

THE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF INTRINSIC MOTIVATION ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract: *For almost two years the Covid-19 virus has impacted all sectors, including the shutting down of education sectors around the world. This has forced higher education to switch from traditional classrooms to open and distance learning (ODL) modes. One of the factors that can affect the effectiveness of ODL is students' motivation. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of intrinsic motivation elements on online learning during the ODL. This study was conducted among students in one of the public higher education institutions in East Coast Malaysia using a qualitative method approach. The data were collected through a Google Form involving 30 respondents. The data were analyzed thematically. The results revealed that ODL has positive impacts on students in terms of motivating oneself in the context of completing tasks within a given period, staying focused while studying, better trying to understand the subject learned more persistently, and strengthening personality. It is suggested that for the next study, researchers can focus on the improvements that students may be able to make in using intrinsic motivational elements in flexible learning situations, especially those involving hybrid and the combination of offline and online learning sessions. This is because the implementation of online learning is seen as beneficial to students as well as lecturers in conducting the learning sessions.*

Keywords: *Covid-19 Pandemic, Intrinsic Motivation, Open and Distance Learning, Significant Impact, University Students*

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has become a global issue and has disrupted more than one billion students in 129 countries worldwide (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, 2020). All universities and schools were instructed to shut down their operations, and face-to-face classes were also suspended to avoid the spread of the Covid-19 virus (Khachfe et al., 2020; Patricia, 2020). In Malaysia, the Covid-19 virus was detected in January 2020 and began to spread in March 2020 (Muhammad Irfan et al., 2020; Azman and Abdullah, 2021). In order to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Higher Education has instructed all higher education institutions in Malaysia to implement Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in their teaching and learning processes (MOHE, 2020). When ODL is being implemented at higher institutions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it has received both negative and positive perceptions from learners and educators.

As students and teachers use computers in their ODL learning process, they need to learn new technology, and learning new technology has increased their enthusiasm and computer skills (Dasrun, 2020; Khasanah, Pramudibyanto, & Widuroyekti, 2020). Another study found that online learning was beneficial for students due to high interaction with educators and high opportunities to experience digital learning programs (Firman & Rahayu, 2020; Hidayat & Noeraida, 2020; Simamora, 2020). On the other hand, the ODL has also received negative perceptions. For instance, Bovermann and Bastiaens (2020) reported that the ODL execution has made it difficult for the students to accept the sudden changes in the university's online learning mode because there are no direct interactions between learners and educators. In addition, it was also found that during ODL, students faced financial difficulties in order to top up their internet quota (Simamora, 2020). On top of that, students claimed that ODL has impaired their eyesight due to long exposure to focusing on telephone or computer screens and has also caused some health issues like headaches and fatigue while doing their assignments (Gustiani, 2020). Other challenges in ODL are problems with technology and the internet, insufficient support from colleagues and instructors, a heavy workload, and a lack of focus (Hussein et al., 2020).

The outbreak of the pandemic Covid-19 has forced all educational institutions to shut down, and students need to learn from home. The sudden change in the learning environment in ODL has affected the involvement of students in the learning process (Qiu, 2018). Many researchers have found that ODL has affected students' motivation in their learning process. For instance, research conducted by Elena (2021) discovered that educators have found a major drop in students' motivation, interest, and participation when online courses were offered in Spring 2020. Another researcher, Gustiani (2020) in her case study discovered that motivation has showed inconsistent effects in online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. There were students who were highly motivated and the others were highly demotivated in online learning. The reasons why students became demotivated were because of the inconducive learning environment, learning time, instrumental supports and interference from parents who asked their children to do the households during the learning time (Cahyani, Listiana, & Larasati, 2020; Rachmat, 2020; and Simamora, 2020). Another contributing factor that deteriorated students' motivation and frustration in learning ODL were having improper internet connection and gadgets (Gustiani, 2020).

In addition, students feel demotivated and decrease their involvement in ODL because of the ineffective delivery from the educators during the learning process (Agus & Supratmi, 2020)

and also because of the lack of infrastructure in the learning process (Claudiu Coman et al., 2020). Research conducted by the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia's (Suhakam) Children Consultative Council found that 32.9% of the students revealed that home-based teaching and learning (PdPR) during the Covid-19 pandemic has made them feel lonely, demotivated, and lacking in energy (Malay Mail, 2020). Esra and Sevilen (2021), in their study on the students' extrinsic and intrinsic motivation found that both motivations were lower in online learning as compared to face-to-face learning. The reason for this occurrence is because of a lack of interaction with their educators and their peers.

On the contrary, research by Fitriyani, Fauzi & Sari (2020) found that intrinsic motivation has become the reason why students become highly motivated in studying online. They discovered that students had become more enthusiastic, and ambitious and even strive themselves to learn new knowledge and skills in ODL. Therefore, as ODL is a key factor in the decrease in the level of motivation and effectiveness of student learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, hence this study is intended to determine the element of students' intrinsic motivation towards their online learning. This study focused on undergraduate students from the Faculty of Business and Management in one of the public higher education in East Coast Malaysia. Specifically, this study is conducted to find views on ODL learning during the MCO and secondly, how does intrinsic motivation bring a good impact on students' learning during ODL.

Literature Review

Online Distance Learning

The term online distance learning is used interchangeably with other terms such as online learning (Wallace, 2010), online distance education (Garrison, 1987), blended learning (Deschacht & Goeman, 2015), e-learning (Keis et al., 2017) and also virtual learning which utilizing internet and various use of online applications and most importantly having physical separation between educators and learners. The Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA, 2013) has documented the term ODL as the practice code for Open and Distance Learning and highlighted the term to be implemented as a guideline for the Higher Education Provider (HEP). The online learning method has had a significant impact on the teaching and learning process among students as well as educators because it has helped learners and educators to interact and at the same time keep their distance from one another (Consilz Tanz, 2020; Dong et al., 2020). In addition, ODL also enables the learners to communicate, continue learning, share their ideas, be independent, attend classes as usual and manage their time (Azzi et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2021). Although ODL has benefits, its effectiveness and quality depend on several factors such as the involvement of the faculty, the support from the university itself, the willingness of students to accept changes and also the motivation of students (Pratiwi, 2020).

Motivation

According to Faridah et al. (2020), as cited in Berestova et al. (2022), motivation defines as the psychological concepts and critical factors that encourage students to learn in online learning. The motivational aspect and the level of motivation can act as an energy that pushes students to strive to achieve their desired goals. Motivation is also an essential factor to maintain the students' satisfaction in e-learning because lacking motivation can prevent the learners from concentrating and following instructions in class (Jaemu, Kim & Lee, 2008). Another researcher who conducted their study among the skill-based hospitality courses students revealed that motivation has become one of the contributing factors in students' online learning readiness (Faliza et al., 2022).

Motivation involves not only a need that moves the student's behavior but also the direction that the students want to take to optimally satisfy their needs. Deci & Ryan (1985) in their self-determination theory categorized motivation into two categories: The first type is intrinsic motivation which includes the inner force of a person that makes something naturally entertaining and enjoyable to do. The second type is extrinsic motivation which refers to the behavior of a person for a desired outcome. Another researcher, S. Pew (2007) described self-determination theory in three categories which are intrinsic motivation - doing something because it is exciting and fun, extrinsic motivation - doing something because it leads to separable results and amotivation - refers to not intending to act. According to Riswanto and Aryani (2017), intrinsic motivation is the behaviour of an individual's own pleasure and satisfaction. S. Pew (2007) discovered that students with intrinsic motivation develop strategies and aim for deep understanding rather than memorizing and students with intrinsic motivation are more excellent in their academic achievement (Lepper et al., 2005).

Nevertheless, the success of ODL is not only measured by the institution's readiness but also by student participation and students' motivation. There is limited studies available on the impact of intrinsic motivation in influencing students on ODL learning during MCO. The studies available in relations to ODL learning include on the students' engagement in online learning and the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Shroff and Vogel, 2009; Rentroia-Bonito et al., 2006; Xie and Ferguso, 2006). This study attempts to investigate how do the elements of internal motivation have such a significant impact on students during ODL. This study attempts to investigate the students' views on ODL learning and how their intrinsic motivation brings significant impact on ODL learning during the MCO. This can be summarized in Figure 1.

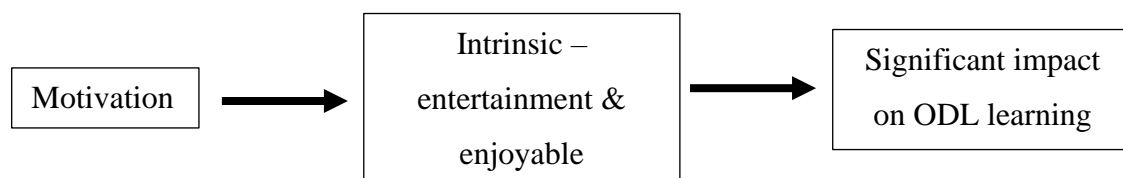


Figure 1

Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach. According to Creswell (2012), the qualitative method was implemented to explore the phenomena using words, stories and pictures. In addition, Gillham (2000) mentioned that the qualitative method can be used to understand the meaning of the gained phenomena, the explanation of the existing issues, and lastly, to offer solutions to the issues. This study was conducted to investigate whether intrinsic motivation has significant impact on the respondents' ODL learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. As respondents stayed at home during the MCO, they were contacted through Whatsapp application with a provided link to respond to obtain the feedback on the research questions. The respondents were approached using snowball sampling due to the condition of physical distancing during Covid-19. As Creswell (2012) mentioned, snowball sampling could be used when the population was hard to locate during the research.

The research questions were divided into two sections. Section A focused on the demographic information of the respondents. Section B provided semi-structured questions on intrinsic motivation on ODL learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Matthew & Ross (2010) mentioned that in the semi-structured questions, respondents were allowed to respond freely

based on what they thought and used the language that they chose to respond. There were 5 questions given in Malay. These questions were adapted from a research by Mohd Zaki and Muhammad Firdaus (2017).

There were 30 respondents out of 92 approached to participate in this research. All respondents filled up their responses via the Google form link in Malay. The data were collected using semi-structured questions. The collected data were analyzed by using thematic analysis. This analysis which was adopted from Matthew & Ross (2010), has four phases which include segmentizing primary themes; categorizing the themes; relinking the aspects of the themes and lastly presenting the themes as final data.

Results and Discussion

Out of 30 respondents, 27 are female and 3 are male. A total of 19 respondents were aged between 18-19 years old, 10 respondents aged between 21-24 years, and 1 respondent aged between 25-29 years. Majority of 20 respondents are from urban, 2 from sub urban and 8 are from rural area. A total of 25 respondents are belong to households with income level below than RM4850 per month and 5 respondents are in the range of RM4851 – RM10,970. 14 respondents are from Selangor, 9 from Pahang, 3 from Terengganu, and respectively 1 each from the Federal of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya. For number of family members of the respondents involved with ODL at home, the majority of 14 respondents have 1 family member involved with ODL, 6 have no family members involved with ODL except themselves, 5 respondents have 3 family members involved with ODL, 2 respondents who have 2 family members involved with ODL, 1 respondent had 4 family members involved with ODL, and another 1 respondent who had more than 4 family members involved with ODL.

RQ1: What are the students views on ODL learning during the MCO?

The findings showed some important elements in the respondents' view of ODL learning during the pandemic. The elements are divided into four parts, namely expenses, easy, facilities, and time management. Respondents thought that by doing ODL learning, they could save costs as expenses such as university fees, transportation charge, boarding fees, reading materials, and daily expenses can be reduced or saved while they are at home. However, ODL will not be permanent as the pandemic already switch to endemic. Thus, respondents will need to be on campus and the use of learning applications will become common in the context of doing assignments, assessment, communication and interactive learning.

Expenses

“... and save my family's expenses compared to if I am on campus”.

“Effective and highly effective and ODL can also save on expenses. It is because when ODL we can save in terms of spending money on food, shelter and so on”.

“There are advantages of ODL. Can save on tuition fees and study materials”.

“Has many advantages. Can save cost”.

“For me studying ODL is very economical ... because I don't have to spend a lot of money”.

“More cost-effective for accommodation, purchase of food supplies, and transportation. Because when in college, the cost of transportation to return and the purchase of daily necessities, the charges are quite high plus the expensive cost of car fuel. In addition, the food sold in the café is quite expensive due to the rising cost of buying raw materials, and there is no cheaper café option”.

Easy

"Makes it easier for me to study anywhere. ODL can make it easier for us, such as being able to record lecturers' teaching and be consulted for revision and further understanding".

"Easy to understand during learning. Because when ODL, can easily manage learning".

"Easy. Save time and energy".

"Easy and efficient. Can be done anywhere...".

"Easy and convenient but difficult to communicate with lecturers, not focus during class. because everything is done online so there will be distractions such as internet, surrounding distractions etc".

"Easier but not fully understood the lesson due to internet problems".

"Good and easy to adapt. Because ODL is easy if good at managing time in learning".

"Good. Easier and time-saving".

"Easy to learn. I feel safe to start learning".

"After 2 years, it has become a new norm. Because I've been studying ODL for too long".

"Helpful to some students and their acceptance to the new norm".

"Ok but sometimes not. Because there are subjects that are easy to understand even if the lecturer only teaches through google meet, but there are subjects that are difficult to understand that require students to meet with lecturers face-to-face to gain understanding".

Facilities

"It's quite challenging. Due to lack of facilities such as internet and laptop".

"To me, it is very difficult because I have to keep on facing the laptop for a long time. Because it makes me "burn out" and tired not only physically but mentally if learning to use an old laptop".

"Somewhat unsatisfactory. The speed and connectivity of the internet/wifi in my house is so slow that it makes it difficult for me to join any of my classes and sometimes causes me to "skip" classes".

"Prefer books from slides. Because if using a book, it can reduce my glare".

"Provide more knowledge in the use of online applications. As every coursework or class held will use the online application".

"For me ODL also helped me to better handle technology and make it easier for me to study at home. To me, if the ODL is not conducted then probably many of the students and students will not be able to be proficient in the use of technology".

"Good because I have facilities".

"Its okay. Internet at home is fast".

Time Management

"Suitable for learning. Educate students to learn more diligently and learn to manage time more efficiently".

"Pleasurable. Because when I'm done doing my assignment and assessment, I can spend time with my family".

"Saves time. Because there is no need to attend classes physically".

"Good. Because it gives me a lot of time to do the assignment".

“In my opinion, ODL learning has advantages and disadvantages. It is because of the advantages of studying at home, does not require energy to get to classes, and brings us closer to the IT world, but the disadvantage is depression, because it is not being able to interact face-to face physically”.

RQ2: How intrinsic motivation bring good impact on students’ learning during ODL?

The findings showed that intrinsic motivation encourages students to be patient in any situation faced during the ODL learning session. It stimulates soberness at a high level as well as being able to survive towards the end of the learning session. With various problems such as MCO, unstable internet line, absence of devices, sharing devices, home assignments, data problems (xxx), it is difficult for students to reinforce their self-motivation to ODL learning. The frequency of occurrence of these problems also forces students to remain patient and continue to stay focused in ODL.

“Require high patience in any situation”. R

“Can survive to this point”. R

Respondents also used intrinsic motivation to encourage self-motivation to continue with ODL learning. Despite the various problems that need to go through as mentioned above, intrinsic motivation helps strengthen the respondents mind setting to undertake ODL. A person who can use intrinsic motivation can turn a less pleasant situation into a simplified one that affects the student's mind to think positively and considers all obstacles can be solved. If the individual fails to be positive and without strong intrinsic motivation, all problems during the ODL can be reasons for not being committed to the learning session.

“Encouragement from family and yourself” – R

“Nurturing students mind setting” – R

Respondents are of the view; they can learn to better manage time during ODL. They can complete the tasks within the stipulated period and do not delay the time to complete the assigned tasks. It's possible that students can save time while at home and can pay attention to learning. In terms of demographics, about 66% (20) respondents experienced less hassle as of sharing devices for ODL at home with other family members, which allow them more time to focus on learning sessions. Time management is often a problem for students, yet, in the context of this study, time management is an advantage where respondents provide positive feedback for ODL sessions. This may be due to other factors that contribute to the matter such as not having to move from one classroom to another, movement from hostel to classrooms, and no involvement in physical or face-to face activities at the university.

“Be able to learn to manage one's own time better” – R

“Can encourage me to complete tasks” - R

“An important impact on me as I am able to manage my time and become a productive person with ODL learning methods” – R

“Not delaying time in completing a task” – R

“...able to make an assignment before the expiration period” – R

A respondent indicates that every student has his own problem and must solve those problems by himself. Intrinsic motivation can stimulate a student to be independent as he needs to find solutions or alternative solutions to his ODL problems. Without a solution, the learning process is disrupted.

“Everyone has to face it on their own” – R

Respondents also noted that intrinsic motivation encourages them to be more eager to learn. With passion, all the problems faced during ODL can be addressed with strong encouragement as well as influencing students to continue learning. If the internal motivation is weak, it will cause the student to be unenthusiastic to continue learning and not energized to learn.

“I still have a passion to keep learning” – R

“encouraging” – R

“encouraging and energy” – R

“More diligent and eager to learn” – R

Self-motivation also results from a strong impulse of internal motivation. Self-confidence and criticism can be a trigger for the drive to succeed. Believing in oneself makes the available lessons and skills an effective tool for achieving the desired goal. Respondents stated with intrinsic motivation students are motivated to understand the topics studied. For positive-minded individuals, strong internal motivation can be a source of encouragement to achieve success.

“Be confident in yourself and make criticism an incendiary to succeed” – R

“Intrinsic motivation gives self-belief that learning and acquired skills can be an effective agent in achieving the goals dreamed of. So, with the available motivation, students are at once interested in mastering the topic being studied” – R

The respondent noted that intrinsic motivation is important and encourages them to focus more on learning sessions. This may be compared to the fact that in the classroom, the students were not bothered by the large number of students in the classroom and only focused on what was achieved through the ODL. Other disorders do not exist because the respondents are alone in the study space and the focus is more focused on what is taught during the ODL. The strength of the internal motivational impulse greatly influences the student's behavior which is geared towards focusing on the learning session.

“The impact is important so that I can strengthen my focus level in the classroom” – R

“so that I am more focused on learning” – R

“Can Focus” – R

Some respondents are of the view that ODL provides an opportunity for them to improve their learning performance. Some say the targets to be achieved can be achieved during ODL, can bring success, improve performance and even grade subjects. Therefore, the achievement of student performance is also considered to be better or better when ODL may be due to certain factors such as time management abilities and lack of outdoor or co-curricular activities. More focus and time at home during MCO also contributed to better performance.

“Can reach the level or target achieved” – R

“so as to be able to bring something to success” – R

“With the advent of an ODL learning system can further improve my performance” – R

“Raising subject grades” – R

The respondent also stated that intrinsic motivation encourages itself to solve learning problems in ODL and try to adapt to the situation at hand. Therefore, ODL is not really an unresolved problem but due to a sudden and unprecedented situation, all the problems that arise are due to the unpreparedness to face things that suddenly happen. Finally, after going through the ODL period during the MCO, the situation becomes easier when the solution to the encounter is resolved and for the unresolved, it is sufficient to adapt to the situation at hand. It is up to every individual to face and accept the situation as it is. On the other hand, for those who can't adapt, ODL will be a burden that is inconvenient for them.

“Able to understand how to overcome ODL learning problems and adapt” – R

Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be concluded that intrinsic motivation has a significant impact on online learners. Most of the students believed that intrinsic motivation played a significant role in encouraging them to participate in ODL. Other than that, students also believe that they would obtain better results with ODL as time could be managed wisely, they could stay focused on learning, there would be less hassle with internet problems at home, there would be no problem with sharing the same devices with family members, and family expenses could be reduced when staying home during ODL. This is supported in Fitriyani, Fauzi & Sari (2020) research, where the authors discovered that intrinsic motivation was one of the factors that made students more enthusiastic and highly motivated in online learning. However, the few setbacks in this study are that it focuses only on undergraduate students from one faculty and one public university. Hence, it is recommended that future researchers extend the study to various faculties of public and private universities in Malaysia. Another area to explore is the intrinsic motivation towards hybrid learning during the endemic and the impact of hybrid learning with the advancement of AI technology on the students' intrinsic motivation.

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