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Title of Presentation: Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Life of Higher Education Students

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Presentation Outline

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May 10, 2022

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1. Objectives

Based on **three independent researches** we were looking for new info and useful findings related to the Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on the life of Higher Education Students. These researches are focused to identify some particular issues related to the students activities after their coming back to universities rooms and labs, to the new perspectives of the family relationships during and after pandemic and the implications of distance education in the case of adult students education.

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2. Approaches

These researches were conducted in a mixed manner, on the one hand based on a questionnaire proposed by the UPG student union (called the Student League) and, on the other hand, through complex analysis, by colleagues from the Department of Education Sciences within the UPG.

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3. Description

a. In most educational institutions, the educational process was resumed in the initial face-to-face system. The representatives of the UPG students wanted to know, at this moment, what is the students' perception regarding the impact generated by the pandemic during the period in which the activities took place mostly in the online system.

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3. Description

a. The total number of respondents was 200, and they are representing all five faculties within the UPG (bachelor and master students).

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3. Description

b. A first research carried out by the people from Department of Education Sciences intended to analyse the difficulties and the solutions that young people/students (involved in the study) have identified inside their families to surmount this period of physical and social distancing.

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3. Description

b. Specific objectives:

- to identify the difficulties / negative aspects of isolation during March till June 2020 (considered as the most difficult pandemic period characterized by many uncertainties;
- to analyse young people/students perception on the utility of the experiences of these times for them, their families and their relationships with their family members

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3. Description

b. The study have started in March 2020 with a group of 35 young people, all women, aged between 21 and 46 years old, students in education sciences, which are living both in urban and rural area. Research method was reflexive journal survey.

Main limit: no male representation (since is about an entire series of women only students)

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3. Description

c. A second research carried out by the people from Department of Education Sciences aims to identify the advantages and disadvantages of distance education for middle stage adult students (35-65 years old). The pandemic period was more easily managed by young adults / students (up to 35 years old) knowing that the younger generations are very open and adapted to use digital media (we are talking about the so-called “digital natives”).

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3. Description

c. Specific objectives:

- to identify the advantages and disadvantages of online education during October till December 2020, both from personal and professional perspective (the subjects are students, parents of their own children, partners in a marital relationship, members of an extended family and employed persons);
- to analyse the subjects' perception on the lesson they have learned from this new experience for their lives and on the further measures considering education.

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3. Description

c. The study has started in October 2020 with a group of 23 adults (middle stage), students in our university, with the following characteristics:

- aged between 32 and 51 years old;
- female;
- all employed (in other areas than education);
- 18 with children, 5 without children.

The research method was questionnaire and focus – group interview.

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4. Results

a. Positive aspects of online education during the pandemic in higher education

Answers	Percentages
Digitization of teaching methods, educational resources(course materials, seminars, laboratories etc.	77,1
The opportunity to find jobs and work part time or full time	57,1
Savings on students accommodation, transportation (local, regional, national) etc.	52,6
The use of new teaching technologies by teachers that facilitates the transfer of knowledge and increases the knowledge and use of digital media	46,9
Flexibility in operation, educational innovation, use of a range of communication tools	46,3

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4. Results

a. Positive aspects of online education during the pandemic in higher education

- other responses:

- Increased attendance in courses;
- Students spent more time with family;
- The ability to create connections and attend courses offered by teachers from other countries or other academic systems;

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4. Results

a. Negative aspects of online education during the pandemic in higher education

Answers	Percentages
Lack of socialization, lack of physical interaction with colleagues and teachers	78,3
Prolonged exposure to computer screens/ monitors harmful to the health	62,9
Difficulty in understanding all aspects taught in electronic format	58,9
Maintaining a low level of motivation and involvement in the educational environment	42,9
Difficulties in connecting to the online classes (no devices, poor internet connection, lack of energy etc.)	40

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4. Results

a. Negative aspects of online education during the pandemic in higher education

- other responses:

- some of the students entered the courses only for attendance;
- diminishing opportunities for research or specialized practice;
- some teachers have failed to adapt to new technologies;
- lack of physical movement and daily routine;

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4. Results

b. For sub- objective 1

1. Interactions between people have been limited;
2. Daily routines have been changed;
3. Problematic behaviours, especially on children and young people, have been emphasized (anxiety, dependency on digital devices, sleeping problems etc.);
4. People that are living in a limited space, like an apartment, are even more affected by isolation;
5. For vulnerable categories of persons, especially, mass media had induced the feeling of fear and dehumanization.

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4. Results

b. For sub-objective 2

1. Relationship with family members has been considerably improved because people had more time to spend together;
2. People have learned the value of a rational buying behaviour and made financial economies;
3. In order to communicate from their homes to the exterior, people have invested time for learning / practicing / improving abilities to use technology;
4. This period could be considered a time for self-(re)discovery;
5. Looking for a healthier living model, people / families have developed healthier routines;
6. Some of the subjects get to the conclusion that spending less time daily on the road to go to work, so they **have more time for themselves**.
7. These times (pandemic periods) created the context for developing civic behaviors.

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4. Results

c. For sub- objective 1

1) Advantages – **personal perspective:**

- a. more time spent together with family members;
- b. personal development (more time to take care of themselves, time for reading, for reflection, developing skills for using technology);
- c. better relationships with partners / family members / children especially;
- d. time and money saved for personal development.

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4. Results

c. For sub- objective 1

2) Advantages – **professional (and scholar) perspective:**

- a. using more efficient the time for job / school duties (learning, reading, solving job / school issues / homework),
- b. developing skills for communication on distance with colleagues

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4. Results

c. For sub- objective 1

3) Disadvantages – **personal perspective:**

- a. less time for family / personal development (because of more time for job/ school duties or bad functioning of technology);
- b. relationships destroyed, roles conflicts;
- c. healthy problems (due to excessive use of technology – eyes, weight);
- d. conflicts due to the resources (splitting computer / telephone with other family members);
- e. distance communication with friends;
- f. less help for in-need old family members.

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4. Results

c. For sub- objective 1

4) Disadvantages – **professional perspective:**

- a. more time for reading and understanding materials and for homework;
- b. more time for conversations with superiors / teachers / colleagues to understand the requests;
- c. more time for learning to use technology / software to solve job issues;
- d. role conflicts;
- e. losing the job (their own or an important family member).

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4. Results

c. For sub- objective 2

a) Lessons they have learned: family and health are important; we have to improve our daily routines and spend more time with families, and also in nature; we have to invest in technology and improve digital skills, even if we hope that in the future will not to be forced to use them excessively, becoming too dependent on it;

b) The future of education: everybody needs to develop and use digital skills; there is the danger of losing interest for school, so face to face meetings are needed; families and school need to redefine their roles in children education.

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5. Conclusions

Few findings (1)

- Pandemic time could be seen as **a challenge for a new beginning** and for experimenting healthier routines for our lives (pandemic represented a reset moment);
- Communication and time daily spent with family members are beneficial for everyone;
- It's important to declare/express our gratefulness for relatives/ family/ friends' attention/ gestures;
- We have to develop healthier routines – for ourselves or for our family: working together inside and outside the house, parents helping children to do homework, children helping parents for house-holding activities (cleaning, cooking, gardening) etc.;
- Children and parents have to (re)learn civic behaviour – respect for the laws and offering help for vulnerable categories (old people, in need people, single persons etc.).

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5. Conclusions

Few findings (2)

The middle stage adult students search and request to identify healthy solutions for the problems they confronted during last months:

- Finding resources in a healthier relation with family and friends;
- Spending time in nature (travels, physical activities);
- Investing money in technology, and time and effort for developing digital skills;
- Making priorities and becoming more organized;
- Investing time for personal and professional development.

From their perspective, school needs new approaches and practical solutions in the context of “un-motivating, impersonal” atmosphere of online education.

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