ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ONLINE LEARNING

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Abstract

This research article focused on the advantages and disadvantages of online learning in an international school called Cambridge International School in Istanbul, Turkey. This study had forty participants, including twenty-four females and sixteen males between sixteen and twenty-two years old. The findings revealed that financial affordability and flexible schedules had the highest percentages of advantages, respectively. Moreover, access to and sharing resources easily, individual attention, self-discipline, and self-motivation were other online learning advantages. However, freedom, saving time, and social interaction had the lowest percentages. Lack of social interaction, health issues, and connection problems had the highest percentages of disadvantages respectively. Additionally, hard to concentrate, lack of motivation, distract easily and lack of teacher control and waste of time were the other negative sides of online learning. The purpose of this study was to uncover the problematic aspects of online learning and propose solutions that instructors consider them while giving online lessons.

Keywords: Advantages, Disadvantages, Online learning.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Distance or online learning is a kind of learning in which students and teachers are not participating physically in the class. All the studies will be done online through the internet based on the institutions' apps. The internet has a huge impact on distance or online education because it is the only way to build connections with people around the world. Online education or remote learning became more popular and subject to focus on when COVID-19 started and affected the globe. Since then, institutions and governments have looked forward to thinking about how to keep the life cycle and run businesses in their normal way. Not only have educational sectors started to have online education, but also all businesses have shifted from face-to-face to online or remote interaction. The government even put restrictions on civilians and insisted on regard for social distance in their daily lives. Wearing face masks and keeping a social distance have become an obligation for people in countries around the world.

Due to reaching out to students and providing an authentic study environment, educational departments in every country have started online learning or online education systems. Even in some countries, like Turkey, educational departments provide classes on TV channels and ask students to watch and give a report. This study focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of online learning and asks high school students to write an opinion essay based on their online learning experiences. This study was implemented in one of the international schools here in Istanbul to provide information for teachers and propose possible solutions for those drawbacks.

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

The development of technology has brought many facilities for people around the world from education to business. However, everything in this universe has its side effect, so technology is not an exception. This study aims to see the advantages and disadvantages of online learning, especially in a high school context. The research was carried out in one of the international schools in Istanbul, which has many international students mostly from Arabic countries. This study investigates to find out what are the drawbacks of online learning due to present reasonable solutions for them.

3. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

In the era of modern technology, people attempt to digitalize every single thing, such as work, education, communication, business, etc. Specifically, during the COVID 19 period, governments, institutions, companies, education sectors, and many others tried to work remotely to protect themselves from the infection of this disease. Since people did not have enough experience with remote work and online learning, the studies'

results enhanced their knowledge and filled their gaps. In addition, people recently want to work remotely and have online classes because of financial benefits and time savings. To consider all these points, people should know the positive and negative effects of online learning and adjust themselves accordingly.

4. RESEARCH QUESTION

This study focuses on this question:
What are the disadvantages and advantages of online learning?

5. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

I had everything ready to implement this study, but I faced some sort of limitations while collecting research data. First, after the school came to its normal situation, some students still did not participate in face-to-face lessons. They believed that people could be affected easily while commuting from home to school because buses are crowded. Secondly, it is expected to collect the written essays in one or two working days, but it took several days or even a week to collect the data. Third, very few research articles were published on the advantages and disadvantages of online learning, especially in middle-eastern countries; therefore, it might be another shortage.

6. LITERATURE REVIEWS

In the twenty-first century, the rapid development of technology brought an enormous amount of facility for the people around the world such as communication systems, education, businesses, traveling as well as learning new cultures and traditions. Most important, modern technology has shifted the traditional way of learning to online learning or remote learning during the Covid 19 period. Shifting from face-to-face learning to online or remote learning was a new experience for people, especially for schools and university students. Shifting was easier for some progressed and well-equipped countries in comparison to less progressed and poorly equipped countries. To build connections, the internet plays a significant role in online/remote learning and business meetings. In addition to that, lots of apps introduced to the market due to facilitate online education for students, business meetings, and many other remote interactions. This research article focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of online learning in one of the Private International Schools in Istanbul, Turkey.

7. ADVANTAGES OF ONLINE LEARNING

Flexibility

Due to the lack of a set schedule, students are free to balance their employment and education. Since students have little control over the scheduled class meetings in a regular classroom, they must plan their calendars around these times. The majority of people who choose online education have other responsibilities and prefer this format of learning because it gives them control over how they allocate their time to their various assignments (Ghoshal, 2020).

If students are using traditional methods of learning, they will need to adhere to a defined timetable of instruction based on the school's curriculum. However, other forms of remote learning let students determine their learning schedules at their convenience rather than adhering to a set course of study. Even if they are not actively participating in the learning process, distance learning programs give students the freedom to select their educational path (Brown, 2017, cited in Sadeghi, 2019).

When location and timing considerations are made, it is adaptable. Every student enjoys the flexibility of selecting the location and time that work best for them. Smedely (2010) claims that the adoption of e-learning gives institutions and their students or learners a great deal of freedom when it comes to the timing and location of information delivery or receipt for learning purposes.

Reduced Costs

For several reasons, online education can be more affordable; for instance, there is no fee for transportation. The online student is unaffected by various transportation expenses like gas, parking, automobile upkeep, and public transportation charges (Ghoshal, 2020). Since no travel expenses are incurred by the students or learners, e-learning is economical. Additionally, it saves money because it provides learning opportunities for as many students as possible without requiring a large number of buildings (Valentina & Nelly, 2014).

According to (Bijeesh, 2017), the cost of a distance education degree (online or otherwise) may be significantly less expensive for any given program than the cost of an on-campus degree. A distance learning course is a choice for students looking for financially sound options. You do not need to reside in the same city or nation to enroll in the educational institution of your choice. Wherever you have a computer and an internet connection, you can study. Additionally, online learning courses are less expensive than typical education center courses (Brown, 2017, cited in Sadeghi, 2019).

Study from anywhere, anytime

The best part about distance learning is that you can study whenever and from anywhere. You can enroll in the course and begin learning regardless of where you live in the country. If you are a citizen of a foreign country, you can readily obtain course materials even if your course is given by an international institution. You can get all the information and instructions from anywhere on the planet (Nagrale, 2013, cited in Sadeghi, 2019).

No commuting

According to Nagrale (2013, cited in Sadeghi, 2019), if you choose distance learning, you won't need to take packed buses or local trains to get to class. You must have a computer in your house with internet access. You wouldn't need to leave your room because the entire college would be there. The most challenging element is the commute because it costs a lot in terms of time, money, and most importantly, energy. Nobody enjoys making a long commute.

Save time

According to (Bijeesh, 2017), there is no time lost waiting for a bus or train or traveling to and from campus. With study materials on your desk or online resources on your computer, a distance learning program puts the classroom right in your bedroom. Distance learning is an option for students who don't have enough free time and can be pursued from the convenience of their homes. Self-pacing is possible with the use of e-learning; for instance, the asynchronous method enables each student to learn at their own pace, whether it be fast or slow. As a result, it lowers tension while raising contentment (Valentina & Nelly, 2014).

8. DISADVANTAGES OF ONLINE LEARNING:

Lack of interaction

There may be little to no face-to-face interaction with lecturers and classmates because online degree programs are completed on computers. Most of the time, an email will be your only form of communication; therefore, some kids may find it challenging to learn in this environment (Ghoshal, 2020).

Since students are frequently working alone while studying, they could feel lonely and miss out on the social and physical interactions that come with being in a regular classroom, and they are unable to rehearse the lessons aloud. Lack of physical interaction during the educational process may lead to a variety of issues, including extreme isolation and burning (Dyrud, 2000). According to Brwon (2017, cited in Sadeghi, 2019), attending a brick-and-mortar school gives pupils the chance to get to know and interact with people from various places on a personal level. Distance learning simply allows students access to online classrooms and learning resources. The experience cannot be compared to that of a typical college campus, even though students can communicate via chat rooms, message boards, emails, and/or video conferencing software.

The contentious study by (Hara & Kling, 2000) also discovered that it can be difficult to comprehend the difficulties and distress experienced by students online. Also, there were many difficulties and negative situations from working alone at night. Furthermore, e-learning as a teaching approach causes learners to

experience reflection, distance, and a lack of interaction or relationship. Therefore, reducing such impacts calls for a very strong sense of inspiration as well as time-management abilities (Valentina & Nelly, 2014).

Complicated technology

According to Brown (2017, cited in Sadeghi, 2019), any student who wants to enroll in a distance learning program must purchase a variety of tools, such as a computer, a webcam, and a reliable internet connection. Since instruction is given online, there is no physical interaction between students and teachers. A significant disadvantage of distance learning is its overreliance on technology. The class session will come to a stop in the event of any device or software problem, which could impede learning. Furthermore, only students who are computer and tech-savvy can take advantage of online education due to the sophisticated nature of the technology employed in remote learning.

The completion of the online teaching-learning process could be hampered if the teacher and the learner lack the necessary technological competence. Online learning can be frustrating due to technical issues, especially if one is unable to access materials and notes due to a poor internet connection (Ghoshal, 2020). Additionally, e-learning could cause some websites to become overloaded or congested. Unexpected time and financial costs as well as other negative effects may result from this, as well (Collins, Hammond, & Wellington, 1997).

High chance of destruction

According to (Bijeesh, 2017), the likelihood of being sidetracked and forgetting deadlines is significant when there is no teacher present for face-to-face interaction and no peers to assist with ongoing reminders about the remaining work. If you want to finish your distance learning course effectively, you must maintain your motivation and attention. If you tend to put things off and have trouble meeting deadlines, distance learning is not for you. Furthermore, because you are unable to communicate with friends and other classmates as you would in a typical college course, you must resolve any questions you may have on your own without seeking assistance from your teacher or friends (Nagrale, 2013 cited in Sadeghi, 2019). To complete a course, one merely needs to be self-motivated and focused (Brown, 2017 cited in Sadeghi, 2019).

Nobody else will be able to inspire you to study besides you. And occasionally, it could be challenging for you to maintain your motivation and discipline, especially if you're busy with other obligations in your life or easily sidetracked while studying at home (Ghoshal, 2020). Although fantastic, face-to-face interaction is still the best way to build relationships; many students find it difficult to speak when they haven't met the person in person (Ghoshal, 2020).

Difficulty staying in contact with instructors

If students in a traditional class ever have problems with homework or concerns about a lecture, it is usually very easy to talk to the teacher before or after class or arrange meetings online at a later time. However, learners who are taking courses remotely will find it more challenging to contact their instructor. Even while students can send emails, they won't receive the same kind of prompt response they would if they could sit down with their instructor (Hutt, 2017, cited in Sadeghi, 2019). For some students who prefer in-person contact with all the verbal and non-verbal cues, online communication might be frustrating. Online learning is a whole new and demanding task for those who have trouble writing (Ghoshal, 2020).

Health-related concerns

Since e-learning necessitates the use of a computer and other similar equipment, the learner may experience eye strain, poor posture, and other physical issues. As a student enrolled in the home-learning program, I found it difficult to adjust to online education because we had no prior practice or preparation. The home-learning program, according to students, is even more onerous than conventional classes. Common justifications for this included things like, while regular classes may have been challenging, having buddies makes it so much more tolerable and less stressful. Many students enrolled in home education programs also claim that online classes require more effort than traditional classes. Home-learning programs, while highly advantageous and a good substitute for school during school closures, are generally agreed to need some getting used to by students because they are a novel idea and few people have any experience with them (Ghoshal, 2020).

9. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

The current study is looking forward to finding out the advantages and disadvantages of online learning during the pandemic period. This section covers the following subheadings: participants, instruments, and procedures.

Participants

When COVID-19 spread out very rapidly and many people were infected with this disease, the governments put lots of strong restrictions and locked down public and governmental offices. Students have started having online classes for more than one year. The researcher researched it to know the advantages and disadvantages of online learning. In this study, the participants had to write an essay about the pros and cons of online learning. Forty students from Cambridge International School participated, including 24 females and 16 males, and their ages ranged from 16 to 22 years old. All the participants were international and most of them were from Arabic countries.

Instruments

Unlike other studies about language learning challenges and obstacles, in this study, each participant wrote an essay based on their one-year online studying experience about the advantages and disadvantages of online learning. Both positive and negative aspects of online learning are discussed in a single essay. After students handed in their essays, the researcher read them one by one and analyzed the advantages and disadvantages. Moreover, the researcher achieved their original written essays.

Procedures

Before the implementation of this study, the researcher raised this issue with the students and collected oral feedback about the positive and negative aspects of online learning. After that, the researcher asked participants to write an essay about the advantages and disadvantages of online learning based on their one-year experiences. This study aims to collect data from the direct influencers (students) and would be able to propose beneficial solutions and somehow reduce the rate of disadvantages by presenting suitable teaching strategies. Since Istanbul is a multicultural city because of its location, many international students from surrounding countries come to study at either colleges or universities. After collecting essays, the researcher went through each and categorized the positive and negative aspects of online learning and then analyzed the data. The researcher used Microsoft Excel, not other specific apps, to analyze the collected data.

Findings

This research article looks forward to seeing the advantages and disadvantages of online learning in a high school context. The figure below presents the findings of online learning advantages based on participants' written essays relating to the topic.
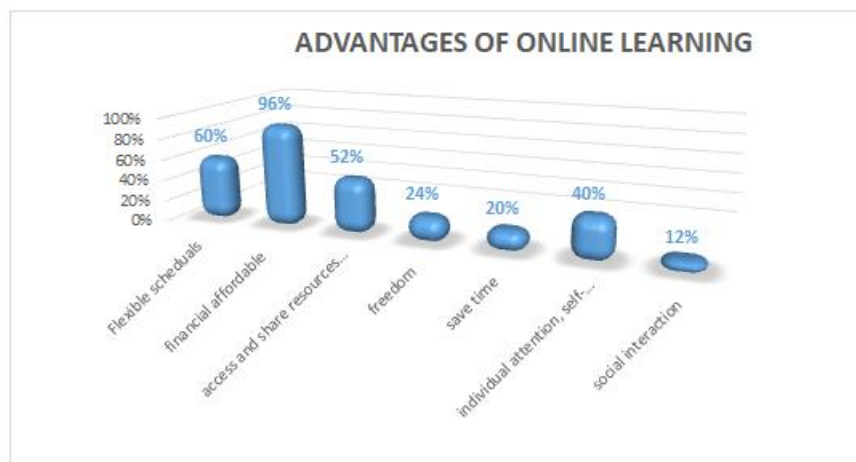

Figure 1: Advantages of online learning

Figure one illustrates the advantages of online learning in one of the international schools (Cambridge International School) in Istanbul, Turkey. The highest percentages of positive aspects of online learning were financial affordability (96%) and flexible schedules (60%), respectively. The third advantage of online learning, according to 52% of participants, is the ease of accessing and sharing resources. Individual attention, self-discipline, and self-motivation options were selected as positive aspects of online learning by 40% of the research participants. The participants of this study also mentioned some other issues as online learning advantages, which are not very influential. Surprisingly, 24% of the participants selected the freedom option, and 20% saved time as an advantage of online learning. Social interaction was selected by 12 % of the participants as an online learning advantage as well.
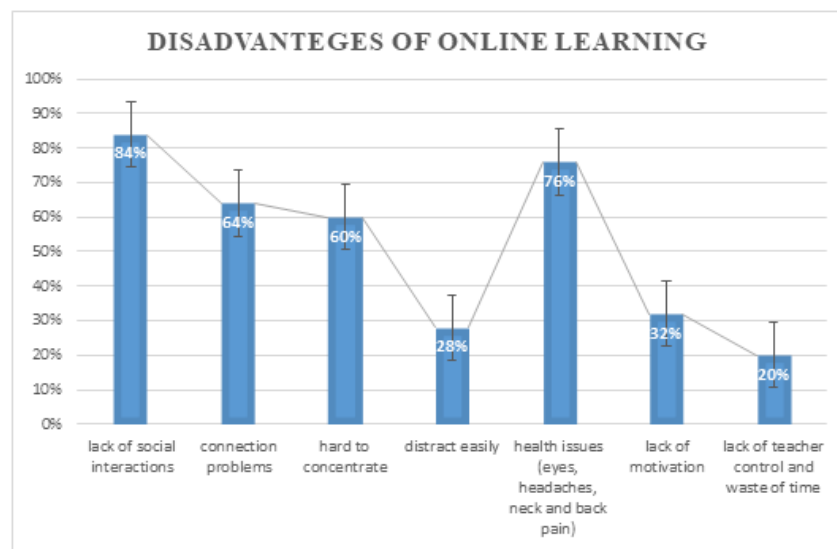

Figure 2: Disadvantages of online learning

Figure two shows the result of the disadvantages of online learning in an international school called Cambridge International School in Istanbul, Turkey. The participants had to write an opinion essay about the topic and express their online learning experiences. 84% of the participants stated that online learning creates a lack of social interaction between students-students and students-teacher. The second most problematic issue that was mentioned relates to health issues. 76% of the respondents claimed that looking at the computer screen for long hours resulted in health problems such as eye soreness, headaches, and neck and back pain. The third and fourth issues relating to the disadvantages of online learning, respectively, were connection problems (64%), and difficulty concentrating (60%). In addition to the above-mentioned online learning challenges, 32% of the participants stated a lack of motivation and 28% stated being distracted easily as obstacles to online learning. The research participants' least favorite online learning obstacles were a lack of teacher control and a waste of time; thus, 20% of them chose this option.

10. DISCUSSION

Although several research articles looked forward to uncovering the benefits and drawbacks of online learning/education previously, this research article is unique because it was conducted right in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic in one of the international schools here in Istanbul, Turkey. The findings revealed financial affordability and flexible schedules were the two important advantages of online learning based on the participants' points of view. The others frequently mentioned concerns of participants were access and sharing resources easily, and individual attention, self-disciplined and self-motivated, respectively. Participants also believed that other factors facilitate online learning, such as freedom, saving time, and social interaction. The previous research articles also highlighted almost the same points which were found in this article, such as flexibility, reduced costs, a study from anywhere, anytime, and saving time. Participants in previous articles believed that "no commuting" was an advantage of online learning; however, participants in this article did not see it as a benefit of online learning. The findings also revealed some other positive factors, which were not mentioned in other research, such as individual attention, self-discipline and self-motivation; freedom, and social interaction, respectively. Since this research was implemented during the pandemic period and participants experienced real challenges of online learning, it uncovered many advantages of online learning compared to the previous ones.

In addition to the advantages of online or remote learning, this research paper also revealed the disadvantages of online learning. Lack of social interaction and health issues (eyes, headaches, neck, back pain, etc.) were the two frequently highlighted disadvantages of online learning. This research also found that learners were more easily distracted in online learning than in traditional or face-to-face learning. However, few participants believed so. In previous studies, the researchers found the same factors, such as lack of interaction, high chance of destruction, and health-related concerns. Participants of this study pointed out some challenges of online learning which were not mentioned in previous ones; in contrast, some challenges are not mentioned in this study. Connection problems and difficulty concentrating were the second significant obstacles to online or remote learning. Additionally, lack of motivation, lack of teacher control, and waste of time were the threw other issues that impeded online learning. Complicated technology and difficulty staying in contact with instructors were the two online learning challenges that were pointed out in previous studies, but in this study, participants did not consider them as online learning obstacles.

I recommend that extra research should be done in the future on this topic (online or remote learning/education) with a considerable number of participants to provide more authentic outcomes to suggest better solutions for teachers and students. Moreover, online learning and business are required due to time constraints because remote study and business are more convenient for both companies and employers.

11. CONCLUSION

Online learning, or remote education and business, has been a concern of people for a long time. This study focused on the advantages and disadvantages of online learning in one of the international schools here in Istanbul during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this study revealed that there were many advantages of online learning in comparison to the previous studies. For instance, financial affordability and flexible schedules had the highest percentages. However, saving time and social interaction had the lowest percentages of all. Unlike previous studies, this research uncovered several disadvantages of online/remote learning, such as lack of social interaction and health issues (eyes, headaches, neck and back pain). There were also some negative aspects such as connection issues, difficulty concentrating, lack of motivation, and so on. Besides all the facilities the researcher had to implement this study, he encountered some limitations while collecting data from the participants. Firstly, it was difficult to gather a considerable number of participants to write their essays relating to the advantages and disadvantages of online learning because governmental offices, educational institutes, and the public were in lockdown. So, I collected data while I was giving students online lessons. Secondly, it would be more significant if the research participants were a lot. Although the researcher experienced some limitations, the results declared many important advantages and disadvantages of online learning. Most importantly, this study was conducted right in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, and participants expressed both the pros and cons of online learning while experiencing it at the time of the study.

Technological development has brought huge changes in every aspect of life in the twenty-first century, especially in both the educational system and business. The previous research articles that were done about the advantages and disadvantages of online or remote education, and the one that was conducted recently, presented many pros and cons. I recommend others conduct research on this topic after the COVID-19 pandemic and ask lots of participants to participate and share their experiences. This one will fill in the gaps and reveal those pros and cons that were not expressed in the previous research articles.

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