

Post-COVID-19 Students' Remote Learning Experiences from the Discipline of Tourism and Hospitality Management at The University of the South Pacific

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the perceptions and feelings of belonging to a community, country, or world. The increase in worldwide mobility and travel has affected many in recent decades. Pacific Island mobility is focused on education, employment, migration and maintenance of familial ties, with travel for leisure relatively uncommon except for visiting friends and relatives. However, the abrupt pause on travel within Fiji on 30th March 2020 left many with unanswered questions and a lingering sense of uncertainty and fear. This intensified with increased COVID-19 cases in Fiji and The University of the South Pacific (USP) moving to online learning. While the transition from the physical learning environment to virtual platforms highlights the potential of online learning in Pacific Island Countries, it is important to understand student experiences and perceptions to assist with the planning and development of academic curricula.

This study investigated students' online learning experiences in the Discipline of Tourism and Hospitality Management at the USP post-COVID-19, using an online survey and Zoom to conduct interviews. The study aimed to understand the effects of the different core components of the online learning environment on the students'

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experiences and perceptions. In addition, the study investigated the coping measures students used to deal with self-isolation, maintaining relationships, and the sudden change from onsite to online classes caused by COVID-19. It explored the extent to which students have been affected by the pandemic. Findings revealed that while students found online learning difficult, they reported a generally positive attitude towards this mode of study. Online learning allowed students to spend more time with their families and friends. Students also found new and innovative ways to utilise technology to facilitate their learning. However, students did miss the socialisation aspects of attending face-to-face classes and faced mental health issues such as anxiety, stress and depression. This study will contribute to research in online education in tourism and hospitality literature and help educational institutes, including USP, with future curriculum planning and development.

Keywords: COVID-19, online learning, remote teaching, South Pacific, student learning experiences, tourism and hospitality education

Introduction

COVID-19 was a global pandemic which resulted in countries implementing lockdowns, enforcing physical distancing, encouraging the use of sanitisers, preventing social gatherings, closing schools and encouraging vaccinations (Ratten, 2020) to control the spread of the virus and bring life back to 'normal'. Since the closure of leisure travel in March 2020, most Pacific countries have experienced dramatic revenue drops for tourism-related businesses. With the emergence of new variants and the slow vaccination process, Pacific Island nations are continuing their lockdowns, physical distancing, enforcing masks and discouraging social gatherings to control the spread of the virus (Ratten, 2020).

The educational sector was significantly affected by this pandemic, and institutions changed their mode of delivery from face-to-face learning to remote online or virtual learning. The pandemic was particularly challenging for programmes with experiential courses that offer elements such as field trips and internships (Brammer & Clark, 2020; Marshall & Wolanskyj-Spinner, 2020). Studies (Ali, 2020; Aucejo et al., 2020, & Ghazi-Saidi et al., 2020) have revealed that educational institutes worldwide have moved from face-to-face learning to online since the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a global pandemic in 2020. This allowed institutions to continue with their academic programmes during the pandemic. COVID-19 has generated extraordinary challenges for such Higher Education Institutions as the Discipline of Tourism and Hospitality Management (DTHM) at the University of the South Pacific (USP). DTHM has now moved away from traditional settings to online classrooms. The pandemic has meant that all academic and industry professionals have had to make innovative decisions about providing meaningful student experiences, especially for such experiential aspects of courses as field trips and internships. The transition initially caused anxiety to students and instructors, but for instructors significantly, having the technical skills, prior online teaching and learning experiences, and infrastructure helped them cope with the sudden changes.

In this context, the paper has raised questions such as: How did higher education students cope with remote online learning during the pandemic, especially in Pacific Island Countries? How has the pandemic affected teaching and learning practices at DTHM? What were some of the challenges faced by students, and how has this situation changed the behaviour and attitudes of students during the pandemic? COVID-19 has exposed the vulnerabilities in our educational systems and the need

to explore flexible and resilient education systems that are appropriate to the times and challenges we face, including the need for social and psychological support systems. Several research studies have been published about the impact COVID-19 has had on online learning experiences. These studies considered several perspectives, such as student motivation and engagement (Cranfield et al., 2021; & Ferrer et al., 2020); the importance of attitude in online learning (Ferrer et al., 2020), and the use of online learning platforms and their related challenges (Al-Kumaim et al., 2021). However, few studies have been conducted on student learning experiences and perceptions, especially in the South Pacific.

This article investigated the online learning experiences and perceptions of students from the Discipline of Tourism and Hospitality Management at USP post-COVID-19, using a SurveyMonkey online survey and Zoom interviews. The objectives of the paper are as follows:

1. To examine the effects of the critical challenges of online learning on the students' experiences and perceptions. These include eLearning tools and the online learning environment, the impacts of the online mode on education, and teacher and school support in the online learning environment.
2. To investigate the barriers and the benefits of students' online learning, such as coping measures students used to deal with self-isolation, maintaining relationships; and the extent to which students have been affected by the sudden change from onsite to remote classes caused by COVID-19.

The shift of the learning environment from physical to virtual highlighted the need to develop online learning in Pacific Island Countries. This study contributed to research in online education in tourism and hospitality literature. It has also identified elements in the online course content and course delivery that contribute to students' online learning satisfaction. Instructors at USP can further modify their online course components to proactively enhance the student online learning experience. There has already been much investment in ensuring the availability of courses in flexible learning modes due to travel restrictions and the inability of students to return to the main campus of USP Laucala. Technical training has been provided at USP on the use of remote online learning tools for course coordinators, students and offering additional student support.

Towards Online Learning

USP is one of three regional universities worldwide (Halter, 2020). It serves 12 member countries scattered over 32 million square kilometres of the Pacific Ocean. Since its inception in 1968, USP has provided face-to-face, print, blended, and online modes of learning experiences to its students. In early 2010 USP started to explore the possibility of converting its courses to online mode (Halter, 2020). Online learning is any learning experience that uses the Internet or the World Wide Web as the primary mode of communication and presentation (Appana, 2008). USP has dedicated significant time and attention to upskilling its academic and professional staff to develop an effective online learning environment. This was seen as a timely move to transform learning in the region, but the initiative had its challenges, which included outdated infrastructure; the inability of the Moodle-based Learning Management System to cope with thousands of log-ins; irregular power in regional countries; students' access to smartphones and other ICTs; costly internet access; and maintaining and monitoring a sense of community (Halter, 2020).

Narayan and Singh (2020) studied online learners' experiences at USP and found that most learners were satisfied with the online course design and delivery. Positive learning experiences included timely feedback greater flexibility from course coordinators, and greater opportunities for interaction among their peers. Johnson, Reddy, Chand, and Naiker's (2021) study on the attitudes and awareness of regional students towards online learning found that 88% of students at USP owned at least one electronic device that allowed access to the internet. They also found that most students were technologically savvy and positive towards online learning. Many tertiary students from around the region could access the internet and computers because of the facilities and services provided by USP through USPNet. Web conferencing tools such as Zoom, Webex and Big Blue Button (BBB) have enabled more accessible communication and interaction between staff and students. Several studies have claimed that online learning provided educational opportunities for students to access course content as well as allowed interaction with course coordinators and peers irrespective of where they are located (See Dhawan, 2020; Dutta, 2020; Gikas & Grant, 2013; & Nihalani & Mayrath, 2010). There was also high student satisfaction regarding the pace of learning and the focus on student learning needs which led to increased learning (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020).

Impacts of COVID-19 on Learning and Education

The emergency lockdown imposed by most countries during the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted all aspects of social interaction and workplaces (Gossling, Scott & Hall, 2020; Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021). Traditional higher education providers had to adjust from predominantly face-to-face teaching to fully online or remote learning. The pandemic had created a unique opportunity for education providers to make changes to traditional curricula so that students could complete parts of their programmes, such as virtual internships, which were part of DTHM students' undergraduate degree programmes (Bilsland, Nagy & Smith, 2020). This fundamentally changed core teaching and assessment practices (Cranfield et al., 2021). As with other sectors, studies have shown negative impacts on higher education institutions due to COVID-19. Mok, Xiong & Rahman's (2021) study found that students from higher education institutions in Hong Kong were extremely dissatisfied with their online learning experiences and preferred courses delivered in modes which offered opportunities for social interaction. The absence of face-to-face opportunities with lecturers and hands-on practical activities is one of the main drawbacks of online learning (Dorovolomo, Rodie, Fito'o & Rafiq, 2021). According to a survey of 1500 students in one of America's largest public institutions (Aucejo et al., 2020), COVID-19 also led to a decrease in enrolment numbers, delayed graduations and loss of employment.

Other challenges included attendance tracking, assessment, evaluation, interactive lessons, travel restrictions, and psychological support (Suleri, 2020). Students in higher education who were graduating and facing challenges with online learning and future job opportunities were among the most at-risk groups for psychological issues (Jiang, Yan-Li, Pamane, & Sriyanto, 2021). Their findings revealed that anxiety was the most problematic issue with students, followed by depression and stress. Blachandran, Alagarsamy, and Mehrolia (2020) stated that there was an increase in suicide rates among students due to the mental instability caused by the pandemic. Elmer, Mephram, Stadtfeld, and Capraro (2020) conducted a study to compare students' mental and social well-being in a Swiss university. Findings revealed that students were at risk of depression, social isolation, and anxiety depending on how COVID-19 affected them and those with whom they had a close relationship. Students worried about their academic and career goals were more likely to have anxiety, whereas those concerned with their family and friends' safety had a higher probability of being depressed. Some students were at a higher risk of social isolation and increased issues in mental health during the pandemic. This had

a profound effect on their wellbeing.

Abuhammad's (2020) study that reviewed distance learning challenges faced by students in local Jordanian Facebook groups found that challenges encountered could be categorised into four thematic areas: personal, technical, financial, and logistical barriers. Personal barriers included lack of training and support, technical knowledge, communication and lack of qualifications. Technical barriers included poor connectivity and high maintenance costs. Logistical barriers included a lack of student preparation and the incapacity of distance learning to meet students' needs, especially face-to-face social interaction. Financial barriers included the inability to buy technology and pay for internet services. Barriers could be removed, and the quality of distance learning enhanced if inter-school, student-student and teacher-student online relationships were developed and supported through appropriate policies and strategies. Proper training for teachers and students could bring about meaningful engagement and greater interest in using distance learning tools. Governments, internet providers; and training institutions should agree on costs [devices, internet, and technical support] for students to engage in distance learning.

Narayan and Singh (2020) found that student challenges at USP included poor internet connectivity and first-time online learners' unfamiliarity with navigating tools for online learning platforms such as Moodle and Zoom. At the USP regional campuses, students faced financial difficulties due to job losses, lack of ICT resources, lack of IT knowledge, and difficulties in printing online material and accessing the internet due to its cost (Dorovolomo et al., 2021; Lagi, 2020; Naiker et al., 2021). For lecturers at USP, it meant finding ways to effectively engage students, develop and monitor online communities (Halter, 2020), keep students interested and convert traditional onsite internships into virtual internships to provide students with experiential skill-based learning.

Methods

A mixed methodology was used to conduct the research. Data had been collected using purposive sampling with an online SurveyMonkey survey (n=235) and Zoom interviews with students (n=13) and teaching staff (n=7). The survey was conducted in Semester 2, 2021 with students enrolled in TS107, TS208, TS302 and TS405. The survey for this study consisted of 21 questions (See Appendix 1), which, apart from general demographics, were divided into the following themes to answer the research objectives:

- i. eLearning tools and the online learning environment.
- ii. Impacts of the online mode on education.
- iii. Teacher and school support in the online learning environment.
- iv. Barriers to students' online learning; and
- v. Benefits of students' online learning.

These questions were adapted from the Global Shapers Community (2020) COVID-19 Youth Survey Report undertaken by WHO (See Appendix 1). This study disseminated 800 survey links via SurveyMonkey to DTHM students in TS107 Tourism in the South Pacific (1st year course), TS208 Operational Issues for Hospitality (2nd year course), TS302 Strategic Services Management in Hospitality (3rd-year course) and TS405 Entrepreneurship and innovation in tourism and hospitality (Postgraduate course) and received 235 completed responses which was a 29% response rate. Given that students were in lockdown and contactable only via the Internet and mobile phones, it was decided that SurveyMonkey would be used to disseminate the survey. The survey included a variety of open-ended and closed questions, with several questions containing a series of statements rated using a Likert scale.

The Zoom interviews with 13 students took 40 minutes to conduct (See Table 1). The relatively low response rate could be attributed to the remote learning mode undertaken by DTHM students, the lack of face-to-face contact between course coordinators and students, the length of the survey (20 minutes) and students having limited data and computer access to complete the survey. Table 1 listed the respondents for the interviews, their demographics, programmes, and the courses they were enrolled in. Data were coded according to the five common themes (See page 6) and further analysed using content analysis resulting in 27 codes indicating different student experiences and perceptions towards online learning. These themes were deductively derived from existing literature before the empirical analysis. Data were checked and triangulated by analysing responses to similar questions and themes and face-to-face interviews. All respondents were informed about the details of the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw from the study anytime. Only the researchers had access to the data. The study was approved by the USP Human Research Ethics Committee and conducted following the USP's Human Research Ethics Policies, which guides researchers on ethical research, particularly in the South Pacific Region.

Table 1. Face-to-Face In-Depth Interviews

Respondents	Ethnicity & Gender	Country of Origin	Age	Programme	Mode	Year of Study	Courses enrolled in S2 2021	Interview Schedule	Interviewer
1. Respondent 236	Indian Female	Fiji	20	B. Com Hotel Management	F2F Remote Learning	2 nd year student	TS208, TS213, TS216, UU204	Thursday 23/09 11.30 am	HH
2. Respondent 237	Regional Male	Vanuatu	50	B. Com Management & Human Resource Management	Print & Online	1 st -year mature student	DG100, LW112, PL101, TS106	Wednesday 22/09	EB
3. Respondent 238	Indian Female	Fiji	20	B. Com Tourism & Hospitality Management	F2F Remote Learning	2 nd year student	TS208, TS213, TS216, UU200	Monday 27/9 6.30 pm	EB
4. Respondent 239	Fijian Male	Fiji	20	B. Com Hotel Management	F2F Remote Learning	2 nd year student	MG201, TS208, TS213, TS216	Tuesday 28/9 6 pm	EB
5. Respondent 240	Fijian Male	Fiji	20	B. Com Tourism & Hospitality Management	F2F Remote Learning	2 nd year student	UU100, TS208, TS213, TS216	Thursday 23/09 7.30 pm	HH
6. Respondent 241	Indian Female	Fiji	20	B. Com Hotel Management	F2F Remote Learning	2 nd year student	TS208, TS213, TS216, UU200	Wednesday 22/9 6.30 pm	HH
7. Respondent 242	Indian Male	Fiji	20	B. Com Tourism & Hospitality Management	F2F Remote Learning	2 nd year student	TS208, TS213, TS216, UU204	Thursday, 23/9 2pm	HH
8. Respondent 243	Fijian Female	Fiji	40	B. Com in Hotel Management	F2F Remote Learning	2 nd year	TS208, TS213, UU204 ED184	Thursday 23/9, 6.00pm	HH
9. Respondent 244	Solomon Islands Male	Solomon Islands	22	B. Com Tourism & Hospitality Management	F2F Remote Learning	2 nd year	MG201, TS208, TS213, TS216	Thursday 23/09 11 am	EB
10. Respondent 245	International Male from Korea	Fiji	23	B. Com Tourism & Hospitality Management	F2F Remote Learning	2 nd year	MG201, TS 213, TS216	Monday 27/09 Time 7 pm	EB

Respondents	Ethnicity & Gender	Country of Origin	Age	Programme	Mode	Year of Study	Courses enrolled in S2 2021	Interview Schedule	Interviewer
11. Respondent 246	Indian Male	Fiji	20	B. Com Management & Public Administration and Human Resource Management	F2F Remote Learning	1st year	MG101, MG106, TS109, MG204	Sunday 26/9 12.20 pm	HH
12. Respondent 247	Rotuman Female	Fiji	23	B. Com. Financial Management & Tourism Management	F2F Remote Learning	3 rd year	FM302, FM305, TS302, TS311	Tuesday 28/9 8.00 pm	EB
13. Respondent 248	Fijian Male	Fiji	30	B. Com Tourism & Hospitality Management	F2F Remote Learning	3 rd year	MG101 TS311	Tuesday 28/9, 7.00pm	HH

Course Legend

DG100 Introduction to Leadership, Governance and Human Rights

ED184 Physical Education and Leisure Education I

FM302 Financial Management in the Pacific Region

FM305 Financial Risk Management

LW112 Legislation

MG101 Introduction to Management

MG106 Introduction to Human Resource Management

MG201 Organisational Behaviour

MG204 Management of Employment Relations

PL101 Politics of Development

TS106 Introduction to Tourism

TS208 Operational Issues in Hospitality

TS213 International Tourism

TS216 Integrated Industry Learning in Tourism and Hospitality

TS302 Strategic Services Management in Hospitality

TS311 Sustainable Tourism

UU100 Communications and Information Literacy (USP Calendar, 2021).

Findings

RO1: To examine the effects of the different key challenges of the online learning environment on the students’ experiences and perceptions.

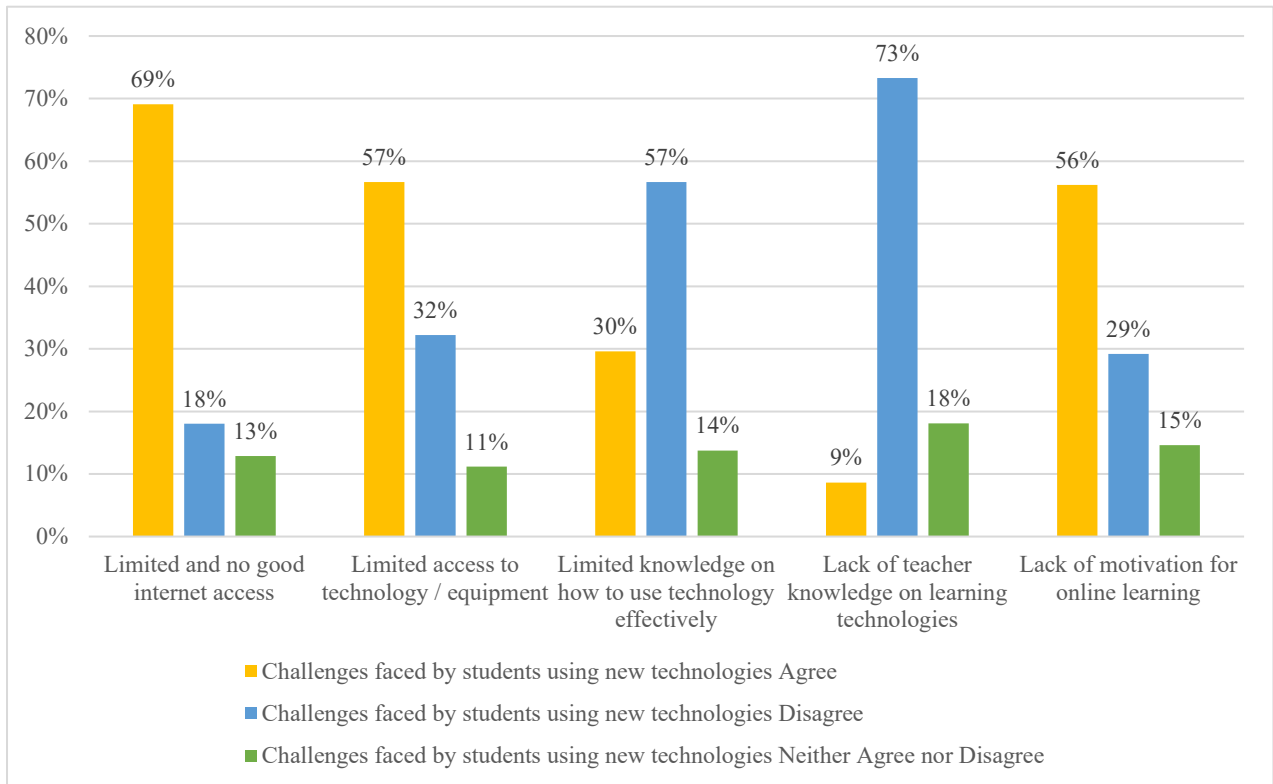
The first research objective was assessed with the following themes:

- i. eLearning tools and the online learning environment
- ii. Impacts of the online mode on education
- iii. Teacher and school support in the online learning environment

Key Challenges with the Online Learning Environment

The sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis under this category were connectivity and internet access, hardware and software, familiarity with educational or conferencing applications such as Zoom, access to online course resources, students’ and instructors’ knowledge of online learning technologies.

Figure 1. Challenges faced by students using new technologies



The key aspects of the online learning environment, such as hardware, software, student learning resources and teacher support, were important to student learning. Figure 1 above illustrates that 69.1% of respondents found it difficult to access the internet. At the same time, 56.65% had limited access to technology and equipment. While 29.62% of students struggled with the introduction of new online learning platforms such as Zoom and other online conferencing tools, 73.27% indicated that teachers were able to use technology effectively. The survey also indicated that 59% of respondents found that the weekly Zoom video conferencing lectures and tutorials had positive impacts on their learning.

Common responses from students included: challenges with connectivity, conferencing software issues; lack of access to relevant hardware or technology and limited knowledge of technology. As explained by Respondent 48,

I think some students are really struggling to cope with their work, and they receive poor grades. The internet connection is so bad in the West, and most of the time, Zoom is not working, and we are unable to attend classes which also affects our attendance, and this affects our marks. It is more difficult for students who use their mobiles because the mobile's storage capacity is less, and we cannot access PDF documents or Excel and have difficulty contacting our group members. If one member has access to everything (laptop, better internet connection) and the others do not, it becomes unfair as one person will end up doing most of the work.

The majority of students lack access to the internet and relevant technology, as echoed by Respondent 115, "We lack technology and access to the internet". At the same time, according to Respondent 81, they possessed "limited knowledge and skills of using technology". There were numerous training workshops offered by the Centre of Flexible Learning (CFL) and Information Technology Services (ITS) at USP that students could have attended to upskill but many seemingly did not do so.

On the other hand, Respondent 236 (See Table 1) argued that she had to improve her computer literacy, increase her knowledge of the Moodle learning platform and related technology, stating that:

COVID-19 has made me more tech-savvy. I usually used my phone, so I barely used laptops, but now I have taught myself with the help of YouTube and MS applications on my laptop to be more computer literate. I have a computer, laptop, and phone; the network is around 80%.

This was also supported by Respondent 242, who claimed that “It was very difficult for me to learn on Zoom, to navigate and connect to the internet and download all those things. But now I have learnt to teach myself and am coping very well”.

Impacts of online mode on student education

The shift from face-to-face learning to the remote online mode has significantly impacted student learning.

Figure 2. Online Mode of Study and Impacts on Student Learning

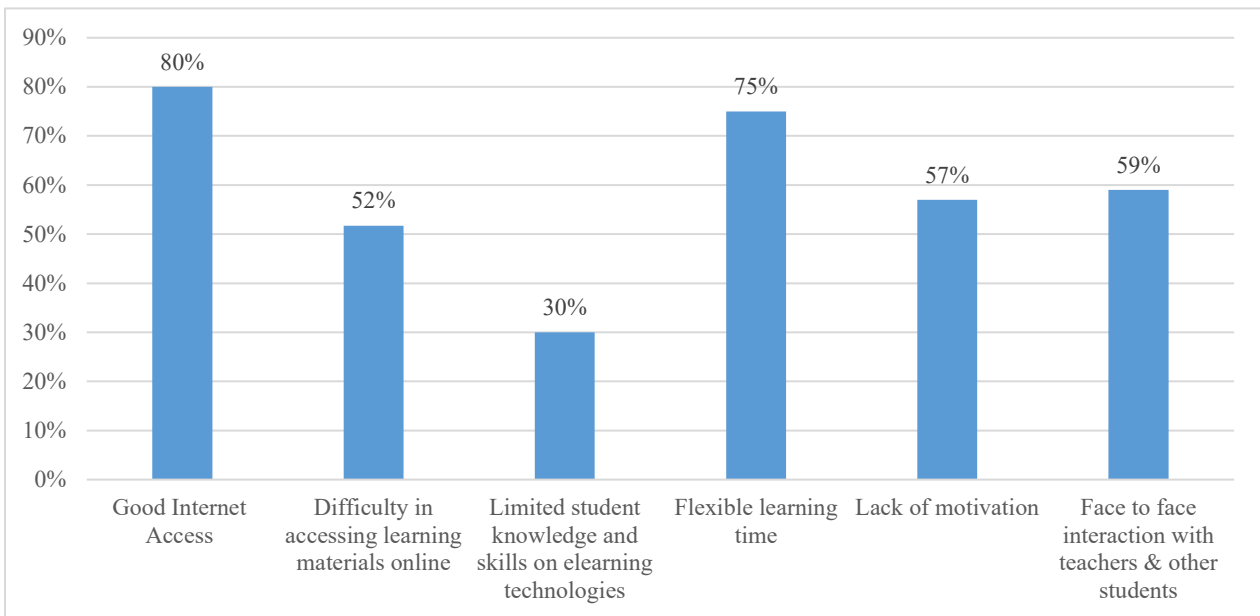


Figure 2 illustrated that over 80% of students indicated that access to equipment and the internet was essential and impacted their learning. At the same time, 52 % of respondents found it difficult to access learning materials online. Lack of face-to-face interaction also impacted students' learning, as 58.6% indicated that teachers had less opportunity to pay attention to individual learner's needs. However, 75% of the students also agreed that student learning time was more flexible and allowed more alignment with their lifestyle.

Common responses included: changes in the mode of learning which affected interactive learning; challenges of online learning such as connectivity; interaction with teachers; access to technology; access to university facilities; lack of practical learning and increased workload. According to Respondent 72:

Face-to-face classes give us more interaction as we connect with our peers, and there are people from whom we can learn. Meeting our tutors or lecturers gives us more information regarding assignments, and we are able to share our knowledge with others. Learning online can be very challenging as one needs to learn everything independently. Our sponsorship can change due to COVID-19, affecting our studies later. Access to university facilities, especially the library and computer laboratories, is one of the major concerns since it provides us with proper information regarding our research and assignments.

This being so, one might argue that it is the social aspects of working in the library that students miss rather than using it to conduct research.

Teaching Support in the Online Learning Environment

Teaching support was the third core component in an online environment that impacted learning. The survey revealed 72.27% of respondents indicated that the teacher/ instructor understood and used the relevant technologies effectively. However, there was dissatisfaction with communication of assessment changes, a lack of understanding and flexibility from teaching staff, and limited communication with students. Thus, it was difficult to ascertain which courses students were expressing dissatisfaction with as they were enrolled in courses from several different Disciplines. As discussed by Respondent 152,

Some lecturers did not understand how we tried to do our assignments on the phone, especially when using Google Slides or other Apps. Most of the time, these types of Apps are not accessible, and the fact is that phones are not reliable for studies. Some parents do not understand the type of studies we are doing, and they pressure students to help them earn a living instead of undertaking remote online classes.

Parents believed online classes were a waste of time and that students were not learning but wasting money. The fact is that we do not have sufficient food, and we spend a lot of money on buying data for online classes. This discouraged students who were losing interest in learning. For students like me who do not have access to laptops and other materials, we stress about how to do our assignments, this gives me suicidal thoughts, and I believe some students have just given up on their studies.

Another respondent stated that “changes in assessments were not well explained”

and felt there was “a general lack of response to emails” by some course coordinators. Respondent 177 felt there “needed to be better course coordination and support from tutors”. At the same time, due to connectivity issues, students relied on class recordings to be uploaded in a timely fashion; however, Respondent 173 stated, “In some cases, Zoom was not recorded or posted 2 or 3 days later”. On the other hand, Respondent 247 strongly expressed how course coordinators at DTHM “...have been very prompt through Viber or Messenger and reached out whenever they can. They have been so helpful.” Some THM course coordinators and tutors also held online social events such as games and quizzes in the evenings, on Facebook, to raise students’ morale and provide virtual opportunities for socialising, discussion and sharing their experiences.

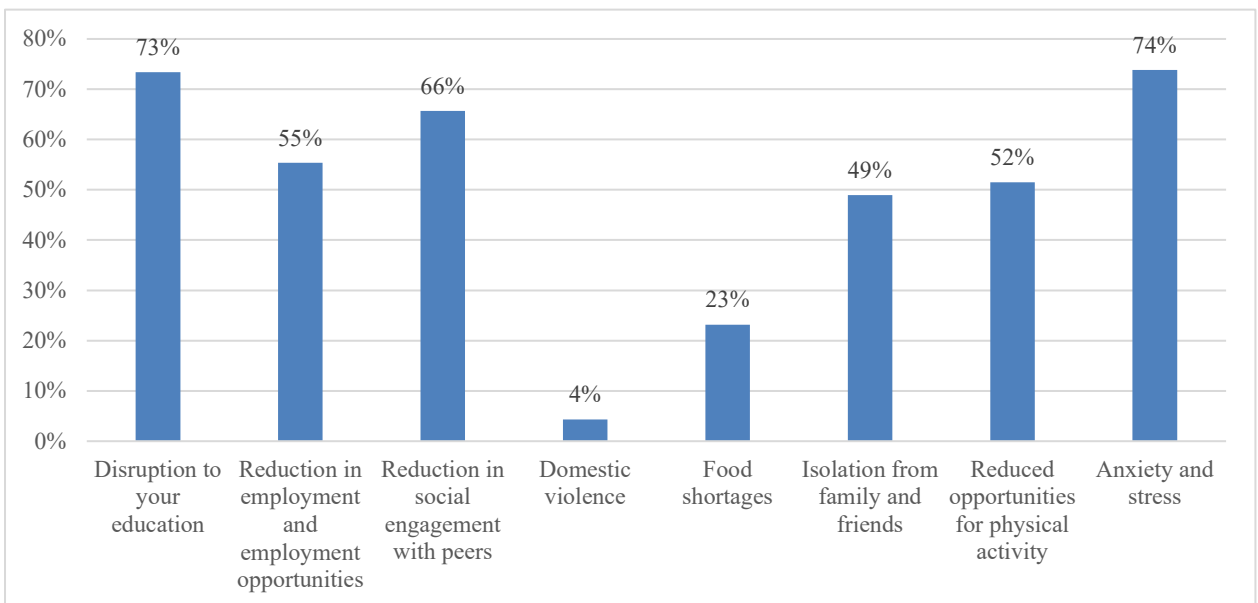
RO2: To investigate the coping measures students used to deal with self-isolation, maintaining relationships, and the extent to which students have been affected by the sudden change from onsite to remote classes.

The second research objective was assessed with the following themes:

- i. barriers to students' online learning
- ii. benefits of students' online learning

Barriers to Students’ Online Learning

Figure 3. Negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on student lifestyle



The environment in which students now reside and study will provide unique obstacles to the students' learning experiences. Figure 3 presents some of the negative experiences faced by students due to COVID-19. Overall, 74% of students reported that the health crisis disrupted their education. 55% of students found a reduction in employment and career opportunities; 23% encountered food shortages; 66% experienced a decrease in social interaction with their peers; and 52% found reduced opportunities for physical activity. 72% of students found that the pandemic affected their social well-being, including their relationships with family and friends. Students also felt isolated from family and friends (49%); experienced high levels of anxiety and stress (74%); some form of domestic violence in the home (4%); and financial pressures (75%).

Common responses included students having a hard time adjusting to the online mode of study from face-to-face mode. One student found that:

Not being able to have face-to-face learning experiences due to the pandemic has been hard because I, for one, learn better having that experience. I feel like my learning has changed because of the online mode and getting used to studying that way has been a bit tough considering we can't have face-to-face interaction. Also, since I'm almost completing my studies, I hope that more ways are introduced to help students learn effectively online (Respondent 139).

Respondent 14 said, "assignments are all back-to-back, and pressure has been increased. We do not have our teachers with us. Though we have them online, answers given online versus face-to-face are different. Students need interaction to learn." The respondent felt that "when grading, teachers should be lenient and flexible". Other respondents were concerned about how the transition from face-to-face to online study would affect their grades.

I, for one, am on the National Toppers Scholarship Scheme, and I fear for my grades as I currently have a GPA of 4.19 but need a minimum of 3.0 for my scholarship. I fear that my marks may change as I have not put in a 100% because of the psychological and emotional factors I have suffered from COVID-19 (Respondent 14).

Also, Respondent 240 stated that "comparing the two modes of study, I loved face-to-face classes rather than online classes because depending on my concentration, face-to-face was more effective, especially with lectures and tutorials". Despite this statement by Respondent 240, course coordinators and teaching assistants observed

that prior to the lockdown, student attendance at most lectures was low, except where assessed. However, tutorial participation was high because it was assessed. The face-to-face students had at least four hours of online contact with their course coordinators and teaching assistants, and the print and blended students had at least two hours of online contact.

Many respondents found their home environment was not conducive to study (for example, working from home, moving back in with family, having children and family around, finding private spaces to study etc.). According to Respondent 95, “Home is not a good place to study”. Respondent 65 agreed, stating, “Not everyone has the same living conditions. Some live alone, some live with extended families, so this can disrupt studies”. Gender also played a role in the home environment. Respondent 42 claimed that “being female and learning from home was challenging, especially in an indigenous Fijian (i-Taukei) household because you were still expected to perform your traditional household duties and they (family) sometimes did not give us time to do schoolwork”. Furthermore, Respondent 183 stated that “Not everyone has all day to sit and work at their laptops or do assignments. For people like me, I have elderly grandmothers who both need attention, and my sister and I must attend to them every day of the week”.

Moreover, students felt financial pressures, which included paying for necessities such as food items, purchasing internet data to complete assignments and attend online classes, university fee payment, and losing their scholarship allowance. Respondent 145 recalled that:

Some issues included paying school fees, as COVID-19 has caused a lot of people to lose their jobs and not being able to earn money has been a huge burden on families. Also, the fact that the government has imposed a ‘no job’ policy whereby if you don’t get the job, students who were on government scholarships would have their scholarships terminated was quite unfair (Respondent 145).

The safety of people and their health, job, money, and food are some of the challenges students faced; however, “one can survive without education at the moment, but not without food” (Respondent 129). Another student reflected that “a main issue that I do not think stakeholders understand was the financial difficulties we as students faced. The fees at USP for Semester 2, 2021, were still the same as Semester 1, which makes no sense because there are no field trips, and there were

limitations to online learning. Tuition fees must be reviewed and amended!” (Respondent 156). This being so, USP Finance advised that students could obtain refunds for field trip fees on request.

Many students felt USP, and their sponsors did not understand the financial challenges they experienced, stating:

They don't understand finances. For example, if the Tertiary Education Loan Scheme (TELS) won't continue to give us allowances, we will not be able to buy recharge cards for data purposes. They say Moodle is free and subsidised by Vodafone and Digicel, but it isn't. We needed data to watch videos, research assignments, and much more. Our parents don't have proper jobs now, so there is not enough money; I'm worried about them and cannot decide whether to buy food or recharge cards to study (Respondent 189).

Budgeting their finances and choosing between food or data for internet access was a common challenge experienced by students. As Respondent 148 commented:

I am a private student at USP, and the fees are so high during the COVID-19 pandemic. It's really difficult to arrange to pay the fee amounts on time. Plus, I'm renting. It's very hard for me to cope with my financial problems.

USP was flexible with fee payments, and students were given the option to negotiate repayment plans with USP Finance (See email from Boila, Executive Director Finance, 9.9.21). Despite the financial constraints experienced by students, only 12% of students applied for financial support services.

Other responses comprised mental health deterioration, including anxiety and stress and increased isolation from family and friends. As one respondent reflected:

Mental health problems are important. Not every student can balance family life (pressures) with schoolwork. The majority of students and my friends went to school as an escape from these things but with COVID-19, this has become a great challenge for most of us (Respondent 109).

This experience is shared by many students, who looked forward to attending university to escape the traditional obligations and chores they faced at home. Another student stated that:

The unequal wealth distribution and resources were more critical than many

might assume. Not everyone can access these resources, and not everyone is located in areas where the internet catches. Also, in my personal experience, the extent to which the current situation impacts mental health is more concerning. I have had to deal with depression and extreme anxiety more often than before, not only because of school but because of current affairs and injustices going on in the world. I've had to deactivate all my social media platforms to try and retain a sliver of sanity (Respondent 53).

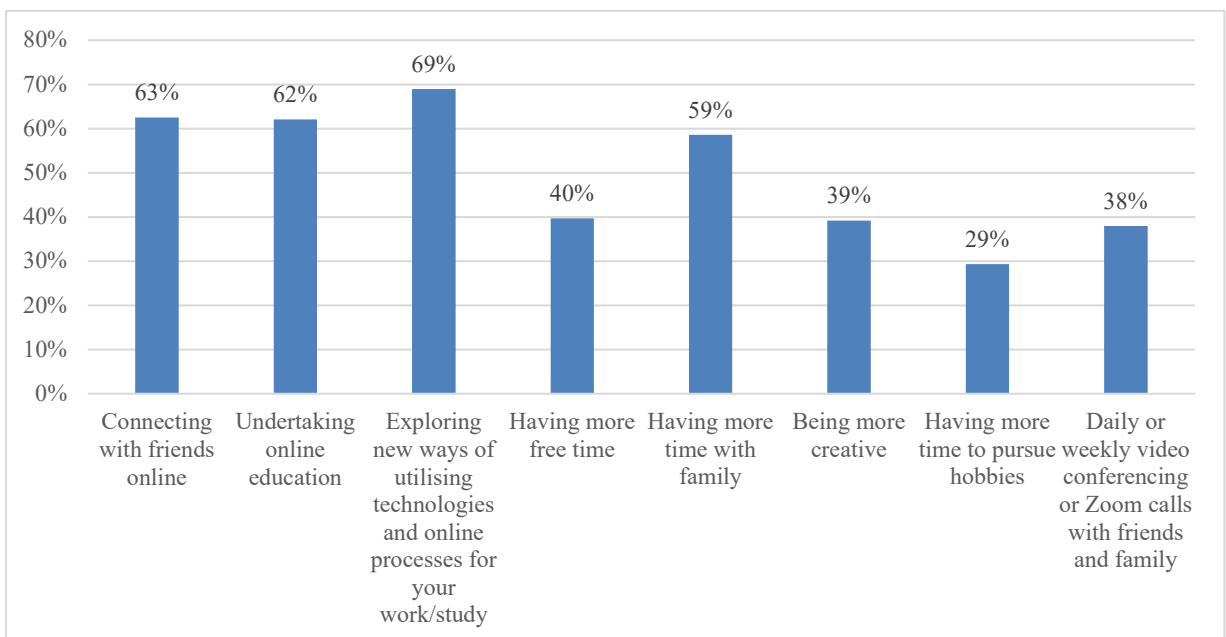
Others felt that they had the weight of the world on their shoulders. Respondent 153 stated, "being a full-time student, a wife, and a religious leader was already hard enough, but when COVID-19 hit the world, it worried me even more, knowing the preparation (spiritually and physically) that had to be done". With the implementing of the containment areas in Viti Levu many students were separated from their families and stranded in Suva. "To be honest, I have been away from my family now for about 8 months, and I really miss them; I am staying on campus. At times, I faced stress and boredom when I was isolated and alone" (Respondent 157). Students also felt demotivated due to not having the social aspect of attending USP on-campus lectures and tutorials. According to Respondent 115, students were 'lazy to study' due to the online nature of learning. Respondent 9 felt that "face-to-face classes gave us more interaction as we connected with our peers and there were people from whom we could learn. Meeting our tutors or lecturers gave us more information regarding assignments, and we were able to share our knowledge with others. Learning online could be very challenging as one needed to learn everything independently".

Other concerns comprising uncertainty about the future included: job security; graduation, grades and assessments, and academic progression. Respondent 136 was worried about "finishing off my study and the availability of fewer job opportunities due to COVID-19". Students were also concerned about job prospects within the tourism industry. "As a tourism student, are we going to get a job when we graduate from the university since the tourism industry is down?" (Respondent 130). Course coordinators attempted to allay students' concerns by sending them opportunities to interview for jobs and organising virtual career fairs and guest lectures to prepare them for the labour market. Anecdotal evidence from the tourism industry showed employers were looking to recruit new graduates as they were more affordable than experienced staff. Also, many of their long-term staff who were laid off due to COVID-19 moved on and found other employment and were not interested in returning.

Benefits of Students Online Learning

Figure 4 highlights some of the positives that students found with online learning. 63% of students found that they were connecting more with friends online, and 40% of students had daily or weekly video conferencing or Zoom calls with family and friends since COVID-19. 62% of students enjoyed online education, 69% found new ways of utilising technologies and online processes, and 40% felt more creative in delivering their assignments. Respondent 1 thought that “USP had delivered very well in online learning. From last semester’s experience, I can happily say that even with the difficulties I faced at home, online learning was made easy for me.” Respondent 153 observed that “tutors and lecturers were doing a very good job delivering education”, and Respondent 128 stressed that there were no concerns as long as “the teachers played their part, but we, the students, on the other hand, have to play ours”. Respondent 4 advised that “students should take advantage of this online learning as they can acquire better grades than face-to-face classes”. Other important benefits of remote learning revealed that 40% of students have more free time, 29% of students have time to pursue hobbies, and 59% of students spend more time with family. Respondent 16 stated that “online classes helped me manage my time better, and I used the rest of the time to develop my cooking and other housework skills”.

Figure 4. Positive Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Students’ Lifestyle



Discussion

The transition from traditional classroom learning to remote online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic has required simultaneous adjustments of learning styles, which has been challenging for students. Before the pandemic, USP had never had to implement remote learning on such a massive scale. This unprecedented situation presented an opportunity to examine the DTHM’s student remote learning experiences critically. This paper provided an important starting point for studying these efforts. The table below provides a summary of the findings of the study.

Table 2. Summary of Findings

Research Question	Main Themes	Codes (Frequency of Statements)
RO1: To examine the effects of the different key challenges of the online learning environment on the students’ experiences and perceptions.	eLearning tools and the online learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited and no good internet access (69%) • Limited access to technology/equipment (57%) • Limited knowledge of how to use technology effectively (30%) • Lack of teacher knowledge on learning technologies (9%) • Lack of motivation for online learning (55%)
	Impacts of the online mode on education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good internet access (80%) • Difficulty in accessing learning materials online (29%) • Limited student knowledge and skills in eLearning technologies (30%) • Flexible learning time (75%) • Lack of motivation (57%) • Lack of Face-to-Face interaction (59%)
	Teacher and school support in the online learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructors’ knowledge of technology (73%)
RO2: To investigate the coping measures students used to deal with self-isolation, maintaining relationships, and	Barriers to student online learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruption to education (73%) • Reduction in employment and employment opportunities (55%) • Reduction in social engagement with peers (66%) • Domestic violence (4%) • Food Shortages (23%) • Isolation from family and friends (49%) • Reduced opportunities for physical health (52%)

the extent to which students have been affected by the sudden change from onsite to remote classes.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress and anxiety (74%)
	Benefits of Student Online Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting with friends online (63%) • Undertaking online education (62%) • Exploring new ways of utilising technologies and online processes for your work or study (69%) • Having more free time (59%) • Being more creative (39%) • Having more time to pursue hobbies (29%) • Daily or weekly video conferencing or Zoom calls with family and friends (28%)

The findings supported Knouse's (2010) arguments that the key challenges of online learning were directly related to internet connectivity, especially in the case of Fiji, for rural areas and marine islands, and the availability of technology and equipment such as laptops, computers, and smartphones. For those with no connectivity issue, accessing online learning resources, for instance, their online learning platform [Moodle], became the next challenge. The findings also revealed that students faced issues with online conferencing facilities or software used for remote learning, such as Zoom. It took them some time to become used to the new software or e-Learning technologies. However, given that students have had almost three semesters of remote learning, the study showed that they were now more confident and experienced in using these new technologies to facilitate online learning. Course coordinators and teaching assistants observed that students worked well and were better prepared when participating in online Zoom tutorials and breakout rooms.

The study exhibited that the lack of knowledge of using online learning technology had an impact on their education, as students faced difficulties submitting assignments on time, attending online classes and tutorials or collaborating online. The inability to access online learning materials such as textbooks and readings due to lack of data also negatively impacted students. However, students had electronic copies of textbooks and study guide units, printed study guides and academic readings and Offline Print Packs (OPP) on request. There were also concerns raised about the lack of internships and practical opportunities that could later affect or delay their ability to graduate or retain their scholarship. This was particularly important for experiential courses and inclusive of field trips and internships (Brammer & Clark, 2020; Marshall & Wolanskyi-Spinner, 2020), such as many of those at DTHM. However, DTHM developed virtual internships for the three hotel

management practical courses (TS218 Rooms Division Practical, TS303 Food and Beverage Practical and TS304 Front Office and Sales and Marketing Practical) as well as TS216 (Integrated Learning in Teaching and Hospitality) and this enabled students to complete their programmes, especially the B.Com. Hotel Management which has a one-year period which comprises three internship courses. Moreover, nearly 80% of students agreed that there was more flexibility in their learning time, as they could always access lecture recordings online through Moodle if they missed their classes. Also, the findings showed a general level of satisfaction with the online mode of study once students became used to the e-learning technologies.

Findings revealed that students faced challenges receiving teaching support, especially at home. Whilst most students indicated that course coordinators possessed the relevant knowledge and skills to use technology effectively, students had to get used to communicating online with course coordinators and teaching assistants as well as their peers. The findings showed a lack of communication regarding changes in assessment, a lack of understanding of students' challenges and limited responses to student queries although this varied with discipline, course coordinators and teaching assistants. However, findings also revealed that some course coordinators went out of their way to check up on individual students and were reachable through various social media platforms such as Facebook, Messenger or Viber. This supported previous studies (See Dhawan, 2020; Dutta, 2020; Gikas & Grant, 2013; & Nihalani & Mayrath, 2010), which claimed that mobile and computer devices, such as cell phones, smartphones, and social media, provided educational opportunities for students to access course content, as well as interaction with course coordinators and peers wherever they were located. However, some students faced challenges when they did not possess such devices.

Moreover, it was evident that the time spent at home did not necessarily mean more time for study. A few students were exposed to domestic disputes at home, resulting in an unstable learning environment. Even in the absence of domestic disputes, some found it difficult to avoid undertaking household chores for siblings and parents or caring for sick, elderly, or young family members. Pacific Islanders were guided by values including "relationships, care, reciprocity, respect, family, community and spirituality" (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020, p. 5), and often older family members or educated family members were expected to act as caregivers (Thaman, 1993) Moreover, physical space and privacy are vital for learning, even with a virtual learning environment (Baticulon et al., 2021). This privilege was not awarded to many studying from home who had become used to the comfort of the

USP library or classroom as a quiet study area.

Students reported that their financial situation was affected by COVID-19. The analysis of students' responses revealed that household finances had to be divided between necessities and internet data; scholarship allowances had been cut, and student loans were on hold. Some working students had lost their jobs due to the pandemic, which affected the payment of their tuition fees. Furthermore, students on Fijian scholarships and loans were in danger of losing them if they chose not to be vaccinated. Some expressed their displeasure that the cost of remote mode tuition fees had remained the same as the face-to-face mode of study, even though all the students were now studying online. Consistent with these responses Kapasia et al.'s., (2020) study reported similar findings where 181 out of 232 students at a university in India from a lower income bracket felt less capable of engaging in online learning. Baticulon, et al. (2021), stated that the added expense of online learning should not be underestimated in poor communities, especially with the example of USP students choosing between food and data.

The COVID-19 pandemic also negatively impacted students' mental health, making it difficult for them to focus on their education. Similar to Baticulon et al.'s (2021) findings, the students expressed feelings of anxiety, loneliness, homesickness, and isolation from family and friends. The students worried about their financial difficulties; the number of online assessments, being unable to attend online lectures and tutorials due to connectivity issues; career readiness, plans after graduation; uncertainty about returning to 'normal'; and the safety of their families from COVID-19. High rates of students experiencing some level of psychological stress have also been reported among students in Australia (Lyons, Wilcox, & Leung, 2020), in Japan (Arima et al., 2020), in Turkey (Aker & Midik, 2020) and Fiji. Students have also admitted to lacking the self-discipline and motivation to study. It was important that educators understood the needs, motivations, and past experiences of students to maintain engagement in a remote online curriculum. Students needed to be guided towards "self-regulated learning strategies, which include time management, metacognition, critical thinking, and effort regulation" (Baticulon, et al., 2021, p. 620) to achieve academic success. USP already has campus-based resources, such as health centres and counselling centres, and other support services, including offices dedicated to students with disabilities, multicultural affairs, and international students. According to Lederer, Hoban, and Lipson (2020), as most higher education institutions undergo budget cuts due to the pandemic, these entities that provide student support services needed to be prioritised

as a critical investment to student success. Lattie, Lipson, and Eisenberg (2019) advised that technology-based mental health services and interventions would be effective in enhancing students' mental health outcomes. Such services at USP must be further developed to deal with students' mental health post-COVID-19. It is also imperative that higher education institutions advocate for increased funding for technology access, given the known challenges of supporting students' health. With many USP students on scholarships and considering the cost of data regionally, it was important that sponsors considered additional funding for data and internet packages to support their online studies.

Conclusion

This study investigated the remote learning experiences of students from DTHM at USP post-COVID-19, using an online SurveyMonkey n=235 survey and online face-to-face interviews n=13 using Zoom. It explored the effects of the key challenges of the online learning environment on students' experiences and perceptions. These challenges were further categorised under (i) eLearning tools and the online learning environment; (ii) Impacts of the online mode on education; and (iii) Teacher and school support in the online learning environment. In addition, the study investigated the barriers and benefits to students' online learning, which included coping measures students used to deal with self-isolation, maintaining relationships, and the sudden change from onsite to remote classes caused by COVID-19. This study contributed to research in remote online education in tourism and hospitality literature and assisted educational institutions such as USP with future curriculum planning and development and the preparation of support systems that helped deal with students' educational; social; and psychological needs (Mok et al., 2021).

The findings revealed that while the shift from face-to-face to online learning was difficult, 62% of the students' attitudes towards online learning were generally positive. The students perceived that online learning allowed for more interaction with their family and friends, which made the learning process more creative. They found interesting ways to facilitate their learning using new technologies and online processes. However, students did miss the socialisation aspects of attending face-to-face lectures and tutorials and appreciated the weekly evening activities and quizzes organised by the staff. This agreed with Reddy et al. (2020) and Reddy, Sharma, and Chandra's (2020) studies, where the researchers found that the above-mentioned benefits led to a positive attitude towards utilising technology and online learning.

Limitations and Future Research

It was difficult to know what the post-COVID educational environment would be, given the threat of community transmission, by the opening of campuses to students and staff (Weeden & Cornwell, 2020). However, this study, although limited in nature, provided an overview of DTHM student experiences and perceptions of remote online learning. Limitations to the study included the relatively small sample of survey respondents $n=235$ and in-depth face-to-face interviews $n=13$. Future studies could focus on more qualitative interviews and a larger sample size survey, including students from other disciplines throughout USP. Student satisfaction levels could be analysed across different disciplines to discover the quality and consistency of teaching and remote online resources available to students from different disciplines and courses.

The findings from this study could assist USP with developing new support systems for remote learning students, not only related to educational and infrastructural resources but mental health and wellness (Mok et al., 2021) since many students claimed they suffered from differing levels of depression, especially those who had contracted the virus. USP can also consider the suitability of different remote learning modes for students, including online, blended or print options that meet some of the challenges faced by students from the region, rural areas, and maritime islands. Moreover, future studies could focus on definitions and characteristics of remote learning and modes such as face-to-face, online, print, and blended and their suitability for delivering quality education across the region and within a post-COVID educational environment. Fiji has a low prevalence of HIV/AIDS ($< 0.1\%$); however, unlike the global HIV trend, which has stabilised in recent years, HIV is a growing problem in Fiji, with figures projected to have increased by 50% in 2020 (Fiji Centre for Communicable Diseases Control [FCDC], 2015; Ministry of Health and Medical Services, 2016; UNAIDS, 2016). This projected increase will place additional burdens on existing prevention, support, and care mechanisms employed in Fiji. Several factors increase Fiji's susceptibility to an HIV epidemic, including low and inconsistent use of condoms and barriers to condom negotiation amongst vulnerable groups such as commercial sex workers, men who have sex with men (MSM), tertiary students, seafarers and uniformed service; low knowledge on modes of transmission of HIV; high rates of multiple and casual partners; low perceived risk of HIV transmission; low rates of HIV testing; and early onset of sexual behaviour (Bavinton et al., 2011; Choudhary et al., 2020; Hammar et al., 2011; McMillan & Worth, 2010).

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Appendix 1 Survey Questions

1. From your experiences, rank the following in terms of what areas of well-being you and young people you know have been most affected by COVID-19. Rate each on a scale of 1 being not impacted and 5 being highly impacted.

Mental Wellbeing: Coping well with worries and anxieties, and enjoying a daily routine

Social Wellbeing: relationships with, and care for, friends and family

Financial Wellbeing: effectively managing your economic life

Physical Wellbeing: having good health and enough energy to get things done on a daily basis

Community Wellbeing: the sense of being part of the community where you live

Career Wellbeing: how you occupy your time or simply what you do for your professional development

2. Which of the following have negatively affected your well-being? Please select all that apply.

- Disruption to your education
- Reduction in employment and employment opportunities
- Reduction in social engagement with peers
- Domestic violence
- Food shortages
- Isolation from family and friends
- Poor access to internet
- Reduced opportunities for physical activity
- Anxiety and stress
- Other, please state.

3. Which of the following have had positive impacts on your well-being from your experience? Tick all that apply.

- Connecting with friends online
- Undertaking online education
- Exploring new ways of utilising technologies and online processes for your work/study

- Having more free time
- Having more time with family
- Being more creative
- Having more time to pursue hobbies
- Accessing support services when/if at risk (physical or mental health risk)
- Undertaking more community work
- Accessing financial support services
- Engaging in sport or artistic activities
- Participating in online religious services
- Daily or weekly video conferencing or Zoom calls with friends and family
- Weekly Zoom video conferencing with university lecturers
- Other, please state:

4. Rate the following statements from your experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it has affected your mobility and ability to act within your communities, online or in other ways?

My routine has not changed much

I cannot go to university

I cannot go to work

I cannot play sport

I cannot spend time with my friends

I spend more time online

I check on/connect with elder relatives and persons more than before

I can spend more time reading and doing hobbies

I can spend more time with my family

I can be creative to think of new things to do with my time

I have not been affected

I am at greater risk of violence

I am finding it difficult financially to continue my online education

I feel stressed about my career prospects when I finish university so I do not

pay much attention to what is happening in the community

I cannot visit museums, cinemas, theatres, nightclubs and other places for cultural/social activities

I cannot attend religious services

I suffer from depression and boredom

I will continue my studies even if they continue to be online

I prefer a face to face educational experience

5. Rate the following statements from your experiences of negative behaviour by or towards youth in your community.

Young people have spread fake news

Young people have been responsible for hate speech

Young people have discriminated against others

Young people are not taking the pandemic seriously

Young people are continuing social gatherings

Young people have been blamed for negative behaviour in the media or towards older people

Young people are not participating in the online learning offered by their university

Young people have dropped out of university

Not having a routine of work and university leads to young people having poor time management

I have not seen or heard of any negative behaviour

6. What do you think are positive examples of young people responding to community needs (online, local, global)? Please select all that apply.

- Community activities such as food deliveries, entertainment, etc
- Family activities such as caring for grandparents or young children
- Campaigning to raise money or change behaviour
- Keeping in touch with peers to prevent isolation
- Forming new support networks amongst peers

Setting up small business to contribute to family incomes e.g., catering, gardening, cleaning, lawn mowing, babysitting etc.

Other, please specify _____

7. Select examples of new ways young people are using technology to respond to COVID-19, either in terms of their daily lives, education, health (and well-being) and civic engagement. Select all that apply.

Social media campaigns

Collaborating through music, art, sport, and cultural activities

Mentoring or providing advice and support to peers

Taking advantage of online courses

Designing apps that help social distancing, understanding of COVID-19, and related issues

Regular Zoom meetings with friends and family at home and abroad

Other, please specify _____

8. Rate these challenges from your experiences of using new technologies.

It is difficult for me to have good access to the internet

I have limited access to technology / equipment

I have limited knowledge on how to use technology effectively

My teacher/instructor does not understand how to use technology effectively

I do not find it interesting to do everything online and it impacts my motivation.

9. Your education has been affected in a number of ways: some negative and some positive. What, in your opinion, are the most important changes affecting education and learning resulting from the pandemic? Rate your answers from 1 = Strongly disagree at all to 7 = Strongly agree

Students need to know how to be self-motivated to continue to participate in learning.

Family support to learning has become more necessary.

Access to equipment/internet is unequal and impacts some learners.

Learning time is more flexible and allows more alignment with lifestyle.

Access to education has become more divided on the basis of social status and wealth.

Access to education has become more divided based on where you live.

Learners, on average, spend more time studying each day.

Learners, on average, spend less time studying each day.

Learners, on average, have quality access to learning materials

Learners, on average, have poor access to learning materials

Teachers have less opportunity to pay attention to individual learners' needs

Women's access to education is lower.

Men's access to education is lower.

Uncertainty about graduation and qualifications is creating anxiety.

Education has become more expensive.

10. What are the opportunities that this crisis creates in terms of learning? Please select your 3 most important.

- Learners have more control over when, how and what they learn
- Universities have the opportunity to rethink the way education is designed and delivered
- Universities can create more varied learning experiences
- Universities can provide more access opportunities e.g. Online, blended, print etc.
- Lecturers can use more new technologies and delivery systems.
- Other, please specify

11. In your experience of this crisis, what, in your opinion, are the most important impacts on the individual rights of young people? Please select your 3 most important.

- Right to health
- Right to safety
- Right to education
- Right to employment

- Right to a healthy environment
- Right to food security and nutrition
- Right to participation and inclusion
- Right to peace and security
- Right to privacy
- Right to freedom of movement
- Right to travel and mobility
- Other, please specify

12. Are there, in your opinion, groups of young people that may be affected more than others? If so, who? Please select all that apply.

- Young people with disabilities or health conditions
- Young people living in cities and/or overcrowded conditions
- Young people living in developing countries
- Younger youth (under 20)
- Young people who have lost their job
- Young people who live alone
- Young medical professionals and first responders
- Young business owners
- Young migrants
- Youth caregivers, including young parents and those that care for the elderly or disabled
- Indigenous or ethnic minority youth
- Young LGBTIQ people
- Other, please specify.

13. As a USP student, what are you most concerned about right now in regard to COVID-19, your education and lecturers?

14. What are some of the issues that education stakeholders might not understand in regard to the realities and challenges you and other students are facing?

- 15. What concerns do you have regarding your education and COVID-19 that have not been answered for you? This could be in regard to alternative assessment, grades, access, sponsorship etc.**
- 16. What is your age?**
- 17. What is your country of birth?**
- 18. What is your gender?**
- 19. What programme are you enrolled in?**
- 20. What mode of study are you undertaking?**
- 21. How satisfied are you with the mode of study you have chosen, given the challenges you are facing post-COVID-19?**