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Abstract

This research paper explores the use of technology and social media during the period of the Covid-19 restrictions and the effects this has on student's mental health. This paper aims to discover whether technology and social media are adding to or alleviating the mental health effects of social isolation, during a time where university classes are taking place online, with limited or no face-to-face interaction. It explores the benefits of online learning, as well as the disadvantages and limitations. It explores means of communication used by students, as well as use of social media and technology being used during difficult time, along with the effects of social isolation. Existing studies were explored in the form of a systematic literature review, as well as primary research in the form of a survey. It was found that technology and social media is both adding to and alleviating the mental health effects of an online based learning environment. It is adding to the mental health effects due to lack of face-to-face interaction with peers, as well as increased difficulty to collaborate with peers. Increased use of social media during this time is also contributing to increased anxiety and depression. However, it was also found that technology and social media is also alleviating the mental health effects during this time as technology allowed university classes and work to remain in place in the form of online classes. Communication tools such as Zoom, WhatsApp and social media platforms allowed students to stay in contact with family and friends and continue some normality in life during this time. In terms of future research, this study would benefit from a follow up study with the participants. As the Covid-19 pandemic is still on going, the exact picture of the effects of the restrictions has not yet emerged. A follow up study which compares the mental health effects of genders would also be beneficial.