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ONLINE LEARNING CONDITION DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC AMONG THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to unexpected changes in all Institut Pengajian Tinggi Awam (IPTA) operations. In the course of the lockdown, there had been a sudden shift in the educational system from face-to-face instruction to online instruction. Studies have shown that progress in online learning and teaching will be considerably more successful if all students have access to a conducive and healthy learning environment. Thus, the present study seeks to determine the level of online learning conditions during the pandemic among IPTA students. A total of 410 students between the ages of 18 to 32 from 20 IPTAs were selected randomly to participate in the study by answering a series of survey form. Several factors, including insufficient access to appropriate ICT devices, constant internet disruption, and a lack of enthusiasm or motivation to study online, contributed to the study's findings, which indicated a need for improvement in the level of online learning condition among university students during the Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently, students who received appropriate information from their educators and perceived the enjoyment and usefulness of the learning sessions will have greater advantages in dealing with learning processes during the COVID-19 pandemic when compared to students who did not share the same feelings and treatment. |

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study is to determine the level of online learning conditions during Covid-19 pandemic among IPTA students. In line with the technological development that we experience, the progress of e-learning technology that is providing training, teaching and learning a better quality (Masrom, 2007) as well. Consequently, the education field is seen to be reasonably evolving as an effect of it leading to a refined future education by taking into consideration the new vision brings in terms of learning skills and knowledge trends (Hussin, 2018). Following that, the Covid-19 pandemic has pushed the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) to implement online learning for students nationwide. This urged the institutes to come up with a revised course content, delivery and assessment approaches while maintaining the initial course objectives to sustain the continuation of education for students nationwide.

The Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) also took efforts in guiding the higher education institutions as they revised their content to suit the pandemic (Mohamad Nasri et al., 2020). However, this news received mixed feelings as issues such as internet availability and demographic differences arose. Researches such as Filius et al. (2019), and, Bao (2020) they believe that embarking onto online education would require a significant planning and also proper investment. Therefore, the shifting phase of educational progress brought uncertainty and distress as well to students. Accessibility to high-quality online learning environment adds a significant information transfer between teacher and student for knowledge and instructional material (Stosic & Stosic, 2015). Solely having the means for distance studies will not suffice and the condition of online learning for student must be conducive to encourage and inhibit quality learning. |

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Malaysian government took actions such as implementing a nationwide Movement Control Order (MCO) from 18th of March, 2020 onwards to control the virus outbreak as well as to mitigate the pandemic. The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) Malaysia decided to pause all face-to-face lectures and urged all higher education institution to delve into online learning to control the pandemic. As an alternative to the traditional face-to-face educational approach, most local universities sorted towards implementing online learning for their students. This urged the institutes to come up with a revised course content, delivery and assessment approaches while maintaining the initial course objectives to sustain the continuation of education for students nationwide.

Online learning through electronic devices with internet access became the alternate learning method due to the spread of this disease that resulted in the closure of face-to-face classes. Online learning or distance learning is defined by Moore and Kearsley (1996) as it being a learning environment where students along with lecturers or teachers are separated by distance and occasionally by time. Online education is a process in which students along with teachers establish interaction and communication in relation to course content through internet-based learning technologies (Curran, 2008). Berge (2007) reported that technology is here to stay and it has become an essential need in handling educational or instructive needs to develop the society's level of knowledge.

Effective online learning requires a variety of approaches due to the use of technology, content design, learning assessment and practices differs in online setting than conventional ways (Fayer, 2017). Online learning has been implemented in synchronous and asynchronous environments. These learning methods brought freedom in learning as it connects teachers anywhere they want (Singh and Thurman, 2019). Synchronous and the asynchronous are the two modes of online learning that depends on the optional interaction timing (Finkelstein, 2006; Abdullah, 2011). Synchronous online learning is the implication of interaction between lecturer and students during class via video conferencing or chatrooms, meanwhile asynchronous online learning refers to creating opportunities for lecturers and students to interact before and after online class via emails or discussion threads (Selvanathan et al., 2020). According to Stoetzel and Shedrow, (2020), online learning is a type of learning method conducted through the internet so teachers and students do not need to be in physical present or face-to-face while in the learning process.

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Online learning provides benefits for independent learning and also in developing new skills in the process of leading an age-long learning (Dhawan, 2020). Online learning are often known via multiple addressing and terms such as web, online learning, or instruction via computer assistance. Berteau (2009) believes that some experts stand by the notion that online learning serves as a way of teaching that is consisting of multiple technological integration that are sought while some were of the notions that the substitution of distant education is facilitated by internet application as a way of effective and rapid communications. Some researchers agree that online learning provides flexibility in the learning process and students' motivation (Tesar 2020). In addition to that, universities introduced to online portals with courses available and embark on efforts to enhance E-learning worldwide (Chen 2010; Yengin et al. 2011; Shahzad et al., 2020).

A study done by Woo and Kimmick (2020) showed that the discussion about adopting online learning has been time consuming and difficult so is the attitude towards online learning too. Murphy (2020) inferred that the online education system is new but will evolve to be as effective as traditional methods as well. Not only that, online learning, Hussin (2018), states, self-direction and flexible learning regardless of time and place is enabled through accessible online platforms and tools all over. There has been multiple obstacles raised relating to online learning. Ertmer (1999) recognized barriers compromising first order and second order barrier. Hardware, access and technical support are classified under the first order and the second order barrier often relates to pedagogy, belief or personal preferences. Another scholar, Pelgrum (2001) identified two classification for online learning as well. Namely, falling under the categories of material barrier referring to the lack of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) resources and the second category; non-material barriers relays on teachers' knowledge and skills.

To combat the pandemic, online learning seem to be the most effective method to continue the learning process. However, the learning process was seen to be a struggle for some students due to bad online learning condition. 52% of students in Sabah, Malaysia do not have the proper access to internet due to the infrastructural lacking ('52 Peratus', 2020). Besides, the limited accessibility to the internet, the students experience difficulty in communicating with their lectures, interaction with their friends, and laboratory access, which affected their studies (Selvanathan et al., 2020). Multiple students and educators are inexperienced with utilizing technology for online education through pandemic (Doyumğaç et al., 2020). Therefore, inadequate information and communication technology competency hinders online education during the pandemic. This study implies Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989). This would allow this study to understand the level of online learning of IPTA students.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The approach of this research is by using a quantitative approach. The design of this research comprises the correlational study using the survey method, where the online learning condition is treated as a variable. Responds from 427 IPTA students aged 18 to 25 was collected by simple random sampling technique. The sample of the participants was drawn from a population of 584,576 students (Statistik Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020) from 20 IPTA across Malaysia as the required sample size in accordance to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table is 384. The questionnaire was distributed online.

The survey instrument is based on the constructs validated by Davis (1989), adapted to the context of this study. The survey include perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and behavioral intention comprising 12 questions of 5-point Likert Scale. A pre-test study was conducted and the Cronbach's alpha was found to be .931 for online learning condition, reflecting a good level of reliability. The usable data is 410 after the process of data cleaning and screening. Then SPSS version 26 is applied to analyze the data. The reliability of the actual test is also recorded. Descriptive analysis is then done to determine the level of the variables. |

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4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

[Table 1: Level of Online learning Condition (n=410)]

Level	Percent	Mean	SD
Online Learning Condition		2.256	.580
Low (1.00 - 2.33)	6.8		
Moderate (2.34 - 3.66)	56.6		
High (3.67 - 5.00)	31.0		

According to Table 1, the level of online learning condition during Covid-19 pandemic among IPTA students is low as the mean is 2.256 (SD=.580). It can be deduced that despite the introduction of online education into the Malaysian Education Blueprint of 2013-2025, Malaysian IPTA student’s online learning condition is in a low level as they are still facing difficulties in adapting to the shift towards. This in accordance to the research done by Filius et al. (2019), and, Bao (2020) with their outcome that suggests entering online education would require a significant planning and also proper investment. This would further ensure a better online learning experience for students. This is in line with a study done by Efriana (2021), this may be due to the shortages faced by educators in term of understanding the subject material to deliver it online, their inability to use technology as they were unprepared for online education followed by the limitations faced by students in terms of inadequate device availability, low enthusiasm or motivation towards embarking education online and shortage in terms of internet access showing a need for improvement to this condition.

In addition to that, TAM used determines the acceptance and adaptability of online learning condition for IPTA students. The findings suggest that the inability of ease of use and usefulness very much affects the behavior of using technology that consequently affects the motivation towards learning that affects the communication effectiveness. Just as the study by Salloum et al., (2019) that determines the acceptance of e-learning that showed that perceived ease of use is affected by computer playfulness for e-learning. Along the way that study also showed that the information quality and perceived enjoyment and accessibility significantly affect perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought drastic and unexpected changes to the educational progress. As a nation that focuses on the educational development among students as a dire need to improve us nation to a better state, it is important to continuously understand the greater good this shift could bring. This shift should be well utilized for it to be incorporated into the education system when Covid-19 is no more too. Both the educators as well as the student’s viewpoint should be taken into consideration into improvising the educational standards of Malaysian students. In conclusion, this study shows a low level of online learning condition during Covid-19 pandemic among IPTA students. However, at the stage of data collection, implication of online learning was still at the beginning stage for many students nationwide. Subsequently, it is important to track the progress of online learning condition and students’ response towards it as timely as possible. At the same time, the Technology Acceptance Model 1 has greatly accommodated this research’s need to obtain feedback by interceding to understand the level of online learning in terms of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, subsequent behavioral intentions and actual usage of IPTA students. Moreover, ways to make online learning useful for students should be emphasized to help also to improve course productivity. In addition to that, online learning is found easy for most students, therefore better outcomes should be considered to incorporate this into the education system post Covid-19 pandemic as well.

As far as this study is done, future studies are suggested to explore other stressors that affects online learning condition such as mental health, technology literacy financial status and family background as well. These stressors may also play an

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important role towards the learning condition of students nationwide, thus the need of an in-depth study on this matter. Besides, an in-depth study to address the educators view point should be done to understand their grasp of online learning condition during Covid-19 pandemic. This subsequently help improve the educational progress for both parties. Moreover, studies to improvise students online learning condition needs to be undertaken as the nation is still observing movement control order while education is still implemented online. Future research is encouraged to comprehensively understand the conditions of online learning in depth as the current study is limited to descriptive analysis.

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