HOW THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS IMPACTED COLLEGE STUDENTS IN VIETNAM

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Abstract

Throughout Vietnam, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted and altered many aspects of life, including education, especially higher education. College students are among those that are affected the most. Using recent studies and interviews with students from three different universities in Ho Chi Minh City, where the pandemic has been most devastating, this paper examines how the pandemic has impacted college students in Vietnam. The results showed that Vietnamese college students had been faced with both mental and financial problems. Students' perceptions of online learning were also explored. The students also perceived certain opportunities from the situation and had a positive attitude toward and hope for a positive future situation. The paper ends with some suggestions on how to help improve the current situation for ultimate education results.

Key words: Education in the pandemic, higher education, Vietnam, pandemic impact, COVID-19 pandemic

1. Introduction

The world has witnessed the exponential growth of the COVID-19 pandemic with different new variants identified recently. The COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted and altered all aspects of life worldwide, including education (Djita et al 2021; Duong 2020; Rapanta et al 2020; Tran et al. 2021). The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 has forced many universities in the world to close, disrupting the teaching and learning of many teachers and students in the

world. However, education, like many essential activities, cannot be stopped (Duong 2020), and online teaching and learning is the choice for the continuity of education. The switching to online teaching might have put teachers and students in unprepared situations, lacking experiences in teaching and learning online. Vietnam is among the many developing countries in the world that have to adjust their education to the new mechanism in order to cope with the current pandemic-related crises at hand. In this unpredictable situation, the education system in Vietnam including higher education has experienced certain challenges to run its educational system smoothly.

It is not easy for universities and teachers to get students through the studying stages as smoothly as in the traditional in-person mode. A number of studies have been carried to explore the impact of the pandemic on the education system in general and higher education in specific. However, the existing literature is mostly on the situation in the early days of the COVID-19 outbreak and in other places other than Ho Chi Minh City. In addition, recent studies were drawn mainly from data collected from surveys on teachers, students, and parents. This study was aimed to explore the impact of COVID-19 on higher education in Vietnam in general and specifically in Ho Chi Minh City, where the pandemic is hitting hard, from the perspectives of students through informal interviews with them. The study will analyse the students' responses against previous literature to have a more complete picture of the issues.

2. Study Background

2. 1. Pandemic Situation in Vietnam

The outbreak of the COVID_19 pandemic started in January 2020 with the first case found in Ho Chi Minh City (Tran et al 2021 & Nguyen 2020). Vietnam started its first national social distancing on April 1, 2020, which lasted for 15 days. Up to now, four major outbreaks have been occurring throughout the nation with several regions being locked down (Duong 2020, Nguyen 2020). Now, Vietnam is still facing the fourth wave of COVID_19, which is said to be the most severe so far, "putting Vietnam in the list of top 30 countries with the highest daily cases" (Tran et al 2021, p. 1). As of November 12, 2021, Vietnam had had a total of 1,000,897

COVID-19 infection cases and 22,849 COVID_19-related deaths, and most of them occurred in the last wave in Ho Chi Minh City. Ho Chi Minh City is the place that has been hit the hardest by the pandemic with 440918 cases (Nguyen 2020).

2. 2. *Vietnam Education in the Pandemic*

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education can be seen worldwide. The initial measures that most countries implemented at first were protective measures in order to prevent the virus from spreading (Van de Velde et al. 2021). Vietnam was among the first countries that acted promptly in closing its door to prevent the spread of the virus. The government's Directive No. 16/CT-TTg required the closure of schools of all levels to implement social distancing (Nguyen and Nguyen 2021). In the first wave of Covid, students in all 63 provinces and cities in Vietnam were allowed to stay home (Duong 2020). There were some interruptions in the teaching and learning flows and switching in learning modes in the Vietnam education system because the country continued to experience the second, the third, and the fourth waves of the COVID_19. While experiencing the hardest outbreak, Vietnamese keeps running its education, but the pandemic has profoundly changed the nature of teaching and learning from primary school to university. Under the directions of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) about the adjustment of the learning mode, schools and universities have been switching to and adapting a different online teaching and learning mode for their students' continuation of education (Duong 2020).

However, as the pandemic was so sudden and teachers and students were unprepared for the new learning mode, there have been different problems arising. According to Nguyen (2020), in a survey carried out in Vietnam in April 2020, more than 50% of the parents and caregivers who participated in the survey stated that their children, while participating in online learning, did not study as hard as expected. 38% of them also indicated that the online-studying children also faced technical problems during their class.

At the same time, a similar scenario is happening to the higher education system. A wide range of institutions for higher education in Vietnam exist, including specialist colleges, teacher

training institutes, private and state-run universities, as well as co-operatives that receive funding exclusively from tuition fees (Temmerman 2019). College students throughout the nation are one of the most COVID-19-impacted in regard to their school activities and personal activities (Tran et al 2021). The government's COVID-19 preventive measures have influenced the operation of the higher education system. As Van de Velde et al. (2021) stated, "[t]hese measures led to a complete reorganization of higher education, including converting face-to-face lectures to online classes, the partial or total cancellation of internships, laboratory attachments, and fieldwork, and the adaptation of assessment methods" (p. 2).

Through reports from different studies so far, Vietnam's higher education has encountered many challenges through the pandemic. The pandemic-induced online learning has probably been the biggest challenge. Adjusting to online teaching and learning practice during the pandemic is a big challenge for Vietnam's education (Nguyen and Nguyen 2021). Although e-learning is not a new concept in the world, it still "has played a peripheral role in the formal education systems related to higher education… in Vietnam" (Pham and Ho 2020, p. 1327). Even though Vietnam has embedded technology in many aspects of life, technology has not widely used in education yet (Pham and Nguyen 2020). This limited utilization of technology in education may have put teachers and students in difficulties with their new e-learning mode.

2. 3. Significance of the Study

How the pandemic has affected college students is also a great concern since college students "belong to the most affected groups in the population", especially in large cities which have been struck badly by the COVID-19 pandemic (Tran et al 2021. p. 1). However, there have few studies on the impact of the pandemic on college students. So far, most of the studies focused on situations of the whole education system in Vietnam. Duong (2020) focused on the COVID-19 challenges for the education sector. Pham and Nguyen (2020) studied about both the challenges and opportunities for Vietnamese higher education in the pandemic. Vu et al. (2020) investigated Vietnamese teachers' perceptions and perceived support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) explored students' embracing the video conferencing in learning. Nguyen (2020) explored the issues from parents' and caregivers' perspective.

There has been little research on Vietnamese students' perspectives to hear their voice on the issues directly related to them.

Tran et al (2021) has been one of the few studies researching students' voice on impact of the pandemic on them. Tran et al (2021) focused on students' pandemic-induced lifestyle and studying environment, wellbeing, as well as awareness of and compliance with the COVID prevention regulations. They reported that 64.53% of the 1875 students who participated in the survey refused to accept online learning as an upcoming trend. Nearly one quarter of students were found "in a negative mood," and also a quarter of them "showed signs of depression" (Tran et al 2021, p. 1). The study also discovered "increasing patterns in sleeping time, body weight, and sedentary lifestyle" but "a positive attitude toward health protection and compliance with government regulations" (Tran et al 2021, p. 1). However, this study was a survey-based study, and details on students' insights have not been discovered yet.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic is potentially having a negative impact on Vietnamese college students, this research explored a more in-depth understanding of the situation. This study was designed with interviews with students to gain a more in-depth understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on college students following other survey-based studies. It is hoped that teachers and institutions should have better ideas of their students' situation, and therefore be able to teach them better and help them pursue their education more effectively during the pandemic. To gain a deeper and broader understanding of students' situation, the paper aims to: (1) describe how they have been affected by the pandemic - the difficulties they may have encountered; (2) describe their involvement in and feelings toward their study and study results in the pandemic; and (3) describe the perceived support they have thus far received. From there, strategic measures will be suggested for Vietnam's higher education following the change of learning mode.

3. Methodology

In this study the author examines the situation of higher education-especially how it has affected college students in Vietnam based on relevant literature and Zoom interviews with

students studying at universities located in Ho Chi Minh City, an area that has been hardest hit by COVID.

3. 1. Participants

I conducted Zoom interviews with three college students (2 males and one female). They are Thien (male), Duc (male) and Mai (female). They have been given pseudonyms for privacy reasons. All the three students are second-year students at three different universities in Ho Chi Minh City, majoring in different subjects. Thien is studying Information Technology, and Duc's major is International Economics. Mai is pursuing a degree in Event Management. They all reported that their institutions and most of other universities in Ho Chi Minh City are still closed for in-person learning and switching to online learning.

Table 1. Basic information about the students

Student name	Gender	Age	Major	Year in program
Thien	Male	20	Information Technology	2
Duc	Male	20	International Economics	2
Mai	Female	20	Event Management	2

3. 2. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of five sections. In the first section, the students were asked about the current teaching and learning situations at their university and other universities from their observation. During the second section, the respondents were asked about the financial pressure they may have experienced as a result of the impact of the pandemic on the economy of society. Section three had questions regarding their psychological state during the most severe

pandemic outbreak. In the fourth section, the students were asked about their perception of teaching and learning during the pandemic, including their feelings and beliefs, their references to in-person mode versus online mode, the difficulties and challenges they may have encountered, and possible breakdowns they have perceived. The questionnaire concluded with section 5, which consisted of questions regarding any perceived support received from school, teachers, friends, the university, and the community thus far.

Students were interviewed in Vietnamese in order to facilitate the interview process. The interviews were then transcribed and translated to English for data analysis. The quotations from the students in this paper have been translated into English.

4. Study Results and Discussion

This section will present and discuss the students' perspectives on the challenges they and other students have encountered, perceptions of online learning, perceived support from different sources, and the opportunities they thought they had gained from the situation. This section also suggests certain solutions for higher education in Vietnam.

4. 1. Challenges Encountered by Vietnamese College Students

In the study, it was determined that Vietnamese students have faced various challenges as a result of the pandemic and adjustments in learning modes, including mental problems and financial strains, and logistical issues.

4.1.1. Mental Problems

A campus is a place where students gather for study, school activities, and socialization. However, these places have not been available to students when the COVID-19 pandemic has prohibited them from attending. In a study utilizing data from the COVID-19 International Well-Being Study of 125 higher education institutions in 26 countries, Van de Velde et al (2021) discovered that "not the pandemic itself, but rather the secondary effects of the

pandemic relate to students' mental health"(p.1). On the other hand, Cornwell and Waite (2009) indicated that leading a solo life, having a narrow social network, infrequently participating in social activities, and loneliness feeling are factors affecting mental health. Therefore, it is anticipated that students will be more susceptible to mental health disorders during the pandemic period because of lockdown measures being imposed by both the government and their institutions (Van de Velde et al 2021).

Several factors related to possible mental difficulties among Vietnamese students were also revealed in this study. The study results also showed that most students have an inactive social life and looser social relationships. According to Mai and Duc, the biggest challenge to students is the mental pressure. Mai said, the students have to lead a sedentary life, becoming lazy and unmotivated to learn. Duc also added that the teacher-student relation is the most concerned, followed by the student-student relation. "When normal studying and working resume, we may experience a pause in our in-person interactions with our friends and teachers," said Duc, explaining that they will have to practice in-person socializing again.

According to the three students, when studying online, the rapports between students and between students and teachers were looser than when learning in person, especially between teachers and students. Thien said, "for some classes, I did not know the teacher's face until the second half of the semester." According to Duc, relationships with friends and teachers had been affected due to the fact that chances for meeting and hanging out have been limited. This was especially true for newly made friends. Mai said that her psychology about online studying had not been affected much because her university had an efficient online studying mechanism, and she had been mentally prepared for the change. Nonetheless, the lack of in-person meetings created some barriers for team or group projects, for which they called each other on the phone to communicate. The private phone calls could have created misunderstandings, which led them to feel hesitant when communicating with others for their learning. More seriously, they had to experience the sense of shock and feeling loss when learning of the deaths of teachers due to COVID-19.

As far as COVID-19-related health issues are concerned, all the students were well-aware of the dangers of the virus and were concerned about their own health and that of others. They showed strong compliance with the government's safety measures to ensure their own and their family members' safety, as well as the safety of others in the community. Mai added that they felt more secure and believed in the management of the government in fighting against the virus. Since more and more people have been getting the COVID-19 vaccine as government regulations are being followed, she hoped that everything would resume to "normal" soon.

Additionally, the students, who are now getting used to online studying habits, were concerned about having to change their study habits again when "normal" studying resumes.

4.1.2. Financial and logistical pressure

Providing infrastructure and devices for online learning is a major challenge for several countries. It has been reported by Perouli et al (2021) that at the University of East London, many students lacked access to devices and the Internet was not strong enough to support online learning. Many college students in Vietnam also experienced the lack of learning devices and the Internet (Duong 2020). It is particularly difficult for students in mountainous and rural areas to join the online learning mechanism, since they do not possess the necessary infrastructure to adopt it easily (Tran et al, 2021). The situation was also reported in the interviews with the students. According to the students interviewed, in most cases, students had to prepare the devices themselves, and the school provided no device support except for Duc's university, which provides laptop computers to students in need. Two students Mai and Thien in this study also reported that even in some courses, teachers required students to have two devices for learning, especially when they are taking an exam. Students have to prepare two devices when taking exams with one device used to video capture the students while taking the exam. Both stated that taking exams online this way is a real challenge for students.

Another problem is related to the availability of learning materials. Mai explained that the pandemic affected transportation and therefore shipping. As a result, their supply sources for studying projects were cut down, causing a delay in finishing their projects for their classes.

Factors outside classrooms also affect students' mental health and directly affect their studying results. Living costs are an intrinsic part of student life, and the COVID crisis makes them even more burdensome. From the talks with the students, it is learnt that those who lived on campus may get a partial refund from the school. In contrast, students living off-campus were still required to cover their housing rent in full. Students have actually returned home while taking their online classes. Although they do not reside in the residence, they are required to cover the rent. For this reason, some students have been stressed. Likewise, the student with whom I had an interview is also under pressure to pay house rent fees without staying because of their contract. Some students may get a discount from kind landlords who understood the situation and sympathized with the students, but other students have to pay the full price without living there.

4. 2. Students' Perceptions about Learning Online during the Pandemic

As noted by Van de Velde et al. (2021), the transition to online learning may have left some students feeling isolated and overburdened without much academic support from friends and teachers, especially those in careers that require on-site training. When students are taking virtual classes at home, they may encounter "conflict, with breached emotional boundaries, physical privacy, and parental intrusiveness" (Aquilino 2006, cited in Van de Velde et al. 2021, p. 2). Additionally, this study also seeks to understand the perspectives of students regarding this transition. Therefore, students were asked to express their opinions on the transition to online learning mode. This section examines students' perspectives on the differences between the traditional and newly adopted modes of learning, whether they have been prepared for the change, their preference between the two modes of learning, their perceived quality of education from the newly introduced mode, and their enrolment during the pandemic.

4.2.1. Students' Experiences with Online Learning

Both positive and negative experiences were reported by the students. Among the positive experiences that the students had with online learning, recording and reuploading of the live lesson recordings were among the most notable. If the students wish to review the content of

their needs after class, these recordings will be available to them. Additionally, Duc stated that it is easier to deliver learning materials in virtual learning mode than in in-person learning. Mai added that in order to control and facilitate the effectiveness of online learning, Mai's institution asked students to complete an evaluation form after each class in which they report any difficulties. The form then would be sent to the university so that the university can know if there is an incident met or ideas raised by the students.

The utilization of user-friendly online learning tools such as Zoom and Google Meet for the ease of teachers and students is another positive learning experience that was mentioned in the interviews, as Nguyen and Nguyen (2020) mentioned these are among many other tools widely used in Vietnam. This result suggested that universities and other institutions should adopt online learning applications that are user-friendly and can be accessed on both computers and mobile phones, allowing students to access lessons more easily.

All the students agreed that learning online helped them save a lot of time physically moving and travelling. Students had more time to engage in activities of their interest such as doing online projects of their own choosing, searching the Internet, and studying useful flatforms, and learning about other subjects such as cooking. Duc added that he also had more time to spend with his family members.

Online learning was deemed to be even more efficient for some courses by the students. In the opinion of Duc, online learning did not affect students in his major except for those doing internships. Duc reported that he was very pleased with his online learning, even better than when he learned in person. Nonetheless, he did not forget to mention that other majors which require practical experience were much affected.

In regard to the negative experiences with online learning, Perouli et al (2021) reported that, at the University of East London, teachers have found that motivating and engaging their students in an online class has proven difficult due to their students turning off their cameras and thus lacking visual feedback from students. Most Vietnamese teachers and students were unprepared for the transition to online learning when it happened in Vietnam. Therefore,

limitations and challenges are sure to arise during the execution of the learning mode. On the students' side, Mai agreed that students' turning off their cameras while studying made it difficult for teachers to monitor the entire class's learning process. Mai stated that when requiring students to turn on their camera, teachers are not flexible in letting students turn off the Zoom camera when necessary. One challenge for students when participating in online learning is finding a quiet learning space. The students may be at home or in a place where they do not have their own study space, and other family members may wander around while they are learning. It is therefore sometimes necessary to turn off cameras, according to Mai. From Thien's perspective, it is more difficult to master the knowledge when studying online, being distracted by other things around.

Moreover, due to the pandemic, extracurricular activities, which were formerly an essential part of traditional learning in Vietnam, have been reduced to a minimum. According to Duc, "some courses should be completed in person for optimum results since they cannot be successfully completed online."

4.2.2. Preference of Learning Modes: Online or in-person?

According to Pham and Nguyen (2020), traditional teaching practices emphasize the importance of interactions for effective learning. The pandemic-conditioned online learning mechanism, however, does not allow much in-person interaction and places more emphasis on listening. The undergoing of both teaching and learning practice creates a question of which form of education is more effective.

In the interviews, the students were asked about their perceptions of online learning and whether they preferred in-person learning or online learning. The students were pleased with the opportunity to access the recordings of the live online classes after class for review. Another pro of learning online was time saving, which allowed students to deal with other matters. Their answers to the question asking about their reference between in-person and online learning varied depending on the students' majors. The one whose major did not require practical experience preferred online as it saved time and was more efficient. Those with majors that

need practical hands-on activities prefer to study in-person. All of them, however, expressed a desire to meet their friends in person. This result suggests that for courses that require hands-on activities and hands-on training activities, educators need to work on ways that meet their needs and motivate students to learn and enhance the quality of learning.

4.2.3. A decrease of Education Quality

The students agreed that the quality of the teaching and learning was inferior to what they experienced before COVID-19. Mai believes this level of quality is lower than usual because students were not exposed to practical skills training in extracurricular activities, which are now moved to online theoretical lessons and regulated by a shorter time frame, and teachers cannot teach effectively without demonstrating real-world experiences. As stated by Duc, students who learn online are not fully observed by their teachers and do not receive timely reminders, resulting in them gradually neglecting their learning. According to Duc, if students turn off the camera and micro and go to sleep, no one knows. Thien commented that the challenges of learning online are the lack of in-person interaction with the teacher and students having to do housework, which prevents students from concentrating on their learning and hence lowers the quality of learning.

Duc stressed the role of peers who are studious students in motivating him to learn well, saying that "being friends and working with them, my level is also enhanced." Two of the students suggested that students' attitudes and determination were decisive in students' online learning since teachers now had a looser control of students' learning process. According to Thien, "the online learning does not have a large impact on those who are studious" while Mai said ". "The school already has the recording of the live lesson as a back-up plan for students" so "it is the students who should be proactive in their learning," and "I don't see any point to say that they can't study."

4.2.4. A decrease in students' enrolment

Students' enrolment is also affected dramatically as a result of the pandemic. The students interviewed agreed that they have observed a trend of dropping classes and school leaving among their peers, both at their universities in particular and in other institutions in general. Mai, who had read and done a study about college students' enrollment situation, reported that each class had at least two students who left school and about 10 who deferred their studying until the next semester. Loss of interest in studying was cited as one of the reasons for dropping classes and leaving school. Thien and Duc said that most of the students are not engaged in the lesson when learning online, being distracted by other means of media available on the device such as Facebook. In addition, many students have dropped out of school due to the high cost of housing, tuition, and fees, and the COVID-19 pandemic has made it impossible to work part-time to finance their studies.

4. 3. Perceived Supports from Different Sources

Koob et al (2021) found that empowerment through social support is one important study resource for students during stressful times. Different entities, in fact, have been trying to solve the pandemic-related problems for the education system. According to (Duong 2020), MOET has directed the department of education in each province to carry out mass teaching on television to students while online learning is also provided at the same time. Moreover, large Internet providers in Vietnam such as Viettel, VNPT, MobiFone and Vietnamobile, answering the call of MOET, offered free data to teachers, students, and parents to use for the online learning purpose. Universities and schools also offer tuition and fee reduction for general students and funding for in-need students.

In this study, we interviewed students and discovered that in general, students also found different sources of support from the government, charity organizations, some kind landlords, and especially their institutions with varying levels of support depending upon their locations and institutions. For students who were unable to evacuate from the center of the pandemic and were forced to remain there during the high wave, the government provided financial assistance and food. In addition, students were among those who were prioritized in getting the vaccine before other ordinary citizens under the government policy.

Additionally, the students received training on online learning methods from their institution. Mai also added that their institution sent free books with free shipping to students who now, due to the pandemic, could not travel to campus or the city to take the books they left there. In addition, most of the universities have reduced tuition and fees. "The university has also cooperated with partner banks to offer loans to in-need students with low interest," said Thien. Especially, Duc said "when the pandemic was at its highest point, the university sent a form to students and asked them to fill a report about their current situation, their location, housing situation (whether they were staying in a rented house or had gone back to their hometown), and the difficulties they are facing. The university then provided money and food for in-need students.

4.4. Suggestions for Higher Education Institutions to Overcome Pandemic-driven Challenges

Along with other countries in the world, the time has come for Vietnam to implement measures to assist students (Duong 2020) so that students can overcome the difficulties and quickly adapt the new learning mode for optimal study results. It is suggested that different approaches and measures should be taken to help facilitate the higher education of the nation. Following are suggested assistive measures that may be applicable for the situation of Vietnam higher education.

Self-paced blended learning courses: As discussed previously, MOET has provided mass-teaching lessons using televisions in order to overcome the problems of internet and device shortages. As a practical matter, this is a proactive approach which is appropriate for a developing country such as Vietnam where smartphones and laptops are not always readily available for students, particularly in rural areas. It is, however, only appropriate for PK-12 students whose studying programmes are almost the same and are administered by MOET. Moreover, it is not applicable to higher education institutions whose programs differ from one another. Therefore, self-paced learning courses where class modules and learning materials are always available during or after class are necessary so that students can learn at their own pace whenever they have access to wifi and devices.

*A flexible learning mode***:** Koob et al (2021) stated that suitable digital learning formats are essential to facilitate students' learning engagement. As discussed above, students' learning fields may or may not require hands-on practices. Online learning mode and in-person learning mode have their own advantages and disadvantages, and students need a learning mode that suits their needs. A flexible method that combines in-person and online learning would provide greater support to students in this pandemic situation.

*User-friendly tools***:** As discussed above, it is good to learn that many institutions have employed user-friendly online-learning tools which help students learn with ease. It is suggested that user-friendly tools for e-learning should be widely used in all institutions so as to minimize the technical difficulties for teachers and students.

*Sufficient technology training for teachers and students***:** As it is the beginning of the online learning era for Vietnam, it is essential to provide necessary professional development and especially training on online teaching tools for teachers. In addition, it is essential to provide training on primary digital skills for students.

*Investment on learning technology advisors***:** As Perouli et al (2021) have found from Europe's successful higher education system, learning technology advisors at each institution must be well prepared and well invested, as they are the ones who will provide the required training for teachers, staff, and students, as well as provide advice on how to navigate the learning system through the pandemic itself.

*Adjusted teaching approaches***:** Online learning requires teachers to adapt their pedagogical approaches to fit the upcoming virtual learning mode. One method is "dividing the teaching content into smaller units to help students focus" (Bao 2020 p. 114).

*Meetings for sharing***:** Koob et al (2021) found that "active self-care and academic self-efficacy are identified as important personal resources" (p. 1). Students should be aware of the importance of their determination and proactiveness during this difficult time. Virtual meetings should be organized to enable students to share their concerns as well as their strategies for

being actively engaged in e-learning. Some virtual extracurricular activities where teachers and students can meet each other for activities other than studying are also needed so that they can build strong rapport, having the feelings to be included and cared for.

Back-up plans always available: In this unpredicted time, the preparation of alternative plans is necessary to teachers and students to assure the continuation of education.

Regular checking from institution leaders: As Mai reported in this study, to control and facilitate the effect of online learning, students in her university were asked to complete the evaluation form after each class and report any problem and send it to the university so that the university can know if there is incident or ideas raised from students. This is a good way to support students in the first stage of their online learning.

In the switch to online line learning during the pandemic, everyone is on the path of learning and not everyone is successful. We must take steps to ensure the learning process is successful. While finding sources of financial support requires time and more effort, the change in teaching methods and other pedagogical measures can be feasibly acquired initially.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated Vietnamese college students' insights about how the COVID_19 pandemic has impacted them. Study results showed that the students had both mental and financial challenges. The mental challenges encountered by college students included an inactive social life and weaker social relationships. The financial problems consisted of a shortage of learning devices and learning materials plus a housing fee burden. The study also explored students' perceptions about learning online during the pandemic, revealing students' major-driven learning mode preference and perceived decrease of education quality and students' enrolment. The students additionally reported some perceived support from different sources, but they are insufficient. Suggestive strategies to cope with the situation were also presented. In an incident of this magnitude, challenges are unavoidable, and everyone must work together to overcome them.

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