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Perceptions about Teaching in Times of COVID-19 Pandemic: Experience of Secondary Education in Chile

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Abstract: The following article is a qualitative study that analyses the perception of parents and high school students regarding teaching in times of Coronavirus disease COVID-19, with the idea of recognizing the facilitators and barriers for the teaching-learning process in the pandemic. The above, in the understanding that due to the sudden appearance of SARS-CoV-2, educational systems around the world had to adapt to virtual teaching, as a result of the confinement to which the population has been subjected during the year 2020 and a good part of the year 2021. The research is based on the interpretative-comprehensive paradigm, with a qualitative methodology, which considered the realization of four focus groups with students and four focus groups with secondary school parents, from two public high schools located in the province of Talca, Maule region, Chile. The findings of the study are related to the adverse effects of the pandemic on student learning, as a result of connectivity difficulties, and the emotional impact on the quality of life of young people and their families. On the other hand, learning at home is related to limited pedagogical strategies and evaluative aspects that do not allow verifying the real learning of the students.

Keywords: *COVID-19, online learning, secondary school students, learning challenges, qualitative study.*

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Introduction

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic highlights the weaknesses of education and, at the same time, exposes indications of the necessary transformation of the ways of teaching and learning in the 21st century (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Crawford et al., 2020; Manullang & Satria, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic declared by the World Health Organization in March 2020 (Sohrabi et al., 2020), brought problems in the political and social sphere in all countries of the world and especially in the field of education (Daniel, 2020; Langford & Damsa, 2020). School closures worldwide affected millions of students and emergency distance education, as a temporary solution, has been adopted to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on education (Basilaia, & Kvavadze, 2020; Kerres, 2020; Morrissette, 2021). In this context, schools were forced to modify their teaching procedures and include distance methodologies to maintain continuity of the school year (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020).

With the adoption of distance learning, the daily classroom routine was modified and directors, teachers, students, and parents had to rethink their practices in the school environment (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; León-Nabal et al., 2021; Manca & Delfino, 2021). Therefore, several challenges to overcome in the teaching and learning process emerged, especially for the work developed by teachers. Teachers were forced to transform their teaching methodologies to virtual mode so that education does not stop (Allen et al., 2020; Ferdig et al., 2020; Sari & Nayir, 2020).

The pandemic suddenly provoked a series of impacts in all areas and education was not an exemption rather along with the society had to face those challenges that abruptly emerged (Zhu & Liu, 2020). In this new context, distance education has involved a continuous adaptation process by all stakeholders. Teachers, students, and parents have had to interact, work and communicate in very different ways. The educational transformations that occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic brought great challenges in the world (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Crawford et al., 2020; Kerres, 2020). With the

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spread of the virus, policymakers and managers had to take emergency measures such as the suspension of face-to-face classes and the implementation of virtual education. With the global technological boom in various social contexts, the school space began to adopt technological resources as a pedagogical strategy in the face of the emerging pandemic scenario. Thus, many barriers were broken, creating a new language, hybrid, and ICT-based education, which allowed the continuity of teaching at all educational levels (Langford & Damsa, 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Virtual education has a direct impact on the education of young people and, of course, on the quality of life of families, given the physical and psychological deterioration experienced by the family nucleus in the face of confinement, with situations such as social isolation, concern for the children, maintaining an economic income, and taking charge of the children's education (Demir & Demir, 2021; Garbe et al., 2020; Janssen et al., 2020; Purwadi et al., 2021).

With the pandemic, the school was temporarily emptied of all the interactional dynamics that give life to the environments that belong to it. In this context, homes and families were required, more than before, as an extension of the school and teachers (Lee et al., 2021; Novianti & Garzia, 2020). Treating the home and family as an extension of the educational system brings a softness to the discourse, which many use to say that schools moved into homes and that now the new teachers are parents and family members (Petts et al., 2020). On the same note, the literature reports that the family is the first educational instance of the child, and therefore, the home and the social context are also educational spaces. However, it is up to the school and teachers to reserve their role, just as it is up to the family and the home to assume theirs as the social and socializing instance of the child (Ceka & Murati, 2016; Dowling & Osborne, 2020; Ma et al., 2016). The family constitutes the first place of all education and, therefore, ensures the link between the affective and the cognitive, as well as the transmission of values and norms. Thus, a real dialogue between parents and teachers is indispensable, because the harmonious development of children implies a complementarity between school education and family education as stated by Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the virtual teaching alternatives promoted are temporary and exceptional strategies that demanded from teachers, students, and family a new *modus operandi* of relationships. In this scenario, it was necessary to resignify and reformulate the conceptions and practices of teaching and learning, undertaking collective efforts from the use of technologies and other supports accessible and appropriate to the needs and possibilities of students and their families, as mentioned in the studies of Daniel (2020), Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), Ferdig et al. (2020), Langford and Damsa (2020), León-Nabal et al. (2021) and Novianti and Garzia (2020).

In Chile, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented crisis in all areas (CEPAL, 2020). The Chilean Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación de Chile- MINEDUC), according to the recommendations of the WHO (World Health Organization) and local specialists, adopted as one of the sanitary, preventive and contingency measures the closure of all establishments of the school system, from kindergarten to higher or university education (Toledo, 2020). Faced with this emergency, MINEDUC's strategy has been to continue classes online and seek a prompt return to normality, without considering the situation of families, especially the most socially disadvantaged groups (Contreras, 2020; Garrido, 2021). On the other hand, the Chilean Ministry of Education implemented various measures and plans to avoid interrupting the learning processes and socially support students who are part of the school system. This support consisted of a website called "I learn online", delivery of personal computers for students, delivery of mobile chips, the planning of a gradual return, and fundamentally establishing a curricular prioritization for the years 2020 and 2021 (MINEDUC, 2020). In this context, technology allows great access to information, however, by itself, it does not promote learning conditions for those who have access to it. At this moment, education professionals have a very important role in a scenario of increasing complexity, wherein it is important that they have the necessary technical mastery and planning to put to work the respective technologies (Allen et al., 2020; Dhawan, 2020; Ferdig et al., 2020). In line with the above, the purpose of the study is to understand the perception of families and high school students regarding teaching in times of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the idea of recognizing facilitators and barriers to the teaching-learning process.

Methodology

Research Design

The study is of qualitative methodology as it refers to the perception of families and high school students regarding teaching in times of pandemic COVID-19. It aims to approach the subjective understanding that the participants have about this situation, that is, how they mean, represent, and somehow give meaning to homeschooling in times of pandemic (Bailey & Bailey, 2017; Flick, 2018; Given, 2008). This choice is based on the aim of the study and the objectives guiding the research process, given that the intention has been to identify and understand qualities and characteristics of symbolic meaning (Alase, 2017; Proudfoot & Kebritchi, 2017; Thorne, 2016).

Sample and Data Collection

The study data were collected during March and May 2021 in two public high schools in the province of Talca, Maule region, Chile, and before data collection, the researchers obtained written informed consent to ensure the confidentiality of the participants' names, emphasizing voluntary participation. Participants were informed of the purposes of the research and their authorization was requested to record the interview in order to safeguard the ethical aspects of the study, in accordance with the Helsinki declaration. The focus groups and interviews were conducted through the Zoom

platform, given the health emergency the country is going through, with a number of 6 to 9 participants and with an average duration of 60 minutes.

Four focus groups were conducted with high school students and four focus groups with parents of students from the selected schools, according to the guidelines reported in the literature in Robinson (2020) and Kallio et al. (2016). For the selection of the sample, the following inclusion criteria were considered: students belonging to the respective educational level, voluntariness to participate in the session, signature of assent, and informed consent by the parents. For data processing, we opted for content analysis (Graneheim et al., 2017; Vaismoradi et al., 2013), which comprises three activity streams: data condensation, data presentation, and elaboration/verification of conclusions (Miles, et al., 2014).

Table 1. Characteristics of the Focus Groups

Participants	High School	Focus Group	Men	Women	Total
Students	A	2	6	10	16
Students	B	2	7	11	18
Parents	A	2	12	5	17
Parents	B	2	12	7	19
Total		8	37	33	70

Analyzing of Data

The data were analysed using the inductive logic of theoretical categorization, which is based on categorization as the main data analytical tool, aimed at theorizing through operations that lead to theoretical construction (Morse, 2015; Silverman, 2014). Nvivo 11 software was used during this process. The research team conducted this stage in the following sequence: i) The data were reviewed in their entirety in an open manner, attempting to answer the question "what do the data tell us? The information collected was grouped into six classificatory categories that subsequently evolved with the following coding phases; ii) In a second phase, connections were established between the codes in order to construct descriptive and explanatory categories. These categories will be detailed in the results section of this article; iii) The last phase corresponds to the theoretical elaboration, the purpose of which is to produce an explanatory framework to understand the perception of students and parents regarding the teaching-learning processes in the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to safeguard the reliability of the data, the research team considered the following strategies as reported by Bailey & Bailey (2017). Firstly, using descriptive categories with a low level of inference, i.e., as concrete and precise as possible. Secondly, considering the presence of several researchers in the data analysis stage, as teamwork ensures a better balance of analysis and interpretation; thirdly, clearly identifying informants, i.e., a good description of the type of people who have been interviewed; and finally specifying the methods of data collection and analysis.

Findings / Results

The matrix is presented below, whose mega-category focuses on the perception of virtual teaching by parents and students in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Two previous categories, such as Family impact and learning at home, emerge from it, which show the main scenarios where perceptions are developed. The primary categories that branch out from the above mentioned are presented according to the codification of the primary documents, i.e., the focus groups with students and parents. Consequently, the categories and codes resulting from the coding and categorization of the eight focus groups are presented below. Each story presented has a code that expresses the following nomenclature: Focus Group (FG), Parent (A), Student (S), Focus Group Number (N°), students 1 to 4; parents 5 to 8.

Table 2. Sistematization Matrix

Mega Category	Previous Categories	Descriptor	Primary Categories
Perception of Virtual Teaching in Pandemic	Family Impact	Category describing the effects of the pandemic on homeschooling	Connectivity emotional aspects Quality of life
	Learning at home	Category that gathers the perception about the students' learning experience	Evaluative environment Pedagogical strategies Back to classes

Previous Category: Family Impact, Primary Category: Connectivity.

The primary category is related to the difficulties that have arisen in the family context for the development of virtual classes, as presented by the interviewees in the following accounts.

"It is very difficult for families to pay for an internet plan that is really good, that doesn't crash and that is really useful for the child to be able to attend classes, here in Chile the plans are very expensive" (FG; A, N° 6)

"Well, it has been difficult anyway, the truth is that the connection from home is very difficult, not all of us can connect at class time, and the teacher does what he can, we have never been all the classmates in a class, there is always someone who has connection problems, and who is left behind with the subject" (FG; S, N°1)

"I think the government should have ensured connectivity for students, with internet or with some devices, because in the end there are many children who do not have connectivity, who find it difficult, so they should have ensured that too, because it becomes a major obstacle for children to at least be able to connect and see their teacher" (FG; A, N° 7)

In the narrative of the interviewed subjects, it is observed that families recognize certain difficulties when it comes to developing online teaching, highlighting that one of the main difficulties is scarce connectivity. This reflects the digital divide in the country, since large majorities of families have limited internet access, showing that the digital divide is also economic since the pandemic has highlighted the limited access to the technology of vulnerable families or those in rural areas. In this same line, internet access is not only related to the provider company, but also to the social and economic conditions of the families to which the children belong, as stated by the parents and students interviewed.

Previous Category: Family Impact, Primary category Emotional aspects:

The primary category of emotional aspects relates to what is subordinate to the emotional aspects in the context of the development of online learning experienced by the families, as the following stories show:

"My daughter has done well in high school, she even says that the pandemic time is better than when she went to school, but I'm worried that she doesn't want to go back to high school, she prefers online classes, that's why she asks me not to go back, she's afraid to go out of the house, she's always locked up" (FG; A, N° 5)

"I think that online classes leave much less time available, even for those of us who are more technologically abled, that leaves us with a lot of time alone with the screen, and that discourages me a little bit" (FG; S, N°3)

"He is sad, he wants to see his classmates, he knows he can't go to school because of everything that is happening, but being locked up so much makes him very depressed, the confinement is not good because it restricts them a lot, he is quieter, he speaks less" (FG; A, N° 6)

In the stories referring to the emotional aspects category, it can be established that there is an imbalance resulting from the confinement generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Fear, frustration, sadness, and depression can be observed in the testimonies, which is a matter of concern since if the student does not learn to manage his or her emotions, he or she will not be able to perform academically. Another aspect that emerges in the discourse of the key informants is the effects of the distance and the prolonged quarantine on the social relationships of the young people, and specifically in the affective-emotional sphere.

Previous Category: Family Impact, Primary category Quality of life

The primary category of quality of life is linked to the aspects that can intervene in this area, i.e., the impact of the virtual learning process on the quality of life of students and their families, as shown in the following testimonies:

"Nothing is the same as before, the meals, the timetables, the routine, everything is a bit messed up, sometimes I am online until late and then I get up at noon, and then everything is altered" (FG; S, N°4)

"I have put on weight, I don't feel like going for a walk or a bike ride, I connect to the computer and I don't stop almost all day..., I would like to have more physical activity, but not at home, at school I really liked the dance workshop" (FG; S, N°3).

"For us as a family, the confinement affected us a lot, my husband and I are unemployed, without work it is difficult for the children to feed themselves well, and now we are all at home and it becomes very small, and conflicts and arguments start" (FG; A, N° 8)

In this category, it is possible to appreciate different factors that affect the quality of life of young people and their families. Confinement and virtual teaching as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have consequences on health, exercise, nutrition, emotional and relational aspects of people. In the interviewees' accounts, it can be noted that the student's health, family time, economic and social factors, etc. have been affected, with a negative impact on the quality of life of the students and families participating in this research.

Previous category: Home-based learning, Primary category Evaluative Domain

The primary category of evaluative domain relates to aspects of students' assessment, i.e., the perception of students and parents regarding the assessment processes developed by teachers in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The evaluations could be a bit more flexible, teachers should try a more differentiated evaluation for each student, according to their progress and the conditions of access to the internet" (FG; A, N° 6)

"The difference between the classroom and this virtual modality is that the children can use their phones to look for information, which is not the case in the classroom, so there is also an advantage for them, that they can do better in the subject they are being assessed on, therefore, it will always be better to have a face-to-face assessment so that they can show what they really know" (FG; A; N° 7)

"I like the virtual assessment, I am calmer, more relaxed, sometimes I don't even turn on the camera and nothing happens, whereas at school I always got nervous and made too many mistakes with the face-to-face evaluations" (FG; S, N°3)

There is a certain advantage of online education in terms of the assessment process, at least according to the parents and the student in the story. This is because the assessments can be flexible, and the use of technology facilitates access to information, which is reflected in the young people's performance. It should be noted that the use of ICTs has contributed to the teaching and learning process, eliminating the spatial and temporal barriers that condition face-to-face education. According to the perception of the families, virtual education has been an advantage, however, they continue to prefer face-to-face assessment.

Previous category: Home-based learning, Primary category Pedagogical Strategies

The primary category of pedagogical strategies is related to the method or resources used by teachers to carry out the learning process, which is reflected in the following accounts:

"I also share the same opinion as my colleague, I would only add that there are days with a lot of classes and a lot of work for us students, while there are days when we have almost no classes, besides, the classes are somewhat monotonous, a presentation that the teacher gives and sometimes a video, nothing more" (FG; S, N° 1)

"Many times the internet tends to fail, so my son cannot see the whole class and therefore he cannot understand everything, I also think he gets distracted faster, sometimes I have seen him playing or doing something else while he is connected to the class, so I think that the strategy is not the best, because the teacher does not know what the students are doing behind the screen" (FG; A, N° 5)

"I think that what we need to do is to shorten the timetable a bit, so that the children don't get bored with so many screens and make the classes a bit more entertaining, with more videos, more interactive, and in smaller groups of six, maximum eight students and not the whole class" (FG; A, N°8)

In the participants' testimony, there is criticism of the pedagogical strategies, i.e., they propose changing certain aspects in order to improve the teaching process, less extensive working hours, reviewing the academic load, a greater organisation in the timetable. While it is true that online education is a phenomenon incorporated into society, the professionals who develop it must be constantly updated, i.e., improve teaching strategies, make them more playful and personalised for the benefit of their students, in order to avoid desertion and/or demotivation.

Previous category: Home-based learning; Primary category Back to School

The primary category of returning to classes is related to all the benefits and disadvantages of a return to face-to-face classes, in relation to the perception of the family inserted in the virtual teaching process, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The benefit I see in these classes is that my son can be at home, so he avoids a possible spread of the pandemic, it is impossible for children at school not to have contact with each other and also they are not even vaccinated" (FG; A, N° 7)

"What happens is that my school is not prepared for the return, we are 40 students in the class, so if we were divided we would be 20 per group, which is still quite a lot, besides there are those who do not want to return to the classroom, there is no technology to attend to them and those who want to return to classes" (FG; S, N° 2)

"In the school the space is small, if I send my child to class and he/she gets infected, he/she will infect everyone. We are chronically ill, so I would not send my child to class, as he is also chronically ill, I am still very afraid" (FG; A, No. 6)

According to those interviewed, it is evident that they disagree with an imminent return to classes, in relation to the situation that the country is experiencing. Students fear getting infected, a concern for health over education, i.e., they are part of the online education process, but they openly reject a return to normality. In a context of uncertainty and generalised tension as a result of a global virus, educational institutions were affected, and a return to face-to-face classes

according to the perception of the families would be a bad idea. Based on the above-mentioned factors there is a clear stand on the part of the participants who reject the idea of returning to classes.

Discussion

Discussions about the school, as a space for socialisation, and the production of multiple learning took on a different meaning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If before there was a conviction about the importance of this social instance, with the pandemic the discussion about the meaning of education and the school intensified (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Crawford et al., 2020; Langford & Damsa, 2020; Reimers & Schleicher, 2020). In this regard, it is worth noting that the temporary closure of schools led to drastic changes in family and educational relationships, as well as in students' learning processes, as shown in studies by Garbe et al. (2020), Janssen et al. (2020) and León-Nabal et al. (2021). Children's socialisation and sociability seem to have been the most affected aspects, since it is through face-to-face contact with teachers and classmates that children develop cognitively, affectively, and socially (Morales, 2020; Morrissette, 2021; Patrick et al., 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). However, the mediations carried out by digital platforms play a decisive role in reducing the negative impact of the absence of face-to-face contact at school and with people. In this context, the family, the first instance of socialisation and educator of the child, was required with greater intensity in the implementation of virtual learning as reported by Demir and Demir (2021), Dowling and Osborne (2020) and Spinelli et al. (2020). Consequently, it is pertinent to listen and consider what students and parents have to say about the dynamics of virtual learning in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, as this emergency mode depends on collaboration between the school system, the family, and most importantly, the students.

The research reports a first pre-category called "Family Impact", composed of the primary categories such as *connectivity, emotional aspects, and quality of life*. The findings of the study are consistent with what has been reported in the literature in terms of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational systems, particularly in relation to the transition from face-to-face education to virtual education, mediated by information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020; Crawford et al., 2020; Joia & Lorenzo, 2021; Lassoued et al., 2020). This is because distance learning adopted during the pandemic, in synchronous or asynchronous activities, was the most widely used alternative to ensure "presence" in these times of pandemic, a situation that evidenced the social and economic gap in a developing country like Chile (Salas et al., 2020). In the present research, students and their parents report that distance classes were implemented suddenly, without considering the lack of internet access of a large part of the population, especially the poorest and most vulnerable (Belmar-Rojas et al., 2021; Cáceres-Muñoz et al., 2020). In this context, it should be noted that each family imprints peculiar characteristics and complexities that must be observed and considered by the school. In this sense, the results of this work point to the need for a constant, frank, and open dialogue between the school, the students, and the family, to overcome the gaps left by a year and a half of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the emotional aspects and in the quality of life of young people and their families, as reported in the studies by Bryson (2021), Canet-Juric et al. (2020), Fernández-Cruz et al. (2020), Janssen et al. (2020) and Morales (2020).

The second category reported in the study is called Learning at Home, composed of the primary categories such as *evaluative environment, pedagogical strategies, and return to classes*. These report the complexity of moving the school classroom to the young people's homes and the subsequent impact on their family life. In this regard, it can be noted that the time of the Coronavirus pandemic brought a new meaning to education, never before imagined. Social distancing and isolation caused a destructuring of the regular and face-to-face education system, generating a pedagogical revolution in face-to-face teaching, the strongest since the emergence of ICT, as virtual teaching was installed in a matter of weeks (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020; Sari & Nayır, 2020; Stewart et al., 2021). The participants of this present study reported that a part of the teachers did not know how to use these tools pedagogically. In many situations, this meant, distance classes were a mere deepening of traditional methodologies, i.e., exercises, corrections, lectures, and no use of technology to develop more attractive learning techniques, findings that coincide with the works of Dhawan (2020), Engzell et al. (2021), Ferdig et al. (2020), Joia and Lorenzo (2021) and Lassoued et al. (2020). Along these lines, the Google Classroom platform and the ZOOM application were temporarily transformed into virtual classrooms, given that the pandemic context in which we live cannot interrupt the educational process of billions of young people. This is consistent with the research of Maphosa (2021) who reports that subsidised access to resources and materials is fundamental to the effective adoption of e-learning.

However, it is necessary to reflect on the need for students and their families to adapt to this new moment, as well as the impacts that such changes may have on the strategies developed by teachers in a home learning context (Bhamani et al., 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Research results show that in the context of bewilderment and uncertainty and in the face of the necessary and inevitable inclusion of the new modality in virtual environments, some teachers try to replicate the face-to-face class in the virtual environment, and others adapt teaching to the available digital technological means, a matter that has been reported in the research findings of Joia and Lorenzo (2021), Daniel (2020), Dhawan (2020) and Ortiz (2020). The pandemic has reinforced that society, schools, and families need to reinvent themselves every day. We live in a time of uncertainty, in which school and family need more than ever to be in tune and aligned in the educational, formative, and emotional processes of all those involved, especially young people (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Garbe et al., 2020; León-Nabal et al., 2021). These are new times that require new attitudes and a lot of flexibility, since the

return to face-to-face classes is already being implemented in many countries, with the idea of returning to the longed-for normality, as stated by the interviewees in this study. Consequently, the return to school becomes a challenge and a dream for many families and students

Conclusion

The pedagogical crisis experienced as a result of the coronavirus should at least be a way of identifying the limits and potentialities of education in the knowledge society. In addition, it is important to recognize the fact that the lessons of the pandemic seem to point out solutions for the post-quarantine period, in the perspective of the need for transformation in the field of education. Although the scientific and academic production on the COVID-19 pandemic is preliminary, as the global spread of the coronavirus and its consequences are still ongoing, it is essential to rescue and record the challenges of this process and the traces it will leave in the world. With the emergence of this pandemic in the world, the return to what we considered normal life is much further away. Social relations have changed and a new social behaviour has emerged, modifying behaviours, ways of learning, and interpersonal relations. Consequently, and faced with the current conditions of emergency remote education, it is necessary to consider the significance that the presence of educational subjects acquires the interaction that is established between them and the mediations that are put into play, within pedagogical relations. These aspects become especially important when the educational activity is carried out exclusively in virtual environments and when there is little or no technological frequency and connectivity.

We have certainly learned many lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the educational field has been no exception. First of all, it is clear that the problems, as we have already mentioned, continue to challenge the school, just as in the face-to-face mode. For the teacher, the main thing is that they always need to reinvent themselves, for the student, they need to continue their education even in a different format, for the families, the unconditional support in their children's learning. Finally, the school realises that it is adopting pedagogical strategies never before imagined, in such a way that it can plan, teach and adapt. Nevertheless, students and their parents categorically recognise the importance of the classroom and they want to return to school as an when it is possible even if this means facing challenges and problems. They want to re-experience the unique pedagogical space that takes place in the classrooms of the educational establishment. In a scenario of a return to "normality", after the onset of vaccination or post-pandemic, hybrid teaching can be used, considering the possibility of rethinking and renewing pedagogical and educational practices. This reflects the fact that it is necessary to integrate ICTs into school learning environments, and that the costs and lack of mastery of these technologies cannot serve as an argument for not using them. In this sense, the difficulties of distance learning are also a consequence of the lack of training and the absence of these resources in the day-to-day classroom.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, home and school, two usually separate spheres, were forced to coexist, mix and overlap. In many families, work, study, and leisure schedules were disorganised. This situation created feelings in many households that were difficult to manage, such as exhaustion, annoyance, and irritability. From the beginning of the pandemic, the school system was seriously challenged. In some cases, schools were able to adapt their functioning to the remote link through guides or digital contacts, while others tried to emulate the face-to-face teaching load with an overload of Zoom tasks. In this context, it has been relevant to listen to the opinions of students and their families regarding virtual teaching in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the idea of reflecting on the social and economic gaps that affect a large part of the population, and which have left a feeling of confusion and uncertainty about the real learning experienced during the pandemic, due to the obstacles that have prevented quality teaching by the school and the educational and social system itself. In this line, the question arises of how to approach pedagogical relationships and propose cognitive-affective challenges with students both in the classroom and virtually? This is because it is essential to consider the significance of the physical or technology-mediated presence of both educational subjects as a necessary condition for the educational activities to take place in their full complexity.

Recommendations

In terms of projections, the study provides useful baseline information for comparison with research in different international contexts in order to understand how secondary school students and their families have experienced the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on education, which will hopefully lead to long-term policy development. In terms of recommendations, the present study will allow teachers and secondary school principals to understand the difficult situation that their students have had to deal with in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This understanding should help them to plan the return to classroom instruction with a strong emphasis on the formation considering emotions and then to deploy all the pedagogical strategies that allow them to overcome the learning gaps left by these two years of the pandemic in the country's young people. On the other hand, academics and researchers will be able to monitor educational processes, providing empirical background for possible solutions to the perverse effects of the pandemic in the educational sphere.

Limitations

The present study was limited to only two schools and the need to increase the sample size. In methodological terms, the study could be complemented by the application of a questionnaire, in order to have both quantitative and qualitative data for analysis. On the other hand, in terms of tools, a second data collection technique such as an individual interview could have been included in order to deepen the perceptions of secondary school students and their families, which would have also allowed for the triangulation of data.

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Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Almonacid-Fierro: Conceptualization, design, analysis, writing. Philominraj: Writing, editing/reviewing, supervision; Vargas-Vitoria: Writing, editing/reviewing, analysis; Almonacid-Fierro: Writing, editing/reviewing, analysis.

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