

Impacts of Covid-19 Lockdown in the Academic Life of Undergraduate Students: An Online Survey

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Abstract

The impact of COVID-19 lockdown can be widely observed in all sectors of the nation including education. An online survey was conducted to identify the impacts brought by the nationwide lockdown in the academic life of undergraduate students currently studying at different bachelor's levels and the ones who have completed final exams after the ease of lockdown. Particularly, the study explored both the positive and negative impact of COVID-19 lockdown. A structural questionnaire link using 'Google form' was circulated using messenger and E-mail from 20 April to 27 April 2021. A total of 98 students, from Tribhuvan University (60), Kathmandu University (16), Pokhara University (11), and Purbhanchal University (11) participated in the survey. The study found that around 42.86% of the students' academic life was affected negatively whereas only 2.04% reported positively. The majority of students pointed to delay in examinations as the primary negative impact followed by difficulty in learning due to excessive use of the internet, disturbance in pass out the pattern, loss of job, and issues of dropout. On the positive side, students have experienced an improvement in reading habits, development in the skills of self-study, virtual learning, group work, and digital competencies. Thus, the study concludes that students' academic life was impacted negatively

than positively. Therefore, the study suggests universities, educational institutions, and relevant stakeholders come up with a concrete plan to respond to the impacts seen in the academic career of students unless the lockdown perpetuates other consequences.

Keywords: Covid-19, Lockdown, Positive Impact, Negative Impact, Undergraduate Students.

Introduction

On December 2019, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was detected in china which rampantly spread at an alarming rate across the world and was declared as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11th March 2020 (Chakraborty, et al., 2020). Within the month of January 2020 the virus apparently started to upsurge throughout the parts of the world with 9782 cases in the Western Pacific, 17 in South East Asia, 9 in regions of America, 14 in the European region, and 4 in the eastern Mediterranean (WHO, 2020). Nepal confirmed its first COVID-19 case on 25th January 2020 and started its full lockdown on 24th March and extended it until 14 June (Mahato, et al., 2020). As of 3rd May 2021, 152199238 cases have been confirmed globally with 192613 death cases and 8993151 recovered cases (WHO, 2021). By 14 May 2021, Nepal has recorded 431191 confirmed cases with 4466 deaths and have administered 2528984 vaccine doses (WHO, 2021) while the country has entered into the second phase of lockdown, the past record of 5743 cases have been broken with the new record of 7137 in a single day. (The Himalayan Times, 2021). The dire consequences of this COVID-19 lockdown have impacted all rounds of the world economy including education. According to Reddy, Soudien & Desire only within mid-April 2020, a total of 1.725 billion students globally had been affected by the closure of schools and higher education institutions, and the number has further rocketed up to 825 million as of 12 January 2021 (UNESCO, 2021). Recent monitoring of UNESCO shows that 23 countries are currently implementing nationwide closures and 40 are implementing local closures, impacting about 47 percent of the world's student population. (UNESCO, 2021b)

Concerning the national scenario, the first case of COVID-19 was found on January 25, 2020, when a 32-year Nepali student returning from Wuhan, China, was tested positive (Bastola, et al., 2020). Therefore, the government of Nepal officially directed to close all educational institutions in an attempt to curb the spread of COVID-19. Afterward, school students including the higher education were locked down at home for nearly seven months (Khadka, 2020) affecting county more than a third of the population or 10 million students in schools and colleges (Sureis, 2020). A study conducted by UNESCO also estimated that nearly nine million (8,796,624) students in Nepal are affected due to the nationwide closures of which 404,718 student belongs to higher education institutions. (Parajuli, et al., 2020). The study of the Ministry of Education shows that the national wide closure of educational institutions has affected 284453 higher secondary students enrolled only in Tribhuvan University, the oldest and largest of Nepal's universities (MOE, 2018). The lockdown has had an enormous impact on higher education student's practices regarding academic work and life. With a shift from face-to-face to virtual mode, many students in Nepal do not have proper access to stable internet and lack electronic devices, and therefore is impossible to conduct distance learning in an

inclusive manner (Rauniyar, 2020). Delay in examinations has left many higher education students in dilemma and fear of losing the academic year. A study conducted in Nepal among 105 students from high schools, colleges, and universities found that 18.15% of the students were experiencing severe anxiety, 22.9% moderate anxiety, and 25.7% mild anxiety due to pandemic (Dangal & Bajracharya, 2020). Besides, loss of student job, worries about the financial situation, future education, career, and emotional health are some of the examples observed in the current context. On top of the many challenges, the lockdown has led to some positive changes in the habits of students helping them to develop skills of reading, self-study, virtual learning, etc. However, after conducting existing literature, it has been observed that no comprehensive studies have been conducted to understand the impacts that COVID-19 lockdown has brought in the academic life of students particularly those pursuing bachelor's degrees and who have recently completed undergraduate level. To these concerns, this research has been initiated to bridge the current knowledge gap by investigating the positive and negative impacts of lockdown in the academic life of undergraduate students.

Research Objectives

- To identify the positive impacts of COVID-19 lockdown in the academic life of undergraduate students.
- To identify the negative impacts of COVID-19 lockdown in the academic life of undergraduate students.

Materials and Methods

Target Population

The study involved a survey about the impact of COVID-19 lockdown on the academic life of undergraduate students. Therefore, the target group consisted of students currently pursuing bachelor's degrees and who have recently completed their final year/semester board exams after the ease of lockdown. A total of 98 samples was collected using random sampling technique with (61.2%) from Tribhuvan University, (16.3%) Kathmandu University, (11.2%) Pokhara University, and Purbhanchal University respectively.

Instrument

The instrument for this study was a researched developed survey. After a detailed review of existing literature on COVID-19 impact on the education sector and students' academic life, three key frameworks pertaining to the proposed issue were drafted; Socio-demographic characteristics, lockdown and academic life, and lockdown and its impact. To explore these topics, mainly close-ended questions were developed. Altogether, there were 19 questions divided into three aforementioned sections.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study employed a quantitative method using an online google form to collect the data which was distributed through emails and messenger from 20th April and was accessible for a week. The collected data were analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and the results are presented through tables, charts, and graphs with corresponding frequencies and percentages.

Results & Discussion

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Information of Respondent

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	39	39.8
	Female	59	60.2
	Total	98	100.0
Education	Bachelor running	73	74.5
	Bachelor Completed	25	25.5
	Total	98	100.0
University	Tribhuvan University	60	61.2
	Kathmandu University	16	16.3
	Pokhara University	11	11.2
	Purbanchal University	11	11.2
	Total	98	100.0

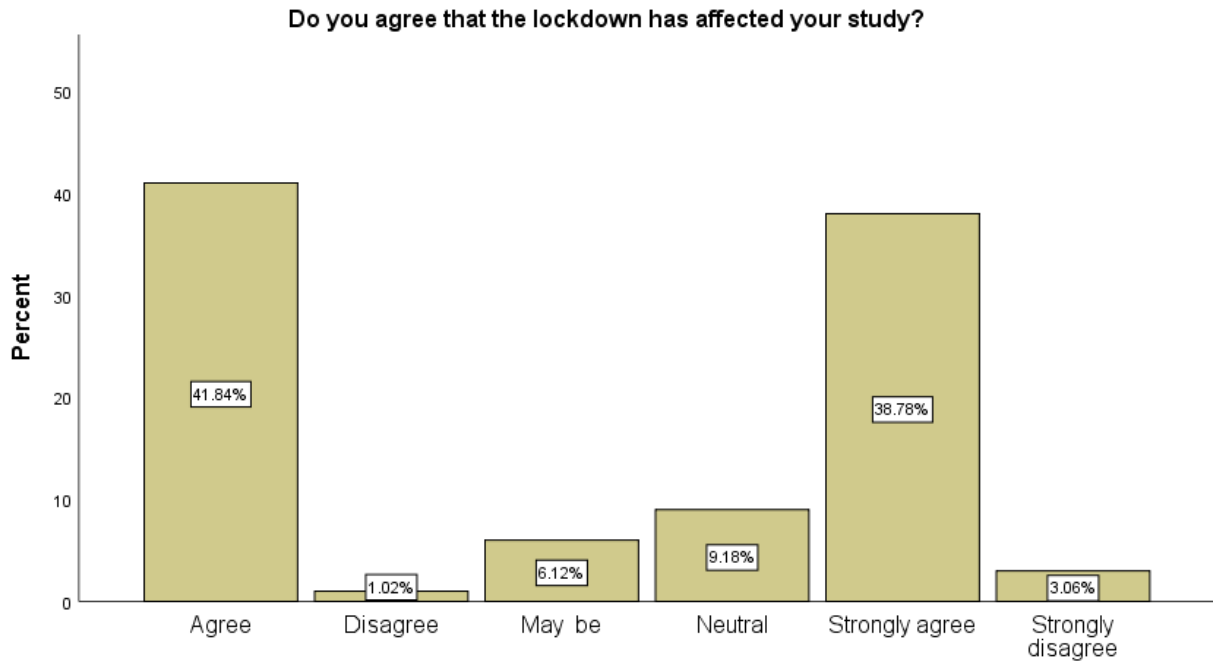
Above table presents the socio-demographic characteristic of the respondent who participated in the study. Out of 98 respondents, 60.2% were female and 39.8% were male respondents. In terms of education, 74.5% have been pursuing their bachelor's degree and 25.5% have completed it recently. Likewise, students from the four largest universities of Nepal participated in this research. 61.2% were from Tribhuvan University (TU), 16.3% were from Kathmandu University (KU), and 11.2% were from Pokhara University (PU) and Purbanchal University (PU) respectively. The study found that the minimum age of students was 18 whereas the maximum was 27 years. 21.7 was the average age of students.

Here in this study, we found that female respondents constitute larger participation than male. The majority of respondents were from Tribhuvan University followed by Kathmandu University and the least and the same percentage of respondents were from Pokhara and Purbanchal University. The proportion of students currently in bachelors level were higher than that of those having the status of completion.

Table 2: How did you continue your study during the COVID-19 lockdown?

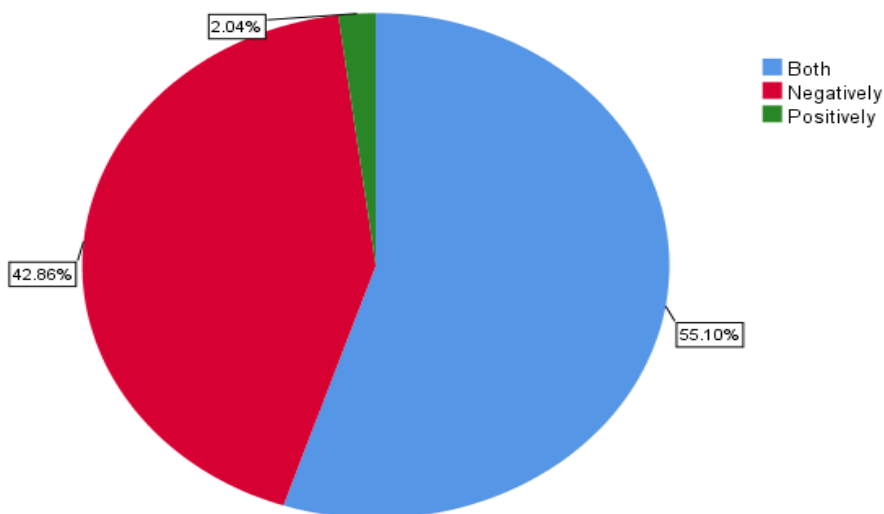
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Online classes	Yes	65	66.3	66.3	66.3
	No	33	33.7	33.7	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Pdf files provided by the college	Yes	16	16.3	16.3	16.3
	No	82	83.7	83.7	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Self-study	Yes	31	31.6	31.6	31.6
	No	67	68.4	68.4	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Group study	Yes	3	3.1	3.1	3.1
	No	95	96.9	96.9	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Did not study at all	Yes	16	16.3	16.3	16.3
	No	82	83.7	83.7	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	

Above shown table presents the responses of participants on how they continued their education amidst the period of COVID-19 lockdown. As of the study of 98 respondents, it was found that 66.3% resumed their study by attending online classes. 31.6% were found doing self-study whereas 3.1% were found to be involved in group study. 16.3% of the respondents have an access to the pdf files provided by the college and the same percent did not study at all. It can be observed that the majority of the participants gave continuity to their study through online classes run by respective educational institutions.



The presented bar diagram shows student's responses towards whether the lockdown has affected their study. 41.84% agree and 38.78% strongly agree whereas 1.02% disagree and 3.06% strongly disagree. 6.12% responded that the lockdown may have affected their study. The percent of students remaining neutral was found to be 9.18%. Overall, the majority of students agree that the lockdown has affected their studies.

Fig 2: Pie chat on what way the lockdown has affected your study?



The study discussed with the students on what way the lockdown has affected their study. The results show that 55.10% of the students perceive that the lockdown has affected both positively and negatively. 42.86% of the students assert that the lockdown has affected their study negatively however 2.04% of the students regard it positively. From this analysis, we found that majority of the students' academic life was affected on both way, but at the same time, the negative percent outweigh the positive one which means student's studies were more affected negatively than positively.

Table 3: The positive impacts of lockdown on the academic life of students

Positive Impacts		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Improvement in Reading habits	Yes	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	No	96	98.0	98.0	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Developed a habit of self- study	Yes	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	No	96	98.0	98.0	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Developed skills of virtual learning	Yes	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	No	96	98.0	98.0	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Developed skills of group work	Yes	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	No	96	98.0	98.0	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Developed digital skills	Yes	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	No	96	98.0	98.0	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	

The mentioned table presents the positive impacts of lockdown on the academic life of students. From the study, it was found that around 2% of the total participant's academic life was affected positively. Therefore, 2% of the students have experienced an improvement in reading habits, developed a habit of self-study, and also developed skills of virtual learning, group work, and digital competencies. On that note, the impact of lockdown can be also observed positively in the academic life of students.

Table 4: Negative Impacts of lockdown in the Academic life of Students?

Negative Impacts		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Dropout	Yes	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	No	97	99.0	99.0	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Pass out pattern is disturbed	Yes	15	15.3	15.3	15.3
	No	82	83.7	83.7	99.0
	22	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Delay in examinations	Yes	29	29.6	29.6	29.6
	No	69	70.4	70.4	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Difficulty in learning due to excessive use of internet	Yes	24	24.5	24.5	24.5
	No	74	75.5	75.5	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Loss of job who relied on employment to support education	Yes	4	4.1	4.1	4.1
	No	94	95.9	95.9	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	

The table discusses the negative impacts induced by the lockdown in the academic life of students. Results show that 1% of the students dropped out of their academic careers. 15.3% of the student's pass-out pattern was disturbed. 29.6% of the student's examinations were delayed. About 24.5% of the students faced obstacles in learning due to excessive use of the internet and 4.1% lost their job who primarily relied on employment to support their education. Thus, from the above analysis, we found that the lockdown has impacted students' education from multiple dimensions. Particularly, the largest proportion of the students' academic life was impacted by deferral of examinations.

Table 5: Problem that mostly affected the Academic life of Students?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Economic problem	Yes	29	29.6	29.6	29.6
	No	69	70.4	70.4	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Psychological problem	Yes	45	45.9	45.9	45.9
	No	53	54.1	54.1	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	

Physical and health problem	Yes	16	16.3	16.3	16.3
	No	82	83.7	83.7	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
Excessive pressure of college for fees	Yes	30	30.6	30.6	30.6
	No	68	69.4	69.4	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	
None of the above	Yes	23	23.5	23.5	23.5
	No	75	76.5	76.5	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	

The students were asked about the problem that impacted the most in their academic life. In response to this question, 29.6% of the students pointed out the economic problems. 45.9% noted psychological problems, 16.3% mentioned physical and health problems, 30.6% reported excessive pressures of college/universities for fees, and 23.5% of the student's studies were neither affected by any of those aforementioned problems. Here, we found that the highest portion of students believes that their academic life was mostly impacted by psychological factors.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study investigated the impact of COVID-19 lockdown in the academic life of undergraduate students. The researcher found that students have been impacted both positively and negatively by the effect of COVID-19 lockdown. On the positive note, the impact of lockdown has resulted in student's improvement in reading habits, development in the skills of self-study, virtual learning, group work, and digital competencies whereas, issues of dropout, disturbance in pass out pattern, delay in examinations, obstacles in learning and loss of job were the negative impacts brought by the lockdown. It was also found that psychological factor has primarily impacted the students' academic life. Therefore, while analyzing both implications, the negative side outweighs the positive with a far greater percent. Thus, the study concludes that lockdown has a greater negative impact than positive on the academic life of undergraduate students. With these concerns, the findings of the study importantly call for universities, education institutions, and other concerned authorities to immediately pay attention to student's problems and the impact COVID-19 lockdown has brought on their academic life. Thus, it is urgent to plan and intervene possible alternatives with regards to resolve the existing issues unless the lockdown triggers other consequences.

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