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Remote Learning During COVID-19 in Hisar School

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Abstract

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools around the world have had to implement remote learning practices. The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of students towards the remote learning practices adapted by Hisar School during the COVID-19 pandemic. Three questionnaires with questions that asked students to reflect on their motivation levels, ability to complete assignments on time, contact their teachers, access school resources and other learning activities were sent to the entire high school population of Hisar School. Our findings demonstrate that Hisar high school students had positive attitudes regarding the remote learning practices of their school, although 12th grade students had the lowest motivation scores and consequently lower positive attitudes. Additionally, students had difficulty accessing the school library's online resources. Lastly, students preferred to complete assignments at their own pace rather than in predetermined self-study hours.

Keywords

attitude; COVID-19; high school; remote learning; online education

Introduction

The novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) has turned into a serious pandemic with significant consequences; nearly 900,000 deaths and approximately 30 million cases have been reported (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 2020). Global health systems have consequently been challenged in efforts to keep up with increasing cases, though the medical sector is not alone in facing challenges. Daily lives of citizens all around the world have been disturbed due to lockdowns imposed in efforts to mitigate the spread of the disease. One area that has been particularly affected by COVID-19 has been education. Due to the lockdowns, many schools have resorted to either online education, which is defined as a flexible form of education that allows students to access information and study whenever they are available, or remote learning, which is defined as the re-creation of physical classrooms by having students



tune in to watch scheduled lectures or engage in group-work (Geneva College, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020). Students around the world have expressed mixed attitudes, both positive and negative, towards online and remote learning practices (The Learning Network, 2020).

Our school, Hisar School in Istanbul, Turkey, has adopted a mixture of remote learning and online education. Throughout the lockdown, students were expected to tune in for online lessons at certain periods of time, but were also expected to complete their assignments or study in predetermined time slots. The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of students towards the remote learning practices adapted by Hisar School during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods

This survey study sample included the entire high school student population of Hisar School including 18 prep year, 104 9th grade, 105 10th grade, 101 11th grade, and 99 12th grade students for a total of 427 students. Three questionnaires created by the high school committee were administered online using the Google Forms survey platform. The first questionnaire including 14 questions was sent out on March 27, 2020 and answers were collected until April 1, 2020. The second questionnaire including 28 questions was sent out on April 10, 2020 and answers were collected until April 15, 2020. The third questionnaire including 5 questions was sent out on May 8, 2020, and answers were collected until May 12, 2020. The response rates for each of the surveys were 48.9%, 70%, and 44.7%, respectively.

In the first survey, students were asked to rate, on a four-point scale from “never” to “always,” questions on their ability to follow course schedules, access course materials and platforms, attend classes in a timely manner, follow class content, communicate with teachers and ask questions, and complete assignments correctly. Within the same survey, students were also asked to provide their evaluation of remote learning within the past week on a five-point scale of “should be improved” to “very good.” Lastly, students were provided an open-ended text box to make suggestions and recommendations.

In the second survey, students were asked to rate, on a three-point scale from “insufficient” to “excessive”, questions on the numbers of class hours of each of the school’s educational departments (i.e the maths department, the social sciences department, and so on) and afterward justify their answers if they chose to do so. Students were also asked to evaluate the helpfulness of course materials, ease of understanding topics, ability to submit on time, and usefulness of teachers’ feedback for each academic department on a three-point scale from “I agree” to “I disagree.” Students could provide justifications for their answers under a text box. Further, students were asked to rate their computer skills and the ease of accessing school resources, such as the university counseling department or the library, and receiving help on a three-point scale from “I agree” to “I disagree.” Students also provided their general impressions and opinions of the remote learning practices of Hisar School in an open-ended text box.



In the third survey, students evaluated, on a three-point scale from “I agree”, “I am unsure,” and “I disagree” for each of their classes their desire to participate, the helpfulness of given assignments, and their understanding of topics. Also, the students evaluated on a five-point scale, ranging from “Low” to “High”, their motivation levels during the remote learning period. Lastly, students were provided an open-ended text box to state their opinions.

Descriptive statistics were compared across the three time periods for each question to determine the general attitude of high school students towards remote learning practices of Hisar School.

Ethics approval was obtained from the high school committee of Hisar School to display the results of the surveys.

Results

For the first survey, 209 students provided answers, with 9.1%, 23.9%, 27.3%, 21.5% and 18.2% of answers coming from prep, 9th grade, 10th grade, 11th grade, and 12th grade students, respectively. Most students stated that they always had an easy time following their class schedules (70%), and accessing course materials (68%) or suggested content (65%). Nearly all students stated that they remained until the end of their online classes, and approximately 80% of students always joined their lessons on time. More than half of students expressed that they could follow given content and communicate with their teachers “always” or “mostly.” 53% of students reported that they could “always” ask questions to their answers, while 33% answered “mostly” and the rest chose “sometimes”. When asked if they could complete assignments on time, 34% of students selected “always”, 29% had chosen “mostly” and “sometimes”, and the rest had selected “never” (Figure 1). When asked to evaluate the overall online education process, 72% reported that it was good or very good, while only 1% gave it the lowest rating and reported that it “should be improved.”



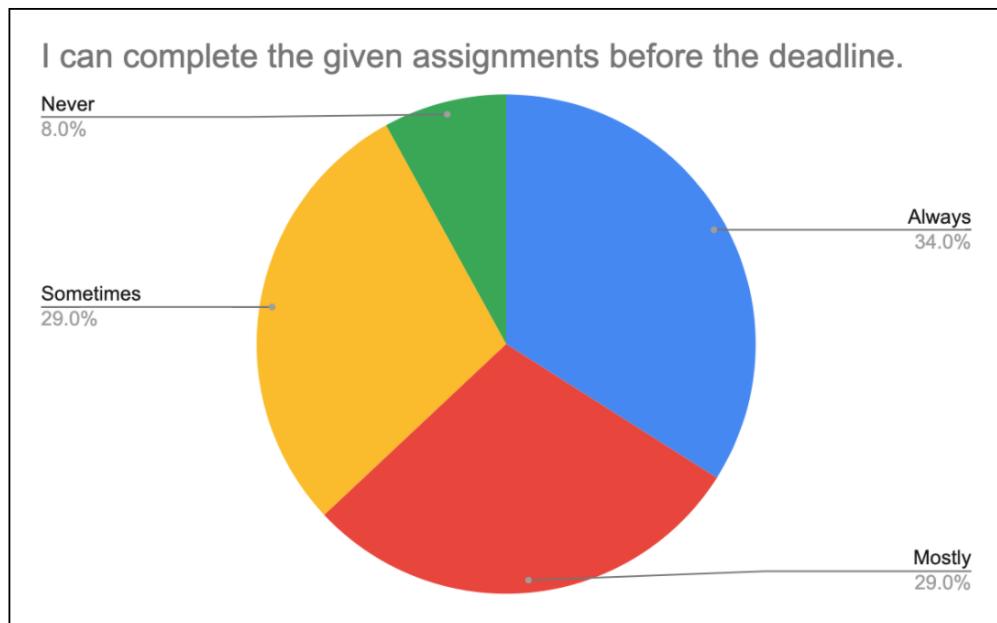


Figure 1: Students' Ability to Meet Deadlines

For the second survey, 299 students provided answers, with 6.7%, 23.1%, 27.4%, 16.4% and 26.4% of answers coming from prep, 9th grade, 10th grade, 11th grade, and 12th grade students, respectively. For their online classes, which were offered by 10 academic departments, an overwhelming majority of students stated that the number of online lessons were sufficient, the lesson materials helped them understand topics, they could complete assignments on time, and receive helpful feedback from their teachers for each academic department, and that they could follow their class schedules and use the school's online resources effectively. Use of designated self-study hours varied across students. Those who always, sometimes, or never completed their assignments during these designated hours were almost split into thirds (Figure 2). This same pattern held for the usefulness of the school's online library resources. Lastly, an overwhelming majority of the participants "agreed" that they had sufficient computer skills to manage remote learning, and that they could contact the IT department and their guidance and university counselors.





I complete assignments during the self-study hours.

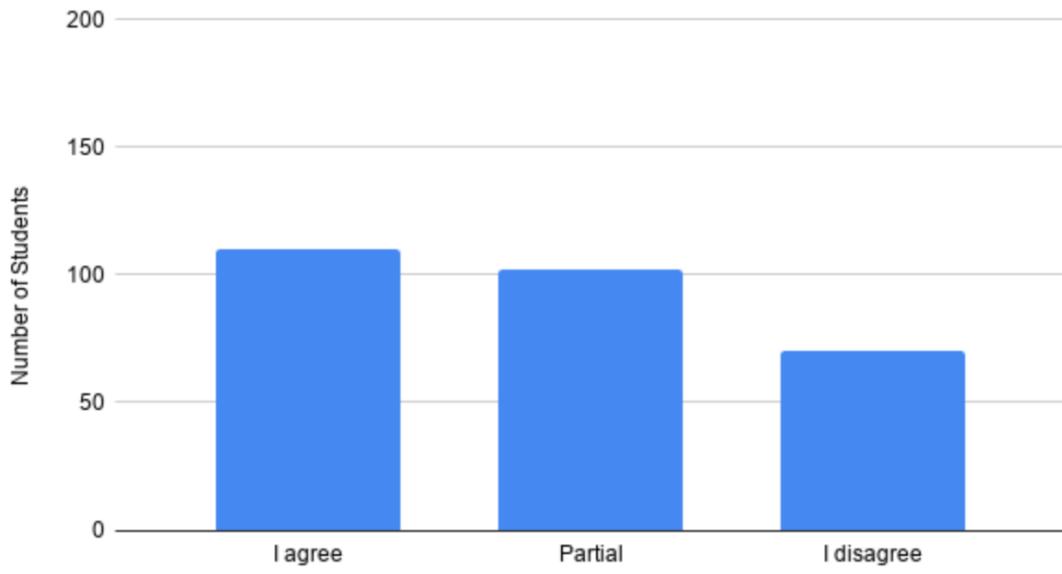


Figure 2: Students' Completion of Assignments During Self-Study Hours

For the third survey, 191 students provided answers, with 6.8%, 37.7%, 21%, 11.5% and 23% of answers coming from prep, 9th grade, 10th grade, 11th grade, and 12th grade students, respectively. While an overwhelming majority of prep year through 10th grade students were satisfied with their classes across the board, 11th and 12th graders showed more variety, partially because their schedules include more electives. Desire to participate, the helpfulness of given assignments, and understanding of topics was very class dependent and showed no patterns.

As demonstrated by Figure 3, prep year's motivation was high, with 84.7% of students selecting 3 and above, and the remaining 15.3% selecting 2 and below. As for 9th grade students, who also had high motivation, 69.4% of students selected scores 3 and above with the remaining 30.6% selected 2 and below. The 10th grade students had high motivation as well, with 87.5% choosing 3 and above and the remaining 12.5% choosing 2 and below. The 11th grade had high motivation too, with 81.8% of students picking 3 and above and the remaining 18.2% picked 2 and below. Lastly, the 12th grade had moderate motivation, with 56.8% of students selecting 3 and above and the remaining 43.2% selecting 2 and below.



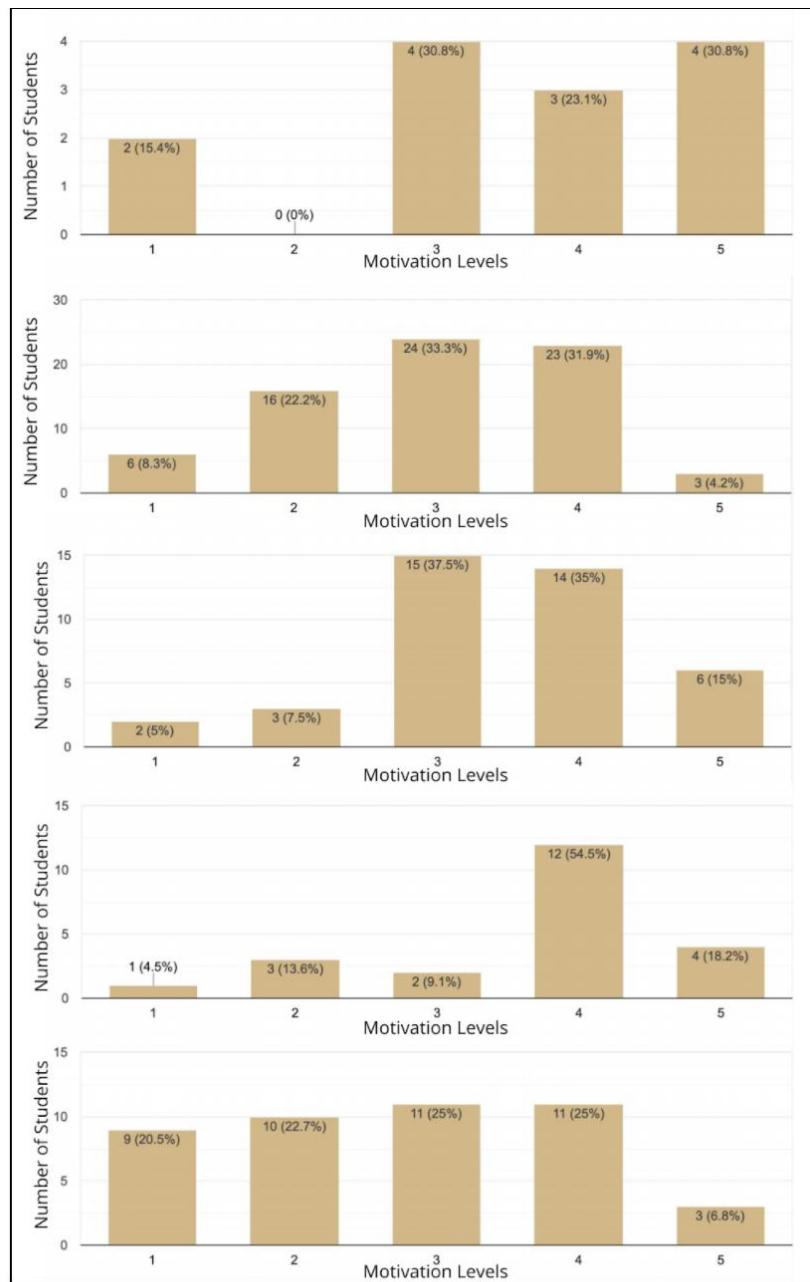


Figure 3: Motivation Levels of Hisar School Students (Top to Bottom: Prep Year to 12th Grade)

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the attitudes of students towards the remote learning practices adapted by Hisar School during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results indicate that, in general, students are pleased with the remote learning practices of Hisar School and therefore have a positive attitude. Most students had an easy time following their schedules, accessing course materials, remaining until the end of the lessons, and communicating with their teachers. However, Hisar students experienced difficulties in completing their duties punctually. This



could have resulted from initial difficulties with adjusting to a brand new education system, both for the teachers and the students; teachers might have increased the workload, believing that students would have more free time to complete assignments due to being in quarantine and remaining at home, or students might have lost motivation to keep track of assignments due to the sudden lack of physical supervision by teachers.

Similar results were observed in the second survey, which also demonstrates that the attitudes of students towards the remote learning practices of Hisar School were positive; each of the academic departments of Hisar School adopted the remote learning practices properly as well, and ensured that students had the opportunities to continue their education. Furthermore, since only 36.6% of students always did their assignments in the designated self-study hours, it can be inferred that the vast majority of students preferred to complete given tasks at their own pace. This is reasonable, as some students might feel more productive working during the evening, and consequently shows that imposing self-study hours may not be effective due to students' personal preferences. Additionally, the second survey showed that students had difficulty accessing the library's resources from home, which indicates that the adopted database was not user-friendly.

The results from the third survey illustrate that prep year, 9th grade, and 10th grade students were majorly content with the remote learning practices for each of their classes. However, since the class selections of 11th and 12th grade students showed more variety due to their electives, it is not possible to make generalizations as there was no particular trend. Regarding the motivation levels of the students, the highest motivation was observed in 10th grade students, followed by prep year, 11th grade, 9th grade, and lastly, 12th grade students. The reason for lower motivation levels in 12th graders can be attributed to the fact that the pandemic occurred in a very critical time for them; the switch to remote learning disturbed the normal study routines of the 12th graders and might have consequently caused them to feel extra pressure and develop a pessimistic viewpoint regarding their academic performance (Zhou et al., 2020). Moreover, a portion of the 12th grade students had applied to overseas universities and already received their acceptances; this might have decreased their desire to focus on their academic performance and work hard during their high school lessons, as they had already secured their positions as university students. These differences in motivation levels suggest that teachers and school administrators should focus on providing extra support to 12th grade students in order to encourage them to participate during the classes and ask questions to their teachers, which would help them have an easier time during the remote learning process and therefore develop positive attitudes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the general attitudes of Hisar School students towards the remote learning practices adapted by their school were positive. However, it was found that the school's library



resources were difficult to use and needed a more user-friendly interface. Moreover, most students did not complete their assignments in the designated self-study hours and instead preferred to work at their own pace, which means that allotting study hours for students may be unnecessary. Additionally, students had trouble completing their assignments on time, which either means that students lost motivation or that teachers assigned too much work. For the former case, teachers could provide encouragement for their students, and for the latter case, longer deadlines could be set. Furthermore, 12th grade students had lower motivation levels compared to prep year, 9th grade, 10th grade, and 11th grade students, which indicates that teachers and school administrators should provide them with extra support.

Author Bio

Lara Nahcivan is 17 years old. She's a senior at Hisar School, hoping to study biology.

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