms and capacity building are critical enablers for India to harness the full potential of e-learning. Careful diagnosis of barriers, customized content, and enabling infrastructure can chart an impactful e-learning future for diverse Indian organizations.

1.4 eLearning and Design in the Indian Consultancy Sector

In the vast tapestry of professional development, the consultancy sector, especially within the context of India, presents a multi-faceted landscape. This sector’s dynamism, combined with the distinctive Indian socio-economic and cultural framework, underscores the potential role of e-learning as a transformative medium. A deep dive into the literature unveils the intricate interplay of global trends, local challenges, and the consequential implications for e-learning designs tailored for the Indian consultancy sector. At the heart of consultancy lies a relentless pursuit for knowledge, innovation, and adaptability. Consultants, globally, grapple with the challenges of staying ahead in a rapidly evolving industry (Chun et al., 2019). Traditional pedagogical methods, often characterized by their rigidity, present limitations in terms of immediacy, flexibility, and contextual relevance (Margaryan et al., 2015). Thus, there's an implicit urgency for alternative learning paradigms, and e-

learning emerges as a front runner. However, is the transition from traditional to digital learning spaces merely a function of technological advancement, or is there a deeper, more profound pedagogical shift at play?

India, with its burgeoning consultancy sector, further amplifies these global challenges with its unique set of constraints and opportunities (Deloitte, 2019). The geographical vastness of the nation, interspersed with regions of varying developmental indices, renders traditional training models less effective, especially in tier-2 and tier-3 cities (Bothra & Sahay, 2019). E-learning's promise of ‘anytime, anywhere’ learning could be a panacea to this geographical conundrum. However, does the mere provision of access equate to meaningful learning experiences? The literature suggests otherwise. Effective e-learning mandates designs that respect the linguistic, cultural, and educational heterogeneity inherent in the Indian diaspora (Ramachandran, 2010). This is not a mere translation of content but a transformation that aligns with regional sensitivities and aspirations. The digitization of learning content, while a commendable step, is merely the tip of the iceberg. The real challenge lies in creating content that resonates, engages, and empowers the learner (Margaryan et al., 2015). Innovations like collaborative digital spaces, and real-world simulations hold promise, but their effectiveness remains contingent on their alignment with the unique demands of consultancy tasks (Botha & Coetzee, 2016). ELearning can be designed to offer autonomy to the learner, but one must critically ask, whether such autonomy always translates to self-directed, meaningful learning experiences (Bersin, 2017)?

Barriers to e-learning adoption are multifaceted. While global issues like long work hours and resistance to change from senior consultants persist (Werr et al., 2009), India grapples with its distinctive challenges. Skepticism from top management, infrastructural limitations, and a deeply ingrained cultural preference for face-to-face

instruction often hamper e-learning initiatives (Kochar, 2006; Sharma, 2019). The discourse then shifts from merely offering e-learning solutions to fostering a cultural and organizational milieu that values and promotes digital learning. The Indian consultancy sector, with its myriad challenges and opportunities, presents a fertile ground for e-learning innovations. The discussion beckons a nuanced examination of not just e-learning solutions but the very ethos of learning within the consultancy paradigm. As the sector evolves, so would be the need for the pedagogies supporting it, warranting continual reflection, and refinement.

1.5 Employee Experiences and Perceptions of eLearning

Research has underscored the effectiveness of eLearning in enhancing employee skills and knowledge, which subsequently contributes to organizational productivity (Sangrà et al., 2012). However, the efficacy of eLearning initiatives is influenced by several variables, such as the quality of content, technological infrastructure, and learner engagement (Al-Adwan et al., 2018). In the Indian milieu, these factors are further nuanced by cultural, organizational, and individual variables (Sahin & Shelley, 2008).

Al-Adwan et al. (2018) emphasizes the critical role of content quality in eLearning effectiveness. For Indian consultancy organizations, this implies the need to curate culturally sensitive and contextually relevant content. Bhuasiri et al. (2012) note the imperative for aligning e-Learning content with the diverse educational and cultural backgrounds of the Indian workforce. Further, Sangrà et al. (2012) suggests that the incorporation of multimedia elements can significantly enhance the e-Learning experience, provided these are congruent with cultural learning preferences. A robust technological framework is a prerequisite for successful e-Learning implementations

(Al-Adwan et al., 2018). However, this is often a challenge in the Indian context, particularly in regions with limited digital literacy and infrastructural deficits (Sahin & Shelley, 2008). Therefore, beyond the provisioning of hardware and software, organizations also need to invest in fostering digital literacy among employees (Zalat et al., 2021). The role of organizational culture and leadership in e-Learning cannot be overstated (Al-Adwan et al., 2018; Assarah et al., 2011). In the Indian context, where hierarchical structures and high-power distance are prevalent, leadership endorsement becomes crucial (Ravindran, 2018). The leaders need to clearly communicate the advantages of e-Learning and set realistic expectations, alongside establishing a reward and recognition system (Abramovich et al.,2013) to foster active engagement.

Given India's socio-cultural diversity, e-Learning programs need to offer a variety of learning formats, such as self-paced courses, webinars, and collaborative learning sessions (Sangrà et al., 2012; Muthuprasad et al., 2021). This multiplicity of formats can address varied learning preferences and technological constraints, thereby enhancing engagement and effectiveness (Sahin & Shelley, 2008). Al-Adwan et al. (2018) and Bhuasiri et al. (2012) highlight the importance of continuous feedback in e-Learning. In the Indian context, characterized by a strong tradition of mentorship, setting up mechanisms for regular communication and feedback can be particularly effective. Sangrà et al. (2012) point out the potential barriers such as time constraints and workload pressures that can hinder e-Learning engagement. To mitigate these challenges, organizations could adopt flexible learning schedules and dedicated learning environments (Zalat et al., 2021).

Understanding the interplay of these variables of content quality, technology, organizational culture, learner preferences, feedback mechanisms, and potential

barriers is crucial for the effective implementation of e-Learning initiatives in Indian consultancy organizations. This nuanced understanding leads to the first research question:

"What are the barriers and enablers for acquiring valuable competencies through e-Learning in the studied organizations?"

Answering this question through in-depth qualitative research will offer invaluable insights for optimizing e-Learning strategies in the Indian consultancy sector. This discussion highlights insights for both academic researchers and industry practitioners aiming to harness e-Learning as a strategic tool for employee development in the complex socio-cultural and organizational landscape of India.

1.6 Role of Technology and Continuous Learning Culture in the Workplace

E-learning in Indian workplaces remains under-researched and under-developed, despite the potential benefits and opportunities it offers for enhancing the skills and competencies of employees and managers (Srivastava et al., 2019). One of the main challenges of e-learning in Indian organizations is the lack of a culture of continuous learning among the workforce. Continuous learning is the process of acquiring new knowledge and skills throughout one’s career, which can improve performance, productivity, and innovation (Senge, 1990). Continuous learning can also foster employee engagement, motivation, and satisfaction, as well as organizational commitment and loyalty (Noe et al., 2014). However, continuous learning requires a supportive environment that encourages and facilitates learning opportunities for employees at all levels (Garvin et al., 2008).

Technology enhanced learning (TEL) is a part of e-learning that focuses on the use of advanced technologies to create innovative and interactive learning experiences that are tailored to the needs and preferences of learners (Laurillard, 2012). TEL can potentially promote a culture of continuous learning in Indian organizations by providing flexible, accessible, personalized, and collaborative learning opportunities for employees. TEL can also enable feedback, assessment, and reflection mechanisms that can enhance the quality and effectiveness of learning outcomes (Sharples et al., 2016). However, the adoption and implementation of TEL in Indian organizations faces several barriers and challenges that need to be addressed. These include technical issues such as infrastructure, connectivity, compatibility, security, and maintenance; organizational issues such as leadership, strategy, policy, culture, resources, and support; pedagogical issues such as design, delivery, content, methods, and evaluation; and learner issues such as attitudes, perceptions, experiences, preferences, motivation, and readiness (Srivastava et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2020). The main focus of this study centers upon the “learner issues” with special emphasis on perceptions and experiences of employees in the studied Indian workplaces.

Therefore, there is a need for more empirical research on the perceptions and experiences of e-learning in Indian organizations. Specifically, there is a gap in the literature on how TEL can promote a culture of continuous learning in the organization. This research aims to fill this gap by exploring the following, 2nd research question:

“What’s the role of technology enhanced learning in promoting a culture of continuous learning in the studied organizations?”

Technology plays a vital role, but along with it employees may need to come to terms with aspects like isolation, reduced engagement, lack of face to face interactions and other social aspects. Going forward, we discuss these social aspects of e-learning in the next section.

1.7 Influence of Social Mechanisms on eLearning

eLearning has been adopted by various organizations to enhance employee skills and knowledge (Sinha & Shukla, 2021; Sharma & Mishra, 2007). But the effectiveness of e-learning in Indian organizations remains a subject of debate, with limited research focusing on the social mechanisms affecting its influence among employees. It is argued that the lack of face-to-face social interaction and the absence of a supportive learning environment may hinder the learning process and lead to lower levels of employee engagement and satisfaction (Gupta & Bostrom, 2009).

Several social mechanisms such as organizational culture, social presence, and social support may affect the efficacy and utility of e-learning among employees. Organizational culture plays a crucial role in shaping employees' attitudes and perceptions towards e-learning (Al-Emran et al., 2018; Schein, 2010). A supportive culture that encourages learning and innovation can positively influence employees' acceptance (Zalat et al., 2021) and use of e-learning (Sinha & Shukla, 2021). Conversely, a culture that does not value learning or is resistant to change may hinder the adoption and effectiveness of e-learning initiatives (Gupta & Bostrom, 2009).

Social presence is the degree to which learners feel connected to others in an online learning (Muthuprasad et al., 2021) environment. It has been identified as a critical factor influencing the effectiveness of e-learning (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Richardson & Swan, 2003). A lack of social presence may lead to feelings of isolation

and disengagement among employees, negatively affecting their learning outcomes (Gupta & Bostrom, 2009). Research suggests that incorporating collaborative learning activities and fostering a sense of community can enhance social presence and improve the overall e-learning experience (So & Brush, 2008; Garrison et al., 2000).

Social support, in the form of guidance, encouragement, and feedback from peers and supervisors, has been found to positively influence employees' e-learning experiences (Al-Emran et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2011). A lack of social support may result in employees feeling overwhelmed and unsupported, leading to lower levels of engagement and satisfaction with e-learning initiatives (Gupta & Bostrom, 2009). Organizations can enhance social support by providing opportunities for interaction and collaboration among employees and ensuring that supervisors are actively involved in the learning process (Sinha & Shukla, 2021). While the existing research provides some insights into the social mechanisms affecting e-learning in Indian organizations, several gaps and limitations can be identified. First, much of the research on e-learning in India has focused on the higher education sector, with limited attention given to the corporate context (Sinha & Shukla, 2021; Chauhan, 2017). This limits the generalizability of the findings and highlights the need for more research focusing specifically on e-learning in Indian corporate workplaces.

Second, the majority of the studies on e-learning in India have employed quantitative research methods, with very few qualitative studies exploring employees' perceptions and experiences in depth (Sinha & Shukla, 2021; Sharma & Mishra, 2007). This gap in the literature suggests a need for more qualitative research to gain a deeper understanding of the social mechanisms affecting e-learning in Indian organizations. Finally, existing research has primarily focused on the individual factors influencing employees' e-learning experiences, with limited attention given to the broader social

and organizational context (Al-Emran et al., 2018; Selwyn, 2011). This highlights the need for more research into examining the interplay between individual, social, and organizational factors in shaping employees' e-learning experiences, perceptions leading to favourable outcomes.

The gaps and limitations identified in the existing literature, highlights the significance of the following 3rd research question:

"What are the social mechanisms affecting the influence of e-learning among employees in Indian organizations?"

Addressing the three research questions will contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors shaping employees' e-learning experiences in Indian organizations and inform the development of more effective e-learning initiatives that consider the social and organizational context.

I will be using selective dimensions of the Constructivism theory as the guiding lens for this research work. The next chapter discusses the prominent theories used in e-learning research over the last few decades and will progress towards the a comparative debate around the Constructivism theory and other theories, its multiple dimensions and the selective dimensions that fit and inform the research questions we arrived at, from this review, thereby providing a strong theoretical framework for my research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

Social Issues and Theories in E-Learning

2.1 Introduction

E-learning, in its multifaceted dimensions, holds profound implications for competency acquisition and continuous learning within organizations. It is within this intricate nexus that this study is situated, guided by three core research questions: (1) What are the barriers and enablers affecting competency acquisition through e-learning? (2) How does technology-enhanced learning foster a culture of continuous learning? (3) What social mechanisms influence e-learning among employees? This chapter serves as a theoretical foundation for the study, positioning e-learning within a broader theoretical context and then honing in on Constructivism as its guiding lens. Extensive indepth reviews of various learning theories was carried out for this study, along with a visit to the consulting organization’s office, which is the focus of this study, after appropriate permissions from the University of Essex and the organization was obtained. After assessing the appropriateness and suitability of the Constructivism theory, compared to the other theories in the learning domain, and the planned direction of the study. Constructivism was chosen, owing to a thorough and critical examination of a multitude of aspects regarding the study. Subsequent sections will elaborate on the comprehensive facets of Constructivism, contrast it with other learning theories, and discuss its selected dimensions that serve as a focal point for this research (Ally, 2004; Siemens, 2005).

The realm of e-learning is steeped in a diverse array of learning theories that inform its design, functionality, and impact. From Behaviourism's focus on observable

behaviours and stimulus-response associations (Skinner, 1954) to Cognitivism's emphasis on mental processes and information processing (Anderson, 1983), various theories have been leveraged to optimize e-learning environments. The Social Learning Theory further enriches this landscape by accentuating the role of social context and observational learning in the e-learning experience (Bandura, 1977). However, it is Constructivism that emerges as the centrepiece of this discourse, particularly for this study. Unlike its theoretical predecessors, Constructivism posits that learning is an active, contextualized process where learners construct new knowledge based on their existing cognitive structures (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978). It is this Constructivist lens that provides the theoretical scaffolding for this research, offering a comprehensive and nuanced framework for exploring the barriers, enablers, and social mechanisms that define e-learning in organizational settings.

2.2 Constructivism: An Overview

The roots of Constructivism can be traced back to the works of pioneering figures like Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, who laid the foundational premises in the early to mid-20th century (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978). Piaget's focus on developmental stages and Vygotsky's emphasis on social context opened new vistas in understanding how individuals construct knowledge. Unlike Behaviourism, which had its ascendancy in the early 20th century and prioritized external stimuli and responses (Watson, 1913), Constructivism posited learning as an internal, cognitive act. Similarly, while Cognitivism, emanating from the works of figures like John Anderson, offered deep insights into mental processes, it often overlooked the situational and social factors that Constructivism brought into focus (Anderson, 1983). In the realm of e-learning, Constructivism comes to life through learning activities that are problem-based, project-based, or inquiry-based (Herrington et al., 2010). These activities aim to

challenge learners to apply previously acquired knowledge and skills to real-world issues or dilemmas. This approach is in direct contrast to Behaviourist methods in e-learning, which often rely on rote learning and mechanical reinforcements (Abramovich et al., 2013; Hamari, 2017). It also deviates from Cognitivism, which, although addressing cognitive processes, frequently neglects the social and contextual dimensions of learning (Lawless, 2019). Another cornerstone of Constructivism is its focus on social negotiation and collaboration as mechanisms for building shared meaning and understanding among learners (Jonassen et al., 2003; Palloff & Pratt, 2007). This focus is materialized in e-learning through various online platforms such as discussion forums, blogs, and wikis, which facilitate interaction and cooperation among learners (Palloff & Pratt, 2007). Here, Constructivism finds alignment with Social Learning Theory, which similarly values social interactions but often falls short in explaining how knowledge is internally constructed (Vygotsky, 1978).

Furthermore, Constructivism emphasizes the importance of employing authentic tasks and contexts that mirror real-world situations and challenges (Herrington et al., 2010). This stands in alignment with Connectivism, which also advocates for real-world applicability (Keengwe et al., 2014). However, Connectivism often falls short in delineating the cognitive processes that underlie the construction of knowledge, leaving it less structured compared to Constructivism (Keengwe et al., 2014). Despite its merits, Constructivism is not without challenges, particularly in the setting of organizational e-learning. It presupposes that learners are intrinsically capable of self-directed learning and can navigate ambiguity (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). This is a departure from theories like Behaviourism and Cognitivism, which offer a more structured learning environment (Lawless, 2019). Moreover, applying Constructivism

in e-learning settings necessitates a high degree of preparation, coordination, and evaluation on the instructor's end. This is markedly different from Behaviourist approaches, which are often simpler in terms of instructional design but may offer less cognitive engagement for learners (Lawless, 2019). In light of this discussion, let me delve deeper into the comparison and contrast of Constructivism with the other learning theories, which have been briefly touched upon above and place it in the e-Learning context of this study. Let’s see how the other major theories have contributed to the narrative of the Constructivism theory and its development.

2.3 Constructivism and Behaviourism: A comparison

At its core, constructivism posits that learners actively construct their own understanding and knowledge through experiences and interactions with the environment. This perspective is grounded in the belief that learning is highly personal, shaped by a learner's previous experiences and their active engagement in meaning-making. Constructivism underscores the importance of context, asserting that learning is most effective when learners are immersed in authentic tasks that allow them to derive meaning and understanding through experience. In contrast, behaviourism takes a more external view of the learning process. Rooted in the works of thinkers such as Skinner & Holland (1976), behaviourism focuses on observable behaviours and their consequences. This theory revolves around the concept of stimulus-response associations. For behaviourists, learning is perceived as a sequence of stimuli and responses, with behaviours being shaped by reinforcements, be they positive (rewards) or negative (punishments) (Cherry & Gans, 2019).

Behaviourism’s approach to e-learning is often systematic and structured. Its principles champion the breakdown of complex tasks into smaller, manageable

subtasks that learners can master progressively. This approach is evident in modular e-learning courses that offer clear objectives, instructions, examples, practice exercises, feedback, and assessments (Clark et al., 2005). The behaviourist model puts a premium on immediate and frequent feedback, helping learners ascertain their performance and adjust behaviours accordingly. In the realm of e-learning, such feedback might manifest in the form of scores, badges, or other tangible markers of achievement (Chen et al., 2017). Constructivism, however, envisions e-learning as a dynamic space where learners actively navigate, exploring real-world problems and constructing knowledge from their endeavours. It emphasizes the role of social negotiation and the importance of active, experiential learning. This paradigm shift would advocate for e-learning courses wherein learners engage in collaborative problem-solving, with the digital environment facilitating rich interactions that help in the co-construction of knowledge.

However, the application of behaviourist principles in e-learning has its merits, especially in scenarios that require the acquisition of specific skills or knowledge. The use of multimedia elements like videos or animations, grounded in behaviourist principles, can effectively guide learners, offering cues or prompts that elicit desired responses (Mayer et al., 2015). Such strategies can be invaluable in ensuring learners grasp foundational concepts before delving into deeper, more complex topics. However, behaviourism has faced criticism for its potential limitations in e-learning contexts. Specifically, it has been argued that behaviourism may neglect crucial internal mental processes that underpin learning, such as memory, attention, and problem-solving (Verywell Mind, 2022). In stark contrast, these are the very processes that constructivism actively celebrates and seeks to cultivate for effective learning to take place.

Moreover, while behaviourism's structured approach can lead to efficient mastery of specific skills, it might not account for individual differences among learners, such as their prior knowledge or learning styles (WGU, 2020). Constructivism, with its focus on individual experience, naturally lends itself to a more personalized approach, acknowledging and catering to the unique pathways through which different learners construct knowledge. While constructivism and behaviourism offer contrasting views on learning, both hold significant implications for the design and delivery of e-learning. Behaviourism, with its systematic focus on observable behaviours and external reinforcements, provides structured pathways to skill acquisition. Constructivism, with its emphasis on active knowledge construction and the role of prior experiences, offers a holistic, learner-centric approach in the context of eLearning.

Behaviourism recognizes the role of stimuli and reinforcement in shaping learning outcomes and behaviour. However, it does not fully explain how people learn from the internal mental processes that are not directly observable, such as memory, attention, perception, and reasoning. This is where Cognitivism comes in, as it emphasizes that learning is not only a matter of stimulus-response associations, but also a matter of mental representations, schemas, and cognitive strategies. Cognitivism also acknowledges that learners are active and self-regulated agents who can monitor and control their own learning processes, which is discussed in detail in the next section.

2.4 Constructivism and Cognitivism: A Comparison

Constructivism, as previously detailed, positions learners as active participants, building knowledge through their unique experiences and interactions with their environment. This theory argues that understanding is not merely received from the outside world but is actively constructed by the learner. Emphasizing the importance

of personal experiences, constructivism underscores the role of real-world tasks and collaboration, with learners navigating challenges and interpreting their results.

Contrastingly, cognitivism zeroes in on the internal mental processes that guide learning. Cognitivism operates on the premise that learning is anchored in the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and application of information within the brain (Ormrod, 2016). Rather than merely observing external behaviours as behaviourism does, or solely emphasizing experiential learning as constructivism does, cognitivism delves into understanding the intricate cognitive mechanisms that underpin the learning process. A key principle of cognitivism lies in the organization of information. By breaking down information into manageable 'chunks' or units, learners can better understand and remember content, thus reducing cognitive load (Sweller et al., 2019). This segmentation and sequencing of information is consistent with the constructivist approach, where structured experiences enable learners to derive meaning. However, while constructivism emphasizes personal interpretation, cognitivism focuses more on the efficient structuring of those experiences to streamline cognitive processing. Further, cognitivism underlines the importance of guidance and scaffolding to bolster cognitive development. With tools like outlines, analogies, or feedback, learners can effectively monitor and refine their learning (Moreno & Mayer, 2007). Constructivism too recognizes the role of guidance, but often through peer interactions and real-world problem-solving. One of the standout strengths of cognitivism, especially within the e-learning domain, is its incorporation of multimedia elements. By employing different modalities like text, audio, or graphics, e-learning platforms can cater to diverse cognitive styles, thereby enhancing understanding and retention (Mayer et al., 2015). This method, underscored by Mayer et al.'s (2015) design principles, acknowledges

the multifaceted nature of learning, echoing constructivism's stance on diverse learning pathways.

Yet, cognitivism isn't without its challenges. While it offers a systematic approach to understanding learning (University of Phoenix, 2022), it may sometimes fall short by overlooking the emotional and motivational aspects of learning, the precise elements which constructivism inherently factors in through its experiential focus. Cognitivism may also sometimes sidestep the nuances of social and cultural interactions, elements that constructivism deeply entrenched within its framework. Conclusively, both constructivism and cognitivism provide invaluable insights into the intricate tapestry of learning. Cognitivism, on the other hand, delves deep into the cognitive processes, offering strategies to optimize learning pathways. Constructivism, with its emphasis on experiential learning, illuminates the richness of personal interactions and experiences.

Cognitivism recognizes the role of instructional strategies and multimedia features in supporting learners' cognitive development and learning outcomes. However, cognitivism does not fully explain how people learn from engaging in meaningful tasks and activities that require higher-order thinking skills and reflection. This is where active learning comes in. Active learning is a learning theory that focuses on practical and experiential learning.

2.5 Constructivism and Active Learning: A Comparison

Constructivism and Active Learning are foundational concepts in the realm of educational theory, with both emphasizing the importance of experience, engagement, and reflection in the learning process. A thorough and deep exploration of their interrelation reveals nuanced perspectives on how learners interact with content and

their environment. At its core, constructivism postulates that learning is a dynamic, individualized process where knowledge is built through interaction with one's surroundings. This perspective aligns closely with Active Learning, which advocates for a hands-on, reflective approach where learners are deeply involved in the learning experience, tackling tasks that demand higher-order thinking skills like analysis and problem-solving.

Active Learning is characterized by its emphasis on "learning by doing" (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). This theory posits that the deepest learning outcomes arise when learners engage in authentic situations, such as simulations or case studies, which challenge them to apply their accumulated knowledge to real-world dilemmas (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Such experiential environments mirror the constructivist belief in the value of real-world tasks, as they offer learners the opportunity to navigate challenges and construct meaning based on their experiences. Feedback and reflection stand as pivotal components within both paradigms. Constructivism values personal interpretation, with learners making sense of their experiences by relating them to previous knowledge. Active Learning builds on this by accentuating feedback mechanisms that foster self-regulation and metacognition, enabling learners to calibrate their understanding and performance (eLearning Industry, 2015). Through this lens, learning becomes a cyclical process, wherein experiences are continually analysed, understood, and incorporated into one's evolving knowledge base. Collaboration is another common thread weaving through both theories. Active Learning emphasizes collaborative strategies, creating avenues for learners to share insights, co-create knowledge, and benefit from varied perspectives through tools like discussion forums or wikis (Johnson et al., 1998). Constructivism echoes this sentiment, acknowledging the profound learning that can occur within a collaborative

context, as individuals compare, contrast, and integrate their unique interpretations of shared experiences.

Research in Active Learning, such as the works of Kolb & Kolb (2005) and Johnson et al. (1998), underscores its efficacy. Kolb & Kolb delineated a systematic experiential learning design, encapsulating stages from engagement to active experimentation, which resonates with the constructivist view of learning as a dynamic journey. Meanwhile, Johnson et al.'s investigation into cooperative learning highlights the tangible benefits of collaborative efforts, further endorsing the synergies between constructivism and Active Learning. However, while both theories champion engagement, reflection, and collaboration, they aren't without challenges. Active Learning, for instance, demands high learner motivation and participation, a level of commitment that might not be feasible for all learners or settings (eLearning Industry, 2023). Similarly, the depth and richness of constructivist experiences necessitate a learner's readiness to engage, reflect, and adapt. Constructivism and Active Learning, while distinct, offer harmonizing views on the intricate dance of learning. They jointly emphasize the potency of experience, the criticality of reflection, and the transformative power of collaboration. By integrating these perspectives, they provide valuable insights towards the dynamics of eLearning in organizations and its practical implications for creating effective eLearning ambience.

Active learning theory emphasizes the importance of engaging learners in meaningful tasks and activities that require higher-order thinking skills and reflection. It also recognizes the role of feedback and interaction in enhancing learning outcomes and metacognition. However, active learning theory does not fully explain how learners acquire new knowledge and skills from observing and imitating others who are more experienced or skilled. This is where social learning theory comes in. Social learning

theory is a learning theory that focuses on how people learn from observing and modelling the behaviour, attitudes, and emotions of others. This is discussed in the next section.

2.6 Constructivism and Social Learning Theory: A Comparison

In the rich panorama of educational theories, both Constructivism and Social Learning Theory stand as pivotal frameworks that centre around the active involvement of the learner in the learning process. When juxtaposed, these theories offer insights into how individual construction of knowledge intertwines with collective and observational learning. Constructivism posits that individuals actively construct knowledge through their experiences and interactions with their environment. In this model, understanding is not passively received but rather is shaped through reflection on one's experiences. Social Learning Theory, as postulated by Bandura (1977), complements this view, emphasizing the role of observation, interaction, and modelling in shaping behaviour and knowledge. In essence, it suggests that much of what we learn arises from observing others, influenced by cognitive, behavioural, and environmental factors. Within the realm of e-learning, the application of Social Learning Theory has profound implications. It underscores the value of fostering engagement, motivation, and performance through social interactions and collaborations (Garrison & Anderson, 2003). Such interactions serve as platforms where learners can share, debate, and refine their constructed understandings, echoing the constructivist notion of evolving understanding. For instance, e-learning strategies that encourage discussions, group projects, or peer feedback foster a sense of community and shared purpose, thereby facilitating deeper cognitive engagement (Garrison et al., 2010; Richardson & Swan, 2003; Rovai & Jordan, 2004).

Metacognition, a tenet closely related to constructivism, finds resonance in Social Learning Theory. Opportunities provided for self-monitoring, evaluation, and correction through platforms like blogs or wikis offer avenues for learners to be reflective and regulate their learning processes (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001; Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). This aligns with the constructivist belief of individuals analysing and revising their understanding based on new experiences and insights. Further, Social Learning Theory pushes the envelope by emphasizing co-creation and collaborative problem-solving (Wenger et al., 2009). In e-learning contexts, this could manifest as online communities where learners not only consume content but also collaboratively create, innovate, and solve problems. This principle finds harmony with constructivist beliefs, where authentic, real-world tasks allow learners to apply, test, and reshape their understandings (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger et al., 2009). However, the juxtaposition also reveals areas of divergence and challenges. While constructivism centers on the individual's construction of knowledge, Social Learning Theory's emphasis on observational learning might not always align with every learner's preference. Some might lean towards independent exploration rather than collaborative or observational learning (Cassidy, 2004). Additionally, in e-learning scenarios, the digital divide and differing levels of digital literacy can impede effective social learning (Ally, 2004). Furthermore, issues like the credibility of e-resources, risks of plagiarism, or challenges in ensuring unbiased feedback further complicate the landscape (Garrison & Anderson, 2003; Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). While both Constructivism and Social Learning Theory prioritize the learner's active role, their synthesis in e-learning contexts reveals both the potential and the challenges of integrating personal knowledge construction with collective and observational

learning. By acknowledging these intricacies, educators can harness the strengths of both paradigms, creating a vibrant, interactive, and reflective learning environment.

Therefore, social learning theory in the context of e-learning is a theory that provides a networked and dynamic approach to eLearning that can cope with the rapid changes and complexity of information and knowledge in the digital age (eLearning in Motion, 2023). It incorporates social learning and knowledge creation strategies that can foster learners' participation, contribution, and collaboration with others in online communities (eLearning Industry, 2016). However, social learning theory does not fully explain how learners cope with the rapid changes and complexity of information and knowledge in the digital age. This is where connectivism comes in. Connectivism is a theory, though not fully accepted as a learning theory by some scholars, focuses on how people learn from creating and maintaining connections/networks with various sources of information and knowledge in a networked digital environment.

2.7 Constructivism and Connectivism: A Comparison

In the evolving landscape of educational theory, both Constructivism and Connectivism emerge as influential models, particularly when it comes to the domain of e-learning. By comparing and contrasting these two theories, a comprehensive understanding of how individual and networked learning function in tandem, can be achieved. Constructivism champions the belief that individuals actively generate knowledge and meaning through interactions with their experiences and environment. According to this perspective, the learning process is dynamic, and knowledge is constantly refined as individuals confront and negotiate new experiences. Connectivism, a theory deeply rooted in the digital age, converges with Constructivism in many aspects but extends the boundaries by emphasizing the importance of

networks and the digital connections among myriad nodes of knowledge (Siemens, 2005). In Connectivism, the focus is not just on the individual's construction of knowledge but also on the access, assimilation, and dissemination of knowledge across digital networks. In the e-learning milieu, Connectivism is realized by creating networked environments wherein learners access and integrate web-based resources such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, and even social media (Downes, 2007). This echoes the constructivist approach, where understanding is developed through the exploration of diverse resources. However, while Constructivism may rely on tangible or traditional resources for knowledge building, Connectivism amplifies this by leveraging the expansive digital universe that almost has no limits / boundaries.

One of the cornerstones of Connectivism is the importance of association, collaboration, and knowledge creation in today's digital landscape. By encouraging learners to participate in online communities or interest groups, e-learning courses can foster an environment where knowledge is not just consumed but is also created and shared (Wenger et al., 2009). This principle aligns seamlessly with the constructivist perspective, which emphasizes the role of collaboration and interaction in deepening understanding. Furthermore, the idea of personal learning environments, proposed by Connectivism, bears resemblance to constructivist practices. Both theories advocate for learner autonomy. While Constructivism emphasizes the role of personal reflection and understanding, Connectivism takes this a step further by allowing learners to customize their e-learning experiences, emphasizing individual learning paths and preferences (Attwell, 2007). Yet, while both theories intersect at various junctures, there are a few inherent challenges in Connectivism. The digital age demands learners to possess robust digital literacy skills, critical thinking capacities, and a high degree of self-regulation, which might not be innate to all (eLearning Industry, 2023).

Moreover, the need for consistent facilitator involvement and the technical demands can sometimes impede the smooth application of Connectivism practices in e-learning environments (eLearning Industry, 2016). Constructivism and Connectivism, when viewed in tandem, offer a holistic picture of how learning unfolds in today's interconnected world. While Constructivism focuses on the internal cognitive structures and processes, Connectivism highlights the potential of external networks and digital connections. As e-learning continues to evolve, understanding and synergizing these two theories can pave the way for richer, more engaging, and holistic learning experiences.

All theories discussed so far have emerged to fulfil the limitations of one another and we have seen how they have been applied in eLearning research all over the world along with their comparison and contrast with Constructivism. Thus, Constructivism forms the overarching theory applicable to this research, and we now examine and try to understand the various dimensions of Constructivism and the integration of few selective dimensions into this research, in the next sections.

2.8 The Key Dimensions of Constructivism

Constructivism theory has several dimensions that can help us understand how people learn and how we can create effective eLearning environments and activities based on it.

The first dimension of constructivism theory posits that **knowledge is constructed** and meaning interpreted based on their prior experiences and interactions with the world (Edge Education, 2020). This implies that eLearning environments need to enable learners to connect the new information to their existing schemas and contexts, and to create new knowledge through active and reflective learning activities

(Pressbooks, 2020). However, this also implies that eLearning environments consider the diversity and variability of learners' prior knowledge and experiences, which may be challenging to assess or accommodate online. Moreover, this also implies that eLearning environments need to acknowledge the multiple perspectives and interpretations that learners may have, and that there may not be a single correct or objective answer or solution to a problem or task (IOSR Journals, 2015). This can pose a challenge for eLearning environments that need to ensure quality and consistency of eLearning outcomes, especially in organizations that have specific standards and expectations for their employees or customers.

The second dimension of constructivism theory is that **learning is an active process** that involves creating mental representations and integrating new knowledge into existing schemas (WGU, 2023). This implies that eLearning environments need to provide learners with authentic and complex tasks and activities that require them to apply and reflect on their knowledge and skills. This can stimulate learners' higher-order thinking skills and foster their creativity and innovation (Pressbooks, 2020). However, this also implies that eLearning environments would need to provide learners with sufficient guidance and support to help them cope with the cognitive load and confusion that may arise from engaging in challenging and unfamiliar tasks and activities. This can be difficult to achieve online, especially when learners have different levels of prior knowledge or skills, or when they lack the necessary digital literacy skills or access to resources (Keengwe et al., 2014).

The third dimension of Constructivism theory posits that **learning is a social activity** that involves interaction and collaboration with others. Learners co-construct knowledge and meaning through social discourse and negotiation (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Learning is also influenced by the cultural and historical context of the learners

and the learning environment (Vygotsky, 1978). This implies that eLearning environments would need to enable learners to communicate and share their ideas and perspectives with others. This can enhance learners' social skills, communication skills, and problem-solving skills (Daniels, 1996). However, this also implies that eLearning environments need to facilitate effective collaboration among learners who may have different backgrounds, preferences, styles, or motivations. This can be challenging to manage and monitor online, especially when learners have limited time, availability, or trust (Lawless, 2019).

The fourth dimension of constructivism theory is that **learning is contextual** and situated in authentic and meaningful tasks and activities. Learners relate the new information to their own experiences and contexts, and apply their knowledge and skills to real-world situations and problems (Dewey, 1938). This implies that eLearning environments need to provide learners with realistic and relevant scenarios and problems that are aligned with their field of study or work. This can increase the transferability and applicability of the eLearning content for learners, and motivate them to learn (Herrington & Oliver, 2000). However, this also implies that eLearning environments need to consider the diversity and variability of learners' experiences and contexts, which may be challenging to identify or accommodate online. Moreover, this also implies that eLearning environments need to acknowledge the multiple alternatives and trade-offs that learners may encounter when solving a problem or performing a task, and that there may not be a single best or optimal way to do so (Lawless, 2019).

The fifth dimension of constructivism theory is that **knowledge is personal** rather than universal. This means that learners construct their own interpretations and meanings of the information they encounter, and that learning is subjective and situated

(Lawless, 2019). This implies that eLearning environments need to enable learners to express their opinions and feelings, and to create their own products and artifacts that demonstrate their learning. This can foster learners' originality and self-expression, and promote their ownership and autonomy of their learning (Pressbooks, 2020). However, this also implies that eLearning environments need to respect and value the diversity and variability of learners' opinions and feelings, which may be challenging to assess or accommodate online. Moreover, this also implies that eLearning environments need to acknowledge the multiple perspectives and interpretations that learners may have, and that there may not be a single right or wrong answer or solution to a problem or task (IOSR Journals, 2015).

The sixth dimension of constructivism theory is that **learning exists in the mind** and not in the world. This means that learners create mental models and representations of reality, and that learning is not directly observable or measurable (WGU, 2023). This implies that eLearning environments need to provide learners with opportunities to reflect on their learning processes and outcomes, and to revise their mental models and representations based on feedback and evidence. This can support learners' metacognition and self-regulation, which can help them monitor and improve their learning outcomes (Edge Education, 2020). However, this also implies that eLearning environments need to provide learners with sufficient feedback and evidence to help them evaluate their learning processes and outcomes, which may not be easy or feasible to provide or obtain online. Moreover, this also implies that eLearning environments need to acknowledge the multiple methods and criteria that can be used to assess or measure learning processes or outcomes, and that there may not be a single valid or reliable way to do so (Lawless, 2019).

A seventh dimension of constructivism theory is that intrinsic **motivation is key** to learning rather than extrinsic rewards or punishments. This means that learners are motivated to learn when they are interested (Rovai & Barnum, 2003), curious, challenged, and supported by the learning environment and the instructor (Lawless, 2019). This dimension implies that eLearning environments need to provide learners with opportunities to choose their own learning goals, activities, and pace, and to receive recognition and encouragement for their efforts. This can enhance learners' intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, which can lead to better learning outcomes. However, this dimension also implies that eLearning environments should take into account the diversity and variability of learners' interests, curiosities, challenges, and supports, which may not be easy or feasible to identify or accommodate online. Moreover, this dimension also implies that eLearning environments need to acknowledge that there may not be a single optimal level of motivation for all learners, but rather multiple factors and influences that are subjective and situated (Lawless, 2019). Going further, I will examine the selective dimensions that form the guiding lens for this research in light of the theoretical fit and the research questions of this study.

2.9 Constructivism and it's selective dimensions as the guiding lens for this research

Constructivism theory has several dimensions that can help us understand how people learn and how we can create good eLearning environments, as discussed above. In this section, I will explain how constructivism theory forms the guiding lens for my qualitative research that examines the experiences of employees with eLearning in their organization.

One of the aspects of constructivism theory that informs my research is that **knowledge is constructed** rather than transmitted or received. This means that learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning, and that prior knowledge influences what new or modified knowledge an individual will construct from new learning experiences (Phillips, 1995). This aspect implies that employees' experience with eLearning is shaped by their existing knowledge and skills, as well as their expectations and beliefs about eLearning. Therefore, one of my research questions is: *What are the barriers and enablers for acquiring valuable competencies through e-learning in the studied organizations?* I aim to explore how employees' prior knowledge and skills affect their motivation, engagement, and performance in eLearning courses, and how they perceive the value and relevance of eLearning for their professional development. I also aim to explore how organizational factors, such as culture, leadership and support, influence employees' attitudes and behaviors toward eLearning by conducting in depth personal interviews with a cross section of employees.

Another aspect of constructivism theory that informs my research is that **learning is an active process** rather than a passive one. This means that learners are not passive recipients of information, but actively engage (Hiltz & Turoff, 2005), with the world and reflect (Rovai & Wighting, 2005) on their experiences. Learning involves creating mental representations and integrating new knowledge into existing schemas (WGU, 2023). This aspect implies that in today's context, the employees' experience with eLearning is influenced by their level of involvement and interaction with technologies like online courses, Virtual reality, Augmented Reality and Mixed reality content, activities, and feedback. Gamification and active participation create continuous learning (Koohang et al., 2009). Therefore, one of my next research

questions is: *What is the role of technology enhanced learning in promoting a culture of continuous learning in the studied organizations?* I aim to explore how technology enhanced learning can facilitate active learning by providing employees with authentic and complex tasks and activities that require them to apply and reflect on their knowledge and skills. I also aim to explore how technology enhanced learning can support continuous learning by providing employees with access, sharing, and creation of knowledge using various technologies.

A third aspect of constructivism theory that informs my research is that **learning is a social activity** rather than an individual one. This means that learners interact with others and co-construct knowledge through social discourse and collaboration. Learning is influenced by the cultural and historical context of the learners and the learning environment (Vygotsky, 1978). This aspect implies that employees' experience with eLearning is influenced by their level of communication and cooperation with other employees, facilitators, or experts. Therefore, my last research question is: *What are the social mechanisms affecting the influence of e-learning among employees?* I aim to explore how social mechanisms, such as interaction, isolation, values, environment, knowledge sharing and creation affect employees' participation and engagement in eLearning courses.

These are the aspects of the constructivism theory that form the guiding lens for my qualitative research that examines the experience of employees with eLearning in their organization. By using constructivism theory as a theoretical framework for my research, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of how employees learn through eLearning, what factors enable or hinder their learning, and what implications this has for creating effective eLearning environments and activities for organizations.

To summarize, the project investigates the employee's experiences with eLearning in their organization, wherein we try to understand the extent of Learning support, Social Mechanisms, and the role of Technology in the learning experience, using selective dimensions of Constructivism, to answer the following **research questions**:

1. What are the barriers and enablers for acquiring valuable competencies through e-learning in the studied organizations?
2. What is the role of technology enhanced learning in promoting a culture of continuous learning in the studied organizations?
3. What are the social mechanisms affecting the influence of e-learning among employees?

The next chapter discusses the methodology and research design in detail in the context of this research in eLearning, applying the selective dimensions of Constructivism theory we discussed here.

Chapter 3: Methodology & Research Design

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and methodology that will be used to conduct this qualitative study on the experiences of employees with e-learning in their organization. The chapter explains the rationale for choosing a qualitative approach and how it is informed by the constructivist theoretical framework. The chapter also describes the research context, participants, sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis methods, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness criteria.

3.2 Research Approach and Rationale

The aim of this study is to find out how employees in Indian workplaces experience and think about e-learning. The study also explores the barriers and enablers for acquiring valuable competencies through e-learning, the role of technology enhanced learning in promoting a culture of continuous learning, and the social mechanisms affecting the influence of e-learning among employees. To answer these research questions, a qualitative approach will be adopted. This approach is suitable for the study because it allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how employees construct their own meanings and interpretations of e-learning based on their experiences and interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

According to Creswell (2014), a qualitative approach can be defined as:

an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures; data typically collected in the participant's setting; data

analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes; and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. (p. 4)

This approach is consistent with the research questions and objectives of this study, as they aim to explore and understand how employees experience and think about e-learning in their organization.

The qualitative approach of this study was informed by the constructivist theoretical framework. As discussed in the previous chapter, Constructivism is a learning theory that focuses on how learners construct their own meaning and understanding from their experiences and interactions (Ormrod, 2016). It has several dimensions that can help us understand how people learn and how we can create effective e-learning environments and activities based on it (Edge Education, 2020). As discussed in the previous chapter, the following three selective dimensions inform the basis of this research:

- Knowledge is constructed rather than transmitted or received.
- Learning is an active process rather than a passive one.
- Learning is a social activity rather than an individual one.

These dimensions form the guiding lens for this study, selected from among seven of them, as they help to shape the research questions, objectives, and analysis, the rationale for which are provided in the previous chapters discussion.

According to Crotty (1998), constructivism can be seen as both an epistemology (a way of knowing) and an ontology (a way of being). As an epistemology, constructivism assumes that knowledge is not discovered but constructed by human beings as they interact with their environment. As an ontology, constructivism assumes that reality is not fixed but relative to human perception and interpretation. Therefore, constructivism

rejects the positivist view that there is a single objective truth that can be measured and verified by empirical methods. Instead, constructivism embraces the interpretivist view that there are multiple subjective realities that can be explored and understood by qualitative methods (Crotty, 1998). According to Schwandt (2000), constructivism can also be seen as both a methodology (a way of doing) and an axiology (a way of valuing). As a methodology, constructivism implies that researchers should use methods that allow them to access the meanings that participants construct from their experiences. As an axiology, constructivism implies that researchers should value the diversity and complexity of human experience, respect the autonomy and agency of participants, acknowledge their own positionality and reflexivity, and aim for social change and emancipation (Schwandt, 2000).

Therefore, constructivism provides a comprehensive and coherent framework for conducting this qualitative study, as it aligns with the research aims, questions, objectives, methods, and analysis. Constructivism also guides the researcher's ethical and political stance, as it informs the researcher's role, relationship, and responsibility towards the participants and the phenomenon under study.

3.3 Research Context

The research context of this study is a consultancy organization in India that uses e-learning for employee training and development. India has a large and rapidly growing economy, with an increasingly young, tech-savvy workforce that requires continuous upskilling (Mehrotra, 2014). The consultancy sector in particular faces immense competition and pressure to develop specialized talent (Deloitte, 2019). E-learning is emerging as a valuable tool for Indian consultancies to provide flexible, scalable and cost-effective training. However, there is limited empirical research on how e-learning

is implemented, perceived by employees, and translated to tangible outcomes within Indian consultancy workplaces. Much of the existing research has focused on educational institutions, with a dearth of studies on corporate e-learning in India (Sinha & Shukla, 2021).

This study aims to address this gap by exploring the experiences of employees with e-learning in Indian consultancy organizations. It employs a qualitative methodology involving semi-structured interviews with 10 employees from the Indian offices of a large multinational consultancy firm headquartered in Europe. The organization has a strong culture of learning and development, using a blend of e-learning technologies and traditional classroom modes for training. The study participants comprise consultants and HR professionals across various levels of experience who have undergone various e-learning courses. By capturing their detailed perspectives, this study hopes to provide rich insights into the enablers, barriers, and outcomes of e-learning initiatives in the intricate Indian consultancy context. The findings aim to inform policies and strategies for unlocking the potential of e-learning in Indian corporate workplaces.

The organization that was selected for this study is a multinational consulting firm that provides services in various sectors such as finance, technology, healthcare and education. The organization has a comprehensive L&D strategy that aims to equip its consultants with the skills and competencies required for delivering high-quality services to its clients across diverse industries and domains. The learning journey of a consultant in the organization begins with an induction program that introduces them to the organizational culture, values, policies, and expectations. The induction program consists of a mix of classroom sessions, e-learning modules, webinars, and on-the-job training. After completing the induction program, consultants are assigned to

projects based on their skills, interests, and availability. During the project execution, consultants have access to various learning resources and platforms that support their performance and development. These include internal and external e-learning courses, podcasts, videos, blogs, newsletters, case studies, simulations, and games. Consultants can also participate in collaborative learning activities such as mentoring programs, peer feedback sessions, and knowledge sharing events. Furthermore, consultants are encouraged to pursue formal certifications and qualifications that are relevant to their areas of expertise and career aspirations. These can be funded by the organization or by external sources. The L&D strategy of the organization is aligned with its business goals and performance management system. The learning objectives and outcomes for consultants are defined by their project managers, clients, and L&D specialists, based on the project requirements, client expectations, and organizational standards. The learning outcomes are evaluated through various methods such as tests, quizzes, surveys, interviews, observations, feedback forms, and client reviews. The learning achievements of consultants are recognized and rewarded through various mechanisms such as badges, certificates, ratings, bonuses, promotions, and recognition awards.

The organization has offices in several countries across the world, including India and the UK. The organization has a strong culture of learning and development, as it believes that investing in its employees' skills and competencies is essential for its success and growth. It offers various types of e-learning courses to its employees such as mandatory courses on compliance, ethics, safety and optional courses on professional skills such as communication, leadership and project management and customized courses on specific topics or projects that are relevant for certain teams or roles. The organization uses various technologies to deliver e-learning such as

online platforms (e.g., Moodle), virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), mixed reality (MR) and gamification elements (e.g., badges). The organization also encourages its employees to use external sources of e-learning such as MOOCs (massive open online courses), podcasts and blogs, as part of their continuous learning. The organization evaluates its e-learning courses using various methods such as feedback surveys, quizzes, tests and certificates. It also monitors its employees' participation and performance in e-learning using various metrics such as completion rates, scores, and time spent. The organization uses the results of these evaluations and metrics to improve its e-learning courses and to identify the learning needs and gaps of its employees.

One of the key components of the organization's L&D strategy is its dedicated global university initiative that offers its consultants and clients leadership and technical training at locations across the globe including India. The Indian counterpart of their University division is located in Hyderabad. This university also functions as an important cultural unifier for the organization, as it brings to life its strategy, purpose, and shared values through a powerful selection of immersive development experiences. The university has multiple facilities around the world, each catering to a specific region and offering customized programs and curricula. The university is one of the most visible and tangible investments that the organization makes in its people, as it aims to grow the world's best leaders and foster a culture of lifelong learning. Consultants who attend the university benefit from the opportunity to network with their peers, mentors, and leaders from different countries, industries, and domains. They also gain access to cutting-edge knowledge, insights, and best practices that enhance their skills and competencies. Furthermore, consultants who participate in the university's programs are expected to apply their learning to their projects and share

their learnings with their teams and clients, thus creating a ripple effect of learning impact across the organization.

The research context of this study is important for several reasons. First, it provides a rich and diverse setting for exploring the perspectives of employees with e-learning in their organization. Second, it allows the researcher to understand the employee experiences in terms of their e-learning technologies, culture, practices, and outcomes. Third, it contributes to the existing literature on e-learning in India and other countries by providing empirical evidence and insights from a specific organizational context.

3.4 Research Participants

The research participants of this study are 10 employees from the consulting firm's offices located in India, who had used e-learning for training and development. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, which is a type of non-probability sampling that involves selecting participants based on specific criteria or characteristics that are relevant for the research purpose (Palinkas et al., 2015). The criteria for selecting the participants are:

- They had used e-learning for training and development.
- They had used different types of e-learning courses (e.g., mandatory, optional, customized) and technologies (e.g., online platforms, VR, AR, MR, gamification).
- They had different levels of experience and seniority and background in the organization (e.g, junior and senior consultants and different HRM Roles).

The purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure that the participants represent a diverse and rich range of experiences and perspectives on e-learning in the

organization. According to Patton (2002), purposive sampling allows researchers to select information-rich cases that can illuminate the phenomenon under study. Purposive sampling also allows researchers to use different types of sampling techniques depending on their research questions and objectives. For example, researchers can use criterion sampling to select cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance, maximum variation sampling to select cases that capture the range of variation in the phenomenon, typical case sampling to select cases that illustrate or highlight what is typical or normal, extreme or deviant case sampling to select cases that demonstrate unusual or exceptional features, critical case sampling to select cases that have strategic importance or implications; or snowball or chain sampling to select cases that are identified by other cases (Patton, 2002).

In this study, I used Criterion sampling to select the participants based on the criteria mentioned above. I contacted the potential participants via email and explained the purpose and procedures of the study. I also obtained informed consent from the participants before conducting the interviews. The participants were assured that their participation is voluntary and confidential, and that they can withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

I assigned pseudonyms to the participants to protect their identities and privacy. Table 3.1 below shows the anonymised profiles of the participants with pseudonyms:

Table 3.1: Participant Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Location	Role (Junior & Senior Consultant,	Experience	E-learning courses	E-learning technologies

		L & D – Learning & Development)			**(AR – Augmented Reality, VR – Virtual Reality)**
Amit	India	Senior Consultant	5 years	Mandatory, optional, customized	Online platforms, VR, AR
Anjali	India	Junior Consultant	3 years	Mandatory, optional	Online platforms, gamification
Arjun	India	HR (L & D)	10 years	Mandatory, Optional,	Online platforms
Deepa	India	Junior Consultant	3 year	Mandatory, optional	Online platforms
Karan	India	Senior Consultant	4 years	Mandatory, optional, customized	Online platforms, VR
Neha	India	Junior Consultant	2 years	Mandatory, optional, customized	Online platforms, AR
Anisha	India	HR (L & D)	5 years	Mandatory, optional	Online Platforms

Arvind	India	Senior Consultant	7 years	Mandatory, optional, customized	Online platforms, VR, AR
Aman	India	Senior Consultant	6 years	Mandatory, optional, customized	Online platforms, VR
Anurag	India	HR (L & D)	7 years	Mandatory, optional	Online Platforms

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The main data collection method of this study is through semi-structured interviews. Interviews are a widely used method in qualitative research, as they allow the researcher to elicit rich and detailed data from the participants about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and meanings (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interviews can also enable the researcher to establish rapport and trust with the participants, and to explore complex and sensitive issues in depth (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). According to Bryman (2012), interviews can be classified into three types: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Structured interviews involve asking a fixed set of questions in a predetermined order and format, with little or no variation or flexibility. Semi-structured interviews involve asking a list of open-ended questions that can be modified or followed by probes or prompts depending on the responses of the participants. Unstructured interviews involve asking few or no predetermined questions, but rather letting the conversation flow naturally based on the interests and concerns of the participants.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most appropriate type of interviews for several reasons. First, semi-structured interviews allowed me to have some guidance and consistency in terms of the topics and issues to be covered, while also allowing some flexibility and adaptability to explore new or unexpected themes that emerge during the interviews. Second, semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask open-ended questions that encourage the participants to express their views and experiences in their own words and terms, rather than imposing predefined categories or options on them. Thirdly, they allowed me to use probes or prompts to elicit more information or clarification from the participants, or to follow up on interesting or relevant points that they raised.

The interviews were conducted online using the video conferencing platform Zoom, as this is the most convenient and feasible way to reach the participants who are located in a different country and time zone. The online mode of interviewing also has some advantages over face-to-face interviewing, such as reducing travel costs and time, increasing accessibility and availability of participants, and enhancing anonymity and confidentiality of participants (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). However, the online mode of interviewing also had some challenges and limitations, such as technical problems or interruptions, lack of non-verbal cues or rapport, and potential distractions or disruptions in the participants' environment (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Therefore, I took some measures to address these challenges and limitations, such as testing the technology and equipment before the interviews, choosing a quiet and comfortable location for the interviews, establishing rapport and trust with the participants before and during the interviews, using verbal and visual cues to communicate effectively with the participants, and minimizing or managing any distractions or disruptions that occur during the interviews.

The interviews lasted for about one hour each, and covered topics such as the participants' background, motivation, expectations, challenges, benefits, and suggestions for improvement of e-learning in their organization. The interview questions were based on the research questions and objectives of the study, as well as on the literature review and the theoretical framework of constructivism. The semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by me. The transcripts were checked for accuracy and completeness by comparing them with the audio recordings. The transcripts were anonymized by removing any identifying information of the participants or the organization.

3.6 Reflections on the data collection process

Gaining access to organizations was my first challenge. I found myself caught between the academic rigor of my research and the practical language of consultancy, necessitating a balance between the two. Building rapport with practitioners was crucial but came with its pitfalls. Maintaining a balance between a friendly rapport and a critical research perspective became a key concern. The ethical dilemma of confidentiality loomed large, especially given the sensitivity around internal politics within the organizations. This was a thin line to tread, and it required utmost caution. As an aspiring consultant, I was careful not to let my future career interests bias the research. The focus remained on drawing broader implications rather than critiquing specific practices. This research journey was a lesson in adaptability, ethical integrity, and the complexities of qualitative research. These experiences have contributed significantly to my academic and professional development.

3.7 Data Analysis Methods

In this research, I employed thematic analysis, a method widely recognized for its capability to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis provides a structured means to interpret the meanings and experiences of participants in alignment with research questions and objectives (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis can be defined as:

a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic. (p. 79)

Thematic analysis can be conducted in different ways depending on the level of detail, complexity, and interpretation of the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) distinguish between two main types of thematic analysis: inductive and deductive. Inductive thematic analysis involves coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing framework or theory, but rather letting the themes emerge from the data. Deductive thematic analysis involves coding the data based on a pre-existing framework or theory, and using it to guide the identification of themes. In this study, deductive thematic analysis is chosen as the most appropriate type of thematic analysis for several reasons. First, deductive thematic analysis allowed me to use the constructivist theoretical framework as a lens to analyze the data, and to answer the research questions and objectives that were based on it. Second, deductive thematic analysis allowed me to use the literature review as a source of existing themes or categories that are relevant for the data. Third, deductive thematic analysis allowed

me to compare and contrast the findings of this study with the findings of previous studies on e-learning and constructivism.

The initial approach was deductive in nature, anchored in a constructivist theoretical framework. This allowed for a structured exploration of data based on predefined themes and categories derived from the literature review (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, as pointed out by my supervisor, qualitative research often engages in a mix of inductive and deductive approaches, leading to what is known as an 'abductive' methodology. In the context of this study, the abductive approach manifested through the emergence of inductive themes during the data analysis. These were unanticipated insights that held significant relevance to the research questions. Therefore, while the study began as a predominantly deductive exercise, the data analysis evolved into an abductive process where inductive elements naturally emerged and were integrated (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012).

The thematic analysis of this study was conducted following the six phases proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006):

Familiarization with the data: I read and re-read the transcripts several times to become familiar with the data and to gain a sense of the overall meaning and content of the data.

Generating initial codes: I coded the data manually, by assigning labels or tags to segments of the data that captured their key features or meanings. I used both descriptive and interpretive codes, depending on the level of detail and abstraction of the data. I also used both pre-existing codes based on the literature review and the theoretical framework, and emergent codes based on the data itself.

Searching for themes: I collated the codes into potential themes, by grouping them according to their similarities and differences. Then reviewed the themes in relation to the codes and the data, to check their coherence and relevance.

Reviewing themes: I refined the themes, by checking them against the entire data set, to ensure that they accurately reflect the meanings and experiences of the participants. Then reorganized, merged, split, and discarded some themes, to create a clear and concise thematic map.

Defining and naming themes: I defined and named the themes, by identifying their essence and scope, and by giving them concise and descriptive labels. Then wrote detailed descriptions of each theme, explaining what they are about and what aspects of the data are captured.

Producing the report: I wrote the report of the analysis, by selecting vivid and relevant extracts from the data to illustrate each theme, and by relating them to the research questions, objectives, literature review, and theoretical framework. Then discussed the implications and limitations of the findings, and suggested directions for future research.

In the process of coding and theme formulation, the Constructivism theory was a cornerstone of my analytical framework, ensuring the themes' relevance and coherence with the theoretical backdrop. This adherence to Constructivism was complemented by a preliminary visit to the company, which provided invaluable insights into the organizational setting. This dual approach, blending theoretical insights with empirical observations, deeply informed the development of the interview guide. Before conducting the interviews, understanding the company's learning environment, technological infrastructure, and the employees' engagement with e-

learning platforms was pivotal. This preparatory step ensured that the interview guide was not only grounded in Constructivism's emphasis on active, constructed, and social learning but also tailored to the specific context of the organization.As I navigated through the coding and thematic analysis, the interplay between the theoretical framework and the organizational context became increasingly evident. The themes that emerged were a reflection of this synergy, capturing how employees' experiences and interpretations of e-learning were shaped by their interactions within this particular organizational milieu. By weaving together these theoretical and empirical strands, the study illuminated the complex interplay between individual learning processes and the organizational context, offering a comprehensive understanding of e-learning experiences within the company.

The abductive nature of the study enriched the research by allowing for a more nuanced understanding of e-learning in the context of consultancy organizations. It opened avenues for questioning and reinterpreting existing frameworks and theories, and it added layers of complexity that a purely deductive method would have possibly overlooked. This research leaned towards an abductive approach, echoing the sentiment that qualitative research often involves a 'mix and match' of inductive and deductive elements (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). This abductive strategy not only strengthened the study's theoretical underpinnings but also enhanced the validity and richness of the findings.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical principles and guidelines throughout the research process, from planning to reporting. The study had obtained ethical approval from the University's Research Ethics Committee before conducting any data collection or

analysis. The study also adhered to the ethical standards of confidentiality, informed consent, voluntary participation, respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Confidentiality refers to protecting the identity and privacy of the participants and the organization, and ensuring that the data is not disclosed to unauthorized parties or used for purposes other than the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure confidentiality, I assigned pseudonyms to the participants and the organization, and will remove any identifying information from the transcripts and the report. I also stored the data securely in password-protected devices, and deleted the data after completing the study. Informed consent refers to obtaining permission from the participants to take part in the study, and informing them about the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, and rights of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure informed consent, I contacted the participants via email and explained the purpose and procedures of the study. I also provided the participants with an information sheet and a consent form that contains all the relevant information and terms of the study. I obtained written consent from the participants before conducting the interviews. I also reminded the participants that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Voluntary participation refers to ensuring that the participants are not coerced or pressured to take part in the study, and that they have the freedom to choose whether or not to participate (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure voluntary participation, I did not use any incentives or rewards to recruit or retain the participants. I respected the participants' decisions and preferences regarding their participation, and did not impose any expectations or obligations on them. Respect for persons refers to treating the participants with dignity and respect, and acknowledging their autonomy and

diversity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure respect for persons, I established rapport and trust with the participants before and during the interviews. I listened attentively and empathetically to the participants, and valued their views and experiences. I also avoided any bias or judgment towards the participants, and did not impose any personal or professional agenda on them.

Beneficence refers to maximizing the benefits and minimizing the harms of the study for the participants and the society (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure beneficence, I designed and conducted the study in a way that aims to contribute to the knowledge and practice of e-learning in India and other countries. I also ensured that the study won't pose any physical, psychological, social, or emotional risks or harms to the participants. The researcher will provide the participants with feedback and debriefing after the interviews, and offer them access to the results and findings of the study. Justice refers to ensuring fairness and equity in the selection, treatment, and representation of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure justice, a purposive sampling strategy was used that aims to include a diverse and representative sample of employees who have used e-learning for training and development in their organization. All the participants were treated equally and respectfully, regardless of their location, role, experience, background, or performance. The data and the findings of the study were established accurately and honestly, and the limitations and the challenges of the study acknowledged.

3.9 Trustworthiness Criteria

The study followed trustworthiness criteria throughout the research process, from planning to reporting. The study also adhered to the trustworthiness standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Peer debriefing refers to seeking input from colleagues or experts who are familiar with the research topic or method, and who can provide critical and constructive feedback on the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, I conformed to peer debriefing by discussing the research design, data collection, data analysis, and report writing with my supervisor and other researchers who have experience in qualitative research and e-learning. The themes were shared and then consulted with them, on the quality and relevance and their feedback has been incorporated into the study.

Reflexivity refers to being aware of and acknowledging one's own positionality, assumptions, biases, values, and influences on the research process and outcomes, and to addressing them transparently and critically (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, reflexivity was practised by writing down all my thoughts, feelings, decisions, challenges, and learnings in this report with respect to the entire experience wherever applicable. Transferability refers to ensuring that the findings of the study can be applied or generalized to other contexts or settings that are similar or relevant to the original context or setting of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure transferability, I have used purposive sampling, conducted interviews, analyzed the transcripts and conducted a thematic analysis in accordance with the previous scholarly literature, theoretical framework and the information on the consultancy sector.

3.10 Strengths and Limitations

The main strengths of this research design and methodology are that they allowed me to gain a deep and holistic understanding of how employees construct their own meanings and interpretations of e-learning based on their experiences and interactions. They also allowed me to explore the complexity and diversity of e-learning

in different situations and places, and to capture the views and voices of the employees who are often ignored or left out in e-learning research and design. They also allowed me to demonstrate understanding of research theory and practice, and to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. The main limitations of this research design and methodology are that they are time-consuming and resource-intensive, as they involve conducting and transcribing 10 semi-structured interviews online. They also rely on the participants' self-reports and memories, which may be influenced by social desirability, recall bias, or other factors. They also limit the generalizability of the findings, as they are based on a small and specific sample of employees from one organization. The main implications of this research design and methodology are that they provide a nuanced picture of how employees learn through e-learning, what factors enable or hinder their learning, and what implications this has for creating effective e-learning environments and activities for organizations. They will contribute to the existing literature on e-learning in India and other countries by providing empirical evidence and insights from a specific organizational context. They will suggest directions for future research on e-learning in different contexts or settings, using different methods or perspectives.

3.11 Personal Motivation and Research Genesis: A Reflective Perspective

My career in Human Resources across sectors like IT, Petroleum, Finance, and Manufacturing laid the groundwork for this research. I consistently observed a lack of employee input in the implementation of e-learning programs across these sectors. This top-down approach sparked my curiosity and led me to identify it as a research gap. The primary aim is to amplify this often-overlooked employee voice in e-learning initiatives, to both challenge and enrich existing literature, and to provide actionable

insights for organizations. The study aims to offer both theoretical and practical contributions by introducing theoretical frameworks that include employee perspectives, and practical recommendations that can potentially transform organizational approaches to e-learning. My prior roles offered valuable context, but also required me to be vigilant against bias, ensuring that my research remained objective and robust. This research is an academic extension of my professional observations, aiming to make contributions that are both scholarly and practical in nature.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter has described the research design and methodology that will be used to conduct this qualitative study on the experiences of employees with e-learning in their organization. The chapter has explained the rationale for choosing a qualitative approach and how it is informed by the constructivist theoretical framework. The chapter has also described the research context, participants, sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis methods, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness criteria. This chapter has presented a comprehensive and coherent outline for conducting this qualitative study on e-learning.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

The previous chapter presented the research methodology for this qualitative study exploring employees' experiences with e-learning in their organization. This chapter now presents the key findings that emerged from the thematic analysis of the interview data (Braun & Clark, 2006). The analysis generated major themes that provide insights into the participants' perspectives, experiences, benefits, challenges, and suggestions regarding e-learning. In this chapter I discuss the findings in light of the extant literature, presented in the literature review and in the discussion of the conceptual framework.

The themes arrived at, are illustrated in the table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Major Themes and Sub Themes

Major Themes	Sub-Themes
Challenges to eLearning	Technical Challenges and Pedagogical Support, Personal & Organisational Time Constraints, Lack of Interaction
Motivational Issues	Skill Progression, Badging & Recognition
Acquiring Valuable Competencies	Technical Skills, Soft Skills, Client Interaction
Social Mechanisms in eLearning	Collaborative Learning, Social Acceptance & Interaction, Community & Organizational Support
Employee Perceptions of Good ELearning design and Technology use	Technology use and Good eLearning design

4.1 Theme 1: Challenges to eLearning

Facing and overcoming the barriers to eLearning was a common theme that emerged from the data. Participants expressed various challenges that hindered their eLearning experiences, such as technical issues, time constraints, and lack of interaction. These challenges are discussed under three sub-themes: ‘Technical challenges,’ ‘Personal & organisational time Constraints’, and ‘Lack of interaction’. The first sub-theme ‘technical challenges’ explores the frustration and dissatisfaction that participants felt due to the quality and reliability of the technology that supported their eLearning activities. The second sub-theme ‘time constraints’ examines the difficulty and trade-off that participants faced in finding time for eLearning amidst their busy work schedules. The third sub-theme ‘lack of interaction’ reveals the diverse opinions and preferences that participants had regarding the social aspect of eLearning. These sub-themes illustrate the complex interplay of challenges that transcend mere logistical or technological issues. They uncover a nuanced debate on the values, expectations, and realities of eLearning within the context of consultancy organizations.

Sub-Theme 1.1: Technical Challenges and Pedagogical Support

Technical challenges emerged as a significant concern among participants. They reported that they sometimes encountered technical issues or difficulties that affected their access or use of e-learning content or platforms. For some, these issues were more than mere inconveniences. They were major sources of frustration and discouragement that negatively impacted their learning process, motivation and performance.

“The internet connection at times is very slow, and the software we use doesn’t always work as it should. It becomes a major hindrance.” (Amit, Consultant)

“I faced compatibility issues with some of the e-learning tools, which was frustrating.” (Aman, Consultant)

“The technology was not easy to use. It would often freeze or crash, and I would lose my work. There was no one to help me with the technical issues, so I had to solve them by myself.” (Neha, Consultant)

“The platform was very slow and glitchy. It took a long time to load the videos and quizzes. Sometimes I could not even log in to the course because it said it was full or under maintenance.” (Karan, Consultant)

Participants such as Amit, Aman, Neha, and Karan voiced their grievances regarding the inefficacy and unreliability of the technological infrastructure supporting their e-learning experiences. Their challenges spanned from sluggish internet connectivity to frequent software malfunctions, issues of incompatibility, and unexpected system failures. Such technological impediments not only disrupted their learning trajectory but also resulted in the forfeiture of crucial time and effort. Moreover, these repeated technical snags dented their confidence in the very technological means meant to aid their learning, leading them to introspect on its overall efficacy and value. Grounded in the constructivism theory, learning is visualized as a proactive endeavor where learners are immersed in their milieu, drawing insights from their antecedent experiences and interactions (Mayer, 2011). However, when confronted with a technological system of eLearning that is neither consistent nor tailored to meet their professional learning requisites, learners are invariably faced with barriers and irritants that hinder them from immersing in purposeful learning pursuits.

Additionally, these are the views of the participants:

“It would be quite helpful, if we had feedback mechanisms along with a point of contact for assistance, that can be reached over a chat or call, to help resolve our troubles, both technically and knowledge wise ” (Neha, Consultant)

“Yes, there are technical issues, but they can be resolved. It’s about having the right support, which we provide in the form of troubleshooting guides to employees” (Anisha, HR - L & D)

Neha highlighted the critical importance of having accessible support mechanisms in place, specifically emphasizing the need for a responsive point of contact that can address both technical and pedagogical challenges. Anisha from HR, while acknowledging the inevitable nature of technical glitches, was optimistic about their resolution, pointing to resources like troubleshooting guides provided to employees as a viable solution. These perspectives underscore the intertwined nature of technical support and pedagogical guidance. Building on this, while the connectivist framework, as delineated by Attwell (2007), underscores the intricate balance and interplay between technological tools, support services, and the guiding pedagogical principles, it becomes evident that the bedrock of these experiences remains rooted in constructivist thinking. According to constructivism, learners actively shape their understanding and knowledge through interactions with their environment and experiences. In the context of these participants' e-learning challenges, it's not just about overcoming technical hurdles but also about how these learners negotiate, interpret, and construct meaning amidst these challenges (Mayer, 2011). Thus, while integrating insights from the connectivist perspective provides breadth to our understanding of the broader organizational and policy landscapes, it is the constructivist lens that offers depth, focusing on the individual experiences and the active construction of knowledge.

However, others presented differing views as follows:

"I liked that I could access the course anytime and anywhere. I could use my laptop or a tablet, to learn."(Arvind, Consultant)

"I liked that I could learn at my own pace and schedule. I could pause, rewind, or skip the content as I wanted."(Anurag, HR – L & D)

Arvind and Anurag presented perspectives that shed light on the positive facets of e-learning. Arvind emphasized the flexibility of accessing course content from various devices and locations, while Anurag underscored the benefits of self-paced learning that e-learning platforms afford, including the ability to control the playback of content according to one's needs. Drawing from these insights, it's evident that certain learners greatly value the inherent advantages offered by e-learning technologies, such as device versatility, ubiquitous access, and the autonomy of pacing one's own learning journey (Koohang et al., 2009). Grounded in constructivist theory, these affordances can significantly bolster learners' sense of agency, motivation, and engagement (Mayer, 2011). This underscores the imperative for e-learning programmes to be designed in a manner that accentuates these benefits, offering learners greater latitude and dominion over their learning trajectory.

However, the merits of technology integration in isolation are not a panacea for a transformative e-learning experience. The technological facet needs to synergize with pedagogical principles to holistically cater to learners' cognitive and socio-emotional growth (Mayer, 2011). Delving deeper into constructivist thought, there's a pronounced need for learners to receive guidance, both from educators and peers, to navigate their

learning journey effectively (van der Westhuizen, 2020). Consequently, it's paramount for e-learning programmes to be enriched with pedagogical scaffolding, encompassing elements like defined learning outcomes, timely feedback, illustrative examples, structured models, probing questions, collaborative discussions and reflective activities (Koohang et al., 2009).

However, some participants did not receive sufficient pedagogical support from their e-learning programmes. They expressed dissatisfaction with the clarity, feedback, or interaction of their e-learning programmes. For instance,

---

“The instructions were not clear enough. I didn’t know what I was supposed to do or learn.”(Aman, Consultant)

“The feedback was not helpful enough. It was too vague or delayed.” (Deepa, Consultant)

“The interaction was not engaging enough. It was too passive or superficial.” (Neha, Consultant)

Several participants expressed their thoughts about the lack of adequate pedagogical scaffolding in their e-learning experiences. For example, Aman felt adrift due to unclear instructions, while Deepa contended with feedback that was either nebulous or untimely. Anisha, on the other hand, believed the interactions to be insufficiently stimulating, leaning more towards the passive or cursory side. Such reflections imply that a segment of learners grappled with feelings of bewilderment, exasperation, or detachment within their e-learning modules. From the lens of constructivist theory, such emotions can be significant stumbling blocks, hindering both cognitive growth

and social engagement (Mayer, 2004). Consequently, it becomes paramount for e-learning programs to be crafted with meticulous attention to offering lucid instructions, time-sensitive feedback, and rich, immersive interactions. In encapsulation, the amalgamation of adept technology integration with robust pedagogical backing emerges as the linchpin for e-learning design. These dual facets wield considerable influence over learners' enthusiasm, immersion, and overall academic outcomes. Grounded in constructivist thought, learners necessitate both trustworthy and congruent technological interfaces, enabling them to meaningfully engage with their learning environments and autonomously sculpt their knowledge reservoirs (Koohang & Harman, 2005).

Progressing through the discussion, it becomes palpable that there's a dichotomy in how technology's role in learning is perceived. For some, technology emerges as a hindrance, creating barriers to seamless learning. For others, when harnessed with appropriate support, it morphs into a formidable ally, enhancing the learning journey. This divergence underscores the potential gaps in both individual and organizational preparedness for fully embracing technology-enhanced learning. It also accentuates an inherent need to augment the technological framework's quality and usability, supplemented by adequate guidance for both educators and learners. This observation dovetails with prior research pinpointing technical difficulties as a recurrent impediment to e-learning among professionals (Al-Azawei et al., 2016; Alshahrani & Almutairi, 2020; Chawla & Joshi, 2018). Such technological challenges impact not merely the reach but also the grasp of e-learning tools and content. Al-Azawei et al. (2016) have posited that these challenges can dent learners' contentment, engagement, and academic prowess. Drawing from constructivist theory, learning emerges as an interplay mediated by tools and artifacts, amplifying

learners' understanding and cognition (Bruner, 1966; Piaget & Inhelder, 1973; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978).

Navigating the terrain of technical impediments is pivotal for turbocharging e-learning's potential. The discourse on this matter envelops a spectrum of standpoints. While some champions highlight the imperatives of unfaltering and safeguarded platforms (Al-Azawei et al., 2016; Chawla & Joshi, 2018), others underscore the salience of adaptability and intuitive user interfaces to resonate with diverse devices and varied digital proficiencies (Alshahrani & Almutairi, 2020; Chawla & Joshi, 2018). Instantaneous tech support is spotlighted as vital, yet some critiques label it as a band-aid solution. Furthermore, while learners laud the idea of technical orientation, the feasibility concerns given resource implications cannot be side-stepped. At its core, a harmonized strategy amalgamating reliability, intuitive design, prompt support, and holistic training is indispensable for making e-learning accessible and potent for a broad swath of learners.

Paving the way forward, while technical challenges and their resolution remain central, another crucial facet warrants exploration, which is the ‘personal and organizational Time Constraints’. This theme delves into how individual and institutional time-related challenges intersect with the e-learning experience.

Sub-Theme 1.2: Personal and Organizational Time Constraints

Time constraints are another multifaceted barrier. The demanding nature of consultancy work often leaves little room for continuous learning:

“With my workload and client meetings, finding time to sit down and complete an online course is tough.” (Neha, Consultant)

“Time is always against us; eLearning requires dedicated time, which is hard to find.” (Karan, Consultant)

Participants like Neha and Karan vocalized the challenges of threading continuous learning into their already packed schedules. Neha grappled with striking a balance between her client engagements and e-learning commitments, while Karan succinctly captured the essence of the time dilemma, emphasizing how e-learning demands uninterrupted chunks of time that are elusive in their profession. The undercurrent of their narratives suggests that professional responsibilities often overshadow their educational pursuits, forcing them to make difficult trade-offs between work imperatives and their quest for knowledge. Moreover, there's a palpable sentiment that e-learning, despite its flexibility, still demands a significant commitment of time, which often feels beyond their reach given their hectic professional landscapes. Contrastingly, some participants valued eLearning despite the time challenges:

“It’s a struggle to find time, some courses are long and demanding, but the skills I gain are worth it. I make time for learning.” (Anjali, Consultant)

Anjali's narrative offers a contrasting stance on the time conundrum. While she acknowledges the innate challenges of carving out time amidst her consulting commitments, her perspective is anchored in the belief that the knowledge and skills garnered from e-learning are invaluable. By elevating learning as a priority, she actively makes the effort to integrate it into her schedule, even if it means recalibrating other commitments or capitalizing on the adaptable nature of e-learning. However, Anjali also expressed reservations about certain e-learning courses, feeling that some

were overly extended or disproportionately demanding in terms of time investment. This sentiment echoes findings from prior research pinpointing time as a recurrent deterrent in the adoption of e-learning among professionals (Al-Azawei et al., 2016; Alshahrani & Almutairi, 2020; Chawla & Joshi, 2018). It's not just the volume but also the depth of engagement in e-learning that is affected by time constraints. Al-Azawei et al. (2016) expounded on how the constraints of time can truncate learners' focus, cognitive agility, and knowledge retention. Rooted in constructivist theory, learning is envisaged as an immersive endeavour where individuals actively mould their knowledge, influenced by antecedent experiences (Bruner, 1966; Piaget & Inhelder, 1973; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Thus, the pressures of time can potentially stymie learners' depth of interaction with e-learning content and curtail reflective contemplation on their academic journey and outcomes. Moving further, some others expressed the following:

"Due to lack of focussed time for some online trainings, I end up taking them outside working hours, including weekends sometimes" (Arvind, Consultant)

Arvind's reflections underscore the gravity of time constraints within the consultancy domain. Despite the availability of online training, the lack of dedicated time during standard work hours pushes him to resort to personal hours, even extending to weekends, to access these learning modules. Navigating the contours of optimizing e-learning reveals a complex tapestry, intertwining considerations of learner autonomy and the nimbleness of the platform. There's a pronounced advocacy for learner-centric pacing in e-learning (Al-Azawei et al., 2016; Chawla & Joshi, 2018), while simultaneously, concerns linger about maintaining a structured approach to preclude

procrastination. The approach of breaking down content into palatable chunks or microlearning is extolled for its precision and emphasis (Alshahrani & Almutairi, 2020; Chawla & Joshi, 2018). Still, parallel debates are rife about potential dilution of comprehensive content understanding. While multimedia's integration is heralded for its ability to augment engagement and streamline cognitive processes, reservations about potential distractions and a disproportionate dependence on technology persist (Al-Azawei et al., 2016; Chawla & Joshi, 2018). Feedback mechanisms are lauded as pivotal motivational levers, yet juxtaposed views accentuate the essence of innate motivation and self-guided learning.

This kaleidoscope of viewpoints surrounding time constraints manifests an intrinsic tug-of-war between organizational imperatives and individual educational aspirations (Sangrà et al., 2012). The discourse not only unravels the tangible challenges at the nexus of work and learning (Zalat et al., 2021) but also offers a mirror to the broader ethos and value placements of organizational cultures. As mirrored in Arvind's experience, the luxury of allocated time for learning is an exception, compelling professionals to seek alternative temporal avenues for their professional growth. This underscores an urgent need to recalibrate the balance between professional commitments and learning, while championing e-learning structures that are both flexible and reachable for learners (Srivastava et al., 2019). As we pivot from time constraints, we transcend into another cardinal facet of e-learning, which is the 'Lack of Interaction'. This sub-theme probes deeper into how interactive dynamics, or the dearth thereof, shape the e-learning experience.

Sub-Theme 1.3: Lack of Interaction

The lack of interaction in eLearning environments was a contentious topic. Participants expressed diverse opinions:

“Online learning is convenient, but it lacks the human interaction that you get in a classroom. I miss the discussions and debates.” (Amit, Consultant)

“I feel disconnected in online courses; there’s no real engagement with instructors or peers.” (Deepa, Consultant)

The realm of eLearning, while advantageous in many facets, encountered critique regarding its interactive capacities. Participants such as Amit and Deepa voiced their concerns. Amit, while appreciating eLearning's convenience, lamented the absence of the rich human touch typical of classroom settings, encapsulated in lively debates and discussions. Deepa's experience tilted towards feelings of detachment, with a perceived void in genuine engagement with educators and fellow learners. Together, these narratives depict a longing for the spirited exchanges characteristic of traditional classrooms. They portray eLearning as having a potential tendency to feel devoid of personal touch, leading to a sense of isolation and diminished dynamism. Others appreciated the autonomy:

“I don’t mind the lack of interaction. I prefer self-paced learning, and online platforms provide that.” (Arvind, Consultant)

In contrast to the earlier sentiments, Arvind's stance leans towards the allure of autonomy. For him, the eLearning framework, rather than being a barrier, serves as an enabler, fostering self-paced exploration devoid of the typical classroom's social dynamics. He cherishes the latitude to navigate his learning journey independently, untethered by the synchronized rhythms, anticipations, or perspectives of others. This perspective paints online learning as a tailored, efficient, and fulfilling experience. The

mosaic of viewpoints around interactivity underscores the eclectic tapestry of learner expectations. While the likes of Amit and Deepa yearn for the tangible camaraderie emblematic of traditional academic setups, Arvind's sentiments echo a cohort that prizes the unbridled freedom and adaptability that eLearning platforms proffer (Hrastinski, 2008). This sub-theme unveils the oscillation between the allure of autonomy and the warmth of community, pitting the virtues of individualistic exploration against the collaborative spirit (Sangrà et al., 2012).

Notably, the resonance in their narratives suggests a palpable need for eLearning platforms to strike a balance. Emphasising the need to cater to varied learning predilections, offering modules that are both immersive for solitary learners, as well as engaging for those who seek communal experiences (Muthuprasad et al., 2021). A recurrent theme is the potential deficit in communication, camaraderie, or the immersive aura typically emanated by instructors, peers, or eLearning facilitators. There's a consensus that certain eLearning modules might lean too heavily towards isolation, potentially alienating learners craving more personable experiences. This aligns with prior research emphasizing the cardinality of interaction in shaping the quality of eLearning among professionals (Al-Azawei et al., 2016; Alshahrani & Almutairi, 2020; Chawla & Joshi, 2018). Interaction, as Al-Azawei et al. (2016) propose, transcends mere social engagements, permeating the cognitive and emotional realms of learning.

Constructivist principles offer an illuminating lens to interpret the issues discussed. Grounded in constructivism, learning is perceived as a profoundly social endeavor, contingent upon learners engaging actively with peers or mentors, who can scaffold their educational journey, nudging them towards their zenith of developmental potential (Bruner, 1966; Piaget & Inhelder, 1973; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The gravity

of interaction, or its deficit, within the digital learning milieu, emerges as a cornerstone, dictating learners' engagement and dictating their academic trajectories. A paucity of this vital interaction presents pronounced challenges, making it imperative to architect intentional strategies to counterbalance. Echoing the sentiments of researchers like Al-Azawei et al. (2016) and Chawla & Joshi (2018), a comprehensive stratagem is advanced. This involves proffering a bouquet of interactive avenues, facilitating both real-time and time-shifted dialogues amongst all stakeholders—learners, educators, and e-learning facilitators. Additionally, championing the cause of collaborative endeavors, as emphasized by Alshahrani & Almutairi (2020) and Chawla & Joshi (2018), is crucial. Such endeavors could span collective tasks or project endeavors, engendering a milieu of shared ambition and reciprocal enrichment. A pivotal component in this equation is the infusion of tools amplifying the sense of social presence. Such tools ensure learners discern the virtual coexistence of their peers, magnifying the immersive quotient of e-learning by fostering a sense of togetherness and collaborative pursuit.

In delving deep into the theme of 'Challenges to eLearning,' a labyrinth of multifaceted obstacles emerges. These impediments are not merely logistical or tech-centric but echo profound debates on the ethos, anticipations, and practical realities of eLearning within the consultancy arena. The hurdles to eLearning unveil layers of complexities, which are far from monolithic. They mirror intricate organizational choreographies and individualized inclinations. By critically scrutinizing these impediments, it paves the way not just for deciphering the intricacies of actualizing eLearning but also unfurls a broader narrative of perpetual learning within the modern-day workspace. As we transition from these challenges, we now pivot to yet another dimension that holds

considerable sway over the e-learning experience: 'Motivational Issues'. This theme will delve into what fuels or diminishes the drive to learn within digital landscapes.

4.2 Theme 2: Motivational Issues

Understanding and enhancing the motivation of learners was a crucial theme that emerged from the data. Various factors that influenced the learners' motivation to engage in eLearning were identified and discussed in two sub-themes: Skill Progression and Badging & Recognition, and E-Learning Adoption. These sub-themes reveal the underlying drivers that not only facilitate eLearning but also shape the broader discourse on continuous learning and professional growth. The first sub-theme, Skill Progression, explores how learners perceive the benefits and challenges of eLearning for their skill development in both technical and soft skill areas. It also examines the gap between the theoretical knowledge acquired online and its practical application within the consultancy domain. The second sub-theme, Badging & Recognition, investigates how learners responded to external rewards such as badges or certificates for completing online courses or activities. It also analyzes the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in shaping learning behaviors and outcomes. By delving into these sub-themes, we can gain a deeper understanding of the motivational issues that affect eLearning within the consultancy context.

Sub-Theme 2.1: Skill Progression

Skill progression through eLearning emerged as a significant facilitator for many participants:

"eLearning has allowed me to enhance my technical skills rapidly. The access to various resources is unparalleled." (Anurag, HR – L & D)

“I’ve seen significant growth in my soft skills through online courses. The flexibility to learn at my own pace has been vital.” (Anjali, Consultant)

For Anurag and Anjali, eLearning stands as a robust conduit for skill enhancement. Anurag lauds eLearning courses for the acceleration it offers in honing his technical proficiencies, highlighting the unmatched abundance of resources at his disposal. Meanwhile, Anjali attributes her tangible ascension in soft skills, encompassing realms like communication and leadership, to online courses. Integral to their positive experiences is the inherent adaptability of eLearning, granting them the latitude to steer their learning trajectory at a pace and timing that aligns with their preferences, unshackled by geographical or chronological constraints. However, some participants raised concerns:

“The skills I gained online didn’t always translate well into my work. There’s a gap.” (Karan, Consultant)

Karan's experience with eLearning paints a slightly discordant note. While he acknowledges the acquisition of skills through online platforms, he perceives a discernible chasm when translating these skills into tangible work outcomes. This resonates with the often intricate challenge of bridging the theoretical constructs imbibed online with their pragmatic application in the professional domain. Karan's reflections underscore the necessity of more than just virtual assimilation—certain proficiencies demand tangible enactment or discourses that might fall beyond the purview of traditional eLearning. Delving into pedagogical frameworks, this dichotomy resonates with foundational tenets of constructivism (Jonassen et al., 2003) and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). These theories emphasize the centrality of hands-

on experiences and meaningful interactions, rather than mere content dissemination, whether from mentors or online repositories. Consequently, for eLearning to truly flourish, it's pivotal to cultivate environments that not only impart knowledge but also facilitate its tangible application, foster collaborative synergies, and ensure continual feedback from both peers and industry experts. Moving further, the participants revealed that they wanted to acquire new or improve existing skills that were relevant to their work and career development. They also mentioned that they valued the opportunity to learn from experts or peers who had more knowledge or experience in their field as can be seen below:

“I like to learn from colleagues who are just a few years ahead of me. They understand my position and are helpful” (Aman, Consultant)

Karan's eLearning journey underscores an oft-experienced conundrum: the translation of online-acquired skills into tangible work benefits. He appreciates the skills acquired via online avenues but notes a palpable disconnect when applying them professionally. This scenario accentuates the perennial challenge of aligning the abstract knowledge amassed online with its practical utilization in the consultancy realm. Such sentiments amplify the need for more than just digital learning. Certain skills, intrinsically rooted in real-world interactions and applications, might elude the scope of conventional eLearning. This sentiment is grounded in the principles of constructivism (Jonassen et al., 2003) and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Both theories champion the notion that meaningful learning emerges from lived experiences and constructive interactions, rather than mere ingestion of content, irrespective of the source.

Deepening this perspective, Aman's reflections offer a nuanced layer. He expresses a penchant for learning from slightly more seasoned colleagues. This preference is rooted in the belief that such peers, being proximal in their professional journey, can provide insights laced with empathy and contextual understanding. These observations align with prior research that underscores skill progression as a linchpin for eLearning engagement among professionals (Al-Azawei et al., 2016; Alshahrani & Almutairi, 2020; Chawla & Joshi, 2018). Skill enhancement not only nurtures personal growth but also catalyzes professional development, bolstering competence, confidence, and workplace efficacy (Al-Azawei et al., 2016). Central to this is the constructivist tenet that views learning as a continuum, melding past experiences to imbibe new knowledge, which subsequently finds its application in professional contexts (Bruner, 1966; Piaget & Inhelder, 1973; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The discourse on skill progression transcends isolated experiences, posing broader reflections on eLearning's relevance and applicability. The diversity in perspectives illuminates an underlying dichotomy: while some extol the multifaceted skill enhancements through eLearning, others contemplate the degree to which these skills seamlessly dovetail into their professional endeavors. Navigating from this intricate terrain of skill progression, we transition to a facet intrinsically connected to motivation in eLearning, namely 'Badging & Recognition'. This sub-theme delves into the external validators of learning, exploring how they shape and sustain learners' engagement trajectories.

Sub-Theme 2.2: Badging & Recognition

In examining the multifaceted dimensions of e-learning, the interplay between badging and recognition and learner motivation emerges as a salient sub-theme. The diverse

sentiments of participants range from viewing badges as symbolic validations of their accomplishments to questioning their intrinsic worth in professional development.

The role of badging and recognition in motivating learners was a recurring theme:

"Receiving a certificate or badge gives a sense of accomplishment. It's a tangible reward for the efforts made." (Anurag, HR – L & D)

"Recognition within the organization for completing an online course boosts morale." (Aman, Consultant)

For participants like Anurag and Aman, the acquisition of badges or certificates from e-learning platforms holds profound significance. Anurag perceives these badges as tangible validations, emblematic of the dedication and effort invested in the learning process. Similarly, Aman values the intra-organizational recognition garnered upon course completion, viewing it as a morale-enhancing acknowledgment of his endeavours. These affirmations, whether in the form of e-badges or peer recognition, reinforce their sense of accomplishment and fortify their professional standing. Such recognitions not only act as testaments to their learning milestones but also bolster their confidence, instilling a heightened sense of professional worth.

Yet, scepticism also surfaced:

"Badges are nice, but do they really add value to professional growth?" (Arjun, HR – L & D)

Arjun from HR brings a nuanced perspective to the conversation. While he acknowledges the allure of badges and certificates, he introspects on their tangible

impact on professional ascent. For him, these accolades may just be symbolic, not necessarily reflective of an individual's true prowess or calibre. He further deliberates on their actual worth, pondering whether such digital affirmations genuinely resonate with stakeholders like clients or potential employers, and if they bear any substantial significance in the broader professional landscape. Participants consistently articulated the significance of recognition, whether it stemmed from managerial commendation, peer acknowledgment, or accolades from e-learning platforms. Such endorsements, as illuminated by findings from Al-Azawei et al. (2016), Alshahrani & Almutairi (2020), and Chawla & Joshi (2018), are paramount in catalyzing employee engagement with e-learning modules. More than just an external affirmation, these badges and recognitions often stoke an intrinsic drive, furnishing learners with a palpable sense of accomplishment and fortifying their identity within the e-learning community.

Anchored in the constructivist paradigm, learning is perceived as an intricate interplay where novel knowledge is seamlessly woven into one's pre-existing cognitive tapestry (Bruner, 1966; Piaget & Inhelder, 1973; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). In this context, badges and recognitions serve as catalysts, bolstering this integrative process, making learning experiences more resonant and memorable. Further corroborating this stance, research by Alshahrani & Almutairi (2020) and Chawla & Joshi (2018) underscores the motivational potential of badges, positioning them as beacons signifying academic progression and proficiency milestones. Yet, amidst these prevailing endorsements, lies a deeper narrative, probing the authenticity and depth of such recognitions. There exists a delicate balance, as portrayed by Abramovich et al. (2013) and Hamari (2017), between intrinsic passion for learning and the allure of external rewards. This equilibrium poses pivotal questions regarding the genuine

influence of accolades on shaping educational trajectories, as well as the risk of rendering learning a mere transactional endeavor. In synthesizing these insights, the overarching theme of 'Motivational Issues' unravels the complex fabric of factors propelling or impeding e-learning engagements. The dance between intrinsic desires and extrinsic validations informs the broader discourse on continuous learning within professional realms.

Transitioning from these nuanced deliberations on motivation, we now shift our focus to the subsequent theme of 'Acquiring Valuable Competencies.' Here, we delve into the essence of skills and knowledge acquisition, further analyzing their tangible manifestations within professional environments.

4.3 Theme 3: Acquiring Valuable Competencies

Developing and enhancing valuable skills and competencies through eLearning was a key theme that emerged from the data. The participants shared their diverse experiences, aspirations, and challenges in acquiring skills and valuable competencies that were relevant to their work and career development. The theme of “Acquiring Valuable Competencies” encompasses three interrelated sub-themes. They are ‘Technical Skills’,’Soft Skills’ and ’Client Interaction’. They touch upon varying aspects related to how the employees acquire various types of skills and competencies required for the job they perform on a daily basis, as well as what behaviour it makes them exhibit with clients. By critically engaging with these sub-themes, we can understand not only the potential of eLearning for skill development but also the implications and challenges for eLearning within the contemporary workplace.

Sub-Theme 3.1: Technical Skills

The first is ‘Technical skills’, which covers how the participants used eLearning to update or learn new technical skills in areas such as data analysis, web development, or artificial intelligence, and how this affected their career prospects and performance. The acquisition of technical skills through eLearning was highlighted by many participants:

“Online courses have been instrumental in updating my technical skills. The tutorials and hands-on exercises are invaluable.” (Karan, Consultant)

“I’ve been able to learn new programming languages through eLearning. It’s been a game-changer for my career.” (Aman, Consultant)

“I took a course on technical design, which prepared me and was instrumental in my performance in the next client project” (Arvind, Consultant)

Karan, Aman, and Arvind were among the participants who strongly attested to the transformative role eLearning played in honing their technical acumen. Karan found eLearning platforms instrumental in refreshing and updating his technical expertise, with particular praise for hands-on tutorials. Aman echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing that his journey in mastering new programming languages through eLearning had been a pivotal turn in his professional narrative. Meanwhile, Arvind attributed a successful client project to a technical design course he undertook online. Collectively, they highlighted the rich tapestry of online courses, replete with interactive components, as invaluable. Furthermore, they underscored how such technical mastery, garnered through eLearning, rendered them more competent and appealing to both clients and employers.

Contrastingly, some participants expressed reservations:

> *"Not all online courses offer the depth needed for technical mastery. I've found some content lacking, both for in house and external subscriptions like Udemy. It's a hit and miss sometimes" (Deepa, Consultant)"*

Deepa, a consultant, voiced some reservations about the consistency of online courses aimed at technical skill development. Drawing attention to both in-house courses and externally subscribed platforms like Udemy, Deepa found that not all content met the necessary depth or contemporary relevance for achieving technical expertise. There was an underlying sentiment of unpredictability in course quality, leading to occasional dissatisfaction with the learning outcomes. Observing the employees' feedback, a diverse landscape emerges around their experiences with eLearning in the realm of technical skills. These employees consistently highlighted the acquisition or enhancement of technical skills pertinent to their professional tasks and future career aspirations. Aligning with studies from Al-Azawei et al. (2016), Alshahrani & Almutairi (2020), and Chawla & Joshi (2018), there is evidence to suggest that technical skill development significantly influences not only an employee's competence but also their on-the-job performance.

Diving into educational theories, constructivism posits that learning is a progressive endeavor wherein learners construct new knowledge building on their prior experiences (Bruner, 1966; Piaget & Inhelder, 1973; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The absorption and application of technical skills are fundamental for learners to merge this fresh knowledge with past experiences, driving practical professional outcomes. As reinforced by scholars such as Al-Azawei et al. (2016) and Chawla & Joshi (2018), providing clear learning objectives, entrenching learners in tasks that mirror real-world

scenarios, and incorporating robust assessment mechanisms stand out as pivotal in maximizing the potential of eLearning for technical skill acquisition. In synthesizing these insights, the eLearning landscape for technical skills reveals a multifaceted picture. While its benefits, particularly in terms of accessibility, are acknowledged, there are valid concerns about the depth and rigor of certain offerings. Such variances underscore the need for astute evaluation and selection of eLearning resources, ensuring they resonate with the requisites of technical proficiency.

Transitioning from the technical domain, our exploration next delves into the realm of 'Soft Skills', further illuminating the intricate tapestry of eLearning's potential and challenges.

Sub-Theme 3.2: Soft Skills

The second one is ‘Soft skills’, which deals with how the participants improved their communication, leadership, teamwork, and empathy skills through online training, and how this facilitated their interaction and collaboration with others. The development of soft skills was another prominent sub-theme, with varied responses.

“I’ve improved my communication and leadership skills through online training. The interactive modules and peer feedback were helpful.” (Anisha, HR – L & D)

“Online courses on teamwork and empathy have enhanced my ability to work collaboratively.” (Neha, Consultant)

Anisha and Neha shared favorable perspectives on how eLearning has been instrumental in bolstering their soft skills. Anisha highlighted how eLearning courses were pivotal in refining her communication and leadership attributes, with a particular nod to the interactive modules and invaluable peer feedback. Similarly, Neha echoed

this sentiment, emphasizing how online courses have sharpened her teamwork and empathy skills, vital components in fostering collaborative efforts. In essence, both participants underscored the efficacy of eLearning in enhancing soft skills crucial for building genuine relationships with clients and colleagues, further accentuating the importance of these skills in the consultancy arena.

However, skepticism emerged:

> *"Can soft skills really be learned online? I have doubts about the effectiveness of virtual training for interpersonal skills." (Amit, Consultant)*

Amit conveyed skepticism regarding the practicality and impact of eLearning when it comes to nurturing soft skills. He opined that true mastery of interpersonal skills might be best achieved through direct, face-to-face interactions, as opposed to virtual mediums. Amit further expressed reservations about the online platform's ability to genuinely encapsulate the intricacies and subtleties inherent in interpersonal interactions, potentially leading to a less-than-optimal learning experience. Drawing from the participants' reflections, it is evident that soft skills, once relegated to the sidelines of professional development, now assume center stage in eLearning discussions. Participants frequently spoke about applying these nurtured skills to their professional interactions and relationships. Such emphasis on soft skills mirrors research trends, with studies highlighting their pivotal role in eLearning outcomes (Al-Azawei et al., 2016; Alshahrani & Almutairi, 2020; Chawla & Joshi, 2018). Beyond mere communication, these skills drive collaboration and leadership, enhancing interpersonal, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities (Al-Azawei et al., 2016).

Grounding this in pedagogical paradigms, the constructivist theory underlines the inherently social nature of learning, emphasizing interpersonal interactions as foundational for skill acquisition (Bruner, 1966; Piaget & Inhelder, 1973; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). In this context, eLearning becomes a potential means for honing interpersonal capabilities, enriching both learning encounters and application in professional contexts. For a successful eLearning experience focused on soft skills, scholars like Al-Azawei et al. (2016) and Chawla & Joshi (2018) underscore the need for clearly articulated objectives, diversified interaction modes, and cooperative undertakings. They further stress the importance of adept assessment mechanisms and feedback loops to ensure tangible soft skills enhancement. Yet, this discourse is not without its tensions. Amidst the backdrop of an eLearning environment seen as conducive to soft skills development by some, reservations persist, particularly surrounding the authenticity and depth of virtual interpersonal skills training. This bifurcation prompts introspection on the very essence of soft skills and the aptitude of eLearning in authentically nurturing them.

Venturing deeper into the complexities of professional development, we now pivot to another significant sub-theme, 'Client Interaction', seeking to discern how eLearning shapes consultancies' ability to navigate client dynamics effectively.

Sub-Theme 3.3: Client Interaction

The third is ‘Client interaction’, with a discussion on how the participants enhanced their client interaction skills through eLearning, such as by managing client expectations, delivering results, handling feedback, and dealing with cultural differences, and how this improved their client satisfaction and retention. The ability to enhance client interaction skills through eLearning was a topic of interest:

“I took an online course on client management, and it has positively impacted my client interactions.” (Karan, Consultant)

“Learning about cultural sensitivity online helped me in dealing with international clients.”(Arvind, Consultant)

Karan and Arvind, among others, provided testimony to the significant advantages of eLearning in honing client interaction skills. For Karan, an online course on client management was pivotal in enhancing his day-to-day interactions with clients. Meanwhile, Arvind underscored the value of eLearning in imparting cultural sensitivity, which proved invaluable in navigating the intricacies of international client engagements. These participants overwhelmingly recognized eLearning as a conduit to better understand and cater to client needs, be it in terms of managing expectations, adeptly handling feedback, or delivering promised outcomes. Furthermore, they acknowledged the profound influence of eLearning in understanding cultural distinctions, ensuring more attuned and effective interactions with international clientele. Overall, they championed the perspective that eLearning, by equipping them with superior client interaction strategies, paved the way for heightened client satisfaction and prolonged retention.

Yet, concerns were also voiced:

“Real client interaction is different from what you learn online. There’s a disconnect. I feel these should be conducted in person, with some roleplaying involved. But since the pandemic, they shifted the majority of the training sessions online” (Anjali, Consultant)

Anjali voiced reservations regarding the real-world applicability of eLearning for bolstering client interaction skills. She opined that genuine client interactions, characterized by their unpredictability and multifaceted nature, differ considerably from the content encountered online. Anjali observed a discernible gap between the theoretical aspects emphasized in eLearning modules and the pragmatic challenges of actual client engagements. She further underscored the irreplaceable significance of in-person conversations, suggesting that genuine rapport with clients is best established through direct, face-to-face interactions. Drawing from the participants' reflections, it's evident that eLearning evokes a spectrum of sentiments, especially concerning client interaction skills. While some consultants highlighted the growth and enhancements in their client interaction capabilities through eLearning, others like Anjali emphasized the irreplaceable value of in-person training sessions. This sentiment resonates with findings from research stalwarts such as Al-Azawei et al. (2016) and Alshahrani & Almutairi (2020), who identified client interaction skills as crucial e-learning outcomes for professionals. These skills, as underscored by Al-Azawei et al. (2016), have a profound impact on client satisfaction, fostering loyalty and ensuring client retention.

Drawing on constructivist perspectives, learning is envisaged as a contextual process, where engagement with e-learning material must echo real-world contexts (Bruner, 1966; Piaget & Inhelder, 1973; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The cultivation of adept client interaction skills necessitates learners to assimilate this e-content and efficiently channel it during professional liaisons. Al-Azawei et al. (2016) and Chawla & Joshi (2018) further emphasize on this by advocating for lucid learning objectives, aligned to foster client interaction proficiencies. Coupled with this, there's a pronounced need to immerse learners in genuine or simulated client scenarios, as suggested by

Alshahrani & Almutairi (2020). This is complemented by rigorous assessment mechanisms and continual feedback, laying the foundation for a comprehensive approach to nurturing and gauging client interaction capabilities within e-learning landscapes.

In essence, the theme "Acquiring Valuable Competencies" underscores the dual-edged nature of eLearning. While offering a vast expanse of resources and flexibility, it also challenges the translation of online knowledge to tangible workplace competencies. Participants' experiences reveal a need for tailored eLearning approaches that bridge this gap, ensuring that competencies truly flourish in real-world scenarios. Pivoting forward, our exploration now navigates into another critical domain, shedding light on the "Social Mechanisms in eLearning." This theme delves deeper into the communal facets of eLearning, elucidating how online platforms foster or potentially hinder interpersonal connections among learners.

4.4 Theme 4: Social Mechanisms in eLearning

Exploring how social factors influence and shape the eLearning experience was a key theme that emerged from the data. Frequent references to the role of collaboration, social acceptance, and organizational culture and community support in enhancing or hindering eLearning were discussed in the three sub-themes. The first sub-theme ‘collaborative learning’ examines how learners engage in co-constructing knowledge and meaning through dialogue, feedback, and reflection with their peers, as well as the challenges and benefits of peer collaboration for eLearning. The second sub-theme ‘social acceptance and interaction’ investigates how learners perceive and respond to the social validation or resistance of eLearning by their peers or colleagues, as well as the impact of social acceptance or resistance on their learning motivation

and satisfaction. The third sub-theme ‘organizational and community support’ explores how learners experience and appreciate the organizational culture and community support that facilitate or obstruct their eLearning endeavors, as well as the influence of organizational culture and community support on their learning outcomes and satisfaction. These sub-themes reveal the complex interplay between individual choices and collective attitudes, as well as the potential influence of social dynamics on eLearning behaviors and outcomes.

Sub-Theme 4.1: Collaborative Learning

Peer collaboration emerged as a key factor in promoting continuous learning:

“We have learning groups where we share online resources and discuss our learning experiences. It’s very collaborative.” (Anjali, Consultant)

“Peer support motivates me to keep learning. We challenge and encourage each other.” (Amit, Consultant)

Anjali and Amit highlighted the pivotal role of peer collaboration in their eLearning journeys. Anjali appreciated the community spirit of learning groups, where sharing and discussion of online resources enriched the learning experience. On the other hand, Amit emphasized how peer support acted as a motivating factor, with mutual encouragement and challenge deepening their engagement. Overall, their experiences suggest that peer collaboration not only offers diverse insights and feedback but also nurtures a sense of community among learners.

However, not all experiences were positive:

"I wish there was more collaboration. Everyone is focused on their own learning, and there's little interaction." (Neha, Consultant)

Neha articulated a sense of dissatisfaction with the current eLearning environment, noting a palpable absence of peer collaboration. She believed that many learners seemed engrossed in individual pursuits, leading to minimal interaction. For Neha, a more collaborative framework would offer richer social interactions, increased engagement, and valuable feedback. Her feelings echo a sentiment of isolation stemming from the existing eLearning dynamics.

Constructivism emphasises that rather than passively receiving information, learners reflect on their experiences, create mental representations, and incorporate new knowledge into their schemas (Bruner, 1966). This promotes deeper learning and understanding, since learning is an active process that is influenced by the learner's prior knowledge, context, and social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, peer collaboration can be seen as a constructivist strategy that enables learners to co-construct meaning and knowledge through dialogue, feedback, and reflection (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Peer collaboration can also facilitate the development of higher-order thinking skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity.

"There are group chats and discussion forums available internally. We get to exchange our thoughts and collaborate there. Some online courses have this integrated which makes it helpful to collaborate and reflect on my understanding" (Amit, Consultant)

“I feel confident collaborating and putting out my thoughts to my team, as I kind of trust them” (Neha, Consultant)

While platforms with internal group chats and discussion forums, as described by Amit, offer promising avenues for collaboration, challenges in eLearning collaboration persist. A foundational challenge lies in building trust and rapport among peers, which Neha emphasizes as a reason for her confidence in sharing. If this trust is absent, learners might hesitate to share insights or contribute to the discourse (Rovai & Barnum, 2003). Achieving a collaborative ambiance in eLearning requires careful design and strategy. Hiltz & Turoff (2005) highlight the need for clear guidelines and objectives, ensuring learners grasp the purpose and framework of collaboration. In contrast, Rovai & Wighting (2005) stress the importance of an inclusive, respectful environment, fostering feelings of value and community. Moore & Kearsley (2012) further advocate for diverse engagement avenues, promoting effective communication and reflection. These discussions underscore the importance of clarity, inclusivity, and diverse interaction in enhancing the collaborative experience in eLearning contexts.

Delving into collaborative learning reveals that effective eLearning hinges not just on content but also on human interactions and shared experiences. However, the broader perspective of eLearning's acceptance in a social and organizational setting remains crucial. This leads us seamlessly into our next focus: 'Social Acceptance & Interaction', exploring the interplay between societal perceptions of eLearning and individual experiences.

Sub-Theme 4.2: Social Acceptance & Interaction

Social acceptance emerged as a critical factor influencing the perception of eLearning:

“eLearning is highly accepted in our team. We often share courses and learn together.” (Amit, Consultant)

“My colleagues see value in online learning, and that encourages me to explore more.” (Karan, Consultant)

Amit and Karan highlighted the prevailing sentiment of eLearning acceptance within their teams and organizational culture. They sensed a collective endorsement of eLearning, often manifested in shared courses and collective learning sessions. For them, this communal validation not only enhanced the learning atmosphere, making it more supportive and cooperative, but also acted as a motivator, driving them to delve deeper into online resources. Such positive social acknowledgment evidently amplifies both their eagerness to learn and overall satisfaction with eLearning.

Contrastingly, some participants noted resistance:

“There’s a belief that traditional classroom learning is superior. Online learning isn’t always taken seriously.” (Arvind, Consultant)

Arvind shed light on a contrasting perspective, highlighting skepticism toward eLearning within his professional circle. He observed a prevailing sentiment that favored traditional classroom learning, often devaluing online educational pursuits. Arvind sensed this prevalent attitude fostered an environment less supportive of eLearning, sometimes even subjecting those who engaged in online courses to subtle dismissals or overt critiques. Such resistance inevitably dampened his enthusiasm and overall contentment with the eLearning approach.

The dynamics of social acceptance and resistance deeply influence eLearning experiences, rooted in the constructivist principle that learners are shaped by their prior knowledge, context, and social interactions (Piaget, 1954). When eLearning enjoys widespread acceptance among peers, it fosters enhanced motivation and engagement (Rovai & Wighting, 2005). Such an environment of approval nurtures a collaborative milieu, prompting learners to willingly share resources, exchange ideas, and co-construct knowledge (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Conversely, resistance or skepticism toward eLearning can stymie motivation and create an environment ranging from indifference to outright hostility (Rovai & Barnum, 2003). In such scenarios, learners face hurdles in exchanging perspectives, receiving feedback, and reflecting upon their understanding, obstructing the potential for shared knowledge creation (Garrison & Anderson, 2003). The contrasting landscapes of acceptance and resistance unveil the intricate balance between individual learning paths and overarching collective attitudes (Garrote et al., 2020; Rusticus et al., 2022).

As this theme delves into the profound impact of social factors on eLearning, it beckons us to further investigate how organizational culture and community support amplify or dampen these dynamics. We now transition to the sub-theme of 'Organizational & Community Support' to delve deeper into this facet of the eLearning experience.

Sub-Theme 4.3: Organizational & Community Support

Organizational culture was identified as a significant social mechanism:

“Our organization promotes a culture of continuous learning. eLearning is part of our DNA.”(Arvind, Consultant)

“Management encourages us to explore online courses. It’s an integral part of our professional growth.” (Karan, Consultant)

Participants like Arvind and Karan highlighted the deeply ingrained culture of continuous learning within their organization. They felt a sense of pride in belonging to an environment where eLearning wasn't just an afterthought but an integral component of their professional DNA. For them, the organizational emphasis on online learning aligned seamlessly with their personal growth aspirations, resonating with their values and eLearning objectives.

However, some participants expressed concerns:

“The culture here doesn’t really support online learning. It’s more about traditional ways of training.” (Aman, Consultant)

“My team tends to lean into traditional classroom learning, so continuous learning happens there. But not much of it happens online, at least in my team” (Anurag, HR – L & D)

Participants like Aman and Anurag expressed reservations about their organization's stance towards eLearning. They perceived that their respective workplaces held a more traditional view of training, leaning heavily towards classroom-based learning. This inclination, they felt, left limited room for online educational pursuits. While their teams seemed to thrive in a conventional learning environment, eLearning initiatives seemed sidelined or undervalued, creating a disconnect with their personal aspirations in the realm of digital education.

The cultural ethos and community support of an organization play pivotal roles in shaping an individual's eLearning experience. Rooted in constructivism, the idea posits that the alignment or misalignment of organizational culture with an individual's eLearning objectives can significantly influence their motivation and engagement with online courses (Koohang et al., 2009). For instance, when an organization embodies a culture of continuous learning, complemented by a community that offers a plethora of eLearning resources, it can bolster an individual's drive to participate in online learning (Rovai & Wighting, 2005). As some participants highlighted, however, there's an evident divergence in learning methods preferred across different teams within the same organization, suggesting that preferences for eLearning versus traditional classroom training can be team-specific.

Conversely, if eLearning initiatives are met with skepticism or indifference by the organization or its community, it can dampen the learner's enthusiasm (Rovai & Barnum, 2003). This is further complicated when an organization, despite endorsing eLearning in principle, falls short in providing the necessary infrastructure and resources for its effective implementation. Such gaps could mean learners often grapple with technological hindrances or face a dearth of quality eLearning materials (Garrison & Anderson, 2003). In essence, the organizational fabric, characterized by its values, practices, and the tools it provides, significantly impacts the perception and assimilation of eLearning. Organizations fostering an environment conducive to eLearning see a vibrant exchange of knowledge, while those with a more traditional bent may inadvertently erect barriers to digital learning. This narrative underlines the complex interplay of organizational ethos, leadership perspectives, and individual learner tendencies, echoing broader discourses on institutional innovation and evolution.

4.5 Theme 5: Employee Perceptions of Good eLearning Design & Technology use

Designing effective and engaging e-learning programmes was a crucial theme that emerged from the data. The participants shared their diverse perspectives, experiences, preferences, and suggestions regarding the design and delivery of e-learning programmes in their organization though this is not the main focus of the study. The theme of “Designing E-Learning programmes' ' encompasses one sub-theme. It is ‘Good eLearning Design and Technology Use’, which covers what the participants consider to be a well designed elearning course. Additionally it also covers the technologies that the participants considered to be a good addition to make courses better, engaging and interesting. By critically engaging with these sub-theme, we can understand not only the potential of e-learning for enhancing learning outcomes and satisfaction, but also the implications and challenges for e-learning design and facilitation within the consultancy context.

Sub-Theme 5.1: Good eLearning Design and Technology Use

Another sub-theme that emerged from the study as the discussions blossomed was about what makes well designed eLearning courses according to the participants, though this is not the main focus of the study. This theme emerged as an outcome of the participant's interests. The participants identified some aspects of e-learning that they considered engaging and effective, such as the use of multimedia, such as images, videos, audio AI, AR and VR to make the content more engaging and easier to understand. (Mayer & Moreno, 2003).

“I liked that the course used a lot of images and videos to explain the concepts. It made it more engaging and easier to understand.” (Amit, Consultant)

“The audio narration was very helpful. It gave me a clear and concise overview of the topic. They should provide this in multiple local languages” (Karan, Consultant)

“There was this introductory orientation carried on VR goggles. I really enjoyed that, they should do more of that for other courses as well” (Aman, Consultant)

“I liked the interactive elements in the VR simulation. I could interact with the characters and be a part of the storyboard in the simulation. They have been slow in bringing this to a wide variety of courses'' (Deepa, Consultant)

“We have an internal University division, this division manages, creates and administers both classroom and online training for all employees at the company. We are proud of this division, as it has the best VR, AR and AI technologies that are used to produce these courses at the highest quality.” (Arjun, HR – L & D)

“The University division skills and reskills employees to be put onto new projects. During tough times, we have previously reskilled the employees, to be put onto new projects, instead of firing them” (Anurag, HR – L & D)

A pronounced emphasis on eLearning design and technology use stands out from the shared experiences of employees. Multimedia components, specifically images, videos, and audio narrations, have evidently played a pivotal role in simplifying and

enhancing the learning experience. The trend of leveraging advanced technologies like Virtual Reality (VR) is also evident. The interactivity afforded by VR simulations offers learners an immersive experience, making them an active part of the narrative. Notably, the organization's dedicated 'University' division underscores its commitment to fostering state-of-the-art learning experiences. This division, adept at integrating cutting-edge technologies such as VR, AR, and AI, epitomizes the organization's commitment to continual learning. The dual role of this division, encompassing skill development and the repositioning of employees onto new projects, further showcases its value in not only upskilling but also in talent retention during challenging times.

In light of the evident appreciation for technologically advanced and multimedia-rich learning experiences, another facet that emerged distinctly in the discourse was the significance of interactive activities within eLearning. As posited by Jonassen & Land (2012), interactive engagements, such as quizzes, polls, and discussions, serve as critical instruments in sustaining learner interest and motivation. They not only validate the learner's comprehension but also foster a sense of community and collaborative learning:

“The quizzes were fun and challenging. They kept me interested and motivated to learn more.”(Arvind, Consultant))

“The polls and discussions were great. They allowed me to share my opinions and learn from others.” (Anjali, Consultant)

The significance of interactive activities in eLearning modules cannot be understated. Drawing from Jonassen & Land's (2012) emphasis on these elements, they serve a

dual purpose: not only do they enhance retention but also bolster a learner's enthusiasm. Arvind's appreciation for the quizzes underlines their pivotal role in sustaining interest, blending an optimal mix of challenge and engagement to spur learners forward. Such interactive components, by their design, compel active participation, ensuring that learning isn't a passive process. Similarly, the polls and discussions were heralded by Anjali as platforms for expression and peer learning. These mechanisms foster a communal atmosphere, offering opportunities for learners to articulate their perspectives, and crucially, assimilate insights from their peers. Such interactive elements, therefore, are more than just tools for assessment; they are integral to creating a dynamic, responsive, and collaborative eLearning environment.

Building on the criticality of interactivity in eLearning modules, another dimension worth exploring is the autonomy accorded to learners in their educational journey. As emphasized by Bruner (1961), learner-centered approaches, which prioritize the autonomy of the learner, are instrumental in creating an environment conducive to intrinsic motivation and deeper understanding. Granting learners the discretion to choose their own content, pace, and even the learning pathway not only personalizes the experience but also infuses a sense of ownership in the learning process:

“I liked that I could choose my own content. I could select the courses that were relevant to my interests and goals.” (Aman, Consultant)

“I saw that the system was adapting to my learning pace. I heard that’s enabled by AI, though I am not sure about that completely” (Amit, Consultant)

“We have been using chatbots like Chatgpt while working, I think they should inculcate them into online courses in some kind of a meaningful manner”

(Deepa, Consultant)

Bruner's (1961) advocacy for a learner-centered approach in educational paradigms underscores the necessity of personalizing the learning journey to the individual's needs and inclinations. This approach not only caters to the diverse learning styles but also enhances engagement and retention. Aman's sentiments resonate with this principle, as he appreciated the flexibility to curate his own learning path. This autonomy in choosing content that aligns with one's personal and professional goals makes the learning experience more relevant and impactful. Additionally, the acknowledgment of the system adapting to a user's pace suggests the burgeoning integration of Artificial Intelligence in eLearning platforms. While there's some uncertainty about the full extent of its application, the ability of such systems to tailor experiences based on individual learning curves indicates the vast potential of AI in reshaping online education. Moreover, the mention of AI-driven chatbots, like ChatGPT, being used in professional capacities points to another frontier in eLearning. Incorporating these chatbots into courses could revolutionize the way learners interact with content, bringing in real-time assistance, clarifications, and enhancing the interactive dimension of online courses.

Delving deeper into the intricacies of eLearning, the role of assessment becomes paramount. Shute & Zapata-Rivera (2012) emphasized the importance of providing learners with not just scores but contextual hints, explanations, and a structured feedback mechanism to foster comprehension and improvement. Such assessments, which go beyond mere evaluation and delve into constructive feedback, are central to

reinforcing learning and allowing students to introspectively gauge their understanding.

“The system lacked proper feedback mechanisms. I rarely received timely feedback, hints, explanations, or scores. This made it challenging for me to monitor my progress and pinpoint areas for improvement.” (Deepa, Consultant)

“The assessment was poorly constructed. It failed to accurately test my knowledge and skills in a realistic scenario. Moreover, it lacked a comprehensive report detailing my strengths and weaknesses.” (Amit, Consultant)

Assessments and feedback play a pivotal role in the eLearning experience, directly impacting learners' comprehension and progress (Shute & Zapata-Rivera, 2012). However, concerns have arisen regarding the efficacy and design of such assessment mechanisms in certain eLearning modules. Deepa, for instance, voiced frustrations over the system's apparent deficiencies in delivering timely and constructive feedback. Without adequate hints, explanations, or scores, learners like her find it increasingly difficult to gauge their learning trajectory and identify areas necessitating further attention. Similarly, Amit underscored concerns about the structure and validity of the assessments. Instead of offering a reflective evaluation of his knowledge and skills within real-world contexts, the assessments seemingly fell short, further omitting a detailed breakdown of his strengths and vulnerabilities.

Delving into the intricacies of eLearning design, it becomes evident that these considerations aren't mere checklists for effective course delivery, they encompass deeper educational philosophies grounded in constructivism. Constructivism purports that learners ought to be central participants in their learning journey, curating

experiences that are engaging, reflective, and interactive. For genuine comprehension to manifest, a learner, according to Mayer & Moreno (2003), should navigate through various modes of representation, intertwining new knowledge with what is already known. This exploration fosters connections and enhances retention. At the heart of this is the engagement, sustained not by mere content delivery but by dynamic interactivity. Jonassen & Land (2012) argue for the significance of active learning where learners grapple with real-world problems, collaborate, and ultimately forge their unique understanding. Activities such as quizzes, discussions, or even immersive VR scenarios, challenge learners to apply and evaluate their knowledge continually. But, active learning needs reinforcement, and that's where timely feedback and assessments come into play. Shute & Zapata-Rivera (2012) assert that these mechanisms not only evaluate learning but also bolster it, guiding learners toward better performance.

Yet, as with all designs, there's the risk of pitfalls. Heavy reliance on text or passive activities can disengage learners, detracting from the immersive experience central to constructivism. Additionally, a dominating instructor-led approach can stifle the learner's autonomy, potentially affecting motivation and comprehension. Bruner (1961) has long emphasized the importance of learner-centered pedagogy, and this remains especially true in eLearning environments. Assessments, while crucial, need a careful design to ensure they aid, not hinder, the learning process. Overwhelming summative evaluations can stifle progress and discourage exploration. In essence, the bedrock of stellar eLearning design is its alignment with constructivist principles. The vision isn't just to transmit information but to foster an environment where learners actively engage, interact, reflect, and evolve. As we navigate the eLearning terrain,

ensuring these foundational pillars stand strong is paramount for realizing true eLearning transformation.

4.6 Summary of Themes and Sub Themes

The thematic analysis of the interview data revealed several key insights into employees' experiences with e-learning. A predominant challenge that emerged was technical issues that caused frustrations and impeded learning. Employees grappled with inconsistent internet connectivity, software malfunctions, compatibility problems and system failures that disrupted their e-learning trajectory. Beyond logistical impediments, some participants also voiced concerns regarding insufficient pedagogical scaffolding such as unclear instructions, delayed feedback and superficial interactions. This highlights the need for greater alignment between technological tools and pedagogical principles to bolster learning outcomes.

Another salient challenge was the struggle to find time for e-learning amidst demanding consultancy schedules and commitments. While recognizing the value of continuous learning, employees still underscored the innate trade-offs between professional obligations and educational pursuits. This mirrors broader debates regarding the integration of work and learning, prompting discussions on recalibrating organizational cultures and e-learning designs to enhance flexibility without compromising rigor or engagement.

Perspectives on interaction and collaboration in e-learning varied. Some employees missed the interpersonal connections of traditional learning, expressing sentiments of isolation online. However, others favored autonomy, appreciating the self-paced nature of e-learning. This bifurcation reveals tensions between individualistic preferences and collective learning norms. It signals the need for multifaceted e-

learning approaches that cater to diverse predilections through both independent and interactive activities.

The acquisition of valuable competencies, both technical and soft skills, was positively regarded. However, some participants noted gaps in translating theoretical knowledge into professional settings. Others questioned the depth and consistency of certain e-learning offerings. This warrants robust content evaluation and blended approaches aligning online acquisition with real-world application. Enhancing client interaction skills was also addressed but reservations emerged regarding the replacement of in-person training.

Peer collaboration and organizational alignment were deemed positive for continuous learning, but resistance from certain teams was cited as a hindrance. Rewards like badges spurred motivation, but their professional value was debated. Good e-learning design was linked to multimedia, personalization and emerging technologies, but assessment mechanisms needed improvement. In summary, while e-learning advantages were highlighted, challenges spanned individual, technological and organizational dimensions, calling for comprehensive strategies.

4.7 Findings as per Research Questions

The first research question examined the barriers and enablers to acquiring valuable competencies through e-learning. The findings revealed that technical challenges, time constraints, and insufficient interaction impeded skill acquisition, by hampering access, focus, applied practice, and collaboration. However, e-learning's flexibility and accessibility enabled participants to enhance their competencies despite busy schedules. This highlights the need for multifaceted strategies addressing logistical issues while retaining e-learning's inherent advantages.

The second research question probed the role of technology-enhanced learning in fostering continuous learning. The integration of multimedia, simulations, VR, AR and AI created engaging, personalized experiences that motivated learning. However, over-reliance on technology and digital literacy gaps raised concerns. This signals the importance of purposeful technology adoption aligned with sound pedagogy and organizational change management.

The third research question investigated social mechanisms influencing e-learning. Peer collaboration, organizational alignment with e-learning, and social acceptance facilitated participation. But isolation, resistance and lack of support hindered engagement. This emphasizes a need to proactively nurture interaction, address resistance through awareness, and foster communities of practice.

The findings revealed a complex interplay of challenges and enablers at individual, technological and organizational levels. While e-learning offers accessibility, issues like technology-pedagogy mismatch, time poverty, and social barriers need resolution through holistic strategies. Insights from the study can guide stakeholders in creating responsive, collaborative and meaningful e-learning experiences.

4.8 Research Framework Shortcomings

While Constructivism provided a beneficial perspective emphasizing learners' active knowledge construction, some limitations emerged. The framework does not sufficiently consider external factors like infrastructure, policies and resources that shape the feasibility and outcomes of e-learning. It focuses extensively on individual learning processes but does not deeply examine broader organizational systems, culture and support mechanisms. The assumption of innate learner self-direction overlooks scenarios where more structure or guidance may be needed. The subjectivity of knowledge in constructivism also poses challenges for organizational

learning which necessitates some objectivity in skills assessment. Additionally, constructivism does not adequately address the role of informal learning, communities of practice, power dynamics or conflicts that color social learning. In summary, using constructivism alone may provide a narrower view, thus utilizing it in conjunction with other theories can offer a more holistic understanding.

4.9 Discussion

The culmination of this qualitative study, exploring the intricate landscape of e-learning within the organizational context, illuminates the multifaceted nature of digital learning environments. From technical hurdles to the rich tapestry of collaborative learning and the nuanced realms of skill acquisition, these findings reflect a spectrum of experiences, aspirations, and challenges faced by employees. Yet, the essential question remains: So what? What does this confluence of challenges and enablers, the interplay of technological advancements and pedagogical strategies, and the dynamic social mechanisms in e-learning signify for the broader discourse on professional development and organizational learning?

The significance of this endeavor lies not just in mapping the contours of e-learning experiences but in its potential to inform and transform organizational learning cultures and strategies. This study underscores the criticality of aligning technological infrastructure with robust pedagogical support, ensuring that e-learning is not merely an exercise in content delivery but a meaningful, interactive learning experience. It reveals the necessity for organizations to transcend traditional training paradigms, embracing e-learning not as a supplementary tool but as an integral component of their learning ecosystem.

Furthermore, the exploration into the social mechanisms affecting e-learning participation highlights the importance of fostering a culture of continuous learning,

where e-learning is valorized and integrated into the fabric of organizational life. It calls for a holistic approach to e-learning design—one that considers the learner's journey, from the acquisition of technical and soft skills to the nuanced dynamics of peer collaboration and organizational support. The findings advocate for a learning environment that champions flexibility, personalization, and inclusivity, catering to diverse learner needs and preferences.

In essence, this study illuminates the path forward for organizations striving to harness the potential of e-learning. It emphasizes the need for a concerted effort to address the barriers to e-learning, leveraging technology not just for its novelty but for its capacity to create immersive, engaging, and effective learning experiences. It suggests a paradigm shift towards a learner-centered approach, where e-learning is seamlessly woven into the organizational culture, supported by a framework that encourages exploration, interaction, and growth.

The endeavor of navigating the e-learning landscape, as outlined in this study, serves as a foundational step towards reimagining professional development within organizations. It posits that the future of e-learning is not confined to technological advancement alone but lies in the synthesis of technology, pedagogy, and social dynamics. This comprehensive approach not only enriches the e-learning experience but also propels organizations towards creating a vibrant, learning-oriented culture that nurtures continuous professional growth and innovation.

In conclusion, this qualitative study, through its detailed examination of the e-learning experience within the organizational setting, offers valuable insights and actionable strategies for enhancing e-learning initiatives. It reinforces the notion that the true value of e-learning transcends the confines of individual learning experiences,

influencing organizational learning cultures, strategies, and ultimately, the broader landscape of professional development. The next chapter is conclusion and recommendations. It will discuss the limitations of the study, scope for future research, recommendations and my reflections on the entire research endeavour.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Limitations and Future Research

While this study offers valuable perspectives into employees' e-learning experiences, certain limitations need to be acknowledged to enrich the discourse and inform future research directions. Firstly, the qualitative methodology using a small sample of 10 participants from one organization restricts generalizability of the findings. The subjective, self-reported data is also vulnerable to biases like social desirability, recall errors or attribution issues, prompting the employees to portray experiences in a possibly skewed positive manner. To enhance objectivity and wider applicability, future studies could adopt a mixed methods approach encompassing interviews, surveys, analytics, and ethnographic observations across a larger randomized sample from diverse sectors. This methodological triangulation across data sources, research designs and organizational contexts could offer richer, more nuanced insights.

Secondly, the India-centric, consultancy sector focus limits transferability of findings to other geographic regions or industries with unique technological, cultural, economic and infrastructural influences shaping e-learning experiences. Applying the same methodology across different global regions and sectors could help identify context-specific and culture-specific challenges and enablers while also illuminating cross-cutting themes, allowing for more judicious tailoring of e-learning based on locale and domain. Thirdly, the cross-sectional nature offers only a snapshot versus the longitudinal tracking of evolving e-learning perceptions, skills gained, and other impacts over time. For instance, technical challenges faced by initial adopters may decrease subsequently as fluency and infrastructure improve. A longitudinal study gathering data at multiple points by following the same cohort could provide richer insights into such temporal developments. Fourthly, the sole reliance on self-reported

employee data risks potential discrepancies from tangible organizational e-learning metrics like participation rates, assessment results, and productivity gains. Comparing such metrics through a mixed-methods approach could reveal gaps between perceptions and empirical data. It could also help assess the tangible ROI and organizational impact more objectively. Fifthly, the exclusive focus on formal e-learning overlooks the parallel role of informal online learning like social media, communities of practice and MOOCs which may intersect with or supplement formal initiatives. Exploring this informal side could provide a holistic ecosystem perspective.

Finally, constructivism offers a useful but somewhat limited lens, thus applying critical or postmodern perspectives could reveal deeper power dynamics and systemic issues that perpetuate inequities through e-learning processes and outcomes. Overall, these limitations provide promising avenues for future research to enrich and extend the discourse through methodological enhancements, contextual expansions, temporal tracking, holistic data integration, informal learning inclusions and paradigm pluralism. Such studies could significantly extend the frontiers of scholarship and practice pertaining to organizational e-learning.

5.2 Recommendations

The key recommendations centered on four main areas. Technologically, improving infrastructure and prompt support services are critical to alleviate recurring frustrations. Pedagogically, flexibility in self-paced learning needs balancing with structure to enhance focus and completion. Socially, diverse peer interactions and organizational alignment can enrich engagement and build communities of practice. Strategically, a multifaceted approach encompassing systems, culture, technology and individual factors is vital for e-learning success. Further suggestions include

comprehensive needs analysis, real-world application, digital literacy development, robust metrics and change management. In essence, the recommendations emphasize an integrated, learner-centric e-learning ecosystem that synthesizes organizational goals, pedagogical principles and technological capabilities for meaningful skills acquisition. The next chapter discusses the Limitations, future research directions and reflections.

5.3 Reflections: A complete research endeavour

It was an enlightening experience to delve deep into the intricate world of e-learning within consultancy organizations in India. The journey was filled with a myriad of learnings, insights, challenges, and breakthroughs that have left an indelible mark on my intellectual pursuit. This research journey was a confluence of learning and discovery. The interaction with various employees in Indian consultancy organizations provided a wealth of insights and perspectives that were crucial in shaping the research. It was enriching to hear their stories, understand their motivations, and explore their experiences with e-learning. The diversity in perceptions and the depth in experiences highlighted the multifaceted nature of e-learning in the Indian context. The path was not devoid of challenges. The complexities of the Indian consultancy sector posed multiple layers of intricacies that demanded meticulous navigation. Navigating through recurring technical, social and learning culture issues was a task that required thoughtful attention and perseverance. Conveying the contextual insights from the study necessitated carefully understanding and expressing the multifaceted nuances of employees' e-learning experiences within this intricate backdrop. However, overcoming these hurdles was a learning experience in itself, pushing the boundaries of understanding and exploration.

The methodological rigor of conducting online interviews, transcribing, and thematically analyzing them was a time consuming and laborious process. It was crucial to maintain the integrity of the data while interpreting the patterns and themes, thereby contributing to the broader knowledge and practices in e-learning. The constructivist theoretical framework provided a structured lens to view and analyze the gathered data, enabling a holistic approach to understanding the subject matter. This research has been a cornerstone for my professional and academic growth. It has instilled a sense of curiosity and a relentless pursuit of knowledge. The experience has been a catalyst in fostering a deeper understanding of organizational learning dynamics and has equipped me with the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the professional world. The journey has been enriching, instigating a profound reflection on my aspirations and goals. The research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering nuanced insights into learner perspectives in the Indian context, often neglected in e-learning research. It serves as a catalyst for future research endeavors to explore the untapped dimensions of e-learning and its interplay with organizational and cultural dynamics. The reflections and insights gained through this journey are instrumental in shaping the discourse around e-learning in consultancy organizations and beyond.

Fueled by insights gained from exploring e-learning in Indian consultancy organizations, I am poised to enter the Learning and Development (L&D) field, aiming to innovate and transform learning experiences. My research journey has enriched my understanding of learning paradigms and organizational cultures, empowering me to develop strategies aligned with both individual aspirations and organizational goals. Committed to continuous learning and innovation, I aspire to blend cutting-edge

research and technology to foster organizational growth and contribute substantially to the evolving realm of L&D.

References

Abramovich, S., Schunn, C., & Higashi, R. M. (2013). Are badges useful in education?: It depends upon the type of badge and expertise of learner. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 61, 217-232.

Agrawal, T. (2014). Skill development in India: An examination. *Journal of Education and Work*, 27(6), 640–661.

Alenezi, A. R. (2018). Barriers to Participation in E-Learning in Saudi Arabia: Stakeholders' Perspectives. Florida: ProQuest.

Alghamdi, S. R., & Bayaga, A. (2016). Use and attitude towards Learning Management Systems (LMS) in Saudi Arabian universities. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science & Technology Education*, 12(9), 2309-2330.

Ally, M. (2004). Foundations of educational theory for online learning. In T. Anderson & F. Elloumi (Eds.), Theory and practice of online learning (2nd ed., pp. 3–31). Athabasca, Canada: Athabasca University.

Almaiah, M. A., & Alyoussef, I. Y. (2019). Analysis of the Effect of Course Design, Course Content Support, Course Assessment and Instructor Characteristics on the Actual Use of E-Learning System. IEEE Access, 7, 171907-171922.

Alshahrani, A., & Almutairi, S. (2020). E-learning in the time of COVID-19: Evaluating undergraduate students perspective at Najran University. *Journal of Educational Informatics*, 6(2).

Alshammari, H., Ali, M. B., & Rosli, M. S. (2020). Challenges of e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic as perceived by EFL learners. *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 18(5), 425-432.

Al-Emran, M., Mezhuyev, V., & Kamaludin, A. (2018). Technology Acceptance Model in M-learning context: A systematic review. Computers & Education, 125, 389-412.

Anderson, J. R. (1983). The architecture of cognition. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Anderson, T. (2004). Teaching in an online learning context. In T. Anderson & F. Elloumi (Eds.), Theory and practice of online learning (pp. 273-294). Athabasca, Canada: Athabasca University.

Anderson, T. (2004). Toward a theory of online learning. In Theory and practice of online learning (pp. 109-119). Athabasca University Press.

Anurag, R. (2021). Role of technology in Indian education system during COVID-19. Tech Observer. https://techobserver.in/author/rachnaanurag

Assarah, A. A., Elleithy, K., & Lee, J. (2011). Learners' satisfaction and perceptions in online technical training in an American university in Egypt. *Global Journal of Engineering Education*, 13(1), 27-38.

Attwell G. (2007). The Personal Learning Environments - The future of eLearning? eLearning Papers. www.eLearningpapers.eu

Bandura, A. (1977). Social learning theory. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Batra, S. (2009). Developing skills and making India globally competitive. IIMB Management Review, 21(2), 12.

Bates, A. W. (2015). Teaching in a digital age: Guidelines for designing teaching and learning. BCcampus.

Bersin, J. (2017). The Disruption of Digital Learning: Ten Things We Have Learned. Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP.

Bhat, S. A., Rajashekar, B., & Kamath, V. (2017). E-Learning Methodologies and Tools. *DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology*, 37(5).

Bhuasiri, W., Xaymoungkhoun, O., Zo, H., Rho, J. J., & Ciganek, A. P. (2012). Critical success factors for e-learning in developing countries: A comparative analysis between ICT experts and faculty. Computers & Education, 58(2), 843-855.

Bonk, C. J., & Graham, C. R. (Eds.) (2006). The handbook of blended learning: Global perspectives, local designs. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.

Bower, M., & Sturman, D. (2015). What are the educational affordances of wearable technologies? Computers & Education, 88, 343-353.

Brown, L., Murphy, E., & Wade, V. (2006). Corporate eLearning: Human resource development implications for large and small organizations. *Human Resource Development International*, 9(3), 415-427.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative research in psychology, 3(2), 77-101.

Bruner, J. (1961). The act of discovery. Harvard educational review.

Bryman, A. (2012). Social research methods. Oxford university press.

Budhwar, P., Varma, A., Singh, V., & Dhar, R. (2006). HRM systems of Indian call centres: An exploratory study. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 17(5), 881-897.

Chauhan, V. (2017). Factor influencing adoption of MOOCs among students from India: Role of Self-Regulation and ICT facilitation. PACIS 2017 Proceedings, 85. https://aisel.aisnet.org/pacis2017/85

Chawla, D., & Joshi, H. (2018). E-Learning: Student's perspective in Indian context. The Online Journal of Distance Education and e-Learning, 6(3), 14-27.

Chen, N. S., Cheng, I. L., & Chew, S. W. (2016). Evolution is not enough: Revolutionizing current learning environments to smart learning environments. International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education, 26(2), 561-581.

Chen, P., Xiong, C., Wu, Z., & Zhao, Q. (2022). Adaptive Learning: Theories, Technologies, and Systems. ACM Computing Surveys (CSUR), 54(8), 1-37.

Chen, W., Wellman, B., & Hiltz, S. R. (2004). In C. Haythornthwaite & M. M. Kazmer (Eds.) Learning, Culture and Community in Online Education: Research and Practice (pp. 91-113). New York: Peter Lang.

Chun, D., Jiang, Y., Lee, S., & Golamari, N. (2019). Future of work & skills. Tata Communications.

Clark, R. C., & Mayer, R. E. (2016). E-learning and the science of instruction: Proven guidelines for consumers and designers of multimedia learning. John Wiley & Sons.

Cole, M. T., Shelley, D. J., & Swartz, L. B. (2014). Online instruction, e-learning, and student satisfaction: A three year study. The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 15(6).

Creswell, J. W. (2014). A concise introduction to mixed methods research. SAGE publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. Sage publications.

Crotty, M. (1998). The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process. Sage.

Dabbagh, N., & Kitsantas, A. (2012). Personal Learning Environments, social media, and self-regulated learning: A natural formula for connecting formal and informal learning. The Internet and higher education, 15(1), 3-8.

Daniels, H. (1996). An introduction to Vygotsky. Psychology Press.

Darby, F. (2019). How to be a better online teacher. Chronicle of Higher Education.

Deloitte (2019). Future of Consultancy in India: Transforming relationships. https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/in/Documents/strategy/in-strategy-future-of-consultancy-in-india-noexp.pdf

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). The SAGE handbook of qualitative research. Sage.

Dewey, J. (1938). Education and experience. Simon and Schuster.

DeWitt, D., Alias, N., Siraj, S., Yaakub, M. Y., Ayob, J., & Ishak, R. (2013). The potential of YouTube for teaching and learning in the performing arts. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 103, 1118-1126.

Dhawan, S. (2020). Online Learning: A Panacea in the Time of COVID-19 Crisis. Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 49(1), 5-22.

DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. Medical education, 40(4), 314-321.

Dixson, M. D. (2010). Creating effective student engagement in online courses: What do students find engaging? Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 10(2), 1 – 13.

Downes, S. (2010). New technology supporting informal learning. Journal of emerging technologies in web intelligence, 2(1), 27-33.

Duke, B., Harper, G., & Johnston, M. (2013). Connectivism as a digital age learning theory. The International HETL Review, Special Issue.

ELearning Industry (2019). Top 10 eLearning Statistics For 2019 You Need To Know. https://eLearningindustry.com/top-10-eLearning-statistics-for-2019

Fabian, K., Topping, K. J., & Barron, I. G. (2018). Using mobile technologies for mathematics: effects on student attitudes and achievement. Educational Technology Research and Development, 66(5), 1119-1139.

Fathema, N., Shannon, D., & Ross, M. (2015). Expanding the technology acceptance model (TAM) to examine faculty use of learning management systems (LMSs) in higher education institutions. Journal of Online Learning & Teaching, 11(2).

Fuad, A., Abdulamir, A. S., & Awang, Z. (2022). Tailoring University–Industry Collaboration Models for COVID-19 Pandemic Using Analytic Hierarchy Process. SAGE Open, 12(2), 21582440221091800.

Gaba, A., & Bhattacharya, P. (2016). Delivering technology to enhance English teaching: The case of digital learning resources in India. In ICT-Supported Innovations in Small Countries and Developing Regions (pp. 215-232). Springer, Cham.

Gamage, S. H., Tretiakov, A., & Crump, B. (2020). Teacher perceptions of learning analytics in higher education institutions. Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 36(4).

Garrison, D. R., & Anderson, T. (2003). E–Learning in the 21st century: A framework for research and practice. London: Routledge/Falmer.

Garrison, D. R. (2017). E-learning in the 21st century: A community of inquiry framework for research and practice. Routledge.

Garrote, R., Pettersson, T., & Christie, M. (2020). Learning together apart—Physical distance as a catalyst for innovation? European Journal of Education, 56(2), 225-238.

Garvin D. A., Edmondson A. C., Gino F. (2008). Is Yours a Learning Organization? Harvard business review, 86(3), 109.

González-Sanmamed, M., Estrada-Sentí, V., García-Santiago, V., & Santos, J. (2014). Barriers regarding the use of MOOCs for employee training in small and medium Spanish enterprises. INTED2014 Proceedings, 4646-4654.

Goyal, S. (2020). Impact of eLearning in Corporate Sector. International Journal of Research in Engineering, Science and Management, 3(9), 143-147.

Greany, T., & Zetlitz, K. (2022). Never go back? Examining the future of education post COVID-19. Emerald Open Research, 4.

Gunawardena, C. N., & Zittle, F. J. (1997). Social presence as a predictor of satisfaction within a computer-mediated conferencing environment. American journal of distance education, 11(3), 8-26.

Gupta, S., & Bostrom, R. P. (2009). Technology-mediated learning: A comprehensive theoretical model. Journal of the Association for Information Systems, 10(9), 14.

Gupta, V., & Wang, H. (2004). The transvergence proposition under globalization: Looking beyond convergence, divergence and crossvergence. Multinational Business Review, 12(2), 37-57.

Hamari, J. (2017). Do badges increase user activity? A field experiment on the effects of gamification. Computers in Human Behavior, 71, 469-478.

Herrington, J., Reeves, T. C., & Oliver, R. (2010). A guide to authentic e-learning. New York: Routledge.

Hiltz, S. R., & Turoff, M. (2005). Education goes digital: The evolution of online learning and the revolution in higher education. Communications of the ACM, 48(10), 59-64.

Hofstede Insights (2021). Compare countries. https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/

Horwitz, S. M. (2013). The 4 major e-learning benefits and drawbacks. Osmosis. https://www.osmosis.com/4-major-eLearning-benefits-drawbacks/

Hrastinski, S. (2008). Asynchronous and synchronous e-learning: A study of asynchronous and synchronous e-learning methods discovered that each supports different purposes. EDUCAUSE quarterly, 31(4), 51-55.

Huang, R. H., Liu, D. J., Guo, J., Yang, J. F., Zhao, J. H., Wei, H. F., Knyazeva, S., & Zhang, L. N. (2020). Guidance on active learning at home during educational disruption: Promoting student's self-regulation skills during COVID-19 outbreak. Beijing: Smart Learning Institute of Beijing Normal University.

Huang, H. M. (2002). Toward constructivism for adult learners in online learning environments. British journal of educational technology, 33(1), 27-37.

Hug, T. (2005). Microlearning: Emerging Concepts, Practices and Technologies after e-Learning. Proceedings of Microlearning 2005.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1998). Cooperative learning and social interdependence theory. Social psychological applications to social issues, 4, 9-35.

Jonassen, D. (1990). Thinking technology: Toward a constructivist view of instructional design. Educational Technology, 30(9), 32-34.

Jonassen D. (1991). Evaluating constructivistic learning. Educational technology, 31(9), 28-33.

Jonassen, D. H., Peck, K. L., & Wilson, B. G. (2003). Learning with technology: A constructivist perspective. Merrill PrenticeHall.

Jonassen, D., & Land, S. (Eds.). (2012). Theoretical foundations of learning environments. Routledge.

Kahnwald, N., Köhler, T. (2019). Metro Trains Melbourne: Using microlearning and gamification for blended learning. Open Context, Germany's specialist platform for open educational resources (OER). https://open-educational-resources.de/case-studies/melbourne-metro-trains-microlearning/

Kaur, M., & Abas, Z. W. (2004). An assessment of e-learning readiness at Open University Malaysia. International Conference on Computers in Education (ICCE2004), Melbourne, Australia.

Keengwe, J., Mbae, J. G., & Ngigi, S. K. (2014) Promoting global literacy for Kenyan youth through laptops and E-readers: The Methe Mobile. International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education, 10(3), 53-66.

Khaldi, M., Kharbach, M., & Cherkaoui, C. (2021). Micro Learning: A Modernized Education System. International Journal on Studies in Education (IJonSE), 3(2), 70-74.

Khan, A., Egbue, O., Palkie, B., & Madden, J. (2017). Active Learning: Engaging Students To Maximize Learning In An Online Course. Electronic Journal of e-Learning, 15(2), 107-115.

Kochar, A. (2006). E-learning process: An effective learning tool for business enterprises. Paradigm, 10(1), 70-78.

Kolb, D. (1984). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

König, L., Jäger-Biela, D. J., & Glutsch, N. (2020). Adapting to online teaching during COVID-19 school closure: teacher education and teacher competence effects among early career teachers in Germany. European Journal of Teacher Education, 43(4), 608-622.

Koohang, A., Riley, L., Smith, T., & Schreurs, J. (2009). E-learning and constructivism: From theory to application. Interdisciplinary Journal of E-Learning and Learning Objects, 5(1), 91-109.

Kop, R., & Hill, A. (2008). Connectivism: Learning theory of the future or vestige of the past? The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 9(3).

Kop, R., & Fournier, H. (2011). A brief history of the future of teaching or the evolving roles of the teacher in emerging learning environments. In M. Koehler & P. Mishra (Eds.), Proceedings of Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education

International Conference 2011 (pp. 216-225). Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).

Kovachev, D., Cao, Y., Klamma, R., & Jarke, M. (2011). Learn-as-you-go: New ways of cloud-based micro-learning for the mobile web. In International conference on web-based learning (pp. 51-61). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.

KPMG (2017). Online Education in India 2021. https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/in/pdf/2017/05/Online-Education-in-India-2021.pdf

Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Laurillard, D. (2012). Teaching as a Design Science. Building Pedagogical Patterns for Learning and Technology. Routledge.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation. Cambridge university press.

Lawless, K. A., & Brown, S. W. (2015). Developing scientific literacy skills through interdisciplinary, technology-based global simulations: GlobalEd 2. The Curriculum Journal, 26(2), 268-289.

Lee, Y. H., Hsieh, Y. C., & Chen, Y. H. (2013). An investigation of employees' use of e-learning systems: Applying the technology acceptance model. Behaviour & Information Technology, 32(2), 173-189.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Liu, X., Magjuka, R. J., Bonk, C. J., & Lee, S. (2007). Does sense of community matter? An examination of participants' perceptions of building learning communities in online courses. Quarterly Review of Distance Education, 8(1), 9-24.

Liu, Y., & Yu, S. (2022). Causal Relationships between Socially Shared Regulation, Group Cohesion and Learning Performance in CSCL. Educational Technology & Society, 25(3), 163-175.

Liu, Y., Li, H., & Carlsson, C. (2010). Factors driving the adoption of m-learning: An empirical study. Computers & Education, 55(3), 1211-1219.

Lu, J., Hallinger, P., & Showanasai, P. (2021). Beyond Superficial Adaptivity: A Theory-Driven Approach and Technologies For Personalizing Online Learning Support Actions. ELearning & Software for Education, 2.

Margaryan, A., Littlejohn, A., & Milligan, C. (2013). Self-regulated learning in the workplace: strategies and factors in the attainment of learning goals. International Journal of Training and Development, 17(4), 245-259.

Mayer, R. E. (2004). Should there be a three-strikes rule against pure discovery learning? American psychologist, 59(1), 14.

Mayer, R. E. (2011). Instruction based on visualizations. In R. E. Mayer & P. Alexander (Eds.), Handbook of research on learning and instruction (p. 427–445). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Mayer, R. E., & Moreno, R. (2003). Nine ways to reduce cognitive load in multimedia learning. Educational psychologist, 38(1), 43-52.

McKinsey & Company (2018). The future of work in India: The rise of the new labour market. https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/the-future-of-work-in-india-the-rise-of-the-new-labour-market

Mehrotra, S., & Mital, M. (2007). Implementing e-learning and knowledge management innovations: Challenges faced in an Indian university. Journal of Workplace Learning.

Mehra, P., & Mital, M. (2007). Integrating technology into the teaching-learning transaction: Pedagogical and technological perceptions of management faculty. International Journal of Education and Development using ICT, 3(1).

Meister, J. C., & Willyerd, K. (2010). The 2020 workplace: How innovative companies attract, develop, and keep tomorrow's employees today. HarperCollins Leadership.

Moore, M., & Kearsley, G. (2012). Distance education: A systems view of online learning. Cengage Learning.

Murre, J. M., & Dros, J. (2015). Replication and analysis of Ebbinghaus' forgetting curve. PloS one, 10(7), e0120644.

Nakayama, M., Silitonga, F., Bogloko, N., & Babazari, P. (2012). Development of e-learning system for international distance education. International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 13(2), 121-137.

Noesgaard, S. S., & Ørngreen, R. (2015). The effectiveness of e-learning: An explorative and integrative review of the definitions, methodologies and factors that promote e-Learning effectiveness.

Noe, R. A., Clarke, A. D., & Klein, H. J. (2014). Learning in the twenty-first-century workplace. Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav., 1(1), 245-275.

Ormrod, J. E. (2016). Human learning. Pearson.

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. Administration and policy in mental health and mental health services research, 42(5), 533-544.

Palincsar, A. S., & Brown, A. L. (1984). Reciprocal teaching of comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities. Cognition and instruction, 1(2), 117-175.

Palloff, R. M., & Pratt, K. (2007). Building online learning communities: Effective strategies for the virtual classroom (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. Qualitative social work, 1(3), 261-283.

Piaget, J. (1952). The origins of intelligence in children. New York: International Universities Press. Piaget, J. (1954). The construction of reality in the child (M. Cook, Trans). Basic Books.

Piaget, J. & Inhelder, B. (1973). Memory and intelligence. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Pimmer, C., Mateescu, M., & Gröhbiel, U. (2016). Mobile and ubiquitous learning in higher education settings. A systematic review of empirical studies. Computers in Human Behavior, 63, 490-501.

Powell, K. C., & Kalina, C. J. (2009). Cognitive and social constructivism: Developing tools for an effective classroom. Education, 130(2), 241-250.

Radianti, J., Majchrzak, T. A., Fromm, J., & Wohlgenannt, I. (2020). A systematic review of immersive virtual reality applications for higher education: Design elements, lessons learned, and research agenda. Computers & Education, 147, 103778.

Raman, R. (2011). The Usage of eLearning in India. Research findings. http://www.elearnity.com/

Ramachandran, P. (2010). Strengthening employability in the knowledge economy: E-learning in tertiary education in India. In E-Learning Practices (Vol. 1, pp. 149-176). Sage India: New Delhi, India.

Ravindran, R. (2018). Organization development interventions and cultural transferability: Case studies from India. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Redseer. (2022). India online education market to grow 3X to reach US$ 5.5 Bn by 2024. https://redseer.com/newsletters/india-online-education-market-to-grow-3x-to-reach-5-5-bn-by-2024/

Richardson, J. C., & Swan, K. (2003). Examining social presence in online courses in relation to students' perceived learning and satisfaction. JALN, 7(1), 68-88.

Rovai, A. P., & Wighting, M. J. (2005). Feelings of alienation and community among higher education students in a virtual classroom. The internet and higher education, 8(2), 97-110.

Rusticus, S. A., Bates, S. M., McQueen, D. D., & Schug, L. M. (2022). Improving learning and building connections in the virtual classroom: Application of community of inquiry concepts to online active learning strategies during COVID-19. Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching, 15, 181-192.

Sahin, I., & Shelley, M. (2008). Considering students' perceptions: The distance education student satisfaction model. Journal of Educational Technology & Society, 11(3), 216-223.

Saltan, F., & Arslan, Ö. (2017). The use of augmented reality in formal education: A scoping review. Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, 13(2), 503-520.

Sangrà, A., Vlachopoulos, D., & Cabrera, N. (2012). Building an inclusive definition of e-learning: An approach to the conceptual framework. The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 13(2), 145-159.

Schein, E. H. (2010). Organizational culture and leadership (Vol. 2). John Wiley & Sons.

Schwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. 189-213). Sage Publications, Inc.

Senge, P. M. (1990). The Fifth Discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Sharma, R. (2021). E-learning: Challenges & Opportunities in Indian Higher Education. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts, 9(6), 1210-1214.

Sharma, R. C., & Mishra, S. (2007). Cases on global e-learning practices: Successes and pitfalls. IGI Global.

Sharples, M., Adams, A., Ferguson, R., Gaved, M., McAndrew, P., Rienties, B., Weller, M. & Whitelock, D. (2014). Innovating Pedagogy 2014: Open University Innovation Report 3. The Open University.

Shute, V., & Zapata-Rivera, D. (2012). Adaptive educational systems. Adaptive technologies for training and education, 7-27.

Siemens, G. (2005). Connectivism: A learning theory for the digital age. International journal of instructional technology and distance learning, 2(1), 3-10.

Sinha, P., & Shukla, S. (2021). Online Learning in B-Schools: An Empirical Assessment of Students' Perspective Using Technology Acceptance Model During Covid-19 Pandemic. Perfect - International Journal of Management and Social Sciences, 8(9), 31-42.

SKILLDOM (2020). Tata Communications Transformation for Improved Business & Employee Performance. https://skilldom.com/case-study/tata-communications-transformation-for-improved-business-employee-performance/

Skinner, B. F. (1954). The science of learning the art of science. Harvard Educational Review, 24, 86–87.

So, H. J., & Brush, T. A. (2008). Student perceptions of collaborative learning, social presence and satisfaction in a blended learning environment: Relationships and critical factors. Computers & education, 51(1), 318-336.

Srivastava, J., Sharma, D., & Agrawal, G. (2019). Determinants of continuous usage intention of e-learning portals: Development of a concept model using smart pls-sem. Procedia computer science, 165, 223-235.

Sturdy, A., Wylie, N., & Wright, C. (2013). Management consultancy and organizational uncertainty. International Studies of Management & Organization, 43(3), 58-73.

Sweller, J., Van Merrienboer, J. J., & Paas, F. G. (2019). Cognitive architecture and instructional design: 20 years later. Educational psychology review, 31(2), 261-292.

TalentLMS (2018). The Essential Guide to ELearning (Free eBook). https://www.talentlms.com/eLearning/essential-guide-to-eLearning

Technavio (2020). Corporate E-learning Market in India 2020-2024 | Increasing Popularity Of Online Certification to Boost Growth. BusinessWire. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200507005489/en/Corporate-E-learning-Market-in-India-2020-2024-Increasing-Popularity-of-Online-Certification-to-Boost-Growth-Technavio

Technavio. (2020). Online learning market in India 2019-2023. https://www.technavio.com/report/online-learning-market-in-india-analysis-share-2019

Timmermans, S., & Tavory, I. (2012). Theory construction in qualitative research: From grounded theory to abductive analysis. Sociological theory, 30(3), 167-186.

Vai, M., & Sosulski, K. (2016). Essentials of online course design: A standards-based guide. Routledge.

van der Westhuizen, D. (2020). Advancing e-Learning in an Institution for Higher Education. DLIS Theses and Dissertations. https://vc.bridgew.edu/lib_sci_etds/24

Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. Nursing & health sciences, 15(3), 398-405.

Verywell Mind. (2022, January 12). How Behaviorism Works. https://www.verywellmind.com/behavioral-psychology-4157183

Visme. (2020). The Complete Guide to Learning Modalities [+How to Identify Yours]. https://visme.co/blog/learning-modalities/

Vrasidas, C., & McIsaac, M. S. (1999). Factors influencing interaction in an online course. *American Journal of distance education*, 13(3), 22-36.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Harvard university press.

Vygotsky, L. S., & Cole, M. (1978). Mind in society. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wang, C. M., & Reeves, T. C. (2007). The meaning of culture in online education: Implications for teaching, learning and design. Globalized e-learning cultural challenges, 1, 1-17.

Watson, J. B. (1913). Psychology as the behaviorist views it. *Psychological review*, 20(2), 158.

Wenger, E., White, N., & Smith, J.D. (2009). Digital habitats: Stewarding technology for communities. Portland, OR: CPsquare.

Werr, A., Stjernberg, T., & Docherty, P. (1997). The functions of methods of change in management consulting. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*.

World Population Review. (2023). Largest countries in the world by population. https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/largest-countries-in-the-world

WGU (Western Governors University). (2023). 4 Pillars of Constructivism. https://www.wgu.edu/blog/4-pillars-constructivism2004.html#close

Zaharias, P., & Pappas, C. (2016, April). Quality management of learning management systems: A user experience perspective. In Current developments in technology-assisted education (Vol. 1, pp. 579-584).

Zhang, W., Wang, Y., Yang, L., & Wang, C. (2020). Suspending classes without stopping learning: China's education emergency management policy in the COVID-19 outbreak.

Zhang, L., Basham, J. D., & Yang, S. (2019). Understanding the implementation of personalized learning: A research synthesis. *Educational Research Review*, 100290.

Zhao, Y. (2003). What teachers should know about technology: Perspectives and practices. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Zimmerman, B. J., & Schunk, D. H. (Eds.). (2001). Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: Theoretical perspectives (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Appendices

University of Essex

01/06/2023

Mr Srikanth Mandela

Essex Business School

University of Essex

Dear Srikanth,

Ethics Committee Decision

Application: ETH2223-1337

I am pleased to inform you that the research proposal entitled "Exploring the Perceptions and Experiences of E-Learning in Consultancy Organizations: A qualitative study with a focus on the Indian context" has been reviewed on behalf of the Ethics Sub Committee 2, and, based on the information provided, it has been awarded a favourable opinion.

The application was awarded a favourable opinion subject to the following **conditions**:

Extensions and Amendments:

If you propose to introduce an amendment to the research after approval or extend the duration of the study, an amendment should be submitted in ERAMS for further approval in advance of the expiry date listed in the ethics application form. Please note that it is not possible to make any amendments, including extending the duration of the study, once the expiry date has passed.

Covid-19:

Please note that the current Government guidelines in relation to Covid-19 must be adhered to and are subject to change and it is your responsibility to keep yourself informed and bear in mind the possibility of change when planning your research. You will be kept informed if there are any changes in the University guidelines.

Yours sincerely,

Casper Hoedemaekers

Participant Consent form for Research Project: "Exploring the Perceptions and Experiences of E-Learning in Indian Organizations: A Qualitative Study"

Dear participant,

This research is being carried out by Mr Srikanth Mandela under the supervision of Dr Marina Michalski and Dr Louise Nash.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by the researcher. The answers which you provide will be recorded through notes taken by the interviewer and video/zoom recording subject to your agreement.

Please see the attached Participant Information Sheet for details about the study and your rights as a participant.

Yours,

Srikanth Mandela

Statement of Consent	**Please initial each box**
• I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided in the Participant Information Sheet dated 19th May, 2023 for the above study. I have had an opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had any questions satisfactorily answered.	☐

• I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty. I understand that any data collected up to the point of my withdrawal will be destroyed.	☐
• I understand that the identifiable data provided will be securely stored and accessible only to the members of the research team directly involved in the project, and that confidentiality will be maintained.	☐
• I understand that my fully anonymised data will be used for a PGR Masters Dissertation and Research Publications	☐
• I understand that the data collected about me will be used to support other research in the future, and may be shared anonymously with other researchers.	☐
• I give permission for the data to be stored in the form of de-identified (anonymised) transcripts, that I provide to be deposited in a research data repository, so that they will be available for future research and learning activities by other individuals.	☐
• I agree for this interview to be video recorded and recorded via notes taken by the researcher	☐
• I agree to participate in the research project, “Exploring the Perceptions and Experiences of E-Learning in Consultancy	☐

Organizations: A qualitative study with a focus on the Indian context", being carried out by Srikanth Mandela	

_____ _____

Participant's signature Date

_____ _____

Researcher's signature Date

Participant Information Sheet for Research Project: "Exploring the Perceptions and Experiences of E-Learning in Indian Organizations: A Qualitative Study"

Dear participant,

I, Srikanth Mandela, am currently carrying out a piece of research entitled, Exploring the Perceptions and Experiences of E-Learning in Indian Organizations: A Qualitative Study, under the supervision of Dr Marina Michalski and Dr Louise Nash.

We are investigating how employees in a consultancy organization In India experience and think about e-learning. The study will run for six months and use interviews with a total of 10 employees from the consultancy organizations offices in India as the main data collection method. The interviews will be analysed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes in the data. The study is being undertaken as a requirement towards obtaining the degree of Masters by Dissertation from the Essex Business School, University of Essex, UK.

This information sheet provides you with information about the study and your rights as a participant.

What does taking part in the research involve?

Taking part in the research involves participating in an online interview with the researcher. The interview will take place on a video conferencing platform, such as Zoom. The interview will last for about one hour and will cover topics such as your background, motivation, expectations, challenges, benefits, and suggestions for improvement of e-learning in your organization. The interview will be recorded with your consent and transcribed word for word. The recording and the transcript will be stored securely and only accessed by the researcher and the supervisor. Your identity and responses will be kept confidential and anonymous throughout the research process.

Do I have to take part?

Naturally, there is no obligation to take part in the study. It's entirely up to you. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to give consent to take part.

If you decide to participate in the study and then change your mind in the future, you can withdraw at any point, even after the data has been collected. If publications or reports have already been disseminated, these cannot be withdrawn, however, these will only contain anonymised or aggregated data. If you wish to withdraw from the study at any time, please contact the researcher on the details at the end of this information sheet.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected will be kept securely in a password protected computer and will only be accessible by me, that is Srikanth Mandela and my supervisors, Dr Marina Michalski and Dr Louise Nash. However, this research forms part of my studies at the University of Essex and therefore may be subject to scrutiny by other University staff in determining the outcome of my degree.

If you are mentioned individually in any publications or reports, then a participant number or pseudonym will be used and identifying details will be removed. A list may be kept linking participant numbers or pseudonyms to names, but this will be kept securely and will only be accessible by those listed above. A copy of the information which we record about you, but not other participants, will be provided, free of charge, on request.

The research data generated by the project will be retained for a period of at least ten years after the completion of the project, as per the University's Research Data Management Policy. The data will be stored securely and only accessed by the researcher and the supervisor. At the end of the retention period, the data will be

destroyed irreversibly and securely, using appropriate methods such as shredding paper records or deleting electronic files.

Are there any possible disadvantages or risk of taking part?

There are no possible disadvantages or risks of taking part in the study, except for the time involved. The interview will take about one hour of your time, which you can choose according to your convenience and availability. There are no significant risks of harm, risks to confidentiality or psychological risk involved in the study. The interview will be conducted in a respectful and professional manner, and you can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason. Your data will be protected and anonymized throughout the research process, and only used for the purpose of this study and as required by any continuing future research or publications.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The possible benefits of taking part in the study are twofold. First, you will have an opportunity to reflect on your own experience and opinion of e-learning in your organization, and to share your feedback and suggestions for improvement. This may help you to enhance your own learning and development. Second, you will contribute to a research project that aims to understand how e-learning works and is accepted in Indian workplaces. This may help to improve the design and delivery of e-learning programs in your organization and other similar contexts. However, these benefits are not guaranteed and depend on various factors. You should not expect any immediate or direct benefits from taking part in the study.

What is the legal basis for using the data and who is the Data Controller?

The legal basis for processing the data collected from this project is informed consent. The Data Controller for this project is the University of Essex and the contact is the University Information Assurance Manager (dpo@essex.ac.uk).

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you want to take part in the research, you need to contact the researcher, Srikanth Mandela (sm21831@essex.ac.uk) by email and express your interest. You will then receive a consent form that you need to read and sign before participating. As the researcher, I will also arrange a suitable time and date for the interview with you. You need to opt in for the research by the mid of June 2023, after which the data collection will begin.

Who is funding the research?

The research is not funded by any external organization or agency. It is self-funded by me as the research student at the Essex Business School, UK. The research is being undertaken as a requirement towards obtaining the degree of Masters by Dissertation from the university.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research study will be used in my dissertation, which will be submitted in part fulfilment of my degree program at the Essex Business School, UK. The dissertation will be deposited in the university library and online repository in electronic format. The results may also be published as a journal article or a conference paper in the future, with the aim of sharing the findings with other researchers and practitioners in the field of e-learning. However, any publication of the results will ensure that your identity and responses are anonymized and not identifiable, as promised earlier in this information sheet. You will also receive a copy of the summary of the findings of the study by email after the completion of the research, if you wish to do so.

Who has reviewed the study?

I have applied for ethical approval to undertake this study. My application was reviewed and approved by the Social Sciences Ethics Sub-Committee at the University of Essex.

What happens if something goes wrong?

If you are harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements. Regardless of this, if you wish to complain, or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been treated during the course of this study then you should immediately inform the student and/or their supervisor (details below). If you are not satisfied with the response, you may contact the Essex Business School Research Ethics Officer, Dr Casper Hoedemaekers (choedem@essex.ac.uk) or Sarah Manning-Press (sarahm@essex.ac.uk) who will advise you further.

Name of the Researcher/Research Team Members

We would be very grateful for your participation in this study. If you need to contact us in future, please contact me, Srikanth Mandela (sm21831@essex.ac.uk) or Dr Marina Michalski (mmichal@essex.ac.uk) and Dr Louise Nash (louisen@essex.ac.uk). You can also contact us in writing at: EBS, University of Essex, Colchester CO4 3SQ.

You are welcome to ask questions at any point.

Yours,

Srikanth Mandela

Interview Guide

Note: This is the overall interview guide to help steer the interview correctly to obtain relevant answers useful for the research. It will be used appropriately as per the situation and context.

Introduction:

Hello, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Srikanth Mandela and I am a researcher from the Essex Business School, University of Essex. I am conducting a study on exploring the perceptions and experiences of e-learning in Indian organizations. The purpose of this interview is to understand your views and experiences of e-learning in your organization. The interview will take about 1 hour and will be recorded for analysis purposes. You can choose to stop the interview at any time or skip any question that you do not want to answer. Your identity and responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. Do you have any questions before we start?

Warm-up question:

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your role in your organization?

Interview Flow

Theme – Barriers and Enablers in ELearning

- What are some of the competencies that you need or want to develop for your current or future role?
- How did you identify these competencies?
- How do you usually learn or acquire these competencies?
- What are the best two ways/methods of learning in the workplace?
- What are the two least effective ones?
- What is your general view of e-learning as a method for learning at work? [**Prompt:** Why is that so/ why not]
- Have you ever used e-learning as a way of learning or acquiring these competencies? [**Prompt:** How was the experience]

- Give me a few examples of eLearning you have used at work (eg. external Mooc courses, training put together by their employer, self search in the web etc). [**Prompt:** Could you learn what you wanted to / How did that go /What is the reason it worked or didn't work]
- What do you think is the best approach/method to develop each of these competencies you mentioned before? [**Prompt:** Why is it so]
- Based on this experience, what do you feel are some benefits or disadvantages of eLearning?
- Do you know if your colleague's favour eLearning? [**Prompt:** How do you know / Does that matter to you]
- What is your employers view of eLearning? [**Prompt:** How do you know]
- Is your employer favourable approach towards eLearning?
- Are these trainings included in your working hours or outside those hours? [**Prompt:** How does that fit into your work schedule]
- How do you or your employer know if a training has been effective? [**Prompt:** How is it measured / Is it checked regularly post training on the job / Has eLearning improved your performance on any occasion]
- Do you think learning at work is a priority for you? [**Prompt:** Does eLearning blend well into your personal goals and expectations]
- Is learning important for the company? [**Prompt:** How do you know that / Do they proactively give you these learning opportunities]

Theme – Technology Enhanced Learning & Continuous Learning

- What kind of technology enhanced tools do you use here or have observed others using? [**Prompt:** Do they help you learn better]
- Are the tech tools available to all? Is it limited by position or resource availability?
- Which tech enhanced tool has helped you the most? [**Prompt:** Do they influence your attitude or behaviour as a learner]
- How do they influence you? [**Prompt:** Can you explain with an example]

- Do you believe its worth for the company to spend money on these technologies? [**Prompt:** Why or why not / If not, do you think there is a better place it could be spent to help employees learn better]

Theme - Social Aspects of E-learning

- How do you compare eLearning to other modes of learning?
- Are you able to communicate with other learners at the same level as face to face or classroom learning? [**Prompt:** Does it ever create feelings of isolation]
- In instructor led courses, are the instructors responsive enough in virtual learning?
- Do you see any benefits in eLearning, over traditional classroom learning for learning outcomes in general?
- Does that make eLearning more attractive to you or not?
- Does eLearning provide a supportive environment to you? [**Prompt:** Can you explain how, with an example]
- Do you feel motivated to learn using eLearning and technology enhanced tools? [**Prompt:** Why or why not]
- Is there anything else you feel in terms of social aspects, about these eLearning environments? [**Prompt:** What makes you feel so]

Closing question:

Is there anything else that you would like to add or share about your perceptions and experiences of e-learning in your organization?

Conclusion:

Thank you very much for your time and participation. Your responses are very valuable and helpful for my study. I will send you a summary of your responses for verification and feedback. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at sm21831@essex.ac.uk. Have a great day!