The Effect of Remote Learning on College Students

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ABSTRACT

The effects of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) are being felt in different sectors. Apart from being a life-threatening virus that has killed many people, COVID-19 has significantly disrupted the education sector. Guided by the containment measures adopted by different countries to reduce the spread of this killer pandemic, many learning institutions have suspended in-person studies, and lessons are now being offered on various online platforms. Despite being vital in reducing the spread of COVID-19, shifting to remote learning has had its fair share of pros and cons. The adoption of the new curriculum instruction techniques caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 has created new schedules, changed the interaction among college students, and led to the adoption of new testing strategies. In effect, this paper examined literature from the current empirical studies to determine the pros and cons of online learning on college students. Results from this review indicated that remote learning has been advantageous because it saves time, is more flexible, has reduced anxieties among students, and has enabled students to develop greater problem-solving skills. On the contrary, the literature reviewed in this paper indicated that remote learning is disadvantageous because it has eliminated psychical interaction, thus leading to boring classes. Additionally, remote learning has been problematic to some professors who are not conversant with modern technology and has been affected by constant destruction. Regardless of these negative effects of remove learning, the research concluded that remote learning remains the only workable teaching and learning methodology in the COVID-19 era.

Keywords: *Effect of Remote Learning, College Students, Covid-19*

1. INTRODUCTION

The outbreak and subsequent global spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has had devastating effects in different sectors. Despite being a deadly virus that has killed over 3.99 million people and infected over 185 million others, COVID-19 has disrupted the education sector in almost all countries. Against the backdrop of this global pandemic, different governments have been formulating containment measures to reduce its rapid spread. With the guidance from the Department of Health and Human Services and the World Health Organization, countries have been imposing stay-at-home orders to reduce social interactions and counter the spread of this virus. Organizations, schools, colleges, universities, and other institutions have closed to contain the spread of COVID-19. The closure of colleges forced students to shift to remote learning to contain the spread of the virus. Different from the traditional curriculum instruction techniques, remote learning has led to a paradigm shift that created new schedules, interactions, and test forms. Despite being effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19, online learning is associated with various shortcomings. As a result, this research paper examines the positive and negative effects of online learning on college students with a key focus on determining whether this mode of teaching has increased their productivity and improved their grades. The paper reviews literature from various studies to determine the sustainability of remote learning in the future.

2. POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF REMOTE LEARNING ON COLLEGE STUDENTS

Literature from the current empirical studies indicates that the current paradigm shift to the adoption of online learning caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 had positive effects on learners and lecturers. For instance, evidence from the studies by Ellis and Bliuc (2016) postulates that the adoption of remote learning has been vital in increasing the study time, enabling college students to increase their productivity and improve their grades [5]. According to Fajri, Baharun, Muali, Farida and Wahyuningtiyas (2021), the time that was lost by students commuting to classrooms is currently utilized during remote learning [6]. Students and lecturers are

currently beginning their respective classes on time, thus creating more study time. Unlike in the traditional teaching and learning methods where students had to commute to their respective colleges, the shift to remote learning caused by COVID-19 led to the creation of enough time for studies. The created time has enabled students to spend more time studying, thus leading to improved grades and productivity.

Moreover, the flexibility of remote learning enabled students to enjoy studying and attending classes. As explained by Fajri et al. (2021), online classes enabled students to juggle their daily activities and studies [6]. Shim and Lee (2020) add that learning from home enabled students to balance between their free time and study time [10]. Remote learning created an enjoyable environment that enabled students to create study plans that fit their respective schedules. Presently, learners have enough time to nap, attend to various duties, and attend to their work shifts, thus making learning more enjoyable. Contrary to the traditional curriculum instruction techniques that required the physical availability of the students, online classes gave students the freedom of balancing education and other duties. Students can easily attend their classes at their homes or offices guided by the current schedule.

Further, evidence from psychological studies indicates that online learning reduced anxieties among students. According to Ellis and Bliuc (2016), some students experience psychological distresses such as anxiety when they are in a big classroom full of students [5]. These challenges lower the esteem of some learners, making it hard for them to ask questions actively or participate in classroom activities. On the contrary, remote learning was beneficial to such students because it reduced anxieties and provided them with a platform for active participation [8]. By learning at the comfort of their homes, students got a chance to actively ask questions during or after the classes, contrary to what was being witnessed in the traditional classroom setup. In this regard, the productivity and grades of these students have significantly increased due to remote learning.

The last positive impact of remote learning is that it enables students to develop greater problem-solving skills. Remote learning provided students with a platform for making independent decisions [8]. College students have the freedom to either attend the classes or not. Besides, the online learning platform is engaging and requires maximum concentration and participation from the students. Lecturers are obligated to give assignments and assign different class activities to students. The creation of this environment has improved the cognitive capacity of many learners, thus influencing them to become critical problem-solvers [6]. The assignments and other class activities that lecturers always give in online learning have broadened the thinking capacity of

many learners, thus encouraging them to be effective decision-makers and problem-solvers.

As evidenced by these findings, the conveniences of online learning have been vital in improving the performance of many students. This mode of teaching and learning created enough time for students to attend class and carry out comprehensive research, thus prompting an improved performance [8]. Additionally, the flexibility of online learning was fundamental in improving the grades of many students. College students created flexible learning schedules that have enabled them to juggle academic and other personal activities [10]. The flexibility of these learning schedules has been significant in improving the general performance of these learners. On the other hand, remote learning encouraged the productivity of college students. As stated above, this mode of learning allows students to make independent decisions about their classwork. Making these decisions improves the thinking capacity of the learners, thus leading to improved productivity [10]. Also, the advantages of online learning have increased the productivity of many students by reducing social anxieties and encouraging active classroom participation. In this regard, this mode of learning should be sustained in the post- COVID-19 era.

3. NEGATIVE INFLUENCES OF REMOTE LEARNING

Despite having several advantages, literature from various studies postulates that remote learning has several negative effects on college students. Evidence from the research by Ali (2020) indicates that remote learning is disadvantageous because it reduces the interaction between students and lecturers [2]. Unlike in the traditional classroom setup, remote learning in the wake of COVID-19 lessened psychical interactions between students and professors, thus creating a boring learning environment that deters some students from participating in the classroom activities. According to Ali (2020), physical curriculum instruction techniques are more efficient and student-engaging compared to online teaching [2]. Students find it difficult to physically interact with their colleagues and teachers, thus reducing productivity and lowering their grades.

Secondly, remote learning has been very problematic to some professors who are not conversant with modern technology. Setting up and managing an online class requires the utilization of basic technological skills [1]. However, some old professors find it problematic to set up and manage online classrooms on platforms such as Zoom. The inability of these lecturers to set up and manage online classes inhibited effective learning, thus leading to poor delivery of course content [1]. Some professors who are not conversant with these modern technologies were forced to pause their lessons until the resumption of the traditional learning system. This

challenge inhibits the performance and productivity of many college learners.

The effectiveness of remote learning relies heavily on internet stability. However, Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) established that some students and lecturers have ended up missing out on this mode of learning due to the instability of their respective networks [1]. Students and lecturers living in remote regions have experienced challenges finding a high-speed internet connection that can be used to run an online class. Poor connections lead to either failed or misunderstood lessons. Besides, the quality of a specific lecture is determined by the stability of the internet connection [3]. As a result, the instabilities of the networks hindered effective online learning, thus leading to poor performance and productivity among students.

Constant distraction among students is also a disadvantage of online learning being witnessed in the contemporary world. Bączek et al. (2021) explain that students often find it challenging to concentrate during online classes. In most cases, students are always destructed by activities happening in their respective environments [3]. These destructions make it hard for the students to fully concentrate and participate in online classes, leading to reduced productivity and poor grades [3]. Contrary to physical learning, where lecturers can easily maintain the attention of learners, online learning does not provide this opportunity to professors. In effect, students become destructed easily, thus preventing them from participating actively in the class activities.

Lastly, online classes are the leading cause of social isolation among students, thus prompting them to develop psychological challenges. Research shows that studying alone with a computer might be terrifying and devastating because the students do not have an opportunity to consult with their colleagues [7]. The social isolation caused by online classes makes students overly anxious about various aspects being taught in the classroom, thus promoting reduced productivity and general performance. Evidence from the research by Horita et al. (2021) concluded that the closure of schools and the shift to online learning cause serious mental illnesses among college students in Japan [7]. According to Horita et al. (2021), students attending online classes felt isolated, thus making them depressed [7]. The mental health of many college students has significantly deteriorated as a result of remote learning caused by COVID-19.

The disadvantages of remote learning amidst COVID-19 negatively affected student's performance and productivity. As evidenced from these findings, challenges experienced during online classes have demotivated many learners, thus prohibiting them from participating in classroom activities actively [1]. Inactive participation led to poor reading habits that have, in turn, lowered the grades of many learners. Guided by the

disadvantages of online learning, the sustainability of this mode of curriculum instruction was questioned based on the poor performance of the learners. Evidence from various studies criticized the online learning because of its hindrance to physical interactions, poor networks, constant distractions, and the inability of some lecturers to set up and effectively manage online learning platforms.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall, evidence from the literature reviewed in this paper shows a negative trend of remote learning. Specifically, students raised more concerns about the certainty of this learning mode based on its ineffectiveness [9]. Compared to the traditional teaching styles, online learning was criticized for reducing the productivity of both the teachers and the students, thus causing poor performance. Research by Horita et al. (2021) focused on examining the effect of remote learning on first-year university students in Japan [7]. After the outbreak of COVID-19, the Japanese government imposed a total lockdown, thus leading to the closure of schools, colleges, and universities. Professors shifted to the provision of online learning to meet the needs of the students. However, as explained by Horita et al. (2021), this mode of teaching has proved to be ineffective because it led to social isolation among students, thus causing various mental health issues [7].

The conclusions of Horita et al. (2021) concurred with the establishments that were made by Besser, Flett and Zeigler-Hill (2020); Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) in their studies. According to Besser et al. (2020), remote learning is not sustainable because it has more pros than cons [4]. For instance, online learning was proved to be more problematic to professors and students who are not conversant with modern technology. Some professors were experiencing trouble setting up and managing online classes. On the other hand, Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) postulate that the instability of the network has hindered both students and lecturers from holding effective online classes [1]. Evidence from the studies by Ali (2020) and Bączek et al. (2021) indicate that online learning is ineffective because it leads to constant destructions. The environment at home is not similar to the environment at school [2,3]. Students attending online classes in the comfort of their homes might easily be distracted, thus making it hard for them to concentrate. Bączek et al. (2021) hold that remote learning has made it hard for teachers to determine the progress of their students. Testing and evaluation in online classes have been very difficult, thus prompting reduced productivity and poor performance among learners [3].

Despite its numerous shortcomings, remote learning is still considered to be workable in the future. Evidence from the studies by Yang, et.al (2019) and Fajri, et.al (2021) postulate that remote learning should be

strengthened to foster educational continuity amidst the pandemic [6,11]. As one of the vital containment measures against the rapid spread of COVID-19, online learning should be adopted in various countries [6]. Yang et al. (2019) explain that remote learning enabled students to be more productive because they are tasked with performing several activities pertaining to their respective courses [11]. Shim and Lee (2020) add that online learning is beneficial in the current uncertainties caused by COVID-19 because of its flexibility [10]. Students have been able to develop flexible schedules that have enabled them to attend to their personal and academic needs. Results from the surveys done by Mukhtar, et.al (2020), Shim, et.al (2020) and Yang, et.al (2019) established that remote learning should be encouraged during the pandemic because it enabled students to develop effective problem-solving skills and has increased the study time [8,10,11]. These advantages have been vital in improving the productivity and general performance of the learners.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, evidence from the current empirical studies on the sustainability of remote learning indicates this mode of curriculum instruction has more concerns and uncertainties raised by both the teachers and the students. Compared to traditional learning, online learning deprived students of the ability to perform practical activities of their respective courses. As shown from this discussion, teachers found it difficult to evaluate their learners' progress and determine whether they understand various concepts taught in the online class. However, these disadvantages have not overruled various advantages of this mode of learning. Arguably, remote learning remains the only workable teaching and learning methodology in the future. Despite being effective amidst COVID-19, relevant stakeholders need to strengthen various aspects of online learning to ensure that it meets the needs of both the professors and the students. Enhancing this mode of curriculum instruction will lead to better performance among students and improved productivity among teachers and learners.

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