

Graduates' Perspective on the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Medical Laboratory Accredited Programs



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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: Students in health profession education programs were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic at both didactic and clinical training levels. The purpose for this American Society for Clinical Pathology, Board of Certification (ASCP BOC) study was to determine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on graduates. This study represents the perspectives of laboratory professional graduates who sat for the ASCP BOC certification in their respective professional disciplines.

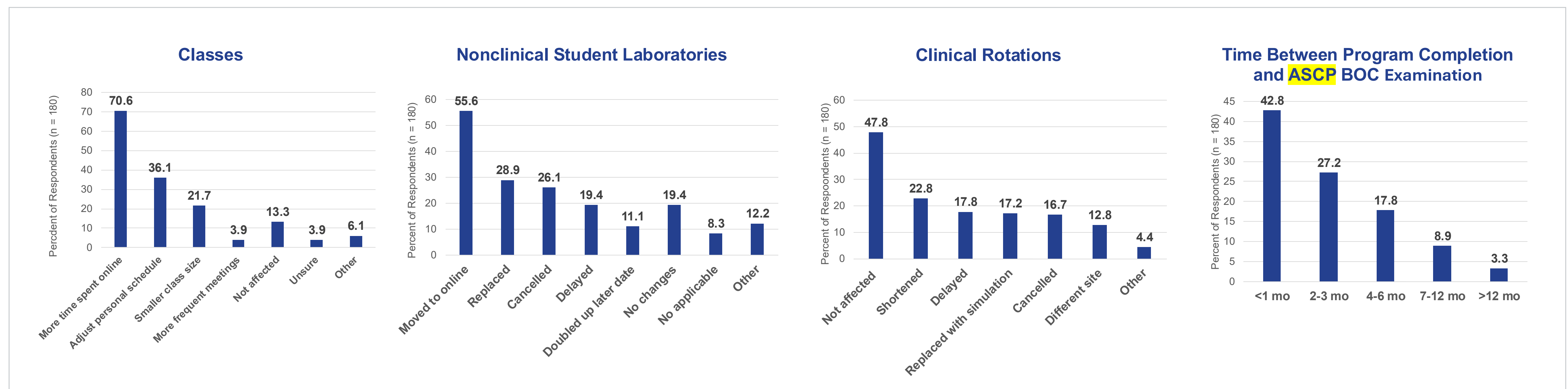
METHODS: A survey was sent to all graduates from the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Science (NAACLS), Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES), and Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) accredited programs who sat for the ASCP BOC examination in 2020 and 2021 to determine the impact of COVID-19 on laboratory professional graduates during the pandemic.

RESULTS: A total of 180 graduates responded to the survey. The majority of graduates indicated that at least 1 didactic program component was shifted to an online system during the pandemic and that both clinical and nonclinical student laboratories were affected. Although program completion for most graduates was not delayed, one-third of graduates delayed taking their respective ASCP BOC exam. Due to the lack of knowledge application through practical hands-on laboratory experience in their educational programs, graduates reported feeling a lack of readiness with regards to preparing for the national certification examination as well as for employment.

CONCLUSION: The study results showed the pandemic greatly impacted the education experience and readiness for the ASCP BOC examinations for graduates. Factors such as the absence of in-person learning and hands-on experience—both crucial aspects in laboratory training—and the ripple effects as a result of the pandemic, such as job loss, financial constraints, and health concerns, contributed to the decreased quality of education for graduates.

IMPACT ON PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND STUDENTS

Laboratory Medicine | Volume 55, Issue 4 | July 2024, Pages e396–e404



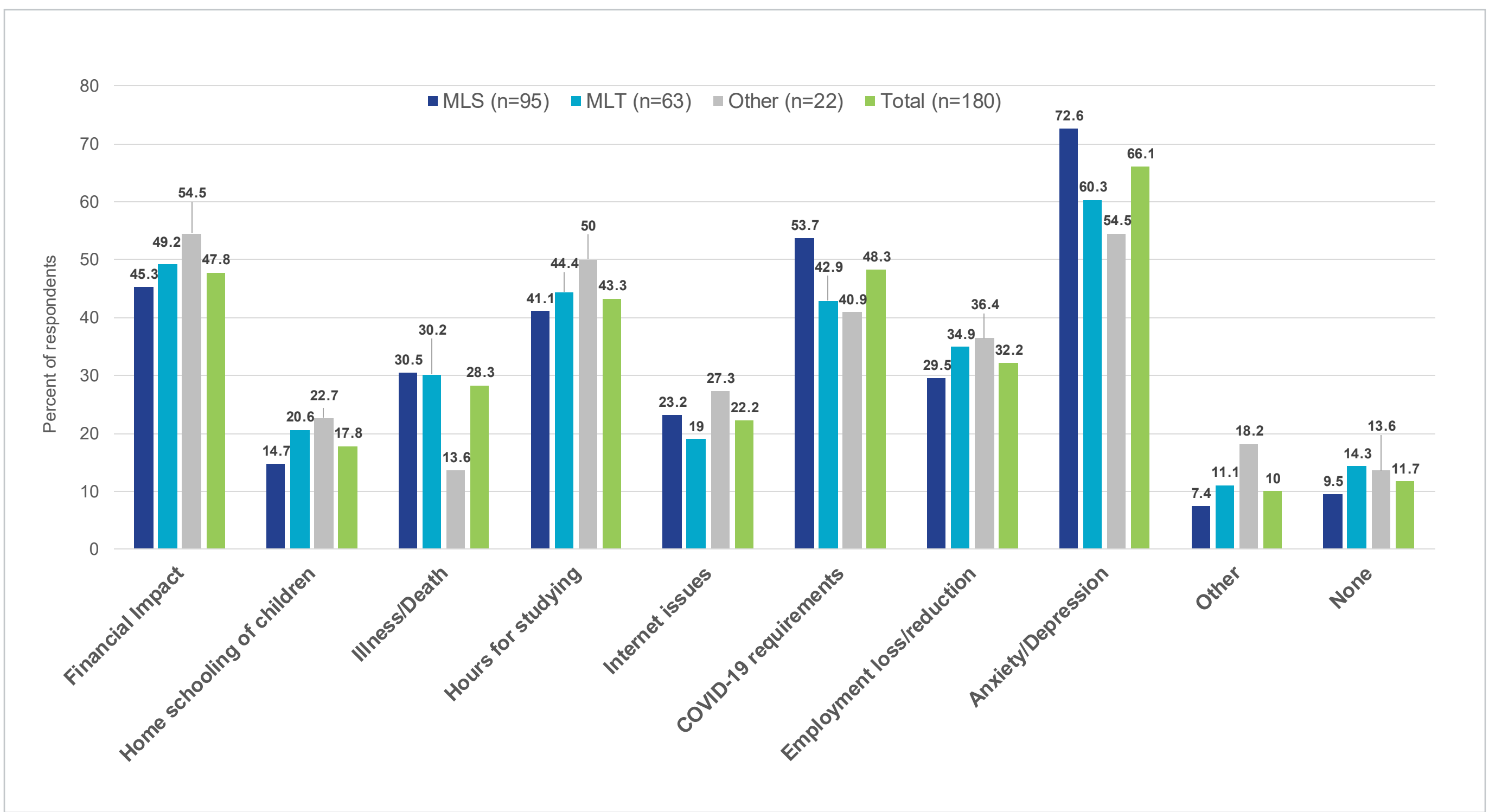
INTRODUCTION

- Health professions education programs were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - mandatory transmission precautions.
 - clinical components delayed or abbreviated due to exhaustion of personnel, equipment, financial resources.
- Students' personal lives and educational outcomes severely affected.
- Purpose of study: to reveal the results of the survey that was distributed to graduates of the accredited programs to gain insight into their unique perspectives.

METHODS

- Survey sent to graduates of accredited programs
 - Sat for ASCP BOC examination in 2020 and 2021
- Electronic invitations via Key Survey, an online survey tool, on June 06, 2022
- Reminder sent on July 6, 2022; survey closed on October 11, 2022
- Quantitative and qualitative data collected from graduates' responses.
- Assessed 4 major areas of impact:
 - Nonclinical Student Laboratories
 - Clinical Rotations
 - Academic Classes
 - Certification Exam Scores

% RESPONDENTS REPORTING NEGATIVE PERSONAL IMPACTS



RESULTS

- DEMOGRAPHICS**
- Total of 180 graduates responded to survey.
 - 52.8% MLS graduates
 - 35.0% MLT graduates
 - 46 states represented
 - Program type:
 - 84.4% University
 - 15.6% Hospital
- SHIFT TO ONLINE FORMAT**
- Any component: 83.8%
 - Lectures (synchronous): 65%
 - Lectures (asynchronous): 48.3%
 - Student labs: 40.0%
 - Clinicals: 24.4%

- COVID EFFECT ON BOC**
- Delay in taking exam: 32.2%
 - 17.2% felt unprepared for exam
 - No impact on: selection of:
 - preferred date: 67.8%
 - preferred location: 70.0%
 - Pass on first attempt: 76.7%
 - Negative effect on exam scores: 41.1%

CONCLUSIONS

- Data verified the results from published study of program directors' perspectives.
- Graduates expressed feeling of unpreparedness with regards to registering for ASCP BOC as well as for employment.
- Reduced clinical and non-clinical laboratory experiences resulted in poorer psychomotor skills especially within MLS educational programs.
- Negative effects from pandemic, general anxiety and depression, were reported by 66% of graduates.