

A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW ON THE ACADEMIC STRESSES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN BLENDED INSTRUCTION

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Abstract

This meta-synthesis attempts to identify the stresses concerning college students' blended-learning environments and to synthesize the coping strategies they use to deal with stress in various cultural contexts. Out of 200 initial studies gathered using the Publish or Perish software, 50 articles were included. The selected studies were organized using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram. Using Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis, the synthesized data were analyzed which have emerged three themes, namely: concerns, challenges, and coping mechanisms. Results indicated that students' stress levels, whether in a face-to-face or hybrid setting, negatively impacted their academic performance. The lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills, restricted computer access, and spending a lot of time on screen make students more anxious. The rapid transition from face-to-face involvement to a blended learning environment negatively influences their perception of their academic efforts. It is recommended that various actions should be considered to lessen students' stress and enhance the online learning process.

KEYWORDS: *blended-learning, blended-based instruction, meta-synthesis, and college students*

1.INTRODUCTION

As evidenced by changes in cognition, behavior, or brain activity, learning is the development of new knowledge, abilities, or talents through experimentation, observation, or other experiences. (American Psychological Association) Learning may be enjoyable, especially when one is learning something new. It may occasionally feel overwhelming due to information overload. Stress is an unavoidable human response; it is our fight-or-flight response to a situation. College students will likely face stress, especially given the rigorous training they get. Academic commitments and the numerous presentations that students must prepare set high expectations for them. As a result, pupils are under additional stress as they seek to accomplish various school projects. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, everything, including the educational environment, has shifted from the physical to the virtual. The integration and usage of technology revealed that pupils were struggling to manage the duties of finishing their assignments. This causes students to experience excessive amounts of stress, which negatively impacts their mental health and academic performance.

Some students reportedly became more self-conscious about their time management and organizational skills, according to (Napier et al., 2011b). For instance, some children found it challenging to develop relationships with their classmates and cooperate on group projects. The satisfaction scores of students in a graduate course for pre-service teachers were compared between the traditional on-campus course and the blended distance component. The majority of students reported favorably that their online education helped them become more independent and that they

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were able to cope with its frequent adjustments. However, the majority of students discovered that working from home raised their level of distraction, and the online format made them fearful of tests and evaluations while preventing them from engaging with others informally with their instructors. They also mentioned more back problems, dry eyes, and eye strain. In terms of their mental health, they reported more stress, followed by anxiety, loneliness, and depression, but this break from school offered them more time for reflection (Idris et al., 2021)

1.1.Gaps in the related studies

According to some respondents, blended-based instruction could increase teaching and learning flexibility, encourage independent learning, and offer opportunities for networked learning that are available to both teachers and students, according to the findings of relevant studies. They also demonstrated little to no understanding of the concepts of blended learning, though. Respondents also believed that blended learning was difficult to implement in a classroom setting because there were no institutional policies on its use, a lack of ICT training or knowledge (such as technophobia), a lack of confidence to use a blended learning approach, and limited access to computer labs. This demonstrates how stress among students might occur during blended learning lessons. The difficulties college students encounter are not consistent with one another. The difficulties college students encounter that prevent them from continuing to use LMS and the online portion of blended learning is not connected. In their studies, Rasheed et al. (2020) and Ashrafi et al. (2020) noted several characteristics, such as technology literacy, competency, complexity, system navigation, and hedonic factors, that provide difficulties for students using LMS in blended learning. The apparent intention of students to utilize the LMS as well as their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are directly influenced by these factors. According to Ashrafi et al. (2020), it is essential to comprehend the underlying variables that drive learners to continue using learning management systems following system acceptance.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

Using the meta-synthesis technique, this study seeks to identify the stressors connected with blended-learning teaching for college students, as well as to comprehend the coping strategies by which individuals adjust to stress across countries. The following are the goals of this study: (1) to identify the stressors associated with blended learning education that impacted college students' socio-emotional well-being and mental health; (2) to understand college students' coping mechanisms and how they adapt to stress; and (3) to identify ways to develop a healthy coping mechanism and possible alternative methods to support college students in their blended learning instruction.

3.RESEARCH METHODS

3.1.Research Design: Meta-Synthesis

In order to analyze how these publications offer recommendations for preventing stress and enhancing students' mental health, a meta-synthesis was done to gather data on academic stress related to blended learning settings. By merging qualitative data, a meta-synthesis seeks to offer a new understanding of the subject area. The finest use of meta-synthesis is to reinterpret meaning from several qualitative research. They do not take the place of meta-analyses, which assess a hypothesis using numerical data (S. Atkins et al, 2008).

3.2.Search Strategy

The majority of the papers downloaded and evaluated were published between 2019 and 2022 and are relevant to understanding the stress associated with the blended-learning instruction. Keywords used in the Published or Perish software in the Google Scholar database include college

students, blended-based education approaches, stress-related with blended learning, and qualitative research design. The second keyword in the title section was blended learning, which was used to narrow the search. These keywords were specifically chosen to extract data from Google Search and Google Scholar. The second keyword in the title section was blended learning, which was used to narrow the search. These keywords were purposefully chosen to gather information from Google Search and Google Scholar in order to collect the variables required for meta-synthesis. Using PRISMA 2020, the researchers organized the data they had collected.

3.3.Selection Inclusive Criteria

The studies in this study were chosen based on the following criteria: Stress Associated with Blended-Learning, Blended-based Instruction Practices, college students, and qualitative research design outputs (dissertations, published research articles, and theses) from 2019-2022 studies, Google Scholar Software database in English.

3.4.Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

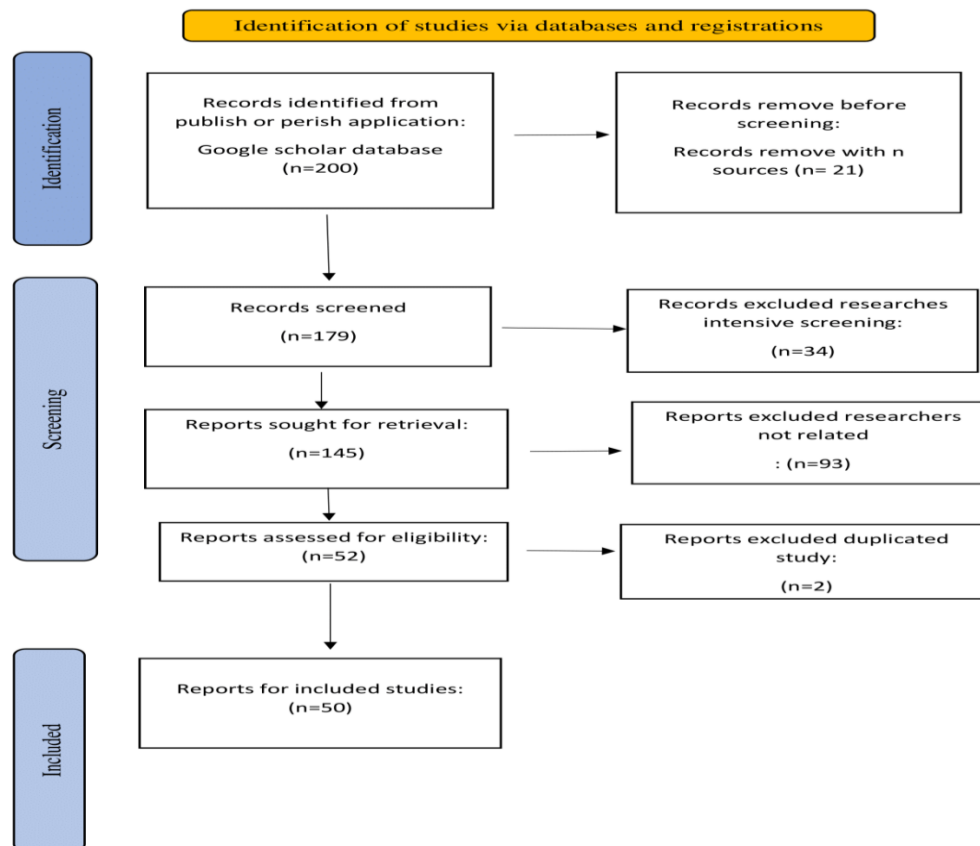
The data from the reviewed research on student academic stress about blended learning, difficulties, and coping methods will be addressed using Thematic analysis (TA) by Clarke et al (2015). A technique for assessing qualitative data called thematic analysis involves looking through data collection to find, examine, and report recurring themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). It is a technique for summarizing data, but when choosing codes and creating themes, it also involves interpretation. Researchers will use TA to perform the following: familiarize themselves with the data; code, search for themes; review themes; define and name themes, and write the report.

4.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are interpreted following the study's objectives, based on a meta-synthesis of the selected studies. A Systematic Review of the academic stresses of college students in blended instruction is identified as the meta-theme. As a result, five sub-themes emerged from the meta-theme, namely, face-to-face over blended-learning, blended-learning instruction provides relative merits (advantage and disadvantage), positive relationship and development of critical literacy skills and support to students, the negative impact of student's mental health, and providing alternative designs of learning system and models. The figure below is the process for the research paper selection.

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4.1.Meta-theme: Academic Stresses of College Students in Blended Instruction

Herbert Freudenberger (1947) was the first to coin the psychological concept of burnout. According to his definition, to "fail, wear out, or become fatigued by excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources." Academic apathy, academic fatigue, and disinterest in schoolwork are all symptoms of academic burnout, a term coined by Nuemann et al (1990). It is also distinguished by a lack of personal development in students' abilities and a lack of personal development in educational matters (academic inefficiency). The ability to initiate, guide, maintain, and choose learning behavior is referred to as learning motivation. Sankaran and Bui (2001) discovered that less motivated students performed worse on knowledge exams than motivated students. One of the most frequently studied factors in learning research is learning motivation. The meta-theme Academic Stresses of College Students in Blended Instruction generated five sub-themes.

4.2.Sub-theme 1. Face-to- Face over Blended-learning

Perceptive research that understands the relationship nature of the technologies is needed to assess blended learning quality. Students' in-person and online learning impressions must be understood. Students regard face-to-face learning as more useful than blended learning due to perceived restrictions in professor connections, group work, peer involvement, class participation, and the opportunity to ask questions about technical content and directions (BL). Face-to-face training increases mental health and well-being, academic performance, and social engagement, according to DOH Officer-in-Charge Dr. Maria Rosario Singh-Vergeire (2022). Many see this as a return to normal, but to grasp that this is the "new normal," we must consider how to frame children' educational experiences and be conscious of well-being and social distance.

4.3.Sub-theme 2. Blended-learning instructions provides relative merits (advantage and disadvantage)

Blended learning eliminates time limits with online and digital materials. Without unnecessary lectures, learners may focus on needed knowledge and skills. This reduces cookie-cutter exam scoring and improves online assessment. Blended learning with cutting-edge technology is cost-effective and benefits students. Blended learning gives students personalized training. Blended learning students connect with teachers via video conferencing and other means. Students have more time to study outside of class. Dependability and usability of digital resources vary. In blended learning, printed and online plagiarism is a growing problem. Blended learning allows students to utilize social resources in the classroom while studying technical skills privately. Blended learning helps EFL students by addressing their needs and being cost-effective. Two Indian universities produced a blended-learning study. Covid-19 pupils list online learning problems. Module analysis found little online peer engagement and difficulty connecting students and teachers. The collected data can be used to improve blended learning in most higher education courses.

4.4.Sub-theme 3. Positive relationship and development of critical literacy skills and support to students

Social constructivism and critical literacy inform this work (Janks 2013). According to studies, students believe blended learning (BL) increases critical literacy abilities. The research favored the BL method, noting its growth of ICT skills, learning of additional knowledge outside of class, convenience of work hours, and ease of self-expression. Blended learning helps customize learning and growth to pandemic needs. Blended learning improves e-learning results. Blended learning is a cutting-edge method that helps new learning modes using ICT. In addition, "a person is often regarded as a critical thinker if they continuously and intentionally seek to improve their thinking. The essential premise underlying the study of critical thinking is simple: "identify one's thinking strengths and weaknesses in order to improve the latter while keeping the former." Norris, Lucas, and Prudhoe, K. (2012).

4.5.Sub-theme 4. Negative impact of student's mental health

Self-regulation and instructional technology are pupils' biggest challenges. Students and teachers require new abilities to utilize online educational resources (Maycock et al., 2018). Both students born in the digital age and those who weren't are overwhelmed by education technology. Teachers' biggest challenges involve classroom technology. Blended learning increases student motivation, while online learning does not. The flipped-jigsaw method can boost student academic motivation in distance learning, according to R.M. Oducado, H Estoque (2021). Academic motivation was affected by COVID-19's psychological harm and quality of life. If teachers and students lack technological skills due to inexperience or inadequate training, technology is the biggest obstacle to online learning.

5.CONCLUSION

There is no correlation between the type of classroom design, such as blended or face-to-face, and the amount of academic stress experienced by pupils. A lack of digital literacy has been identified as one of the challenges that students face when participating in blended learning. It is also abundantly clear that their incapacity to communicate with their instructors and peers may be having an effect on the mental health of the students. It is also abundantly obvious that people's mental health and way of life might suffer as a direct result of excessive time spent staring at the screen of a computer. People's perceptions of their academic accomplishments are negatively impacted when they are forced to make a sudden transition from traditional classroom instruction to a setting that emphasizes blended learning. It is recommended that a number of different steps be taken in order to reduce the amount of stress that students experience and to improve the experience of online learning.

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