

The Impact of COVID-19 in Higher Education at Utah Valley University

Aimee Jorquera and Jared Hull
Criminal Justice Capstone
Utah Valley University
April 26, 2021





Overview

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Method
- Results
- Conclusion

Introduction

MARCH 2020: nearly 300 U.S. universities have announced plans to move classes online in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

- The World Health Organization confirmed more than 100,000 global cases of COVID-19
- More than 1,200 cases are confirmed across 44 states and Washington D.C. by U.S. health officials
- Universities move to online learning management systems to ensure students can access course materials and communicate with professors



What impact did COVID-19 have on college students?

✓ technology issues

✓ mental/emotional health

✓ financial hardships/food security





Prior studies in the beginning of the pandemic

- National Conference of State Legislatures
 - This study discovered learning disruptions with online instruction and stated, "20% of college students have issues accessing effective technology including working laptops and reliable high-speed internet." (Smalley, 2020)
 - The shift from in-person classes to online-only could create potential issues for transfer students and those planning to attend graduate school.
- Journal PLOS ONE
 - reported college students are more likely to be "affected by COVID-19 because of the **uncertainty regarding academic success, future careers and social life during college, among other concerns.**" (Matthew, 2021)





Psychological Impact

Prior to the pandemic...

students already experienced increasing levels of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts.



After the pandemic...

several studies report COVID-19 significantly affected people's mental health and behavior (Browning et al., 2021).

Mental health
hotlines
experienced 1,000
increases during
April 2020.

Browning et al., 2021



The pandemic effect on enrollment

-
- ◆ Enrollment drop rates ranged from 10% and 30%
-

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)

- ◆ No access to high-speed internet
-

lower income students have the least access to internet meaning some students do not have the tools to continue online learning

-
- ◆ "...low-income and first-generation students are choosing not to enroll this year." (2020)
-

AACRAO says this could be due to unemployment forcing students to make the *decision between keeping food on the table or paying for school*

- ◆ Negative perceptions
-

Some students do not like virtual learning which affected their decision to enroll in the fall semesters.

Universities were apprehensive about switching to online only and kept campus open increasing new COVID-19 cases (2020).

Looking at UVU

◆ Method

Representative and convenience sampling method was used to collect data about the opinions and experiences of the effects of COVID-19 from UVU students.

◆ Research Instrument

We used Qualtrics to distribute a set of questions to 500 UVU students from mid-March to early April 2021. We received 73 completed responses, 63% were female, 36% were male, and 1% preferred not to say.

◆ Minimizing the Risk

We provided informed consent to each participant to notify the individual of potential risks when participating in the survey. To minimize the risks to subjects, we offered links to counseling services and resources if participants felt distressed after taking the survey.

How stressed did you feel BEFORE the lockdown started?

How stressed do you feel **AT THE MOMENT?**

Both males and females

experienced nearly a 20% increase in stress AFTER the lockdown

- More than 80% of students would communicate with others during lockdown by:
 - 1) chatting to the people they lived with
 - 2) talking to family friends online/phone
- More than 50% of students would use video calling or social media chats



As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, how often do you
worry about...

doing well in your classes now that many or all
are online?

Paying your bills (e.g., tuition, loans, rent, internet access,
medical)

Having enough to eat day-to-day

Being able to sleep in a safe and secure place every night

Have you faced any specific challenges during the lockdown period?

Technological issues

"Unclear expectations of what professors are wanting for assignments."

**"DOING A ONLINE
CHEMISTRY LAB!
IT'S A LAB YOU
CAN'T DO IT
ONLINE AND
EXPECT ME TO
LEARN."**

24% of students are not connecting with instructors while in-person activities are cancelled

- 18% expect a response from instructors within a few hours
- 52% expect a response within a day
- 27% expect a response within a couple days



Challenges during the lockdown

- caretaking
- maintaining motivation
- frustration
- nowhere to study
- mental health issues

Did you feel you had the necessary support and resources you needed to effectively study from home during the pandemic last year?

I have not reached out to anyone for help
because...

What additional support and resources could UVU provide this school year?

✓ Parking

"Free parking. It's insane that they didnt offer free parking or at least lots that are free. Some of us only have to be on campus to pick up supplies/drop stuff off. Free parking shouldve been provided during the pandemic and remote learning."

✓ Online classes

"I think online classes are challenging, especially when a professor is not communicative."

✓ Guidelines

"Taken the pandemic more seriously earlier on and actually enforced its policies."



Key findings and interpretation of results

While data could be bias, open-ended responses show negative impacts of COVID-19 on lifestyle behaviors and psychological health. Among the most commonly reported changes were increases in depression, anxiety, sleep disruption, financial stress and pressure, and negative thoughts.

UVU students expressed concern with online learning due to the following:

- access to reliable internet
- instructor discomfort or lack of familiarity with technology
- unclear expectations around which technologies required
- connectivity (internet, Wi-Fi), access, or functionality
- personal device difficulties
- UVU Canvas issues

Moving forward

Nearly 41% of UVU students have been satisfied with the campus response to coronavirus. Over 60% of students would like to receive updates on from UVU on the COVID-19 crisis.



Recommendations for UVU

UVU students reported struggling to pay for food or tuition

- Our campus should address the financial hardships and food security needs of the entire school body.
- UVU should also consider providing mediation/mindfulness sessions for students who are experiencing distress (less 30% of UVU students reach out to counselors or at all for help)
- Instructors can further help UVU students by setting expectations and knowing how to use the required technology themselves.
- Clearly the level of education has been lowered due to COVID-19 however, the cost for UVU has stayed the same.



