

Academic Barriers and Emotional Effects During COVID-19 Online Learning



Sanice E. Salas Alcázar, RT; Yalainis Lozada Galarza RT, Karla C. Colón Romero, EdD, MS.
 Universidad Central del Caribe
 School of Health Sciences and Technologies
 Medical Images Technology Program



Background

Covid-19 has substantially altered all human interactions. In particular, there has been a significant change in the way we interact, as people are required to isolate themselves to prevent further spread of disease. In education, constraints have made the adoption of online learning indispensable. This study explored the academic barriers and emotional effects experienced by undergraduate students at the Universidad Central del Caribe during online learning. Some of the main findings of the study include the finding that there has been an increase in mental health problems among students. This aspect is related to the various academic barriers that students had to face as a result of the change in educational methodology. The study explored some aspects related to the methodological change, for example: isolation among peers and teachers, difficulty in using the various online platforms, connection problems, communication or counseling problems, and high levels of distraction associated with the continuous social changes. Some of the most recurrent emotional effects among the group of students were stress, anxiety, confusion and frustration. The research showed that the abrupt switch to online learning proved to be one of the main causes of stress, despite being a solution to the challenges of Covid-19 blocking learning.

Introduction

During the 2019 academic year, the psychological services office in Universidad Central del Caribe reported 958 psychological interventions among the students of the various academic programs. In contrast to the academic year 2020 where a total of 1,805 interventions were reported, which means an increase of 847 interventions in one year. The purpose of the study was to know what were the possible academic and emotional factors that contributed to the deterioration of the mental health of students during the emergency online learning of covid - 19.

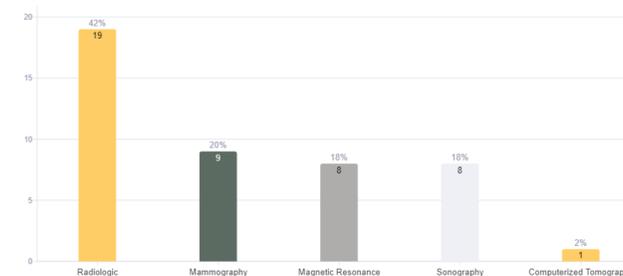
Methods

The study was a quantitative, exploratory study. An online instrument was administered to 101 undergraduate students in the Medical Imaging Program active during the autumn term 2021. The instrument remained active for one week and the response rate was 45%, (45/101). The instrument composed about demographic questions (7), about academic barriers (23) and emotional effects (17) experienced during emergency online learning were asked.

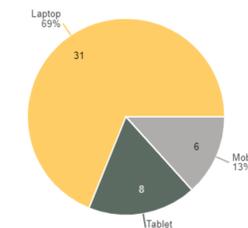
Results

Eighty-nine percent (40) of the participants were female between the ages of 18 and 24 years 84%, (38). Eighty-two percent (37) indicated full-time study and 18%, (8) indicated part-time.

Distribution of participants by academic modality

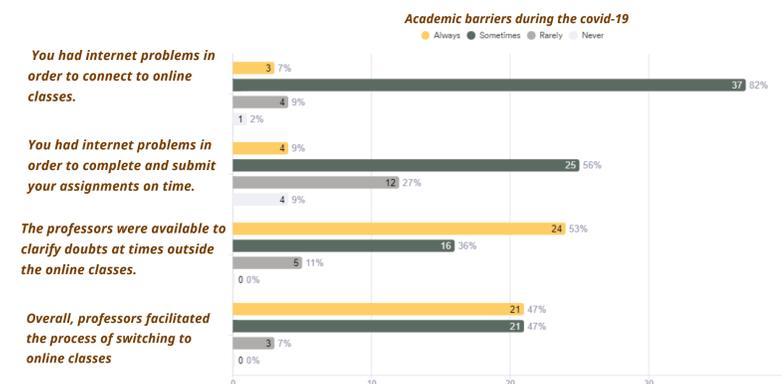


Type of electronic devices you mostly use to take online classes

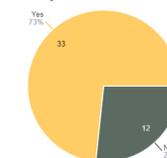


Academic Barriers

Sixty percent (27) of the participants indicated that the academic load increased during the covid-19 online classes. In contrast, 40%, (18) did not consider this increase. On the other hand, 62%, (28) of the students felt that they benefited from the online classes during the pandemic. Participants indicated that during online classes learning 7%, (3), student participation 4%, (2) and communication with professors 13%, (6) were higher than in face-to-face classes.

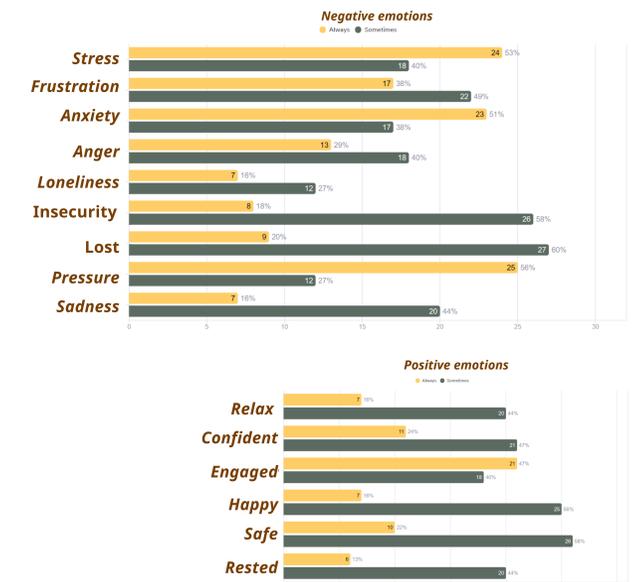


During Covid-19 have you had to dedicate more hours to your studies?



Emotional Effects

What emotions did you experience during the online classes in the Covid-19 period?



Conclusions

Based on the most significant results obtained through our research, we can conclude that 31% of students used laptops as an electronic device to take their online classes, 44% of students spend 3 to 4 hours studying, 73% have had to spend more time studying than usual, 73% indicated that the classes have been less learning than face-to-face, as well as participation and communication between teachers.

- The most negative emotional effects experienced by the students of the Medical Imaging Program at the Universidad Central del Caribe were stress, anxiety and high academic pressure.
- The most positive emotional effects some students faced was feeling engaged and confident during the process.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to the students of the Medical Imaging Program, Dr. Orlando Berrios, Prof. Elaine Ruiz, Prof. Crucita Orama and Claribelitza Ortega for their valuable contributions that made our study possible.