



Tourism Students' experience of emergency remote teaching due to COVID-19 pandemic

Sónia Pais¹, Ana E. Sousa²

Polytechnic of Leiria, CiTUR, Portugal¹
Polytechnic of Leiria, CiTUR, Portugal²

Abstract

The upsurge of the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdown led to school closure globally. Across the globe, students have been away from schools and their teachers. To cope up with this educational emergency, in Portugal all levels of education suspended face-to-face classes and were replaced by online activities.

Within this context, the teacher involved in this study sought to adapt the activities and teaching materials to the exclusive use of technology and promoted asynchronous tasks, which could be developed independently and in an autonomous way by the students. In order to understand students' perspectives on the transition to emergency remote teaching, a quantitative survey was conducted. The participants in the study are undergraduate students from a Portuguese Higher Education institution attending the curricular unit of Public Relations in Tourism.

The analysis of the students' responses to the questionnaire applied highlighted the main positive and negative aspects experienced, bringing contributions to a discussion on factors that determine the success of remote education.

Keywords: Distance Learning in Times of Crisis; COVID-19; Higher Education, School Closure, Lockdown, Technology Adaption

1. Introduction

In 2020, the coronavirus crisis and the ensuing pandemic context caught everyone by surprise, changing lifestyles throughout the world and with all sectors of society being affected. But its effect has been particularly strong in Education [1]. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a huge disruption in the way traditional higher education institutions deliver their courses.

Teaching was moved online on an untested and unprecedented scale. Educators, faculty and students did their part to support each other. Despite that, several doubts and uncertainties emerged among educators. Although student engagement is a challenge today, tomorrow, whether offline or online, even so one question stood out: how to proceed with teaching activities in the online format without compromising the commitment and engagement of the students?

And, if at the beginning, this pandemic situation created many fears, uncertainties and constraints for both teachers and students, it also created opportunities that allowed them to leave their comfort zone and adjust teaching methodologies that ended up enabling learning to continue in this context of social isolation.

Nowadays, the importance of using active methods is indisputable, where through interaction, the student learns voluntarily, actively and consciously. The variety of teaching strategies that encompass active methodologies, problem-based learning, projects and/or peer learning, invests in the construction of knowledge, requiring the movement of search, criticism, study, production, autonomy and sharing among peers [2].

The modality of distance learning or, in this case, remote teaching, requires reflection which leads to the rethinking of the concepts of education and technology, as well as the development of pedagogical proposals that enhance the process of collective construction of knowledge [3].

Within this context, the teacher involved in this study sought to adapt the activities and teaching materials to the exclusive use of technology and promoted asynchronous tasks, which could be developed independently by the students.

This article reports (1) some of the different strategies and methodologies used in the Public Relation in Tourism curricular unit of the undergraduate degrees in the field of Tourism; and (2) students' opinions regarding the methodologies used and/or the results achieved.



2. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to understand how the profound changes in higher education, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic in Portugal, were perceived by students. In order to understand that a quantitative survey [1] was conducted. The participants in the study were undergraduate students from a Portuguese Higher Education institution attending the curricular unit of Public Relation in Tourism of the undergraduate course of Tourism Marketing.

In view of the pandemic situation and the consequent suspension of face-to-face classes, the teacher involved in this study attempted to adapt the activities and teaching resources for the exclusive use of technology and promoted asynchronous tasks that could be developed autonomously by the students. The questionnaire aimed to assess students' views regarding the methodologies used by the teacher involved in this study. After data collection, qualitative analyses were carried out, quantified whenever necessary and possible. Statistical analyses were performed with Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 28.

2.1. Description of the study

The classes had a total duration of 1 hour and 30 minutes, twice a week. The sessions were synchronous taking place on the Zoom-Colibri platform.

At the beginning of each week, the teacher uploaded a study guide on Moodle, with the objective of allowing students to manage their time and to organize their work.

In each class, the teacher dedicated the first part of the class (about 40 minutes) to present the syllabus, using ppt, videos and websites. Then, in the remaining time, the students were asked to carry out practical activities. Students divided into groups and worked in group zoom rooms, with the teacher online to clarify doubts. Some work proposals, which they carried out throughout the semester, were to create ebooks, websites, logos, posters, slogans and public relations plans. At the end of the activities, students shared their work with the other groups and an assessment was made by the teacher and also by their peers. Activity proposals (scripts) were placed on moodle.

2.2. Respondents

The respondents of the study were college students from a Portuguese Higher Education institution attending the curricular unit of Public Relations in Tourism of the undergraduate course of Tourism Marketing. A quantitative survey was distributed online to the 80 students enrolled at the CU, and a total of 41 responded. The survey was conducted after CU ended.

The great majority of respondents (95.1%) were full-time students, under 25 (90.2%). Most respondents 68.3% stated they were female and 31.7% stated they were male. This was a convenience sample, as participants were easily accessible to researchers.

3. Results and discussion

Regarding the question "Given the circumstances and measures associated with COVID-19, how do you assess your degree of satisfaction with the transfer of semester classes to the online system?", the percentage of students who said they were not satisfied is slightly lower than percentage of students who said they were satisfied (31.71% and 39.02%, respectively); 29.27% of students said they were indifferent to them (figure 1).

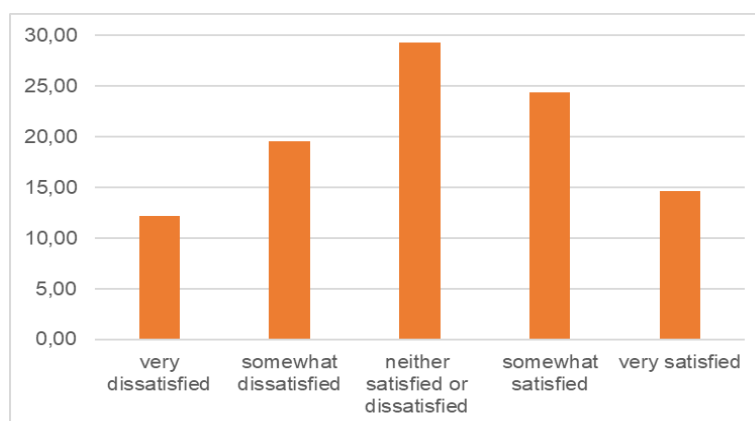


Figure 1. Student satisfaction regarding transfer to the online delivery system.



Students were asked to rate, through a five point Likert scale (1- very dissatisfied; 5 – very satisfied) their satisfaction about online solutions. Table 1 shows the responses to these questions.

Table 1. Heatmap with frequencies of responses to questions about student satisfaction with online solutions (Likert scale: 1 – very dissatisfied; 5 – very satisfied)

	1	2	3	4	5
Online Classes	2	4	13	14	8
Commented materials	2	2	5	25	7
Use of distance learning platforms	1	3	8	20	9
Access to online resources	4	3	5	16	13
Asynchronous communication with the teachers	1	2	7	16	15
Tasks carried out asynchronously	1	2	5	19	14

As can be seen in Table 1, in all six statements the responses are similar with a clear majority of satisfaction. Regarding the solution “Online classes” 22 (53.66%) respondents considered to be satisfied. In all other online solutions, more than 70% of the respondents said they were satisfied. The online solution with the highest number of satisfied students is the solution “Tasks carried out asynchronously” with 80,49% of positive opinions.

More than 90% of the students surveyed consider that they had all the resources and necessary conditions to continue studying remotely. It should be noted that even though all students indicated that they had access to the internet, not everyone had access to videoconferencing tools (only 85.4% had it) and only 68.3% indicated having access to a quiet and private space to attend classes and study during lockdown. These factors may be the cause of a less positive response from some students regarding the transfer of classes to the online system. Lack of access to essential resources has been highlighted as one of the main learning problems during the pandemic and can even be considered a factor that promotes inequality among students [4; 5].

Regarding whether or not they have a computer at their disposal, 95.1% of the students indicated that they had their own computer and 4.9% indicated that they had a shared computer.

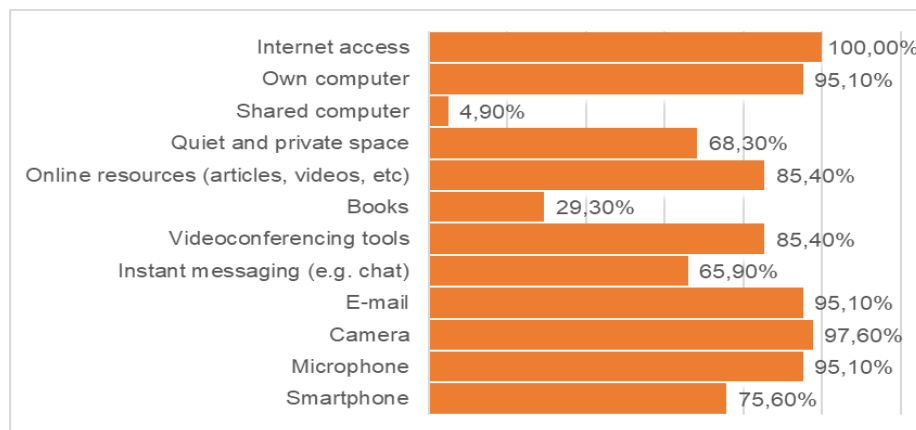


Figure 2. Resources that allowed students to continue studying remotely.

As can be seen in figure 3, more than 50% of the students didn't have an internet connection of good quality. A study developed by Shim and Lee [6] about college students experience of emergency remote teaching due to COVID-19 reported similar results regarding that the most frequent complaint was network instability. Also, in the study developed by Durão and Raposo [7], the instability of the internet is identified as one of the main complaints of students. More than 50% of students believe that the performance of the Zoom platform has affected the quality of classes. Regarding being able to follow the subjects, 31.70% of the inquired students considered it difficult. About 70% said they had difficulty concentrating and less than 10% said they felt more motivated. A study developed by Aguilera-Hermida [8] reported similar results regarding low levels of concentration and motivation. It should also be noted that only 43.9% of respondents consider that they have managed their time well,



which means that more than 50% did not a good time management of the autonomous study. 39% of respondents consider that they have developed autonomy skills.

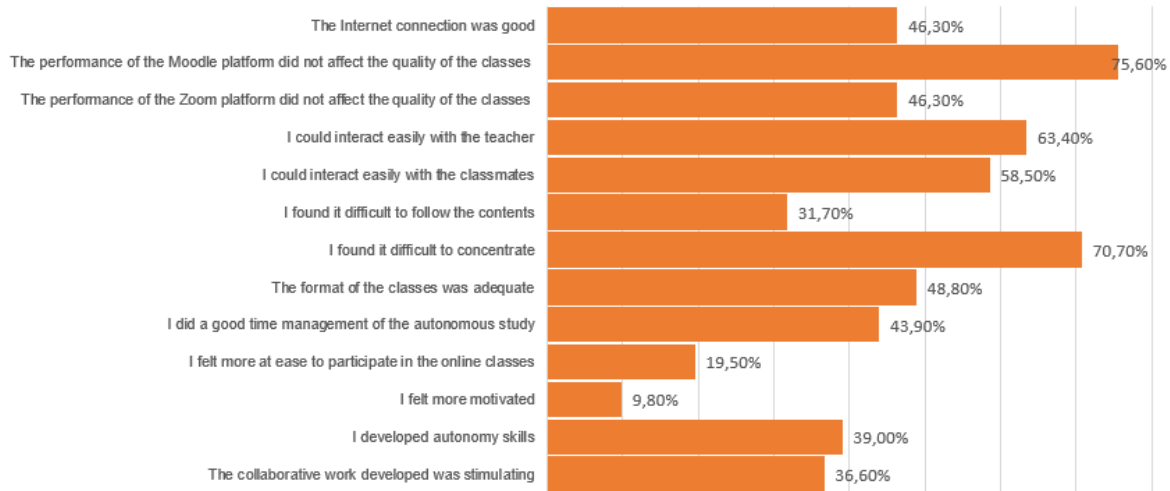


Figure 3. Students' views regarding the online classes attended.

Students were asked to rate, through a five point Likert scale (1- very dissatisfied; 5 – very satisfied) their satisfaction with the format of the online classes. Figure 4 shows the responses to these questions.

Most of the students surveyed say they are satisfied with the format of the online classes, with the percentage of students that stated to be very dissatisfied being inferior to 3% in the four points under analysis. The point with the highest percentage of satisfied students is “Asynchronous work” with 63.41% of respondents saying they are satisfied, less than 10% saying they are not satisfied and none saying they were very dissatisfied. With regard to the “Proportion of time between synchronous sessions and asynchronous work”, the vast majority of the respondents said they are satisfied and less than 10% of respondents said they are not satisfied. It should be noted that none of the respondents said they were very dissatisfied with regard to synchronous sessions.

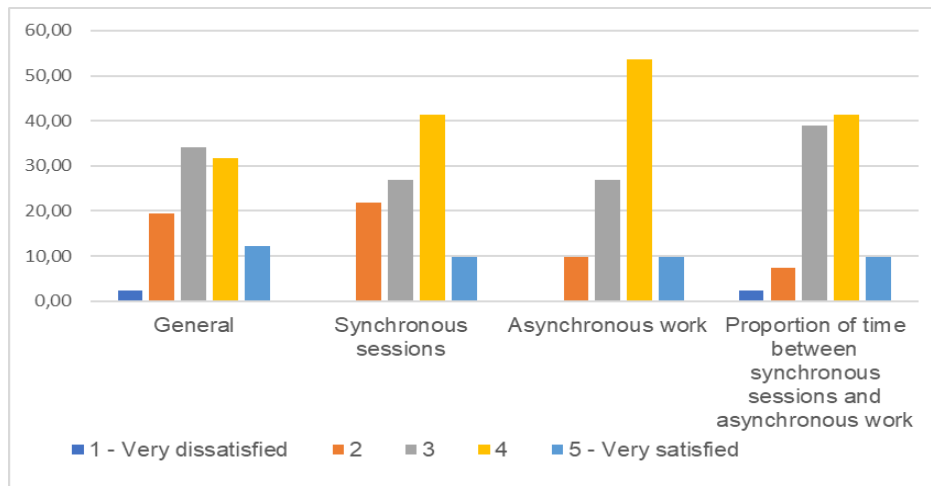


Figure 4. Student satisfaction regarding the format of online classes

4. Conclusions

This study explored the perception of Marketing for Tourism students about the use and acceptance of emergency remote teaching during lockdown due to COVID-19, regarding not only the resources they had available to study, but also other factors such as interaction, concentration, time management, motivation, collaboration and autonomy. The data surrounding students' perceptions of emergency remote teaching in this study indicate that students' experience was positive, although there are clear challenges that need to be overcome. Some students did not have access to technological tools (such



as the access to a personal computer or to high-speed internet) and/or their family conditions were not the best making it hard to find a quiet space to study. In a recent study by Ahmadon, Ghazalli and Rusli [4], the authors points that a “*strong and stable Internet connection and the availability of electronic learning gadgets such as tablets, laptops, computers, and smartphones are essential for online learning*” (p. 2). They also refer that “equally important is having a designated learning area that is free of distractions.” Aguilera-Hermida [8], reported the same problems in his study about students acceptance of ERT and claims further work is required to explore how inequalities may have impacted students’ learning opportunities and outcomes.

The most positive results are related to the satisfaction with asynchronous work, students’ own performance and the teacher’s performance. The fact that there were high satisfaction scores despite the technical problems that affected some students is also worth noting.

Further research is required to explore how emergency online learning may influence the adoption of online learning in the future

Acknowledgements

This work is financed by national funds through FCT - Foundation for Science and Technology, IP, within the scope of the reference project UIDB/04470/2020.

References

- [1] Chagas, L., Pires, A. and Pais, S. “Assessing students’ engagement levels during lockdown: a survey in Tourism degrees”. *Edulearn21 Proceedings*, pp.11025-11031, 2021. DOI: 10.21125/edulearn.2021
- [2] Fonseca, S., & Mattar, J. “Metodologias ativas aplicadas à educação a distância: revisão de literatura”. *Revista EDaPECI São Cristóvão*, 17 (2), 2017, pp 185-197. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29276/redapeci.2017.17.26509.185-197>
- [3] Martins, K., & From, D. A importância da Educação a distância na sociedade atual. Retrieved from <https://www.assessoritec.com.br/wpcontent/uploads/sites/641/2016/12/Artigo-Karine.pdf>. Accessed on 2 August 2021.
- [4] Ahmadon, F., Ghazalli, H.I.M. and Rusli, H.M. “Studying during Pandemic: A Review of Issues from Online Learning in the Middle of COVID-19,” *2020 6th International Conference on Interactive Digital Media (ICIDM)*, pp.1–4, 2020. DOI:10.1109/ICIDM51048.2020.9339644
- [5] Gonzalez-Ramirez, J.; Mulqueen, K., Zealand, R., Silverstein, S., Mulqueen, C. and BuShell, S. “Emergency Online Learning: College Students’ Perceptions During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *College Student Journal*, vol. 55, no.1, 2021, pp. 29-46. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3831526>
- [6] Shim T.E. and Lee, S.Y. “College students’ experience of emergency remote teaching due to COVID-19,” *Children and youth services review*, vol. 119, 2020, pp.1–7. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105578>
- [7] Durão, A. & Raposo, A. (2020). “Desafios do Ensino Remoto de Emergência: Da prática à teoria,” *Interações*, nº55, 2020, pp. 28-40. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25755/int.20999>
- [8] Aguilera-Hermida, A.P. “College students’ use and acceptance of emergency online learning due to Covid-19”, *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, vol. 1, 2020. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2020.100011>