The Impact of COVID-19 on Students' Academic Performance: The Case of the University of Ghana Business School

Joseph Ofori Acheampong
*Utah State University, jacheampongofori@yahoo.com*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/polsci_stures](https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/polsci_stures)

Part of the Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons, and the Political Science Commons

**Recommended Citation**

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Political Science Student Works at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Political Science Student Research by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usu.edu.
The impact of COVID-19 on students’ academic performance: The case of the university of Ghana business school

Joseph Ofori Acheampong

To cite this article: Joseph Ofori Acheampong (2023) The impact of COVID-19 on students’ academic performance: The case of the university of Ghana business school, Cogent Education, 10:1, 2186011, DOI: 10.1080/2331186X.2023.2186011

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2186011

© 2023 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license.

Published online: 05 Mar 2023.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data
The impact of COVID-19 on students’ academic performance: The case of the university of Ghana business school

Joseph Ofori Acheampong

Abstract: The unruly consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak have hamstrung higher education institutions. This study aims to investigate the perceived impact of COVID-19 on student learning and academic performance through a qualitative approach. In-depth semi-structured interviews with 30 purposively chosen informants were used. The results indicated that 70% of students perceive a paradigm shift in their learning experience before and after COVID-19. It was discovered that their sociodemographic characteristics influenced 60% of students, and 57% were influenced by their parent’s socioeconomic status, which influenced their academic achievements during the COVID-19 outbreak. The findings revealed that 63% of students had faced numerous challenges during the COVID-19 online learning, affecting their academic performance. The study provides insight into the student academic performance during the covid-19 online education in the Ghanaian context. The study discusses the implications of the findings on higher institutions, government, and parents’ household income and recommendations for future research. Higher education institutions, governments, and parents must purchase licensed e-learning tools and provide students and professors with digital skills training to enhance faculty teaching, student learning, and academic performance.

Keywords: Higher education; Teaching & Learning; Information Technology; Research;; Teaching

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak’s unruly consequences have hamstrung various sectors of society, including higher education institutions. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the COVID-19 outbreak influences students’ academic performance and university enrollment (Aucejo et al., 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). According to the American Council on Education, university enrollment is expected to fall by 15% in 2020, and many students will face academic performance challenges and complexities due to online virtual classes. Furthermore, Owusu-Fordjour et al. (2020) stated that during the peak of COVID-19, most governments chose to shift to online learning and teaching to reduce virus spread, resulting in approximately 370 million children missing school. The government of Ghana, like numerous countries around the world, has opted to shutter all academic institutions to stem the massive spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.
Given that all educational institutions in the country remain closed, the Ministry of Education in Ghana compensated for the teaching process through an online system. As a result, the Ministry of Education in Ghana developed and operated an online platform system to respond quickly to the COVID-19 crisis in the educational context. Face-to-face teaching began to give way to online teaching, with multitudes of students and educators able to use this platform. Since then, public universities across the country have witnessed online teaching as a novel phenomenon during the COVID-19 pandemic, for which there had been no prior planning.

Online education has grown and changed dramatically in particular countries over the past two decades for various reasons (Bayrak et al., 2020). College and university professors are more fascinated by online approaches to teaching and learning, where the learning process can be done more efficiently and at a lower cost (Green et al., 2010). Despite the increasing interest in online teaching, students’ satisfaction and achievement remain the most focused indicator of the online teaching experience. Students’ satisfaction and achievement levels can be related to several factors, including student-lecturer interaction, student-student interaction, course assessment quality, internet quality, self-efficacy, and students’ learning process (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020). As a result, online education played a critical role during the pandemic’s critical condition and earned a two-fold reputation. For example, evidence has shown mixed assumptions about the influence of COVID-19 on online learning and students’ academic performance (Aguilera-Hermida et al., 2021; Aucejo et al., 2020; Elsalem et al., 2020).

As a result, one of the impacted conclusions of COVID-19 may be students’ academic achievement as they first enroll in online teaching. Their satisfaction with online education may also be substantial to measure. In sub-Saharan Africa, studies on the COVID-19 outbreak mainly focus on its economic and health implication, learning experience, poverty, and employment (Coker et al., 2020; Danquah et al., 2020; Mahdy, 2020; Wodon, 2020). Most COVID-19 studies in Ghana focus on second-cycle institutions, primary education, and medical students (Henaku, 2020; Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020; Sabates et al., 2021), with little attention is paid to parents’ socioeconomic and student sociodemographic factors in higher education. Ghana offers a distinct context to understand critical issues regarding the influence of COVID-19 on the performance of students and higher education. However, there is a need for more exploratory studies on how COVID-19 affects students’ academic performance in the social science field. There is a dearth of studies exploring deep issues of the COVID-19 pandemic and students’ academic performance in emerging economies like Ghana. This paper then examines the role of socioeconomic and demographic factors in influencing students’ academic performance during the outbreak of COVID-19, taking the University of Ghana Business School as a case study. The study aims to accomplish the following:

(1) How do students perceive the paradigm shift in their learning experience before and after COVID-19?
(2) What is the role of socioeconomic and sociodemographic factors in influencing students’ academic performance during the outbreak of COVID-19?
(3) What are students’ reflections on their challenges during the COVID-19 online learning?

2. Literature review

Even though little research has been conducted to investigate the effects of COVID-19 on students’ academic achievement with online teaching during the outbreak of COVID-19, the researcher discovered the most relevant literature for the study. Deplorably, the eruption of COVID-19 had a significant impact on virtually all educational levels in various contexts around the world and has been integrated into instructive settings to provide the feasible requirement for teachers and students (Hashemi & Adu-Gyamfi, 2021). Gonzalez et al. (2020) investigated the outcomes of COVID-19 restrictions on student performance at the higher education level. They conducted experimental field research with 458 students divided into control and experimental groups. Remarkably, their analysis showed that COVID-19 restraint positively influenced student
performance and assisted them in improving students’ learning strategies. Likewise, Realyúdezquez-Vargas et al. (2020) investigated whether the environment can affect students’ academic achievement during COVID-19. They revealed that environmental factors influenced students’ academic performance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Elhadary et al. (2020) investigated the effects of COVID-19 on the academic performance of Turkish science and social science students. Their conclusions revealed that several factors influenced students’ academic performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. They showed that anxiety (60.3%), social problems (41.8%), and internet connection (43.2%) all had an inverse effect on both student and teacher motivation. However, students (65.0%) and teachers (48.8%) are pleased with the e-learning platform they use. Similarly, another study was conducted by Maatuk et al. (2022) on the COVID-19 pandemic and e-learning challenges and opportunities from the perspective of students and instructors. The findings indicated that e-learning benefits students and raises their educational excellence. On the other hand, students claim that e-learning is complex and that the most significant barrier is poor internet service quality, which reduces teachers’ workload while increasing students’ tasks.

Kuhfeld et al. (2020) revealed that missing school for a prolonged period due to the COVID-19 outbreak is likely to positively influence students’ academic achievement. They asserted that it would take students probably two whole years to compensate for such a loss of educational time and stressed the need for a long-term recovery effort. Even though their study found that students are more likely to return with more critical academic skills and performance variability, one of its significant limitations is that it did not project the role of COVID-19 differently based on race. Correspondingly, Owusu-Fordjour et al. (2020) found how ineffective the online learning system is due to students’ inability to study effectively at home. They also emphasized how parents could not assist their children in accessing online platforms and supervising their studies at home without complications. Moreover, limited Internet access and a lack of technical knowledge about e-learning platforms could have improved students’ academic achievement (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020).

Congruently, the UNESCO (2020) report indicated that about 89% of students in sub-Saharan Africa lack home computers, while 82% do not have Internet access. The e-learning platform could not accommodate all students simultaneously due to poor internet connectivity, which affected their academic performance. However, the literature did not investigate student performance differences across courses and how individual characteristics influence student academic achievement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, Henaku (2020) found that online learning, connectivity problem, cost of internet bundle, challenges with the device, household production, and overall perception of e-learning influence students’ overall academic achievement at educational institutions in Ghana. However, the study’s sample size of 10 participants needed to have been increased to generalize.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, Lederer et al. (2020) have discovered that college students in the United States face increasing housing and food insecurity, financial hardships, lack of social connectedness and a sense of belonging, uncertainty about the future, and access issues that impede their academic performance and wellbeing. Bono et al. (2020) discovered that the COVID-19 outbreak caused depression, which influenced students’ wellbeing and academic achievement. The study, however, did not address racial and socioeconomic status disparities. According to Rwigema (2021), disruptions in learning, decreased access to education and research facilities, lack of digital skills, insufficient infrastructure, poor network connectivity, power outages, inaccessibility, and unavailability have hampered students’ academic performance in Rwanda during the COVID-19 outbreak. However, the study ignores the class size and mode of course delivery and how they influenced students’ academic achievement. Furthermore, El-Said (2021) posited that the unplanned and rapid transition from face-to-face to online learning resulted in a better learning experience than expected. According to Tamrat (2021), the pandemic has significantly
influenced academic achievement, business operations, and higher education institutions in Ethiopia by reducing their revenue sources, decreasing their employee productivity, and limiting their institutional capacity to cover critical costs such as salaries and rents.

Numerous studies have shown how specific sociodemographic characteristics of students, such as age, gender, marital status, level of education, level or year at school, life orientation, and socioeconomic status, have influenced their academic achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic (Aristovnik et al., 2020; Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021; Olaseni & Olaseni, 2020). Literature on COVID-19 also shows that university lockdowns influence academic achievement and make reading more advantageous (Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020). Other scholars argue that economic stress, financial constraints, unemployment, psychological implications, and fear of being infected by the virus will reduce university education students’ academic performance (Education Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Pfefferbaum & North, 2020; Trust, 2020b).

Furthermore, low-income students will not outperform students from middle or upper-income families in reading (Alexander et al., 2001; Kuhfeld et al., 2020). This is because many low-income students need access to enough devices to obtain online materials and virtual instructions (Ahn & McEachin, 2017; Brenan, 2020; Education Trust, 2020b; Kurtz, 2020; Lieberman, 2020). According to evidence, academic performance is higher in face-to-face learning than in online learning (Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021; Urtel, 2008). Other researchers claim that online learning improves students’ academic performance more than face-to-face instruction (Cavanaugh & Jacquemin, 2015; Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021; Ladyshewsky, 2004). Due to time management and perseverance in an online learning context, self-regulatory and adaptive students perform academically better than face-to-face students during the COVID-19 era (Limniou et al., 2021). Nonetheless, educational researchers have studied the disparities in student achievement between face-to-face and online learning. Their results vary greatly depending on the type of analysis and study sample.

3. Methodology and data collection
The study’s primary aim was to explore the role of COVID-19 on the academic performance of university students. It examined gender views on how COVID-19 has influenced students’ academic achievement. Hence, opinions were solicited from level 300 undergraduate students at the University of Ghana Business School (UGBS)’s main campus. The study chose such students because they had both face-to-face and online learning experiences during the lockdowns and were thus best suited to answer the research questions. The key questions posed include (i) how do students perceive the paradigm shift in their learning experience before and after COVID-19? (ii) what is the role of socioeconomic and sociodemographic factors in influencing students’ academic performance during the outspread of COVID-19? (iii) what are students’ reflections on their challenges during the COVID-19 online learning? Through the study, the researcher could establish how students’ sociodemographic characteristics and their parents’ socioeconomic factors can help them achieve higher academic performance during their virtual learning experience.

Interviews were purposively conducted with all student participants to understand better the influence of the COVID-19 outbreak on their academic performance. The sampled participants who had experienced online learning were purposively selected from all the departments in UGBS, namely: Accounting, Finance, Marketing and Entrepreneurship (M&E), Operations and Management Information Systems (OMIS), Organization and Human Resource Management (OHRM), and Public Administration and Health Services Management (PAHSM). In total, 30 out of 36 selected participants have agreed to participate in the collection exercises held between October 2021 and January 2022. Despite the refusal of some students to participate in the study, it is significant to admit that including more students from the UGBS would have remained the same study findings. However, said findings can only be generalized to some UGBS undergraduate students. Instead, they offer an investigative value by demonstrating how COVID-19 has impacted student academic performance. Six accounting, finance, M&E, OMIS, OHRM, and PAHSM students make up the sample. Of the 30 interviews, 17 were with men (representing 57%), while the rest were with
women (representing 43%). Students over the age of 20 (representing 76%) were more common in the sample than those between the ages of 18 and 20, accounting for 23 of the 30 interviewees. The 30 interviewees were interrogated at the UGBS main campus in Accra.

Furthermore, the study would highlight the prospects of promoting high academic achievement and quality education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interview guide was designed based on some of the reviews done, and content validity was ensured through peer debriefing and modifications made by an expert qualitative researcher. The interview guide, which aims to solicit the requisite information from the students, was pre-tested to reflect the study objectives for quality assurance purposes and contains the relevant sociodemographic. It focused on the main keywords; (i) how do students perceive the paradigm shift in their learning experience before and after COVID-19? (ii) what is the role of socioeconomic and sociodemographic factors in influencing students’ academic performance during the outbreak of COVID-19? (iii) what are students’ reflections on their challenges during the COVID-19 online learning? An introductory letter explaining the research aims and requesting consent to participate in the study was sent to the randomly selected students. After obtaining the consent of the study participants, the researcher scheduled an appointment with each of them to conduct the interview held in English. In addition to the one-on-one in-depth interviews, secondary data articles and research reports on the COVID-19 pandemic related to higher education were thoroughly reviewed and examined.

Data collected, field notes, natural participant observations, and informal discussions were transcribed into a word file to understand how sociodemographic and socioeconomic factors of COVID-19 lockdowns have influenced students’ academic performance. Interviews and field notes based on informal discussions captured students’ views on the role of the pandemic shutdown on their academic performance. Thematic analysis was then carried out using the NVivo 11.0 software, allowing systematic coding and development of themes. The themes were deductively derived from the key research questions but inductively from the qualitative data organized and analyzed thematically using data from interviews and secondary sources (Patton, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Analytical and thematic headings were generated based on the research questions. Because the research involves human subjects, it was conducted per the research ethics code of the Ethics Committee for the Humanities (ECH), University of Ghana, and Social Science Ethics in general. It ensured that the necessary informed consent was obtained for human subjects' participants and that their privacy was respected. The researcher used pseudonyms for each participant to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Furthermore, participant information was safeguarded against unauthorized third-party access.

4. Results
The study identifies three primary themes based on the research objectives during the analysis stage. They include; (i) how do students perceive the paradigm shift in their learning experience before and after COVID-19? (ii) what is the role of socioeconomic and sociodemographic factors in influencing students’ academic performance during the outbreak of COVID-19? And (iii) what are students’ reflections on their challenges during the COVID-19 online learning?

5. A paradigm shift in their learning experience before and after the COVID-19
When asked to compare their learning rates in face-to-face versus online classes, most participants (21 out of 30 representing 70%) agreed that there were substantial differences. They expressed a lack of zest and motivation to study or meet deadlines, low self-discipline, lack of understanding of courses because they were usually rushed through, lack of classmates interaction, and little to no group learning. An interviewee made the following statement:

Online learning was ineffective because the teaching needed to be more satisfactory, and knowledge and understanding were lacking due to the absence of concentration. I did not broaden my scope in the subject area because there was no pressure from the faculty.
I submitted my assignments and projects late, which affected my academic results (Interview with OHRM student, 2022).

Another participant observed:

I find onsite lectures more innovative and interactive than online learning, with poor classroom socialization and a lack of face-to-face interaction. These hampered my academic performance (Interview with OHRM student, 2022).

An OMIS student shared how the learning was better during face-to-face than online classes:

I understood courses better during face-to-face learning than online learning because of the ability to form study groups to facilitate discussions. Before the lockdown and online learning, I was in the first-class division (Interview with OMIS student, 2022).

This study aims to determine how COVID-19 influenced students’ academic performance. In varying degrees, all thirty (30) interviewees agreed that COVID-19 had affected their academic performance. This has emerged from the findings that the lockdowns have affected students’ knowledge based on the field of study, quality of learning, loads of class assignments, class projects, and learning performance. Some students made the following observation:

Yes, I experienced abysmal academic performance because I received no support from faculty or colleagues on the e-library search. I also needed to gain more knowledge of digital learning (Interview with accounting student, 2022).

When asked if class size affected students' academic performance, it was discovered that it played a role in students’ academic performance. The study's findings revealed that (21 out of 30 representing 70%) students performed worse in required courses with zoom larger class sizes than in elective courses with smaller classes. A participant has observed:

I could have done better in the UGBS required courses. However, my results in the electives were better because we were a smaller group, so I could ask the lecturers questions, whereas, in the required courses, the number was more significant. Not everyone had the opportunity to ask questions for further clarification (Interview with accounting student, 2022).

According to the study, 21 of 30 (representing 70%) interviewees fared much better in reading courses than in mathematical lectures delivered online during the COVID-19 shutdown. The findings further indicate a better student academic performance in reading and mathematics courses delivered during face-to-face learning. Some interviewees have noted the following:

It did not help because only some people use smartphones and laptops during online learning. As a finance student, I had to learn how to use Sakai to type mathematical equations during an assignment, which was a challenge and caused my GPA to drop from 3.6 to 3.52 (Interview with OMIS student, 2022).

However, some students (9 out of 30) experienced a positive influence of COVID-19 and online lessons on their academic performance. One of the PAHSM students has made an interesting statement on how online learning has improved his independent learning skills and academic performance:

Yes, the lockdown positively influenced my academic performance as a student by providing opportunities to learn digital skills and innovative pedagogies that were not available in face-to-face learning (Interview with PAHSM student, 2022).
6. Role of student sociodemographic traits on their academic performance during the COVID-19 instruction

The study examines the role of students' socio-demographics on their academic performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most students' sociodemographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, class size, course/program type, and culture (18 out of 30 representing 60%) affected their academic performance during the lockdown. The field data showed a significant difference in academic performance between genders during the COVID-19 outbreak. Furthermore, due to patriarchal societal dominance, strong personalities, and cognitive abilities of men, the study has discovered that male students experienced higher satisfaction and performed better academically during lockdown than female students (who participate in household activities). The study found that students over the age of 20 are more likely to perform better than those between 18 and 20 during the shutdown due to their high self-regulatory capacity. According to the findings, the age of the participants influenced the amount of time they spent on online course teaching and learning activities. An interviewee revealed in this regard:

Yes, as a teenager, I found it difficult to cope during the lockdown because of my low cognitive abilities regarding digital learning, which reflected in my reasoning skills, distractability, and difficulty sustaining attention in online finance classes (Interview with female finance student, 2022).

Another participant elaborated on the role of gender in students' academic performance during the pandemic shutdown:

You see, as a young lady, society and culture demand that I assist my mother in the kitchen and perform certain house chores while my brothers either study or do class assignments. By the time I finish all these numerous chores, I am exhausted and cannot concentrate on my online learning or complete class assignments (Interview with female PAHS student, 2022).

Perceptions of students regarding the relationship between parental socioeconomic characteristics and their academic performance

The study investigates the influence of socioeconomic factors on students' academic performance during the COVID-19 era. Most interviewees (17 out of 30 representing 57%) posited that socioeconomic factors such as parents’ income level, employment status, and level of education had a significant negative influence on students' learning and academic performance during the lockdowns. Its findings indicate that students with parents of high socioeconomic status report strict learning enforcement, exceptional support, and increased academic performance compared with a student of parents with average or low socioeconomic status during the pandemic shutdown. According to interviewees (17 out of 30), there was no system-structure solution to ensure equity and equality in opportunities for students from different socioeconomic backgrounds during the lockdowns. Interviewees have added that the socioeconomic profile of the university is also relevant to their academic performance, regardless of the socioeconomic status of their families. An interviewee noted:

Yes, because my parents have a high socioeconomic status in terms of education, occupation, and income, they provided the necessary books, computers, study rooms, internet availability and connectivity, and access to additional educational services. I also had a conducive home learning environment, which impacted my academic performance during the lockdown (Interview with OHRM student, 2022).

It was discovered that parents of low-income families were less involved in their children's school activities. Participants (17 out of 30) in the interviews also stated that they provided less exceptional support through discussions, appropriate resources, and learning conditions, which influenced their academic performance. An M&E student stated that:
As a student from a low-income family with a low social orientation toward education, my parents could not afford the high broadband data consumption, digital devices, and available study room that is furnished with relevant academic resources, which negatively hampered my academic performance (Interview with M & E student, 2022).

7. Students’ reflections on various challenges they encountered during the COVID-19 online learning

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in numerous challenges for students, negatively influencing their academic performance. Most interviewees (19 out of 30 representing 63%) emphasized that poor Internet connectivity, loss of interest, socioeconomic factors, high Internet costs, unavailability of learning devices, inaccessibility of online learning resources, less interaction, a sense of loneliness, human intrusion, procrastination, distraction, lack of digital competence, insufficient Internet bundle, and updated device availability are factors that have hindered their academic performance. A finance student had this to say about the subject:

I experienced technical difficulties (lousy internet connectivity, outdated devices, poor classroom socialization, and high data cost) in online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown. It negatively influenced my learning and academic performance compared to the face-to-face learning semesters (Interview with male finance student, 2022).

Another interviewee stated how students’ low socioeconomic backgrounds significantly affected their ability to effectively transition into online learning and purchase broadband Internet connectivity during the COVID-19 shutdown.

I am from a low socioeconomic background, and I found it difficult to transition smoothly from face-to-face to online learning due to financial constraints. I relied mainly on the university and school computers and free Internet connectivity before the lockdowns (Interview with OMIS student, 2022).

Moreover, a participant agreed with the above statement, saying:

Yes, I reside in a village in the northern part of Ghana with low digital learning skills, coupled with the unavailability of school facilities. Because I am from a poverty-driven home and could not afford the necessary educational resources, my academic record declined (Interview with OHRM student, 2022).

When asked whether digital competence influenced students’ academic performance, most interviewees stated that they lacked the necessary digital competence, which hampered their academic achievement. Also, 19 of 30 interviewees added that the lockdown forced students to access course materials through the digital library, which they lack the requisite competence to navigate. A BSc finance student answered in the affirmative:

Yes, during the COVID-19 lockdown, I was not provided with the necessary digital and technical training, skills, knowledge, and attitudes for using digital devices to learn and complete assignments. I found it challenging to optimize the digital library because of my low digital competence (Interview with M & E student, 2022).

A BSc Human Resource student observed how human intrusion was a challenge to effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Yes, when I am learning, family members would be shouting or call my name to attend to something, or pets would be barking, which affects my concentration during online teaching and learning (Interview with OHRM student, 2022).
Another participant reiterated:

Very poor because there is a lot of distraction from home, like poor network connectivity, a serene environment, and distraction from parents and television. It was challenging for me to cope because I learn best in group settings, and the lockdown has made that impossible (Interview with M & E student, 2022).

An interviewee observed how the learning was rushed, stressful, lacking in quality teaching, and attended by a lack of concentration and understanding, which affected her independent learning:

On campus, I have study groups or learning partners, and we study together or even explain what our lecturers taught us that we could not understand. I experienced difficulty learning independently as a result of the lockdown (Interview with finance student, 2022).

8. Discussion
The COVID-19 pandemic has caught educational systems everywhere off guard, requiring higher education institutions to come up with potential methods overnight in the face of unplanned changes. The study found that the role of the COVID-19 shutdown was widespread and affected students' academic performance worldwide. The lockdown has an ongoing, lengthy, and pervasive influence on students' academic achievement. The findings of the UGBS case study have shed light on students' perception of the paradigm shift in their learning experience before and after COVID-19, the role COVID-19 play in students' academic learning outcomes, and students' perspectives on the influence of their sociodemographic characteristics on their academic performance during the COVID-19 instruction. The results also illuminate students' perceptions of the relationship between parental socioeconomic characteristics and their academic performance and their reflections on various challenges they encountered during the COVID-19 online learning. The research also placed students in their institutional settings in order to understand the influence of the COVID-19 lockdown on students' academic performance in larger Ghanaian higher educational institutions.

The perception of the paradigm shift in their learning experience before and after COVID-19, and the role COVID-19 play in students' academic learning outcomes, is mixed to varying degrees. The study found that the COVID-19 lockdown influenced student academic success and achievement due to a loss of interest, unavailability and high cost of the internet, unavailability of learning devices, inaccessibility of online learning resources, less interaction, and a sense of loneliness. This finding is supported by the work of Owusu-Fordjour et al. (2020) and Tamrat (2021). However, contrary El-Said's (2021) findings, the study also revealed a positive sentiment toward lockdowns which concern students' digital skills and innovative pedagogies, which enhanced their academic performance. This is affirmed by Limniou et al. (2021). The study results contradict the findings of Iglesias-Pradas et al. (2021) that there is no significant difference in the variation in student academic performance during online and face-to-face learning. The findings explained that students performed better academically when they received face-to-face teaching rather than online instruction due to the significant challenges of e-learning that confronted them.

One of the study's key findings is that the pandemic lockdowns influenced students' independent learning rate due to personalities and digital memory loss. The study's findings corroborate the works of Limniou et al. (2021) that students with solid self-regulation and e-learning skills could remain focused and committed to independent learning during lockdowns. It also revealed that learning was rushed, stressful, and lacked quality teaching and concentration, influencing students' independent learning. In line with the works of Aristovnik et al. (2020), the study revealed that students' socio-demographics, such as age, ethnicity, and socio-culture, affected their academic performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The investigation has unearthed that due to patriarchal societal dominance, strong personalities,
and cognitive abilities of men, male students performed better academically during the lockdown than female students. The findings also revealed that students over the age of 20 are more likely to perform better than those between ages 18 and 20 during shutdowns due to their high self-regulatory capacity. The study shows that the age of the participants played a role in the amount of time they spent on online course teaching and learning activities.

The study pointed out that parents’ income level, employment status, and level of education had a significant negative influence on students learning and academic performance during the shutdowns, corroborating the works of Iglesias-Pradas et al. (2021) and Olaseni and Olaseni (2020). Furthermore, students unanimously agreed that socioeconomic factors influenced their academic performance during the COVID-19 lockdowns, both positively and negatively. During the pandemic lockdowns, parents of students with high socioeconomic status reported strict learning enforcement, exceptional support, and higher academic performance than those with average or low socioeconomic status parents. Following Tamrat’s (2021) findings, the study discovered no system-structure solution to ensure equity and equality in opportunities for students from various socioeconomic backgrounds during the pandemic. Moreover, the study emphasized that the socioeconomic profile of the university is also relevant to students’ academic performance, regardless of their individual family’s socioeconomic status. The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on student academic performance caused them to perform abysmally worse during online learning than face-to-face learning, even though the difference is insignificant. The study revealed that students fared much better in reading courses than in mathematical lectures delivered online during the COVID-19 outbreak. Despite this, the findings show no significant difference in student academic performance between reading and mathematics courses when taught face-to-face.

The study’s findings disclosed students’ reflections on the numerous challenges that negatively influence their academic performance, including poor internet connectivity, socioeconomic factors, human intrusion, procrastination, distraction, dearth of digital competence, insufficient internet bundle, and updated device availability. The findings, however, have limitations and cannot be generalized to other Ghanaian public higher educational institutions.

9. Conclusion and implications for practice and policy
This study aimed to investigate the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on students’ academic performance in a Ghanaian higher education institution. It also explores how sociodemographic and socioeconomic factors, independent learning rates, and challenges influenced students’ academic performance during the pandemic lockdowns. The findings presented here appear to be consistent with the results of similar studies, revealing that COVID-19 has influenced student academic performance to varying degrees. The COVID-19 shutdown has also significantly affected student academic success and achievement and should not be taken lightly. Moreover, parents’ income, employment status, and education level played a role in students’ learning and academic performance during the COVID-19 shutdown. Several challenges that negatively affect student academic performance have been disclosed in this study and should not be taken for granted. In order to mitigate the challenges that each brings and satisfy the general student population, higher education institutions may consider a balance of online and face-to-face learning. They must purchase licensed e-learning tools and provide students and professors with digital skills training. Lecturers should be assisted in developing interactive online learning and materials for higher education institutions. Developing and maintaining robust communication techniques with management, staff, faculty, and students are critical to keeping all entities informed and updated on the next steps in the transition and ongoing training support. The study findings are limited to the University of Ghana Business School and cannot be generalized to all higher education institutions. Future research can be conducted among students in other universities using quantitative methods.
Acknowledgements
The author would like to thank Michael Agyemang Adarkwah (Ph.D.), Southwest University, China, for his immense support and all the participants who devoted their time and energy to participating in the experiment.

Funding
The author received no direct funding for this research.

Author details
Joseph Ofori Acheampong
E-mail: j.acheampongofori@yahoo.com
1 Department of Political Science, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

Disclosure statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Availability of data material
Due to anonymity concerns, the data sets generated and analyzed during the current study are not publicly available but are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Statements and declarations funding
This study did not receive any external financial support.

Declarations competing for interests
The author declares that he has no competing interests concerning this research.

Citation information
Cite this article as: The impact of COVID-19 on students’ academic performance: The case of the university of Ghana business school, Joseph Ofori Acheampong, Cogent Education (2023), 10: 2186011.

References


167760804&Signature=fTcA2QER7oxa4FoUeBV2s9jLzzE2CnLuVU–PONWnEya6pKnpvNhLV15eTWk-wsS0BC-LRyO040s1-wh3C-Y86cOQMsyLoX3dUOA-R5Q4mJ-Zbk5n6Ykn078kVc3Lk85U17JsOBEaWtPnECWjPvnFDI-WIGUqrvFt1fWv57incWOWfGn5yp7nG58Q1KjDlbrv-OvPi6P-oPqyMa5pSTx-138wcv6q2WPRw3PMNlc2Zel2p6n3W7p9zBoz5S5yLsYIYRlFgLF7nVHOBY7b5K-fz0c5spvkV19JdzdxebKFQ29ohnkUmzvn7G2xvdVLH0xK3zaKJ6a_6Key-PairId=APkAkJLOH5G5SLBwY42A


