

The effect of online education on student learning during a pandemic

ABSTRACT:

This study used a qualitative content analysis technique to evaluate 47 published papers and research on online teaching and learning since 2008, with a primary focus on how theories, practices, and assessments apply to the online learning environment. The goal of this article is to give practical ideas for individuals who want to design online courses in order to make informed decisions during the implementation phase. They had acclimated to digital learning, however, and claimed that they would rather have a poor education than endanger themselves and others as a result of COVID-19.

The authors suggested that effective online education is contingent on 1) well-designed course material, motivated interaction between the teacher and learners, well-prepared and fully-supported instructors, 2) the establishment of an online learning community, and 3) rapid technological improvement.

It is intended that by doing so, an ongoing dialogue of successful practices that might improve university and faculty effectiveness in moving to online teaching can be sparked. This study might assist enhance higher education and student enrolment and retention in light of current discussions over the expense and quality of higher education.

The students faced the following primary challenges:

- (a) Trouble with online education
- (b) Difficulty interacting with instructors
- (c) Lack of motivation
- (d) Losses
- (e) Difficulty accessing other learning materials
- (f) An unsafe/inaccessible home environment.

Keywords:

COVID-19, Higher education, Learning, Online education, Students, cognitive presence, social presence, teaching presence.

INTRODUCTION:

Our lives have been upended in incomprehensible ways, not only because of the confirmed number of infections at 119 million and deaths due to COVID-19 passing over 2.6 million globally, but also because of the pandemic's far-reaching effects on our collective mental, emotional, and financial well-being (World Health Organization, 2021). Shutdowns enforced to manage the new coronavirus and prevent a worldwide health calamity prompted a quick yet fluid shift to virtual schooling for everybody - from K-12 schools to higher education institutions. The past year has been highly stressful and disconcerting for both students and teachers as they learn to adjust to this abrupt move to remote education. Our study adds to this body of information by recording undergraduate and graduate students' experiences with online education during the pandemic in a School of Social Work at a northeastern public institution in the United States.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Teaching and Learning Modification

With the uncontrolled COVID-19 boom, colleges all around the world have been forced to adopt some type of remote instruction. Despite the fact that online and blended learning have been widely adopted for several decades, Resources for continued professional development are required to provide flexible, interactive, innovative, and the number of enjoyable online courses is shrinking. Student enrolment and satisfaction in online courses increased at Dutch institutions, with more students finishing online courses because they could not find acceptable learning options during a gap year.

Despite the fact that some students prefer online learning, research indicates that students are having difficulty adjusting to remote instruction during the pandemic, particularly in the context of following guidelines, struggling with deadlines, a lack of interest, and expecting quick responses from instructors at odd hours. Furthermore, while online learning allows students to continue their education, it disadvantages students who are financially disadvantaged, have an inconsistent internet connection, lack self-discipline, and are socially isolated. Access to and dependability of infrastructure were significant barriers in Turkey, which were worsened by fear, stress, and uncertainty induced by the epidemic on university personnel, students, and their families.

Student Vulnerabilities during the Pandemic:

Emerging study is exacerbating the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of college students globally as they manage online learning during the epidemic. During the COVID-19 epidemic, 7.7% of university students in China experienced depressed symptoms, which was greater than the 4.3% found in the general population at the same time. Cao and colleagues discovered that 24.9% of Chinese college students had experienced anxiety since the outbreak began. Anxiety was connected with economic difficulties, life trauma, scholastic delays, and exposure to the new coronavirus in their family unit.

A study of Indian students found a rise in stress, despair, and anxiety during the epidemic, with around 42% of the 232 students polled experiencing mental health stresses. The quarantine's isolation and loneliness were identified as important risk factors for depression and anxiety.

During the epidemic, college students in the United States experienced high levels of worry and stress. Multiple factors have been recognized as increasing anxiety, despair, and stress among college students as they cope with distant learning during the pandemic - financial inequalities, health disparities, and fear of loss, focus loss, sleep disturbance, social isolation, and academic failures.

Struggle with Online Education:

One participant said, "Moving to online classes has been dreadful." I feel like we're no longer in class and are simply rushing to do tasks." "[Online] learning feels 'flatter,' not as rich and effective," said another student. Regarding participants' struggles with online education, three sub-themes were identified: (a) discomfort with remote/online learning, (b) diminished involvement in online environment, and (c) lack of rigour.

All respondents expressed dissatisfaction with distant education. They all found the adjustment challenging to adjust to, and their feelings varied from "difficult transition," "awful," "hard," "hurts," "tough," to "hate." "The social distancing methods have made my learning little harder as I am a hands-on learner and I find it tough to study things online rather than in the classroom," one student remarked. "I believe I am learning considerably less now than in class," said another responder. Discussions are an important aspect of my social work study, so not having them makes the content less memorable."

Another participant pondered, "I despise online learning." Online learning without in-person talks just does not work for me, and I am aware that the quality of my learning has suffered as a result." "It's been a shame losing out on class time, as I learn best in class rather than online," one student said frequently. The following were the causes of concern: (a) difficulties keeping on topic and focusing; (b) difficulty remembering deadlines and assignments for online classes; and (c) strains and headaches induced by excessive use of technology. Another data-driven sub-theme that emerged was students' perceptions of lower involvement in online learning. "It's difficult to perform social work when you can't be social," one student said. It was challenging for visual and conversational learners to absorb as much knowledge online as they did in a classroom setting. "It might sometimes seem like I'm educating myself on areas that I could need more assistance on," one student said.

"...class became a Zoom call for classmates to discuss the implications of covid19 on their life, and studying any scheduled class subject went out the window," a student sentiment adds. As a result, the conclusion of the semester was not a time for learning." "My lectures entirely turned to studying the COVID-19 answer in," said another student.

Difficulty Connecting with Instructors

As evidenced by the following quotes, participants expressed concerns about access to their instructors: "It has been a bit difficult to communicate with some professors"; "I honestly don't think I learned anything new this semester because the professors gave up"; and "It's really hard for me to communicate what I need to my professor online."

Lack of Motivation

Another recurring topic was a lack of enthusiasm to continue with schooling as a result of the heightened uncertainty and stress created by the epidemic. "I'm finding the present global crisis to be badly harming my capacity to focus and find the drive necessary to complete the activities demanded of me by my lecturers," one participant remarked eloquently. What's the use of writing a report when people I care about are ill or dying?"

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

It is critical that colleges endeavor to meet the needs of all students as they pursue an education, regardless of their living circumstances. Given the possibility for continued online learning, issues for student safety and capacity to learn well at home must be considered. This level of consciousness and activity reflects the emerging push for trauma-informed educational approaches. The epidemic has had a significant impact on our collective mental, emotional, and financial well-being, leading to increased worry and tension among students. During the present epidemic, all of mankind has suffered losses, and the students in our study confirmed those losses on several levels. Disorganization, isolation, and alienation from classmates and professors during quarantine, as well as cancellations of graduation festivities and celebrations, all led to increased stress and anxiety among students. These issues highlight the need of educators and administrators considering students' social and emotional needs, which have been exacerbated by social distance restrictions, and creating additional areas for student interaction and support. In addition to concentrating on curriculum and improving sanitary procedures on campus, institutions must include and make free online mental health services available to all students. When the majority of students are studying online, clear management guidelines and flowcharts describing online access to support services should be extensively provided to all stakeholders via a number of means.