

**CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS OF ONLINE STUDYING
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

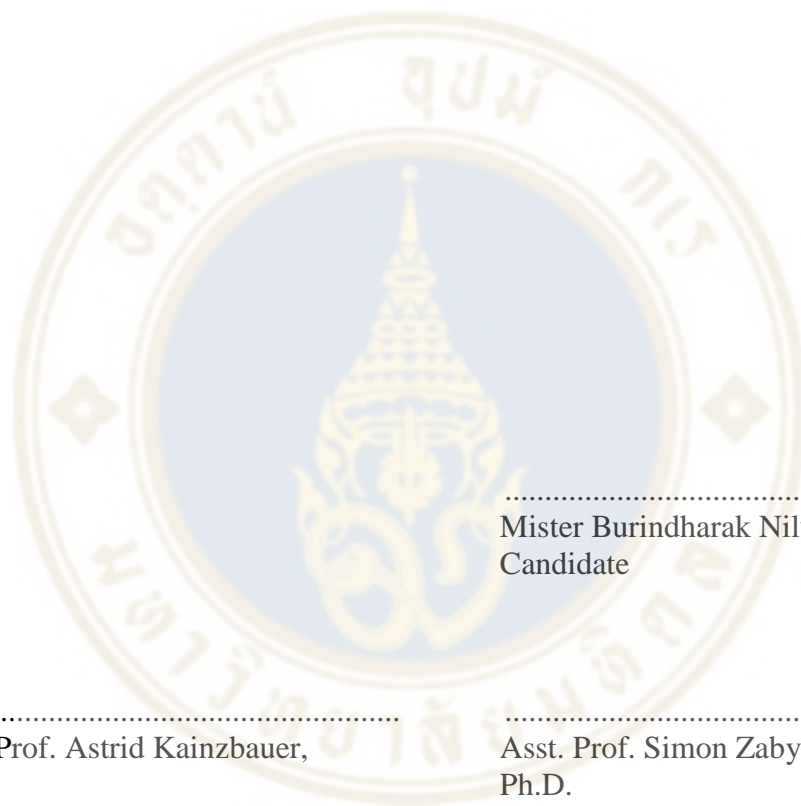


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Thematic paper
entitled
**CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS OF ONLINE STUDYING
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the challenges and benefits of online studying during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, recommendations from students are provided as alternatives for overcoming those challenges and improving online studying. Qualitative research collects the data through in-depth interviews based on open-ended questions. It can be summarized into ten challenges and four benefits. The challenges are technical challenges, difficulty in paying attention, lack of social life, digital illiteracy of instructors, no adaptation of curriculum to online teaching, lack of facilities/field trip/practical section, lack of immediate interaction, lack of self-discipline, office syndrome and difficulties in doing group assignments. The benefits are time flexibility, different channels for interaction, cost savings, and multitasking for learners.

The recommendations can be divided into recommendations for students, instructors, and university staff. Instructors and staff need to enhance the instructor's digital literacy, adopt a suitable teaching style, improve curriculum and online tools, and require students to turn on cameras. For students, they need to set a suitable environment for studying, make an agreement with family members, set a schedule for doing assignments in advance, and turn on their cameras during the classes.

KEY WORDS: Online Studying/ Covid-19 Pandemic/ Challenges/ Benefits

30 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

By the end of 2019, the COVID-19 outbreak started to spread across the world. This is another big crisis in the past decades where the latest one occurred around 2007, the financial crisis or the Hamburger crisis. However, the COVID-19 outbreak does not only affect the financial industry and business; it affects almost every industry all over the world. People who are employees, small business owners, corporations, and investors receive the impact to some extent. It is undeniable that almost every industry receives negative impacts. Many employees are laid off, small businesses close, big corporations restructure, and investors lose their profit.

On the other hand, this crisis acts as a catalyst for the world economy and technology. People are forced to do new things they have not done before. In Thailand, many companies announce a work-from-home policy since it is locked down due to government regulation. Some people find that it is better than going to the office as it saves time. Nonetheless, some find that their companies assign too much workload and feel like burnout from more working time.

Likewise, the education industry, which is usually unaffected by the crisis, however, is affected all around the world. The way students study and the method of teaching is altering. Some academies change the teaching format to the online session, while some combine offline and online teaching. Consequently, students from kindergarten to college face both challenges and advantages. Some may find it easier to study online as it saves time, and they can study from anywhere.

Nonetheless, some may hardly adapt to online teaching since they find it difficult to pay attention for a long time. Moreover, online teaching may lessen some course benefits, for instance, a master's degree, since one of the popular reasons they take the course is the opportunity to build new connections. Thus, they should meet in person and spend time together. In terms of teaching methods, teachers also conduct different teaching styles. For instance, the group discussion, presentation, and

examination format would not be the same. It may be easier for students to cheat on the exam, so teachers might have to make it more difficult or change to take-home exams instead.

The scope of this study is to explore the benefits and drawbacks of studying online during COVID-19 time for students compared to the regular offline class, which gives different experiences to students. The study aims to understand what students like and dislike about online studying, together with reasons and suggestions for improvement. Researching this will answer the following questions: What are the challenges and benefits of online studying during the COVID-19 outbreak? Furthermore, which platform do students prefer to study between online and on-site classes? The context of the study will focus on both bachelor's and master's degree students who have experience from both offline and online classes. This paper will gather the challenges and benefits of online studying by collecting information and relevant theories from reliable past research. After that, an individual interview will be conducted as primary data and further analyzed to gain more insights. It will be sufficient to answer the research questions and conclude research findings from both data.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

COVID-19 cause the education industry to become online learning

Based on The World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 Clinical Management gives the informative detail that the COVID-19 virus can be transmitted in several ways. The virus became a crisis because it spreads easily from person to person by coughing, sneezing, singing, or even breathing. An individual close to the infected person can be infected by inhaling the air in short range. This virus can also be transmitted easily in indoor locations or crowded places because the virus can transfer within the room via the conversation that spreads in the air. (WHO, 2022). Adedoyin (2020) mentioned that the education industry is one of several industries that received the effect of this pandemic. COVID-19 virus has shut down the whole world since WHO announced a contemporary threat to humanity. The pandemic forced the global physical industry to be closed based on social distancing policy.

Thus, the education industry has to develop from typical interactive classrooms to online classrooms. However, online learning is not a new thing in the education industry. Throwback to the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, online learning was also one of the methods for learning at that moment; even though it was not popular, it is called 'The Perspective of Good-To-Have' method of learning. Boczkowska et al. (2018) also agreed that online studying is essential for the education system after the COVID-19 pandemic or in case of emergency nursing and also become an enhancement for this industry.

2.1 Challenges of Online Studying

Student perspective

Technology, Tools, Device challenges

Adedoyin (2020) stated that several challenges arose from online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. The research mainly discussed challenges, opportunities, and crisis-migration methods of institutions concerning the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the classrooms are developed to be online learning, devices and tools are inevitably necessary for students and teachers. They are laptops, tablets, and smartphones. Also, an internet connection is needed for this format. Online formats are all associated with technology and socio-economic factors. For instance, not every student or participant can access the internet, which is a barrier to their education. Socio-economic factors are students' status and their affordability on devices and the internet. Demirbilek (2014) studied factors affecting the digital propensity of college students. One of them is socio-economic status. Some groups of students rely on free computers and the internet at school. These groups of students who have low socio-economic power and cannot afford their internet connection often face extra challenges and fall behind others.

Environmental distraction

Adedoyin (2020) mentioned another exciting topic about human and pets' intrusion. Human and pet intrusion is the interruption of family members or pets during the online session. During the lockdown period in many countries, students usually study at their home. There could be a chance that they are distracted by the environment, resulting in less attention to the lessons.

Lack of adequacy in work, quizzes, and assignments

Some spots are also challenging for online classes, for instance, following instructions posted on the course announcement section instead of traditional communication via email. Digital competency is when students lack skills regarding

programs and connections. Assessment and supervision is a measurement such as examinations and quizzes. The format may differ from traditional offline classes. Heavy workload deals with more responsibility of educational institution staff and instructors to establish the online class structure and platform. Lastly, compatibility refers to how suitable the subject and field of study are when conducted online. This research gives a general idea of fundamental challenges that stakeholders in the education industry should know and handle.

However, there are still weaknesses that sometimes restrict the effectiveness in learning. For instance, different students require different levels of care. Some may understand the lesson easily, while others do not. Not only do challenges occur with students, but also with educational institutions. The quality of online infrastructure should be an essential concern, or it would hinder the effectiveness of online learning. With the minor problem of e-learning platforms, every party could benefit from quality literacy (Cojocariu et al., 2014). In terms of opportunities, a leap growth of educational technology startups is foreseen. Advanced style of teaching, assessment, curriculum might arise from these firms. In addition, teachers can adapt their lessons with these technologies to ensure excellent student performance. This will develop adaptability and critical thinking skills for both teachers and learners. This analysis provides strengths, affirms some weaknesses, and states opportunities for online learning and educational technology firms.

Adnan's (2020) survey mentioned some differences between online and offline learning. He concludes that most participants agree that a conventional offline class is more motivating than an online class. They still consider that face-to-face contact studying with the instructors is still needed and association among colleagues. This concludes that half of the participants find it difficult for them to complete the whole course online. This is evidence to verify the challenges of online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Instructor perspective

Unable to control student behavior

Demirbilek(2014) mentioned that digital competency, assessment, and supervision are a challenge due to the limited time for an online class. An instructor cannot control their student as usual, so there is a possibility of having some actions that are over expectation, such as cheating or plagiarism at an online examination or having a lower potential answer or score. Online learning depends much on the internet and technological devices.

2.2 Benefits of online studying

Flexibility of time and venue

It is helpful to observe the advantages and disadvantages of studying online. Referring to S.Dhawan's (2020) SWOC analysis. Online studying does not only make learners struggle. Instead, they generate some valuable features for them. The key strength of learning online is the flexibility of time and venue. Students are free to manage their schedules without worrying much about time. Moreover, they can access useful online tools such as online media or video to maintain active learning and experience surroundings similar to regular offline classes. Brittany (2015) also agreed that online courses are flexible in several ways, so many students are also attracted to online learning. Time and place are not a problem for their learning needs. Instead of worrying about parking, traffic, and other problems that may happen in a traditional class environment, they can be more focused on their learning: no time zone, location, and distance for online learning issues. Students can access the classroom whenever and wherever they are suitable. (Terry, 2008)

Self-Regulated and Time management skills

Brittany(2015) 's research found many advantages of online studying as we know Online classrooms are flexible in time and location. Students who have self-regulated learning can respond to online classes effectively and can spend more time searching for more details of a study by themselves. Learners who have self-control, time managing for an online class, review material regularly, manage the assignment and deadlines, and had the skill of metacognition will reflect upon their learning (You & Kang, 2014)

Multitasking for Learners

Terry's (2008) theory stated that online studying is suitable for students who have a job or are not only a student but also have other roles such as employees or business workers. While studying, online classrooms can complete their aims and activity when they manage their own space and facilities. Learners can also do their job while studying and manage both of their paths more effectively than in an offline classroom where they cannot manage their time themselves.

Online Materials can be up to date

In asynchronous online learning, learners can access data and materials on the internet immediately while studying in class. Meanwhile, at an on-site class while learning to ask the teacher or instructor is the only way that learners can do while online studying; when learners are doubted or want to know more about context while studying, they can immediately search for more details at online accessibility. Moreover, instructors also can update their class's information or context instantly. Even easier for a teacher that can send the appropriate information to learners. (Terry, 2008)

According to the research of Chen (2021) on factors affecting college students' continuous intention to use online course platforms, interesting variables are proposed; effort expectancy, performance expectancy, content quality, social influence,

and perceived cost. The result showed that effort expectancy, performance expectancy, and content quality directly influence continuous intention to learn online. Only the perceived cost is a negative factor to continuous intention to learn online. With this research, it may open for the author to explore more on factors that hinder the willingness of students to learn online rather than only perceived cost.

From the research and past studies concerning challenges and benefit of online studying, it can be summarized by this following table:

Table 2.1: Summary of challenges and benefits of online studying from literature review

Online Studying during COVID-19	
Challenges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technology, Tools, and Devices Challenges 2. Environmental Distraction 3. Unable to control student behavior 4. Lack of adequacy in work, quiz, assignment.
Benefits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexibility of time and venue 2. Self-Regulated and Time management skills 3. Multitasking for learners 4. Online Material can be up to date

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Primary Data Collection Method

The method of collecting data applied in this research will be in-depth interviews. This qualitative method is expected to give insights, opinions, and tangible experiences that the interviewees have on online studying during the pandemic. Moreover, the author will add self-experience about the topic and articulate all thoughts together.

3.2 Interview Method

3.2.1 Sample Selection

The interviewees include selected 20 students who have real experiences and understand the conditions of studying online during the COVID-19 outbreak. The students may have experiences from their bachelor's or master's degrees. These interviewees typically attend offline classes; however, they have to shift to online classrooms due to the pandemic and their institution's policy. They are not the ones who intend to register for online courses in the first place. The sampling technique is convenient sampling as these 20 students are selected from various institutions.

Table 3.1: Lists of Interviewees

Student	Education	Number of Semester of Offline, Online studies	Age
A	Bachelor's degree	5,3	21
B	Bachelor's degree	7,1	22
C	Master's degree	2,3	28
D	Bachelor's degree	7,1	22
E	Master's degree	3,3	27
F	Master's degree	2,3	26
G	Master's degree	2,3	26
H	Bachelor's degree	2,1	20
I	Bachelor's degree	2,1	21
J	Master's degree	1,2	26
K	Bachelor's degree	2,2	23
L	Bachelor's degree	6,2	27
M	Master's degree	2,3	28
N	Master's degree	1,3	25
O	Master's degree	1,4	36
P	Master's degree	2,1	25
Q	Master's degree	2,3	31
R	Master's degree	2,3	28
S	Bachelor's degree	5,1	24
T	Bachelor's degree	5,3	20

3.2.2 Developed open-ended questions

To get deep insights and opinions from the interviewees, the questions should be open-ended and let them share the challenges they have faced. Below are the questions for asking their opinions on the challenges and benefits of online studying during the pandemic.

Interview Questions

1. What are the challenges of online studying during the COVID-19 situation that you found?
2. What are the benefits of online studying during the COVID-19 situation that you have found?
3. How to improve online studying or make it more interesting for learners? What is your recommendation to instructors, students, and university administrators?
4. After online studying, which platform do you prefer to study between online and on-site classes? Why?

3.2.3 Probing Techniques

The techniques used during the interview will be probing techniques. The answers from the interviewees will be asked or act as a foundation for further questions to verify the data (McDaniel & Gates, 2015). To understand the interviewees as much as possible, examples and reasons behind the answers will be inquired about. The interview will be conducted using two-way communication via online platforms such as Zoom or Line video call. Each interview is expected to take 15 to 30 minutes, including an introduction and the research aims, asking the questions, following probing techniques, and concluding the interview.

3.3 Research Framework

The framework is based on both information from in-depth interviews and a literature review. The challenges and benefits found will be compared with the past studies whether there are similarities and differences or new interesting points discovered. Furthermore, the interviewees' recommendations for improvement in online studying will be discovered.

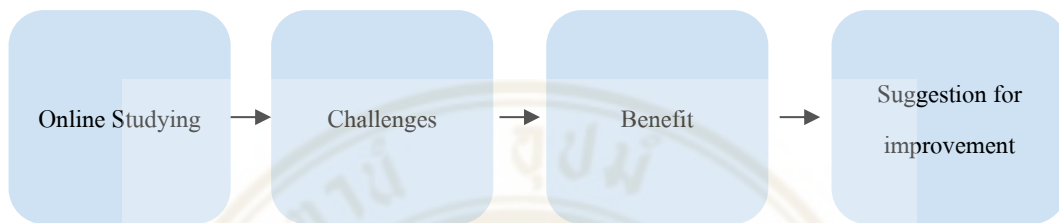


Figure 3.1: Research Framework

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

After conducting qualitative research through an interview, the data from all samples are summarized and categorized into groups based on similar findings.

4.1 Challenges

4.1.1 Technical Challenges

Technical challenges are the most occurring challenges, according to this research. Thirteen students agreed that they faced technical problems. However, the technical challenges which students face may be different. The most occurring problem is the crash of tools and devices used for online learning. It can be a low internet connection, the crash of a microphone, the crash of a camera, or being unable to share the participant's screen. One student said that when she had a presentation, it would take more effort and longer than presenting in offline classes since she had to beware of the internet connection or make sure that the screen or sound would be shared smoothly with the audience.

Two students mentioned that their universities and instructors used e-learning platforms and email to communicate and facilitate online learning. Nonetheless, using two platforms simultaneously often creates confusion and inconvenience. They were unsure whether to submit their assignments via email or the universities' e-learning system. Sometimes, some instructors send class materials through emails, but some may post them on the system. This results in inconsistency, and students could miss messages or feedback from their instructors. One student also mentioned that the e-learning system was complicated, and it took quite a long time for him to get used to it.

4.1.2 Difficulty to Pay Attention/ Environmental Distraction

According to the interview, environmental distraction became the second problem students most experienced as nine students gave information. Most of them said that during the COVID-19, they could not go out anywhere, so they usually studied in their rooms. They all mentioned that they were interrupted by the environment; for example, they became lazy when they sat beside their beds and wanted to sleep. They were distracted by their phones since no one was watching them, and they could do other things instead of studying only. Furthermore, they sometimes were distracted by their family or pets. Two students said that their parents often ask them for help during the classes since they forget that their children had classes. Another two students mentioned it was difficult to focus since they had to focus only on screens and had no interaction with their friends like in offline classes. This makes online classes dull, and they can quickly lose their attention from the lecture. Many students thought they were distracted by the environment due to the lack of requirement to turn on the camera from instructors. One student mentioned she could pay attention to the lecture better in offline classes since she needed to prepare everything for the classes, such as waking up early and going to the university. Hence, she needed to pay attention and put effort into the lessons as she spent much time on transportation and getting herself ready for the lecture. On the other hand, when studying online, she could wake up late and not take a shower, so she did not have a sense of urgency or morale for studying.

4.1.3 Lack of Social Life

Another challenge many interviewees had experienced was a lack of social life or meeting friends in person. Nine students agreed on this and think they still want to meet their friends in real life. One student mentioned that she enjoyed her first semester of online classes; however, after she stayed online for a long time, she started to feel depressed. She thought that her life was a routine of waking up, studying, and sleeping. Others also mentioned less interaction and conversation with friends. Many of the interviewees were studying master's degrees with the main reason of expanding social connections. However, online studying hindered this intention and became a barrier for them to know more people. They also mentioned that they worked with the same group and had fewer chances to work with new people, which means they lost

some opportunities that might come from new people. For instance, Mr. J mentioned that many colleagues had different exciting profiles. One of them was a CEO of a public company, and he offered a job to Mr. J. However, by studying online since the first semester, he has a few chances to make new friends. This limits him to only working with the same people; therefore, he should have more chances to work with new people and get more business opportunities if the classes were held onsite. Another student who studied cultural management said that he lost the opportunity to practice communicating in English and sharing cultural experiences since he had a chance to discuss them only in the classes.

On the other hand, if the classes were held offline, he would have had more chances to go out or have conversations outside the classes. Some interviewees were studying a bachelor's degree and met their friends for the first time in an online class, not meeting in person. This makes them feel that they were not close to those friends even though they had studied many online classes together.

4.1.4 Digital Illiteracy of Instructors

Interestingly, six respondents mentioned the digital illiteracy of their instructors. The interview reported that one of the challenges students agreed to was that many instructors were not good at using online platforms. For instance, many instructors did not know how to share screens properly, open a chat box and create breakout rooms on Zoom. This slowed down the class, and the class did not go on smoothly. One student mentioned that instructors did not know how to use online tools, leading to fewer activities and engagement than in traditional offline classes. Some students mentioned that they understood that most of the instructors were from the older generation and may not be familiar with technology as much as students were. However, some instructors knew how to use specific tools for online teaching; for instance, one student who studied law liked one of her instructors so much because she was good at using the online teaching program and used a specific function of that program for students to discuss the topic anonymously. Thus, students were more willing to participate than in other classes significantly.

4.1.5 No Adaptation of Curriculum to Online Teaching

Six students reported that the classes they attended, the instructors did not adapt or adjust the curriculums to suit online teaching. Several students think that instructors use the same curriculum and style of teaching as their traditional offline class. However, they think those teaching styles, for example, only use presentation slides and talk about the topics, do not work with the online format since it is boring. Students will lose attention quickly because they can only look at the screen without participation. Some mentioned that some instructors who were good at teaching classes offline could not make online classes interesting enough. On the other hand, some instructors could not make the offline classes enjoyable, yet they were good at online teaching since they knew how to utilize online tools effectively. Of these six students, three students agreed that online classes have more potential to be exciting and engaging. They think that online tools or applications can be used together with the traditional teaching style.

Another interesting point is that some students mentioned the grading system and the course assessment. Some instructors maintained the same grading style, such as putting more weight on the midterm and final exams; however, some changed the assessment style and gave more assignments with low weight (some classes do not have exams). Some students are satisfied with more assignments without exams because they think that online examinations are complicated as they have to turn on the camera and worry about the internet connection. On the other hand, some students prefer having the exams since they experienced some classes where grades were totally based on assignments, and they felt too much workload.

4.1.6 Lack of facilities/field trip /practical section

Five interviewees felt that they lost an opportunity to use the university's facilities, visit a field trip and have a practical session. Two of them agreed that they could enjoy the facilities such as a library or a student lounge in a normal situation; however, they could not enjoy those benefits online. Another two students mentioned they missed a real-life experience in the practical section. One of them studied medical technology, and a laboratory session was necessary. He said instructors shared a video clip of a lab test instead of an actual session. This frustrated him since he was unsure if

he could do it in a lab himself. Another student who was studying engineering also faced the same problem. The instructors recorded a video clip for welding and shared it online. She said that she worried that she did not have experience herself, which could cause a negative impact when she needed to apply for her job.

4.1.7 Lack of Immediate Interaction

Four students agreed that if they had questions about the lessons or assignments, they could not get the answers from instructors immediately as they could in offline classes. These students used to go and ask questions after the class; however, two of them mentioned that instructors usually ended the online class immediately when the class was finished. Hence, all of them need to contact instructors via email or chat application which usually takes a long time to reply. One student said that once, he and his group did not understand the instruction of an assignment, so he emailed the instructors. He got a reply from the instructors four days after he emailed so that the group project started late, and they all needed to rush to finish it on time.

4.1.8 Lack of Self-discipline/ Procrastination

Three students found that they had less self-discipline compared to studying offline. They were lazy and could not force themselves to study appropriately. For instance, instructors will send the lecture video in some classes instead of a live class. Students usually postpone the lessons and rush themselves before having the exams. They all said that they felt demotivated and did not have incentives to study. Hence, grades and exams were the only things that could motivate them to study. One student mentioned that after she knew she had to study online for a semester, she thought that she would be hard-working due to more available time; however, she was lazy and often used that time to rest. All three students struggle with procrastination during online studying.

4.1.9 Office Syndrome

Three students reported they had an office syndrome, usually a back pain, a neck pain, and eyestrain. They said they suffered from this pain more than studying in offline classes. In a regular class, they could have a break and take a walk; however, in

an online class during the outbreak, they stayed for the whole class even though they had a break. For an eye strain, they mentioned that they rarely had this problem in an average classroom since they did not have to only be on the screen. Also, a meeting and a group assignment would be solely conducted online; hence, it significantly increases screen time for students.

4.1.10 Difficulty in Doing Group Assignment

Working in a group assignment online is one of the challenges three interviewees experienced. One of the students said that they were forced to do group assignments online using a meeting platform while they usually scheduled a meeting in person in a normal situation. He said that it limited their opportunity to create a creative project. For instance, he could have created an innovative video if he were able to shoot a film together outside; however, they had to record a Zoom online meeting which was not interesting instead. Another two students mentioned that attending online meetings to discuss group work wasted more time than having a meeting in person. One of them said that the meetings were boring and usually no one turned on cameras, so there were fewer contributions than in an offline meeting. Someone may do another thing while others are discussing. Another student mentioned that they could not realize facial expressions and gestures whether group members agreed on a discussion since many of them were hesitant to share their honest opinions. They all preferred an offline meeting since it was fun and more enjoyable.

4.2 Benefits

4.2.1 Time Flexibility

Of 20 interviewees, 15 agreed that time flexibility was what they liked the most. Most of them mentioned that they could study at any time and anywhere. Three respondents said that they do not have to wake up early, take a shower or wear makeup which gives them more time to sleep and results in more energy to study. One of them noticed that when she can choose her time to study by herself, she can focus more during the class and understand the lessons clearly.

Twelve of all respondents mentioned that studying online can significantly save their time from transportation. Most of them usually take at least one hour to reach their university. Ms. A and Mr. B mentioned that they saved their time around one to two hours a day from the traffic if they studied online. Both stated that they saved time, not only from transportation but also from eating outside and having a conversation with friends. Those who work and study simultaneously, such as Ms. F and Mr. Q, said that they have to leave their office before working hours to go to the class on time. However, they are usually late, so they like online classes since they can log in and study yet do not have to leave much early. Two of them also stated that they gain a lot more energy without transportation and traffic jams and do not feel exhausted like they used to.

4.2.2 Different Channels for Interaction

Eight out of all interviewees realize that they benefit from online learning systems such as the program used for e-learning. Two of them mentioned that direct message or chat via the Zoom program helps students ask questions or participate with instructors. For offline classes, introverts or shy people usually do not ask questions or answers even though they know the answers or have questions to ask. Having a chat box from the program facilitates students to participate easily without any fear of embarrassment. They also mention that those who are not comfortable texting can turn on their microphone and ask instructors right away. Thus, they have alternatives to participate while studying onsite; students have to raise their hands and ask questions. Other six students mentioned the utilization of the program and e-learning system. Ms.F, Ms. I, and Ms. N stated that they are satisfied with the recording system of online learning. They can comfortably watch the videos again if they do not understand the lessons or are busy at class time, they can study by themselves at other times. They think this is the real benefit of online classes over offline classes. Not only the recording system that helps students keep up with the lessons but also other functions of online programs facilitate learning. For instance, Ms.J mentioned that instructors could share their screens and can show helpful content from Youtube or other websites smoothly. This helps visualize lessons, enhances the learning process and makes the classes more interesting.

Furthermore, one student mentioned that she had difficulty seeing the whiteboard in offline classes; however, this problem is totally solved since everyone can see the slides or smartboard on their screens. Another function mentioned by one student is the ability to check everything on an online platform, in this case, Google Classroom. He said that he could check his class schedule, assignment due date, and grade not to miss any assignments or any updates from instructors.

4.2.3 Cost Savings

Five interviewees thought that online learning could reduce their daily expenditure. Most of them mentioned that they saved their transportation cost and fuel cost. Moreover, one mentioned that he did not have to eat outside or have dinner with friends. Instead, he can go home and eat with his family. Also, he saved more cost on class materials; for example, he had to print out the lecture slides for every class when attending class onsite. However, he did not have to do that when he studied online. Another two students mentioned saving rental costs. They said that their friends saved the rental cost for a dorm from 7,000 THB to 12,000 THB, which was a significant amount saved.

4.2.4 Multitasking for Learners

Four students mentioned that they could do several tasks simultaneously while learning online. Since online meeting platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet do not require participants to turn on the camera and microphone, students had choices to turn on or turn them off. All four interviewees said that they could comfortably surf the internet, chat with friends, eat or do their work or assignments they had not finished during online classes, while they could not do that when having classes onsite

4.3 Preference for Studying Format

Out of 20 interviewees, the results show that 12 interviewees prefer studying onsite, five interviewees prefer studying online, and the other three suggest a hybrid classroom. Those who prefer offline studying think that they have experienced challenges of online studying over offline studying.

Majority of the interviewees who prefer studying offline see more benefits from offline classes. Most of them still require social interaction with friends and interaction with instructors. They think they can effectively discuss the lecture with both friends and instructors, and they get lots of knowledge. They also value socialization with friends. Most interviewees who are master's degree students mentioned that they register for the course in order to pursue new social connections, which can not be fully replaced by online teaching. Some also mention that they find offline classes more exciting and usually enjoy offline classes more than online classes.

Students who prefer studying online think that they can save much time, do not have to be exhausted by traffic jams, and can take more rest. One of them thinks that even though online studying has many challenges, she thinks that those are minor challenges, and she can get used to it if she studies online for some time. She values the benefits she gets from online studying more than the time she can save. Another student thinks that he could get more benefits from studying onsite. However, he has already gotten used to online studying and is too lazy to go to the university.

The three students who suggested the hybrid style see the benefits of offline and online studying, so they want to combine both formats. Two of them think that some classes in which instructors give a pure lecture without any activities or practical sections should be taught online, so students do not waste time going to university or spend a long time on transportation. They think those classes are indifferent between offline and online teaching. On the other hand, if instructors require participation or practical activity, they should hold the class onsite. Another student who was taking a master's degree thinks that the university may hold offline classes on the weekend so that she can attend the classes without hurrying from work. On the weekday, classes can be held online so that she can attend the class from anywhere right after her work time.

4.4 Suggestions for improvements for online teaching

4.4.1 Enhance Instructors' digital literacy

Half of the interviewees suggested that instructors should get to know how to use online tools, programs, and devices. As mentioned in the challenges, the digital illiteracy of instructors is one of the significant challenges students found. Therefore,

students think that online studying will be held smoothly if these technical problems are reduced. Moreover, some students believe that university staff should help or arrange a coaching session for instructors to use online tools professionally. They understand that some instructors may come from the older generation and do not know how to use or utilize online tools to improve teaching performance.

4.4.2 Adopt a suitable teaching style

Numbers of students believe that teaching style is an important issue. Many students found out that the teaching style of several instructors is not suitable for online teaching. For instance, reading the presentation slides without any participation. This can make the classes boring and not interesting. Thus, many students think that instructors should increase engagement between instructors or students, such as asking students questions along with the lecture or creating a breakout room for students to discuss topics. Some students mention that instructors' tone of voice should not be monotone but instead dynamic.

Furthermore, two students mentioned the energy of instructors. They realize that online teaching requires a lot more energy than offline teaching since instructors have to talk in front of the screen for hours with less interaction than in the actual classroom. Hence, they suggest that instructors be well-prepared and save their energy before teaching online classes.

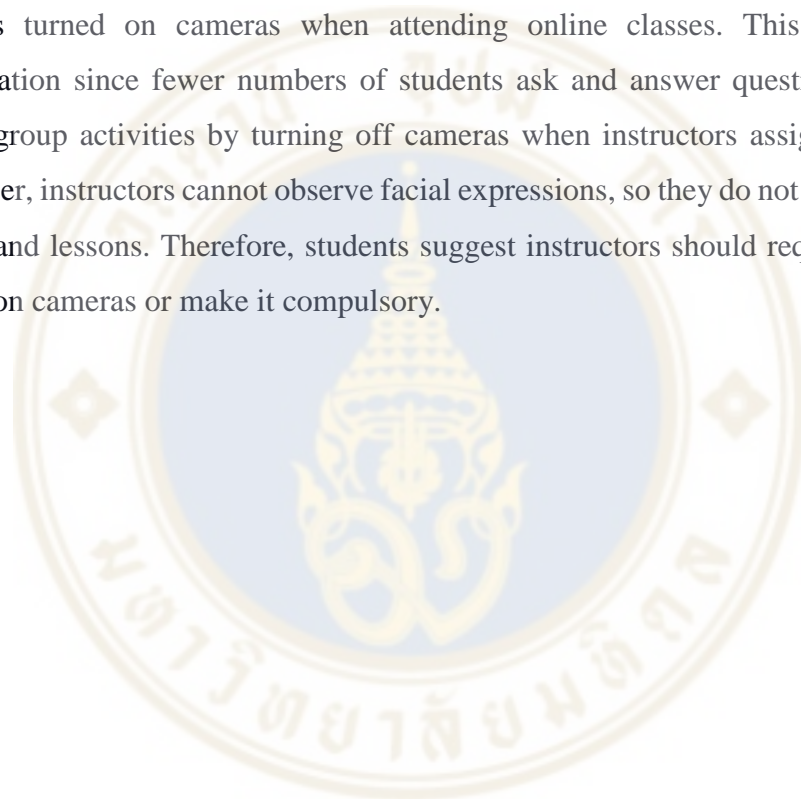
4.4.3 Improve curriculum and online tools

Many students mention the adoption of technology to improve online teaching. Students believe that using traditional tools for teaching; for example, presentation slides is not enough to make online studying appealing. Interestingly, some students with experience with instructors who adopt practical online applications suggest various applications. For example, Gather is a virtual experience for a team meeting. Mentimeter is interactive presentation software that can create polls and discussions. Kahoot is a game-based learning platform for making quizzes and other simulations. With these tools, students believe that it will enhance attention and engagement, which will make online studying more compelling.

Some students also mentioned that instructors should revise the score rubrics and how they assess students' knowledge. They think that instructors should follow up and assess students' knowledge continuously since it may not be enough to hold an examination at the end of the courses.

4.4.4 Requirement to turn on the camera

Not only do instructors contribute to an improvement of online learning, but also students could help contribute to online classes. Some students said a minority of students turned on cameras when attending online classes. This results in less participation since fewer numbers of students ask and answer questions. Some may ignore group activities by turning off cameras when instructors assign group works. Moreover, instructors cannot observe facial expressions, so they do not know if students understand lessons. Therefore, students suggest instructors should require all students to turn on cameras or make it compulsory.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

Table 5.1: Summary of challenges and benefits of online studying from research findings

Online Studying during COVID-19	
Challenges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technical Challenges 2. Difficulty to Pay Attention/ Environmental Distraction 3. Lack of Social Life 4. Digital Illiteracy of Instructors 5. No Adaptation of Curriculum to Online Teaching 6. Lack of facilities/field trip/practical section 7. Lack of Immediate Interaction 8. Lack of Self-discipline/Procrastination 9. Office Syndrome 10. Difficulties in Doing Group Assignment
Benefits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time Flexibility 2. Different Channels for Interaction 3. Cost Savings 4. Multitasking for learners
Suggestion for improvements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance Instructors' digital literacy 2. Adopt a suitable teaching style 3. Improve curriculum and online tools 4. Requirement to turn on camera

This research paper aims to identify the challenges and benefits of online studying during the COVID-19 outbreak. From the interview, the challenges found are

technology, tools and devices challenges, environmental distraction, lack of social life, digital illiteracy of instructors, no adaptation of curriculum to online teaching, lack of facilities, field trip and practical section, lack of immediate interaction, lack of self-discipline/ procrastination, office syndrome and difficulties of doing group assignment. On the other hand, the benefits found from the interview are flexibility of time and venue, technical benefits, cost-saving, and multi-tasking for learners.

By doing a literature review and interviewing samples, it can be seen that there are both similar and different challenges and benefits compared to findings from the literature review. The challenges similar to those from the literature review are technology, tools and devices challenges, and environmental distraction. Other challenges mentioned are additional challenges that are different from the literature review. Regarding the benefits of studying online, similar components are flexible time and venue and multi-tasking for learners. Other benefits are additional benefits found from the interview.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Recommendation for Instructors and University Staff

From the research findings, it is undeniable that technology, tools and devices challenges, and digital illiteracy of instructors are among the top occurring problems. Typically, the internet, online platform, and other connections can be down; however, preparation and solution for possible technical problems can be made in advance. For technical problems, staff should observe recurring problems from students in each class, find solutions, such as making checklists for solving a screen sharing problem, and propose to all instructors and staff how to fix the problem. Furthermore, staff and instructors should have paid attention to students by asking about the inconvenience and challenges they faced, not only fixing problems from the instructor's perspective. For instance, some students may not have compatible devices for studying online, so universities may provide those devices for students who do not have them. In terms of the digital illiteracy of instructors, universities should provide training for all instructors to learn how to use all necessary online teaching platforms. Also, staff should

let them know that technical problems could have happened in general, so telling them not to panic should be emphasized.

For instructors, another problem they should be well-prepared for is the online teaching curriculum and teaching style. Since many students agree that online studying is boring and believe that the curriculum taught onsite cannot be used with online teaching effectively, instructors should redesign the course objective and curriculum to suit the online format. Moreover, teaching styles should be revised whether it works for the online format; for instance, the voice used should not be monotone. The lesson should not have only a lecture, instead of adding a discussion and exciting activities. New technology and applications can be used to help facilitate activities. As the example students mentioned, Gather, Mentimeter, and Kahoot can be applications that bring more excitement to online studying. Thus, instructors should keep updating themselves about new educational technology and may contact university staff for help with instruction on these platforms.

5.2.1 Recommendation for Students

For the students' side, their challenges are an environmental distraction, lack of social life, lack of self-discipline, and difficulties in doing group assignments. For the first problem, students should make their environment suitable for studying. They should arrange their home spaces to be a place for studying only. For example, they will only study on their desks, not on a bed or in a living room since these places are not suitable for studying and can make them lazy. Moreover, they should make agreements with their family members about the schedule of classes so that they will not interrupt during the classes.

For the second problem, lack of social life, students can socialize anytime and anywhere with the help of technology in this era. For instance, they could set up an online casual meeting with friends once a month on a platform such as Gather, which includes games there to spend their time together (in case students cannot go out). If the outbreak situation is getting better, they should have a meeting session with their friends. For lack of self-discipline, it is undeniable that an unclear deadline for an assignment or a video clip instructors record instead of a live class can make students lazy and have no discipline. Thus, they have to set a date for watching the video or doing the

assignment clearly. Also, they can invite their friends to do the assignment together using an online meeting platform so that it can be more appealing and enjoyable. For the last problem, difficulties in doing group assignments, students should all turn on their cameras to be aware of what they are doing. This is important because group members can do other things during the meeting, and others may not know, resulting in less contribution and output.



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