



Students' Perceptions of the Oral Presentation Planning Tool (OPT) eBook Manual

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ABSTRACT

This study reports on students' perceptions of the Oral Presentation Planning Tool eBook Manual, a scaffolded digital resource designed to support undergraduate students in planning and organising oral presentations. Informed by scaffolding theory, the manual integrates step-by-step instructional content and a visual planning worksheet to guide learners through speech preparation tasks. It was reviewed by an instructional design expert and a language testing specialist to ensure its validity and pedagogical clarity and appropriateness. A descriptive cross-sectional survey was also conducted with 32 undergraduate students enrolled in an oral communication course across three academic programme clusters to gauge their perceptions towards the manual for using Oral Presentation Planning Tool (OPT). Data were collected using a self-constructed online questionnaire comprising demographic items, six 10-point interval-scaled items, and one open-ended question. Descriptive analysis revealed positive perceptions of the manual's content, usability, and relevance. The majority of the students also indicated interest in purchasing the manual with most preferring it in PDF format. One student suggested the inclusion of rhetorical strategies in future iterations. The study underscores the potential of scaffolded instructional materials in supporting communication-based learning within a technology-enhanced higher education learning environment.

Keywords: oral presentation skills, scaffolding, digital learning tools, student perceptions, higher education

INTRODUCTION

In higher education, oral presentations are a common form of assessment, particularly in language and communication courses, where they serve as a key avenue for developing essential 21st-century skills. Oral presentations are designed to cultivate students' confidence, clarity, and competence, attributes vital for academic success and professional readiness (Thao, 2019). Through the process of planning, rehearsing, and delivering a speech, students are expected to enhance their ability to articulate ideas clearly, persuade an audience, and engage in structured communication.

However, the reality in many classrooms is that students often encounter persistent challenges that hinder their performance. Among the most common difficulties are speech anxiety, limited vocabulary repertoire, poor content organisation, and fear of negative judgment from peers or instructors (Mak, 2019; Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019; Rusli et al., 2018). These affective and cognitive barriers frequently diminish the effectiveness of oral presentations as a learning tool. Despite the introduction of technological aids in providing guidance, students still struggle with transforming outlines into coherent, engaging, and confidently delivered speeches. What remains



lacking is pedagogical guidance that supports not only the structure of a speech, but also the thinking, reflection, and confidence-building processes behind its preparation.

E-books, in particular, have emerged as accessible and flexible alternatives to printed material, capable of offering rich multimodal learning experiences. As Memon and Memon (2025) argue, digital tools can bridge geographic and economic gaps in education by giving learners equitable access to knowledge, especially in regions with limited physical infrastructure. The value of e-books lies not only in their portability and convenience but also in their potential to house interactive and learner-centred content that is adaptable to various learning needs.

Nonetheless, the mere availability of digital resources does not automatically translate into improved learning outcomes. In other words, having access to powerful tools is not enough; learners also need clear, accessible manuals or guides that help them use these tools purposefully and effectively. A compelling example is provided by Sung and Wu (2017), who developed a dynamic e-book system that adjusted content complexity based on students' reading comprehension skills. Their findings demonstrate that when digital resources are designed with adaptive and scaffolded learning paths, they can significantly improve learner motivation, satisfaction, and overall performance (Sung & Wu, 2017). Such resources shift the role of e-books from passive reading material to interactive learning companions. While this example is drawn from reading comprehension, the principles of scaffolding and adaptive support are equally applicable to performance-based tasks such as oral presentations.

This principle is equally applicable to spoken academic tasks, where digital tools can function as scaffolds for performance-based assessments (Mohd Yusof et al., 2025). Robillos (2022), for instance, implemented a digital graphic organizer (LoiLooNote) to help students prepare for oral presentations. The tool was found to enhance multiple aspects of performance, clarity, fluency, and coherence as well as foster critical thinking dispositions such as open-mindedness and self-confidence. However, as with other tools, its effectiveness depended on how well learners were introduced to its features and guided through its use. This reinforces the importance of pairing digital innovation with structured instructional support. Robillos (2022) highlights that digital tools, when thoughtfully designed and accompanied by pedagogical guidance, can effectively address both the cognitive complexity and emotional demands of presentation tasks.

Guided by these pedagogical and technological insights, the present study introduces the OPT eBook Manual, an interactive, student-centred resource developed to complement the existing OPT framework. Unlike conventional templates, the eBook Manual developed in this study offers a step-by-step guide to oral presentation preparation, featuring annotated sample speeches, structured outlines, reflective questions, and visual learning aids. Its development aligns with Ilmudinulloh's (2023) creation of an interactive e-book with explicit instructions to assist students in preparing final exam presentation slides. In his study, the e-book featured the 4D model validated by media and content experts and achieved an 84% satisfaction rate. Similarly, Rahmayani et al. (2024) demonstrated the usage of E-book Augmented Reality (AR) based on STEM approaches on renewable energy material. The core aspect of the e-book is not just concerning the content but the user manual guidelines that include instructions for using the application. In line with the studies discussed, it is imperative to note that well-designed e-books not only enhance student learning but also provide lecturers with reliable assessment support. In



this context, a practical manual that explains and demonstrates to learners how to optimise the application.

To this end, this study aims to demonstrate that the OPT eBook Manual is similarly designed to support students in both the technical and pedagogical aspects of oral presentation preparation. By focusing on both the affective and cognitive dimensions of public speaking, it functions as a pedagogical scaffold that bridges the gap between planning and performance. The primary objective of this pilot study is to examine students' perceptions of the OPT eBook Manual as a supportive digital learning tool.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is based on the scaffolding theory, which suggests that More Knowledgeable Others (MKO) such as instructors, peers or digital tools, should aid less skilled students. By doing so, the less skilled students can perform tasks they would not be able to accomplish independently. This process takes place within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD henceforth), which refers to what a learner can do unaided versus what they can achieve with help (Boştină-Bratu et al., 2022). The pioneer of scaffolding in education, Jerome Bruner, denotes that the process of development occurs when instructors facilitate learning through co-construction of language (Margolis, 2020). With the use of the eBook, instructors may provide assistance as learners gradually develop self-reliance in their learning process. This collaborative relationship between instructors and learners, where instructors help learners to extend their capabilities through the use of the eBook, establishes the core aspect of learning.

The positive impact of scaffolding on students' performance has been significantly highlighted by a number of researchers (Ginaya et al., 2018; Öztürk & Öztürk, 2021). Sarmiento-Campos et al. (2022) underlined the impact of scaffolding on Iranian EFL learners' speaking performance in two different groups (experimental and control). They discovered that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in the speaking posttest. This shows that the application of scaffolding to the experimental group in classrooms is effective in enhancing learners' speaking performance. This is consistent with observations by Naibaho (2019) and Alwahibee (2019) who provided empirical evidence on the positive impact of scaffolding on students' speaking achievement. Additionally, Sim et al. (2023) mentioned that online instructor scaffolding strategies are useful in enhancing Malaysian students' speaking performance in a technology-based classroom. Guo et al. (2023) studied the effects of blended learning-based scaffolding strategies on students' self-efficacy and willingness to communicate. The findings displayed that students' interaction in the context of this type of scaffolding was able to enhance their self-efficacy and willingness to communicate. All in all, these studies establish that scaffolding is an effective technique for facilitating students' speaking achievement.

In the educational setting, expert scaffolding is primarily used, where language instructors are referred to as experts who provide scaffolds to learners (Kamil et al., 2024; Kelaiaia & Djari, 2020). The experts' priority as subject-matter specialists is to "close" the ZPD. In this study, two types of expert scaffolding are used; soft scaffolds and hard scaffolds. According to Shin et al. (2021), soft-scaffolding refers to adaptive, situational support provided live, responsive to student needs as they arise during instruction. In this study, soft scaffolds are observed when an instructor discusses with each learner to track their development of speech outlines in classrooms using the



eBook manual. Hard scaffolding (Shin et al., 2021) refers to planned, static support embedded in course materials or digital platforms, designed to help university students with anticipated challenges. In addition, this type of scaffolding is more student-centred and involves teachers giving ideas or clues regarding the students' speech outline via the eBook manual.

The second type of scaffolding is self-scaffolding which occurs when students self-manage their ZPD while utilising a pertinent and accessible scaffold (Bosanquet et al., 2021). As stated by Ge et al. (2025), in ZPD, self-scaffolding refers to students actively assisting their own growth by arranging, observing, and adjusting their approach to advance on their own inside their learning zone. Normally, it appears when students start using scaffolds on their own after internalising them. In relation to the e-book, it offers suggested prompts in regard to preparing the speeches to help students control their own learning.

Therefore, the scaffolding theory is implemented as the theoretical foundation of the eBook manual. In particular, expert scaffolding and self-scaffolding were integrated into the eBook manual. Structured instructional materials, such as guided explanations, examples of outlines, and planning prompts that indicate effective presentation preparation, are used to incorporate expert scaffolding. At the same time, interactive elements, which are a presentation planning worksheet that empowers students to take charge of their own preparation, and a set of checklists for the students to ensure important elements of speech preparation are done, facilitate self-scaffolding. The inclusion of the materials and interactive elements is to ensure that students experience a positive learning experience in acquiring oral presentation skills.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional and descriptive research design, which is appropriate for capturing participants' perceptions at a single point in time (Creswell, 2009). This design is deemed suitable to evaluate undergraduate students' perceptions of the Oral Presentation Planning Manual (eBook) which is an instructional resource developed to support the planning and delivery of effective oral presentations. The research was carried out in two main phases: the development and piloting of the manual, followed by its implementation and evaluation through student feedback.

The manual was developed to address essential elements of speech preparation, including attention getters, credibility statements, central ideas, internal previews, supporting details, and conclusions which form the foundation in public speaking pedagogy (Lucas, 2019; Nie et al., 2020; Ryndak et al., 2022). It also features annotated examples (refer to Figure 2) based on informative speech topics. In addition to these conceptual explanations, the manual also contains a dedicated section outlining the features of the Oral Presentation Planning Tool (OPT) and providing step-by-step instructions (refer to Figure 1) on how to use it effectively. Its content was designed in alignment with the learning outcomes of an oral communication course and intended for application across various academic disciplines.

AN EXAMPLE OF MAIN IDEAS AN SUPPORTING DETAILS FOR AN INFORMATIVE SPEECH(1)

Organisational Pattern: **Topical**

Main Point 1:
At the time of her launch on May 31, 1911, Titanic's immense hull was thought to be the largest movable manmade object in the world.

A. According to Geoff Tibbals, in his 1997 book *The Titanic: The extraordinary story of the 'unsinkable' ship*, the Titanic was 882 feet long and weighed about 46,000 tons.

1. This was 100 feet longer and 15,000 tons heavier than the world's current largest ships.

B. It was stated in *Titanic: The truth behind the disaster*, published in 1992 that the Titanic accommodated around 2,345 passengers and 860 crewmembers.

C. The beautiful accommodations of the Titanic were decorated and furnished with only the finest items.

D. Fine parlor suites located on the ship consisted of a sitting room, two bedrooms, two wardrobe rooms, a private bath, and a lavatory.

E. The first-class dining room was the largest on any liner; it could serve 500 passengers at one sitting.

1. Other first-class accommodations included a squash court, swimming pool, library, barber's shop, Turkish baths, and a photographer's dark room.

7

Figure 1. An Example Provided in the Manual

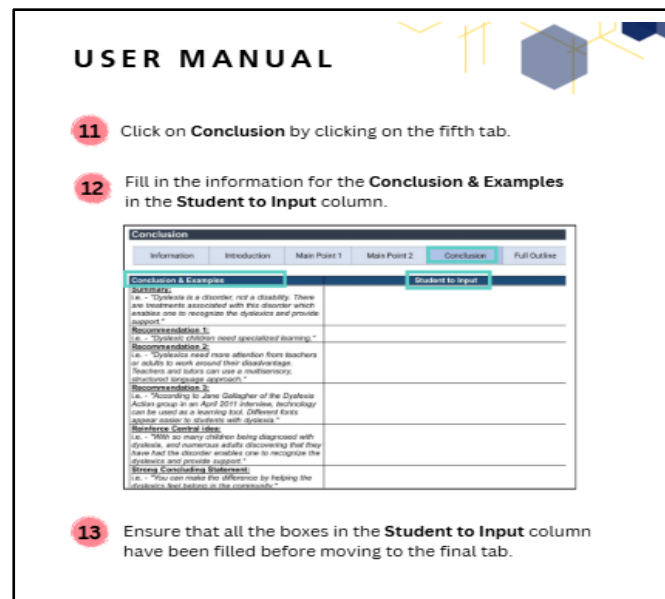


Figure 2. An Excerpt from the Instructions to use OPT

The manual was reviewed by two experts to ensure instructional coherence and content validity. One expert specialised in instructional design and provided feedback on the structure, sequencing, and usability of the content. The second expert, with a background in language testing, assessed the clarity, linguistic appropriateness, and pedagogical alignment of the manual. Revisions were made based on their input to improve terminology, refine the flow of information, and enhance the integration between conceptual explanations and practical application.

Following expert validation, the manual was piloted with ten undergraduate students in a classroom setting. These students, who were not involved in the main study, used the manual during their presentation preparation and offered informal feedback on its clarity, organisation, and ease of use. Their responses informed several minor revisions, particularly in terms of language clarity, visual layout, and the alignment between the instructional content and the planning tool.

The final version of the manual was subsequently introduced to three classes of undergraduate students enrolled in an oral presentation course at Universiti Teknologi MARA. These students were selected through purposive sampling and represented three academic programme clusters: (1) Social Sciences, (2) Science and Technology, and (3) Business Administration. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to recruit participants who had engaged directly with the Oral Presentation Planning Manual and OPT during their oral communication coursework. This approach ensured that all students had sufficient exposure to the materials to provide informed feedback on their design, usefulness, and relevance (Memon et al., 2024). After completing their use of the manual and the planning tool throughout the semester, the students were invited to complete a self-developed questionnaire designed to examine their perceptions of the manual and its potential value as a commercial learning resource.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section collected demographic information, including gender, year of study, and programme cluster. The second section contained six items



measured on a 10-point interval scale, allowing students to rate the usefulness of the manual and their level of interest in purchasing it. A score of 1 indicated "not at all," while a score of 10 indicated "extremely." A 10-point interval scale was employed to capture greater granularity in student perceptions, which allowed for clearer distinctions in their evaluations of the manual's usefulness and purchase intention (Coelho & Esteves, 2007). The final section included an open-ended question asking students to suggest additional topics or features they would like to see included in future iterations of the manual. Prior to administration, the questionnaire was piloted with ten students to ensure clarity and face validity. Minor refinements were made to improve the wording and layout of the items.

Data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The form was administered at the end of the semester after students had completed their use of the manual and planning tool. Participation was voluntary, and responses were anonymous. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS. Qualitative responses to the open-ended item were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework to identify recurring suggestions and key themes for future enhancement of the manual.

RESULTS

A total of 32 undergraduate students participated in this study. Of the total students, 53.1% were male ($n = 17$) and 46.9% were female ($n = 15$). The majority of participants (65.6%) were enrolled in Science and Technology programmes, followed by 21.9% from Business and Management, and 12.5% from the Social Science and Humanities cluster. In terms of academic progression, most students were in Semester 3 (50.0%), while 46.9% were in Semester 1 and 3.1% were in Semester 2. This distribution reflects the typical curriculum design at the institution where data were collected, as oral presentation courses are introduced during the first year of undergraduate study. All participants had completed the oral presentation course and had used the Oral Presentation Planning Manual and its accompanying planning tool as part of their coursework.

This section presents the findings that address the research objective which was to examine students' perceptions of the Oral Presentation Planning Manual (eBook) as a supportive digital learning tool. Five items were measured using a 10-point interval scale to capture students' evaluations of the manual's content, usability, and perceived value, while one item examined their preferred format. Descriptive statistics were computed using SPSS to summarise mean and standard deviations for all survey items as presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Students' Perceptions of the OPT eBook Manual

Item	Description	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I am interested in purchasing this eBook that focuses on enhancing presentation skills.	7.97	1.534



2	The topics covered in this eBook (e.g., speech elements, presentation techniques) are relevant to my academic needs.	8.53	1.413
3	I am likely to use the Oral Presentation Planning Tool that helps organise and visualise my presentation ideas.	8.46	1.502
4	I will consider purchasing the eBook if it includes access to the OPT.	7.94	1.721
5	I would consider the price range of RM20–RM25 reasonable for this eBook.	7.94	1.966

As shown in Table 1, the students rated the relevance of the manual's content highly ($M=8.53$, $SD=1.413$) which suggests a strong alignment with their academic needs. They also indicated a high likelihood of using a tool that helps them organise and visualise their presentation ideas ($M=8.46$, $SD=1.502$). Interest in purchasing the manual was generally favourable ($M=7.97$, $SD=1.534$), particularly if access to the Oral Presentation Planning Tool (OPT) was included ($M=7.94$, $SD=1.966$). The results also demonstrate that the students showed positive consideration in purchasing the manual if the price range is set between RM20 and RM25 ($M=7.94$, $SD=1.966$).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Students' Preference for Manual Format

Item	Description	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
6	I prefer the following format for this eBook:		
	PDF	28	87.5
	ePUB	0	0
	Interactive Online Platform	4	12.5
	Total	32	100



With regard to preferred format, 87.5% of the students ($n = 28$) expressed a preference for a downloadable PDF version of the manual. The remaining 12.5% ($n = 4$) preferred a more interactive platform, such as a website or learning management system. Interestingly, none of the students chose EPUB as their preferred publication format despite being briefed on the differences between these formats during classes. These results suggest a strong student preference for accessible, easy-to-use digital formats, while also indicating interest in more dynamic, platform-based learning tools.

In addition to the scaled items, the questionnaire included an open-ended question inviting the students to suggest additional topics or features they would like to see included in the Oral Presentation Planning Manual or the accompanying OPT. A thematic analysis of the verbatim responses revealed two emergent themes: perceived completeness of the manual and suggested content enhancement.

Several students expressed satisfaction with the existing content, indicating that the manual was sufficiently comprehensive. One student noted, *“I think it’s already complete”* (Student 5), while another commented, *“Everything is good”* (Student 7). These statements suggest a generally positive reception, with no immediate need for expansion.

However, one student proposed a specific area for improvement. Student 21 suggested the inclusion of content on stylistic delivery techniques. The student stated, *“How to add figurative language (proverbs especially) in an oral presentation to attract audience”*. This feedback highlights a desire for deeper rhetorical or linguistic strategies to enhance audience engagement. Overall, the qualitative feedback reflects both endorsement of the current structure and content, as well as interest in further enhancing the manual’s scope to support more impactful delivery.

DISCUSSION

This study explored students’ perceptions of the Oral Presentation Planning Manual (OPT eBook) as a supportive digital learning tool. The findings revealed that students perceived the manual as highly relevant to their academic needs, particularly in terms of content coverage and the organisation of presentation ideas. High average ratings across the quantitative items, along with affirming qualitative responses, suggest that the manual and its accompanying planning tool were generally well received. A total of 87.5 percent of students preferred the PDF format, indicating a demand for accessibility and ease of use in digital resources. While most students expressed satisfaction with the existing content, one respondent offered a specific suggestion for enhancement, highlighting a desire for the inclusion of stylistic features such as figurative language to increase audience engagement.

Students rated the relevance of the manual’s content highly, particularly its focus on speech elements, structure, and techniques. This supports the intention behind the manual, which was designed based on scaffolding theory (Wood et al., 1976) to guide students step by step through the planning and organisation of oral presentations. The manual’s structure was meant to reduce the cognitive load often experienced by first-year students by breaking down complex tasks into manageable stages. Similar to Ilmudinulloh’s (2023) development of an interactive e-book using



the 4D model, the OPT manual was reviewed by both an instructional design expert and a language assessment specialist to ensure its practicality and academic value. Ilmudinulloh's study showed high user satisfaction and feasibility, which aligns with the positive reception of the OPT manual among students in this study.

Students also showed a high interest in purchasing the manual. These responses suggest that students recognised the manual's usefulness, particularly with the embedded visual planning tool. The proposed price range of RM20 to RM25 was rated as reasonable. The clear preference for the PDF version further highlights the importance of developing flexible, device-friendly formats (Kavcic-Colic & Hari, 2024; Kononets et al., 2021). Students and schools often default to PDF because it is a well-known format, making it easier and quicker to use for both creating and accessing materials (Bowes, 2018). These observations are consistent with earlier findings by Lai and Hong (2015), which suggest that students are more likely to adopt digital tools that are affordable, familiar, and relevant to their academic tasks.

The qualitative responses offer further insights as two students stated that the manual was already complete while one recommended including guidance on using figurative language to attract audience attention. Although the current version focuses on helping students organise ideas and structure content, this feedback suggests a need for more stylistic and delivery-based elements in future editions. This reflects students' growing interest in not just content planning but also expressive strategies for engaging an audience which is a crucial shift that educators and instructional designers should consider when developing oral communication materials.

These findings have several implications. Pedagogically, the OPT manual supports the development of oral presentation skills among first-year undergraduates by offering structured guidance that students can follow independently. Since oral presentations are often introduced early in the curriculum, the manual serves as a valuable resource for helping students prepare effectively. Its modular design, which includes the planning tool, promotes learner autonomy and aligns with the core principles of scaffolding theory. Similar outcomes were reported in the study by Ahad et al. (2024), where an Open-Education Resource laboratory manual improved both academic performance and student satisfaction through a curriculum-aligned and updatable format. Li's (2024) study further supports this by showing that students benefit from concise, guided resources that match their learning preferences and time constraints (Biggers & Luo, 2020; Krapf & Pfefferkorn, 2022). By embedding short videos and step-by-step instructions within a learning platform, the study addressed challenges related to attention span and comprehension. Although the OPT manual focuses on oral communication rather than technical skills, the underlying principle is the same which observes that students respond well to learning materials that are clearly structured, visually supported, and easy to follow. The high mean score for tool use in this study reflects this preference.

Beyond its classroom utility, the OPT manual also contributes to a broader conversation about the role of structured resources in teaching and learning. Klette and Blikstad-Balas (2018) suggest that observation and coding manuals help standardise instruction and make it more measurable. With its clear structure and embedded tool, the OPT manual not only supports learning but also offers educators a practical way to scaffold and guide oral presentation preparation more consistently.



CONCLUSION

This study sets out to examine undergraduate students' perceptions of the OPT eBook Manual which is a scaffolded digital resource developed to support the planning and organisation of oral presentations. Informed by scaffolding theory, the manual was designed to guide students through each stage of speech preparation and offers structured support that could be accessed independently. Responses from 32 students across science and technology, business, and social science programme clusters indicated that the manual was perceived as relevant, accessible, and useful in supporting their academic needs. By embedding a planning tool within a clearly structured format, the manual supported students in taking ownership of their preparation process while also providing guided instructional support. This manual was particularly beneficial for early-semester students who often face challenges in structuring content and anticipating audience expectations during oral performance tasks.

This study contributes to instructional design and communication pedagogy scholarly literature by demonstrating how low-cost, expert-validated digital resources can enhance learner engagement and preparation in performance-based courses. The findings are aligned with earlier studies on digital scaffolding tools, such as those by Ilmudinulloh (2023) and Ahad et al. (2024), and highlight the importance of format accessibility, with many students preferring a downloadable PDF version.

Although the study was limited to a single course and a relatively small sample size, it provides a meaningful foundation for future inquiry. Further research may examine the effect of the manual on students' actual oral presentation performance and confidence using pre- and post-assessment designs. There is also potential to expand the manual's content to include rhetorical strategies, figurative language, and delivery techniques to support a more comprehensive approach to oral communication. The OPT eBook Manual offers a promising approach for developing instructional materials that prioritise clarity, autonomy, and learner-centred design as higher education continues to adopt blended and technology-enhanced learning models.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

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Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Authors' Contributions

N.M.N. conceptualised and developed the OPT eBook Manual and wrote the theoretical framework section. N.H.S.M. conducted the data collection and wrote the introduction. M.H.K. conducted the pilot testing, proofread the article, and led the grant. N.R. assisted in the survey development and contributed to proofreading. N.A.M. was responsible for developing the Oral Presentation Planning Tool (OPT). N.S.M.D. provided mentoring guidance and served as the article's gatekeeper by reviewing content and language clarity. N.A.D. assisted in the development



of both the OPT and the manual, conducted data analysis, and wrote the methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion sections. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.