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EMBRACING NEW NORMS: THE CONTRIBUTIVE FACTORS TO STUDENT ONLINE LEARNING READINESS"

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Abstract

The research is determined relevant contributing factors for the student to embrace new norms in learning during the pandemic Covid-19. Academic institutions were closed to curb the viruses from spreading by avoiding unnecessary physical contact and social distancing. However, teaching and learning must continue as usual. Thus, the only option is to continue the teaching and learning process online. The sudden changes have caused the adaptable issue to students. The study conducted an online survey of 102 respondents from the tertiary education level. The study considered an online survey as a practical approach to collect responses because of the pandemic. Only respondents who have experienced in online learning were eligible to be selected. Thus, the study used a quota sampling technique to conduct the sampling process. The data went through a series of validity and reliability tests to ensure the research instrument is valid and reliable. The study used Partial Least Square to test the research hypothesis and scrutinise the relevance variable and items deemed statistically acceptable. The finding indicated that the learning environment is a significant factor in ensuring the student is ready to embrace the new norms in teaching and learning online. The learning environment is expected to be related to student motivation and adaptability to the new setting.

Keywords: Emotion**,** learning environment**,** learning equipment, online learning readiness

1. Introduction

On 25th January 2020, Malaysia announced its first three positive Covid-19 cases. By the 30th January 2020, the case had been increased to eight cases. To cater for the alarming situation, the Malaysia Ministry of Health (MOH) had published a standard procedure to prevent the virus from spreading in the community. When the positive Covid-19 case had increased to 3,347 cases by 20th March 2020, the situation had caused public worries and panic. In response to the pandemic, on the 18th March 2020, Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin had declared movement restriction orders (MCO) to restrict contact in the community as one of the plans to prevent the virus from spreading. As a result, many economic sectors, including education, has forced to be closed down temporarily. However, the teaching and learning process must continue as usual. Thus, instead of physical class, the schools, colleges, and universities had to switch to online learning.

In Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA (KUPTM), the educators and students use Learning Management System (LMS) for teaching and learning. It is a centre where students could download teaching materials, post questions or comments, and enable other teaching and learning activities such as discussion or assessments. Educators and students must use the LMS besides other free online platforms such as google meet, google classroom, zoom, just to name a few. Moreover, KUPTM implements blended learning where the classes and assessments were conducted offline and online based on the subject suitability and needs.

The sudden teaching and learning environment approach caused various feedback from the parents, students, schools, public and private institutions. During the pandemic, remote learning has become a new norm incorporating flexibility in teaching and learning to achieve the teaching and learning objective. Global education shows some drastic impact. For example, 78 percent of tertiary students in Malaysia prefer the online class because of cheaper educational fees than the face-to-face session (Karupiah, 2021).

The finding is significant during the pandemic and the post-pandemic. Online learning must be considered as a new teaching and learning method in education. Online classes or the combination of physical and online classes must be considered a new teaching and learning approach. Previously, online classes only available or the focus for part-time and executive students to allow them to acquire knowledge easily and complete their studies. However, the situation has changed that full-time students also need to be treated similarly to part-time and executive students. The online classes allow institutions to reach other students transcend geographical boundaries. More options are available for the student to choose suitable courses to be studied. Educational sectors will become more competitive. The institutions must know relevant details to attract students to enrol with their institutions. The finding will help the institution to prepare the necessary plan to meet the students' expectations.

However, there are several hindrances to the new norm in the education system. Almost 40 percent of the total student in 2020 could not follow online classes because of data problems and do not have the device to support the online classes (Karupiah, 2021). Since the pandemic started, the Malaysia Ministry of Education has given tremendous support to ensure that teaching and learning will continue to happen despite any situation. For example, 485 digital textbooks have been uploaded on Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia (DELIMA) platform to provide resources for educators to support online

teaching and learning. In addition, 6,585 educational videos can also be found in the CikgooTube portal supported by DELIMA (Rahim et al., 2020). The Malaysia Ministry of Education also is serious about providing a conducive online learning experience to the student in Malaysia. Internet users are enjoying free 1GB data from 8 am to 6 pm everyday to surf educational web pages and video conferences (Aziz & Zainul, 2020)

Parents and students express concern about their readiness to adapt to online teaching. They worried about the device reliability to be used during the online teaching and learning as well internet connectivity readiness. News had reported difficulties and challenges related to this issue. For example, in Sabah, a student had to climb and spend the night on a tree to get a good Internet connection for online university exams (Lee, 2020). The student also lacks motivation and shows little interest in following online classes because they prefer physical classes instead of online learning (Lim, 2020). Student stress levels also mounting because they struggle to adapt to the new system and more assignments to be completed as part of the new assessment to replace the examination (Lim, 2020). Online learning also limits specific teaching and learning applications, especially the subject requiring laboratory use to conduct a specific experiment. This limitation also caused students to feel stress because they are prone to use different auditory, kinesthetic, visual, and read and write techniques while acquiring knowledge.

A study conducted by Owl and Badger Company in 2020 indicated that 75% of students do not prefer virtual learning because of the communication barrier (Covid-19: Impact on Tertiary Level Students in Malaysia, 2020). Students complaining that they are no longer can enjoy the interaction in the teaching hall and tutorial rooms. They felt that it is harder for them to ask the question in a non-invasive way. And it becomes a burden to those who cannot afford to purchase a computer and buy an internet package (Yee, 2020). The students express different views regarding online and offline classes. However, the replacement face to face classes with online learning is crucial due to the risk of Covid-19. Therefore, there are many contributing factors towards student readiness to study online such as emotional (Engin, 2017), teaching methods, psychological, language, proficiency and others (Karuppannan & Mohammed, 2020), device and internet efficacy, financial status, and gender (Lau & Shaikh, 2012). Thus, the contributing factor to student readiness is must be explored so that the teaching and learning can resume meeting the educational objective.

2. Problem Statement

Given the relevance of the study, the scientific problem is to explore factors influencing student readiness to study online as an important catalyst to be excellent in education. The study believed face-to-face teaching and learning is already challenging enough for students and teachers. The study also is looking at the situation in a more extensive spectrum where not every student is at home to continue their education online. However, there are many others are staying in institutions like orphanage homes and recovery centres also affected. Thus, to learn online is beyond perplexing because many factors must be considered to ensure the online learning quality is at par with face-to-face classes regardless where they are. The study suggests that exploring factors significant to online learning excellent will land the student in a better learning environment. As a result, the learning process will become an effective and joyful experience. Therefore, it is necessary to recognise influencing factors to effective online learning.

3. Research Questions

In accordance with the statement, the following research questions are addressed to find answers:

- What is the relationship between student emotions and online learning readiness?
- What is the relationship between the learning environment and online learning readiness?
- What is the relationship between learning equipment and online learning readiness?

4. Purpose of the Study

To explore the influence factors related to student online learning readiness as one of the approach to ensure the student could enjoy the online and teaching session, and the process is effective enough parallel to the physical class

5. Research Methods

To achieve the research purpose, the study used survey to collect 102 responses from the Kolej University Poly-Tech MARA Kuala Lumpur students. The study used a survey to collect the data because it can be used widely to answer various research questions, easy to conduct, is fast to obtain the necessary information, and applicable to large sample size (Piaw, 2020).

The study used a quota sampling method to identify the sample that deems suitable to participate in this study. The quota sampling method is a non-probability sampling technique. The sample was selected based on similar characteristics shared by the entire population. The study used a quota sampling method because it allows the researcher to choose the sample according to the study interest. Thus, the study determined samples from Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA Kuala Lumpur. The students were selected as samples because they entirely use online learning in their teaching and learning methods. The chosen sample met the study interest to identify the contributive factors to the student studying online readiness. The respondents are voluntary participants in the survey.

The questionnaires were distributed online because it was cost-efficient, convenient, and the safest approach to be used during the pandemic. Respondent feedbacks were recorded using the Likert Scales. The items in the questionnaire were adopted from the previous scholars, namely O'regan (2003), Allam et al. (2020), Nassr et al. (2020), and Widodo et al. (2020) and AlAteeq et al. (2020). A questionnaire consisting of 43 questions was developed for the online survey.

The study performed content validity by sending the proposed items to the content expert to ensure the adopted items are valid to measure the intended variable. The study used Partial Least Square (PLS) to measure the item validity and reliability also the relationship between the variables. Hair et al. (2017) said PLS is a suitable statistical analysis for exploratory study. Considering the rules of thumb for selecting PLS (Rigdon et al., 2017), the researcher believed this study was appropriate for using PLS because the study's main goal is to explore new knowledge related to contributed factors to the student readiness studying online. Also, the number of samples in this study is small because less than 200.

This study emphasis on quantitative measures to determine precise validity and reliability assessment. Thus, the convergent and discriminant are established to assess the study reflective model consistency.

6. Findings

During the initial step in the convergent validity test, only three variables remain. The analysis deleted learning equipment because the items in this variable failed to meet the outer loading value essential requirement. Thus, the further assessment omitted learning equipment for further evaluation.

In prior to testing the hypotheses, the study conducted a multicollinearity test to ensure the items in this study are not correlated. Table 1 indicated the items in this study are not associated based on the acceptable VIF value in between 0.2 to 5.0.

Table 1. Variance Inflation Factor Value (VIF)

Constructs	Items	VIF
Learning Environment	I have problem to have a group discussion for my assignment due to poor internet connection	1.52
	I have a problem in getting enough information for assignment due to a lack of brief from lecturers	1.72
	I have a problem in handing in assignment to lecturers because some of them use different platforms to hand in the assignment	2.11
Online Learning readiness	I have confidence to use any applications or software for online learning	2.36
	I seek assistance when facing learning problems	1.73
	I can follow online learning well	1.97
	I have often participated in online learning training	3.16
	I can understand course material well through online learning	2.48
	I am ready to take part in online learning	2.4
	I have managed time well	2.26
	I carry out my own study plan	2.16
Student emotions	I frustrated when my computer or smartphone crash during online class	1.71
	I feel excited to explore a new learning method	1.47
	I feel proud and relieve whenever my assignment gets positive feedbacks from lecturers	2.48
	I believe the motivation for learning is a crucial factor for student to maintain focus	1.94
	I feel angered because certain things happened outside of my control	1.81

To achieve the research objective, the study used the path coefficient test to determine the relationship between the variable (refer Table 1). The relationship between the variable is considered significant if the P-value is lower than 0.05.

Table 2. Result of path coefficient test

			P value, < .05	Result
Student emotions	---->	Online Learning readiness	0.48	Not sig
Learning environment	---->	Online Learning readiness	0.05	Sig

Table 2 indicated the finding is similar to the previous research that the learning environment is an important factor in influencing student academic performance. Thus, it is important to ensure that the learning environment is conducive to online learning to ensure the student academic achievement is high. According to the research finding, the effect size between the learning environment and student online learning readiness is small ($f2 = 0.003$). Thus, the relationship between the variables is considered weak. The probable explanation of this relationship is the non-conducive environment, such as non-supportive group members and the below minimum attention by the lecturer to explain the lesson. Also, the respondent believes internet stability also contributed to a better learning environment. The respondent thought that limitation to access information and miscommunication in group assignments could be reduced. Besides, internet stability also could minimise student worries to submit the assignment using a different platform.

The study believes a conducive learning environment could offer a safe platform for the student. As a result, the student will feel supported, welcomed and respected. Green and DeBruler (2020) mentioned that frequent communication is an important component to creating a supportive environment for online learning. Thus, internet connection is crucial for students to communicate amongst themselves and to communicate with the lecturer. The student will begin to feel unimportant and frustrated if they need to wait long to respond to their enquiry. During the pandemic, internet stability is crucial because the internet is the only option available to establish communication and be suitable for many platforms and devices and affordable.

Table 2 also indicated student emotion is not a significant contributed factor to student online learning readiness. The probable explanation to this phenomenon is that the respondents agree that their feeling and state of emotion, such as frustration, excitement to learn, feeling proud when receiving positive feedback, or feeling angry to factors they cannot control are not relevant to determine the student readiness to study online. Hence, the finding is slightly contradicted the previous conclusion that mentioned student emotion contributed to the learning process.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, amongst the three possible contributed factors to student readiness to study online, only the learning environment is significant compared to student emotion and learning equipment. However, the influence of the learning environment is considered not apparent because of the weak relationship. For the other factor, student emotions are not important in determining student readiness for online learning. Also, learning equipment was found not a factor to influence the student readiness to study online. The finding cannot be generalised because the study was conducted specifically to measure feedbacks only from the student of Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA Kuala Lumpur. The study believes studying in the conducive learning environment is important to create joy during the online learning process. The student also must feel comfortable. Confine space, noise, and internet connectivity would make the student feel depressed. Overall, the students are coping with online learning, but there was dissatisfaction with certain factors. To highlight, this study wishes to recommend the parents and the universities to increase sets requirements related to resources and infrastructure to ensure the learning environment is conducive for effective online learning. The study suggested replicating the study in other education institutions to identify the student readiness pattern for online learning. The finding also

contributes to educational institutions preparing themselves to cater to student interest in online learning. The study considered that the limited number of independent variables studied is part of the study limitation. The study wishes to suggest more relevant predictive factors can be included for future research.

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