



# Online Education and Academic Community during COVID-19

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## Abstract

Virtual education plays an important role with respect to mitigating the negative effects of this pandemic in academic community health while remain at home. This group concerns people like students, staff and faculties who pertains to the campus. Despite its benefits online learning shows some harmful impacts. Thus, it is require the developing of a successful online system capable of addressing the COVID-19 effects and future pandemics of home academic community.

**Keywords:** COVID 19; Pandemic; Online Education; Academic Community

## Online Education: Risk and Benefits

COVID-19 pandemic has disturbed all levels of the education system across the world. Campus closures, interrupted teaching and learning], financial instability and travel restrictions are just a few examples of the problems faced by the academic community worldwide. Many universities have implemented policies and procedures to minimize gatherings and hence decrease the transmission of virus. However, these measures lead to higher economical, medical, and social implications on both undergraduate and postgraduate communities [1,2].

Due to the suspension of classroom teaching in many colleges and universities, a switch to the online teaching for undergraduate and graduate students becomes effective. Virtual learning helps to keep the students up and running with an opportunity for self-study. This form of learning provides an alternative way to minimize either the contact between students themselves or between the students and lecturers. At the same time, it requires more discipline and self-regulated learning than traditional in-person learning to accumulate extra skills.

Few studies highlighted COVID-19 in relation to online studies and transformation of academic life. The collecting

of wealthy data is the first step toward understanding the depth and breadth of these changes. Future research ought to investigate the most involved aspects of academic community's life doubt to online education. As it is known the negative impact on dimensions such as physical health, levels of stress, levels of isolation, productivity, and financial stability is an actual reality. It is important to emphasize the need for immediate provision of measures to assist the campus community with this in vigor health problems.

## Why can be Online Learning a Disadvantageous Option?

An undeniable challenge that online education faces nowadays is how to give practical lessons. Since a lot of the subjects are practical; therefore, it is not easy to learn it online. According to the opinions of Veterinary Medical Students of South Valley University, it is difficult to fulfill the veterinary competencies only with online education system. About 60.7% of them evaluated the online learning in general with 1-5 of 10 points, while 77.9% considered the online learning in practical lessons with 1-5 of 10 points [1]. This is similar to outbreaks in University of Massachusetts on December 2020, where academic community found online activities like the cause of lack of intellectual productivity and loneliness [2].

COVID-19 pandemic lockdown affected the academic performance of most students with varying degrees. This is in agreement with previous studies, which reported that the illness has a profound impact on medical students, dental medical students, and radiology trainee [3]. Taking online courses has a negative effect on students; reduction of students' progress and success has been reported to be associated with taking online college courses, instead of traditional in-person courses [4].

The common problems that academic community confront today are, among others: the availability of internet to members live in provincial and rural areas; the speed and cost of internet; the accessibility of learning devices, such as laptops, tablets and smart phones devices to access the internet and view the online materials; the shortness of the disposable time to solve the online test, which causes panic; the lack of online information about certain subjects; and the loss of students' concentration and motivation to participate.

### What about Devices, Materials and Tools of Virtual Education?

The most popular device that members of academic community uses to access the online materials is the smart phone followed by laptop, iPads and tablets while the least used tool is the personal computer and social media [5]. It is worth to mention that many students have no access to the online teaching due to lack of either the means or the instruments because of economical and digital divide. The studying hours spent for online learning ranged from less than 1 h/day to 11hrs/day. Other than live streaming, students can access the online materials at any hour of the day when convenient to them. This flexibility helps some students to better invest their time and efforts while it is considered as a challenge to other students who cannot manage their own time [4].

The online study materials available are mostly online classes and pdf lectures followed by books, university platforms, YouTube videos, educational websites and educational applications. Different online tools had been used to access the online classes: Zoom had the highest preference followed by WhatsApp, and Google classroom. Microsoft Teams, Edmodo, Skype, and Google Meet are moderately used; while Canvas, Edpuzzle, and Edverum are not so popular.

### Recommendations to Get Better Online Learning

Online education can be successful improved by: the providing of platforms for online learning with easy access

to the study materials; supplying students with electronic devices to access the internet; the improvement of internet speed and providing cheaper or even free internet package during the pandemic; bringing training for lecturers on e-learning tools and computer skills; making available virtual resources to mimic the laboratory work or live streaming directly from the laboratory; promoting the interaction between students and teachers; delivering accessible online resources such as e-books and instructional videos for practical lessons and increasing the available time to solve the online tests.

### Final Considerations

Certainly it is too early to asseverate accurately the time of cessation of this sorrowful pandemic, of which all people are victims worldwide. Facts reveal that nowadays, the academic community's life is an important target of the situation relating to the on line education negative effects. It is offer an invitation to reflecting about the imminent need that has the academic community to change what is understood about the virtual learning. Assuming a responsible attitude in front of the handling of this essential resource constitutes a fortress and the way to mitigate the victims' role: the answer is in our hands.

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