

RESEARCH ARTICLE

An investigation into the impact of COVID-19 on the academic performance of students in higher education institutions in Namibia

Nikodemus Angula*, Amanda Schroeder*, Lindie Beukes*, Deoni Olivier* and Sandra Du Plessis*

Department of Management Science, Namibia University of Science and Technology, Windhoek, Namibia

***Correspondence:**

Nikodemus Angula,
nangula@nust.na
Amanda Schroede,
aschroeder@nust.na
Lindie Beukes,
lbeukes@nust.na
Deoni Olivier,
dolivier@nust.na
Sandra Du Plessis,
sduplessis@nust.na

Received: 22 July 2023; **Accepted:** 14 August 2023; **Published:** 25 August 2023

This study aimed to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the academic performance of students during emergency remote teaching and learning in higher education institutions in Namibia. This study used qualitative methods, meaning qualitative data were collected and analyzed using interpretive techniques. This study employed a case study research design as a single unit of analysis. In this case study, the fourth-year NUST students were the participants. This study used semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data to establish the experiences and views of honor students' self-regulation learning skills during emergency remote teaching and learning and how it affected their academic performance. The study participants were 30 honor students who provided information regarding their experience and views influence of COVID-19 on the academic performance of students in higher education institutions in Namibia during emergency remote teaching and learning. The study findings were that most students were facing the challenges of not having devices to participate in online teaching and learning. Some students do not know how to use gadgets to learn, and network coverage was the main issue for some students, such as network data and self-teaching or learning. In addition, some students stated that there was a lack of Internet access for online classes that lack commitment and self-discipline for many students because they know that they do not write the examination on their respective campuses. This study recommends that higher education institutions in Namibia use parallel hybrid teaching and learning of both online and face-to-face modes of teaching and learning.

Keywords: COVID-19, academic performance, students, education institutions in Namibia

Introduction

In many countries, higher institutions were involved in globalization and demographics to enhance access to life-long learning opportunities (1). According to Yang (2), online teaching and learning made the accessibility of learning

and teaching to take place anywhere, anytime without students physically visiting universities Montacute and Holt-White (2020). Montacute and Holt-White (2020) exclaimed that the transition to online learning brought about some uncertainties in different populations. Some of the challenges and uncertainties included having to vacate the University

premises and having to study from home, which was very different for each student. Some of these students were left without access to electricity, devices, and access to the Internet. Thus, they were unable to complete their work or tasks delegated to them. It was noted that in Namibia in March 2020, COVID-19 was declared a lock which negatively impacted the way people use to leave, and several sectors of the economy were negatively affected as thousands of Namibian lost their job and salary cut.

Problem statement

COVID-19 has been a challenge in Namibia, and still, some regions face challenges in many parts of the country. Over the last 2 years since 2020, COVID-19 has been a distraction to many people who have experienced illness and death (1). As a result, most Namibians lost their families. In addition, the performance rate of many students in higher institutions in Namibia has been affected negatively due to COVID-19 because teaching and learning have switched to online learning, which posed many challenges for students on the use of mobile learning in a short period to attain a good grade. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the academic performance of students during emergency remote teaching and learning in higher education institutions in Namibia.

Objectives

The study's main objective was to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the academic performance of students during emergency remote teaching and learning in higher education institutions in Namibia.

The study's specific objectives are as follows

- To determine the effect of the impact of COVID-19 on students' academic performance in Namibia's higher education institutions.
- To evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on students' academic performance in higher education institutions in Namibia.
- To identify the challenges to students' academic performance in Namibia's higher education institutions during COVID-19.

Research questions

- What are the impacts of COVID-19 on the academic performance of students in higher education institutions in Namibia?

- What affected the academic performance of students in higher education institutions in Namibia during COVID-19?
- What are the challenges to students' academic performance in higher education institutions in Namibia during COVID-19?

Literature review

This section describes existing materials related to the topic under discussion.

Define COVID-19 in general

According to the World Health Organization (2020), COVID-19 death is defined for surveillance purposes as a death resulting from a clinically compatible in a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case unless there is an apparent cause of death that cannot be related to COVID disease (e.g., trauma). In addition, there should be no complete recovery period between illness and death.

Academic performance during COVID-19 a student's experience

COVID-19 has had a detrimental impact on student achievement in many parts of the world, including Namibia. Due to COVID-19, most schools were closed, affecting the achievement of many pupils in underdeveloped nations (3). Furthermore, there is mounting evidence that COVID-19 has harmed many kids' academic achievement. Blankenberger and Williams (4) exclaimed that COVID-19 has affected many students across the globe because students shifted from face-to-face learning to online learning in which students have to learn ICT in a short period to adapt to the online environment.

The challenges of students on academic performance

During COVID-19, the student's academic performance in Namibia has been declining at an alarming rate since 2020. In the Namibian context, as of January 2021, 32,425 cases were reported, and 319 deaths were recorded simultaneously (5). Additionally, the first two cases were recorded in Windhoek district to the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS on 13 March 2020).

Conceptual framework

The framework in [Figure 1](#) below depicts independent and dependent variables for this study. The independent variables

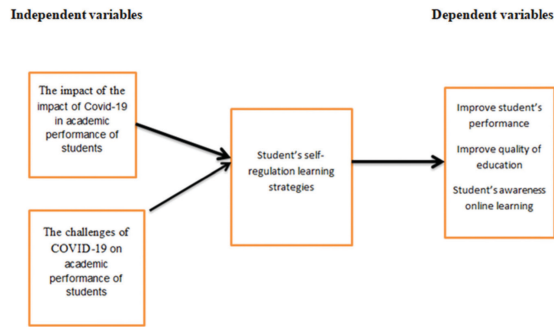


FIGURE 1 | Conceptual framework for student's self-regulation learning strategies in Namibia. Source: researcher's conceptualization.

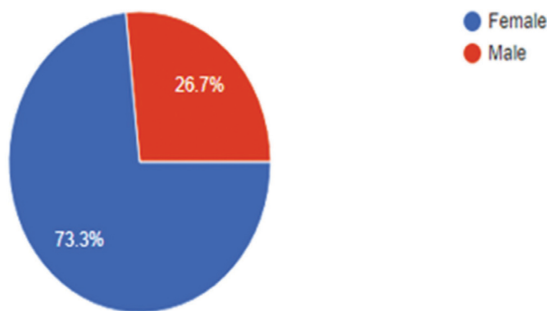


FIGURE 2 | Male and female.

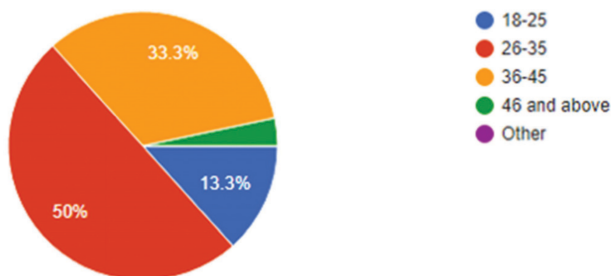


FIGURE 3 | Age group.

are the impact of COVID-19 and dependent variables on the academic performance of students in higher education institutions in Namibia Yoo et al. (2022).

Conclusion

This section is about a literature review in which literature related to the study topic and research objectives were reviewed to understand existing materials relevant to the study under discussion clearly.

Research methodology

This section explains the methods and techniques used in this study, the type of data collected, and how the data would be

analyzed. The selection of the methods and techniques was influenced by the study's goal, which was to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on students' academic performance.

Research design

This study employed qualitative methods. A qualitative method was used in this study because it enabled the researcher to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research. This method allows a researcher to engage participants face-to-face and get real-time feedback from the participants. The study used a case study approach. A case study approach was employed in this study because it enabled the study to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context.

Population

The study target population was 200 students, including fourth-year honor students. The study decided to use honor students as a target population primarily because these were the most affected students as they were in their exit year to finish University.

Sampling size

The determination of this study sample size is determined by Dworkin (2012) statement which states that the recommended minimum sample size for in-depth interviews is between 25 and 30 in a qualitative study. The range between 25 and 30 is regarded as a sufficient number to engage with in a study that is qualitative in nature.

Research instrument

The study used a semi-structured interview method. A semi-structured interview was used because it enabled the interviewer to ask only a few predetermined questions while the rest of the questions were not planned (2). A semi-structured interview was selected primarily because this type of interview combines structured and unstructured interview styles.

Data analysis

The study used qualitative data, and data were analyzed using interpretive techniques. The interpretive techniques organize categories, rearrange, and summarize data in a format others can understand.

Significance

If the research findings are accepted, the researcher believes that MHETI and the government will benefit as follows:

Ministry of Higher Education, Technology, and Innovation: The ministry will have an up-to-date remuneration framework that will provide information about what is to be paid to board members of each SOE in Namibia.

Government: It will provide the government with the latest information when developing online educational strategies to improve education systems in higher education institutions in Namibia which in turn aid management with timely decision-making. The study will add to the existing literature in the field of higher education in Namibia.

Research ethics

The study sought ethical clearance from Namibia University of Science and Technology, under which this study was undertaken in the department of management science. The researchers explained the purpose of the survey to the students and assured them that the information they provided would be confidential.

Conclusion

This section is about research methodology, which explains the methods and techniques employed in the study, the type of data collected, and how the data would be analyzed.

Results and discussion

The gender

Figure 2 shows a total of 30 honor students who participated in the study, of which 26.7% were male representatives and 73.3% were female representatives.

Age group

Figure 3 shows that the age group between 18 and 25 honor students was represented by 13.3%, 26–35 were represented by 50%, 36–45 were represented by 33.3%, and 46 and above were 0%.

COVID-19 on student's academic performance in higher education institutions in Namibia

The participants indicated that many students struggled with online learning during the emergency remote teaching

and learning, leading to poor performance. Some students fell sick after exposure to COVID-19 and tended not to study appropriately. The honor students had a challenge during COVID-19 of learning new techniques being taught online. With COVID-19, higher education institutions in Namibia introduced online classes and online assessments; most students find it quite challenging due to lack or limited Internet coverage. As a result, most students were unable to obtain their evaluations, contributing to many students' low academic achievement during the emergency remote teaching and learning. In addition, the pandemic made it difficult for students to keep up with the school in terms of fees and having access to online education. In contrast, students have become less active in their studies, and as a result, there have been shortcuts to achieving good grades for many students during that period.

Challenges students' academic performance during emergency remote teaching and learning

The participants indicated that some students faced the challenges of not having devices to participate in online tests. Some students do not know how to use gadgets to learn, and network coverage was the main issue for some students, such as network data and self-teaching or learning. In addition, some students stated that there was a lack of Internet access for online classes that lack commitment and self-discipline for many students because they know that they do not write examinations on their respective campuses. Additionally, when lectures were shifted to online learning, not all students could connect online or access the Internet. Moreover, when online classes were introduced, some students were not attending classes due to the limited Internet and gadgets at their disposal.

Students in the academic performance during COVID-19 in higher education institutions in Namibia

The participants demonstrated that some students lacked suitable lessons to write examinations during emergency remote learning because some lecturers did not attend class or canceled class while not leaving with notes for self-study. As a result of that, the academic performance of many students dropped. Moreover, some students had Internet facilities and data issues because they could not afford to recharge super Aweh every 7 days of the week. With lessons being online during COVID-19 and having limited face-to-face lectures, students find it hard to learn the required understanding to pass the subjects. Internet access and equipment were the many issues, and some students had to

travel from houses to the institution to access the Internet. Some students gauge more information through face-to-face learning. Online classes make it difficult for some students to process learning content technically.

Student's perception and experience during COVID-19 and recommendation

Students indicated that adapting to online learning during emergency remote learning was challenging. In the beginning, it was rocky, but the students showed that they understood that it would work for both students and lecturers. In addition, online learning had a positive impact in terms of allowing students and universities to move to a more digitalised way of doing things. However, other students used the opportunity to pass well, while others struggled with the transformation. In addition, students indicated that it is safe for students to attend online classes, but in contrast, some students are struggling due to a lack of Internet coverage and data bundle.

Conclusion and recommendation

The study was about investigating the impact of COVID-19 on the academic performance of students during emergency remote teaching and learning; 30 honor students participated in the study, they indicated that during the emergency remote teaching and learning, many students were struggling with online learning, which led to poor performance, some students were falling sick after being exposed to COVID-19, and they tend not to study appropriately. In addition, the

honor students had a challenge during COVID-19 of learning new techniques being taught online. Therefore, the study recommends that higher education institutions in Namibia use parallel hybrid teaching and learning of both online and face-to-face modes of teaching and learning.

References

1. Mphahlele R, Seeletso M, Muleya G, Simui F. The influence of covid-19 on students' learning: access and participation in higher education in southern Africa. *J Learn Dev.* (2021) 8:501–15.
2. Adams WC. Conducting semi-structured interviews. *Hand Pract Program Eval.* (2015) 2015:492–505. doi: 10.1002/9781119171386.ch19
3. Inf OF, Measu I. *Health inequity and the effects of COVID-19.* Geneva: WHO (2020).
4. Blankenberger B, Williams AM. COVID and the impact on higher education: the essential role of integrity and accountability. *Adm Theor Praxi.s* (2020) 42:404–23. doi: 10.1080/10841806.2020.1771907
5. Southern Africa. *Real-time assessment (RTA) of UNICEF's s ongoing response to COVID-19 in Eastern and Namibia.* New York, NY: UNICEF (2021).
6. Kaur S. Review article sample size determination (for descriptive studies) Simarjeet Kaur. *Int J Curr Re.* (2017) 9:48365–7.
7. Kimura M. Introduction to population genetics. In: *My thoughts on biological evolution. Evolutionary studies* Singapore: Springer (2020) 2012:85–101. doi: 10.1007/978-981-15-6165-8_6
8. Leal Filho W, Wall T, Rayman-Bacchus L, Mifsud M, Pritchard DJ, Lovren VO, et al. Impacts of COVID-19 and social isolation on academic staff and students at universities: a cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health.* (2021) 21:11040. doi: 10.1186/s12889-021-11040-z
9. Dhawan S. Online learning: A panacea in the time of COVID- 19 crisis. *J Educ Technol Syst.* (2020) 49:5–22.
10. Chakraborty P, Mittal P, Gupta MS, Yadav S, Arora A. Opinion of students on online education during the COVID- 19 pandemic. *Hum Behav Emerg Technol.* (2020) 3:357–65. doi: 10.1002/hbe2.240