

## **Psychological Effects of Online Education during Covid 19 Process on Students: Tishk International University Case**

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### **Abstract**

The Covid-19 process has deeply affected people psychologically as well as in many different ways. This pandemic, which spread from China to the whole world, has caused increasingly important psychological problems over time. This pandemic, which caused great anxiety, fear and panic on the masses of the people, also had an impact on students. Online education, which emerged as a result of this process, also caused psychological problems. In order to determine how effective these were in the sample we discussed, a Likert scale questionnaire was applied. While the results obtained are generally in harmony with the problems mentioned in the literature, some contradictory results have also emerged.

Keywords: Covid 19 Process, Online Education, Psychological Effects

### **Introduction**

Covid-19 has left many different effects on people and societies throughout the process. One of the most important of these effects is psychological effects. The rapid spread of the pandemic and the rapid spread of the resulting deaths by the mass media have caused great psychological problems among people. These problems have had a significant impact on students as well as affecting all societies in general.

### **Covid 19 Pandemic**

Coronaviruses are enveloped, positive single-stranded large RNA viruses that infect humans as well as a wide variety of animals. Coronaviruses were first identified in 1966 by Tyrell and Bynoe, who cultivated viruses from patients with the common cold. There are four subfamilies: alpha, beta, gamma, and delta coronaviruses. Alpha and beta coronaviruses apparently originate from mammals, particularly bats, while gamma and delta viruses originate from pigs and birds. Among the seven coronavirus subtypes that can infect humans, beta-coronaviruses can cause severe illness and death, while alpha-

coronaviruses can cause asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic infections (Velavan & Meyer, 2020).

The first COVID-19 outbreak caused by the novel SARS-COV-2 corona virus, which started at the end of 2019 (Lai et al., 2020), was reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019 (Giovanetti et al., 2020). It was declared an 'International Public Health Emergency' by the World Health Organization (WHO) in January 2020 (WHO, 2020: 1). Within a month, this virus spread rapidly, during a period of high human activity among the Chinese because it was a new year, and people were in social interaction more than normal times, causing an epidemic of acute infectious pneumonia (Bao et al., 2020). After the statement from Wuhan, the first case outside the borders of China was seen in Thailand, after a 61-year-old woman traveled from Wuhan to Bangkok (Allam, 2020). Thailand was followed by Japan with the detection of a virus in a person with a travel history from the city of Wuhan. The number of daily cases in Korea increased from 2 to 909 between February 18 and February 29 (Kim et al., 2020). Italy was the first affected country in Europe (Peelino & Spinelli, 2020).

Due to the rapid and uncontrollable increase in cases and virus-related deaths in Italy, a nation-wide lockdown was declared on 9 March 2020. Later, it spread to other European Union countries such as Spain, France and Germany. At the same time, a state of emergency was declared in many states in the United States (Mosia, 2022). Countries that take into account factors such as the rate of spread and transmission, the vital risk of the infected people, and the continuity of the health sector, have started to fight the pandemic by taking various precautions. Lockdown, social distance rules, and the use of masks are among the main measures implemented in countries experiencing an epidemic. In addition to these measures, many countries have called on their citizens to stay at home in order to avoid contact with the virus and thus stay away from the disease (Storr et al., 2021).

### **Psychosocial Effects of the Pandemic in the World**

On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the current coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency (Barry et al., 2020). Thus, measures regarding the epidemic began to be taken all over the world, and as a result, home closure and quarantine were applied. This epidemic, which emerged suddenly and all over the world, increased the anxiety in people with the quarantine conditions (Celik et al., 2022). The fact that the issue was handled as an agenda item, especially in the media, increased people's fears even more. Over time, a universal awareness emerged, and anxiety and distress came to such dimensions as to affect human health (Matos et al., 2021).

In this period when it was very easy to access all kinds of information through the internet in advanced technology, it was not difficult for people to access information that

would impair their health and cause them to fear. In particular, the open declaration of the spread and death rates of the virus had negative psychological effects. These fears then expanded, causing massive hysteria and panic, creating psychological problems that would be more harmful to some people than the virus itself (Dubey et al., 2020).

Apart from the problems caused by the virus itself, the quarantine conditions applied to stop the spread of the disease had a different destructive effect on people's psychology. People who are physically stuck in a closed area during the quarantine period also faced the problem of losing self-control (Chen et al., 2021). As a result, a rapidly increasing rate of anxiety and distress emerged in addition to the pandemic and quarantine conditions. Therefore, the fact that families stayed away from each other increased psychological problems even more (Sood, 2020). In addition, other problems emerged that people could not predict before and became aware of as they experienced them. For example, while the uncertainty in the progression of the disease emerged as an important problem, the difficulty of meeting the basic needs in quarantine conditions was a separate cause of psychological discomfort for many people. In addition to all these, financial losses experienced by people, disinformation, uncertainty and the increase in risk perception in society are other factors that cause psychological problems (Serafini et al., 2020).

The negative effects of the pandemic and quarantine went beyond the ones listed above and caused problems such as anger, fear of contagion by the pandemic, the fear of spreading their disease to their family members, disappointment, loneliness, anxiety depression, insomnia, hopelessness (Dubey et al., 2020), and these problems sometimes also caused suicide cases (Hossain et al., 2020).

The psychological problems caused by the pandemic continued in the post-quarantine period. The social and economic difficulties that people who returned to normal life fell into, the financial losses they experience during the quarantine emerged as another psychological problem (Kochhar et al., 2020). In addition, isolation of people with positive results from the environment and people's suspicion and avoidance of each other continued these problems after the pandemic (Li et al., 2020).

### **Psychological Effects of the Pandemic on Students**

Considering the psychological effects of this process on students, we can say that they also experienced the above-mentioned effects. With the start of the quarantine process, the necessity of students to switch to online education and to follow their lessons constantly on the internet has brought along many psychological problems over time.

Although the students liked the idea of a holiday that emerged with the quarantine conditions at first, the continuity of the quarantine and the uncertainties brought along psychological problems, which would increase over time. From the perspective of students, many problems such as fear, anxiety, hopelessness, anger, loneliness, boredom, and stress

have emerged.

In the process, the emergence of negative ideas of students and the fact that they began to struggle with psychological problems emerged over time. When the process started, the thought of quarantine and vacation was mostly welcomed by students (Wang et al., 2021). However, deprivation of friends and social relations over time caused them to feel uncomfortable. Especially the socialization needs of people at this age have made the quarantine conditions a difficult situation for students to endure over time (Alizadeh et al., 2020).

One of the factors that caused students to experience other psychological problems in this period was online education. Although everything seemed normal for the students at first, over time, the students started to get bored in the lesson due to the lack of any social communication in the classroom. Especially the lack of social communication at the expected level and the lack of mobility that students need caused the students to get bored more. Considering that people of this age need to move more than adults, it can be seen more clearly how bored they are in the prolonged quarantine conditions (Irawan et al., 2020).

Yildiz (2017) notes that “What makes an education system good is based on the teachers, since they play an essential role and have a place in the very core of education process” (pp.116). They had to do more than enough in Covid time. It is essential for students to be responsible for their learning process and to take active role in their learning process (Yildiz & Yucedal, 2020). However, some studies have revealed that students did not understand online education as well as face-to-face education (Ramos-Morcillo et al., 2020). Due to the lack of social communication and other factors, the students could not understand their lessons properly and this situation caused stress on them over time. In addition, the continuous prolongation of the process and the unpredictability of the end began to reduce the interest and motivation towards the lessons. As a result of this, the students started to get more bored with the lessons and they were more stressed over time (Erumit, 2021).

As a result of the decrease in the motivation of some students and their boredom in the lesson, their grades started to decrease. As a result, students' anxiety about their lessons emerged. Related to this, some of the students experienced extreme stress and hopelessness (Pawlak et al., 2020).

### **Methodology**

### **Research Model**

This study was conducted on 1st and 2nd year students studying at Tishk International University in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan. In order to determine the psychological effects of the Covid-19 process and the resulting online education on students, a Likert scale questionnaire was applied to students. It was tried to determine what kind of

psychological problems the students experienced in the covid-19 process in general and especially in online education.

### Sampling

In this study, 1st and 2nd year students studying at Tishk International University in the city of Erbil in the Iraqi Kurdistan region were used. A large part of these students are students who studied at preparatory school from the previous year. All of the students were high school 12th grade students in the 2019-2020 period, when the covid-19 process started. The fact that students had to face a stress factor such as university preparation, especially in the last year of high school, was an important factor in this choice.

### Data Collection

The data required for this study was obtained from a questionnaire prepared in accordance with the Likert scale. The results were evaluated by applying the questionnaire questions to the students.

### Findings

In order to determine how effective, the psychological problems detected in the literature were on these students, the same questions were asked to them. First of all, the quarantine process announced by the governments during the pandemic process was very attractive to the students because it meant holiday to them. To determine how valid this is, we asked our students the same question.

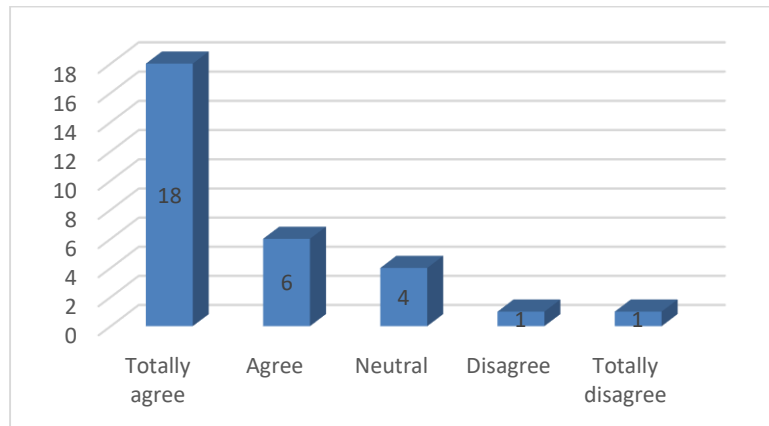


Figure 1: In the first period of the quarantine during the Covid 19 pandemic process, the idea of holiday was very attractive to me

When we look at the results we obtained, 24 (80%) of the 30 students expressed a positive opinion on this subject. Most of the students initially welcomed the idea of

quarantine.

However, over time, the prolongation of quarantine conditions and the emergence of some problems in online education caused students to change their minds. In order to determine the situation, the students were asked how their ideas and psychology changed over time.

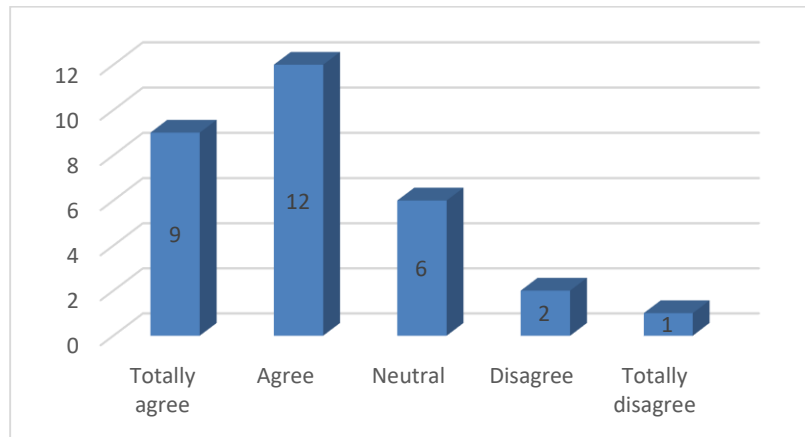


Figure 2: Over time, this thought gave way to uncertainty and stress

21 (70%) of the students stated that the idea of an attractive holiday at the beginning causes uncertainty and stress over time. Therefore, it is possible to see the same change in these students.

The change of students' feelings and thoughts about the quarantine conditions brought by covid 19 has occurred over time. The answer we received to the question we asked the students in parallel with this is as follows.

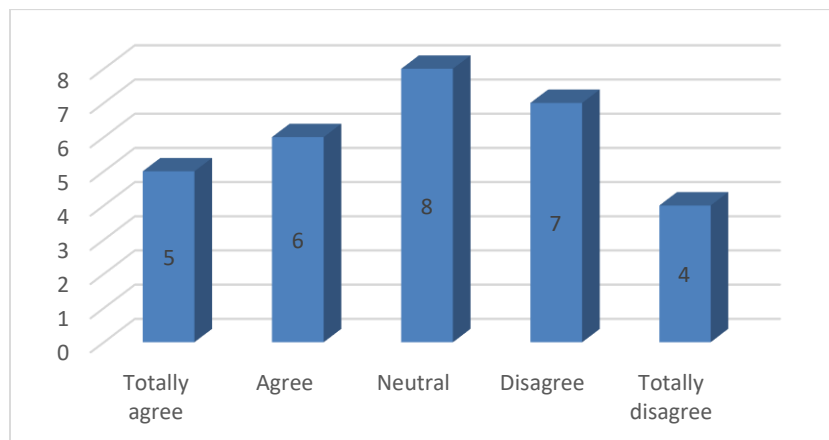


Figure 3: As the process took longer, anxiety, stress and depression increased in me

11 of the students (36%) stated that with the prolongation of the process, their anxiety, stress and depression increased. 8 students (27%) remained neutral on this issue and stated that they did not have any opinion. In addition, the remaining 11 stated that the process did not have such an impact on them in any way. In fact, higher results would be expected here. However, the fact that the students are not adults yet and they do not understand the seriousness of the issue properly may have caused low results here.

After the students' thoughts about the quarantine conditions in general, we tried to reveal what kind of psychology they developed during online lessons. For this, we first asked students if they were bored with online lessons.

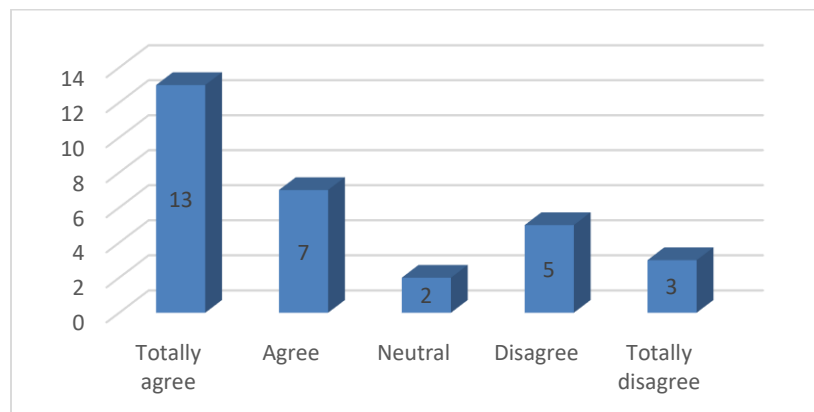


Figure 4: Over time, I started to get bored of online classes

20 of the students (67%) expressed a positive opinion on this issue. According to the opinion of the majority, online lessons started to become boring over time. The remarkable point here is that only 2 of the students remained neutral. On the other hand, 8 students (26%) stated that they were not bored with online courses.

The fact that students start to get bored with the lessons that continue over a long period of time will naturally reduce their interest in the lesson and cause them not to understand the lessons. Afterwards, as seen in the literature review, fears and concerns arose in students that they could get low grades. We asked the following question to determine how valid this is for our students.

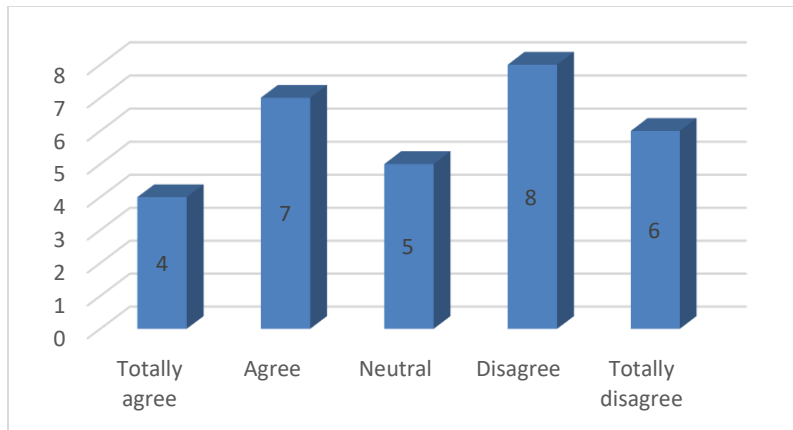


Figure 5: After a while, I couldn't follow the lessons because I got bored, and this caused anxiety and fear about my grades afterwards

Considering the response, we received, 11 (37%) of our students stated that they experienced such anxiety and fear. On the other hand, 14 students (47%) stated that they did not experience any fear or anxiety. It is understood from this that the problems related to not following the lesson caused by being bored with the lessons and the resulting fear and anxiety among these students are not significant. However, a considerable portion still experiences these fears and anxieties.

Normally, the inclination of students at this age to computers and the Internet has caused them to be called digital natives in the literature. However, after their online education experience in these extraordinary conditions, we asked them the next question to express how their opinions on this subject have changed.

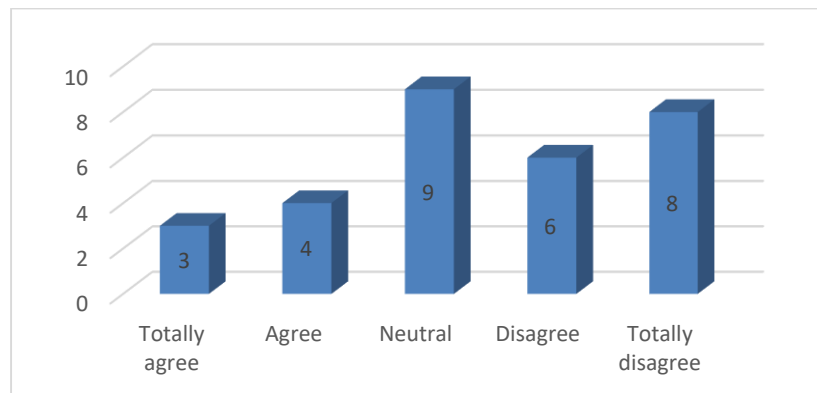


Figure 6: Online education is not an alternative to face-to-face education

When we look at the answers of the students, only 7 (23%) think that despite all



these experiences, online education will not be an alternative to face-to-face education. However, 9 people (30%), an important part of this, remained neutral about this issue. The remaining 14 people (47%) still consider online education as the right alternative. As can be seen, the difficult conditions brought by the quarantine have changed the ideas of only a little portion of the students about online education.

One of the psychological effects of this process on people is the risk of contagion of the disease and the fear of people in the face of this risk. It has been seen that this fear has had a profound effect on the masses due to its spread both among people and through the media. To determine how effective this was on the students, we asked the students the next question.

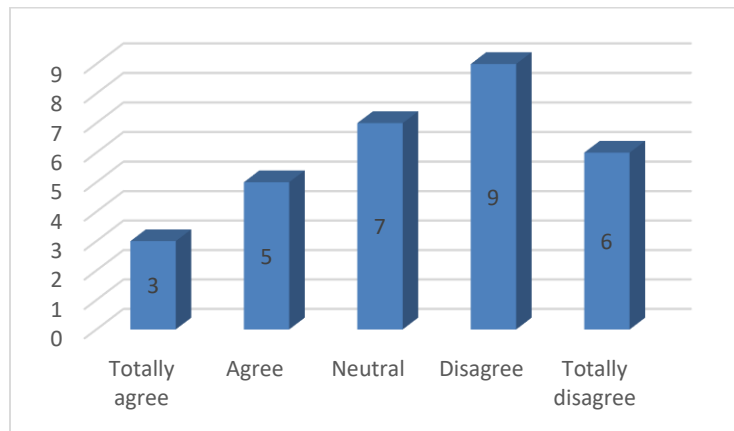


Figure 7: The risk of contagion of the disease and the fears of the people in my family made me worry too

8 of the students (27%) stated that they were worried about the risk of transmission of the disease and the fears of other people in their families. 7 of the students (23%) remained neutral on this issue. Half of the students stated that they did not experience such fear. We can state that the rate of students experiencing this fear that we have mentioned here is low.

In this process, another important factor that causes people to experience psychological problems is economic problems. We asked the following question to determine to what extent these problems had a depressive effect on students.

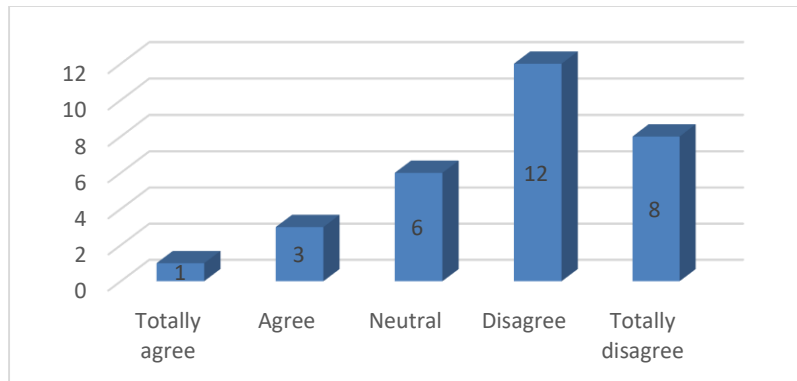


Figure 8: The economic problems we experienced caused me depression

Only 4 of the students (13%) stated that economic problems caused depression in them. While 6 of the students (20%) remained neutral about this issue, 20 of them (67%) stated that economic problems did not cause any depression in them. It turns out that the students we surveyed did not experience the economic problems that many other people experienced during the process.

One of the important aspects of this process that causes fear is that it spreads in masses and negatively affects social psychology. In this context, we asked the next question to determine how effective this problem, which frightened the masses, was on students.

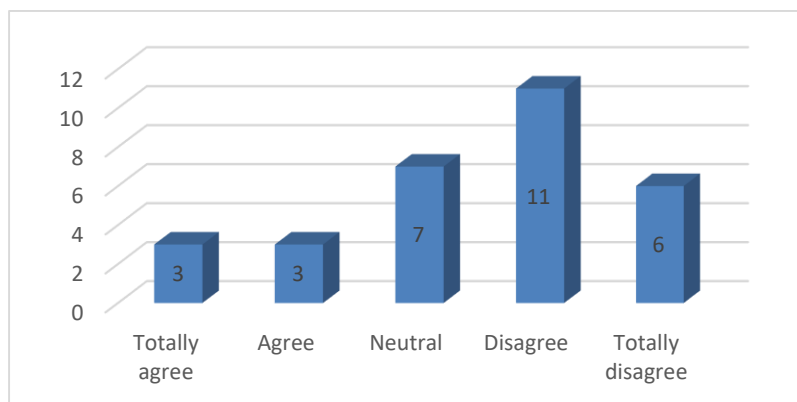


Figure 9: The concerns of the people around about the disease scared me as well

When we look at the answers we received, only 6 of the students (20%) stated that people's general uneasiness about the process scared them. Most of them did not experience any fear in this regard.

As being different from the specific questions we have asked so far, we finally asked the students whether this process had any negative effects on them in general.

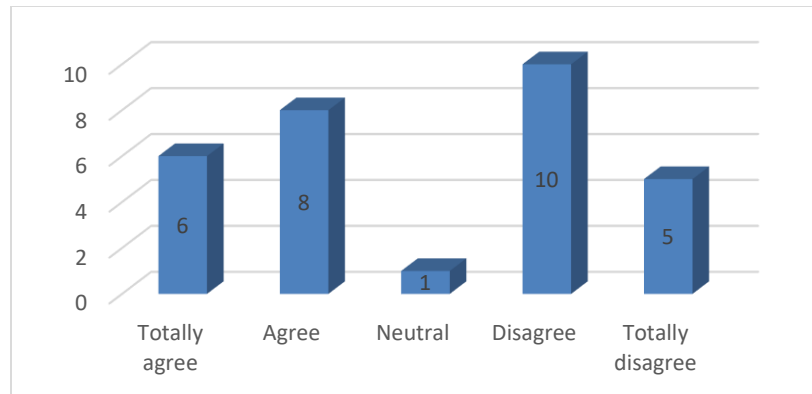


Figure 10: In general, this process had negative effects on my psychology

Considering the answers, we obtained, 14 (47%) of the students expressed a positive opinion on this subject. The abstention of only one of the students shows that the students have clear ideas on this subject. On the other hand, 15 students (50%) stated that the process did not have a negative effect on them in general.

### Discussion

The covid-19 process, which has had very important psychological effects on the masses, has had different effects on people. One of the most important of these effects is the psychological problems that people experience. Many psychological problems have also emerged depending on the factors that gradually emerged during the process. We obtained similar results in the questionnaire we applied to our students to determine how these problems affected them. Although it is not consistent with the general tendency at some points, it is seen that our students also experience psychological problems.

First of all, we see that the idea of holiday, which is one of the minor issues on the agenda of the relevant literature, is welcomed among the students in the first place. However, the prolongation of the process and the increase in uncertainties caused stress on the students. In addition, it is seen that the process causes anxiety, stress and depression in a significant part of the students.

In addition to the psychological problems that students generally experience about the process, it has been observed that some psychological problems have arisen in the online education they have applied during the term. First of all, students got bored with online courses during the process and as a result, they started to not understand some lessons. As a result, the students were filled with the anxiety and fear of getting bad grades in the courses.

The fact that students are digital natives on computers has raised the question of how they will approach this issue of online education due to the problems they experienced.

In this context, when we asked students whether online education is an alternative to face-to-face education, it was seen that the majority of students viewed online education positively.

One of the reasons that increases the fear in this process is that the issue is constantly on the agenda in mass media and mutual human communication. We asked the students how effective this situation was on the students. It was revealed that the students here generally do not worry too much about the situation that has arisen. An important reason for this is that the covid-19 process does not affect this region as much as it affects other countries, and the atmosphere of fear in the country is less intense due to the low death rates. It has been observed that the students do not get depressed too much about economic problems. Likewise, the fact that there is not much economic problem in this society may cause the students to generally have this opinion.

In general, we found that a small part of the students was psychologically negatively affected by this process. We can say that this is actually a reflection of the general atmosphere that has emerged in the society.

### **Conclusion**

There are many psychological problems caused by the Covid-19 process. However, when we look at the effects we have identified on our students, it is seen that in some issues, students do not experience these problems to the extent expected. An important reason for this may be that this problem is experienced at a lower density within the country in general and does not affect the masses too much. Our students have experienced some psychological problems in general. In addition, it has been observed that they experience similar problems in online education brought by the process.

We can say that the conduct of this study in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, where the covid 19 pandemic is relatively less intense, yielded lower results than expected at some points. The low intensity of some points that usually cause great fear among people explains this situation. We can say that if this study is carried out elsewhere, it can yield very different results.

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### Appendix- The Questionnaire

	totally agree	agree	neutral	disagree	totally disagree
1. In the first period of the quarantine during the Covid 19 pandemic process, the idea of holiday was very attractive to me.					
2. Over time, this thought gave way to uncertainty and stress.					
3. As the process took longer, anxiety, stress and depression increased in me.					
4. Over time, I started to get bored of online classes.					
5. After a while, I couldn't follow the lessons because I got bored, and this caused anxiety and fear about my grades afterwards.					
6. Online education is not an alternative to face-to-face education.					
7. The risk of contagion of the disease and the fears of the people in my family made me worry too.					
8. The economic problems we experienced caused me depression.					
9. The concerns of the people around about the disease scared me as well.					
10. In general, this process had negative effects on my psychology.					