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## Adjusting to Remote Learning as a Result of COVID-19: Experiences of Students and Teachers in Jamaica

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### Abstract

This qualitative study aims to explore the challenges of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in rural and urban Jamaica, from the perspectives of both students and teachers. Data was collected from 20 teachers and 21 students through virtual and face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, and observations of virtual lessons. While there were more positive impacts of remote learning than negative, challenges such as technical issues, attendance, digital competencies, environmental disturbances, unresponsive students, and physical pain were identified. The problem is that teachers and students are frustrated with the challenges of remote learning and are in need of a solution. The study aims to provide assistance to those facing such difficulties and to contribute to future policy decision-making. The results will be used to produce a report that initiates some level of assistance for students and teachers and informs future policy and decision-makers.

*Keywords:* Remote learning, remote teaching, pandemic, social distancing

## Introduction

### *Background*

According to the World Health Organization (WHO; 2020), COVID-19 is “an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus” (para. 1) and most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness, but the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions may develop severe illness. In March 2020, the Director General of the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic due to its rapid spread and severity (WHO, 2020). Social distancing is in place to limit the spread of this harmful disease. Social distancing practices have forced organizations and institutions to physically close, forcing schools to resort to online or distance learning. On March 10, 2020, Jamaica received news of the first case of COVID-19 being imported, prompting the decision to close schools and switch to online learning and teaching using online tools such as Zoom, Schoology, and Google Classroom. After several days of observation and experience, teachers, parents, and students found the transition to distance learning confusing. The most affected by this transition were those without devices and access to the internet, those with unreliable resources and devices, and those without supervision. This fear of being left behind and being exposed to the deadly virus caused frustration and fear that students are not benefiting fully from remote learning.

Hibbert (2020) reports concerns from Jamaican parents regarding the negative impact of remote learning on their children’s mental health and extracurricular activities. Hendricks (2020) highlights the issues faced by students during online classes, such as inadequate devices and technical problems. Williams (2020) found that teachers in Jamaica struggle with the lack of control in the virtual space, with only 3% accounting for all their students online. These findings emphasize the need for adaptation and improvement in distance learning in order to mitigate these challenges and ensure that students’ education is not compromised. The information can be used to formulate solutions, which are essential to prevent long-term consequences for society as a whole.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to The Dutty Berry Show (2020) and JV Radio (2020), frustrations are high among parents, children, and teachers with the use of online platforms for schooling. Videos and audio clips show children expressing tiredness and stress, while teachers express confusion and a lack of resources. Some students even expressed a lack of motivation, with one stating that she would remain a “dunce” due to her exhaustion from the workload. Based on personal experience with teaching Zoom classes, it was concluded that both students and parents are struggling to navigate the necessary platforms for remote learning. As a result, frustration levels are high for all involved and there are concerns that students may not be benefiting from the remote learning process.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study focuses on online learning in Jamaica and the Caribbean, with the goal of encouraging financial assistance for students and parents who need resources for online schooling. The researcher hopes the results will also encourage schools to provide training for teachers, parents, and students on how to navigate the platforms needed for online or remote learning and teaching.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The goal of this qualitative study is to investigate the challenges of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Jamaica, from the perspectives of both students and teachers. The aim is to produce a report that will help provide assistance to those facing issues with remote learning and will contribute to future policy decision-making.

### **Research Question:**

- What are the perceived impacts of remote learning and teaching on children and teachers?
- What are some of the challenges of remote learning and teaching experienced by teachers and students?

- How can remote learning and teaching be improved as perceived by teachers?

### **Operational Definition of Variables**

According to Dhurumraj et al. (2021), remote teaching refers to the delivery of instruction outside of an on-campus course, while remote learning – also known as distance education – occurs during emergency situations where educators and learners are distanced from each other, but remain connected virtually or with no technology.

A pandemic is an epidemic that affects a large number of human beings worldwide.

Social distancing is explained as a public health practice that aims to prevent sick people from coming into close contact with healthy people to reduce opportunities for disease transmission (Pearce, 2020).

PATH stands for the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education. This programme was created to provide assistance to vulnerable persons who might be affected by poverty.

Non-traditional high schools are educational institutions that deviate from the conventional methods of a traditional high school to cater to those who might not thrive in a traditional setting as a result of behavioral issues, circumstances, learning difficulties, or other reasons.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Challenges of Remote Learning and Teaching**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed flaws in the Jamaican education system, particularly at the primary and high school levels. As noted by Demirbilek (2020), the response of teachers, parents, and students to

online schooling indicates the system's readiness to integrate technology. The study suggests that while the impact of this new form of learning may be felt across generations, younger generations such as Millennials and Centennials may have an advantage due to their digital backgrounds.

### **Accessibility and Digital Equity**

Access to technology and devices is crucial for effective online learning, since a lack of resources can lead to cognitive losses and exclusion from learning opportunities. Studies by Demirbilek (2014), Rasmitadila et al. (2020), and Murat and Bonacini (2020) report that low-income students encounter technical issues with online learning due to a lack of access to devices and internet connections, which can make transitioning to online learning challenging and can result in cognitive losses. Socio-economic status is a significant factor that affects students' access to necessary devices and internet connections. Rasmitadila et al. (2020) also note that teachers may need to work harder to reach students who lack access to devices, and some may resort to offline learning or visiting students' homes, which can put them at risk of exposure to COVID-19. Additionally, Tzivinikou et al. (2020) highlight the need for the development and quality assurance of online learning environments, which may present a significant challenge for teachers who are not accustomed to teaching in a digital setting.

### **Technological and Digital Competence**

Teachers are facing challenges adapting to online classes, but are still going above and beyond for their students. The successful integration of technology into education requires more than just acquiring devices; training teachers, parents, and students is also necessary for a smooth transition (Tingling, 2016). Teachers' digital literacy is particularly important in adapting to online teaching during COVID-19 school closures (Biela

& Glutsch, 2020). However, some teachers may be unwilling to move from traditional classroom teaching to online environments, as they are used to face-to-face lessons and may hesitate to accept the change (UNESCO, 2020; Dhawan, 2020). Successful online teaching requires a teaching style and personality that fits online teaching, which may be time-consuming for teachers to become competent (Kearsley, 2002). Teachers must also be able to navigate virtual platforms effectively so as to deliver effective online instruction (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). It is also possible for both teachers and students who are digital natives to have low digital competences and introducing new platforms can be a challenge without prior knowledge or training (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020).

### **Environmental Factors**

In traditional classroom settings, teachers have more control over environmental factors that can cause disruptions. However, in virtual classrooms, both teachers and students may lack access to quiet spaces due to a limited living space or intrusion from family members and pets. Murat and Bonacini (2020) found that not having a quiet place at home can lead to cognitive losses. Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) reported that human and pet intrusion is a major distraction during online learning, with videos surfacing online that show classes being interrupted by family or pets. The material from Island Girl (2020) and St. John's D.S.G. Pietermaritzburg (2020) provides examples of how such distractions can cause interruptions in online classes. Additionally, a study on the perception of primary school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic found that student's environments, including disturbances from family members, can make it challenging for students to focus in class (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). The paragraph highlights the importance of having a quiet and distraction-free environment for effective online teaching and learning.

## Social and Emotional Wellness and Safety

The importance of socializing during recess for both children and teachers has been highlighted, but COVID-19 restrictions have made it challenging. Studies by Garbe et al. (2020) and UNICEF and CAPRI (Brown-Knight & Burnett, 2020) have shown that remote learning has negatively impacted children's social and emotional development, leading to boredom, frustration, anxiety, sadness, and fear. Additionally, the pandemic has put children at risk of abuse and danger, both in person and online (United Nations, 2020). Teachers are also facing challenges with the new teaching methods and the pressure to ensure student performance. According to Klapproth et al. (2020), teachers feel constrained by excessive student workloads and low motivation for doing schoolwork at home.

## Theoretical Framework

Behaviorism, a theory introduced by John B. Watson in 1913, asserts that all behaviors are the result of experience and should only be studied through observable, measurable activities, according to Baron (2001) and Cherry (2021). The Learning Behaviorism Theory encompasses classical and operant conditioning, which involve learning through the association of stimuli and learning through the consequences of behavior, respectively. This theory can be applied to remote learning by using positive reinforcement techniques such as awards, competitions, and game-based learning platforms like Kahoot, Bamboozle, and Edu Candy, as suggested by Baron (2001).

The Situated Learning Theory, developed by Lave and Wenger, emphasizes social learning and the situational nature of learning. Because digital technologies can be used as situational tools, they can recreate authentic situations and places for learners, providing them with opportunities to actively participate in the learning process and acquire new knowledge, as explained by Schiavi (2019). Digital tools such as virtual museums and game-based learning platforms can facilitate the integration

of the Situated Learning Theory into online classrooms, enriching the online learning experience (Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2012).

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

A qualitative method was selected for this research paper in order to garner more information on the impact of remote learning from the perspective of teachers and students in Jamaica. Qualitative research, whether social or psychological, focuses on how people perceive reality and it guides them in reporting on experiences or data that could not be adequately expressed numerically (Hancock et al., 2009).

### **Population Sample and Sampling**

The study involved purposeful sampling of students and teachers with prior remote learning and teaching experience, from both urban and rural schools at the primary, preparatory, high school, and postsecondary levels. The researcher aimed to interview at least two professors and two students from each level, resulting in a total of 20 teachers (15 females and 5 males) and 21 students (10 males and 11 females) sharing their perceptions. Consent and assent forms were personally collected from interested pupils and teachers and participants were solicited through Junior Centres, nearby communities, friends, and co-workers.

### **Site and Setting**

The researcher sought permission from principals and parents to interview teachers and students at a particular site. Consent and assent forms were distributed to interested parties and interviews were conducted with Google Meet, face-to-face, or over the phone. A Google form with interview questions was also created for participants who were unable to be interviewed in person or over Google Meet/Zoom. Due to the pandemic, face-to-face interviews were limited.

## ***Data Collection Methods and Procedures (Interviews, Observation, Recording, and Field Notes)***

### ***Interviews/Questionnaires***

The participants were contacted after their phone numbers and email addresses were obtained. Interviews were arranged for a convenient date, time, place, and mode and they lasted 15–20 minutes. For those unable to meet face-to-face, a Zoom or Google Meet link was shared. Face-to-face interviews were held at selected schools while observing COVID-19 protocols. The interview process lasted 4 months. Teachers and students were asked 11 and 18 questions, respectively. An online questionnaire was also used for those with busy schedules, with the questionnaire link being emailed to participants who completed and submitted it online.

### ***Recording***

The researcher used pseudonyms instead of real names for each participant during the interview. Recordings were made with the participants' permission and used as a means of capturing every detail during the interview and to avoid mis-quotes and biases. Face-to-face interviews were recorded using a phone app, while Zoom and Google Meet interviews were recorded with the applications' built-in functions. After the interviews, recordings were transferred to an encrypted file on the researcher's computer and used for research purposes only.

### ***Observation***

The researcher conducted an observational study in various educational settings. The study lasted for different periods of time, ranging from 5 to 10 days, in different grades and institutions, including preparatory schools, primary schools, high schools, and a teacher's college. The researcher focused on observing how students interacted with their teachers and how they accessed and responded to online assignments. Additionally, the study explored teachers' reactions to online classes, student complaints, and online socialization during breaks. The researcher occasionally participated in virtual classrooms as a student to gain insight.

### ***Data Analysis***

The recorded face-to-face and virtual interviews were transcribed verbatim and hand-coded. The most common responses to each question were identified and themes were formulated. The researcher revisited the research questions and re-read the responses to ensure that they could be answered. The notes taken during observation were also transcribed and used to explore other areas.

### ***Instrumentation***

Permission letters, consent forms, and assent forms were issued to students and teachers. Virtual interviews were conducted using Zoom and Google Meet, and phone interviews took place. A questionnaire was also created using Google Forms for those who could not communicate using other formats. During the face-to-face interviews and observation sessions, notes were taken using a notepad, pencil, and computer.

### ***Trustworthiness and Credibility of Research***

The use of triangulation is recommended to improve the credibility of qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). This involves collecting data from different sources to gain a fuller perspective on the situation being investigated (Lacey & Luff, 2004). In this research, observation and individual interviews were used to collect credible data. Additionally, the researcher met with peers once a week to discuss the research project and make logical suggestions for adjustments, in line with Shenton's recommendation for peer scrutiny to improve credibility (Shenton, 2004).

### ***Ethical Conduct***

To ensure compliance with legal requirements, assent forms were used for children under 18 years of age and consent forms were used for adults, accompanied by letters explaining the research. The researcher obtained permission to use the school premises from the school's director. All information gathered was kept confidential and stored on a computer protected by folder lock software. Peer scrutiny sessions were held to review the data.

## Results/Findings

Interviews were conducted with six high school teachers, two lecturers, six primary school educators, and six teachers of preparatory schools. Five male teachers and 20 female teachers were interviewed. Twenty-one students, including five high school students, three tertiary students, five primary school students, and eight preparatory school children, took part in this study. The student sample was comprised of 10 men and 11 women. Different questions were posed to both teachers and students.

### **Question 1 for the teachers: “Do you find it hard to use online platforms for school (e.g., Zoom, Schoology, Google Classroom, etc.)? If yes, please state why.”**

Seventeen of the teachers responded to the question in the negative, while three teachers responded positively, all stating that they were unaccustomed to using technology.

### **Question 2 for the teachers: “Did you receive training to utilize the tools needed to teach online?”**

“Yes” was the response from 12 teachers, while others thought the training period needed to be extended. Eight teachers said they had to educate themselves and had learned new things via engaging with students and their peers.

### **Question 3 for teachers: “How do you think you can improve remote learning for your students?”**

Three teachers claimed that adapting their technique or teaching strategy to the online environment would improve remote learning for their students. According to two teachers, supporting their pupils would help remote learning. Three teachers claimed that sponsors could provide students with easier access to the internet and equipment in order to boost remote learning. In order to enhance interest and improve remote learning for students, 10 teachers said they made an effort to be

engaging and enjoyable throughout their classes. Two teachers claimed that since they lacked technological aptitude, they were helpless.

**Question 4 for teachers: “What do you think are some of the impacts of remote learning on students (whether positive or negative)?”**

The majority of responses to this question were negative, citing issues such as poor internet connectivity, device shortages and defects, laziness and reduced autonomy among students, and negative psychological effects. Some teachers noted positive impacts such as increased independence and interest in technology, and more efficient work on schoolwork.

**Question 5 for teachers: “What methods do you exercise in order to improve interaction during your online classes?”**

Twelve of the teachers who participated in this study used gamification as a means of improving interaction. Three teachers used question-and-answer sessions to improve interaction, seven used interactive and engaging videos to create an interactive environment, two created an interactive and inclusive classroom by having students lead class discussions, three allowed students to be engaged in group activities, two utilized rewards and competitions to encourage students to interact, and one teacher encouraged students to keep their cameras on.

**Question 6 for teachers: “What do you do to ensure that your lessons are effective online?”**

Three teachers stated that they ensure their lessons are effective by requesting feedback from students at the end of the lesson. Three teachers stated that they used videos to improve the effectiveness of lessons. One teacher stated that they used a reward system and one stated that they asked students to lead class discussions. Six teachers stated that they utilized interactive games and presentations to improve the effectiveness of their online lessons.

**Question 7 for teachers: “What are the attendance rates like on a daily basis in your class?”**

One of the teachers surveyed stated that the attendance rate at her school had decreased by 10% since remote learning, while another stated that the attendance rate in her class was 50%, which was considered good. One teacher claimed that the attendance rate online was 75% and that she considered it good. Five teachers stated that the attendance online was bad, while six teachers said it was good, seven very good, and one teacher stated that the attendance in her class was excellent.

**Question 8 for teachers: “What are your challenges as a teacher with teaching students online?”**

The teachers mentioned various difficulties with remote learning, including not being able to reach enough students and students not engaging in classes. Internet connectivity issues and poor internet connections were a problem for 10 instructors, while device accessibility was another issue mentioned by three teachers. Two of them mentioned physical discomfort from spending too much time in front of computers. Environmental distractions, such as people, animals, and noises, were also mentioned by several teachers as a distraction for both students and themselves.

**Question 9 for teachers: “How motivated are you to teach using the online platform? Give a reason for your answer.”**

In this survey, 11 teachers expressed a lack of motivation to teach online due to various reasons such as student engagement, safety concerns, and the effectiveness of face-to-face teaching. However, five teachers were motivated to teach online because they saw it as the future and had the opportunity to learn and use new online tools. Four teachers reported being somewhat motivated.

**Question 1 for students: “Do you find it hard to use online platforms for school (e.g., Zoom, Schoology, Google Classroom, etc.)? If yes please state why.”**

Ten students responded “no” to this question, most of whom did so because they were enjoying the opportunity to utilize technology to learn. Nine students responded “yes” to this question, citing reasons such as internet and device issues, a preference for traditional face-to-face methods, and a lack of knowledge about online platforms because they are unaccustomed to the virtual environment.

**Question 2 for students: “Do you have access to the internet?”**

Eleven students stated that they had access to the internet. Six students stated that they sometimes do, while four students stated that they had no internet access.

**Question 3 for students: “Do you have a device to access online classes? If yes, what kind do you have?”**

The data indicates that most of the students had access to personal devices for remote learning. Specifically, eight students had their own laptop, nine had a tablet, and six had access to the internet through their own phones. Only two students had access to a desktop computer. However, one student had to rely on a friend’s device for internet access, while three students had to use their mother’s phone to access the internet.

**Question 4 for students: “Do you have problems focusing in class sometimes? If yes, why?”**

Of the surveyed students, 12 reported having problems focusing during online classes; eight did not. The reasons for difficulty focusing included distractions from games, videos, and social media, environmental noises, device and internet connectivity issues, fatigue from screen time, boredom, and difficulty following the teacher when multiple people are talking at the same time.

**Question 5 for students: “How well do you understand the lesson when it is taught online?”**

Twelve of the students surveyed responded that they understood the lesson well when taught online; nine students did not understand very well when taught online. Internet connectivity issues, running out of data, and difficulty navigating the online platform were mentioned as reasons for not understanding well. Two students expressed the opinion that virtual school did not feel like school and they were lost at times.

**Question 6 for students: “Do you miss out on online classes sometimes? If yes, why?”**

Of the students surveyed, nine stated that they missed out on online classes. The reasons for missing out on classes included device-related issues such as charging problems or devices dying in the middle of class, as mentioned by four students. Internet connectivity issues were also a problem for six students. Two of them did not have access to a device of their own, while another two were unable to attend due to financial constraints preventing them from buying data.

**Question 7 for students: “Do you feel safer at school than at home? Why?”**

Thirteen students considered home to be a safer learning environment due to better ability to concentrate and understand the lessons and due to safety from risks such as accidents, robbery, kidnapping, and sexual assault. Some students expressed concern about contracting COVID-19 at school. Five students felt safer at school due to support and the presence of a security guard. One student preferred face-to-face classes, while another felt unsafe at home due to an experience of gunshots.

**Question 8 for students: “When you are online at home, are you monitored by a responsible adult?”**

Eleven students stated that they are not monitored by a responsible adult when learning online from home. Ten students stated that they are monitored by a responsible adult when working online from home.

**Question 9 for students: “Were you taught how to use the internet safely?”**

Ten students stated that they were not taught to use the internet safely, while eleven said that they were.

**Question 10 for students: “How do you feel when you are at home all the time and not at school?”**

Eight students reported feeling bored at home all the time due to being unable to socialize with their friends. Four students felt sad for not being able to leave the house and play with their friends. On the other hand, six students were content with being at home all the time instead of at school. Another two students felt lonely and missed being able to see their friends at school. One student expressed anger at being at home and not at school.

**Question 11 for students: “How do you feel when you are unable to see your friends in person?”**

The survey results show that 12 students were sad because they could not see their friends in person. Three students were bored and one student was lonely. However, six students mentioned that they were fine with not seeing their friends in person, citing reasons such as being able to see them online or having friends at home.

**Question 12 for students: “How do you feel when you are unable to see your teacher(s) in person?”**

Thirteen students were sad about not seeing their teachers in person and one student struggled without their help. Seven students were okay with not seeing their teachers, with one not liking their teacher and another finding some classes boring. One student felt bored without in-person interaction with their teacher.

**Question 13 for students: “Do you think that you are learning enough during online classes? Give a reason for your answer.”**

Ten students were dissatisfied with online learning for various reasons, including a preference for face-to-face learning, feeling left behind,

internet issues, the workload, and cheating. Two students were uncertain because they had missed classes. However, nine students reported satisfaction with good teaching, access to online notes, and consistency in the syllabus.

#### **Question 14 for students: “Do you enjoy online classes? Why?”**

Seven students liked online classes for interactivity, fun, and learning computer skills. Two students preferred online classes to avoid travelling by bus and health risks. Eleven students preferred face-to-face classes for socializing with peers and the teacher, and disliked online classes due to issues with the internet, data, and distractions. Some students were bored due to non-interactive teachers, while three students enjoyed classes only when they were not too long or dull.

#### **Question 15 for students: “Do you prefer learning online or at school? Why?”**

Out of the 22 surveyed students, 14 preferred in-person learning for socializing with friends and teachers. Four preferred online learning to avoid commuting and being exposed to COVID-19. One preferred in-person learning to access PATH food and one preferred online learning for fewer distractions. Three had no preference between online and in-person learning.

### **Observation Results**

#### **Response to Online Assignments and Complaints**

When students at the primary school level (preparatory schools) were given assignments to be completed online, I did not hear them complaining. The majority (95%) of the time, these assignments were required to be submitted online. When students in primary and high schools were given assignments to complete and submit online, there were concerns such as “I don’t have access to a device all the time” and “my data will run out over the weekend.”

## **Navigating Online Platforms**

The primary and high school students had difficulties submitting assignments on Google Classroom, while the tertiary-level students did not face any issues. In turn, 40% of the teachers who received complaints helped their students navigate the platform. Preparatory schools used Schoology and Zoom, with no reported issues in navigating these platforms.

## **Communicating with Classmates and Teachers Online**

The preparatory school students responded well to their teachers and socialized during breaks as if they were face-to-face. The primary school students communicated well with their teachers, but were not given the opportunity to socialize during breaks. Non-traditional high school students had the opportunity to socialize but were silent, while traditional high school students were more responsive. The tertiary students responded well to lecturers.

## **Attendance Rate**

At the primary school level (preparatory and primary), the students were in full (or nearly full) attendance 97% of the time. In the traditional high school (7th grade), full attendance was observed 95% of the time, while the non-traditional high school (8th grade) had full attendance only 40% of the time. At the tertiary level, full attendance was recorded 97% of the time. The students who did not attend cited reasons such as lacking a device, data, internet access, and electricity.

## **Discussion**

The aim of the study was to investigate the challenges of remote learning faced by Jamaican students and teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the goal of creating a report to assist them and inform parents. The study revealed the positive and negative impacts of remote

learning, with some negative effects being increased laziness, stifled independent learning, and exposure to predators online and at home. Both students and teachers expressed frustration with the limitations of online teaching and learning. The information gathered in the study was intended to contribute to policy decision-making. Dhawan (2020) argues that online learning provides students with ample time and flexibility, which often results in inefficient use of time and a lack of supervision, in turn leading to time-wasting activities such as playing games and visiting social media platforms during class. According to the teachers in the study, students' technologically savvy nature has led them to manipulate the remote learning system, further exacerbating the issue.

According to UNESCO (2020) and Dhawan (2020), teachers and students are facing challenges with the transition to online learning due to a lack of technology skills, an unwillingness to adapt, and a difficulty receiving personal attention and two-way interaction while adhering to pandemic guidelines. The COVID-19 lockdowns increased the risk of child abuse, exposure to inappropriate content, and online predators, making it essential to take precautionary measures to ensure the safety of children in the online learning environment (United Nations, 2020).

The teachers in this study reported that some students were receiving assistance from adults and others during assessments, exams, evaluations, or tests, which poses a challenge in measuring the child's capabilities. However, remote learning has also had some positive impacts, such as promoting technological competence, building independence and self-paced learning, and reducing commuting time. The students in this study preferred online classes for its flexibility and decreased exposure to danger, which increased their productivity time. As Dhawan (2020) noted, online learning is student-centered and flexible in terms of time and location. The challenges expressed by the teachers and students were quite similar. These challenges included internet issues (lack of money to purchase data, data running out quickly, no internet access, and unstable internet connections), device issues (faulty or no device), attendance (chronic absenteeism), digital competence, environmental disturbances, unresponsive students, and physical pain due to long hours spent at

a computer. Internet and device issues will be an ineluctable problem given that “not all parents have cell phones/laptops, and Internet signals are poor” (Rasmitadila et al., 2020, p. 98). Most of the challenges mentioned by both students and teachers might be related to financial issues. While some might be unavoidable, they can be managed or even resolved.

### **Conclusion**

Online learning has advantages, including being a safer option for students who can avoid commuting to school. In addition, it saves parents money on transportation and meals, while allowing college students to benefit from online lectures without the expense of living on campus. According to Dhawan (2020), online learning is a relatively cheap mode of education compared to traditional classroom learning and it allows for flexibility in learning anytime and anywhere.

The challenges associated with online learning can be addressed by seeking funding from the private sector, providing affordable internet access and spaces for learning, and engaging students in virtual experiences and interactive games using the Situated Learning Theory. Teachers can also encourage attendance through operant conditioning and can periodically engage students in training sessions with IT or computer teachers. The Jamaican education system needs a pandemic plan that integrates technology into the curriculum to deliver lessons and create resources for remote classes. These challenges can hinder progress and lead to adverse reactions.

### **Limitation**

The study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the challenges of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Jamaica, from the perspectives of teachers and students at various education levels. The study’s limitation is its relatively small sample size, which may have influenced the comprehensiveness of the results. Future research could increase the sample size and include the perceptions of parents and administrators, who also play significant roles in the education system.

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