



Covid-19: Impact on Students' Perspective Towards Online Education Compared to Face-to-Face

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ABSTRACT

Introduction & Method: This study was conducted to identify the challenges faced by students during the COVID-19 pandemic's online transition and understand how it has affected their preferences/view towards the two education methods. To gather qualitative data, interviews were conducted with 26 students which will help with the goal of identifying common themes, thoughts, and ideas between them.

Results & Discussion: The findings showed that most students that were interviewed prefer studying using physical education methods. The surprising result showed that even though online education does offer benefits such as the complete removal of commuting, the large majority of students would still prefer learning in physical classrooms for better focus and more personal interactions.

1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction of issues

After the COVID-19 pandemic was over, multiple research studies have discovered that over 70% of undergraduate students worldwide reported a serious decline in mental health and attitude towards online studies and education in general. This is mostly caused by the disruptive impact of COVID-19, which drastically altered the lifestyles of people globally, especially with regards to physical communication.

1.2 Purpose and rationale of the study

The research purpose is to find out the student's perspective regarding online learning, and how it compares to physical lessons. The goal is to analyze the data that were gathered from the personal interviews and note down how the pandemic has affected the views of students. We will then compare their stances between the two methods of education and conclude with the type of learning that students prefer.

1.3 Thesis Statement

The study shows that most students who were interviewed actually preferred the traditional learning method of physical education. Students noted how they had better focus during physical classes, especially due to the lack of distractions when compared to studying within their homes. While there are clearly benefits to studying online such as the ease of access and saving commute costs, the positive aspects of physical lessons still outweigh the convenience that online education brings. This meant many students would choose to attend physical lessons when given the choice.

2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review we will discuss the current understanding found from other relevant thematic sources in this topic. This review is important in order to find conclusions that were made by other researchers, which will help this study to find common ideas and themes.

2.2 Notable increases in social isolation

A study published in 2020 showed that students were greatly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic (Timon Elmer, Kieran Mepham, Christoph Stadtfeld, 2020). The study analyzed changes in multiple aspects of social networks such as: Interaction, friendship, social support, and co-studying and compared with results before the pandemic.

The study found that following the lockdown procedures, students especially females, experienced increased isolation in social networks, lack of interaction and emotional support. The students' levels of stress, anxiety, loneliness, and depressive symptoms worsened, compared to data before the crisis.

2.3 Changes in students' perspectives towards COVID-19's Lockdown

Students' perspective and experiences that each student have faced during COVID-19 Lockdown with the later transition to online classes are reflected in this study. Two weeks into the lockdown, 75% of students reported that their life had become more difficult and 50% felt that learning outcomes would be harder to achieve due to the sudden shift to online education.

Twelve weeks into the lockdown, the corresponding numbers were 57% and 71%, respectively. (Kari Almendingen, Marianne Sandsmark Morseth, Eli Gjølstad, Asgeir Brevik, Christine Tørris, 2021). As a result, students prefer physical classes to online classes due to many factors, such as lack of focus, time management, stress and many more.

2.4 Lack of interaction during online classes

The lack of interaction during online classes has raised notable concerns and arguably has lasting negative effects on both students and professors. The lack of face-to-face interaction is one of the main reasons why students may prefer face-to-face.

For example, consider Momna Azmat and Ayesha Ahmad's article in *Journal of Materials and Environmental Science*, "Lack of Social Interaction in Online Classes During Covid-19", in which they mentioned issues such as "lack of internet connection, misuse of mobile phones, online communication is not as much effective as physical means, no check and balance, poor time management, and inability to monitor students' activities are the barriers." Therefore, students interact less in online classes due to multiple factors and it is still not as effective compared to face-to-face learning.

2.5 Conclusion of literature review findings

In conclusion, the Covid-19 pandemic had a profound impact on students as shown by Lockdown measures led to increased social isolation and exacerbated students' stress and mental health issues. The transition to online classes presented challenges, with many students finding it difficult to adapt, leading to a preference for physical classes due to issues like lack of focus, time management, and stress.

With students feeling more difficult in life and learning outcomes as explained in Kari Almendingen, Marianne Sandsmark Morseth, Eli Gjølstad, Asgeir Brevik, Christine Tørris, (2021). The significant concerns arising from online classes were the lack of interactions affecting students heavily seen in Timon Elmer, Kieran Mepham, Christoph Stadtfeld, (2020). Furthermore, factors such as poor internet connectivity, misuse of mobile phones, and ineffective online communication continued to hinder learning experiences shown in Momna Azmat, Ayesha Ahmad (2022). These studies would emphasize the importance of addressing these challenges and prioritizing social interaction and mental health support to create a more resilient and effective education system for the future.

Elmer, T., Mepham, K., & Stadtfeld, C. (2020, July 23). Students under lockdown: Comparisons of students' social networks and mental health before and during the COVID-19 crisis in Switzerland, *PloS One*.

https://www.research-collection.ethz.ch/bitstream/handle/20.500.11850/428501/Elmer_Mepham_Stadtfeld_2020.pdf?sequence=1

Kari Almendingen, Marianne Sandsmark Morseth, Eli Gjølstad, Asgeir Brevik, Christine Tørris, (2021), Student's experiences with online teaching following COVID-19 lockdown: A mixed methods explorative study, *PloS One*. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34464386/>
 Momna Azmat, Ayesha Ahmad (2022, March 5), Lack of Social Interaction in Online Classes During Covid-19, *Journal of Materials and Environmental Science*, https://www.jmaterenvironsci.com/Document/vol13/vol13_N2/JMES-2022-13015-Azmat.pdf

3: Research methodology

3.1 Research method used

The mode of collecting data involved conducting personal interviews with students, utilizing a qualitative research method that encouraged longer answers and statements. This approach enabled the study to gain a deeper understanding of students' opinions compared to traditional quantitative methods like questionnaires. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing room for the interviewees to expand on their thoughts and opinions.

3.2 Data Collection and Sample

A sample of 26 respondents' answers was collected from diverse student bodies across multiple universities in Johor, Malaysia. This comprehensive approach aimed to minimize bias and ensure a varied data pool. By gathering insights from different sources, the research was better equipped to examine how COVID-19 affected students' attitudes and perspectives towards their studies.

3.3 Thematic Analysis and Findings

Thematic analyses were employed as one of our research goals is identify the common thoughts, ideas, and themes shared by the participants. The study discovered several factors influencing students' attitudes and perspectives during the pandemic. These factors included challenges related to online classes, such as feelings of isolation, increased responsibilities, distractions, and procrastination, all of which impacted the efficiency of teaching.

Research Method	Purpose of method	Data pool	Number of participants
By using interviews to gather data from students	To collected data that are more concise than quantitative research	Varied by universities around Johor, Malaysia	26 in total

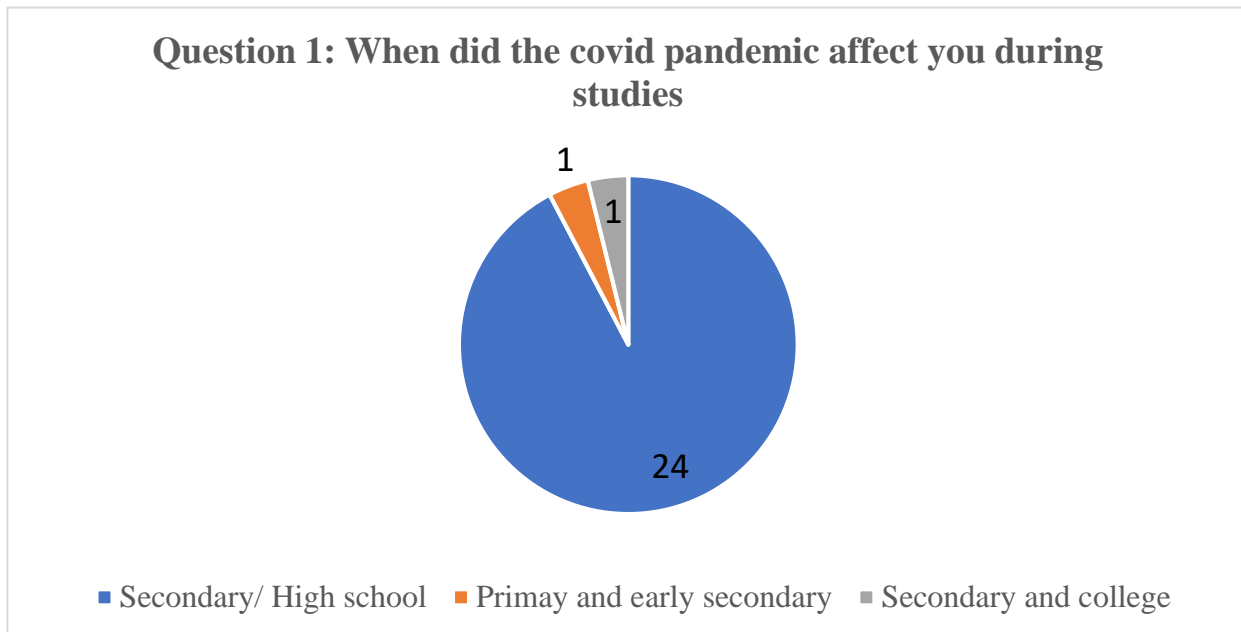
4: Findings & Data analysis

4.1 List of themes and analysis:

Table 1.0

Theme	Extracts
Secondary students	[question about when did covid affected them] Candidate 1: "During my secondary studies" Candidate 5: "It happened during my late secondary" Candidate 12: "The pandemic happened during my secondary"

Chart 1.0

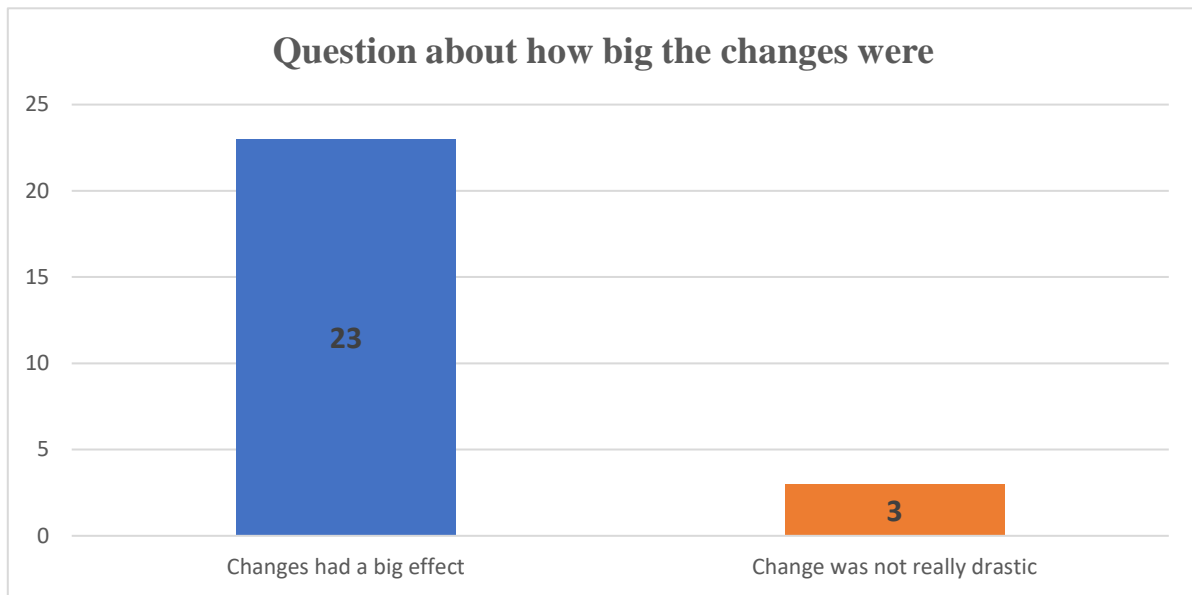


Out of a sample size of 26 respondents, all most of the respondents were affected by covid during their secondary studies. This tells us that a large majority were affected during one of their most important educational periods, which is also a transition to adulthood. This information can tell us that their experience of online classes during covid will have a huge influence on their perspective towards online education.

Table 2.0

Theme	Extracts
Drastic changes	Candidate 3: "Yes, it was a big change for me" Candidate 11: "It affected me quite drastically" Candidate 18: "Yes, I hated it because I didn't learn much"

Chart 2.0



We also noted that more than 23 of the students have said that it was a big change when they had to change from face-to-face classes to online classes. The question tried to find out whether or not they are able to adapt to the new learning environment or not, students needed time to adapt, and some may fail to which may lead to lack of focus and motivation. As a result, students must be responsible and manage their time wisely to pay attention in class.

Table 3.0

Theme	Extracts
Distraction	[question regarding focus in online class] Candidate 12: <i>"No, I get distracted very easily in online classes"</i> Candidate 16: <i>"I don't, I get distracted by everything around me"</i> Candidate 20: <i>"No, online classes are very distracting"</i>

Out of 26 respondents, only 2 agreed and said that it was easier to focus on online classes. As a result, this shows that almost 90% of the students get easily distracted attending online classes. Distractions such as mobile phones, family and work can be one of the few reasons for students to get easily distracted from. Therefore, online students need to be more responsible and create structure to achieve their academic goals.

Table 4.0

Theme	Extracts
Interaction	Candidate 7: <i>"It is very important to interact with your lecturers in online classes"</i> Candidate 13: <i>"Yes, without interaction, students will feel more isolated"</i> Candidate 19: <i>"Yes I think, because interactions make learning fun"</i>

Out of 26 respondents, only 1 answered that it is not necessary to communicate with lecturers. Most of the respondents answered that it is important to interact with lecturers in online classes. This shows that interacting with lecturers makes students more attentive and more engaging to students since won't be able to pay as much attention compared to face-to-face lessons, they may also not be able to understand certain topics, therefore asking lecturers about topics that students won't understand may also help them.

Table 5.0

Theme	Extracts
Participation	Candidate 9: <i>"I did not participate in class"</i> Candidate 11: <i>"Sometimes may be hard to participate because of internet issues"</i> Candidate 4: <i>"Significant reduction in participation"</i>

Out of 26 participants, only 2 disagreed that online education has not impacted their concentration and participation during classes. As most of them said that it was hard for them to adapt to the new learning environment, they started losing motivation, lack of concentration, participating in class and many more. This implies that most students may feel unmotivated or participate less in classes due to online classes not being as interactive compared to face-to-face.

Table 6.0

Theme	Extracts
Online graduation	Candidate 12: <i>"No, I dislike the idea of online graduation"</i> Candidate 6: <i>"I graduated through online, it felt like it was a huge turning point in my life"</i> Candidate 21: <i>"No, I don't accept it since students will not be able to experience graduation in person"</i>

Out of 24 participants, only 3 agreed with the idea of graduating with mainly online lessons. One participant also noted that he/she graduated this way and unfortunately it felt as though nothing was learned. This is telling us that most of the participants have a negative perception and disagree with the idea of mainly utilizing online lessons up until their graduation. This implies online education has not caught up with the learning effectiveness of physical lessons for most of the respondents.

5.0 Recommendation and Conclusion

5.1 Recommendation

Within our qualitative primary data research, we have found out that a large majority of the data comes from people who were affected during their secondary studies. A larger data pool that includes students from primary school or university could provide this research paper with a wider range of varied responses.

5.2 Conclusion

In summary, the findings from the qualitative data reveal that online classes may be beneficial to students. However, it has its own disadvantages such as lack of concentration, decrease in participation in online class and feeling more isolated. This supports the idea that most students have a relatively negative perception of online education even though it does provide some aspects of convenience.

While online classes could be beneficial to students, the data suggests that COVID-19 has heavily affected students' perspective negatively towards online education. Most disagree with the idea of its effectiveness, and it is still perceived by many as a downright inferior teaching approach. Even with its disadvantages however, the data suggests that educators should also be mindful of the advantages that online classes can bring and how by taking advantage as quick learning substitute, both educators and students can mutually benefit from it.

6: References and bibliography

6.1 Research References

Elmer, T., Mepham, K., & Stadtfeld, C. (2020, July 23). Students under lockdown: Comparisons of students' social networks and mental health before and during the COVID-19 crisis in Switzerland, PloS One. https://www.research-collection.ethz.ch/bitstream/handle/20.500.11850/428501/Elmer_Mepham_Stadtfeld_2020.pdf?sequence=1

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7: Appendices

7.1 Themes:

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7.2 Charts

Chart 1.0

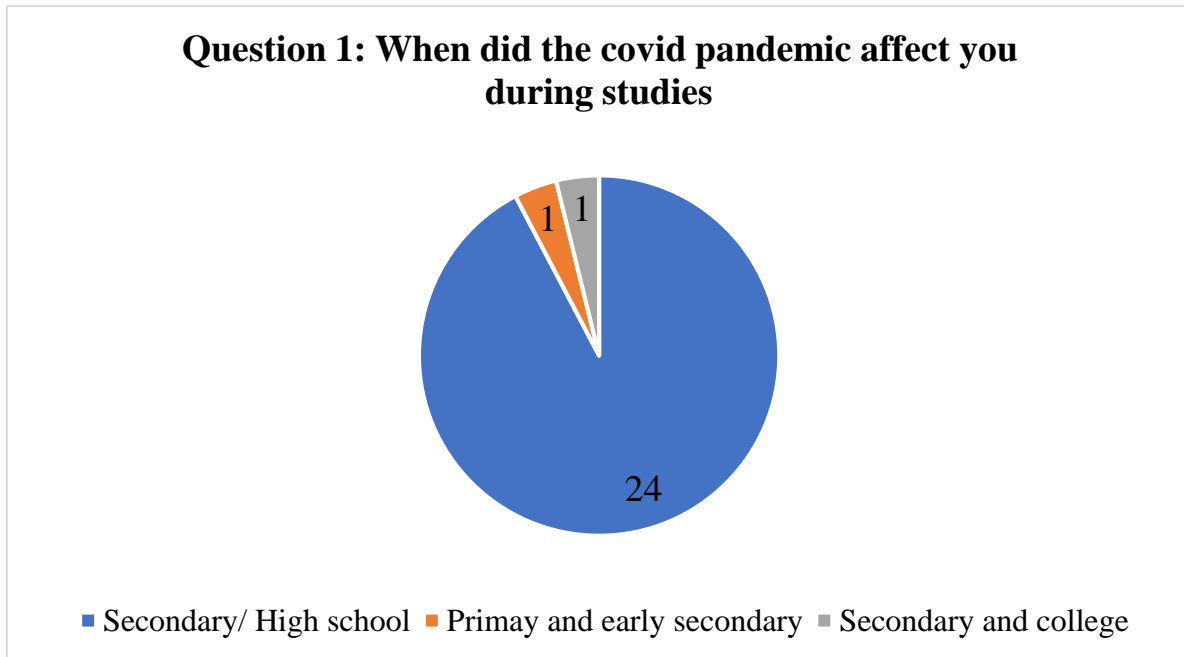
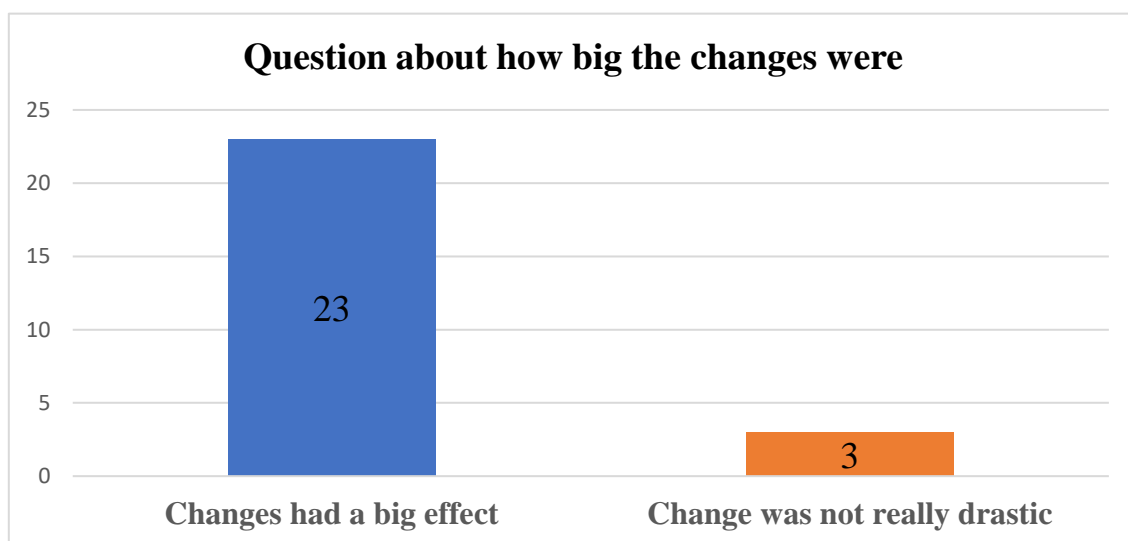


Chart 2.0



7.3 Interview Questions

1. When did the covid pandemic affect you during studies. (Secondary, university etc.)
2. How much did the change from physical classes to online affected you? (Was it a very big change?)
3. Have you noticed any specific changes in your sleep patterns, stress levels, or overall mood when online classes started? (ex: I feel more sleepy, cannot focus etc.)
4. Do you feel like you can concentrate with the same amount of focus during online classes compared to physical lessons?
5. Do you think that interaction between your friends and lecturer are important during online classes?
6. How has the transition to online classes affected your engagement and participation in class?
7. How did the reduced social contact during online classes impacted you? (ex: I feel more stressed/ I need to talk with friends etc.)
8. Do you think that online classes can replace physical lessons. If yes/no, Why?
9. Do you prefer attending online classes after the lockdown. If yes/no, Why?
10. Do you have good or bad opinions for online lessons after the pandemic? (ex: I don't like online class, I feel happy that I can go back to physical)
11. Do you have good or bad opinions for online education when it isn't compulsory? (Example: finally happy because online isn't enforced anymore)
12. Do you feel that online lessons are able to provide more for your education compared to physical?
13. What do you think about graduating with mainly online lessons, do you think it is acceptable?
14. Do you think the benefits of online classes are able to outweigh its disadvantages to be effective?
15. Do you feel that physical lessons are necessary after attending online lessons for so long during the pandemic?