

Open and Distance Learning (ODL): Challenges perceived by TVET students during Pandemic Covid-19

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ABSTRACT: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning has become increasingly vital to both students and educators in this current academic period. The study looked at the issues relating to open and distance learning (ODL) faced by TVET students in Malaysia in the midst of the pandemic. A total of 46 participants took part in answering questionnaires that were distributed using a simple random sampling technique, and the data were analyzed descriptively with SPSS v.22. This study could add to the corpus of knowledge that will assist universities in formulating their strategies for future implementation of online learning and resolving the challenges. This might improve people's intentions and preferences in using online learning in the future.

Keywords: *Open and Distance Learning; Challenges; TVET Education*

INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 has been a challenging year for education sector around the world. The deadly Covid-19 has infected millions of people around the world and forced them into a new way of living. In early 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak in Malaysia recorded virus infections steeply increases which have enforced the government to implement a movement control order (MCO). The MCO enforcement urged the non-essential sectors to be closed for operation whereby education sector shall be continued through online basis.

To cope with the pandemic situation, the new era of education strategy focuses on applying open and distance learning (ODL) as the possible method of managing all aspects of teaching and learning on an online basis. However, it has enlightened an issue in which students are facing great challenges in trying to adapt with the environment of ODL. The online classes require students to prepare themselves with all equipment and knowledge in open and distance learning.

A previous study confirmed that students were experiencing personal issues such as feeling unmotivated, having a lot of distractions at home and lack of self-study skills [1]. Students have also clarified that it was a tough experience due to poor internet connection and it is difficult to cope with ODL [2]. The university students expressed their dissatisfaction as they have barriers in interacting with their lecturers since they cannot interrupt their lecturers when they are teaching or delivering the lessons [3]. Another study has also shown

that some students tend to detest online learning due to the challenges of personal and technological difficulty issues [4].

Numerous studies have been discussed the impacts and challenges but this is however, there are fewer studies that focus on the real challenges that TVET students encounter through the implementation of ODL. It was also found that each research is conducted in different fields of education and yields a different result which accounted to different sets of obstacles. Thus, this research specifically aims to identify the level of challenges perceived by the TVET students on ODL implementation especially during pandemic Covid-19.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study was based on a quantitative method that aims to identify the challenges perceived by undergraduate technologies students in using ODL during pandemic Covid-19. This quantitative method uses survey as the main technique for data collecting tool and sample was taken using simple random sampling technique. A structured online questionnaire form has been distributed to all respondents' taken from the sample of populations. The data obtained were further analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section will present the result and discussion as gained from this study. For demographics of respondents, the majority of respondents are male students which total 31 people (67.4%) and the rest are female students which is a total of 15 people (32.6%) taken from the population of undergraduate technologies program students.

In this study, descriptive analysis using mean level value interpretation is divided into five (5) levels: (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree. The level of measurement in this study can be referred to as per Table 1 that has been suggested by [5].

Table 1: Interpretation of Mean Scores

Scale	Interpretation
3.37 – 5.00	High
1.69 – 3.36	Moderate
0.01 – 1.68	Low

Table 2: Level of perceived challenges towards ODL implementation among TVET students

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Lack of sufficient time for study	4.28	.655	High
2	Financial constraints for online class preparation	3.78	1.094	High
3	An unfavourable home learning environment	3.24	.639	Moderate
4	Lack of support from family, employer, friends, etc	3.09	.890	Moderate
5	Difficulties in conducting online assessment	4.15	.729	High
6	Conflicts between family, work and study schedule	4.21	.593	High
7	Lack of experience and/or training with instructional technologies	4.13	.653	High
8	Excessive assignment load	4.17	.851	High
Total		3.88	.332	High

Based on Table 2 above, it was shown that the overall ODL challenges among TVET students are high (M = 3.88; SD = 0.332). The highest mean score is the first item (M = 4.28; SD = 0.655) that stated “Lack of sufficient time for study” where 23 students answered strongly agree (50.0%), 5 students answered agree (10.9%) and 18 students answered neutral (39.1%). Based on [6], the workload assigned to the students during the ODL period is more than that of normal classrooms, putting an immense amount of pressure on students with impractical schedules [7].

Meanwhile, the lowest mean score was shown in the fourth item (M = 3.09, SD = 0.890) that stated “Lack of support from family, employer, friends, etc.” with 11 students answered strongly agree, 19 students answered agree (41.3%), 3 students answered neutral (6.5%) and 13 students answered disagree (28.3%). Clearly, the psychological aspect is impacting the students’ motivation and learning progress significantly. [8] claimed that due to the loss of physical contacts with teachers, friends, school and classroom environment, students have also lost the benefits of socializing with friends since they are chained to assignments or homework [9].

CONCLUSION

There is an increasing interest on the challenges and ineffectiveness that students confront as a result of ODL. ODL seems to have high challenges among technologies undergraduate students due to learning feasibility and effectiveness. It is undeniable that this approach is conducted to protect students’ health from COVID-19, but there are also high learning challenges cited among students. If the desired goal is to attain a better learning

outcome, students shall have good time management meanwhile the academic institution and government need to tackle the issues by producing appropriate and effective learning environment. Future study are advisable to highlight the suitable practices to overcome this identified challenges.

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