

## Comparing Face to Face versus Online MUN Conferences during and after the Covid-19 Lockdown (Poster)

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### Abstract

This study took advantage of the Covid-19 lockdown which canceled all Face to Face (hereinafter: F2F) United Nations conferences (hereinafter: MUN). MUN conferences had mostly been large F2F simulations of the United Nations for students. Students from schools all over the country or world congregated in order to participate. Hence, this academic activity provides not only the opportunity to sharpen and improve academic skills, it is a challenging platform to develop better social/emotional skills as well. The Covid-19 lockdown provided a window of opportunity to investigate the effects of online conferences, which were rarely used. Due to the lockdown, MUN conferences became online activities instead of F2F.

The aim of this study is to determine if the same benefits occur using video-conferencing platforms instead of live, F2F conferences. Based on a review of the literature, MUN, which is a student run simulation of United Nations negotiations, (Harmon & Kikuchi, 2019; Hazen, 2019) exhibits positive change in many students' self-confidence and academic skills (Engel, et al, 2017; Harmon & Kikuchi, 2019; Obendorf & Randerson, 2013). On the other hand, the literature review mentioned that social activities are more difficult to conduct online (Bailenson, 2021; Tomprou et al., 2021). The study consisted of 119 junior and high school students who participated in MUN conferences, responded to a survey which focused on if they felt they had gained social/emotional skills after taking part in MUN conference/s. Twenty one participants had participated only in online conference, 40 who participated only F2F and 58 participants who experienced both types of conferences. The data was sorted based on the type of conference (Online or F2F or

*Proceedings of the 18th Chais Conference for the Study of Innovation and Learning Technologies:  
Learning in the Digital Era*

D. Olenik-Shemesh, I. Blau, N. Geri, A. Caspi, Y. Sidi, Y. Eshet-Alkalai, Y. Kalman, E. Rabin (Eds.),  
Ra'anana, Israel: The Open University of Israel

Both). In addition, three Advisors, who were teachers that had led both F2F and online conferences shared their experiences, insights and lessons and suggestions. Analysis of the responses demonstrated that MUN conferences improve social /emotional skills in both types of conferences. The results were more positive in F2F conferences. On the other hand, online conferences exhibited several benefits such as being less stressful and better for shy speakers to gain confidence. In addition, online format is the best opportunity to meet even when it was physically impossible. Online conferences also help develop sophisticated online communication and negotiating skills. Ideas and solutions were extrapolated from the results which could help improve online social activities similar to Model United Nations.

**Keywords:** Model United Nations, Social Skills, Emotional Skills, Online Conferences.

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