Social, Academic, and Psychological Impacts of Ghana's COVID-19 Measures on University Students: A Human Security Perspective

Owusu Sekyere Kwarteng

Department of Political Science Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.910000269

Received: 12 October 2025; Accepted: 19 October 2025; Published: 10 November 2025

ABSTRACT

This study examines the social, academic, and psychological impacts of Ghana's government COVID-19 measures on university students through the lens of the Human Security and Securitization framework. Many scholars, the world over, have debated about the limitations and issues associated with securitizing public issues by governments. By situating the analysis within these theoretical frameworks, the study seeks to explain how securitizing the educational sector during COVID-19 by the Ghanaian government bred some unintended consequences in students academic performance, social interactions, and psychological wellbeing of university students. The study employed a quantitative descriptive survey to collect data from 100 Political Science students at the University of Education. Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) table recommends that a population of 1,700 requires a sample size of 315, however, due to logistical constraints, voluntary participation, and limited time for the study, the researcher was only able to gather responses from 120 students, ultimately receiving 100 valid responses. In selecting the participants, the researcher used simple random sampling coupled with a departmental list and a random number generator. Findings of the study revealed that, socially, students maintained peer connections through virtual channels, thereby mitigating risks associated with isolation. Academically, students faced challenges with respect to the Online Management Systems introduced coupled with limited internet access. Psychologically, high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression were recorded due to lack of mental health support. While the Government's measures were laudable, they insufficiently addressed human security concerns. The study recommends investments in virtual learning infrastructure, subsidizing internet costs, and integrating telehealth services in university systems.

Keywords: COVID-19, human security, university students, Ghana, social effects, academic effects, psychological effects.

INTRODUCTION

World history consists of harsh or forceful, extreme, and rigorous happenings that acted as a turning point across various realms. Among these, the year 2020 would be remembered for COVID-19, which seriously turned the world upside down (Kiran, 2020). The outbreak, caused by the novel severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), emerged in Wuhan, China, in late 2019 and rapidly evolved into a global crisis. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic, marking the beginning of one of the most significant public health emergencies in recent history (Asante & Mills, 2020). By the end of March 2020, the virus had spread to over 178 countries, with confirmed global cases surpassing 780,000 (Johns Hopkins University, 2020).

Although African countries initially recorded fewer cases as compared to Europe and the Americas, they soon faced significant challenges where their social, economic, and political lives were altered to suit the demands of the pandemic's prevention (Asante and Mills, 2020). On March 12, 2020, Ghana confirmed its first cases of Covid-19 involving two individuals returning from Norway and Turkey (Frempong et al., 2021). In response, the government implemented a number of containment measures, which included closing down schools, cracking down on public gatherings, border restrictions, and targeted lockdowns in targeted hotspot areas (Frempong et al., 2021).

While these measures were laudable to flatten the transmission of the virus, they also had profound implications for education. On March 6, 2020, the University of Washington led the way by shifting from traditional face-to-face to online learning in response to COVID-19. Several institutions followed suit, and by late March, most universities had either suspended classes or shifted to online instruction (Weeden & Cornwell, 2020). Following global protocols, the Ghanaian government abruptly shifted education from face-to-face to virtual learning. However, as observed by Agormedah et al. (2020) and Henaku (2020), the Ghanaian context presents a challenge of internet connectivity, limited access to digital devices, and the absence of robust institutional e-learning infrastructure.

Beyond technological constraints, the social and psychological dimensions presented by the pandemic on students are underexplored. Measures such as social distancing disrupted established peer networks, extracurricular engagement, and informal learning environment, which are critical in students' well-being and success (Singh & Singh, 2020; Pietrabissa & Simpson, 2020). Moreover, mental health issues became more pronounced, with students reporting heightened anxiety, reduced motivation, and increased financial stress (Saladino et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020).

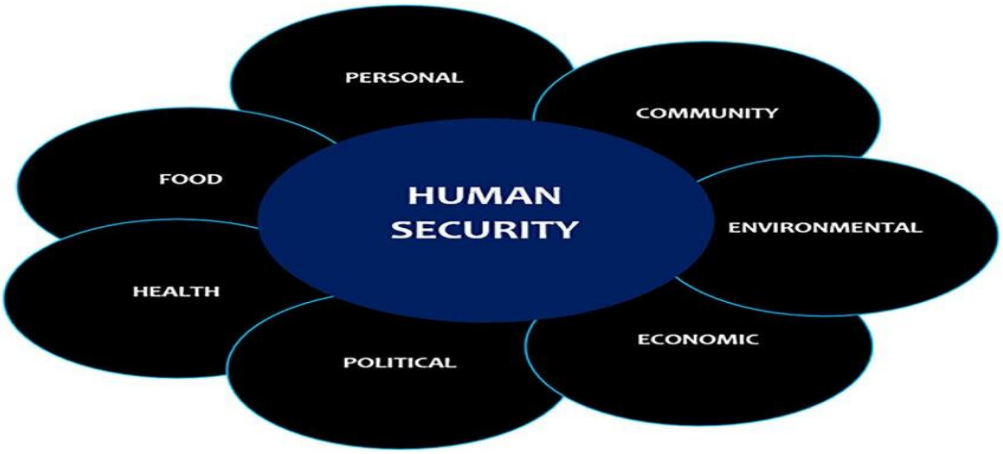
In this context, the present study addresses the academic, social, and psychological impact of Ghana's Covid-19 measures on students in the Political Science Department at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). Specifically, it seeks to address these questions: (1). How did the government's COVID-19 measures affect students socially? (2) How did these measures impact students' academic experience virtually? (3) What were the psychological consequences of these measures on students?

By situating the analysis within the human security framework, this study contributes to the emerging body of literature on higher education resilience in crisis contexts. The findings provide practical insights for Ghanaian policymakers and university administrators, while also offering lessons relevant to other higher education systems facing similar infrastructural and socio-economic constraints. Moreover, the study brings to light the limitations of securitization theory when applied to real-world policy contexts.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: Human Security Theory& Securitization Theory

The Human Security theory provides an inclusive framework for analyzing various dimensions of harmful threats to human well-being, shifting away from the traditional state-centric focus of security paradigms. The 1994 Human Development Report issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defined human security as "safety from chronic threats and from sudden, hurtful disruptions in the normal rhythms of life" (UNDP, 1994, p. 22). This new concept of understanding human security is very important, as it encompasses a wider range of threats, such as territorial integrity, to include people's livelihood, dignity, health, and survival. The framework identifies seven interrelated components: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security (Anderson-Rodgers & Crawford, 2018; Nkang & Bassey, 2022). These dimensions collectively emphasized on the importance of safeguarding humans from both immediate and structural vulnerabilities.



Health security as one of the components of the framework focuses on the protection of human beings from diseases and unhealthy lifestyles. Positive social relations and networks are crucial for individual well-being, as they are supported by personal and community security.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, represents a clear case of a human security threat due to its concurrent disruption of multifaceted dimensions of life. Policies enacted by governments to contain the virus include lockdown, school closures, and restrictions on public gatherings and border controls. While these interventions were to safeguard lives, they also had far-reaching impacts on the academic, mental health, and social life of students.

In Ghana, the human security paradigm becomes evident. March 12, 2020, the country recorded its first two COVID-19 cases, signaling a swift governmental action to contain the virus. These measures included the closure of all institutions, with universities included, the suspension of public events, and the imposition of partial lockdown within the hotspot of Kumasi and Accra (Frempong et al., 2021). While this swift response was laudable, it raises concerns with other aspects of human security, which include academic continuity, economic stability for students and families, and access to social support and networks.

By integrating the human security framework and the theory of securitization, the study analyzes the intersection of student welfare and protective state measures during COVID-19. More specifically, this integrated framework allows for a comprehensive analysis of the social, academic, and psychological consequences of Ghana's pandemic response on university students, placing these effects within the broader debate on the resilience of higher education during crises.

Securitization Theory

In addition to the human security framework, this study employs the Securitization Theory propounded by Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde (1998). The theory explains how issues are constructed as existential threats, enabling leaders (securitizing actors) to justify extraordinary measures that go beyond normal political routines. It is when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object (traditionally, but not necessarily, the state, incorporating government, territory, and society) with exceptional policies such as lockdowns, curfews, and restrictions on movement become legitimized (Wæver, 1995; Baele, 2020).

In the Ghanaian context, COVID-19 was farmed as an existential threat to national survival and security. Through a series of public addresses, the President of Ghana used securitizing language where he labeled the virus as a threat, thus justifying the drastic action of closing schools, stopping public gatherings, and social distancing. These decisions aligned with the logic of securitization as protective measures. However, the measures designed to protect individuals produced unintended consequences, particularly in education. School closures and social distancing exacerbate social isolation and psychological distress and isolation coupled with the psychological impact of lockdown.

This response, while grounded in Human Security and securitization, simultaneously reflects the adverse impacts on education and student welfare.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of the study takes into account the global and Ghanaian perspective of pandemic and Covid-19 interventions and its effect, particularly on student's mental health, social and academic domains. It relies on existing studies which contextualizes the research within the literature and highlights the gaps that the current research attempts to fill.

Pandemics: Definitions and Characteristics

The determination of disease events as endemic, epidemic, or pandemic relies on both the number of cases observed relative to expectations and the geographic spread of the disease (Grennan, 2019). An epidemic refers to the occurrence of a disease within a community or region in excess of what is normally expected, whereas a

pandemic is an epidemic that has crossed several countries and continents and affected a large portion of the population (Morens et al., 2009). In other words, a pandemic is an epidemic which is global in nature. The word "pandemic" comes from the Greek word pan (all) and demos (the people) which means a severe and widespread outbreak (Honigsbaum, 2009).

Historical precedents have demonstrated the disruptive potential of pandemics. The 1918 influenza pandemic is regarded as one of the deadliest recorded in history, killing an estimated 50 million people worldwide within months (Worobey et al., 2019). Other notable examples include the 1831–1832 cholera pandemic and the 1889 influenza pandemic. Pandemics are characterized by their widespread geographic reach, high attack rates, and contagious nature, often leading to significant mortality and morbidity.

COVID-19 fits this profile. First detected in Wuhan China in December 2019, it rapidly spread across other countries, prompting the World Health Organization to declare it a pandemic on March 11, 2020. The virus, primarily a respiratory disorder, has an incubation period of 2 to 14 days, with symptoms comprising of fever or chills, difficulty breathing, cough, fatigue, body pains, headache, loss of taste or smell (Lauer et al., 2020; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, [CDC], 2022)

Measures against COVID-19

Governments the world over, adopted different preventive measures rooted in public health recommendations and national contexts. Some of these measures included frequent hand washing, wearing of masks and maintaining social distancing (Guner et al., 2020). Singapore also developed a system of Community Isolation Facilities for mild-symptom patients alongside the digital contact tracing application Trace Together (El Guerche-Seblain et al., 2021). Italy imposed fines up to 3,000 euros and penalties of up to five years in prison for those who violate it while in the United Kingdom, failure to comply with restrictions was punishable by a fine of £1,000, and failure to pay could lead to imprisonment (Cifuentes-Faura, 2022).

A review of available literature suggests that quarantine is the most effective method in reducing both the number of infected and dead (Pan et al., 2020; Iwasaki et al., 2020). According to El Guerche-Seblain et al., (2021) Taiwan combined early measures of universal mask usage, border control, and strict quarantine measures with the use of data and digital technologies, thereby avoiding a complete lockdown situation, even as a neighboring country to China.

In Ghana, containment measures include closing of borders, partial lockdowns in Kumasi and Accra and nationwide disinfection of markets. Emphasizing on the importance of these interventions, the President of Ghana asserted in his speech "We know how to bring the economy back to life. What we do not know is how to bring people back to life" (The Presidency, 2020). This then necessitated the springing up of measures to help in the prevention against the virus. The government also implemented WHO-endorsed antigen testing protocols and provided PPE to health workers (Africa CDC, 2020). However, the partial lockdown was lifted in April 2020 even as cases continued to rise, raising questions about balancing health security with economic and social considerations (Gyasi, 2020).

Student Mental Health and COVID-19

Mental health is an important yet overlooked aspect of student wellbeing. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, one in five college students have experienced one or more diagnosable mental disorders worldwide (Auerbach et al., 2016). The literature suggests that restrictive measures such as quarantine, isolation, and social distancing, have an impact on psychological wellbeing of people as well as emotional reactions to pandemic itself (Talevi et al., 2020; Mayo Clinic Staff, 2021). Studies conducted during the pandemic consistently reported increased anxiety, depression and distress among students (Wang et al., 2020; Essadek & Rabeyron, 2020).

In China, a study conducted by Zhang et al., (2020) in a University concluded that over 20% of the students reported at least one form of mental distress in line with previous acute emergencies during the pandemic. Similarly, in France, Essadek and Rabeyron (2020) reported that depression levels were at 43%, anxiety at 39.19% and distress at 42.94% with scores much higher than those normally observed in the student population

(Verger et al.,2010). In the Ghanaian educational setting, Oti-Boateng et al., (2022) found that an elevated fear of COVID-19 was associated with increased depression, anxiety and stress levels of students in the present study, and this is in congruence with emerging research from other populations during this pandemic

These findings emphasize the importance of integrating mental health support into emergency education responses, including tele-counseling services and targeted outreach to vulnerable student groups.

COVID-19 and Education

Globally, more than 1.2 billion children are out of the classroom, and 186 countries are affected by the closure of schools as of 29th April 2020 (Li & Lalani, 2020). The main educational methodology employed in Ghana is face-to-face classroom teaching for almost all basic schools and second cycle institutions and some tertiary institutions such as the colleges of education (Henaku, 2020, p. 55). In order not to disrupt the academic process, host of universities in the country resulted to online teaching and learning i.e. University of Ghana, Wisconsin International University College, University of Education, Ashesi University and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology all resorted to e-learning platform for engaging students in academic activities, with Lecturers mandated to develop their model and upload it on e- learning platform to ensure effective instructional discourse (Anaba, 2020a; Agormedah et al., 2020).

The sudden transition, however, exposed to educators the inequities in access to technology and reliable internet connectivity specifically for students in rural areas (Henaku, 2020; Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020). Recognizing this, some student Unions like the University of Cape Coast Student Representative Council President admonished Management of the university to give students internet data packages to help them participate in online studies (Anaba, 2020b).

In response to these broader challenges, the Government of Ghana introduced distance and remote learning programmes for all students in order to support academic continuity (Abdul-Salam, 2020). About 9.2 million and 500,000 learners from the basic and tertiary levels have been affected respectively (Ministry of Education, 2020). These figures highlight the extent to which the pandemic disrupted academics in Ghana.

COVID-19 and Social Isolation

Social isolation according to Zavaleta et al. (2017) refers to "the inadequate quality and quantity of social relations with other people at the different levels where human interaction takes place (individual, group, community and the larger social environment)". Humans are inherently social and the quality of personal relationship influences our well-being (Office for National Statistics, 2011). Ghana's Covid-19 measures disrupted already existing social networks thereby replacing in person interactions with virtual communications. According to Bezerra et al. (2020) the most widespread measure by the authorities was social distancing, generally understood by the population and the media as social isolation. Rather than connecting people, these restrictive measures are creating rivalries and arousing discord between people (Pietrabissa et al., 2020, p.2).

Empirical studies have shown that prolonged periods of isolation, even less than 10 days, can have long-term effects, with the presence up to 3 years later of psychiatric symptoms (Brooks et al., 2020). With measures that restrict social networks, students are at risk. According to Bazera et al., (2020), the impact of isolation is different according to the comfort and structure, where the space (housing) can make a big difference, whether or not in isolation, but also in the conditions of isolation.

Research Gap

While prior studies, (e.g., Weeden & Cornwell, 2020; Agormedah et al., 2020; Henaku, 2020), focused on the transition to remote learning during COVID-19, limited attention has been given to how the containment measures by Ghana's government affected students holistically in the sphere of social, academic and psychological well-being. By situating the study in Human Security and Securitization theory, the study addresses this gap by examining the social, academic and psychological effects of Ghana'sCovid-19 response on university students, thereby offering insights that are both local relevant and have broader applicability.

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume IX Issue X October 2025

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey design which is effective in obtaining systematic information from a large group of respondents within a defined population (Creswell, 2014). It enabled the researcher to collect numerical data on the social, academic and psychological effect of Ghana's Covid-19 measures on students at the Political Science Department, University of Education, Winneba (UEW).

Population

The Population for this study comprised all Level 300 and 400 students in the Political Science Department of the UEW during the 2020/2021 academic year, summing up to 1,700. This group was purposefully selected because they had experienced both prior pandemic teaching and learning (face to face) and pandemic teaching and learning (virtual learning)

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample size used in this study was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan's table (1970) which indicates that a population of 1,700 requires a sample size of 315. Due to logistical constraints and the voluntary nature of participation and the limited time of the study, the researcher was able to collect data from 120 students.

With the 120 questionnaires distributed, only 100 respondents returned their questionnaire which represents 83.3% response rate. The simple random sampling technique was used. According to Creswell (2014) with simple random sampling, each individual in the population has an equal probability of being selected. A departmental list was used and random selection was achieved using a random number generator

Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed and organized into four sections:

1. Demographic Information: age, gender, and educational background

2. Social Impacts: Questions that measure peer interaction and social engagement.

3. Academic Effects: Items on remote learning effectiveness, access to resources, and academic performance.

4. Psychological Effects: Questions assessing anxiety, stress, depression and emotional wellbeing

Responses in Sections 2–4 were captured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Content validity was established through expert review by two lecturers from the Department of Political Science and one from the Department of Psychology and Education at UEW. A pilot test with 15 students outside the main sample produced with feedback informing revision to improve clarity and coherence of the questionnaire items.

Data Collection Procedure

After obtaining departmental permission, questionnaires were administered during lecture periods with assistance from two trained research assistants. Respondents were briefed on the study's purpose and assured of confidentiality. Respondents averagely took 10 minutes to answer the questions on the questionnaire and immediately they were done, it was collected to ensure completeness.

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume IX Issue X October 2025

Data Analysis

Analysis was done after screening, editing and coding the responses with rationalization using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages were used to present the analyzed data. Results were also presented in tables and figures with each objective analyzed separately.

Ethical Considerations

In research, these are a set of principles that are considered appropriate for the researcher to take into consideration (Arifin, 2018). The study thus conformed to ethical principles including informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality. Both physical and electronic data were stored securely.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The information in this chapter is based on data gathered from respondents about issues related to Ghana's Government Covid-19 measures and its impact on education in relation to the objectives of the study, linking them to Human Security theory and relevant literature

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic data includes age, gender and educational background.

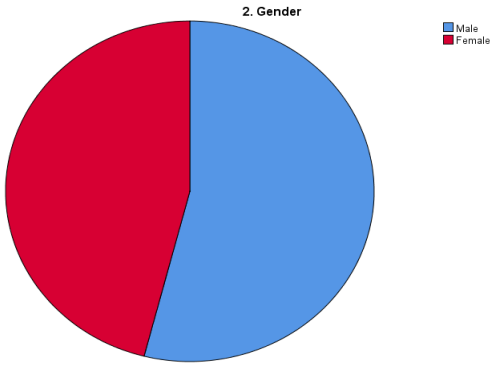


Figure 1 shows that males (that is the half in blue), comprised 54% of respondents, while females (that is the half in red) made up 46%, indicating a near gender balance

Table 1 Age Distribution of Respondents (N = 100)

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–23	46	46.0
24–29	48	48.0
30–35	6	6.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Field work, 2024.

As shown in Table 1, respondents were predominantly aged between 24–29 years (48%), followed closely by those aged 18–23 years (46%). Only 6% aged 30–35 years. From the study, it is evident that respondents in the age bracket of 24 to 29 constitute a greater proportion and it is in a typical university age range, reflecting a population highly engaged in academic activities.

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume IX Issue X October 2025

Table 2 Educational Level of Respondents (N = 100)

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SHS	2	2.0
Tertiary	98	98.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Field work, 2024.

With respect to the table above, students that are in Tertiary constitute 98% of the respondents and with that of students from the Senior High School (SHS), they constitute 2% of the respondents. This means that, findings reflect the experiences of students in the University.

Social Effects of COVID-19 Measures

Under the first research question, the study examined how Ghana's government COVID-19 measures affected students socially.

Table 3 Enough Time to Study and Ability to Reach Out to Friends (N = 100)

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	10	10.0
Agree	28	28.0
Neutral	18	18.0
Disagree	26	26.0
Strongly Disagree	18	18.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Field work, 2024.

Table 3 shows that out of the 100 respondents who took part in the survey, 10% of them strongly agreed with the hypotheses, 28% of them also responded that they agreed with the hypothesis with 18% adopting the neutral position. 26% of the respondents disagreed with the hypothesis and 18% of them chose the strongly disagree option. According to Pietrabissa and Simpson, (2020) Covid-19did not impact students negatively socially but made them look out for avenues like using social media and other virtual means to connect with friends for academic and social engagement.

It also corroborates with Pancani et al., (2021), who found out that who indicated that people can gain social support through online contacts, protecting them from the adverse effect of isolation and Waytz and Gray (2018) who pinpointed that online social connections can replace the supportive effect of face-to-face interactions during uncertainty. However, it contrasts with Owusu-Fordjour et al., (2020) who asserts that learning alone in the house has been proven to be very ineffective due to distractions.

Table4 Home Conduciveness During COVID-19 Lockdown (N = 100)

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	40	40.0

Agree	28	28.0
Neutral	16	16.0
Disagree	6	6.0
Strongly Disagree	10	10.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Field work, 2024.

The findings of this study revealed that respondents agreed to the fact that home was conducive in time of the pandemic which in turn facilitated learning because 40 respondents representing 40% of the 100 respondents, strongly agreed to the statement, 28 constituting (28%) of the respondents also agreed to this statement. Nonetheless, 16 (16%) respondents chose neutral, 6 (6%) and 10 (10%) strongly disagree and disagree respectively. The findings here align with that of Bazera et al., (2020), who clearly indicated that the comfort and structure of the space (housing) can make a big difference, whether or not in isolation, but also in the conditions of isolation. This is in contrast with the study conducted by Owusu-Fordjour et al., (2020) who states that many homes in developing countries do not provide an adequate learning environment hence students are therefore obliged to learn either in the living room or their bedrooms which is very ineffective.

Academic Effects of COVID-19 Measures

The second research question explored the academic effects of the government's measures on academics.

Table 5 Challenges with the University's Learning Management System (N = 100)

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	28	28.0
Agree	49	49.0
Neutral	13	13.0
Disagree	10	10.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Field work, 2024

Table 5 shows that 49% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they faced challenges with the University's Learning Management System (LMS). This is consistent with Agormedah et al. (2020), who report that students were largely unprepared for remote learning transitions due to limited prior exposure to e-learning platforms.

Table 6 Fruitful Adjustment to Remote Learning (N = 100)

Response Option	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Strongly Agree	2	2.0
Agree	28	28.0
Neutral	36	36.0

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume IX Issue X October 2025

Disagree	26	26.0
Strongly Disagree	8	8.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Field work, 2024

The findings of this study revealed that respondents couldn't agree nor disagree on the statement that they had fruitful adjustment to remote learning because 2 respondents representing 2% of the 100 respondents strongly agreed to the statement, 28 constituting (28%) of the respondents also agreed to this statement. Nonetheless, 36 (36%) respondents chose neutral, 26 (26%) chose disagree option with 8 (8%) opting for the strongly disagree option.The reason respondents were not decisive with this statement is based off of many factors and according to Owusu-Fordjour et al., (2020) students did not have adequate or conducive learning environment hence students are therefore obliged to learn either in the living room or their bedrooms; Henaku (2020); Saavedra (2020); OECD (2020a) also in their studies stated that access to devices such as computers remains a major challenge for students as schools have moved teaching and learning online due to the COVID-19. These factors made respondents not too sure to choose as to if remote learning was fruitful for them during the pandemic.

Table 7 Access to Constant Internet for Online Learning (N = 100)

Response Option	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Strongly Agree	2	2.0
Agree	22	22.0
Neutral	28	28.0
Disagree	32	32.0
Strongly Disagree	16	16.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Field work, 2024

The findings of this study revealed that respondents disagree with the statement that they had access to constant internet connection for online learning because 2 respondents representing 2% of the 100 respondents strongly agreed to the statement, 22 constituting (22%) of the respondents also agreed to this statement. Nonetheless, 28 (28%) respondents chose neutral, 32 (32%) chose the disagree option with 16 (16%) opting for the strongly disagree option.

The findings here align with that of the study conducted by Agormedah et al., (2020) which stated that students in economic and financial distress are more likely to have poor or no internet access - because they cannot afford the cost of a laptop/computer or the internet connection or because they live in regions or neighborhoods with low connectivity. Also, Henaku (2020) which states that internet connectivity is one of the main challenges faced by students who due to the COVID-19 pandemic are schooling from home. Owusu-Fordjour (2020) also asserted this finding in his study by saying the majority of households in Ghana do not have internet access which had led to an online learning platform rolled out by the Ministry of Education in Ghana being suspended because majority of the students do not have access to internet.

Psychological Effects of COVID-19 Measures

The third research question addressed psychological impacts.

Table 8 University's Provision of Mental Health Facilities (N = 100)

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	3	3.0
Agree	11	11.0
Neutral	14	14.0
Disagree	32	32.0
Strongly Disagree	40	40.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Field Work, 2024

Table 8 shows that only 14% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the University provided mental health facilities during the pandemic, with 72% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This is consistent with Essadek and Rabeyron (2020) and Auerbach et al. (2016) who states that significant proportion of students probably required psychological support during the Covid-19 pandemic… because the high distress scores suggest that the virus and the confinement have favored the emergence of post-traumatic stress symptoms. In addition, the work of Auerbach et al., (2016) also support this finding and states that, university counseling centers should set up options to continue to provide college students with counseling services at a distance (i.e., telemental health counseling) within the constraints of the pandemic outbreak.

Table 9 Stress, Anxiety, and Lack of Motivation to Learn (N = 100)

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	24	24.0
Agree	47	47.0
Neutral	13	13.0
Disagree	12	12.0
Strongly Disagree	4	4.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Field Work, 2024

Table 9 indicates that 71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were stressed, anxious, and lacked motivation to learn. This aligns with Essadek and Rabeyron (2020) which states that Covid-19 significantly increased levels of depression, anxiety and distress…. note that 47.2% of students reported difficulty concentrating and 14.86% reported self-harming or suicidal thoughts. In addition, Wang et al., (2020) states that majority of participants (71.26%) indicated that their stress/anxiety levels had increased during the pandemic. This contributed to why students had no motivation to learn.

Table 10 Depression Due to Family Financial Insecurities (N = 100)

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	16	16.0

Agree	48	48.0
Neutral	18	18.0
Disagree	14	14.0
Strongly Disagree	4	4.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Field Work, 2024

The findings of this study revealed that respondents agreed that they were depressed because of the financial insecurities of their families which made it difficult for them to concentrate during remote learning, because 16 respondents representing 16% of the 100 respondents strongly agreed to the statement, 48 (48%) of the respondents also agreed to this statement. Nonetheless, 18 (18%) respondents chose neutral, 14 (14%) chose a disagree option with 4 respondents, (4%) of them opting for the strongly disagree option. The findings here align with that of the study conducted by Essadek and Rabeyron (2020) which states that students with financial insecurities also had higher scores for depression. In addition, Auerbach et al., (2016) study also asserted that many college students lost their on-campus jobs due to the evacuation, and the pending issue of room and board fees can aggravate their financial hardship and mental health outcomes. These factors made students depressed which made it difficult for them to concentrate during remote learning.

DISCUSSION

The Human Security framework emphasizes the protection of individuals from threats to their survival, livelihood, and dignity. In this study, the social, academic, and psychological challenges documented reflect vulnerabilities that extend beyond immediate health concerns. Socially, while many students adapted through virtual interaction, others faced isolation risks due to limited face-to-face engagement. Academically, infrastructure and resource deficits such as unstable internet and LMS challenges compromise educational continuity, threatening the economic security dimension of human security. Basically, it is through some form of education i.e. either formal or informal that provides knowledge for employment, helping individuals to earn a living. Psychologically, the absence of adequate mental health support services, compounded by financial insecurity, undermined students' well-being, aligning with the personal security dimension.

Beyond human security, the findings as understood through the securitization theory (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998), explains how issues are framed as existential threats requiring extraordinary measures. White Ghana's COVID 19 response was motivated by public health protection at the expense of educational and psychological welfare of students. By prioritizing virus containment through school closure and social distancing, the state shifted students rights to a more securitized field where normal welfare mechanisms were suspended.

Thus, the human security and securitization theory provides a holistic explanation of how Ghana's COVID-19 measures produced overlapping vulnerabilities in the education sector. While securitizing COVID-19 was crucial for national survival, it unintentionally bred some unintended consequences that are divergent from human security components.

These findings reinforce the argument that crisis response policies must holistically address multiple facets of human security, ensuring that public health measures do not inadvertently exacerbate vulnerabilities in other domains.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study examined the social, academic, and psychological effects of Ghana's government COVID-19 measures on university students, using the Human Security framework as the guiding theoretical lens. The

analysis revealed that while some students adapted socially through virtual communication channels, a significant proportion faced academic disruptions and psychological distress.

Socially, most students-maintained contact with peers through online means, aligning with prior research that underscores the supportive potential of virtual networks during isolation (Pietrabissa & Simpson, 2020; Pancani et al., 2021). However, these findings contrast with studies highlighting the limitations of home-based learning environments in developing contexts (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020).

Academically, the study found substantial barriers to effective learning, including technical challenges with the Learning Management System, insufficient adjustment to remote learning, and poor internet connectivity. These issues echo the findings of Agormedah et al. (2020), Henaku (2020), who documented infrastructural and preparedness gaps in transitioning to online education.

Psychologically, the absence of adequate mental health facilities, increased stress and anxiety, and financial insecurities significantly undermined students' well-being. The results are consistent with Essadek and Rabeyron (2020) and Auerbach et al. (2016), who emphasize the compounded effect of financial hardship and mental health stressors during crises.

Overall, the findings suggest that Ghana's COVID-19 policy responses, while necessary from a public health standpoint, did not sufficiently safeguard students' broader human security needs, particularly in the domains of economic (educational), and personal security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the study's findings and the Human Security framework, the following recommendations are proposed:

Enhance Virtual Learning Infrastructure

Universities should invest in robust and user-friendly Learning Management Systems, accompanied by adequate training for both students and faculty to ensure seamless adoption and utilization (Agormedah et al., 2020).

Expand Affordable Internet Access

The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with telecommunications providers, should subsidize internet packages for students and explore the establishment of community-based learning hubs with reliable connectivity (Henaku, 2020; Owusu-Fordjour, 2020).

Integrate Mental Health Services into University Systems

Institutions should establish permanent mental health units equipped to provide in-person and virtual counselling services, aligning with global best practices for supporting student well-being during crises (Auerbach et al., 2016; Essadek & Rabeyron, 2020).

REFERENCES

1. Abdul-Salam., L. (2020). Ghana, Covid-19 and E-learning systems in the various universities. GhanaWeb. https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/Ghana-Covid-19-and-E-learning-systems-in-the-various-universities-925216
2. Agormedah, E. K., Henaku, E. A., Ayite, D. M. K., & Ansah, E. A. (2020). Online learning in higher education during COVID-19 pandemic: A case of Ghana. Journal of Educational Technology and Online Learning, 3(3), 183-210.
3. Altman, L. K. (2009, June 8). Is this a pandemic? The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com
4. Anaba, D. (2020a). COVID-19: University of Ghana moves lectures online. CNR. Retrieved from https://citinewsroom.com/2020/03/covid-19-university-of-ghana-moves-lectures-online/

5. Anaba, D. (2020b). COVID-19: UCC SRC directs students to stop registration for online studies. CNR. Retrieved from https://citinewsroom.com/2020/04/covid-19-ucc-src-directs-student-stop-registration-for-online-studies/
6. Anderson-Rodgers, R., & Crawford, T. (2018). Human security: Theory and action. Rowman & Littlefield.
7. Asante, L. A., & Mills, R. O. (2020). Exploring the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic in marketplaces in urban Ghana. African Journal of Governance and Development, 9(1), 287–306.
8. Auerbach, R. P., Mortier, P., Bruffaerts, R., Alonso, J., Benjet, C., Cuijpers, P., Demyttenaere, K., Ebert, D. D., Green, J. G., Hasking, P., Murray, E., Nock, M. K., Pinder-Amaker, S., Sampson, N. A., Stein, D. J., Vilagut, G., Zaslavsky, A. M., & Kessler, R. C. (2016). Mental disorders among college students in the WHO World Mental Health Surveys. Psychological Medicine, 46(14), 2955–2970. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291716001665
9. Bezerra, A. C. V., Silva, C. E. M. D., Soares, F. R. G., & Silva, J. A. M. D. (2020). Factors associated with people's behavior in social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ciência & Saúde Coletiva, 25, 2411–2421.
10. Brooks, S. K., Webster, R. K., Smith, L. E., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., & Rubin, G. J. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: Rapid review of the evidence. The Lancet, 395(10227), 912–920. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30460-8
11. Babbie, E. (2010). The practice of social research (12th ed.). Wadsworth.
12. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). Symptoms of COVID-19. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html
13. Cifuentes-Faura, J. (2022). The role of public administrations in the COVID-19 crisis. International Journal of Public Administration, 45(6), 468–479. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2021.1900265
14. El Guerche-Seblain, C., Chakir, L., Nageshwaran, G., Harris, R. C., Sevoz-Couche, C., Vitoux, O., & Vanhems, P. (2021). Experience from five Asia-Pacific countries during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic: Mitigation strategies and epidemiology outcomes. Travel medicine and infectious disease, 44, 102171.
15. Essadek, A., & Rabeyron, T. (2020). Mental health of French students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Journal of Affective Disorders, 277, 392–393. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2020.08.042
16. Floyd, R. (2007). Human security and the Copenhagen School's securitization approach: Conceptualizing human security as a securitizing move. Human Security Journal, 5, 38–49.
17. Fofana, N. K., Latif, F., Sarfraz, S., Bilal, Bashir, M. F., & Komal, B. (2020). Fear and agony of the COVID-19 pandemic: Impact on mental health. Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 76, 102326. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2020.102326
18. Fowler, F. J. (2014). Survey research methods (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
19. Frempong, N. K., Acheampong, T., Apenteng, O. O., Nakua, E., & Amuasi, J. H. (2021). Does the data tell the true story? A modelling assessment of early COVID-19 pandemic suppression and mitigation strategies in Ghana. PLoS One, 16(10), e0258164.
20. Grennan, D. (2019). What is a pandemic? JAMA, 321(9), 910. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2019.0700
21. Guner, H. R., Hasanoğlu, I., & Aktaş, F. (2020). COVID-19: Prevention and control measures in community. Turkish Journal of Medical Sciences, 50(SI-1), 571–577. https://doi.org/10.3906/sag-2004-146
22. Gyasi, R. M. (2020). Fighting COVID-19: Fear and internal conflict among older adults in Ghana. Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 63(6–7), 688–690. https://doi.org/10.1080/01634372.2020.1753589
23. Henaku, E. A. (2020). COVID-19: Online learning experience of college students: The case of Ghana. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences and Advanced Technology, 1(2), 54–62.
24. Honigsbaum, M. (2009). Historical keyword: Pandemic. The Lancet, 373(9679), 1939. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(09)60956-X
25. Ibrahim, A. K., & Kelly, S. J. (2013). A systematic review of studies of depression prevalence in university students. Journal of Psychiatric Research, 47(3), 391–400. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychires.2012.11.015
26. Iwasaki, A., & Grubaugh, N. D. (2020). Why does Japan have so few cases of COVID-19? EMBO Molecular Medicine, 12(7), e12481. https://doi.org/10.15252/emmm.202012481

27. Johns Hopkins University. (2020). Coronavirus COVID-19 global cases. https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html
28. Kiran, E. (2020). Prominent issues about the social impacts of Covid 19. Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences, 19(COVID-19 Special Issue), 752-766.
29. Li, C., & Lalani, F. (2020, April 29). The COVID-19 pandemic has changed education forever. World Economic Forum. https://www.weforum.org
30. Lauer, S. A., Grantz, K. H., Bi, Q., Jones, F. K., Zheng, Q., Meredith, H. R., ... & Lessler, J. (2020). The incubation period of COVID-19 from publicly reported confirmed cases: Estimation and application. Annals of Internal Medicine, 172(9), 577–582. https://doi.org/10.7326/M20-0504
31. Morens, D. M., Folkers, G. K., & Fauci, A. S. (2009). What is a pandemic? The Journal of Infectious Diseases, 200(7), 1018–1021. https://doi.org/10.1086/644537
32. Nkang, O. N., & Bassey, O. B. (2022). Securitization of global health pandemics and reiterating the relevance of the 2005 International Health Regulations: COVID-19 and human security in Africa. African Journal of Empirical Research, 3(1), 36–48.
33. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2020a). Education responses to COVID-19: Embracing digital learning and online collaboration. OECD Publishing.
34. Office for National Statistics. (2011). Measuring what matters: National statistician's reflections on the National Well-being debate. https://www.ons.gov.uk
35. Oti-Boadi, M., Malm, E., Dey, N. E. Y., & Oppong, S. (2022). Fear of COVID-19: Psychological distress and coping among university students in Ghana. Current Psychology, 41(11), 8260-8270.
36. Owusu-Fordjour, C., Koomson, C. K., & Hanson, D. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on learning: The perspective of the Ghanaian student. European Journal of Education Studies, 7(3), 88–101.
37. Pan, A., Liu, L., Wang, C., Guo, H., Hao, X., Wang, Q., ... & Wu, T. (2020). Association of public health interventions with the epidemiology of the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China. JAMA, 323(19), 1915–1923. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2020.6130
38. Pietrabissa, G., & Simpson, S. G. (2020). Psychological consequences of social isolation during COVID-19 outbreak. Frontiers in Psychology, 11, 2201. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02201
39. Quakyi, N. K., Asante, N. A. A., Nartey, Y. A., Bediako, Y., & Sam-Agudu, N. A. (2021). Ghana's COVID-19 response: The Black Star can do even better. BMJ global health, 6(3), e005569.
40. Rashid, S., & Yadav, S. S. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on higher education and research. Indian Journal of Human Development, 14(2), 340–343.
41. Saavedra, J. (2020, April 2). Educational challenges and opportunities of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. World Bank Blogs. https://blogs.worldbank.org
42. Saladino, V., Algeri, D., & Auriemma, V. (2020). The psychological and social impact of COVID-19: New perspectives of well-being. Frontiers in Psychology, 11, 577684. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.577684
43. Singh, S., & Singh, N. (2020). COVID-19 and mental health: A review. International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health, 7(5), 1675–1680.
44. Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. (2011). Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. International Journal of Medical Education, 2, 53–55. https://doi.org/10.5116/ijme.4dfb.8dfd
45. United Nations Development Programme. (1994). Human development report 1994: New dimensions of human security. Oxford University Press.
46. Wang, C., Pan, R., Wan, X., Tan, Y., Xu, L., Ho, C. S., & Ho, R. C. (2020). Immediate psychological responses and associated factors during the initial stage of the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) epidemic among the general population in China. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(5), 1729. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17051729
47. Waytz, A., & Gray, K. (2018). Does online technology make us more or less sociable? A preliminary review and call for research. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 27(4), 301–309. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721418768894
48. Weeden, K. A., & Cornwell, B. (2020). The small-world network of college classes: Implications for epidemic spread on a university campus. Sociological Science, 7, 222–241. https://doi.org/10.15195/v7.a9

49. Worobey, M., Han, G. Z., & Rambaut, A. (2019). A synchronized global sweep of the internal genes of modern avian influenza virus. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 116(8), 3709–3717. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1814995116
50. Zhang, Y., Zhang, H., Ma, X., & Di, Q. (2020). Mental health problems during the COVID-19 pandemics and the mitigation effects of exercise: A longitudinal study of college students in China. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(10), 3722. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17103722