

## **Negative impact of Virtual Learning on Students' and Teachers' physical and mental health**

### **Abstract**

COVID-19 has had a great impact on everyone's lives, students and teachers have both been greatly impacted. The sudden change from in person classes to fully virtual classes is negatively affecting students and teachers and will continue to harm their mental and physical health. Using a survey that was given to students that are taking online classes this semester as well as research about other experiments conducted in order to see how this change is affecting students and teachers. Through my experiment, it was proven that virtual classes cause students to feel lazier and less happy, become less physically active, and can harm their eyes. In conclusion, virtual learning brings a lot of negative impacts on the students and teachers that have been forced to completely change their way of schooling.

### Introduction

Many students across the United States have started school through virtual learning this year. Virtual learning has become a part of many students' and teachers' daily lives. Students do not get the opportunity to interact and socialize with as many people as they used to when going to school in person, this can take a heavy toll on them mentally. In addition, students often feel lazier, less happy and they tend to fall behind on assignments with virtual learning compared to in person learning. Also, teachers have also been negatively affected by virtual learning because it forced them to change their lesson plans (that most have been using to teach for years and have perfected) to make them online friendly. This process took teachers a long time in order to be able to transfer everything and try to make the class interactive and entertaining for their students. In addition, many teachers and students relied on white boards in order to show examples and teach/learn the material because they were technology illiterate. Those teachers and students now have to try to learn and buy devices that they would have never used if they didn't have to teach online. Both teachers and students have to deal with many technological problems at home such as internet outages, devices breaking, etc. This all takes a huge toll on both students and teachers' mental and physical health which can and will have a negative impact the longer online learning is utilized.

### Materials and Methods

I had two methods that I was going to use to gather information for this lab report.

1. Find information and experiments that show the effect of virtual classes on students and teachers.
2. Conduct my own survey where I ask students that are taking online classes and ask questions about how this change is affecting their mental and physical health. I will post the survey on my instagram page and close the form after 15 minutes of receiving answers.

### Results

Survey: 21 responses

1. Ever since starting online classes, have you been:

	More physically active	Less physically active	Same physical activity
% of students	14.3	57.1	28.6

2. Ever since starting online classes, have your grades:

	Gone up	Went down	Remained the same
% of students	42.9	33.3	23.8

3. Ever since starting online classes, has it been:

	Easier to keep up with class/homework	Harder to keep up with class/homework	Same as before
% of students	9.5	71.4	19

4. Ever since starting online classes, have you been feeling:

	Happy	Sad	Lazy	Energetic
% of students	28.6	33.3	52.4	9.5

### Discussion

Online learning places really huge expectations on technology and the person using said technology. According to a study conducted by Brookings on DeVry University students, students that took a class in person received a B grade, or a 2.8, while the online class students that took the same course received a C grade, or a 2.4. Both of these classes had the same professor, syllabus, homework, quizzes, and tests but there is a very big difference in overall grades in the course between the online class and the in person class. Lower grades in schools are proven to lower students' self esteem, cause the students to feel discouraged, and can cause sadness or depression. Based on the survey I conducted, 52.4% reported that they feel lazier after starting online classes and 33.3% reported that they have been sadder since starting online classes compared to in person. In addition, in my survey, 71.4% of students reported that it is harder to keep up with their class/homework ever since starting online school. This adds on to the stress levels of these students and can lead to depression. Teachers have also had a very hard time adjusting to virtual learning as well, a teacher in Norfolk State University stated, "My attitude and perspective after teaching at a distance and transitioning to the face-to-face classroom was that I struggled with lecture present. I thought I could just jump back into the classroom but it was a huge challenge for me. I was trying to use the same material but I had to go back and completely redesign a lot of my material to be more entertaining. I felt like I had to entertain the students more in a face-to-face class than I do in an online class." This change from in person classes to online classes and some even back to in person classes is taking a toll on teachers because it forces them to change up their lessons every time in order to be as effective as possible. This can lead to students not learning the material as well and even some unfinished or poorly planned lessons due to time constraints. Not only does online learning affect students' and teachers' mental health, it affects their physical health as well. According to The Northern Light, "The American Optometric Association recommends the 20-20-20 rule, which requires one to take 20 seconds to look at something at least 20 feet away after every 20 minutes of screen time. In that case, students should be taking screen breaks at least once every class period and the "passing time" should also be utilized for the 20-20-

20 rule.” This is extremely hard to do for students because most classes are at least 45 minutes long with a normal school day of 6 hours. After classes, students have homework and projects that they need to work on which are also online. This kind of continuous screen time is very dangerous to the students’ and teachers’ eye health. In the survey that I conducted, 57.1% reported that they are less physically active compared to when they had in person classes, and only 14.3% reported that they have been more physically active. Physical activity is crucial to everyone’s health, with a minimum of 30 minutes of exercise a day.

## References

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