

THE ONLINE LEARNING READINESS: TECHNOLOGICAL SKILL READINESS AND GENDER IMPACT

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the early year 2020, the world has been shocked by the COVID-19 outbreak. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the world to a standstill, entire cities have been locked down, and people have been restricted to their homes to stop or slow the spread of this disease (Rafique, Mahmood, Warraich, & Rehman, 2021). This outbreak has affected people's daily routines. It is included social, career, economics, education, and so on. In terms of education, the minister had announced the different phases and methods to be adopted while academic institutions were closed. Most universities have transformed their way of teaching and learning environment. One of the teachings and learning methods is Open and Distance Learning (ODL). It was supported by Rafique, Mahmood, Warraich, and Rehman (2021) which stated that Corona Virus Disease or COVID-19 has changed the way of teaching and learning process. They explained that online learning provides a computer-mediating environment for sharing one's perspective with others confidently and comfortably. If both instructors and students connected virtually during the teaching and learning process, it can be assumed as an example of online learning. Nowadays, many media or platforms can be used by instructors or students such as social media. This was supported by Min-Ling, Chien, Chao-Hsiu, and Zang-Yuan (2010) who stated that an online course environment provides communication tools to facilitate interpersonal communication among teachers and students. Readiness is defined as being prepared mentally or physically for some experience or action (So & Swotman, 2006). It requires people to accept any form of teaching-learning method. Other than that, readiness is also defined as students' perception in delivery, self-confidence in using e-communication channels, and students' autonomy in learning participation (Yuk, et al., 2021). In addition, the Chapnick Readiness Model (2000) was used as the theoretical framework in the study Coopasami, Knight, and Pete (2017). This model groups different factors into eight readiness categories which are psychological readiness, sociological readiness, environmental readiness, human resource readiness, financial readiness, technological skill readiness, equipment readiness, and content readiness. However, this study only focuses on technological skill readiness among students.

This paper explores technological readiness as a key factor related to students' participation in online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak and taking into consideration gender differences (Yuk et al., 2021). Thus, this study will explore online learning in terms of technological readiness among Faculty of Information Management students from different levels of education. There are three (3) programs offered in the faculty which are Diploma in Information Management, Diploma in Library Management, and Bachelor of Science in Library Management.

Several studies have been conducted around the world regarding online learning. To strengthen the readiness concepts, McVay (2001) developed a 13-item instrument for measuring readiness for online learning. The instrument focuses on student behaviour and attitudes as predictors. Furthermore, Chapnick Readiness Model (2000) also outlined the eight categories of e-learning readiness. There are many scholars came out with their categories, scale or theories which contribute to the online learning readiness. Most of the categories, scales, or theories have the similarities such as technological skills. Due to the most popular categories took under those models, the researchers decided to assess one of the categories from the Chapnick Readiness Model (2000) which is technological skill readiness. Technological skill readiness refers to the availability of technical support among students (Coopasami, Knight, & Pete, 2017). It is slightly similar to the dimension of online learning readiness invented by McVay (2000) which stated that computer and Internet self-efficacy refers to individuals' ability to use the technology. The objective of this study is to identify the perceived technological skill readiness for online learning among FIM students in UiTM Kedah. There are TWO (2) research questions in this study which are:

1. What is the technological skill readiness perceived by students?
2. Is student technological skill readiness for online learning affected by gender?

This study will explore to what extent the level of technical skill readiness of the students towards the subject undertaken in the current semester. Other than that, this study also discovers the impact of gender in online learning readiness among FIM students in UiTM Kedah.

2. METHODOLOGY

The first concept of online learning readiness was proposed by Warner, Christie, and Choy (1998). They defined OLR as 1) students' preference for classroom instructional method against the face-to-face learning, 2) students' confidence in using different kinds of technology, internet, and especially computer-mediated tools for communication in online learning, and 3) students' engagement in their autonomous learning. According to Yuk et al. (2021), most of the studies define online learning readiness as students' perception in delivery, self-confidence in using e-communication channels, and students' autonomy in learning participation. Students need to be committed to their lecture and tutorial hours and tasks given by the instructors. This study will be conducted using Chapnick Readiness Model (2000). From eight readiness categories in this model, only one category will be assessed which is technological skill readiness. The researchers will apply the quantitative method as research methodology and questionnaire as a research instrument. Most of the questions will be an opt-in form of a five-point Likert Scale. This model is equipped with a Chapnick readiness score guide. This guide will be referred by the researchers to categorizing the respondents' answers. The lower score they get, the further evaluation is required to improve their technical skills.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The previous studies showed that there is a need to come out with new attributes that contribute to the success of the teaching and learning process. From the issue and problem that arise, hopefully, it may guide the other researchers to find the solution to cope with the problems faced by instructors and students in completing an online learning environment. Technological skill readiness is important to the students because online teaching requires

students to communicate with instructors virtually. The assessment of technological readiness measures whether respondents or students have appropriate technical skills to handle online learning.

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this conceptual paper shows that the COVID-19 pandemic affects the ways of teaching and learning methods. Most of the instructors and student tried their best to support and make the process happened and be successful. Many factors contribute to the successful or unsuccessful learning process, including the commitment given by both instructors and students. Although all eight readiness is important to evaluate, due to the time constraint, only one of the readiness categories will be assessed. In terms of future research, it is recommended that the other seven categories of readiness can be explored to know the level of readiness of the students towards online learning.

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