



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Research Constraints in the Pandemic Era: a Mixed- Method Projective Analysis

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The current study addresses the research approaches adopted by master's students in conducting final projects in the time of the pandemic end-phase. With a mixed-method, we project the research trail as well as the outcomes. The results postulate that there is an aggregation of factors resulting blatant mediocrity in research, which is attributed first, to the lack of constant supportive supervisory accompaniment. Second, mental health issues that appeared to be detrimental. Third, the unsupportive atmosphere with respect to reaching target populations and peer-exchange. Fourth, resorting to misconduct, and that, dissatisfaction feeling among the participants was predominantly noticeable, and that, they could do better in normal circumstances.

Keywords: Constraints, COVID-19 Pandemic Research Undertaking, Projection, Students' perspectives.

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Introduction

The outbreak has had a global impact on various aspects of life. It affected educational institutions, namely higher education which has tremendously been disrupted in terms of the teaching and learning process. Consequently, new modalities have emerged, electronic learning has altered conventional one; novel maps, eventually, surfaced bringing alternative ways and mechanisms in providing and receiving knowledge. Therefore, adopting a responsive stance relevant in the time where high quality research was challenging appeared to be inescapable.

Since most students embraced precarious approaches in doing research, this implies that they were far from achieving a scholarly done work. In this sense, we throw our projection on how research intricate or simple was conducted during the critical context. We identified, therefore, two prominent challenges stemming from that era's associated measures, social distancing and mental wellbeing, that both threatened quality research making. Although, there is a debate about resorting to alternative mechanisms or ways to apply norms to judge a research work, there is, however, an informal consensus around the fact that precariousness of methods in terms of research doing yielded mediocrity and averageness. Likewise, more consideration should be given in that sense to investigate thoroughly reasons behind this phenomenon. Eventually, the particularities of the new context spelled the way university students handled research in general, and thus, generating the full picture about some schematic shared approaches amongst the population under study. In other words, the process of learning has not been immune to the viral crisis effects notably face-to-face interaction, reaching participants, and exchange of research knowledge as well. In addition to mental health issues that have been adversely disruptive as well as health worries related to contamination risks. Besides, lack of constant supervision further exacerbated the overall situation. While this is typically adequate time to address the problematic of research doing and the constraints revolving around. In this respect, we start sparking questions that would seed this paper:

1. To what extent did the pandemic era disrupt the process of conducting research?

2. Did students cope with the constraining environment? And how was the quality of the achievement? Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

1. The pandemic has had a detrimental impact on the process of research.
2. It was expected that students would strive with their research projects.

Therefore, a panoply of guidelines have compulsorily been administered to buffer the outbreak's impact on university learners. Consequently, many students made their way home and tried to settle on virtual learning. Additionally, they were likely to be struggling with their mental wellbeing, as they were concomitantly experiencing a negative impact of the health crisis on their ability to collect data. Eventually, the precariousness of the situation transpired huge gaps with regard to data gathering and analysis, which was further accentuated by a lack in supervisory support and accompaniment.

Physical distancing

Physical distancing, also referred to as ‘social distancing’, is a major plan to reduce the spread of the virus by limiting close contact with others (Galea et al., 2020; WHO, 2020). While the specific behavioral recommendations for physical distancing vary from one jurisdiction to another, they often include avoiding group gatherings and crowded areas as well as maintaining a minimum when in the presence of others (Bonell et al. 2020; WHO, 2020). This reality prompted university students to consider other strategies and install alternative mechanisms when conducting research. Therefore, the researcher/student is the instrument of data collection; this implies that the contact with classmates is highly significant in exchanging knowledge and sharing expertise to optimize research doing process. Moreover, with regard to positionality of the researcher in relation to population or group of study (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) emphasized the notion of contextual dependency. This explains the crucialness of participants’ exposedness during the research trail. Likewise, these instances lead to feelings of connectedness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). It is about the relationships people have with each other and their engagement with the community. Eventually social connection is an integral part of mental health and wellbeing.

Distance learning

The new measures of physical distancing urged researchers to seek alternative data-gathering methods that concentrated on virtual interaction and access to the field via MOODLE platform, beside synchronous category of learning. Similarly, alternate methods in research guidance were endorsed in response to the outbreak. For instance, online focus groups using chat or video and interviews were considered in situations where physical proximity was limited (Dodds & Hess, 2021). In this regard, recent evidence advocates that virtual methods of interaction alter the relationships between student-instructor or student-student, and this issue, therefore, is still generating in-depth debate.

Supervision factor

Supervision is an important part of the implementation and improvement of education. It consists on the evaluation stage through a series of activities to supervise, check, match, and control all educational activities to conform to the established plan and the desired results (Rahmah, 2018). Ideally, effective supervision is carried out through systematic and well-planned stages with proportional targets (ibid). Effective supervision can help, then, the academic unit to organize the planned work, so that its implementation runs smoothly and is completed properly. It means that the supervisory function as a corrective effort via control process, the controller, thence, focuses on the outcomes, behaviors, and clan (Han et al. 2019; Kirsch, 1996; Sihag & Rijdsdijk, 2019).

In fact, within the folds of supervision lies the psychological support, will, and determination that the teacher communicates all along the process, beside cognitive assistance. In this respect, (Goh & Khine, 2002) stated that student perception of teacher support has been related with greater feelings of school belonging and greater school engagement and motivation as well as better academic performance. If the students perceive high teacher support would exhibit higher academic

achievement as compared to the students perceiving low teacher support. Likewise, when learners view their teacher as supportive, they report higher levels of interest, valuing effort, and enjoyment in their schoolwork (Fraser & Fisher, 1982; Midgley et al, 1989) and greater expectancies for success (Goodenow, 1993). Perceiving the teacher as supportive is also related positively to asking for help when needed (Newman & Schwager, 1993). Eventually, this type of support is paramount in boosting student's motivation and desire to accomplish a good work scholarly done. In sum, supervision encompasses both processes heuristic as well as emotional.

Research aim

The current research aims at exploring and reporting the trajectory that master two students took a path in achieving their research projects, as well as the experience they may have had with regard to the critical context of the global pandemic.

Research objectives

- 1-Firstly, to identify types of research constraints and categorize them.
- 2-Secondly, find out anomalies and lacks in relation to research trail.
- 3-Thirdly, rate research projects with respect to quality.

Method

Participants

Master two learners were the core of this research study, a promotion of forty university students aged from 22-24 years studying at University of Saida, Algeria. In fact, the choice of the subjects in question was not random, the researcher has been supervising them during the critical phase of the pandemic, and thus, witnessing the changes occurring with respect to research undertaking. They had endured the pandemic years and coped with its biggest challenges. Some of them have been contaminated twice, in the COVID -19 and Omicron variant too. As a result no communication medium was under their disposal but electronic, and this in reaching participants, meeting supervisors, or peer-collaboration. In addition, observation sessions were scheduled in accordance with the availability of target populations, and most of the time insufficient. Eventually, the researcher was able to reach a point culminating to the reality that a mutation happened, i.e., a serious negative change in handling university tasks. This was an urge to write the present manuscript, describing those changes.

Instruments & Procedure

The semi-structured questionnaire was dispatched the first week of September 2022. This means that data were collected in person. Taking into account affect considerations in research, notably interviews, the semi-structured interview was addressed the same week to five students randomly chosen. It encompassed four consolidative questions considering face-to-face supervision and classmate-collaboration. Similarly, the questionnaire afforded a substantial report about how this population was managing research in the context of the pandemic. It is important, therefore, to note that the quantitative method appeared to be derisory in addressing causality in poor performance regarding research undertaking in general. This ought to be endorsed by a qualitative account portraying circumstances in which academic tasks have been conducted. Additionally, observation of troubled

mental health among participants stemming from the stressing conjuncture complicated the issue of data gathering and exchanging knowledge, meeting supervisors, or peer-review.

Research findings

Our data suggest nonlinearity of the process of research yielding poor performance in academic achievement. This implies that mediocrity was the salient trait of the overall description of project works when it comes to high quality standards and scholarly done artifacts. Accordingly, there was a consensus among participants around factors leading to that, which can be classified and summarized as follows: firstly, lack of supervisors' constant interaction, due to social distancing which has been altered by sporadic discussions, and most of the time contending by electronic feedback. Secondly, reaching populations under study or meeting classmates for peer-correction or collaboration. Thirdly, amotivation and poor mental health issues gave birth to the sense of indolence and carelessness.

Results & Discussion

The discussion highlights some of the chief research findings resulting from the questionnaire and the interview. Therefore, several conclusions can be drawn from the already mentioned revelations, which were premised, on a correlation between the three sections of the questionnaire. Those postulate that it was quite challenging for the majority of the respondents to conduct a research work in the time of the pandemic, since it was not evident to join participants under health crisis restrictions regarding gatherings avoidance. Furthermore, it was not easy to meet classmates to exchange knowledge or do some peer-correction. A priori, the total number of participants confirmed that they were unconvinced by the quality of the work achieved. Moreover, lack of supervisory support and face-to-face guidance was discernable point. This is in line with the first hypothesis assuming that the pandemic's consequences might be detrimental on the process of research. The table below demonstrates in number the above considerations.

Table. 1. Academic Achievement's Impediments during the Outbreak

Factor	Percentage
Lack of supervisor psycho-cognitive support	50%
Poor mental health	15%
Reaching participants problems	15%
Research misconduct	15%
Time constraints	05%
Total	100%

The table above demonstrates that the teacher support, psychological and cognitive is a determinant factor for a satisfactory educational return. Mental health consideration along with student's self- perception and determination are with auxiliary importance; this is in line with academic achievement and academic self-concept notion advocated by (Moller et al, 2009). Roughly, the one third of the students had expressed their feelings of psychological wellbeing decrease; however,

they have experienced an increase in anxiety regarding solitude and university disconnectedness. Similarly, (Richardson et al 2012) studied the significance of maintaining a correlation between university and the accompanying psychological data and academic performance. Besides, perplexity surfaced when it comes to research trail stages and running the risk of accidental distortions and misconduct, as well as drift threats, which impacted negatively the quality of the final artefacts. This finding seems to be in congruence with the second hypothesis positing struggled research path yielding precarious work. To encapsulate what came above, two hugely disruptive factors had recurrently been evoked in both tools the questionnaire and interview with regard to research undertaking: Lack of the teacher persistent accompaniment as well as stress and discomfort. Surprisingly, perhaps the most appealing answer provided by a minority (04%) was enjoying loneliness: *"It was quite comfortable to work alone..."* A variable worth mentioning when evoking introversion question. Contrastively, students who do not tend to favor isolation outnumbered (96%) those who like socializing and studying in pairs or groups with the presence of the teacher. The coming table displays numerically the above data.

Table.2. Extroversion-introversion Types Recapitulative Table

Personality type	Respondents' perspectives regarding research handling	Percentage
Extroverted	Appreciate group-exchange; Collaborative approaches adoption	96%
Introverted	Enjoy individual work; Rarely consulting others	04%
	Trivialize peer-correction and sharing	
Total		100%

The prominent ingredient of school engagement and educational return is the affective bound between the instructor and the student, which appears to be paramount in ordinary as well as extraordinary contexts; and this might corroborate with (Roorda's et al, 2011) findings stating the influence of affective teacher-student relationships on students' school engagement and achievement. In addition, what seems worth incorporating, are elements fostering keenness and continuity, despite the challenges arising from the health crisis. The tools elicited a set of boosting agents summarized as the table shows.

Table.3. Academic Achievement's Boosting Factors during the Outbreak

Factor	Percentage
Supervisor psycho-cognitive support	55%
Mental wellbeing	25%
Participants' exposedness	15%
Time availability	05%
Total	100%

Conclusion

This paper has been trying to address causality in relation to mediocrity in research doing amid the viral crisis amongst master two students. Our analysis indicates that, the one third of the respondents were experiencing drawbacks of the outbreak on their ability to reach participants, collect data, and discuss ideas and findings with classmates. More than the half also identified a negative repercussion on meeting supervisors for an in-depth correction and feedback, which had been altered by electronic communication. In addition, almost a third of the subjects expressed their poor mental health that reflected negatively on research quality. While around three quarters confessed that they have resorted to research misconduct to finish on time, otherwise they run the risk of out-time submission. Overall, the results show that, there is an aggregate of causes ramifying mediocrity in research work accomplishment; undoubtedly, there may have been certain gaps around supervision. Eventually, more complex analyses are now required to tease out the potential long-term effects or aftermath of the sanitary crisis on the coming generation's academic success. Ultimately, future generations should be geared-up to buffer such challenges for better acquaintance.

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محدودیت‌های پژوهشی در دوران همه‌گیری: تحلیل آینده‌نگر با روش ترکیبی

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مطالعه حاضر به بررسی رویکردهای پژوهشی اتخاذشده توسط دانشجویان کارشناسی ارشد در انجام پروژه‌های پایانی در دوره پایانی همه‌گیری می‌پردازد. این پژوهش با به‌کارگیری یک روش ترکیبی، مسیر پژوهش و همچنین نتایج را پیش‌بینی و تحلیل می‌کند. یافته‌ها حاکی از آن است که تجمیعی از عوامل منجر به بروز سطح متوسطی از کیفیت در پژوهش‌ها شده است. این عوامل عمدتاً به این شرح هستند: اول، فقدان همراهی و پشتیبانی مستمر نظارتی از سوی اساتید راهنما. دوم، مسائل سلامت روان که تأثیرات منفی آشکاری داشتند. سوم، فضای نامساعد در دستیابی به جامعه آماری مورد نظر و تبادل نظر با همتایان. چهارم، روی آوردن به سوءرفتارهای علمی. همچنین، احساس نارضایتی در میان مشارکت‌کنندگان به‌طور محسوسی غالب بود و این باور وجود داشت که آنان در شرایط عادی می‌توانستند عملکرد بهتری داشته باشند.

واژه‌های کلیدی: محدودیت‌ها، انجام پژوهش در دوران همه‌گیری کووید-۱۹، پیش‌بینی، دیدگاه‌های دانشجویان.

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