Students' Acceptance and Motivation on Andragogical Approaches Towards their Academic Performance

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ABSTRACT

Online Distance Learning (ODL) has been practiced widely around the world. The educational delivery of ODL provides learners vast opportunities to deal with the learning process, that includes time, place as well as pace of learning. Assisted by technology, ODL has tremendously improved the educational system in many ways. This erupts the possibility of implementing andragogical approach through ODL. Hence, this study, which is guided by Knowles's theory of andragogy, is qualitative research investigating the issue of learning process via andragogical approaches of seven adult learners in UiTM Perlis, Malaysia. The study also seeks whether students' attitudes vary differently among themselves throughout ODL so that their performance during class could be evaluated. The findings of the study support andragogical approaches which they positively affect the students' learning experiences.

Keywords: *Adult Learners, Andragogy, E-learning, Open Distance Learning*

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2020, an outbreak of COVID-19 surged all around the world which caused interference in many sectors such as the economy and the education sectors. The pandemic of COVID-19 has disrupted normal life and working environment in almost all parts of the world. Among other industries, the education sector has been hit hard (Baber, 2021). Hence, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has been presenting tremendous difficulties for educators and students.

In the education field, the learning system has to be changed to virtual classroom. It was a new norm to the students for they were accustomed to physical study environment. COVID-19 and lockdown have compelled education to be delivered through e-learning (Azlan et al., 2020). Moreover, online education has been widely used due to the closing of schools and universities. Besides halting almost all socio-economic activities, non-essential services, including schools and universities, were instructed to close, and all teaching activities were migrated online (Azlan et al., 2020). They must adapt to the different ways of learning by utilizing advanced technologies in the education system rather than using conventional ways such as in the classroom.

Furthermore, e-learning might be more of a forced learning process than a planned and willingly one. Thus, it might influence the attitude of the students on how they accept the new environment. The situation during this COVID-19 outbreak is exceptional, and negative impact of lockdown and long quarantine period on the learners' psychological condition is the point of concern (Brooks et al., 2020). In doing so, this study incorporates andragogical approach where students are acknowledged to be autonomous, self-directed, internally motivated, and problem-solving oriented. Knowles's theory of andragogy counters pedagogy concept where the former focuses on the learners rather than teachers. As stated in Knowles (1980), "andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn, in contrast to pedagogy as the art and science of teaching children" (p. 43). Hence, the present study helps to seek how andragogical approaches and innovation by the instructor influence the students' attitudes as well as their academic performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowles theory of andragogy is no longer foreign among adult learners. Similar to pedagogy that addresses methods of teaching children, andragogy takes up methods of teaching adults. It is believed that adults learn best through driven stimulus. Knowles (1968) outlined five assumptions about adult learners that are: 1) adults are self-directed, 2) adults use experiences as means in learning, 3) adults are aware of their priorities, that make them ready to learn, 4) adults possess different perspectives in learning, and 5) adults are internally and extrinsically motivated to learn.

In other words, Knowles acknowledges adults as autonomous learners and that adult learning as self-directed learning. This is concurred by Meriam and Cafarela (1999), Knowles seems to picture adult learners as free agents apart from the social context of one's world. Learners are expected to set their own learning tempo with the assistance of instructors. Here the role of the instructors is to facilitate the fulfilment and production of knowledge. Roberson (2002) further justifies that andragogy's informality allows learners to be involved in their own learning experience as well as helping to set the parameters of the experience. Therefore, appropriate learning approach that is andragogy should be considered in teaching adults, including web-based instruction (Gibbons & Wentworth, 2001). Wlodowsky and Ginsberg (1995) also mentioned how adult education must move beyond traditional concept.

Nevertheless, there are challenges that arise when utilizing andragogy to the adult learners. Johnson (2014) highlights the issue of adults transitioning their learning style from childhood to adulthood as well as the readiness of the adults in becoming responsible, self-directed learners. In addition, Miflin (2004) adds that individuals who have made a recent transition from childhood to adulthood, may still lack the educational experience necessary to function as independent, self-directed adult learners. Another challenge for the andragogical approach is that whether it could be applied to all learning environment (Johnson, 2014). Such includes the ODL; could andragogy be implemented throughout the online learning environment?

While there are certain challenges and implications, Houle (1996) as cited in McGrath (2009) is of the opinion that andragogy is the most learner-centred of all patterns of adult education programmes. This is

also confirmed by Pratt (1993) that andragogy has been adopted by legions of adult educators around the world. With that being said, it is sufficient for this study to be carried out.

METHODOLOGY

Since the implementation of ODL during the pandemic, it may open to the possibility of practising andragogical approach for the working adults through e-learning. Therefore, this paper sets out to investigate how andragogical approaches perform by lecturers affect students' attitudes towards learning as well as to seek whether students' attitudes affect students' academic performance.

The research questions are based on substantial literature on the issue of ODL and andragogical theory. The research questions are:

1. How do andragogical approaches implement by the lecturers affect students' acceptance towards learning?
2. How do the students' motivation affect their academic performance?

Respondents involved in this study were seven adult learners who are undergoing their part time education besides working. Since they are currently studying in Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Kampus Arau, Perlis, all of them are Bumiputera students, ranging from 26 – 35 years old. Four of them are single while three of them are already married.

This research is a qualitative study which focuses on interviews to gather information needed for the study. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted for further investigation of the participants' responses. Also, semi-structured interviews were chosen for the study as they offer the possibility to dig deeper into specific points that could emerge during the sessions with the respondents. The aim was to allow the respondents to express themselves freely on the theme and sub-themes initiated by the interviewer and let them work on expanding answers based on the questions that they felt needed to be spent more.

As mentioned by McNamara (1999), interviews are specifically handy in getting story out from a participant's experience. He also adds that interviews may be beneficial as follow-up to certain respondents to questions, e.g., to further investigate their responses. Open-ended interview questions were derived from literature review on andragogical theory as well as how ODL may enhance their academic performance. Thus, an interview protocol is designed prior to the interview session.

The qualitative data have been analyzed, structured and broken into sub-themes. Initially, all the interview transcripts were read through. The interview transcripts were later segmented by dividing the transcripts into segments of information. The researcher then labelled each segment by assigning codes. These codes were then examined for overlaps and redundancy. The interview transcripts were analyzed for recurring patters and the themes were classified according to categories. The researcher then constructed the coding categories that were used for the transcriptions. The researcher compared the coded categories and decided on the standard coding categories, referring to the most repeated patterns that were found in the transcripts. The codes were then collapsed into themes. The researcher then derived the main themes. Lastly, the researcher derived the sub-themes.

Interview sessions have taken place in a conducive environment, mostly outside campus and were recorded. Telephone interviews were also conducted for interviewees who were not available for face-to-face interview. Each session lasted about 30 minutes to an hour. Later, the recordings of the interview were transcribed verbatim using Atlas TI.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, each respondent alongside with his or her attitudes within the e-learning environment was described in tables as shown below. The main theme is on students' attitudes in e-learning environment while the sub-themes include: 1) adequacy of online learning activities provided by the lecturers, 2) students' ability to cope with work and studies, 3) students' issues on technology during ODL, and 4) students' motivation in learning. The seven individuals studied in this qualitative study displayed different personal characteristics as well as diverse approaches to the ODL. Further explanations based on the structured themes are later explained in this study. The explanations were also categorized to answer the following research questions.

1. How do andragogical approaches implement by the lecturers affect students' acceptance towards learning?

Table 1: Adequacy online learning activities provided by the lecturers

Respondent(s)	Gender	Students' attitudes in e-learning environment
		Adequacy online learning activities provided by the lecturer
RA	Female	Satisfied
RB	Female	Satisfied
RC	Male	Satisfied
RD	Female	Satisfied
RE	Male	Satisfied
RF	Male	Satisfied
RG	Female	Satisfied

All seven adult learners were satisfied with the activities and lessons carried out by the lecturers. Lessons were smoothly conducted and equaled with normal f2f interaction classes. Explanations were clear and interesting, using assorted platforms to make online learning more enjoyable. Assignments were given to the students as planned and submission of the assignments were scheduled accordingly. Nonetheless, most of them preferred to have a f2f classes more than having it virtually. They considered of having more physical interaction with the lecturers. Even though they were able to have various assistance, namely virtual friendly applications, online librarians, and references that could be obtained from the Internet, the need of seeing the lecturer face-to-face is the most preferable alternative.

Table 2: Ability to cope with work and studies

Respondent(s)	Gender	Marital status	Students' attitudes in e-learning environment
			Ability to cope with work and studies
RA	Female	Single	Yes / able to WFH
RB	Female	Married	No / exhausted of WFH and WFO
RC	Male	Single	Yes / able to WFH
RD	Female	Single	No / WFO
RE	Male	Married	No / WFO; thus, able to study during office hour
RF	Male	Married	No / exhausted of WFH and WFO
RG	Female	Single	Yes / able to WFH

From a total of seven respondents, three of them were able to cope with their studies since they were allowed to Work from Home (WFH) during the pandemic. These respondents, namely RA, RC and RG, did not have other responsibilities at home. Meanwhile RD and RE were practically exhausted since they must Work from Office (WFO) and travel to work for quite a distance. By the time they reached home, they were tired and demotivated to look at their assignments, and during weekends they had to manage the house chores. RE especially managed to study and work on his assignment only at the office as he was facing difficulties with the network at home. In contrast, RB and RF were allowed to take turn to WFO and WFH, at the same time supervising children who were having online classes at home and managing house chores since their spouses were also working.

2. How do the students' motivation affect their academic performance?

Table 3: Technology issues during ODL

Respondent(s)	Students' attitudes in e-learning environment
	Technology issues during ODL
RA	None
RB	Facing network congestion
RC	None
RD	None
RE	Home network is unable to connect to the Internet
RF	None
RG	Facing network congestion

It is believed that most of the respondents did not have problems in using technology since they were all familiar with the online platforms used by the lecturers. This is because they have been using technology in their work environment. However, the only disadvantage is when RB and RG were sharing the network with their children. Uploading and downloading videos and recordings would take some time and patience, what more with sharing the same Internet connection or data from a single source. In addition, slow and limited coverage seemed to be the challenge too especially for RE who stayed in a restricted coverage area. Yet, those affected students stressed that the lecturer was understanding and had permitted more time for them to complete their assigned tasks.

Table 4: Motivation in learning

Respondent(s)	Gender	Marital status	Students' attitudes in e-learning environment	
			Motivation in learning	Reasons to further study
RA	Female	Single	Highly motivated	Career development
RB	Female	Married	Highly motivated	Self-satisfaction and job requirement
RC	Male	Single	Highly motivated	Improve discipline
RD	Female	Single	Highly motivated	Career development
RE	Male	Married	Highly motivated	Better lifestyle
RF	Male	Married	Highly motivated	Make more money
RG	Female	Single	Highly motivated	Self-satisfaction

In terms of motivation, most of them were motivated to cope with their studies. They seemed to manage both their studies, work, and families satisfactorily despite being exhausted to juggle everything simultaneously. Even though RB, RE as well as RF are already married, their commitments in studying could not be denied. They were highly motivated and that answers andragogical approach where adult students are both intrinsic and extrinsically motivated to further studies. Intrinsic motivation such as self-satisfaction, improve discipline, career development, better lifestyle as well as make more money have made all respondents determined to pursue their studies. Whereas extrinsic factors i.e., job requirement, has played a minimum factor which has influenced only RB.

All these ultimately support the andragogy theory. As mentioned by Knowles (as cited in Culatta, 2021) stated that adult learners are self-directed and expected to take responsibility for decisions making. They take full charge of their studies and are able to cope with the lessons and tasks given despite the challenges faced while studying virtually, especially during the pandemic. With the help of technology, it sure is perfect for them to follow the path that most appropriately reflects their need to learn (Fidishun, 2012).

On the other hand, adult learners' attitudes i.e., motivation, determination, and life experiences do affect their performances in studies. This applies to the sixth principles of andragogy in which adult learners are responsive to internal factors more than external. It somehow relates to Deci and Ryan's Self-determination theory that highlights adults being motivated by internal urges (Ryan & Deci, 2000) namely, the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life, and the like (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

CONCLUSION

In general, students' attitudes of going through e-learning environment and on campus are particularly comparable. Despite the difficulties occur, the process of teaching and learning of adult learners can be said to be a successful one during this pandemic. Interactive learning activities are designed to capture students' attention and learning style as well as to provide productive input. Besides, multiple online platforms are used to engage students' interest and increase students' skills especially using technology.

Nevertheless, more research should be carried out to know more on the issue. Some limitations need also be considered for continuous improvement of the study. The results could not be generalized to every adult learner in other higher education institutions. Perhaps, a wider coverage and distinctive set of interview questions could possibly help to elaborate further about the subject.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Darus, N. A. and Mohd Radzi, A. H. constructed the questions for semi-structured interviews with the respondents. Ibrahim, N. F. W., has conducted the interview and took the lead role in planning the whole research. Ibrahim, N. F. W., also has contributed to data analysis procedures with the help of Darus, N. A.

Mohd Radzi, A. H., checked the final interpretation analysis and Ibrahim, N. F. W., took the lead part in writing. All authors provided critical feedback and helped shape the research, analysis, and manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

I/We certify that the article is the Authors' and Co-Authors' original work. The article has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. This research/manuscript has not been submitted for publication nor has it been published in whole or in part elsewhere. We testify to the fact that all Authors have contributed significantly to the work, validity and legitimacy of the data and its interpretation for submission to Jurnal Intelek.

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