



# PSYCHOLOGICAL INFLUENCE OF THE PANDEMIC ON STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS

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## Abstract:

With the outbreak of COVID, strong winds of change have blown into the spheres and strata of global society. On the education front, a forcible shift in the method of teaching and learning is inevitable. The stark reality in the face has prompted urgent and immediate change in the ways lessons are delivered. Covid-19 period is projected to place greater emphasis on virtual leaning in which the role of the teacher and learners will significantly transform. Challenges confronting institutional heads, educators and students are put forth in the paper in view of the various forms of transformation.

## Key Words:

Pandemic, COVID-19, Educators, Students, Challenges, Traditional Teaching.

## Introduction:

The world first met the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) after an outbreak in December 2019. The outbreak began in Wuhan, China, and has now led to a pandemic (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). Coronavirus disease, called COVID-19, is an infectious

disease that causes mild respiratory symptoms and requires special treatment. Many people have been infected in 216 countries, areas, and territories worldwide, with having been 226,236,577 confirmed cases and 4,654,548 confirmed deaths by September 16, 2021 (WHO). Since transmission occurs through direct or close contact with people or via small air droplets, social distancing is one of the best ways to prevent the transmission and spread of the virus. Therefore, to slow down its transmission by reducing social contact, school closures were put into effect worldwide as a first response. Country-wide school closures were carried out in 143 countries, while several other countries implemented localized closures. All over the world, 1,184,126,508 students, making up 67.6% of total enrolled students, were affected by these closures, this fact being based on data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (UNESCO, 2020).

COVID-19 pandemic in India is a part of the worldwide pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). As of 17 August 2021, according to official figures, India has the second-highest number of confirmed cases in the world (after the United States) with 32.2 million reported cases of COVID-19 infection and the third-highest number of COVID-19 deaths (after the United States and Brazil) at 432,079 deaths. However these figures exhibit severe under-reporting.

The first cases of COVID-19 in India were reported on 30 January 2020 in three towns of Kerala, among three Indian medical students who had returned from Wuhan, the epicenter of the pandemic. Lockdowns were announced in Kerala on 23 March, and in the rest of the country on 25 March. On 10 June, India's recoveries exceeded active cases for the first time. Infection rates started to drop in September, along with the number of new and active cases. Daily cases peaked mid-September with over 90,000 cases reported per-day, dropping to below 15,000 in January 2021. A second wave beginning in March 2021 was much more devastating than the first, with shortages of vaccines, hospital beds, oxygen cylinders and other medical supplies in parts of the country. By late April, India led the world in new and

active cases. On 30 April 2021, it became the first country to report over 400,000 new cases in a 24-hour period. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the precautions and restrictions recommended by the scientific advisory board began to be implemented after confirmation of the first case. Some of these precautions and restrictions included staying at home except for obligatory reasons; controlling international and domestic flights; banning domestic travel, both by mass transportation and private vehicles; closing shopping centres, community leisure centres, movie theatres, and concert halls; not allowing the congregational prayers; banning wedding ceremonies and funerals; implementing a lockdown for children and older people (under 20 and over 65), declaring a curfew for all people during some periods, accepting only emergency cases in hospitals and health facilities, developing health Educational Practices during the COVID-19 Viral Outbreak: International Perspectives 21 and education apps for mobile devices, and closing schools and childcare institutions country wide. In addition to affecting the economy and social life, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly interrupted education. The routines and activities of millions of students, teachers, and parents have changed, with school closures affecting a total of 19,559,437 students from preschool to high school. Students have had to be socially isolated, and this isolation has affected them in an undesirable manner. The results of a study conducted with preschool children demonstrate that children are aware of the terminology related to the pandemic and regularly obtain information from the media as well as parents concerning the current situation. At the same time, they have negative feelings about the pandemic and have been significantly affected by social isolation during this period.

Due to school closures, distance education and digital learning platforms have gained more attention and become crucial parts of life, as distance learning is the best way to ensure learning continuity during COVID-19. In this chapter, Turkey's general and special education practices during the COVID-19 viral outbreak are described. In addition, it intends to describe the situation and explain the measures taken in higher education, reveal the experiences of families, and investigate the conditions of in-service and pre-service



teachers. It also emphasises the decisions and actions taken towards normalization, addresses a number of concerns, and puts forward a number of future recommendations.

Traditional face to face education has remained dormant for a long time, with little change in expectation or innovation at a systems level. Teachers have lectured, students have listened, textbooks utilized, homework has been assigned, and tests have been administered. Students typically have attended programs in their neighbourhood, and they have participated in extra-curricular activities after hours: instruction has seldom been delivered outside the confines of the classroom. All in all, these were variations of a theme: a standardized school day, with teachers teaching, students learning, all within the confines of a physical school building. Even with the passage of Every Student Succeeds Act 2015, which encouraged states and districts to be more flexible and adventurous in their programming, most districts and programs stuck with the tried and true: the historically expedient options set before them. Few were the innovators that took the lead in providing novel approaches to teaching or learning, materials or methodologies, programming or evaluation even though options were evolving in these areas in dramatic fashion.

Enter COVID – the medical behemoth that set the entire infrastructure of the world on its head when it arrived in 2020. No longer were educational programs and services able to be provided in a neighbourhood building, with a real human dispensing content in a face-to-face fashion, using chalkboards and textbooks as instructional tools. Instead, teachers frantically assembled course content and placed the information online in the best way possible. Students were forced into learning at home, in the car, or on-the-go, utilizing internet enabled technological devices that provided instructional content and information derived from sources from who knows where. With implemented home based, online learning activities, parents' participation in their children's academic programs were no longer relegated only to parent-teacher conferences, awards days, science fairs, and field days. Just the opposite: with little notice parents were being thrust into the role of educator, instructor, counsellor, technology coach, and programme valuator. Instructional responsibilities were reactively lunged upon them with little discussion as to willingness,

ability, or capability to provide this level of service. Over time, in less than a full academic year, a “new normal” developed for students, parents, teachers, and educational programs.

The “new normal” had unforeseen short-term consequences on all involved. “Teachers” became an open-ended definition as many educators appropriately struggled to effectively provide content in new modalities with little, if any training. The educators and programs that students and parents once relied upon for appropriate materials, methods, curriculum, content, and assessment started to be less and less of the support they once were. With this new online reality, students not only utilized the content provided by their schools, and their new instructional guides (often their parents), but they often identified new source of support. They augmented and supplemented instructional content and instruction from any reliable supplier. Parents and students soon came to realize the limitations of current educational systems; more importantly, they came to understand the capabilities of instructional support systems within their own reach.

The purpose of this paper is to encourage research at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels to further explore the ramifications on educational practice due to the most recent pandemic. While a body of global research has developed that includes discussions of preparation, teacher experiences, and barriers, there will be a growing need to identify the ways in which local and national conditions have precipitated continuous change by educational leaders and providers. In addition to a brief discussion about learning, education provision, and a short overview of existing research, potential questions and areas for future research to guide such inquiries have been offered.

### **Learning and Teaching Practices**

Throughout the centuries, researchers have studied the ways people learn and how instructors teach. Learning is dialogic, and involves four typical forms: dialogic instruction, dialogic inquiry, dialogical pedagogy, and dialogical teaching. Despite all the effort to provide training and support to educators, there remains a school resistance, where students are reluctant to buy into what educational institutions are selling. More current research indicates that culture, regardless of its situation in race, space, or place, re-mains at issue

within class rooms. Primary and secondary school leaders, as well as those responsible for undergraduate, graduate, professional, and doctoral studies programs are increasingly working to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion as related to curriculum development and delivery, hiring practices, training, and teaching practices. As the education modality moved from exclusively brick-and-mortar to distance delivery, the need for instructors, course developers, subject matter experts, and others did not shift away from the cultural priority. However, the pandemic, COVID-19, created new stressors one education institution resources as the need to shift to more exclusive forms of distance delivery presented itself. As states, provinces, and countries shut down and governmental leaders enacted legislation to restrict movement and gathering, education leaders pressed toward online forms of teaching and learning.

Schools and colleges have been wrestling with distance education for decades. While technology has enabled provision of education across various virtual platforms, not all school levels or institutions have used them. There are financial and logistic implications to a governmental shutdown, as well as psychological ones. To be clear, virtual learning takes place when teachers, leaders, and students can reflect on the best options to engage virtually and then go through a process where they learn what works and what does not. There is a great deal of planning and preparation that goes into virtual learning. Pandemic learning is when the opportunity for virtual learning is created overnight. The luxury of time to reflect on what works and what doesn't work is non-existent.

Schools in many countries operate under a mandate to provide some basic form of education. Yet, research shows there have been challenges with the processes being used in schools, colleges, and universities to stay ahead of the health issue for their students, instructors, and administrators.

This chapter provides a review of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the teaching and learning at higher education institutions, the challenges faced by educators, and approaches to dealing with the impact on the educational process of higher education.



- The chapter deals with the transition from face-to-face classes to remote learning, with a focus on engineering education.
- The transition involves the methodology for the creation of effective classroom lessons that align specified learning outcomes with learning experiences and measures of student achievement for the physical classroom that can be adopted for remote learning.
- The different modes of learning that are considered include total face-to-face, total remote, and hybrid.

### **Higher Studies**

- Digital infrastructure, capacity, and experience differ among universities, affecting their adaptation to distance education. Universities should take steps to increase their equipment and capacity.
- The pandemic has disrupted hands-on training, laboratory studies, and applied research. The conditions under which hands-on training will be given and what kind of measures will be taken should be determined in detail.
- It can be determined which critical professional skills the students who had to complete applied courses with distance education did not acquire. These students should be taught these skills before starting in their professions.
- The burden placed on academic staff to provide distance education has also affected the quality of the education. The difficulties faced by academic staff in the previous distance education experience should be analysed, and professional development activities should be organized in line with their needs.

### **Families**

- Determining who would be responsible for the care of children during the pandemic was a critical issue in families where both parents still had to work. Therefore, a government care service should be planned so that families can leave their children if necessary.

- As parents took on the roles of teachers during the pandemic, their learning needs increased and differed. The learning needs of families should be determined across the country, and online family education services should be provided to meet these needs.
- Even though mobile educational apps were developed, and education was carried out at a distance, families with low socioeconomic status could not access these opportunities, leading to a significant interruption in education. For this reason, social support should be provided for families to access technological devices, and printed materials could also be mailed to these families.
- As special education services are mostly based on institutions, families have to undertake the education of their children in extraordinary situations. Thus, more family-oriented studies should be planned. Side-by-side or distance coaching activities might be carried out for families so that education can be continued.
- During the pandemic, challenging behaviours increased in children due to changes in routines. With this increase, anxiety and stress levels of their family members also escalated. Therefore, families should be taught how to help their children adapt to new habits, and psychological support should regularly be provided to families.

## **Teachers**

- Many teachers were caught unprepared to use technological devices, teach field skills through distance education, and conduct distanced student assessments. Further, most teachers did not have any distance education experience prior to the pandemic. Studies should be undertaken to develop in teachers the digital and pedagogical competencies required for distance education.
- With the pandemic, differences in the learning needs of teachers became evident, and many of these needs could not be met in traditional ways. Teachers' learning needs should be determined country wide, and online professional development activities should be planned to meet these needs.



- The lack of school social activities was one of the most overlooked issues during the pandemic. Such events are crucial for the development and learning of students. Workshops can thus be organized for teachers to carry out these activities, and competitions can be held to reveal creative ideas for implementing them.
- Besides dealing with distance education, teachers had to cope with the social and psychological difficulties of the pandemic in their own lives. Thus, teachers' well-being should be taken into account, and psychological support should be provided to them when necessary.

### **Learners Responsibility in Learning:**

With virtual learning gaining prominence, especially after covid-19, the learners' role in the learning process will become paramount more than ever before. No matter how much effort the teacher puts in preparing the course materials, how many learning platforms are utilised and no matter how creatively the instructions are prepared, it is not going to field results without fundamental attitude shift among learners.

### **Role, Functions and expectations of educators:**

The long-standing role assigned to teachers has always been of an input provider and the primary source of information and reference. The very notion of a teacher being the knowledge transmitter who solely prepares lesson plans and delivers them in class. In the digital age, where virtual lessons are likely to see a rise in educational institutions world students will find themselves remotely attending classes without having their teachers or peers physically nearby for quick reference or enquiry. This places a greater emphasis on education to take up the role of a facilitator and effectively guide, monitor and motivate students through a screen.

### **The Challenges :**

This switch to virtual education has created challenges to both teachers/faculty and students. Distance learning, for many teachers and students, will not appear to be as effective as face-to face learning. To quote the President of a University in our state at a

State Senate Higher Education Committee Hearing, “Because the fact of the matter is you cannot function as a university with remote learning. The sudden movement of instruction during the spring 2020 semester from the traditional classroom to the virtual classroom included other related challenges. Students had received instruction in the traditional classroom during the first half of the semester and virtual learning in the second half of the semester. As a result, the following issues arose:

1. Would the students, after the transition to virtual learning, have acquired the skills and knowledge specified by the learning outcomes at the beginning of the spring semester?
2. How will grades be assigned for the students?
3. What grading policies will be effective that are able to capture student learning accurately, and that reflect the achievement of the knowledge and skills specified for the students at the beginning of the semester?

#### **Assessment Issues:**

These issues are relevant, not only to post-secondary students, but also to the high school graduating seniors who may be going on to college or even the workforce. Students may be returning to the classroom, or pursuing a career from very different learning experiences due to the mix of face-to-face and remote learning. Educators will have difficulties in closing learning gaps without understanding the full nature of these potential learning shortfalls: where students could be lacking skills and/or knowledge that will be needed to learn before they are ready for the following courses. Schools will need to conduct comprehensive benchmark testing to identify how the mixed learning environments have affected student learning and plan for remediation. Prior knowledge is critical towards success in any course.

Completing a prerequisite course should mean that the students have acquired the skills and knowledge needed for success in the next course. And completing the sequence of courses within a degree program should indicate that the students have acquired the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes required by graduates of the program. Unfortunately, some

instructors may have misconceptions about “flexibility” when it comes to their assessments and in the change to virtual instruction may “reduce expectations” for learners. Hence the students may not have the requisite skills/knowledge for success in the following courses. Students must understand how future courses or their career path after graduation require the skills and knowledge to be acquired in their current courses. They will need specific support in the following courses, perhaps through reviewing skills and content that normally would have been covered in the previous courses. High school seniors could begin the next school year having lost as much as a third of the expected progress from the previous year. This can mean that there will be more underprepared students entering college and university classrooms and the placement of students into appropriate courses, such as mathematics, and science will be critical. Earning college credit while still in high school could become problematic. Dual enrolment programs, usually one-year college courses taught at the high school, probably lost at least one-quarter of the course content, leaving students unprepared for the following college courses.

As faculty move from the face-to-face classroom to the virtual classroom, the issue of assessment becomes more difficult to address. In addition to the challenge of facilitating student learning, instructors must be able to provide a means to measure student learning and to assign grades to the students. The learning experience can be synchronous or asynchronous in nature. Regardless of the learning environment, assessments must be designed that maximize the likelihood that the students are able to demonstrate their learning accurately by achieving specifying skills and knowledge. Assessments can include several different methodologies, and must be able to provide written feedback for students. Unfortunately, for a good many instructors, their assessment of students focuses on the use of testing to determine what they have learned. And the primary use, if not the only use, of test results usually is to provide the final grades for the students. Also, while instructors can be flexible when it comes to assessments, the flexibility should not be used to “reduce expectations” for learners.

In the classroom, an instructor can use traditional classroom assessment techniques to gather information and examine students’ learning of key concepts or skills from lectures,



class discussions, study of a textbook or other sources of information, or working through a common learning assignment by all students in the classroom. The results would be a determination of the skills and knowledge that the students have acquired as a result of the time they have spent in class, regardless of the learning environment. In addition to demonstrating and documenting student achievement, assessments should also serve as feedback to the students so that they know their achievements and weaknesses. Thus, the instructors should be able to assess and reflect upon real-time student learning, so that they can effectively provide feedback to the students and adjust their teaching based upon what the students have actually learned. This is usually accomplished in a face-to-face classroom. It could become a difficult task in a virtual environment where consistency in the assessment process is even more complex. Assessments should draw from multiple ways of demonstrating knowledge. The instructor must be able to determine if, and how, assessments used in traditional classrooms can be utilized remotely. The learning experience for online students would have both synchronous and asynchronous activities. In addition to testing, other forms of assessment could include discussions, short and long term projects, portfolios, papers, etc. Student discussions can be viable assessment tools of both traditional and online courses. And online discussions have the advantage that the format can allow for more discussion than face-to-face courses. Instructors would still be able to provide ongoing feedback at different points in the discussions. Online, students would have much more “think-time” to craft responses, since there should be no need to have time limits on discussions. Finally, students can speak to each other as well as to the instructor, and recordings of the discussions can accommodate students whose schedules may not allow them to attend the real-time events as well as serve as an assessment tool for the instructor.

### **Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Learning**

Good online instruction begins with good instructional methods and the availability of the different technology tools that power synchronous vs asynchronous learning may require different tactics and techniques. There are two major categories of instructor-led and semester-based remote learning: (1) entirely synchronous or live-online learning, using such

platforms as Zoom, WebEx, and Microsoft Teams; and (2) entirely asynchronous or “anytime” online learning using such platforms as Canvas and Blackboard. Each of these two categories has many combinations that have led to the creation of hybrid, blended or Hy flex scenarios, which, by definition, require some proportion of learning to occur in physical classrooms with actual instructors. While there is a long history of higher education offering learners the opportunity to study online, up until recently the asynchronous or anytime instruction has been the most prevalent mode. Thus, the pedagogy associated with it has been modified over the years to produce learning experiences demonstrated to be equal in quality to that achievable in a physical classroom. But with the advent of COVID-19, there has been a rapid transition to live online synchronous classes. One instructional issue related to the two main remote modes of learning is that the different technological platforms required by each can uniquely constrain the ways in which faculty can provide instruction to their students. The content may be the same regardless of whether the mode of delivery is face-to face or remote, but it must be presented/prepared differently depending on which of these modes are being used.

As basic definitions, entirely synchronous or live-online remote learning refers to “education in which the students have the opportunity to learn and interact at the moment with their teacher and peers.” On the other hand, entirely asynchronous remote learning is a type of group learning that relies on the instructor having designed in advance how to integrate his/her or others written words, videos, materials and educational resources into a class before it is ever conducted virtually. That is, the students learn the same content created by the instructor, but each student has some control over the time, place, and pace. However, it is not entirely self-paced because it is led by an instructor who typically expects assignments to be completed week by week. Despite the differing times of the day or night that an individual learner is able to log-on to a class, he/she is still able to interact and stay abreast of what the teacher and classmates are doing due to the embedded archiving feature in the technology platform that supports this anytime/any place category of remote learning. There is also a difference between the two modes as to the amount of time the instructor needs to put into the course. If the instructor has given face-to face classes for the same

course, technically synchronous is simply simulating that instructor led discussion remotely. An asynchronous class involves a lot more work – the thought as to how students can navigate each week, the creation of either self-made videos or links to other materials, and the need for “discussion groups” to try and engage students, even asynchronously.

The primary disadvantage of synchronous learning is in terms of the technology, the Internet speed, and most of all the students have a fixed time. The primary advantage of asynchronous learning is the fact that students can decide when to study, when to do the homework (within the confines of an instructor’s constraint) and because there are many resources on the learning management page, students can review materials again and even go ahead. The disadvantages of asynchronous learning to the students are that they may not feel like they are attending school, and that they are in charge of their learning. Not having to go at a specific time to class can be a problem for the procrastinator. When adapting to online instruction with the utilization of technological platforms, the support from Instructional Designers, when available, in creating effective remote learning classes could be key to the achievement of specified learning outcomes by students. These professionals, possess a wealth of knowledge about the differing capacities of each available technology platform, applicable apps and tools, and therefore are the ones who can guide instructors on how to best utilize a particular learning platform in their online classroom.

On the most basic level there are several major constraints imposed by the uniquely different platforms needed to power the two major remote learning categories so that instructors can provide the course content to their students. For example, with Zoom, so that faculty can focus on “teaching” their live-online classes, they often find it a great benefit to have a “navigator” or pilot” operating in the background to assist them with technical tasks/chores such as aggregating questions coming in during the class via “chat” and “Q&A” features and organizing and curating “breakout rooms” which are so useful in this platform for group discussions and project work. If possible, a Teaching Assistant or Instructional Design office staffer can be assigned to take care of these tasks. Otherwise, the instructor may assign one student, or rotate the assignment among all the students in the



class to handle this task. This may also be a way for students to actually enhance their learning, and perhaps acquire new organizational skills,

### **Reopening Higher Education**

Colleges and universities are now dealing with reopening campuses, as they consider possible learning models and plans for instruction. It appears to be almost a given that many, if not most, educational institutions will continue some level of remote learning this fall. What needs to be part of the consideration is how they will be able to ensure that students will have the opportunity to acquire all skills and knowledge from each course that is required in the pursuit of a degree and future career. And that appropriate assessment practices will be able to demonstrate that the students have acquired those skills and knowledge specified by the learning outcomes of the course. Models being considered include in-person, remote learning, or some hybrid model. Remote learning could be synchronous, asynchronous, or a combination of them. The hybrid model allows for a combination of in-person learning supplemented with virtual learning and can have different approaches. For example

- Students could have face-to-face classes for part of the semester, and remote learning for part of the semester. This approach also provides the opportunity for small-group collaborations in which teams of students can begin work on a project together in the classroom and then continue to work on the project remotely.
- For a given class, some of the students are in the classroom with the instructor and some of the students are doing remote learning synchronously. In this approach, learning could be consistent for students in the classroom and those in the virtual classroom.

Regardless of the differences between the different modes of learning, students must be able to achieve the specified skills and knowledge to be acquired in the course, and appropriate assessments will be used to demonstrate student acquisition of those skills and knowledge, and providing feedback to both the instructor and the student.

## **Conclusion:**

COVID-19 pandemic has been a wholly transformative and landmark event in modern human history, as all sectors of the economy and human life has been affected by its repercussions. Through this paper we have tried to explore how pandemic situation has impacted on students and instructors by the new normal and the implications resulted from the inevitable changes we are beginning to witness from the global pandemic.

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