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Omega Graduate School

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**120 Day – Revision of Original Draft**

1. Revise your argumentative essay according to your Professor’s recommendations.

Submit the second draft to DIAL by the end of 120 days.

2. Include the sentence outline and headings developed for the 60-day and 100-day

assignment with any changes received from professor feedback.

3. Additional drafts may be required before you will be allowed to present your paper in the

Forum during Core 4.

4. Review the syllabus for the milestones that will need to be met in Core 3.

5. The submission of the forum paper (COM 822-62 Milestone #4) for consideration of

presentation is a condition of attending Core 4.

6. Your Core 4 grade for this course will be the average of the grades submitted by the

Faculty Dais.

7. The forum paper must be presented in Core 4 before being admitted to Core 5.

8. Any exceptions due to extenuating circumstances must be requested in writing to the

Chief Academic Officer/Dean (chughes@ogs.edu).

**THESIS STATEMENT:**

The transition to online learning due to the COVID-19 Pandemic led to a noticeable learning disparity for K-12 students of varying socio-economic status. Globally this transition forced educators and stakeholders to implement various technical and pedagogical strategies.

**Outline**

Introduction

1. Main argument one-Low attendance in online classes during the Pandemic affected student performance.

III. Main argument two- Limited access to devices and technology contributed to low participation in online education and academic success.

IV. Main argument three -Families from low socio-economic backgrounds experienced more challenges with remote learning than other families.

V. Opposing argument one-The use of technology allowed families to support their children`s academic progress better.

VI. Opposing argument two - Online learning aided innovation and creativity as previously not capitalised technology would have been used during the Pandemic

VII. Opposing argument three- Families who were more financially stable and had a better support system in place were better able to help with homeschooling during the Pandemic.

VIII. Conclusion: (statement that *your* position is stronger than opposing positions)

* 1. Point 1: (why your position is stronger)
     1. Subpoint 1.1:
     2. Subpoint 1.2:
  2. Point 2:

Other conclusion points

**The disparity in access to education during the Pandemic led to ineffective learning and educational outcomes**.

**Introduction**

One of the sustainable development goals that the United Nations hopes to achieve by 2030 is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all [(*The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*, 2022)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?pZwUos). The attainment of this goal was severely challenged during the COVID-19 pandemic as educational districts worldwide were thrown into unfamiliar territory during the early half of 2020 when teachers were required to teach in a virtual setting to accommodate their students’ learning processes. In the digital age, education equality encompasses access to information and communication technology (ICT) in education [(Parey, 2023)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?5QBSy7). However, this situation proved difficult for many students as there was not equal access to online resources for all students.

While the digital divide regarding ICT access among students in their homes previously existed, its ramifications became more apparent with the emergence of the pandemic, school closure and the adoption of remote education worldwide [(Parey, 2023)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?ZLccxR). However, students in households with more involved and financially stable parents were better able to thrive during the pandemic [(Haelermans et al., 2022)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?AEprGD). Student absenteeism and dropout rates also increased during the pandemic [(Santibañez & Guarino, 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?uRyQxx). The UN reports that school closures have had worrisome consequences for both children's learning and their well-being, especially for girls and those considered disadvantaged; children with disabilities, rural dwellers and ethnic minorities. It is estimated that 147 million children worldwide missed more than half of their in-person instruction from 2020-2022 [(*The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*, 2022)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?zioQZy).

Pre-pandemic, 17 per cent of children and youth globally were out of primary and secondary school, compared to 26 per cent in 2000. From March 2020 through February 2022, schools worldwide were fully or partially closed for 41 weeks. Latin America and the Caribbean experienced the most prolonged school closures, with more than 60 weeks closed in the past two years [(*The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*, 2022)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?NUHjPy). In Trinidad and Tobago, the education system is overseen by the Ministry of Education together with the Division of Education, Research and Technology (MoETT). During the pandemic, the MoETT and school administrators attempted to close the technology access gap that existed by providing to students who were most in need. Families in need were required to submit a Means Test form to determine eligibility for ICT devices; however, approximately 63,369 primary and secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago had limited or no access to ICT or connectivity during school closure [(*Ministry of Education*, 2020)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?PocvnG). Governments must implement ambitious programmes to ensure that all children returning to school, recover their learning losses, and meet their psychosocial needs.

**Main argument one-Low attendance in online classes during the Pandemic affected student performance.**

One of the effects experienced during the Pandemic that became exacerbated was the increase in absenteeism; during the pandemic, the rates were lower than in regular in-person school. Virtual schools could not obtain the standard student attendance rates that generally occur during in-person learning. From March to June 2020, students would have consistently missed ten weeks of school, which amounted to 50 days, putting them at the far end of the typical absenteeism spectrum . In the United States, absenteeism was highest among students of colour and disadvantaged groups (Santibañez & Guarino, 2021). Absenteeism negatively affected student performance during the pandemic, especially for Mathematics compared to English Language Arts subjects’ test scores. M Data predicted that worldwide that, student would achieve 50% of the learning gains in mathematics and only 70% of the learning gains in reading which is up to a full year behind in some grades in comparison to a normal year [(UNESCO, 2020)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?dIod33).

Absenteeism affected middle school students’ achievements more than elementary students. Research suggest that school disruptions brought on by the pandemic will negatively affect both the academic and social–emotional development of students, particularly for students in certain grades and vulnerable subgroups. (Santibañez & Guarino, 2021)

**Main argument two- Limited access to devices and technology contributed to low participation in online education and academic success.**

Worldwide the education field was not equal during the Pandemic; this was primarily due to the lack of access to technology which was not the same for all educational districts. Low and middle-income African countries experienced challenges conducting online classes due to inadequate power supply and poor internet connectivity (Lawrence et al., 2021). Other issues faced were insufficient internet network connectivity as well as a shortage of trained or technologically skilled teachers; these would have also contributed to low attendance or poor participation in online learning [(Lawrence et al., 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?QlqCjW)

Inequalities of learning outcomes occurred in rural areas where there are known issues related to reliable power supply and Internet availability [(Uweso, 2020)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?XNJjfq). The lack of technology was not only a developing country problem but also was felt by racial minorities and those with lower education and income levels in the United States as they were less likely to have broadband services at their home. Another concern was that families who were able to access the content provided by schools; may not have the requisite language or technological skills to benefit significantly from the information produced by schools [(Huck & Zhang, 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?OPjdUE). Students’ learning was also impacted by the quality of access related to the type of technology and availability of more features on some devices versus others, conditional access based on the use of shared deviand motivational access (or personal attitude toward technology[(Parey, 2023)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?C2CEDE)p

A decrease in students’ engagement, which lead to less favourable academic success than traditional face-to-face instruction, was also observed as few online teaching and learning activities could follow a rigid schedule and design [(Zhonggen, 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?5HyYn2). Generally, a digital divide occurred due to the lack of ICT devices, infrastructure, and connectivity which impeded learning opportunities and experience as meaningful ICT interaction and engagement were hindered, which affected learning experience and outcomes [(Liu, 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?f08pL3). Despite the global revolutionising of digital and online education during the pandemic, primary and secondary school learners in rural and under-served communities remained behind due to a lack of skills and resources to transition to the new learning avenues [(Eze et al., 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?FBGup1)

**Main argument three -Families from low socio-economic and less educated backgrounds experienced more challenges with remote learning than other families.**

Stressors may have more dramatically impacted marginalised groups from the pandemic and school closures, but students from all socio-economic backgrounds experienced difficulties [(Huck & Zhang, 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?NkWFw8). In the Netherlands, lower-educated parents felt less capable of helping their children with schoolwork. Children with low-educated parents learned less between the midterm and end-of-year test in comparison to their peers with high-educated parents; this difference was mainly observed in grades 1, 2 and 3 for spelling and math [(Haelermans et al., 2022)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?g40p67). Generally, research has shown that parental education and home guidance critically determine ICT availability and are instrumental in supporting learning-relevant ICT use at home. Parents with higher educational levels are more likely to guide, support, and supervise their child’s device and internet use (Liu, 2021).

**Opposing argument one-The use of technology allowed families to support their children`s academic progress better.**

Research suggests that the use of technology to communicate with parents via mass texts, emails about school policy, Facebook posts announcing school events, and teacher emails regarding student progress positively supports the engagement of parents of children of all ages [(Huck & Zhang, 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?SJdVxv). Thus, the increased use of these mediums during the Pandemic should lead to increasing parental engagement as parents and teachers can communicate at times convenient to both, giving parents more opportunities to be involved in their children’s learning. Motivation is one of the factors that affect an individuals academic achievement; parental relations by extension can affect an adolescent's feelings of competence and autonomy . A child with a supportive parent during remote learning is more likely to excel with ICT during remote learning. However, during the lockdown children may not have always received supportiveness from parents as they reported parent more controlling, not only introducing new rules on social distancing and hygiene, but also on doing homework [(Klootwijk et al., 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?KaSbRI).

**Opposing argument two - Online learning aided innovation and creativity as previously not capitalised technology would have now been used during the Pandemic, which could have led to more student engagement.**

Some of the benefits also observed during the Pandemic through digital education were the opportunity for rapid learning and significant innovative and creative opportunities for both teachers and students. It encourages learning from varied locations, collaborative learning and the achievement of tasks, and also enhances learning competence. Collaborative learning was strongly and positively correlated with peer discussions and engagement rates [(Lawrence et al., 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?qSx5eJ). Studies also reported that online learning could increase student participation, improve discussion quality while fostering online interactions [(Zhonggen, 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?OcX9wk).

**Opposing argument three- Families who were more financially stable and had a better support system in place were better able to help with homeschooling during the Pandemic.**

Middle-class parents spent more time on homeschooling than parents from the working class in the United Kingdom [(Haelermans et al., 2022)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?eiViEF).On the other hand, in low- and middle-income countries, without adequate parental involvement during these unprecedented times of the COVID-19 Pandemic, online learning may be an illusion in countries such as Nigeria [(Lawrence et al., 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?d2zbBS). In wealthier households, students are more likely to achieve educational gains from computer use because they engage in learning-enhancing and information-rich ICT activities at a much higher frequency (Liu, 2021).

**Conclusion**

The research concerning the Pandemic and the worldwide education system challenges experienced during remote learning showed varied levels of effectiveness for students. The challenges noted were attributed to technological, pedagogical, and social. Technical challenges were related to access to appropriate internet sources and devices capable of remote learning/ virtual school. Pedagogical challenges included teachers’ and students’ digital competencies; teacher challenges included managing online resources and appropriately designing their digital learning environments [(Seabra et al., 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?DLRZZW). Teachers also had challenges encouraging their students in engagement and motivation, not only in being physically present but mentally engaged in classes. The social difficulties experienced also included the lack of engagement between students and between students and teachers. The physical conditions of the home where online school took place were also crucial as it was not always the most appropriate for learning to take place; parents’ or guardians’ availability and support were also challenges that contributed to a learning disparity during the Pandemic (Seabra et la., 2021).

One of the rights of a child declared by the United Nations is the right to education this is a humanitarian right that every child has a the right to; this should also include virtual education/ online learning, which became more prevalent during the pandemic. Governments and the varying agencies responsible for the education of children within children have a responsibility to ensure that this humanitarian right is afforded to all children. It will require governments to provide grants and ensure they are easily accessible to parents. It may also require training of teachers and parents to ensure that they can adequately assist their young persons. The Bible strongly emphasises training a child in the way that they should go; this can be related to both formal and informal education. Many Christian families practice homeschooling their children, and one would assume they would have thrived during the Pandemic. For other families where this is not their norm, a concerted effort should be made to assist these families whose children may have fallen behind in their studies during that time. As we are to be our brother’s keeper, churches and other social groups can put in place systems or programs that will help families get back on track with their education.

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