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Information about the journal



"K L A D" IS A STUDENT JOURNAL FIRST PUBLISHED AT M. NARIKBAYEV KAZGUU UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS. THIS JOURNAL IS AIMED AT ENHANCING STUDENTS' INVOLVEMENT INTO SCIENCE AND RESEARCH.

"K L A D" JOURNAL ADMITS FOR PUBLICATION VARIOUS TYPES OF ARTICLES: ORIGINAL RESEARCH, REVIEW ARTICLES, SHORT REPORTS OR ESSAYS, REFLECTIONS, CASE STUDIES, METHODOLOGIES AND CASES IN ENGLISH; CONTAINING THE RESULTS OF FUNDAMENTAL AND APPLIED RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF PHILOSOPHY AND IDENTITY, HISTORY OF KAZAKHSTAN, PEDAGOGY, LINGUISTICS AND METHODS OF TEACHING LANGUAGES, TRANSLATION, AND TOURISM.

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M. NARIKBAYEV KAZGUU UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESEARCH ARTICLES

“TERMINOLOGY SOLUTIONS FOR KAZAKH TRANSLATORS IN THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY” <i>V. Sidorenko</i>	4
“FEATURES OF HOUSEHOLD REALIA TRANSLATION IN LITERARY TEXTS” <i>Zh.A.Kunayeva</i>	11
“WHAT FACTORS THE RESEARCH METHODS I STUDENTS CONSIDERED WHILE CHOOSING THEIR FIELD OF STUDY?” <i>Russalina Akhmerova, Rakhat Eslyan, Aiarys Nursapa</i>	19
“WHAT DIFFICULTIES DID KAZGUU UNIVERSITY’S SECOND YEAR STUDENTS ENCOUNTER DURING ONLINE LEARNING?” <i>Kuatova K., Makartseva A., Uraztayeva A.</i>	27
DO BILINGUAL PEOPLE THINK IN TWO LANGUAGES? <i>Malika Zhandarbek</i>	34
“KAZGUU STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF BILINGUALISM IN THE PROBLEM- SOLVING EXPERIENCE” <i>Rakhmetova Aidana, Nagornyyak Natalya, Shakhmarova Tomiris</i>	38
WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE ON PEOPLE’S IDENTITIES? <i>Russalina Akhmerova</i>	41
“FACTORS AFFECTING THE FINAL DECISION OF SPECIALTY CHOOSING: CASE OF KAZGUU UNIVERSITY” <i>Vesselskaya Kristina, Nikolayev Aziz, Saduakas Tursynzhan</i>	45
“THE IMPACT OF A FAILED ACADEMIC COURSE ON STUDENTS’ OVERALL WELL- BEING, FURTHER MOTIVATION, AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE” <i>Yergaliyev Akbar, Aubakirova Zhibek, Nuranova Ayazhan</i>	56
“KAZGUU UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES OF GENDER STEREOTYPES” <i>Yermekkyzy Assem, Zhamantayeva Assiya, Khamzin Aslan</i>	67
“PECULIARITIES OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE” <i>Beysembekov Yerzhan</i>	74
“FUNCTIONS OF INTERJECTIONS IN THE MODERN ENGLISH LANGUAGE” <i>Vesselskaya K. V.</i>	84
“THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC-RELATED STRESS ON STUDENTS” <i>Dilyara Temirbulatova, Tomiris Lee, Bayan Rymkhan</i>	96
“ONLINE EDUCATION AND THE EFFECT ON STUDENTS’ STRESS LEVEL” <i>Bazarbekov Timur, Kabzhanova Karina, Ondassynova Gulnur</i>	106
“THE PROBLEM OF BRAIN DRAIN IN KAZAKHSTAN” <i>Kuldin D. Pavlovich, Abdilmanov Abilmansur, Akbarov Nursultan</i>	114
“THE NEED OF SEX EDUCATION IN KAZAKHSTAN” <i>Aruzhan A. Nurtaza, Gulsezim Zh. Nagi, Perizat A. Mazhitova</i>	119

LITERATURE REVIEWS

“WELL-BUILT CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT AS A SOLUTION FOR THE DIVERSITY OF CULTURES AMONG EMPLOYEES IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS” <i>Nazira Dauletova</i>	136
“RE-EDUCATION CAMPS IN CHINA: HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS” <i>Ayupov Dinmukhamed</i>	138
“BINGE-WATCHING: ADDICTION OR ENTERTAINMENT” <i>Mukhitova G. Mukhitkyzy</i>	141
“CAUSES OF MISMATCH BETWEEN JOB CHOICES IN KAZAKHSTAN” <i>Nagi Gulsezim</i>	144
“MENTAL EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN” <i>Otesh Tomiris</i>	147

STUDENTS' ESSAYS

“SHOULD WE CONTINUE READING E-BOOKS INSTEAD OF PAPERBACKS?” <i>Karina Kabzhanova</i>	152
“WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF GLOBALIZATION?” <i>Kazhgaliyev S. T.</i>	154
“SHOULD FAMOUS PEOPLE IN THE SOCIETY GET INVOLVED IN POLITICS?” <i>Manapova G.</i>	156
“WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF GROWING UP IN POVERTY?” <i>Perizat A. Mazhitova</i>	158
“WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF GLOBALISATION?” <i>Ormantayeva A.</i>	160
WHO AM I? <i>Berikkara A.B.</i>	161



Research Articles

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M. NARIKBAYEV KAZGUU UNIVERSITY

“WHAT DIFFICULTIES DID KAZGUU UNIVERSITY’S SECOND YEAR STUDENTS ENCOUNTER DURING ONLINE LEARNING?”*Kuatova K., Makartseva A., Uraztayeva A.***Introduction**

The world has faced global changes in every sphere due to the pandemic situation. The education system has been no exception. The Covid-19 pandemic has also had a significant impact on it, raised the actuality of online learning, and played an important role in a sudden shift to distance learning. As a result, all educational institutions switched to online learning and educational processes have been digitized. Transition to online learning has become a tool of social distancing designed to slow the spread of infection and prevent the increase in the number of disease cases.

Distance learning technologies previously were not used as actively as now. So all universities around the world as well as students were not fully prepared for this sudden transition to the online education system and faced great difficulties during this process. Therefore, because of the actuality of online learning due to the current situation all over the world, our research aims to investigate the difficulties occurring from the viewpoints of students.

This study is conducted in order to deeply know the opinions of KAZGUU University’s second year students, how they describe pros and cons of online learning, the difficulties that they encountered while taking online classes and also if they find it effective or not.

In order to find precise answers to our research questions the research studied expected challenges from different perspectives such as technical, physical and mental health issues. The research is carried out on purpose of personal interest to the topic as, at the same time, an unexpected switch to a new system also caused challenges, for us – students, in adapting to unfamiliar conditions in an online environment. In this way, the research will help us, to researchers, to identify the results, and to find out if the experience of our peers has a compliance with ours.

As a result, the following research questions were formulated:

Overarching research question:

- What difficulties KAZGUU University’s second year students encountered during the online learning?

Subsidiary research questions:

- Does the fatigue condition of the students cause their lack of concentration during online classes?

- Does the quality of the internet connection affect the work of the camera during online lectures?

Literature review

Online learning was some sort of an option to get education for students all over the world. But after the emergence of COVID-19, distance learning turned into a mandatory format which resulted in endless ZOOM conferences and being at home 24/7. This literature review was conducted in order to look at online learning amid pandemic from perspectives of students with different backgrounds and gather more theoretical basis and understanding of the research topic.

The research about the psychological impact of the coronavirus pandemic on medical college students from Changzhi investigated the mental state of the college students during the lockdown. The results of this research showed that almost 24.9% of college students have experienced anxiety since this COVID-19 flare-up (Cao et

al., 2020). In addition, it was indicated that having a relative or an associate tainted with COVID-19 was an independent hazard factor for experienced uneasiness. The COVID-19-related stressors that included aspects such as finances, daily-life, and academic delays were the possible causes for Chinese medical college students' anxious state (Cao et al., 2020).

Another research with a similar theme was done by researchers in the United States. They investigated the effects of the coronavirus epidemic on the mental health of US college students. Through the conducted survey it was found that of the 195 students, 138 (71%) had increased stress and anxiety due to the COVID-19 outbreak. A number of stressors such as worrying about their health and of their loved ones (91%), concentration troubles (89%), sleeping pattern problems (86%), lack of social interaction (86%) and concern related to the academic performance amid online learning (82%) were indicated that contributed to the increased stress, anxiety, and depressive thoughts among students (Son et al., 2020).

Researchers from Switzerland looked into comparison of students' mental condition and social interactions before and after the emergence of COVID-19. It was concluded that lockdown and social measures negatively affect some students' social life and therefore affect their mental health. Students, especially those that live alone, may face a lot of stress and worry about their condition because of lack of interaction with their family, friends and society. Female students are at higher risk of having negative mental health consequences. (Elmer, Mepham, & Stadtfeld, 2020).

Researchers from Spain did research on whether COVID-19 confinement affected the academic performance of the students of The Autonomous University of Madrid. The results showed that pandemic lockdown had a significant positive impact on students' performance. Moreover, this impact is noteworthy both in subjects that expanded the number of evaluation exercises and in subjects that did not alter the student workload. After lockdown, students' learning methodologies changed to a more continuous habit, progressing their effectiveness (Gonzalez et al., 2020).

Finally, Pakistani researchers looked into higher education students' perspectives on online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was concluded that online learning is not so effective in developing countries such as Pakistan because a tremendous number of students are incapable of accessing the internet due to technical as well as financial issues. 73% of respondents had access to the internet and 71.4% participants were confident in their capability to use computers for study purposes. However, despite that, 78.6% of students felt that usual classrooms were much more effective than distance learning (Adnan & Anwar, 2020).

From reading these research papers, it can be concluded that despite different backgrounds and countries, most students, especially those who live alone or lack social interaction, experience anxious conditions during the pandemic lockdown and it negatively affects their mental health. However, students' perceptions about online learning may vary depending on the background. For example, online learning positively impacted students' academic performance and proved to be more effective in Spain, whilst students from Pakistan considered conventional classrooms much better. Based on this knowledge, we wanted to find out about the opinions and difficulties encountered by students from KAZGUU University in Kazakhstan, since it was not investigated before. Moreover, though conducted literature review revealed that students from different countries and with different backgrounds experience anxious conditions during online learning and have problems with their mental health, the present study investigates the effect of online learning on students' physical health thus adding value to the bulk of research on this topic.

Methodology

For the purposes of the research we have chosen a quantitative method of enquiry. One of the main goals of this study is to identify the difficulties faced by the second-year students of KAZGUU, therefore, the survey was chosen as the main research tool.

The survey was created through Google forms and was distributed via WhatsApp messenger. The survey was sent to the chat rooms of second year students, where the number of people was approximately 100-150, but only 40 people answered. The participants were randomly sampled.

The survey consisted of three parts. The survey instrument was checked for face validity by being assessed by our research supervisor. The first part was aimed at collecting the demographic data of the participants, namely their age, gender and profession. In the second part, there were questions related to technical difficulties during online lectures. The third part consisted of questions about health problems caused by online learning.

Descriptive analysis of the data was carried out in order to determine what difficulties the students faced and to answer the main question. Bivariate analyses were conducted to answer subsidiary research questions.

Quantitative findings

Background of the research participants

The survey was conducted among 40 KAZGUU students of the second course. The conducted descriptive analysis shows that the majority of the students who answered this survey are females, which we can see from the central tendency ($Mode = 1$). Research participants aged 17-19 (87.5%) make up the greater part of the sample ($Median = 1$). The statistics demonstrate that the same number of the students have the specialty in Translation Studies and Applying Linguistics that constitute 30%.

The conducted survey covered some technical challenges that students faced during online learning. On the question of inaccessibility of gadgets in large families or because of financial issues, the majority of the students (75%) report not encountering such issues ($Mode = 2$). Respondents have a neutral opinion about the quality of the internet connection ($Median = 3$). Students evaluate the work of online platforms such as Zoom, Canvas and rate the work of Zoom as average ($M = 3$), Canvas as stable ($M = 4$), on a continuous scale where “1” means “very unstable” and “5” is “very stable” (See Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1

Work of the online platform “Zoom”

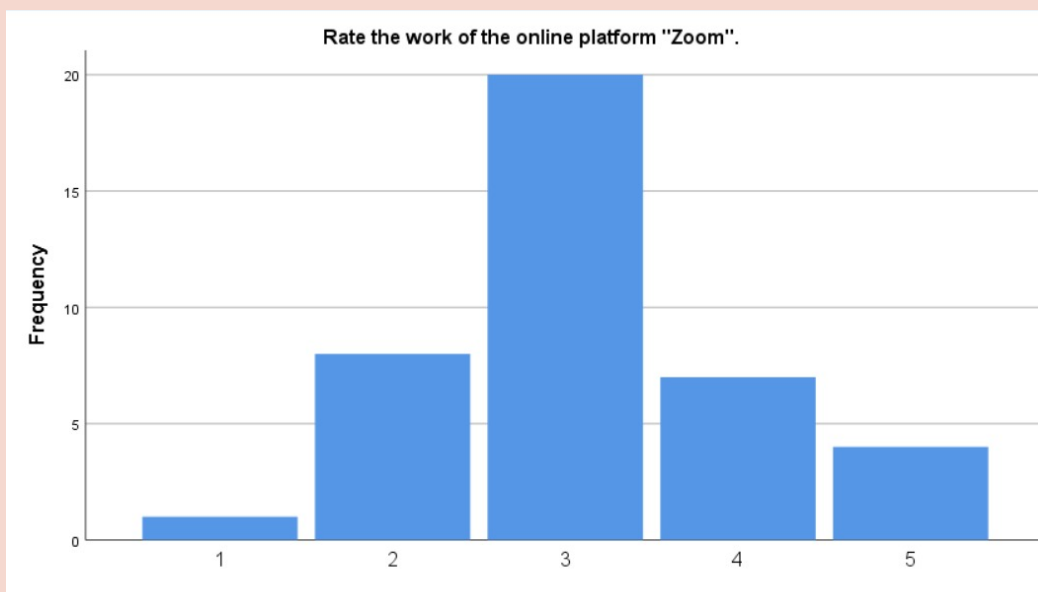
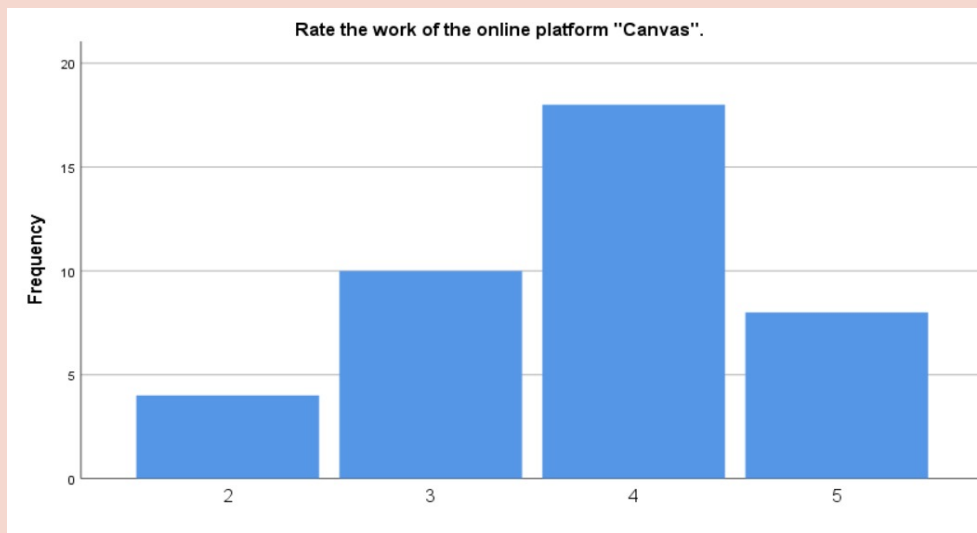


Figure 2

Work of online platform Canvas



The majority of the participants experienced difficulties with the settings of the microphone during the online lessons and represent 57.5% of the population ($Mode=1$), and 55% students report not encountering difficulties with the settings of the camera ($Mode=2$).

The survey discovered students' views on academic aspects of online learning and its effect on physical health. On the matter of both level of academic load and level of given assignments, 45% and 57.5% of students respectively selected "4" ($Mean=4$), which means "high" on the scale from 1-5. 82.5% of participants noticed the lack of concentration during online lectures ($Mode=1$).

Almost 75% of students encountered difficulties with group projects during online learning ($Mode=1$). Research participants reported to experience various difficulties during online learning, but mostly report being bothered by background noise (50%) and bad quality of internet connection (72.5%) (See Table 1).

Table 1

Factors that bother students during online lessons

		Answers	
Factors		N	Percentage
	Background noise	20	50.0%
	Family	12	30.0%
	Lack of work place	4	10.0%
	Bad internet connection	29	72.5%
	None of the above	5	12.5%
Overall		70	100%

As for the condition of physical health, 80% of participants agreed with the statement: "Online learning negatively affects physical health". Also different states of malaise were provided as possible ones, so most of the students experienced backache (82.5%), fatigue (70%) and headache (60%) after several online lessons on one day (See Table 2).

Table 2

Experienced malaises

		Answers	
		N	Percentage
Malaise	Fatigue	28	70.0%
	Pain in the eyes	22	55.0%
	Backache	33	82.5%
	Headache	24	60.0%
	None of the above	2	5.0%
Overall		109	100.0%

With the help of this descriptive analysis, we can draw many conclusions regarding difficulties second-year students encountered during the online learning. Also bivariate analysis was conducted to find possible relationships between variables and to provide help in answering the subsidiary questions.

Bivariate analysis

In order to find out whether the fatigue of the students caused their lack of concentration during online lectures we conducted a cross-tabulation test between these two variables. To see if the relationship between the independent variable, which is fatigue, and the dependent variable, which is the lack of concentration, is significant we conducted a chi-square test. The results illustrated that the relationship between the variables is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The calculated effect size ($\Phi = 0.71$) shows that this relationship is quite strong. The analysis of cross-tabulation tests suggests that the students who report having problems with concentration during online lessons are more likely to suffer from fatigue (See Table 3).

Table 3

Cross-tabulation for Problems with concentration VS Fatigue

				Fatigue		Total
				Yes	No	
Do you have problems with concentration during online lessons?	Yes	Count	Expected	28	5	33
				23.1	9.9	33.0
	No	Count	Expected	0	7	7
				4.9	2.1	7.0
Total	Count	Expected	28	12	40	
			28.0	12.0	40.0	

Cross-tabulation test two

We also wanted to look at the relationship between the quality of internet connection and the problems with camera students encountered during the online lectures. So we did the cross-tabulation test and chi-square test. The results showed that the connection between the independent variable, which is the quality of the internet connection, and the dependent variable, which are the technical problems with the camera, is statistically significant ($p = 0.3$). The calculated effect size ($\Phi = 0.332$) shows that this relationship is moderate. From the cross-tabulation test we can conclude that those who report having poor internet connection are more likely to experience problems with the camera (See Table 4).

Table 4

Cross-tabulation for Problems with camera VS Poor internet

				Poor internet		Total	
				Yes	No		
Do you have problems with camera during online lessons?	Yes	Count	Expected	16	2	18	
				13.1	5.0	18.0	
	No	Count	Expected	13	9	22	
				16.0	6.1	22.0	
Total				Count	29	11	40
				Expected	29.0	11.0	40.0

Conclusion

In order to answer main and subsidiary research questions, descriptive and bivariate analysis were conducted.

Overarching research question:

What difficulties KAZGUU University's second year students encountered during the online learning?

Based on the descriptive analysis students it was found that students had to face such difficulties as technical issues (poor internet connection, background noise, microphone settings), increased amount of assignments, problems with concentration and physical health (backache, fatigue, pain in the eyes, headache).

The subsidiary questions are:

Does the fatigue condition of the students cause their lack of concentration during online classes?

Does the quality of the internet connection affect the work of the camera during online lectures?

Results of the descriptive analysis represented some interesting points and we wanted

to find out whether there is a relationship between variables. We noticed that most of the participants experience tiredness during or after online lessons. Moreover, we saw that almost all participants find it hard to concentrate during online lessons. So we wanted to see the strength of the relationship between these two phenomena. And as the results showed us, the fatigue of the students is highly likely to be the cause of their inattention to the content of the lesson. From the survey results, one of the factors, which is the low quality of internet connection turned out to be the most actual obstacle for students to participate actively in the online class. Then we saw the problems with the camera that 45% of the survey participants encountered at least once. So we wanted to see if there is a relationship between these two variables. The results of the bivariate analysis presented that poor internet connection could cause the problems with the camera.

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