



An Analysis of Psychosocial Challenges Faced by University Students During Covid-19

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Abstract: The majority of educators and students agreed that online learning was a preferable option during the pandemic. This study's primary goal was to examine the psychosocial difficulties college students had during COVID-19. The primary goals of the study were to identify the psychological problems that college students face, to assess how these relate to their comprehension, perspective, and application of COVID-19, and to look into the different methods that students have employed to treat these illnesses. The whole student body at Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan served as the study's population. Using a deliberate selection technique, the departments of IBL and social science education were chosen to represent the study's sample. A questionnaire was used to gather data from the targeted department sample, and SPSS was used for data analysis. The gathered information was tallied, examined, and evaluated in relation to the study's goals. Conclusions were drawn from the data and then based on the research findings. Additionally, this study has highlighted the psychosocial problems and challenges that students face when learning online—problems that still need to be resolved. The conclusion emphasizes the assistance that the state, parents, educational institutions, and educators must offer in order to boost students' access to and participation in online learning.

Keywords: Online teaching-learning process, psychological challenges, higher education, COVID-19

1. Introduction

Pandemics have happened on multiple occasions throughout history. Pandemics are a kind of disease that kill millions of people and have extremely serious ramifications for people's mental health and psychological well-being. Since it was first discovered in Wuhan, China, the COVID-19 pandemic has been affecting people. Like previous pandemics, COVID-19 spread swiftly and had a significant negative impact on the population's morbidity and death. People are experiencing psychological effects from the COVID-19 pandemic because it is continuously spreading, killing more people every day, ending lives, and having an unclear control period. COVID-19 will have a corrupting psychological influence on every person, just like the horrific occurrences that have caused innumerable psychological issues in humans throughout history. To prevent COVID-19 from having detrimental social, educational, political, psychological, and economic impacts, scientific research on the virus is important. Students at academic institutions across the globe faced unprecedented challenges and a range of stressors related to

the lockdown and remote learning when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. These institutions abruptly closed their campuses and abruptly shifted to online instruction. The conventional educational system necessitated in-person instruction as well as social and emotional ties between students and professors that looked jeopardized.

The COVID-19 epidemic is also expected to trigger suicidal thoughts, acute stress disorder, rage, increased alcohol and cigarette consumption, intense fear of getting sick, and schizophrenia. Unfavorable circumstances, such as pandemics, war, forced migration, disasters, and forced displacement, have a particularly detrimental effect on children. Due to their limited ability to communicate themselves and inability to make sense of the COVID-19 events, children are thought to suffer more psychological injury than other age groups. Children in families where there are pandemic-affected relatives report excessive weeping, difficulty falling asleep, and feelings of shame, according to Tsang, Scuds, and Chan's (2004) study on the psychological effects of the SARS outbreak. It was determined by researchers looking at the psychological consequences of epidemics that psychological issues were more common among young people. In a study on the connection between stress and MERS pandemics, Al-Rabiaah et al. (2020) found that 18.4% of university students experienced moderate anxiety and 77% of students experienced mild anxiety. Similar findings were reached by Wang et al. (2020), who looked at the psychological impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak in China. According to their research, young people are more psychologically impacted by the epidemic and have higher levels of stress, anxiety, intolerance, and despair (Wang et al. 2020). Research on mental health indicates that psychological problems such as despair, anxiety, tension, impatience, melancholy, and dread are evident in children and teenagers affected by pandemic.

1.1 Statement of Research Problem

When the corona virus first surfaced, our lives abruptly stopped. Online learning was overwhelmingly regarded as the best alternative for education during this pandemic by both professors and students. The study has also highlighted the psychological problems and challenges that students who are enrolled in online courses face; these areas still need further research. The primary objective of the study will be to ascertain "An Analysis of Psychosocial Challenges Faced by University Students during Covid-19". Because of the rapid shift from traditional to online learning, students are experiencing anxiety owing to inadequate digital skills, lack of electricity, and difficulty submitting assignments, exams, and presentations on time. The psychosocial difficulties that university students confronted during COVID-19 must thus be studied in particular.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

- a) To investigate the major psychological societal issues that learners at Abdul Wali Khan University dealt with.
- b) To appraise the association of these social issue and learners' awareness and practices of the COVID-19.
- c) To examine the approaches which are adopted by students to cope with these inconveniences?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study will have manifold benefits for educators' general and specifically for Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. It will help to improve the results. It will assist to raise students' academic performance.

2. Literature Review

One of the many important sectors that have been adversely affected by worldwide lockdowns is education. Owing to the abrupt closure of schools, universities, and organizations owing to the outbreak, students were introduced to online and distance learning. Early childhood education was disrupted when the epidemic initially started because digital learning was being used in classrooms in low-income areas of the world. The parents were suddenly compelled to take on the role of home educators, even though many of them lacked the requisite training. The three biggest things preventing students from learning online are inadequate data, bad internet access, and a lack of resources. The Pakistani government decided on Thursday to close all educational institutions nationwide till July 15 in an effort to stop the corona virus from spreading. The decision was made at a meeting presided over by Prime Minister Mr. Imran Khan of the National Coordination Committee. Following the meeting, Federal Minister for

Professional Training and Education Mr. Shafqat Mehmood declared that all of the nation's educational institutions will officially close until July 15th. He asserted that the administration had authorized an extension to the middle of July even though it had originally consented to close schools until May 31.

Children have a variety of psychological issues during the pandemic, such as issues with anxiety, depression, and a lack of social connection (Wang et. al., 2020). It may be argued that youngsters of today who will become adults face significant psychological dangers in this regard. Young people are another population heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that COVID-19 has a low death rate; one may assume that young individuals will be less negatively impacted psychologically. On the other hand, it is expected that this pandemic process will negatively affect youth and result in psychological problems. Children may have a variety of psychological issues during the COVID-19 occurrence, such as issues with anxiety, depression, and a lack of social connection, according to Wang, Zhang, Zhao and Jiang (2020). It may be argued that youngsters of today who will become adults face significant psychological dangers in this regard. Young people are another population heavily impacted by the pandemic. Given that COVID-19 has a low death rate; one may assume that young individuals will be less negatively impacted psychologically. On the other hand, it is expected that this pandemic process will negatively affect youth and result in psychological problems. Studies investigating the psychological effects of COVID-19 on children and adolescents have revealed the presence of psychological issues such anxiety, despair, discomfort, impatience, melancholy, and dread (Heng and Zhao 2020; PEW 2020).

Ozer (2020) reports that fear and dread were among the negative psychological symptoms that parents and children experienced as a result of social isolation and other COVID-19 restrictions. The majority of nations have temporarily closed their educational institutions worldwide in an attempt to stop the COVID-19 pandemic. These Nationwide closures affect about 60% of the student population globally. Millions more students will be impacted by regional closures that other countries have implemented (UNESCO, 2020). In order for the educational process to be productive, teachers are also essential. But most teachers lacked the pedagogical expertise required to manage the process of online learning or remote learning for teachers. According to Rapanta et al. (2020), they lacked the necessary skills to produce online or remote learning materials. The children appear to find it more difficult to make up for the negative effects of the outbreak as a result. Reimers (2020) asserts that the vast majority of kids will find it difficult to make up for the educational chances they lost due to the pandemic. The greater the duration of physical separation from other students and teachers, the more difficult this task will be. These kinds of setbacks produce a learning disadvantage that eventually spreads to social and economic disadvantage.

3. Research Methodology

The study's methodology was quantitative. The population of the study consisted of all enrolled students at Abdul Wali Khan University in Mardan. Using purposive sampling, the sample was selected. Social science departments of Education and IBL were selected. For the investigation, a random sample of students from these departments was also selected. This is the sample's description. There were 250 samples in total, of which 125 came from the IBL department and another 125 from the Education department. The samples were split into two groups. That was gathered by means of a questionnaire. The information was gathered only by the researchers. Utilizing the Statistical Software for Social Sciences, the data was tallied, examined, and analyzed (SPSS). For analysis, the data was imported into SPSS, where statistical methods such as mean and standard deviation were used.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this section, data collected via questionnaire regarding learners' computer understanding and its usage for online classes, their observation and viewpoint about the virtual classroom environment during the lecture and the issues and the problems that they faced throughout the pandemic's lockdown are presented. To comprehend the students' responses, the data was analyzed using percentages that showed the percentage of students who agreed and disagreed with a certain statement.

Table 1: Less IT learning caused stress among the students

SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	Mean	SD
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98	125	09	11	07	250	60	51.38
39.2	50	3.6	4.4	2.8	100	Percentage	

According to the table, students feel stressed because they have less digital skill, with 39.2% strongly agreeing and 50% agreeing with the statement. The mean value of the data is 60. It indicates that learners are dissatisfied with distance education. 3.6% of students disagree, 2.8% strongly disagree, and 4.4% of students are unsure.

Table 2: Students feel uneasiness and anxiety in online classes

SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	Mean	SD
113	102	19	09	07	250	60	52.95
45.2	40.8	7.6	3.6	2.8	100	Percentage	

With a mean of 60 and a standard deviation of 52.95, the table indicates that 45.2% of students strongly agree and 40.8% agree. This indicates that students are accustomed to in-person instruction and have limited proficiency with digital tools. 3.6% of students disagree, 2.8% strongly disagree, and 7.6% of students are unsure.

Table 3: Electricity failure caused stress

SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	Mean	SD
118	68	29	19	16	250	60	51.86
47.2	27.2	11.6	7.6	6.4	100	Percentage	

According to the table, 47.2% of students strongly agree. With a mean of 60 and a standard deviation of 51.86, the statement that states that an inadequate supply of energy is a major hindrance to online learning is supported by 27.2% of respondents. It's likely that when online lessons begin, there won't be any electricity available. 11.6% of students are not sure. 6.4% definitely disagree and 7.6% disagree.

Table 4: Teachers face problems in learners' weakness identification in online teaching processes

SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	Mean	SD
105	98	22	14	11	250	60	54.47
42	39.2	8.8	5.6	4.4	100	Percentage	

According to the table, 42% strongly agree, 39.2% agree, 8.8% are unsure, 5.6% disagree, and 4.4% strongly disagree with the statement. With a mean of 60 and a standard deviation of 54.47, the majority of students concur that the student-teacher relationship in online learning is unsatisfactory.

Table 5: Online teaching-learning is mind-numbing

SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	Mean	SD
102	79	19	39	11	250	60	40.05
40.8	31.6	7.6	15.6	4.4	100	Percentage	

The data presented in the table indicates that 40.8% of students highly agree, 31.6% agree, 7.6% are unsure, 15.6% disagree, and 4.4% severely disagree. whose mean is 60 and standard deviation is 40.05, indicating that students find online learning to be uninteresting and do not show the same level of enthusiasm as they do in traditional learning.

Table 6: Audibility problems during the lectures cause stress among the students

SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	Mean	SD
87	103	19	21	20	250	60	41.98
34.8	41.2	7.6	8.4	8	100	Percentage	

According to the table, students are divided as follows: 7.6% are undecided, 8.4% disagree, and 8% strongly disagree. 34.8% of students strongly agree. 41.2% agree. Their standard deviation is 41.98 and mean is 60, indicating that being inaudible will cause stress

Table 7: In online learning-teaching process, a gap of communication occurs that cause mental stress

SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	Mean	SD
107	94	17	19	13	250	60	59.87
42.8	37.6	6.8	7.6	5.2	100	Percentage	

According to the table, 37.6% of respondents agree, 6.8% are undecided, 7.6% disagree, and 5.2% strongly disagree, with 42.8% strongly agreeing. Whose standard deviation is 59.87 and mean are 60 as a result of a communication gap that prevents teachers from identifying student problems.

Table 8: Students have less chance to carry out experimental tasks

SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	Mean	SD
98	107	21	13	11	250	60	41.93
39.2	42.8	8.4	5.2	4.4	100	Percentage	

According to the table, 342.8% of students agree, 8.4% are unsure, 5.2% disagree, and 4.4% disagree strongly. Of these students, 39.2% strongly agree. Its mean is 60 and standard deviation is 41.93, demonstrating that scientific experiments—which require a laboratory—are not feasible in online classes.

Table 9: Poor audibility causes confusions that lead to mental stress

SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	Mean	SD
97	92	28	22	11	250	60	40.10
38.8	36.8	11.2	8.8	4.4	100	Percentage	

The table demonstrates the issues that students face as a result of low audibility. 38.8% of students strongly agree, 36.8% agree, 11.2% are unsure, 8.8% disagree, and 4.4% definitely disagree.

Table 10: Online teaching-learning process does not help in students’ social development that cause anxiety

SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	Mean	SD
117	76	21	16	20	250	60	44.88
46.8	30.4	8.4	6.4	8	100	Percentage	

The data indicates that 46.8% of students strongly agree, 8.4% are unsure, and 6.4% disagree. Of the pupils, 30.4% agree. Majority of the students concur that they are not growing socially as a result of online learning, with 8% strongly opposing; the mean is 60 and the standard deviation is 44.88.

Table 11: Students uncertainty about their academic achievement causes depression learners

SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Percentage	Mean	SD
105	78	21	25	21	250	60	34.61
42	31.2	8.4	10	8.4	100	Percentage	

The data in the table indicates that while 42% of students highly agree, 31.2 percent agree, 8.4 percent are undecided, 10% disagree, and 8.4 percent strongly disagree, indicating that completing assignments and papers while learning online is not a simple task but the degree of comfort students experience in conventional classrooms. Online classes did not have it.

Table 12: Looking at screen for a prolonged period of time cause exhaustion

SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	Mean	SD
103	68	19	28	32	250	60	41.36
41.2	27.2	7.6	11.2	12.8	100	Percentage	

The data presented in the table indicates that 41.2% of students highly agree, 27.2% of students agree, 7.6% of students are uncertain, 11.2% of students disagree, and 12.8% of students strongly agree. The mean score of 60 and the standard deviation of 41.36 indicate that students will attend classes for four and six hours per day.

4.1 Summary

The purpose of this study was to find out more about the digital literacy of the students. Their thoughts on distance learning, as well as the challenges and roadblocks they faced during COVID-19's lockdown period. Since the study was limited to Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, the population as a whole was taken into account. Particularly selected were the education departments for social science, IBL, and education. One hundred students from the education department and one hundred from the IBL department were randomly selected to serve as the study's sample. Data was gathered via questionnaires. The data was analyzed using statistical instruments, specifically the mean and standard deviation. Students' data were examined using the mean and standard deviation.

All of the information on the questionnaire was divided into four categories. Questions about the students' digital talents, such as their proficiency with computers, their ability to communicate, and their speed of expression, were asked in the first category. Students' perceptions of the online learning process were the subject of the second category. They were unable to comprehend the course information because of the instructor's limited teaching methods, the scheduling of the lectures, and their poor hearing. One major obstacle to online learning was students' lack of computer proficiency. The third category addressed the problems that students had when taking online courses. Lack of interaction with peers and professors while resolving internet and power problems affected the students. The fourth category dealt with the use of various online learning systems, such as LMS, Zoom, Google, Chrome, and others.

4.2 Findings

Eighty-four percent of students believed that their inability to use digital tools effectively caused them to feel anxious when trying to learn online. 82% of students said that they were concerned about taking classes online. This represents the majority of the students. Numerous participants said that a primary source of disruption in virtual learning environments, leading to psychological strain, is power outages and malfunctions. In online learning procedures, eighty-five percent of students felt that teachers could not tell where their weaknesses were. According to 70% of students, the process of learning online is less engaging for them and they are not as interested in it. Students said that they have trouble hearing in the online course 73% of the time, while 88% thought there was a communication breakdown between the teacher and the students that led to anxiety. It has been claimed that doing experiments in online classes is nearly impossible, which makes students anxious. Sixty-nine percent of students concur that unclear instruction during online classes lead to confusion, which in turn creates sadness. It was discovered that 66% of students believed that pupils become depressed when they are uncertain about their academic performance.

5. Conclusion

The findings and statistical analysis led to the following conclusions being made. Students and teachers have been

quite supportive of the switch to online learning despite the pandemic. Pupils did not have the required emotional, financial, social, or technical background. Students often struggled because they were unfamiliar with technological learning approaches. While most university students were adept at using digital tools like PowerPoint and Microsoft Word, some couldn't even use the most basic computer programs, which made it hard for them to organize their information. Because of the strength of the institutional servers, technical problems are still the most difficult to resolve. Universities have undoubtedly worked to address these issues and enhance the performance of e-learning platforms.

Students still suffer with bad internet connections, signal loss, and a lack of adequate digital equipment, particularly those who live in rural areas or come from low-income homes. According to the majority of respondents, learning online was less communicative. The following are some of the variables that can impact how well an online course is delivered. Including the degree of technical training instructors have received, their pedagogical approaches, and their interactions with pupils. Most students agreed that the instructor should give multiple examples to help students understand the material during the online learning process. According to, there are several benefits to online learning, such as: higher standards from teachers, diversified learning through technology, speedy input, collaborative learning, active learning, task time motivating students to devote more time to task completion, and attention for some kids. Teachers should communicate to students what is expected of them in terms of inspiration and motivation.

5.1 Recommendations

Considering the challenges and barriers that students believed they had to face when learning online. It is therefore proposed that in order for teachers and students to get familiar with digital knowledge and abilities, training is urgently needed. To ensure that everyone has access to online education, this study attempts to draw the attention of the government. Because of the strength of the institutional servers, technical problems are still the most difficult to resolve. Universities have undoubtedly made an effort to solve this issue and enhance the functionality of e-learning platforms. To get better results, more efficient online and offline teaching and learning modes need to be discovered. It also calls for a methodical methodology that includes just the appropriate quantity of online education. Some recommendations for the treatment of COVID-19 in children, adolescents, the elderly and healthcare professionals have been made in light of the study's findings. In order to allow children to freely express themselves throughout this process, families should first foster a trusting environment.

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