TO BITE OFF MORE THAN ONE CAN CHEW?: PARENTS' OPINION IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN IN PETALING JAYA

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1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic is a risk health issue, and it has had an impact all over the world. In Malaysia, the rules of critical physical distancing and wearing a mask have been executed in each state (Times, 2020). The country's education system also had taken a precautionary measure in shutting all schools operations and replaced it with Online and Distance Learning (ODL) (Teräs, 2020). This pandemic strongly impacts education, where learning approaches are changed from physical classes to ODL. Universally, over 1.2 billion children had to continue learning from home. Consequently, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the lifestyle and education with the idiosyncratic rise of e-learning and might negatively impact the children. Therefore, the researchers intended to investigate the parents' opinions on ODL concerning their children's health, time management, and skill requirements in Petaling Jaya, Selangor during the Covid-19 outbreak.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parents' opinion is essential in ODL studies. Parents are the closest persons who deal with setting up and monitoring their children during class. According to Sonnenschein (1997), it is the ideas of parents about how their children develop and learn. Despite the convenience of having classes within the house, several arguments highlighted the negative impact of the ODL, such as in terms of health, time management, skills required (Arthur, 2017), anxiety and depression (Aucejo, 2020), backaches, and short-sighted or long-sighted (Rusli, 2020). With the above arguments, Thus, the first hypothesis was generated, as follows:

H1 – There is a relationship between health and parents' opinion of ODL.

Time management is a crucial skill that is required for all online learners. Poorer self-regulators tend to struggle with distractions, dwell on their mistakes, and are less organized when solving as they spend less time assessing how the new information is linked to prior knowledge (Jo et al., 2016). Research shows that distraction and reduced attention, psychological difficulties, and management issues are the most important elements contributing to students' unhappiness with online learning (Maqableh & Alia, 2021). The most pressing issue is a lack of student self-control, which can lead to dissatisfaction and poor performance (Chakraborty, 2020). Thus, the following hypothesis was generated:

H2 – Time management has a significant relationship with parents' opinion of ODL.

Students' skills development is essential to successive online learning as speculated by educators (Roper, 2007). Adaptation to new information interfaces and communication technologies is highly demanded (Bovermann et al., 2018). Also, getting a good grade during online learning required various students' skills. Online learning boosts online learning skills such as meta-cognitive, self-direction, and individual collaborative skills (Ho, 2010). It requires changing from old habits to having the ability to operate basic internet and computer in participating ODL. With the above arguments, a hypothesis is developed:

H3 – Skill enhancement has a significant relationship with parents' opinion of ODL.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research employed a quantitative study. The survey was distributed to 373 Petaling Jaya, Selangor residents between May 15, 2021, and May 31, 2021. Petaling Jaya was chosen because the location placed various income groups and ethnicities. The responds rate was 80%. The questionnaire consists of five sections, viz. 1) demographic profile; 2) parent's opinion on children's ODL; 3) health; 4)time management; and 5)skills enhancement; which using five Likert scales. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 20.0. The reliability test indicated that parents' opinion on children's ODL was .919 (6 items); health scored at 971 (5 items); time management at .955 (5 items); and skills enhancement at .971 (6 items).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
4.1 Demographic Profile

The total respondents of this study were 300 respondents, who represented 179 (59.7%) majority of female and 121 were male (40.3%). Most of the respondents were aged between 25 to 35 years old (n=94, 31.3%). This figure followed by the age groups of 56 years and above represented by 27.3% (82 respondents), 46 to 55 years old with 24.0% (72 respondents), and lastly, the respondent in the range of 36 to 45 years old is 17.3% (52 respondents). Most of the respondents were married to 268 respondents (89.3%), followed by the single parent, which indicated 18 respondents (6.0%). Respondents that were widower (n=9, 3.0%), divorcee (n=4, 1.3%) and separated represented by 1 (0.3%). The education level of the respondents recorded degree holders with 181 (60.3%), followed by the Ph.D. (n=35, 11.7%), SPM holders (n=30, 10%), Diploma holders (n=27, 9%), Master (n=24, 8%) and lastly those that uphold PMR/PT3 (n=3, 1%). Most of the respondents were employed in the government sector that represented 192 (64%), followed by the private sector by (n=71, 23.7%), self-employed (n=21, 7%) homemaker (n=15, 5%), and voluntary services (n=1, 3%) also captured in the data.

4.1.1 Relationship between Health, Time Management, Skills Enhancement and Parents' Opinion of ODL

The findings indicated a significant relationship between health and parents' opinion of ODL ($r = -.157$, $p = .006$). Apart from that, the second hypothesis was tested, and the result determined a strong relationship between skills enhancement and parents' opinion of ODL ($r = .813$, $p = .000$). The last hypothesis tested disclosed a strong relationship between time management and parents' opinion of ODL ($r = .881$, $p = .000$).

5.   DISCUSSION

This research investigates the relationship between health, time management, skills enhancement, and parents' opinion of ODL. The findings indicated that most parents expressed that they agreed and generally had a positive opinion on the implementation of ODL. Although they recognized that their children had spent more time on online classes, the parents felt that their children had gained the necessary skills for ODL, namely the time management and gaining online skills, particularly in managing the application needed for their studies. Online learning allows the students to access a wide diversity of learning materials (Abdallah, 2018). Online learning required a self-direct learning component (Martin, 2020; Jo et al., 2016; Lambert, 2007). Practices and exposure using software and technologies make students skillful (Paadre, 2011). Despite the Covid-19 outbreak, both parents and students were not given much choice to undergo the daily classes except online (Rafidi, 2020; Ayebi, 2017). Therefore, such support from parents was much predicted.

The study also tested the health of the school children in the eyes of the parents. However, the findings recorded a significant negative relationship with the parents' opinion on ODL. This, in turn, reflects that although the parents agreed on ODL implementation, they have some concerns about physical and psychological issues that the students might experience. According to Sheaffer and Rodgers (2020), adolescents and young adults are exposed to many online issues, including sexting, education and mental health disorders, family issues, and cyber-bullying. The excessive use of technology can harm emotional, mental, physical, and youth social health (Halupa, 2016).

The findings represent ODL as two sides of a coin. At one point, it delivers necessities of a new way of learning and threats that might harm the students' wellbeing. These findings offer several research implications. First, the Ministry of Education needs to shape and plan appropriate contents, activities, assessments, and timing of the ODL according to their age and exposure to the screen time. An adequate budget in providing infrastructure and infostructure is vital in ensuring equity in education can be achieved. Secondly, the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) could help produce high internet access to all household and creative content that spark the interest of the information seekers. At the same time, promoting child online safety campaigns should be undertaken to protect children online. This is a vital step to curb the exposure to violence, abuse, and manipulations by irresponsible parties (UNICEF, 2020).

6.   CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the ODL approach has direct impacts on children physically and psychologically. ODL has a positive and negative influence on children's health conditions, and this study reflects the concerns. Thus, control from all stakeholders is essential to ensure the future human capital would grow in a healthy and supported environment. Gradual development in ODL with careful thoughts would help promote the children's well-being and avoid the earlier idiom mentioned *to bite off more than one can chew.*

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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