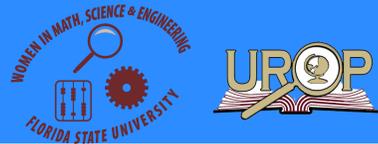


# An Analysis of the Relationship Between Webcam Preference and Seating Preference



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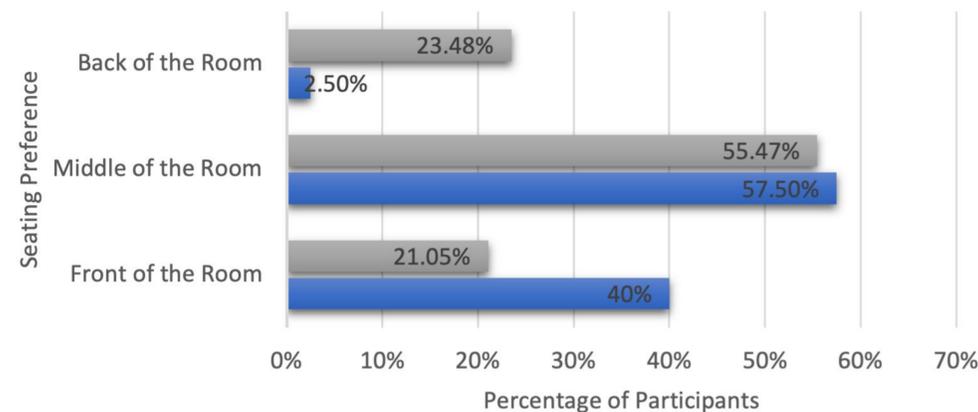
## Background

- While the concept of online learning has been around since the 90s, for most students it became something familiar due to the worldwide emergency school closures brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic (Aguilera-Hermida, et al., 2021)
- Despite the lifting of restrictions, online learning is still commonly used through platforms such as Zoom, BlackBoard, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, and Skype
- Given the pandemic's abrupt altering of learning environments, it is worthwhile to investigate how student behaviors in in-person classrooms translate to online classrooms and vice versa (Dennen, et al., 2022)
- Our research explores the relationship between webcam preferences for online classes and seating preferences for in-person classes
  - Are participants who prefer to keep their webcam on more likely to prefer sitting in the front than those who prefer to keep their webcam off?
  - Are participants who prefer to keep their webcam off more likely to prefer sitting in the back than those who prefer to keep their webcam on?

## Survey/Interview Questions

- When you are in a face-to-face classroom, where do you typically sit? Front, middle, or back?
- Do you prefer to keep your webcam on or off in online classes?

### Seating Preferences for Webcam On/Off



## Discussion

- The data collected supports the following statements:
  - Participants who prefer to keep their webcam on are more likely to prefer sitting in the front
    - 40% of participants that indicated a preference to keep their webcam ON also indicated a preference to sit in the front
    - 21.05% of participants that indicated a preference to keep their webcam OFF also indicated a preference to sit in the front
  - Participants who prefer to keep their webcam off are more likely to prefer sitting in the back
    - 23.48% of participants that indicated a preference to keep their webcam OFF also indicated a preference to sit in the back
    - 2.50% of participants that indicated a preference to keep their webcam ON also indicated a preference to sit in the back
- It should also be noted that for both participant groups (webcam on, webcam off), more than 50% indicated that they prefer to sit in the middle
  - It can be hypothesized that students have a tendency to “default” to middle seating, but more research that takes into account other factors (e.g., class type, class size) is necessary
- Considering that webcam use is associated with attentiveness, diligence, and high performance, it makes sense for it to be connected to sitting in the front of the class, which yields similar results (Day & Verbiest 2021) (Dennen, et al., 2022) (Xi, et al., 2017)
- On the contrary, research has shown that webcam non-use can indicate a lack of active participation, which has also been found for students sitting in the back of classrooms (Day & Verbiest 2021) (Will, et al., 2020)

## Methods

### Participants

- Recruited from College of Education Study Pool
- Undergraduate and graduate students (18 and older; all have prior experience with online synchronous classes)
- 11 interview participants (10 female and 1 male)
- 278 survey participants

### Instruments and Data Collection

- Online survey delivered on Qualtrics
  - Based on earlier study by Dennen et al. (2022)
  - Closed-response questions about demographics, class behaviors, webcam use preferences, experience of social presence, and multitasking
- Interviews conducted via Zoom
  - Use semi-structured protocol focusing on online learning experiences, webcam use and preferences, multitasking behaviors

### Data Analysis

- Survey: Preliminary analysis focused on frequency distributions and measures of central tendency
- Interviews: Coded by topical area. Second round coding to focus on inductive identification of major themes.

## Results

- 40 participants indicated that they prefer the webcam ON
  - 40% indicated that they prefer to sit in the front, 57.50% prefer to sit in the middle, and 2.50% prefer to sit in the back
- 247 participants indicated that they prefer the webcam OFF
  - 21.05% indicated that they prefer to sit in the front, 55.47% prefer to sit in the middle, and 23.48% prefer to sit in the back

“Because I feel like sometimes I want to hear the teacher clearly... if you sit in the back, sometimes it’s hard for me to gather information, just because my first language is not English. So, I want to make sure I hear everything clearly.”

- Interviewee on why they prefer to sit in the front

“Personally, I’ll always look at what other people are doing on their little webcam bubbles when they’re on. I feel that people are doing that to me—I focus on how people are perceiving me as opposed to focusing on the lecture. I’ll be like, ‘Okay, well, I can’t sit and doze off. Because, like, what if I look weird on camera? Or, you know, what if somebody walks into the room, and I have to leave, and then all of a sudden, the people are like, ‘Oh, where’d she go?’ Like, it just makes me a little bit more self conscious and it distracts me.”

- Interviewee on why they prefer to have their webcam off

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