



THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC ON STUDENT EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE EDUCATION SECTOR, FORCING LEARNING INSTITUTIONS, TEACHERS AND LEARNERS TO CHANGE THEIR LEARNING PRACTICES. CHANGES IN THE METHODS USED IN THE DELIVERY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES HAVE AFFECTED THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE OF ALL LEARNERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. COVID-19 HAS AFFECTED DIFFERENT AREAS OF STUDENTS' LIVES, THUS INFLUENCING THEIR ABILITY TO LEARN. THE QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY WILL DETERMINE: HOW HAS COVID-19 AFFECTED STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT? THE RESEARCHER COLLECTED DATA FROM A SAMPLE OF 22 STUDENTS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 11 AND 14 USING EXISTING DATA SUCH AS OPEN-ENDED DIARY QUESTIONS, CONVERSATIONS, NOTES AND CONDUCTED HOLISTIC CODING AND IN VIVO DATA ANALYSES. DATA ANALYSIS ALSO INVOLVED COMPARING THE INFORMATION COLLECTED WITH VARIOUS SOURCES TO FACILITATE ACCURACY AND RELIABILITY. THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY SHOWED THAT COVID-19 AFFECTED STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SEVERAL WAYS.

HOWEVER, THE STUDY FACED A LIMITATION IN DETERMINING THE ACCURACY OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE PARTICIPANTS, THE RESEARCHER COULD NOT DECIDE WHETHER IT WAS TRUTHFUL OR NOT. FUTURE RESEARCH IN THIS AREA IS NEEDED TO DETERMINE WAYS TO EMPOWER PARENTS, ALLOWING THEM TO SUPPORT AND GUIDE THEIR CHILDREN WHEN LEARNING AT HOME. THE STUDY CONCLUDED THAT HOME LEARNING LED TO NEGATIVE STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT. THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY CAN BE USED TO GUIDE DECISION MAKERS IN IDENTIFYING RELIABLE STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS TO SUPPORT LEARNING AT HOME AND TO FACILITATE THE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, DISTANCE EDUCATION, STUDENT PERCEPTIONS, ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, DISTANCE LEARNING

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all areas of the country. One area whose operation has been significantly affected by COVID-19 is education (Mărcău et. al., 2022a). All stakeholders, including learners, teachers and the government, have been urged to make more changes in service delivery to ensure that the provision of quality education continues (Adnan & Anwar 2020, p. 45). However, there were several achievement gaps before COVID-19, and it is believed that student achievement gaps will widen as we move through the pandemic. One group that has been affected by COVID-19 is students, who have been forced



to learn in a different way. The changes in the learning process and in the learning, environment have also affected students from an emotional point of view, a component that can influence their perceptions of education.

The psychological and emotional effects of the changes include depression and anxiety (Mărcău et. al. 2022c), negatively impacting students' perception of socio-emotional development (Baloran, 2020). Students are also forced to learn in an environment where they do not have the attention teachers need to facilitate their development process, making the issue an important area of study. As such, it is essential to conduct a study to determine how COVID-19 has affected students' perceptions of academic performance and socio-emotional development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

COVID-19 has affected all aspects of education, limiting the ability of students to use conventional means of learning in accessing educational resources. As a result, various authors have provided different assessments of the methods currently used and their impact on students. The role of literature is to ensure that there is a deep knowledge of strategies so that students do not build a negative perception of school performance and socio-emotional development. Themes in the existing literature on this topic include physical, social and emotional development, as well as learning perceptions and attitudes.

Physical and social-emotional development

COVID-19 has forced millions of students around the world to shift their learning from school to a home environment. According to Daniel (2020), distance learning is associated with many challenges because it requires preparations to ensure that students get all the necessary resources (p. 92). For example, schools must ensure that all students have reading materials to enable them to learn while at home. In addition, schools need to undertake training and staff training to equip them with knowledge of how to address the needs of students when learning at a distance. According to Imran et al. (2020), being away from school has a significant impact on students' social, physical and emotional development. Because most schools have not been prepared for the changes, teachers lack the training to help them meet the needs of students. As a result, the quality of education and guidance that all students receive has changed, negatively impacting their developmental process.

Teenagers between the ages of 12 and 21 make up the largest student population in the world. Age plays a significant role in shaping a person's adult life because it is associated with the emotional, physical and social development of people in society (Pedrero & Debbane, 2017).

A study by Pigaiani et al. (2020) led to the finding that adolescents need assessment for assessment in order for the developmental process to be successful. The authors argue that schools are essential in facilitating development in physical, emotional and social areas, thus being a key factor in determining adolescent well-being. Similarly, Baloran (2020) states that the emergence and spread of COVID-19 has created great concern for students, leading to increased levels of anxiety due to the changes experienced in the learning process (p. 636). The process had a psychological and emotional impact due to the disruptions introduced to the students' learning process. As a result, students cannot perform at the same level as before the outbreak of the pandemic, thus limiting their development process.

Learning perceptions and attitudes



The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the closure of schools in various countries. Because of the critical role of learning institutions in supporting the learning process, it is crucial to determine how students respond to instituted changes. According to Dhawan (2020), the pandemic is disrupting education and exposing students to various risks, including stress, depression, insomnia, anxiety and fear (p. 11). Challenges affect students' learning and their perception of school performance. Those who experience depression, stress, and lack of attention from their teachers are more likely to have negative attitudes toward education and expect to achieve poorly in their education. Similar findings were provided by a study conducted by Baloran (2020) to investigate students' knowledge, coping strategies, attitudes and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study indicated that school closures and the introduction of virtual learning have a significant emotional and psychological impact, affecting students' perception of the learning process.

Another factor that has substantially affected students' learning perceptions and attitudes during the COVID-19 epidemic is the suspension of classes. According to Daniel (2020), delaying education has a psychological impact on students who expect to take end-of-year exams, as they are unlikely to take the test on time (p. 92). Uncertainty about completing programs due to the pandemic has most students worried about the long-term impact of the outbreak on their school performance.

Instead, the study by Buzzi et al. (2020) indicated that although crises have a negative impact on people's attitudes, their effect on adolescent learning perceptions is small. The study found that students demonstrate positive attitudes due to their ability to adapt to changes and adhere to regulations set by the government. As such, the study's findings contradict those provided by other researchers, as it argues that the pandemic is not having a significant impact on learning perceptions and attitudes.

Existing literature indicates that the COVID-19 outbreak has a drastic impact on the physical and social-emotional development and learning perceptions and attitudes of students. The quality of education and guidance that teachers provide to students has changed due to the pandemic, subsequently affecting their development process. COVID-19 has also led to school closures, denying teenagers the assessments they need to develop physically, socially and emotionally. The specialized literature also shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected students' perceptions and learning attitudes, although some students have adapted to the new changes.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

COVID-19 has affected many aspects of students' lives, all of which have an impact on their ability to learn. The researcher will seek to determine the impact of the pandemic on students' perceptions of their education, focusing on academic performance and socio-emotional development. To fully address the research topic, the study will be guided by the following research question: How has Covid-19 affected students' perceptions of school performance and socio-emotional development?

The study is of immense importance as it will add to and support educational practices. According to Buzzi et al. (2020), experiences like COVID-19 are unprecedented for all people because they affect the normal behaviors of people and families (p. 1). The emergence and spread of the condition relied on health care providers and professionals from various sectors providing best practices to help stop the spread and promote the safety of people in different areas. However, the lack of previous studies determining the impact of strategies on students



affects their reliance on positively influencing students' perceptions of school performance and socio-emotional development. Little is known about the reactions of students in a variety of regions to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Buzzi et al. 2020, p. 1).

The study will therefore add support to currently used practices by identifying evidence-based practices that have maximum positive benefits for learners. Research findings will facilitate decision-making, enabling various stakeholders to use evidence-based practices that not only improve the quality of education, but also students' perceptions of education and social-emotional development.

The study will also provide additional information on the effectiveness of strategies currently in use. According to Adnan & Anwar (2020), this is not the first time that conventional educational activities have been suspended due to a pandemic (p. 45).

Outbreaks such as SARS-CoV and H1N1 have led to school closures and the identification of alternative strategies for educating students. The techniques currently used are based on research studies of those used during outbreaks. Through the current study, information on the reliability of techniques in addressing the impact of COVID-19 and their impact on students' perception of school performance will be examined. The study will also introduce new knowledge on the topic, enabling teachers to be more effective in their practice. The research is of significant importance as it will add to existing research knowledge, improving its success in positively influencing students' perceptions of school performance and socio-emotional development.

METHODOLOGY

The analysis will use a qualitative case study, due to the ability of the method to provide reliable data. According to Mertler (2019), case studies allow researchers to make an in-depth and detailed study of an event or a person. The study aims to determine students' perceptions of their school performance and socio-emotional development. Therefore, the method is most suitable as it will allow them to collect their perspectives on their attitude change, before and during the pandemic.

Similarly, Mertler (2019) states that case studies ensure that researchers gain a deeper and better understanding of the participants, making it one of the most effective research methods (p. 83). The strategies used in case studies allow the researcher to understand the feelings and emotions of the participants, allowing them to make more accurate conclusions and recommendations.

The study will rely on measurement data from existing documents, conversations, and notes that participants will complete so that the researcher can determine the answer to the research question. The reason for choosing measurement data is because of the valuable method information it provides. Mertler (2019), existing data allows researchers to collect data from multiple respondents, allowing them to pose numerous questions on the topic being studied. With students as the primary target of the study, measurement data is the most reliable source of data. The method will allow them to provide personal opinions and insights on the subject. The method will help answer the research questions as it will allow the collection of raw data from the participants with high reliability in influencing decision making. Participants will be asked questions about the impact of COVID-19 on their education and how it has influenced their perceptions of school performance and social-emotional development.

The sample of the study will be a class of 22 secondary school students. All participants will be 7th and 8th grade students from school X (pseudonym); because the sample selection



has a large sample size to improve the accuracy of the study findings. According to Zamboni (2018), the large sample size has a smaller margin of error, which makes the data collected more accurate. Qualified participants will be Latino and Black students between the ages of 11 and 14. The final step would involve analyzing the data using the holistic and in vivo coding process.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

The research study is of immense importance as it seeks to improve the provision of education. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the state of education has become a challenge in various schools. Through the study, information about the impact of the pandemic on the education of students will be identified and used to introduce change in the learning process. One of the most affected groups of students is those expected to take the end-of-year exams (Daniel 2020, p. 92). This study targets group members as it focuses on students in grades VII-VIII. Consequently, the research findings will help determine how group perceptions have been affected, therefore being useful in addressing issues affecting students.

The research is different from other studies because it aims to identify students' perception of their school performance and socio-emotional development. Previous studies have focused on the overall impact of COVID-19, without focusing on students' perceptions of social-emotional development. Therefore, the current study will add to the body of education research by introducing new knowledge based on input from students. The study's findings will result in recommendations for ways to improve education during a pandemic to help minimize the negative effects of outbreaks like COVID-19 on students' perceptions of school performance and social-emotional development. The recommendations will help inform educational practice and policy as they are based on evidence from participants' experiences.

RESEARCH RESULTS

In general, the COVID-19 pandemic has had varied impacts on the education sector, affecting the learning process and the quality of education provided to students. The study seeks to determine: In what ways has Covid-19 affected students' perceptions of academic performance and socio-emotional development? The researcher conducted a qualitative case study using existing data, including open-ended journal prompts to collect qualitative feedback from participants and holistic and in vivo coding in data analysis.

The choice of method is to promote an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions and changes they have experienced since school closures in response to COVID-19. The data collected indicate that most students have negative perceptions of academic performance and socio-emotional development due to changes in the learning process.

The study shows that students' academic performance and socio-emotional development are affected by various factors influenced by the learning environment. According to the study, 95% of students are worried about their grades, with around 78% attributing the worry to teachers' inability to provide support during the pandemic. Students report home learning to be coupled with various challenges, including distraction, lack of motivation, difficulty concentrating, and lack of space to do homework.

Students report having mixed learning experiences when schools were closed in learning, tutoring, extracurricular activities, physical health, belonging and relationships. However, most participants said they were more concerned about their grades because of the decline they experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



In addition, some students report that they enjoy reading from home because of the lack of bullying in the environment, the flexibility of their schedule, and the overall learning experience. Significant concerns for students since school closures include school performance, relationships with friends, own emotional/mental health, own physical health, and the physical and emotional health of families. Furthermore, students experienced higher levels of stress, depression and loneliness due to the requirements introduced in response to COVID-19. As such, the findings indicate increased student concerns about academic performance and socio-emotional development. Changes in learning make it difficult for students to continue their usual practices, thus raising concerns about their social-emotional development.

Findings show that COVID-19 had a significant impact on students' perceptions of educational performance and socio-emotional development. Most students are concerned about the level of support they receive from teachers during the learning process, believing it to be ineffective in improving their grades. The requirement that students learn has virtually separated them from teachers, making it difficult for them to interact and receive help in areas where they are experiencing challenges.

In addition, some students feel that teachers do not know what they are doing when teaching them remotely, thus increasing the possibility that students will experience a drop in their grades. In this case, participants are not sure about the quality of education, which increases their concern about education. The change in perception is also due to the poor learning environment without the necessary resources and guidance. As shown in the results, distance education has many challenges, all of which harm students' perceptions of academic performance. The home environment is not designed for learning. Because of this, it is challenging for students to study and perform at a level similar to when they were in school.

Findings show that COVID-19 has increased students' concerns about their social-emotional development due to a lack of teacher assistance in multi-tasking. In this case, the home environment and the lack of means to enable teachers to monitor and control the activities in which learners engage result in socio-emotional challenges. Similarly, students reported feeling increased anxiety, depression, stress and loneliness due to virtual learning. The feedback is due to the separation of students from school, where they receive professional support and crucial medical services to ensure they remain healthy at all times. The lack of medical resources and professional guidance on what activities students should engage in makes it difficult for them to stay healthy, hence the negative perception of their emotional development.

Most of the participants stated that they were not able to stay connected with their friends as they used to, making this a challenging experience for them. Available means of connecting students, such as video games and social media, were ineffective for most participants, especially girls, leading to increased loneliness during the period. Some students feel that their mental, physical and emotional health has declined since their parents prevented them from playing with their peers. In addition, the data shows that students feel concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on the community. As such, students feel they may not achieve socio-emotional development due to the various challenges the pandemic has introduced to their relationships with friends and families.

Although some students believe that the home environment is good for education and social-emotional development, the percentage of students who show little or no concern about



academic performance and social-emotional development is very small, indicating that the process has had a negative impact the most.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results support the information presented in the existing literature regarding the impact of COVID-19 on socio-emotional development and academic performance. Existing literature indicates that the COVID-19 outbreak is drastically affecting students' physical, social-emotional development, and learning perceptions and attitudes. Participants provide similar information regarding the factors that led to severe concerns about their grades and social-emotional development. Information provided on various literature works indicates that the quality of education and the support that those teachers can provide to students has changed due to the pandemic, subsequently affecting their development process.

The specialized literature also shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the perceptions and learning attitudes of students, although some have adapted to the implemented changes. The same information is provided by participants, with some expressing satisfaction with the level of teacher support they receive when learning remotely. Although the study involved only 7th and 8th graders aged 11 to 14, its findings are similar to those of the literature review, even though the review involved an analysis of different papers from different countries, which involved students of mixed ages and characteristics.

The current study addresses a wide range of factors affecting students' perceptions of academic performance and social-emotional development following school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the study can contribute to the existing literature by providing information about the importance of teacher support in the learning process for improving academic performance and the continuous connection between students for improved social-emotional development. Findings indicate a positive relationship between teacher support and educational achievement, with connections between students crucial in facilitating social-emotional development.

For this reason, it is recommended that the result be used to guide decision-making in the education sector (Mărcău et. al. 2022b). In addition, the data provided in this study can be used to determine the most effective communication strategies to be used by teachers when supporting students at home. In this case, the study will provide information on the most effective method of communication, ensuring that it allows teachers to help their students throughout their studies and facilitates communication and connection between students for socio-emotional development.



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