

A FACULTY PERSPECTIVE ON THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN A PANDEMIC

Zahid Hussain Bhat, University of Kashmir
Nuzhat Saba, University of Kashmir

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic that swept the globe in 2020 and put every country on strict lockdown regulations froze the global academic infrastructure. It was mandated that teachers and students work and study from home. Academic activities that had previously relied solely on face-to-face encounters have been sustained by the abrupt emergence of the virtual world as an inescapable and pervasive artifice. This article examines how the global pandemic has radically transformed global higher education. As colleges and universities have collapsed, an effort is being made to illustrate how the growth of information and communication technologies has affected the future viability of institutions. In the absence of a coordinated national response to the public health problem, the COVID-19 restrictions have made the digital gap more pronounced in all contexts for teaching and learning. Additionally, several suppositions, perspectives, and insights are recommended for educators and practitioners to investigate during and after the pandemic to inspire, challenge, and connect them.

Keywords: COVID-19, Higher Education, Blended Learning, Social Media.

INTRODUCTION

Since the onset of COVID-19 in early 2020, the need for distance and online learning around the world has increased significantly. Notably, the current and rising global pandemic levels have underlined the significance of online teaching and learning in higher education and international education, particularly the value of distance learning (Dwivedi et al., 2020; Paudel, 2021). Due to its pervasive character, the pandemic faces huge global concerns today. Numerous colleges and institutions have developed alliances and collaborations to negotiate the evolving COVID-19 environment, and new industrial partners and philanthropic groups are needed (Bhat, 2021; De Wit & Altbach, 2021). In response to the pandemic, universities, particularly in middle- and high-income nations have invested in and implemented new approaches and technologies (encompassing synchronous, asynchronous, online, and face-to-face learning). The imperative requirement to migrate from face-to-face to online instruction by March 2020, the traditional inclination to avoid innovation and stick to the status quo would be defeated by online training and presented an even more severe exogenous shock than those resulting from the majority of disruptive innovations. Numerous sectors have seen technological disruptions whenever the quality, pricing, and functionality of new technology-enabled solutions hit a “tipping point” that made the majority of customers want to use them. Even if online learning is becoming more and more popular, this tipping point has not been reached in higher education before COVID-19.

The global shift to remote teaching in 2020 due to social distancing requirements has expedited changes in higher education institutions (HEIs), leading to less resistance to online options and increased pressure to lower costs. This transition has showcased the potential for innovative internet-based solutions and highlighted the capability of faculty to swiftly adapt to remote instruction. The pandemic-driven technology innovations have the potential to enhance educational programs universally, bridging the gap between traditional and online training (Hurlbut, 2018).

However, despite the rapid transition, HEIs faced challenges in providing comprehensive teacher education, primarily due to insufficient time to fully adapt to the pandemic's effects (Assunco Flores & Gago, 2020). Many institutions were technologically prepared but lacked the hindsight to incorporate necessary changes (La Velle et al., 2020). The widespread use of current technology supports both traditional classroom instruction and online learning as equally effective (Hurlbut, 2018).

Nonetheless, there remains little consideration of how the public will utilize information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the future, and many institutions still struggle with remote instruction (Altbach & De Wit, 2020). Asynchronous audio and video conferencing have become prevalent tools, with over half of institutions shifting from classroom to distance learning (IAU). The pandemic also intensified the digital gap, affecting historically vulnerable groups' access to ICT (Salmi, 2021).

This study examines the significant alterations in higher education globally due to the pandemic, emphasizing the need for ongoing professional development for educators and staff. It highlights the widening digital gap and its impact on vulnerable groups, offering alternative perspectives to motivate and challenge stakeholders in navigating the challenges of remote education post-pandemic.

Our ultimate goal is to empower stakeholders by analyzing the evolving instances, patterns, and frameworks provided by online education and enhancing online teaching quality. This study seeks to address the challenges of transitioning from traditional lectures to online learning, ensuring its success, engaging stakeholders, and rethinking online courses to focus on experiential learning.

This study posed the following research topics using qualitative research methodology and socio-cultural perspectives.

- What effects does the COVID-19 pandemic have on teacher education?
- How has this pandemic affected educators' teaching, learning, well-being, and professional careers?

This study intends to answer these questions. It focuses on strategies for ensuring effective learning outcomes in various teaching formats, including online instruction. It emphasizes the active involvement of faculty, staff, students, and alumni in fostering meaningful interactions within the online learning environment. Moreover, it aims to explore techniques that best facilitate students' intercultural learning and virtual study abroad experiences.

Additionally, this study seeks to develop and offer remote learning courses that prioritize fieldwork and experiential learning, recognizing their importance in the educational process. Given the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the paper aims to serve as a comprehensive

guide, equipping researchers and stakeholders with the necessary insights and knowledge to elevate the quality of online teaching and learning within higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study delves into the transformative impact of remote learning on the landscape of higher education, propelled by the COVID-19 pandemic. The sudden shift to online education in 2020 marked a significant milestone as students and faculty engaged in remote learning for the first time. This experience not only enhanced faculty adaptability but also sparked a surge in their interest and confidence in delivering online courses.

The move to remote teaching had varying impacts globally, with countries like the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and the United States transitioning smoothly, while others faced challenges due to financial constraints and technological limitations (Crawford et al., 2020). However, the immediate effects of this transformation on the effectiveness of remote teaching and its influence on the student experience and technological disparities across global higher education remain uncertain.

Recognizing the crucial role of belongingness in higher education, this study underlines its significance in sustaining learning communities and student engagement (Ennals et al., 2016; Flint, 2018). Interestingly, amidst discussions on belonging, the role of social media in fostering a sense of community has been overlooked, especially during the pandemic (Sobaih et al., 2020).

Drawing from higher education and community literature, this study aims to scrutinize the role and impact of social media on belongingness. It leverages three analytical perspectives—community, relationships and support, and sense of place—to evaluate how social media influences belongingness in the context of global higher education during COVID-19 (Masika & Jones, 2016; O'Keeffe, 2013).

While social media has rapidly altered higher education dynamics, concerns persist regarding its institutional utilization and its potential to bridge the gap between physical and virtual academic interactions (Willems et al., 2018). Moreover, the importance of belongingness in the digitally transforming landscape of higher education has been underscored, emphasizing the need to explore how social media can foster a sense of community in a predominantly virtual learning environment (Thomas, 2012).

This study seeks to extend the understanding of belongingness in higher education by exploring its facets through the lens of social media, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to delve into the complexities and challenges of creating a sense of belonging in the networked public of higher education using three crucial analytical perspectives—Community, Relationships and Support, and a Sense of Place (Ahn & Davis, 2020).

Community

According to Grabher & Ibert (2017), our perspective on online virtual interaction has altered due to considering social media as a viable and effective tool for maintaining social relationships in higher education. While Ahn & Davis (2020) findings highlight the importance of face-to-face communities in building a sense of belongingness, they do not rule out the

possibility of online networks generating a sense of belongingness; COVID-19 served as an alternative for the community's physical presence, notwithstanding the importance of physical venues and locations to community formation and preservation across the global higher education landscape. The current body of knowledge provides a conceptual and empirical framework for approaching this topic. At its most fundamental level, the mix of community, education, and social media has been described as a distinct ecosystem in which community development can foster information interchange and collective academic advancement (Stephansen & Couldry, 2014).

The study by Cuesta et al. (2016) highlighted Facebook's role in fostering co-learning communities within Swedish higher education, particularly amid the COVID-19 crisis. Ahn & Davis (2020) stressed the significance of community and collaboration for students' sense of belongingness, acknowledging that virtual constructs on social media contributed to building this sense of community. Despite challenges in distance learning, research by Sobaih et al. (2020) and Dutta (2020) pointed out the significant community-building aspect of social media in Egyptian and Indian higher education institutions during the pandemic. However, this study argues that while social media served as a transitional platform for fostering a sense of community in international higher education, it may not entirely capture the complexity of establishing and sustaining a community (Ricoy & Feliz, 2016).

This viewpoint encounters skepticism raised by Burgess (2006), questioning the inclusivity and accessibility of virtual communities in higher education. Dutta (2020) findings revealed social media's advantages for Indian students during COVID-19, highlighting its role in enhancing remote learning access. However, it remains unclear how these platforms supported mental inclusion alongside physical accessibility challenges. Marwick & Boyd (2011) concept of social media context collapse presents another barrier, emphasizing the challenge of navigating a virtual environment where different social groups converge, potentially impacting identity presentation and authentic participation within higher education communities. Furthermore, studies have linked social media usage during COVID-19 to mental health issues (Gao et al., 2020), suggesting that addressing context collapse in a social media-driven community may alienate some students from the global higher education community.

Relationships and Support

This review acknowledges, in line with Whit church and Gordon that a web of interrelated local and international contacts that define professionalism, social integration for students and staff, and a sense of belonging at the program, institution, and organizational level is the foundation of contemporary institutions of higher learning. Our physical and virtual realities have combined to establish a hybridized institutional arena where interactions are made and perpetuated, and the meteoric rise of social media has changed how these relationships are formed and maintained. What role did our networked public play in keeping high-quality, supportive interactions in global higher education during the pandemic, when the introduction of COVID-19 made our physical higher education realities ineffective?.

In higher education, social media plays a pivotal role in sustaining relationships (McCarthy, 2010; Kapidzic, 2019; Dutta, 2020; Sobaih et al., 2020). McCarthy (2010) study showed that 82% of Australian design students from similar cultures used Facebook to cultivate friendships during their coursework. Kapidzic (2019) highlighted how academics in Germany leverage social platforms for professional collaboration. Dutta (2020) emphasized how social media facilitated remote learning and crucial communication between students and teachers in India. Similarly, Sobaih et al. (2020) emphasized its significance in nurturing student-faculty ties in Egypt's online learning context. Ahn & Davis (2020) suggested social media aided global higher education institutions in networking and mutual support during the pandemic.

Despite this, virtual interactions may not entirely mirror the depth of in-person connections and support on campus. Institutions globally utilized social channels to relay reminders of on-campus relationships, raising questions about the depth of engagement in virtual environments compared to real-world interactions.

The pandemic's impact on social integration within university communities due to reduced physical interaction remains uncertain. Digital accessibility challenges globally (Crawford et al., 2020) have potential implications for social exclusion. While research from Egypt and India suggests social media aided social inclusion during the pandemic (Dutta, 2020; Sobaih et al., 2020), issues of digital proficiency affected some students (Kapidzic, 2019; Dutta, 2020). Jordan & Weller (2018) noted academics' resistance to social media due to digital literacy concerns. Hence, the extent of the digital divide's effect on students' connections and support networks amid the pandemic remains unclear.

Sense of Places

Sullivan (1999) asserted that an institution's success is contingent on its capacity to maintain focus and direction in times of crisis. Despite its age, Sullivan's (1999) thesis seems more and more relevant in the context of higher education where COVID-19 has had a significant impact. Ahn & Davis (2020) emphasize the role of the student's surroundings as a moderator in their study of belonging. Notably, they highlight the cultural, emotional, and physical ties between an institution (and the community in which it exists) and the traits that foster a sense of belonging. Since there has not been much research in this area, it makes sense to look at how social media helped people feel like they were still at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the COVID-19 upheaval, higher education institutions turned to social media as a vital communication tool, bridging gaps, and recreating the on-campus experience online (Fairloye et al., 2020). Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WeChat have become extensions of these institutions, employing Instagram's stories to offer glimpses of campus life and using Twitter for socio-cultural debates, particularly around COVID-19's impact (Fairloye et al., 2020). However, this shift has posed challenges in conveying the cultural and emotional aspects of place attachment in an online environment (Ahn & Davis, 2020).

Though universities showcase visually appealing and emotionally resonant content on platforms like Facebook, such presentations might not fully capture students' diverse experiences (Peruta & Helm, 2018). The upbeat tone might inadvertently overlook certain student sentiments or events, potentially making students feel disconnected. This reveals the limitations of relying solely on social media, which naturally tends to share controversial content, possibly isolating certain student groups.

Moreover, insights from alumni engagement via university Facebook pages suggest that highlighting pride, relevance, unity, and nostalgia tends to evoke stronger emotional connections and alumni contributions (Peruta & Helm, 2018). Emphasizing community identification over emotionally charged content might better foster institutional place attachment post-pandemic, as proposed by Ahn & Davis (2020).

To enhance institutional bonds through social media in the aftermath of COVID-19, prioritizing community identification and unity could better capture the essence of place attachment, allowing higher education to flourish as a connected public space.

Online Teaching Learning in Higher Education

The COVID-19 crisis has propelled a rapid digital transformation in global education, urging educational institutions to adapt their teaching methods, research approaches, and collaborative efforts. This shift from traditional residential education to online or hybrid models has presented significant challenges, especially for students in low- and middle-income countries facing issues with internet access and technical infrastructure (Bhat, 2021). The International Association of Universities highlights three key obstacles in online education: subject matter concerns, distance learning capabilities, and technical infrastructure limitations.

While there have been mixed experiences among students, professors, and administrators during the transition to remote learning, many frustrations have been attributed to the sudden shift and crisis conditions. However, positive experiences have emerged, reducing skepticism and opening avenues for further development in online education. Additionally, the pandemic's financial repercussions have compelled institutions to make cost-cutting decisions, testing the decision-making authority within higher education and potentially accelerating the adoption of online options (Friga, 2020; Carlson, 2020).

Amid financial pressures, senior administrators are considering enhancing investments in online education, expanding course options, and fostering faculty development. This shift in financial focus, combined with increased exposure to online learning for students and staff, might drive institutions closer to considering online education as a viable alternative to traditional classroom teaching.

The surge in online education's popularity could be attributed to current necessities (Altbach & De Wit, 2020). However, this transition has exposed challenges in effectively teaching students online and has led to a growing digital divide, particularly in developing countries (Day et al., 2021; Bhat, 2021). Addressing these disparities requires a reallocation of resources to ensure equitable access to virtual professional development opportunities and

inclusive online learning experiences for students, including those with disabilities and refugee status.

In navigating this shift, educators must consider students' diverse communication needs and adapt teaching methods to accommodate distance learning effectively. As teacher-scholars and practitioners in academia, prioritizing inclusive and effective communication strategies for remote learning becomes imperative.

Online and Distance Learning: Opportunities and Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing disparities within higher education systems across countries (De Wit & Altbach, 2021). Amidst the era of widespread higher education, there's a contentious debate about the quality of online learning, with many students and academics perceiving it as inferior to in-person instruction (Shim & Lee, 2020). Research by Means & Neisler (2020) indicates a notable decline in student motivation and happiness during the pandemic, with over 50% of US students expressing dissatisfaction with online courses. Altbach & De Wit (2020) predict potential student apathy in the upcoming higher education cohorts due to online delivery challenges.

There are concerns about the quality of remote instruction, increased workload without proper compensation, and insufficient resources to prepare faculty for online teaching (Bhat, 2021; Day et al., 2021). To meet the evolving demands of digitalization, educators and instructional designers must adopt innovative pedagogical strategies that prepare students for diverse learning experiences, including international exposure and career readiness (ElSaheli-Elhage, 2021; Bhat, 2021).

Implementing evidence-based teaching strategies is crucial to fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments, whether in-person or online. However, some faculty members resist employing such strategies in online settings, especially in low- and middle-income countries where there's limited exposure to remote instruction (Gratz & Looney, 2020; Altbach & De Wit, 2020). Moreover, concerns arise regarding the time-intensive preparation required for online teaching compared to traditional methods (Cutri & Mena, 2020).

Challenges persist with the negative impact of hybrid and distance learning on student experiences due to teacher detachment (Day et al., 2021). Despite opportunities for professional development, many professors struggle with online learning, either finding it challenging to adapt or reluctant to change their teaching approach.

However, the pandemic has driven improvements in student and institutional connectivity, benefiting both developing and developed countries in higher education. Online and distance education offers several advantages, including reaching underserved student communities, catering to individual needs, and fostering remote innovation in the classroom. This surge in significance has encouraged collaborative initiatives among institutions, such as joint degrees, cooperative teaching, and research collaborations (Cutri & Mena, 2020; Salmi, 2021).

In conclusion, educators must collaborate to create inclusive and innovative online learning environments that prepare students for success in higher education. The academia should build on the models established during the emergency shift to remote instruction to brace for potential future disruptions. Emphasizing teaching methods that have proven effective for student learning should be a priority during and after the pandemic.

Education in a Pandemic

In their duties as classroom facilitators, faculty members in online courses face increased workload as they shape curriculum critical to student success (Holly et al., 2008; Beaudoin, 1990). Amid uncertain return dates and safety guidelines, exploring online teaching technology becomes essential. The rapid shift to online education exposed technology disparities among students, from sharing devices with siblings to using phones as hotspots (Williamson et al., 2020; Bhat, 2021). Economic hardships and increased work hours for some students disrupted their study routines. The focus shifted from education to survival, necessitating trauma-informed teaching approaches, recognizing potential student trauma, and preventing re-traumatization. Faculty members also need self-care awareness to combat burnout and compassion fatigue.

Creating a sense of community among students is crucial, particularly in a pandemic that isolates them from regular social interactions (Rippy & Munoz, 2019). Leveraging asynchronous discussion groups to foster connections and discussing shared pandemic experiences can facilitate community building. Aligning coursework with learning objectives rather than adding extra assignments helps prevent cognitive overload and enhances information retention. Simplifying tools and consistently presenting crucial information aid in reducing cognitive overload. Practical tasks centered on real-world challenges foster critical thinking skills and better prepare students for similar scenarios.

Implications for Policy

The COVID-19 crisis has underscored the importance of integrating technology into teacher education programs, making it essential for both content delivery and adaptability in evolving circumstances. Universities, historically resistant to disruptive technologies, need to invest in faculty development, student support services, and experimental programs to create and deliver high-quality online courses effectively. Greater flexibility in choosing between synchronous and asynchronous remote teaching is crucial for instructors, as highlighted by Research Associates and Ahn & Davis (2020) survey revealing limitations in this area. Understanding teachers' perspectives on student challenges during the pandemic could significantly improve online instruction and support for students.

Despite the rise of social media during the pandemic, it's evident that a solely virtual environment cannot fully replicate the sense of belonging found in on-campus communities. The impact of relying on social media for a sense of community in higher education, especially in economically developing nations, remains uncertain. Concerns about the mental health repercussions of students feeling disconnected from their institutional 'home' during this period

should be considered with compassion, drawing from prior studies on mental health during lockdowns. As global higher education navigates an uncertain future with anticipated frequent lockdowns, creating carefully planned virtual policies and support systems on social media platforms could help maintain a sense of belonging and support. Collaboration among educational institutions worldwide is vital to ensure that no institution is left behind in adapting to these changes.

CONCLUSION

As the number of COVID-19 cases increases, it is vital to implement a pandemic pedagogy and support the development of online courses to provide high-quality training. Even if the pandemic learning environment is not ideal, a course design that combines pandemic pedagogy and authentic learning can enhance student achievement and quality. The focus is on enhancing online education during the pandemic and beyond, emphasizing the importance of pandemic pedagogy and equitable access to technology. This includes brief synchronous training for teachers on utilizing existing technology effectively. Social media has temporarily aided a sense of belonging in global higher education, especially in regions with limited remote education access. However, it cannot fully replicate the campus experience. As universities consider blended learning models, social media's role in fostering intellectual, cultural, and social connections will be crucial, particularly in hybridized physical and virtual interactions. The long-term impact of these strategies on student retention and a sense of belonging remains uncertain.

REFERENCES

- Ahn, M., & Davis, H. (2020). Four domains of students' sense of belonging to the university. *Studies in Higher Education, 45*(3), 622–634.
- Altbach, P. G., & De Wit, H. (2020). Responding to COVID-19 with IT: A transformative moment? *International Higher Education, 103*, 3–4.
- Assunco Flores & Gago, (2020). Teacher education in times of COVID-19 pandemic in Portugal: National, Institutional and pedagogical responses. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 46*(4), 1–10.
- Beaudoin, M. (1990). The instructor's changing role in distance education. *American Journal of Distance Education, 4*(2), 21–29.
- Bhat, Z. H. (2021). Leveraging Information and Communication Technology for Higher Education amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic. In Churi, P. P., Kumar, V., Kose, U., & Rao, N. T. (Eds.) *Technology and Tools in Engineering Education: Research and Innovations* (1st Ed.). CRC Press Taylor & Francis Group.
- Burgess, J. (2006). Hearing ordinary voices: Cultural studies, vernacular creativity and digital storytelling. *Continuum, 20*(2), 201–214.
- Carlson, S. (2020). The plan for college budgets next year? Improvise. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Crawford, J., Butler-Henderson, K., Rudolph, J., Malkawi, B., Glowatz, M., Burton, R., Magni, P. A., & Lam, S. (2020). COVID-19: 20 countries' higher education intra-period digital pedagogy responses. *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching, 3*(1), 1–20.
- Cuesta, M., Eklund, M., Rydin, I., & Witt, A. K. (2016). Using Facebook as a co-learning community in higher education. *Learning, Media and Technology, 41*(1), 55–72.
- Cutri, R. M., & Mena, J. (2020) Faculty readiness for online crisis teaching: Transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 43*(4), 523–541.

- Day, T., Chang, I-Chun C., Chung, C. K. L., Doolittle, W. E., Housel, J., & McDaniel, P. N. (2021). The immediate impact of COVID-19 on postsecondary teaching and learning. *The Professional Geographer* 73(1), 1–13.
- De Wit, H., & Altbach, P. G. (2021). Fighting for funding against inequality post- COVID-19. *International Higher Education*, 105, 3–4.
- Dutta, A. (2020). Impact of digital social media on Indian higher education: Alternative approaches of online learning during COVID-19 pandemic crisis. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 10(5), 604–611.
- Dwivedi, Y., Hughes, L., Coombs, C., Constantiou, I., Duan, Y., & Edwards, J. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on information management research and practice: Transforming education, work and life. *International Journal of Information Management*.
- ElSaheli-Elhage, R. (2021). Access to students and parents and levels of preparedness of educators during the COVID-19 emergency transition to e-learning. *International Journal on Studies in Education*, 3(2), 61–69.
- Ennals, P., Fortune, T., Williams, A., & D’Cruz, K. (2016). Shifting occupational identity: Doing, being, becoming and belonging in the academy. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 35(3), 433–446.
- Fairloye, T., Wayne, T., Mogaji E., & Watat, J. K. (2020). Social media for universities’ strategic communication. In E. Mogaji, F. Marine, & R. E. Hinson (Eds.), *Strategic marketing of higher education in Africa* (pp. 96–115). Routledge.
- Flint, M. A. (2018). Co-implicated disruptions: Narratives of belonging in higher education. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 11(2), 210–230.
- Friga, P. N. (2020). The hard choices presidents will have to make. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Gao, J., Zheng, P., Jia, Y., Chen, H., Mao, Y., Chen, S., Wang, Y., Fu, H., & Dai, J. (2020). Mental health problems and social media exposure during COVID-19 outbreak. *Plus One*, 15(4), 1–10.
- Grabher, G., & Ibert, O. (2017). Knowledge collaboration in hybrid virtual communities. In H. Bathelt, P. Cohendet, S. Henn & L. Simon (Eds.), *The Elgar companion to innovation and knowledge creation* (pp. 537–555). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Gratz, E., & Looney, L. (2020). Faculty resistance to change: An examination of motivators and barriers to teaching online in higher education. *International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design*, 10(1), 1–14.
- Holly, C., Legg, T., Mueller, D., & Adelman, D. (2008). Online teaching: Challenges for a new faculty role. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 24(4), 254–258.
- Hurlbut, A.R. (2018). Online vs. traditional learning in teacher education: A comparison of student progress. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 32(4), 248–266.
- Jordan, K., & Weller, M. (2018). Academics and social networking sites: Benefits, problems and tensions in professional engagement with online networking. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education*, 2018(1), 1–9.
- Kapidzic, S. (2019). The social academic: A social capital approach to academic relationship management on social media. *Information, Communication & Society*, 23(11), 1673–1688.
- La Velle, L., Newman, S., Montgomery, C., & Hyatt, D. (2020). Initial teacher education in England and the Covid-19 pandemic: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 46(4), 1–13.
- Marwick, A., & Boyd, d. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, 13(1), 114–133.
- Masika, R., & Jones, J. (2016). Building student belonging and engagement: Insights into higher education students’ experiences of participating and learning together. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 21(2), 138–150.
- McCarthy, J. (2010). Blended learning environments: Using social networking sites to enhance the first-year experience. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 26(6), 729–740.
- Means, B., & Neisler, J., with Langer Research Associates. (2020). *Suddenly online: A national survey of undergraduates during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Digital Promise.
- O’Keeffe, P. (2013). A sense of belonging: Improving student retention. *College Student Journal*, 47(4), 605–613.
- Paudel, P. (2021). Online education: Benefits, challenges and strategies during and after COVID-19 in higher education. *International Journal on Studies in Education*, 3(2), 70–85.
- Peruta, A., & Helm, C. (2018). University Facebook pages: Engaging the alumni community in the digital era. *Journal of Social Media in Society*, 7(1), 123–150.

- Ricoy, M. C., & Feliz, T. (2016). Twitter as a learning community in higher education. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 19(1), 237–248.
- Rippy, M., & Munoz, M. (2019). Integration of engaging social justice assignments into online courses. *Ubiquitous Learning: An International Journal*, 12(2), 25–38.
- Salmi, J. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on higher education from an equity perspective. *International Higher Education*, 105, 5–6.
- Shim, T. E., & Lee, S. Y. (2020). College students' experience of emergency remote teaching due to COVID-19. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 119, 105578.
- Sobaih, A. E. E., Hasanein, A. M., & Abu Elnasr, A. E. (2020). Responses to COVID-19 in higher education: Social media usage for sustaining formal academic communication in developing countries. *Sustainability*, 12(16), 6520.
- Stephansen, H. C., & Couldry, N. (2014). Understanding micro-processes of community building and mutual learning on Twitter: A 'small data' approach. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(10), 1212–1227.
- Thomas, L. (2012). Building student engagement and belonging in higher education at a time of change. *Paul Hamlyn Foundation*, 100, 1–99.
- Willems, J., Adachi, C., Bussey, F., Doherty, I., & Huijser, H. (2018). Debating the use of social media in higher education in Australasia: Where are this paper now? *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 34(5), 135–149.
- Williamson, B., Enyon, R., & Potter, J. (2020). Pandemic politics, pedagogies and practices: Digital technologies and distance education during the coronavirus emergency. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 45(2), 107–114.

Received: 01-Dec -2023, Manuscript No. JMIDS-24-14330; **Editor assigned:** 02-Dec -2023, Pre QC No. JMIDS-24-14330 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 16-Dec-2023, QC No. JMIDS-24-14330; **Revised:** 22-Dec-2023, Manuscript No. JMIDS-24-14330 (R); **Published:** 24-Dec-2023