

Integration of Blended Learning Approach in Learning Social Science: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

The current investigation is an attempt to explore the attitude of students and teachers towards the incorporation of blended instructional approach in learning social science subject at the secondary level of schooling. The research is guided by three major objectives: a) to evaluate the attitude of both students and teachers towards blended instructional approach in social science learning; b) to compare the mean scores of students' attitude towards blended instructional approach in terms of gender; and c) to explore the major challenges towards integration of blended instructional approach in social science. Descriptive survey method was adopted in order to conduct the investigation. 50 students from one public high school and 50 teachers from eight public schools from Jorhat district of Assam constitute the sample of the present study. The selection of the samples was done through random and purposive sampling techniques. Two self-developed attitude scales along with a questionnaire were used as research tools for data collection. The findings of the research revealed that majority of both the students and teachers have a moderate attitude level towards blended learning approach and no significant difference exists between male and female students' attitudes towards this particular approach in learning social science. The study further concluded that majority of the teachers found unequal access to technology among students, lack of adequate training regarding integration of blended pedagogy and limited technological infrastructure are considerable challenges that hinders the process of effective incorporation of the specific pedagogical approach.

Keywords: Blended Pedagogy, Challenges, Secondary Schooling, Social Science, Students' Attitude, Teachers' Attitude.

Introduction

The 21st century era of digitalization and information has overpowered the entire structure of education, offering multifarious opportunities along with its own challenges. The teaching, learning and assessment process has been greatly influenced by the emergence of educational technology, whereby millions of educational stakeholders benefit through its adaptation and application, which has introduced many new pedagogical methods that can be applied in classroom situations for achieving desired learning outcomes. Blended learning, which combines the strengths of traditional and online education, addresses the limitations of both methods and plays a crucial role in enhancing teaching quality and talent development (1). The more general definition of the idea of blended learning has been advocated by Cleveland-Innes and Wilton in 2018, who stated that "Blended learning refers to the use of traditional classroom teaching methods together with the use of online learning for the same students studying the same

content in the same course" (2). Meaningful integration of both physical and online learning activities can improve the classroom learning experiences for both learners and teachers. There are many factors considered responsible for successful implementation of blended instructional approach. The attitude of both students and teachers, ample access to digital resources, adequate internet facilities within school premises, cooperation and support on the part of educational stakeholders, concerned authorities and administrators, etc., need to be kept in mind in order to make blended pedagogy an effective approach.

While observing the increasing popularity of this particular approach, many investigators from different parts of the world have experimented on several aspects pertaining to this innovative learning pedagogy. Studies have been found in relation to students' attitude towards blended learning in multiple domains. Empirical evidence found a moderate attitude of students towards blended learning at university level (3). Other

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literature reports positive attitudes of students towards the use of technology in the implementation of blended instructional learning (4–6). In addition, certain studies indicated that students using blended learning via Edmodo demonstrate a positive attitude towards learning skills (7). However, research on science education indicates the potential of flipped classroom in influencing the attitude of students (8). Furthermore, certain studies highlight that blended pedagogy contributes to a more positive attitude of students towards learning outcomes (9–12). In the context of language education, evidence from empirical studies report favourable students' attitude towards blended instructional approach (13–15). Regarding the attitude of teachers, the literature indicates positive and favourable attitudes towards adoption and implementation of blended instruction in classroom environment (16–19). Other empirical literature reveals positive perceptions on the part of the teacher educators towards blended instruction at the elementary and higher education level (20–23). Prior studies also indicated favourable attitudes of teachers towards learning language and social science through blended mode (24–26). In connection with the comparison of mean scores of students' attitude towards blended learning based on gender, empirical investigations report no significant difference between male and female students' attitude towards the approach (27–29). With regard to the challenges, experimental evidence outlines that lack of technological and physical infrastructure, unequal access to technology among students, lack of adequate teacher training on Information and Communication Technology, resistance to change and absence of support system create obstacles towards successful integration of blended learning approach (30–33). In general, previous literature extensively confirmed that use of blended instructional approach influences the attitude of students and teachers in a positive manner. Further, some investigations identified considerable challenges in the path of successful integration of blended instruction in classroom environment. In this study, the investigators have made an attempt to explore the attitude of both students and teachers, along with some serious issues that hamper the process of effective integration of blended approach. The present study also endeavoured to

identify major challenges encountered by teachers in social science classroom.

This study is considered to be important as it fills the gap found in the existing literature. Many empirical evidence in the concerned area has been discovered at the international level, in multiple subject domains at varied levels of educational settings. But very few studies have been conducted at the regional level in social science subject at secondary school level. The current study is motivated by these limitations found in the existing literature in order to address the below-mentioned proposed objectives.

- a) To evaluate the attitude of students and teachers towards blended instructional learning in social science classroom.
- b) To compare the mean scores of the students' attitude towards blended instructional approach with respect to their gender.
- c) To explore the major challenges towards integration of blended instructional approach in social science classroom.

Based on the purpose of the current study, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H0: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the attitude of students towards blended learning approach with respect to gender.

Methodology

The researchers have employed descriptive survey method in order to explore the stated objectives of the present investigation. Since the current study is exploratory in nature, the justification for adopting this research design is to describe and explore the current status, perceptions and attitudes of both the target groups towards incorporating blended pedagogy within the domain of social science. Survey is one of the most suitable methods to describe, measure and interpret attitudes and to identify the challenges encountered by the teachers in a natural blended classroom setting.

The total sample of the current study consists of 100, divided into two groups. 50 students constitute the first group of samples, selected from one public school from Jorhat district of Assam. The sample school was selected purposively and the students were selected through a random sampling technique. The reason behind choosing one public school for student sample is to get a more intensive, authentic and in-depth result in

terms of evaluating their attitude. The more convenient part for the researchers is that students from one school provided homogeneous data in relation to their commonly shared school environment, socio-economic background, curriculum and grading system. Another group of the sample consists of 50 teachers purposively selected from eight public schools from the same district of Assam. Eight schools have been selected to get a diverse and broader perspective concerning their attitude and challenges. The

number of social science teachers is also very less in one school. Hence, eight public schools were chosen to obtain an adequate sample size of teachers to generalize the findings. For the student sample group (N = 50), males constitute 28 and females constitute 22 in number. Similarly, for the teacher sample group, male teachers are 20 and female teachers are 30 in number. The Global Positioning System (GPS) of the eight selected schools have been recorded in the following table along with their geographical coordinates.

Table 1: Geographical Location Details of the Chosen Schools from the Research Area

Name of the School	Location	GPS Coordinates	
National Telegraph Girls' High School	Mithapukhuri	26.757749° N	94.210470° E
Jorhat Government Boys Higher Secondary and Multipurpose School	Mithapukhuri	26.757838° N	94.209623° E
Jorhat Government Girls Higher Secondary and Multipurpose School	Choladhara	26.759208° N	94.204567° E
Jorhat Polytechnic High School	Malow Ali	26.763848° N	94.204434° E
Lakshmi Union High School	Babupatty	26.755603° N	94.213815° E
Sankardev Seminary School	Malow Ali	26.760828° N	94.206985° E
Jorhat Gitarthi Vidyalaya	Atilagaon	26.752991° N	94.206081° E
Balya Bhavan	Atilagaon	26.756280° N	94.208678° E

Note: GPS = Global Positioning System, N= North Latitude, E= East Longitude, ° = Degree.

Table 1 shows the geographical distribution of each selected schools from the respective research site. The locations of all the schools belong to Jorhat district of Assam. For diverse representation of teacher group of samples, four different localities were purposefully selected. The GPS Coordinates of all the schools were recorded by using Google Map.

For the purpose of data collection, two attitude scales and one questionnaire were developed by the researchers themselves. Two different attitude scales were used to measure the level of attitude because both the sample groups represent different roles and perspectives in blended classroom setting. Hence, the perceptions of both students and teachers cannot be assessed with the help of one instrument. The intention of the present study is not to make a statistical comparison between students' and teachers' attitudes but to explore the perspectives of both to get a comprehensive understanding of the fusion of blended pedagogy in social science.

The items of each tool of the study were developed by the researchers themselves, as no appropriate standardized tool was found to measure the attitude of students and teachers at secondary level towards blended pedagogy, specifically in Social Science context. The items of the tools were

generated by following a systematic procedure. Item generation was initially based on an extensive literature review and blended learning dimensions. The content validity of the specific tools was evaluated through experts' judgement and educators from the educational field following pilot testing and item analysis. The research instruments' reliability was analysed by applying the test-retest method. The reliability for both scales was calculated through the Pearson Correlation Formula and found to be 0.97 and 0.92, which shows a very high and acceptable degree of reliability of the scales.

For the purpose of objective-wise data analysis, the following statistical measures have been adopted. For evaluating the attitude of students and teachers towards blended instructional learning, frequency and percentage formula have been used. To compare gender wise mean scores of students' attitude towards blended instruction, descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation were used. In order to test the hypothesis related to this objective, the Mann-Whitney U test was performed as the nature of the data was ordinal and did not follow a normal distribution. For analysing the major challenges identified by the teachers, the frequency and percentage formula was applied.

Results

To evaluate the attitude of students and teachers towards blended instructional learning in social science classroom. To examine the learners' attitude, the researchers collected the required

data through a self-developed attitude scale. To analyse the collected data, the following statistical techniques were used.

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage of Level of Attitude Towards Blended Learning Approach in Learning Social Science

Level of Attitude	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Extremely Favourable	2	4
Highly Favourable	4	8
Above moderate	8	16
Moderate	20	40
Below Moderate	15	30
Highly Unfavourable	1	2
Extremely Unfavourable	0	0
Total	50	100

Table 2 presents seven groups of attitude levels based on which the individual scores were evaluated. These categories of attitude include: Extremely favourable, highly favourable, above moderate, moderate, below moderate, highly unfavourable and extremely unfavourable. It is

clear from the table that out of 50 students, 20 students possess a moderate level of attitude, followed by 15 with below moderate attitude. Only 2 students have shown extremely favourable attitude, while none of the students fall under extremely unfavourable category.

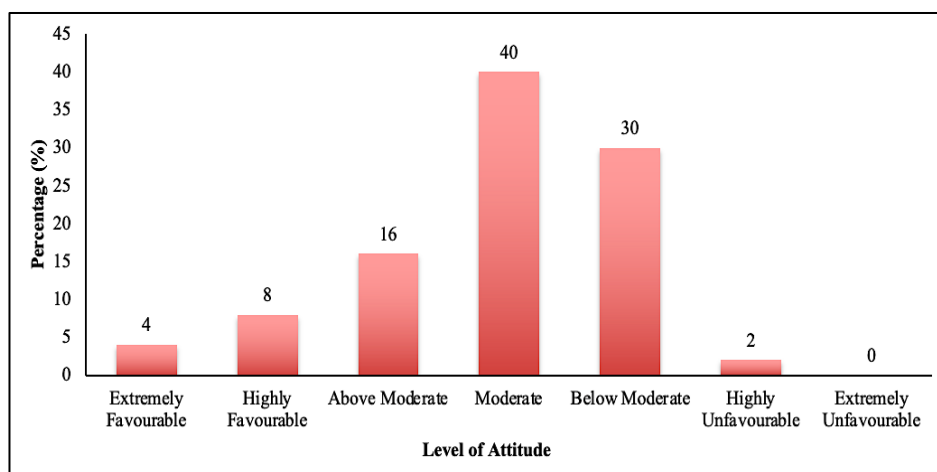


Figure 1: Percentage of Level of Secondary Student's Attitude Towards Blended Instructional Approach

By observing Figure 1, it is established that 4% of students have an extremely unfavourable attitude, 8% of students have a highly favourable attitude, 16% of students have an above moderate attitude, 40% of students have a moderate attitude, 30% of students have a below moderate level attitude, 2% of students have a highly unfavourable attitude and 0% of students fall into the extremely unfavourable attitude level category. From the

observations, it can be concluded that majority of the secondary students have a moderate level attitude towards blended instructional approach in learning social science.

To examine the teachers' attitude, the researchers collected the required data through a self-developed attitude scale. The following statistical techniques have been used to analyse the collected data.

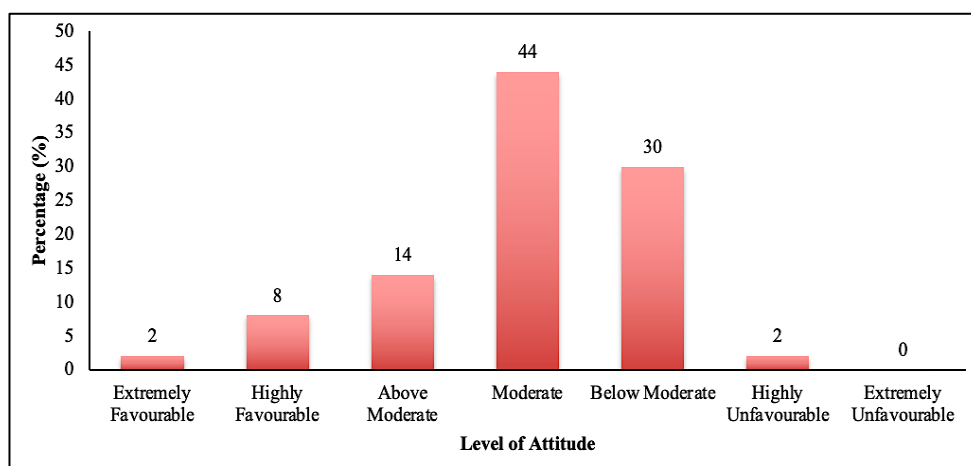
Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of level of Attitude Towards Blended Pedagogical Approach in Social Science Classroom

Level of Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely Favourable	1	2%
Highly Favourable	4	8%
Above moderate	7	14%
Moderate	22	44%
Below Moderate	15	30%
Highly Unfavourable	1	2%
Extremely Unfavourable	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table 3 shows that the individual scores of the teachers were evaluated by categorising seven groups of levels. These categories of attitude include: Extremely favourable, highly favourable, above moderate, moderate, below moderate, highly unfavourable and extremely unfavourable.

In the table, 22 teachers have a moderate level of attitude, followed by 15 with below moderate level of attitude and none of the teachers fall under extremely unfavourable category.

The graphical representation of the above data in Table 3 is displayed below.

**Figure 2:** Graphical Representation of Level of Teachers' Attitude Towards Blended Pedagogical Approach

By observing Figure 2, it is established that 2% of teachers have an extremely unfavourable attitude, 8% of teachers have a highly favourable attitude, 14% of teachers have an above moderate attitude, 44% of teachers have a moderate attitude, 30% of teachers have a below moderate level attitude, 2% of teachers have a highly unfavourable attitude and 0% of teachers fall into the extremely unfavourable attitude level category. From the observations, it can be interpreted that majority of the secondary school teachers have a moderate level attitude towards integrating blended pedagogy in teaching social science.

In order to compare the mean scores of the learners' attitude towards blended instructional pedagogy with respect to gender, the following statistics have been applied.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the attitude of learners towards blended instructional approach with respect to gender.

The researchers analysed the above stated objective through descriptive statistics method followed by graphical representation of data.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of the Attitude of Boys and Girls Towards Blended Instructional Approach

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SEM
Attitude Score	Male	28	126.04	7.43	1.40
	Female	22	124.68	6.42	1.37

Note: N = Number of students, SD = Standard Deviation, SEM = Standard Error of Mean.

Table 4 exhibits the descriptive statistics of attitude scores with respect to gender. The mean scores of the attitude of male students (126.04) are slightly higher than that of female students

(124.68). This shows that both male and female students possess almost similar attitude level towards blended learning approach.

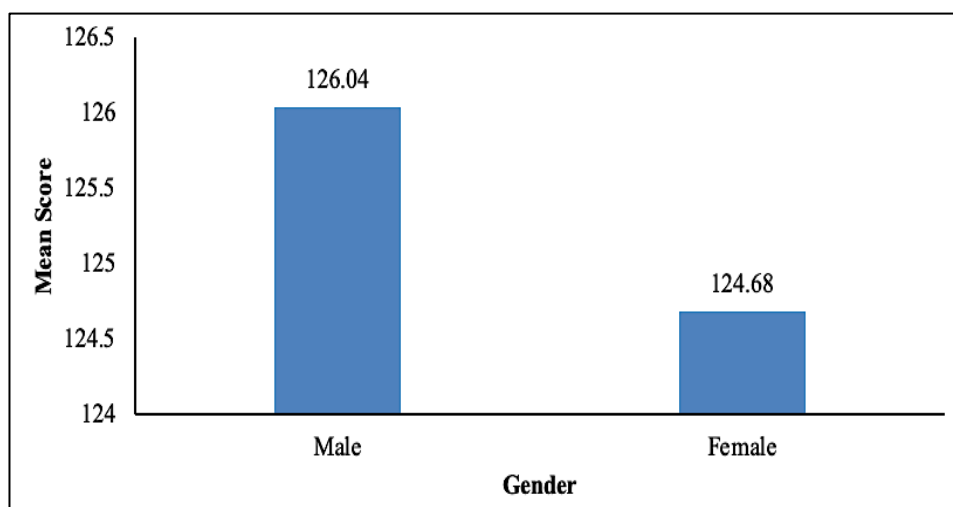


Figure 3: Mean Score of Students' Attitude Towards Blended Instructional Approach in Terms of Gender

Figure 3 indicated that male learners have a mean score of 126.04 (N=28, SD=7.43) and female learners have a mean score of 124.68 (N=22, SD=6.42). In order to detect the significant difference between male and female learners'

attitude towards blended instructional approach in social science, the respective data were analysed by conducting a Mann-Whitney U test through SPSS 26 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software programme.

Table 5: Result of Mann-Whitney U Test of Learners' Attitude Towards Blended Instructional Approach With Respect to their Gender

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	P
Score	Male	28	26.63	745.50	276.50	0.537
	Female	22	24.07	529.50		
	Total	50				

Note: N = Sample size, U= Mann-Whitney U test, P= Significance value

Table 5 indicates that the p-value [0.537] is greater than the chosen significance level, i.e., 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). Hence, it can be interpreted that no statistically significant difference has been found in students' attitude in terms of gender. As per the mean rank of the data, both male and female secondary students exhibit similar attitude levels towards blended instructional approach in learning social science. To identify the major

challenges towards blended learning integration, a self-developed questionnaire was used by the investigators in order to collect the required data. The data were collected from 50 social science teachers from the respective schools. The questionnaire for analysing this objective consisted of 10 close-ended questions with Yes/No categories. The details are presented in the form of frequency and percentage in the following table.

Table 6: Challenges of Integrating Blended Pedagogy in Social Science

Statements	Yes - F (%)
Limited technological infrastructure hampers in the adoption of blended pedagogical approach.	35 (70)
Inadequate access to online resources hinders in the effective integration of blended pedagogy.	30 (60)
Difficulty in evaluating students' performance through blended pedagogical approach.	40 (80)
Lack of electricity during class hours hamper in the integration of technology in the classroom.	20 (40)
Lack of support from Head of the Institution.	0 (0)
Difficulty in designing social science contents by using online resources/materials.	25 (50)
Insufficient training of teachers regarding integration of blended pedagogy.	41 (82)
Issues related to equitable access to technology among students.	44 (88)

Lack of students' interest to learn the content in blended mode.	8 (16)
Lack of time to prepare social science teaching through using blended approach.	25 (50)

Note: F= Frequency, %= Percentage.

Table 6 depicts the challenges encountered by social science teachers in incorporating blended pedagogy. The most notable challenge reported was inequitable access to technology among students identified by 44 teachers and no teacher

reported lack of institutional support from higher authorities as a challenge while implementing blended pedagogy.

The graphical representation of the above data has been displayed in the following diagram.

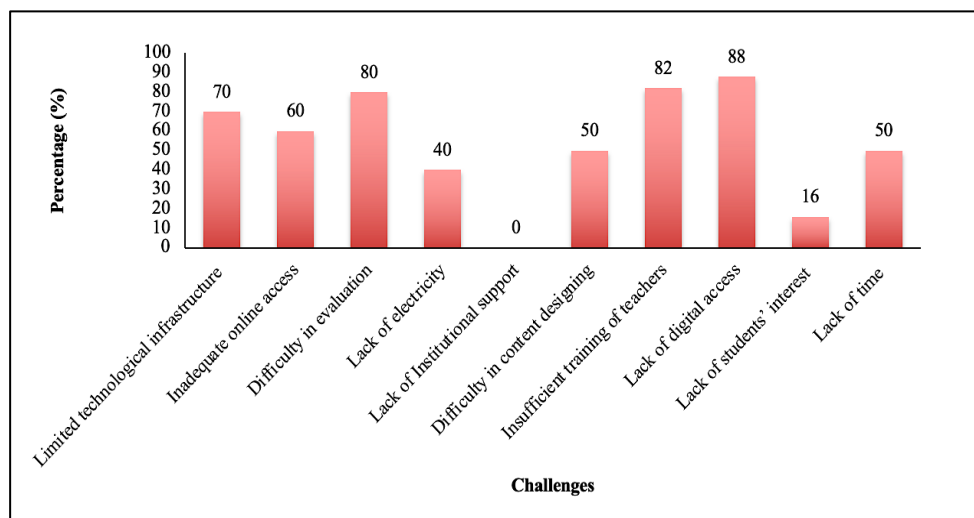


Figure 4: Challenges of Integrating Blended Pedagogy in Social Science

Figure 4 reveals that 70% of teachers finds limited technological infrastructure obstructs in the process of successful integration of blended pedagogy in social science, 60% of teachers identifies inadequate access to online resources hinder in the effective integration of blended approach, 80% of teachers find difficulty in evaluating students' performance through blended mode, 40% of teachers find electricity problem during class hours, none of the teachers faced lack of institutional support in implementing blended pedagogy, 50% of teachers find difficulty in designing social science contents by using online resources/materials and 82% of teachers find insufficient training in the field of blended pedagogy, usage of digital tools specific to social science content, digital assessment and designing subject specific blended lesson that create obstacles in the way of fruitful implementation of blended pedagogy in social science. 88% of teachers identified problems in equitable access to technology among students, 16% of teachers find lack of students' interest to learn the content in blended mode and 50% of teachers do not get sufficient time to prepare social science teaching through using blended approach. From this observation, it can be interpreted that majority of

the teachers found that unequal access to technology among students, lack of adequate training regarding integration of blended pedagogy and limited technological infrastructure are considerable challenges that hinder effective incorporation of the specific pedagogical approach.

Discussion

While exploring the integration of blended learning in social science, the present study focused on examining the attitudes of students and teachers and identifying some of the prominent challenges towards blended learning incorporation. The evidence-based factual analysis provides the following major findings.

First, the attitude of students towards blended learning in social science revealed that 40% of the students display a moderate attitude regarding this innovative approach in social science classroom. This finding corroborates the result of previous investigations, which stated that students at the graduate level exhibits a positive attitude towards blended learning technology (34). The current result can also be aligned with the prior empirical studies which found positive and favourable attitude of students towards integration of blended instructional pedagogy (35,

36). Positive attitude on the part of the students was further investigated towards online aspects of blended learning in former literature (37). Second, the findings regarding the attitude of teachers towards integrating blended pedagogy in social science classroom indicated that 44% of the secondary school teachers have a moderate level attitude towards integrating blended pedagogy in teaching social science. This finding is supported by a previously investigated study that reported that prospective teachers held an average level of attitudes towards blended pedagogy (38). Further, some prior studies reported that in-service teachers and educators develop a significantly positive relationship between their attitude and blended instructional approach (39, 40). Third, no significant difference has been detected between male and female students' attitudes towards blended learning approach in social science. This finding can be aligned with the results of earlier scientific investigations which concluded that both male and female students share similar attitudes towards blended learning (41, 42). Fourth, observations in terms of challenges towards integrating blended pedagogy in social science classroom indicated that 88% of teachers found unequal access to technology among students, 82% of teachers found inadequate training in previously mentioned areas of blended pedagogy, 80% of teachers found difficulty in digital assessment and 70% of teachers identified limited technological infrastructure are some of the paramount challenges that negatively affect the effective incorporation of the specific pedagogical approach. These findings are supported by prior research, which stated that inadequate access to technology, lack of teachers' pedagogical and technical knowledge and lack of resources often hamper in the way of integration of blended approach in classroom situations (43–45). In the same line, other studies identified lack of requisite infrastructure, lack of Information Technology (IT) skills, inadequate access to computers, power and internet connectivity, resistance to change and increased workload of teachers as major obstacles towards successful incorporation of blended learning in classroom practices (46, 47). Furthermore, resource constraints and financial constraints for proper maintenance of ICT infrastructure are found to be pertinent issues while dealing with the barriers of blended

instruction (48). Some literature reported blended learning approach encounters technical difficulties, labour-intensive and complex procedures, digital divide, non-engagement on the part of students and teachers, poor electricity, insufficient opportunities for professional development, difficulty in adequately aligning digital tools with social studies syllabus, etc., on the way of its successful implementation (49–52).

Conclusion

Attitude is an important component that needs to be evaluated for the purpose of productive implementation of any innovative idea. The present study systematically examined the attitude of students and teachers towards blended learning approach in social science learning. The study also made an attempt to compare the students' attitude towards the approach in terms of gender. Challenges encountered by teachers have also been identified by the current study. The results revealed that both students and teachers exhibit a moderately positive attitude, recognizing the benefits and flexibility of blended instructional approach in learning social science. The moderate attitude of students towards this particular pedagogical approach will pave the way for its successful implementation in the future educational society. Findings of the study further concluded that no attitudinal change has been observed between male and female students towards blended learning approach. Some obstacles, such as lack of training in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), unequal access to technology among students and limited technological infrastructure, have been identified by the current study that hinder the process of constructive integration of blended learning in social science. These challenges must be tackled through the cooperative effort of all the educational stakeholders with effective mechanism to make blended learning integration a successful and meaningful one in classroom situations.

The scope of the current investigation is delimited by certain constraints. The sample drawn for the study was limited to one specific region of the State of Assam as well as one type of institution. The study is confined to only one subject i.e., Social Science. The study is delimited to the group of learners and teachers belonging to the secondary

level of schooling. The study is further limited to the descriptive survey research method. Further research can be carried out in this area by taking a large sample covering all the districts of Assam for better generalization of results. Apart from Social Science, similar investigations can be replicated in other school subjects like Language, Mathematics, Science, etc. An experimental study can be conducted to test the effectiveness of blended pedagogy towards students' achievement in Social Science. A comparative study can further be executed between Government and Private schools and Rural and Urban schools to understand students' and teachers' perception towards blended pedagogy. Finally, case studies, in-depth interviews and observations can be performed to understand the real-life experiences and challenges encountered by teachers and students in blended classroom setting.

Abbreviations

GPS: Global Positioning System, ICT: Information and Communication Technology, IT: Information Technology, SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

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Author Contributions

Suman Baruah: Data Collection, Data Analysis, Result and Discussion, Writing – Original Draft, Pratima Pallai: Research Design, Methodology, Writing – Review and Editing. Both the authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest.

Data Availability

The supporting data of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

The authors declare no use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the write-up of the manuscript.

Ethics Approval

Not Applicable.

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