

## Academic Challenges during COVID-19

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### Dear Editor,

Covid-19, the epidemic that became a pandemic had the world in a sudden grip of tension and survival. It changed the normal for the world into what is now considered the new-normal. Not only are people effected by the drastic viral effects but also they have to adjust to the staggering effect it had on the economy, society and the education of the entire world as a whole. When Covid-19 hit Pakistan, it bought with it a panic that was beyond fathom. The economy collapsed, the educational institutions were shut down and many forms of safety protocols were put in place. The most difficult for social species, that is human beings, was the imposition of the lockdown in the whole country. The effect of the lockdown on the lives of people was harsh. The next step to keep the educational system somewhat intact was taking education to an online platform [1-2].

Taking education to online mode of teaching in a country like Pakistan was a struggle in its own. The first step to making education available online for students was the access to electronic devices like computers, laptops and mobile phones. Most students who cannot afford a computer or laptop had to succumb to using their mobile phones to gain access to all the online lectures. Again to gain access to these lectures one needs a good internet connection, that will connect the teachers and their lectures to the students [3]. These two major factors are connected to the availability of electricity. Our country suffers from an electricity crisis that has been around for more than three decades now. Every area in Pakistan, Karachi especially, suffers from constant load shedding that is either random or fixed. This load shedding has not only affected students but also the teachers who had to upload lectures. The next challenge was, the teachers who were used to a classroom environment to deliver knowledge in the form they have been used to since they themselves were students. Even when universities gave training

to teachers on how to make and upload their lectures using different softwares, the quality and the delivery of lecture by most teachers was not up to the mark. Teachers who shone during direct delivery of lectures in a classroom environment were facing problems while delivering the same in front of the screen of their computers [4]. Teachers who were at universities during fixed hours with complete focus on their work alone had to work from home, which was an added burden because they had to manage their lectures along with the household chores and their own children who themselves were home and were engaged in online learning.

The distress that students face during this pandemic episode is another problem. The load shedding interfering with their lectures is one thing, but students miss out on the whole aspect of being students, that is the ability to have their queries answered immediately. This was not only difficult in the uploaded form of lectures but also if teachers took direct online classes on forums such as Google meet or zoom, because not all students could make themselves available at the designated time of the online lecture due to reasons like slow or no internet access, load shedding, another sibling having lecture at the same time and only one available device to name a few. Students have also reported feeling embarrassed asking questions in the online form of learning while they had no such issues while they were taking physical classes. Even in uploaded lectures, students complain of bad sound quality of lectures. Another important point is the whole act of getting ready to go to university interacting with their teachers and peers, being mentally and physically present in class. While taking online lectures in the comforts of their homes, they do not get the environment needed to be attentive [5]. They may be lying down while taking lectures and sometimes dozing off when in such a comfortable position. Also teachers could focus on every student in class, keeping them attentive by asking questions from

different students which is not possible even in online mode of teaching because student even if present would make excuse of not being able to hear the teacher or having mic issues to answer questions directed to them. Hence bringing out the same sense of motivation while being distracted by family at home is next to impossible [6].

The students who suffered gravely are especially the ones in the field of medicine. The learning process for medical students relies heavily on practical learning rather than theoretical. Not having any access to labs or patient interaction limits their learning process which may result in just wasting a whole subject. It's not literature that can be learned by just reading and writing. A lot of experimentation and practice on patients takes place in order to master medical procedures.

### **Post COVID-19 normalization with future strategies and planning's**

Resilience after this global pandemic COVID-19 would absolutely crop up with revolutionary challenges toward normalization of the system. As it brought new opportunities of e-class rooms, synchronize lectures, digital workshops and assignments. It will also take a great account to boost the system toward monotonous program. The role of administration would serve as the key in alleviating the impact on semester provision and outcomes. Managements have to adapt rigorous strategic guidelines and coordination, to train and communicate with the Faculty workforce and students to reinforce the digital aspect along with conventional system more appropriately said a hybrid mechanism to cater the need of time.

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## **CONCLUSION**

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The breakthrough of pandemic COVID 19 squinted health crisis globally. It unprecedentedly affected the social, economic, and educational mechanisms. Although, where all the resources were seeming to be

sacred and left longstanding scars to the society. Contemporaneously, scarcity chases its path toward new opportunities. The outcome of this devastating pandemic revolutionized this whole world into a land of new prospects. Education has also set his mode towards digitalization.

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