



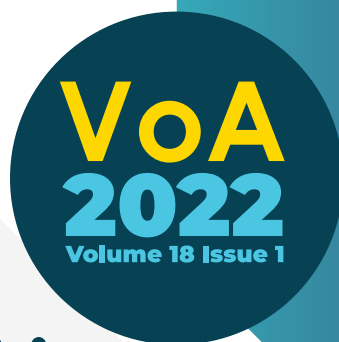
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## **A STUDY OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF ONLINE LEARNING CLASSES BASED ON MARS MODEL IN UiTM SEREMBAN 3 CAMPUS**

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### ABSTRACT

*Based on the MARS Model of individual behavior and performance, this study examines students' perceptions of online learning classes at UiTM Seremban 3 Campus. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many educational institutions have adopted the online learning approach to replace traditional face-to-face classes. The research design for this study was a qualitative research. Respondents from three faculties at UiTM Seremban 3 were interviewed via Google Meet: Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies (FSPPP), Faculty of Computer Science and Mathematics (FSKM), and Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation. This study aims to determine what factors influenced students' motivation, challenges, and problems throughout online classes. It was found that students are motivated by a variety of variables, including facilities, social support, and the environment. Students experienced numerous obstacles during online learning, including their obligations, time management, and internet connection. According to the students, online learning involves issues such as difficulty in understanding, integrity, and bad communication. Based on the findings of this study, the researchers offer two guidelines for students and the university to overcome online learning issues.*

## **1. Introduction**

Online learning is a type of learning that uses Internet tools while avoiding face-to-face interaction with lecturers (Allam et al., 2020). Online learning is often referred to as e-learning, blended learning, virtual learning, and distance learning (Allam et al., 2020). Online learning is defined as having access to learning activities via technology (Moore et al., 2011). Online learning has recently grown in popularity to deliver education and information to students (Dash, 2019). The growth of the Internet enables online learning and teaching, which substantially impacts the quality of teaching and learning (Zhao, 2003). It also has an impact on the rise of online learning (Willett et al., 2019). According to Zhao (2003), there are several advantages to online learning and teaching, including the ability for students to have more flexibility in terms of time, place, and pace.

Furthermore, online learning lowers the cost of education while also encouraging students and teachers to learn more and faster. However, online learning may fall short of specific colleges' quality standards (Zhao, 2003). According to a study by Bali and Liu (2018), online learning is preferable since it saves money and gives students more flexibility in terms of time and space. On the other hand, face-to-face classes provide pupils with a higher level of satisfaction than online learning. When it comes to professors, they prefer face-to-face sessions since students are more engaged than during online learning (Ali et al., 2020).

Following the closure of numerous buildings, including schools and colleges, due to the Coronavirus illness (COVID-19) pandemic, online learning and teaching became the primary mode of instruction (Carter et al., 2020). Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) used several technologies such as i-learn, Google Classroom, and Skype to perform blended learning (Allam et al., 2020). Microsoft Teams and U-Future are two other platforms used by UiTM. Students at UiTM must learn, study, and complete the lecture session without being physically present in the classroom. Students and lecturers may not be able to prepare for the shift from face-to-face classrooms to online learning and teaching methods because lecturers lack expertise and abilities in delivering education online (Ali et al., 2020).

## **2. Problem Statement**

According to a recent survey, online learning is preferred due to its cost-effectiveness, time, and location flexibility (Yang & Cornelius, 2004; Zhao, 2003). The content of online learning will impact students' motivation (Dwivedi et al., 2019). Students will be driven to work hard and continue to face challenges to attain their goals if the work or tasks are beneficial to them (Smart & Cappel, 2006).

Moreover, according to Yang and Cornelius (2004), when students hear feedback from their professors, they feel more motivated. One of the things that demotivated the students was a breakdown in communication, which left them frustrated and depressed. Aside from that, students are motivated by the availability of electronic research, the simplicity of connecting to the Internet, the ease of navigating the online class interface, and familiarity with the professors (Yang & Cornelius, 2004).

These elements may have an impact on the pupils' motivation. Much prior research has found that face-to-face classes are more satisfying than online learning approaches (Bali & Liu, 2018). Face-to-face classes provide more contact during the learning process, greater engagement, a better flow of debate, and students are exposed to a broader range of viewpoints (Kemp & Grieve, 2014). According to Bali and Liu (2018), students favored online learning over face-to-face classes because of the time and space flexibility. According to the report, students chose online learning because it was less expensive than face-to-face classes.

As a result, a study should be done to determine the factors influencing students' motivational level, to determine the problems and challenges faced by the students during online learning, and to suggest a guideline on the implementation of online and distance learning (ODL) for students and faculty.

### **3. Literature Review**

#### **3.1 The Impact of COVID-19 on Traditional Classrooms**

COVID-19 has shifted people's learning styles worldwide, forcing them to switch from traditional classroom learning to online learning (Saleh & Almekhlafy, 2020). Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has become more accessible as technology has advanced (Dhawan, 2020). Virtual learning, e-learning, blended learning, and interactive learning are all terms for online platforms used to communicate and help students.

#### **3.2 What is Open and Distance Learning (ODL)?**

Open and Distance Learning (ODL), sometimes known as online learning, is a technique that can make the teaching and learning process more student-centered, innovative, and efficient. According to Dhawan (2020), online learning experiences in learning with internet access in web-based environments through gadgets such as cellphones, computers, and tablets. In these settings, students can learn and communicate with teachers and other classmates from anywhere. Learning can take place in a systematic or non-systematic manner. Systematic learning is structured due to real-time interactions between educators and students during live lectures, and there are opportunities for immediate feedback during live sessions. Unsystematic learning settings, on the other hand, are not well-structured. This is due to the lack of live lectures or lessons available through various learning platforms and forums. Because it is not live learning, the method also lowers the possibility of pupils' instant feedback and immediate response (Littlefield, 2018). According to McBrien et al. (2009), systematic learning can provide many opportunities for social connection.

#### **3.3 The Beneficial Effects of ODL**

A substantial number of research reveal strong statistically relevant effects on student learning performance in the online or hybrid format compared to the traditional face-to-face format. Positive learning outcomes include increased test scores, improved participation with class content, a higher understanding of learning and the online format, a stronger sense of community among students, and decreased withdrawal or failure (Nguyen, 2015). Hence, ODL has the effect of making students more self-aware and independent (Nursyahidah et al., 2020). This demonstrates the tremendous influence of ODL on pupils since they become active rather than passive learners.

#### **3.4 Comparing Traditional and Online Learning**

There are numerous disputes about the differences between online and conventional schooling. Traditional classroom learning shapes significant teacher-student interactions. They can communicate with one another, engage in direct negotiation, and hold discussions. The teacher can also determine the pupils' comprehension by observing their reactions and emotions in class. It is not like the tactics used on the internet (Nayar & Koul, 2020). According to the experts, digital learning platforms do not have the same impact as traditional classroom learning. This is because the learning process must include emotional and social learning elements, and it is most effective when the presenter and the audience interact. Traditional approaches are only practical when instructors can determine the learner's level of comprehension and establish a learning environment to gain knowledge. The most efficient technique is to create a learning delivery that effectively satisfies the course outcomes by combining traditional and online instruments (Nayar & Koul, 2020). On the other hand, learning online has an impact on a student's potential to build soft skills such as personal characteristics, communication, and collaborative abilities. This is since the platform will reduce social contacts and impact students' emotions and learning processes.

### **3.5 Student Motivation During ODL**

Paris and Turner (1994) defined motivation as the "driving force" of learning, and Howe (1998) referred to inspiration as the "fuel" of human learning. Participating in ODL exercises during pandemics makes learning possible and ensures that educating and learning information flow. However, in ODL, there is a need to examine a variety of learning exercises for the students. Moreover, experts also go above and beyond to discover what motivates students to attend the ODL classes (Allam et al., 2020).

### **3.6 Role Perception of students on ODL**

The process of acquiring information and making it sensible is known as perception (Manik & Sidharta, 2017). However, because an individual may not accept all information, perception can influence a person's attitude and actions. ODL has been criticized in the past as students' opinions have deteriorated. ODL has reduced student and lecturer social interaction, leading to significant boredom, emotional instability, and other psychiatric issues (Manik & Sidharta, 2017).

### **3.7 Situational Factors of Students on ODL**

The activity or reaction that is impacted by the internal or external environment is referred to as a situational element (Thin, 2011). Situational factors occur outside of the pupils' direct control and either limit or stimulate their performance. Even if students have great desire, ability, and views, their learning experiences are nonetheless influenced by their external environment. Because students must share learning tools with their siblings, ODL has elevated their stress levels (Thin, 2011). The student's home environment is also thought to be unsuitable for learning.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research explores attitudes, behavior, and experiences through interviews or focus groups to gain in-depth opinions from participants. Although fewer people are required to participate in this study, more time will be emphasized because their attitudes, behavior, and experiences are vital (Dawson, 2002). There is no single accepted way of doing qualitative research. How it is carried out depends upon a range of factors including their beliefs about the

nature of the social world and what can be known about it, the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired, the purpose and goals of the research, the characteristics of the research participants, the audience for the research, the funders of the research, and the position and environment of the researchers themselves (Snape & Spencer, 2003). In this study, face-to-face interviews were carried out through Google Meet with respondents to understand the nature of the study, which was affected by respondents' experiences.

#### **4.2 Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis is a qualitative analysis used to analyze classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data (Boyatzis, 1998). The thematic analysis allows the researcher to determine precisely the relationships between concepts and compare them with the actual data (Alhojailan, 2012). By using thematic analysis, there is an opportunity to determine the link between trust and participation and compare these with the data gathered in the literature review. The thematic analysis also allows the researchers to determine what factors influenced students' motivation, challenges, and problems throughout online classes.

Before collecting the data, the interviewer was familiarised with the depth and breadth of the content of the study. The process of familiarising was achieved by reading the content repeatedly in an active way and by searching for the meaning and patterns that were related to the research. Reading was done before beginning the coding, as the ideas and identification of possible patterns are shaped through reading.

Data were collected using face-to-face interviews between the interviewer and the interviewees. The questions asked were based on semi-structured questions that were prepared earlier. The interviewer used a video recorder in Google Meet to record the interview sessions. The data were then transcribed into written form. It took about 1 to 3 hours to transcribe each of the interviewees' answers. Data collected through interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The data recorded was transcribed and later coded manually for analysis. In the thematic analysis, the research questions are arranged into themes and sub-themes.

#### **4.3 Interview Process**

Interviews were conducted at times that were most convenient for the respondents. This flexibility in the study venue and timing is beneficial in ensuring that targeted respondents participate in the study. The researcher had met the respondents in Google Meet in June, 2021. The reason to interview six respondents was based on Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), that stated data saturation occurs when the researcher interviewed either six or twelve respondents. Data saturation for this study occurred with the fifth respondent.

#### **4.4 Sampling**

##### **a. Purposive Sampling**

In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling to select students from UiTM Seremban 3. A purposive sample is referred to as a judgmental sample which is a type of nonprobability sample. The main objective of a purposive sample is to produce a sample that represents the population. This can be achieved by applying expert knowledge of the population to select a sample of elements that represents a cross-section of the population (Battaglia, 2008). The researchers interviewed six (6) respondents. Two respondents from the Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, two respondents from the Faculty of Computer Science and Mathematics and lastly, two respondents from the Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation.



### **b. Snowball Sampling**

The principle of this sampling method includes identifying the respondents and which in their turn, shall recommend other respondents for the research (Dragan and Isaic-Maniu, 2013). This process is based on the assumption that a link exists between the initial sample and others in the same target population, allowing a series of referrals to be made within a circle of acquaintance (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Hence, the respondents chosen for the interview will provide information about other respondents for the interview sessions.

### **4.5 Transcribing and Analysing the Data**

After the interview sessions were completed, transcribing the data took about one month, in July 2021. The data were analyzed manually by the researchers.

## **5. Findings and Discussion**

### **Objective 1: To identify the factors influencing the motivational level of students**

For first objective, the researchers have identified the factors influencing the motivational level of students by using the Motivation, Ability, Role Perceptions, and Situational Factors (MARS) model. The factors such as social support from families and facilities can influence a student during online classes.

Family, parents, friends, lecturers, including the students themselves, can influence their motivation during online classes based on the respondents' answers. Most of the students stay with their parents during ODL. Hence, the encouragement and support from parents helped motivate the respondent to finish his or her studies. Students can ask for assistance from friends if they have difficulties in understanding a subject.

The facilities in the home for the students can influence their motivation level and help them focus on their work or learning sessions. Facilities such as a conducive place with a stable internet connection with study tables for the students can ease the students' learning process and increase their motivation.

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#### **Factors Influencing the Motivational Level of Students**

#### **Respondents` View**

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Social support

"If you include motivation, maybe sit at home, spend a lot of time sitting with family, haa , we are calm again, relax."

(Respondent 4, pg. 41)

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"For me....parents. My parents are the reason why I learn from home. I am close to my parents and family, and they always support me for me to finish this degree"

(Respondent 1, pg. 2)

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" I must remember the sacrifice that My father's and my mother's had made. During my study period, my father went to work every day. My mother took care of me throughout my online learning. They want me

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to succeed. So I have to be serious. When I think of their services, it inspires me."

(Respondent 5, pg. 60)

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Facilities

"When studying face to face, the environment is better if you want to study during ODL. Because in the rented house there is no internet network problem, the facility is sufficient and comfortable for me to focus on my studies."

(Respondent 1, pg. 10)

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"I can say that the atmosphere is very good. In UiTM Seremban 3, the situation is not that serious. The room itself is comfortable; then there is a big table and a big shelf compared to matriculation. I have no problem studying face to face at UiTM Seremban 3. My experience if studying there, I like studying at PTAR, library, with my friend Aiman. Very comfortable atmosphere for me. Any facility at UiTM is very good, for me to study."

(Respondent 5, pg. 66)

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## **Objective 2: To determine the problems and challenges faced by the students during online learning**

The responsibility of the students' is to complete their tutorials, assignments, and final examinations. Students need to understand their role in finishing assessments during online classes four respondents said online learning needs students to understand their role as students. Respondent 3 stated that during online learning, there is a need for self-motivation to do work as students are doing tasks and assignments in groups. In addition, due to communication problems, students tend to have a slower response to their assignments.

The lack of supervision from lecturers may lead students to abandon their assigned task as stated by Respondent 5. Respondents 3 and 4 also agree that responsibilities as a son or daughter distract the learning process during online learning at home. Whenever the class sessions start, there will be a sudden call for help from parents, which will interrupt their learning process.

Two respondents did not have a conducive place for online learning. Respondent 1 stated that the environment and the absence of an internet connection would not be conducive to studying, especially online learning. Respondent 6 finds that college or a rented house environment is better than at home because of direct interactions with friends or seniors. The quick interactions help students in getting information and assistance when having problems in the university. According to Respondent 4, the poor internet connection in rural areas is a problem during online learning. The location of the house affects the availability of the internet for students to participate in the learning sessions. According to three respondents, facilities such as a stable internet connection influence the students' motivation. According to Respondent 1, an unstable internet connection at home is troublesome as most learning materials are available online.

Additionally, the responsibilities and other roles in a community may affect their time management as a student. According to Respondent 1, completing work can be difficult if the students fail to manage time. Active participation in associations may cause problems in managing time for online classes.

Living in a comfortable environment during ODL will distract the students when they are studying. Due to the pandemic, most students stay at their parents' home with everything needed there for them. Respondent 5 highlights that good time management is the main criteria to success during online classes. Students have many assignments to submit during online classes, there are classes to attend, and actively involved in university clubs and associations. The students have to handle their time correctly so that their workload will not burden them. Furthermore, Respondent 3 also agreed that there are too many assignments and some of the assignments need to be submitted simultaneously.

During online classes, it will depend on the students themselves to show that they can be trusted and responsible for their attendance and behavior in learning. According to Respondent 1, it is hard to show a good attitude in online learning as there are too many loopholes, such as attending the class but doing another job. Respondent 5 stated that the students are responsible for studying at home. However, when the parents went to work, nobody monitored and ensured that the students attended the classes. The students themselves must practise self-discipline and take responsibility to attend classes.

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**Factors That Create Problems and Challenges for the Students During Online Learning****Respondents` View**

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Unplesant Environment	"Talk about the environment of my house it is very inappropriate because, as I said earlier, my house does not have a good Internet network."  (Respondent 1, pg. 7)
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	"In terms of if we study, it's normal to go to a friend's room, a friend who people understand the subject better. Neither can we be happy to meet seniors. We need happy communication with people....other people. You can ask for your friends or other people's guidance."  (Respondent 6, pg. 77)
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	"Because the house area is close to the village area, the internet connection is problematic.  (Respondent 4, pg. 51)
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Responsibilities and Duties of the Students	"I can't give my full commitment and time to study. For example, I can only come here to study during the day and how many hours can the laptop battery and phone battery last" (Respondent 1, pg. 8)
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"When we're studying, we have to clean the mess up around the house, our parents tell us to do work in the house, we can't focus in the study, we're watching a lecture, then we have to respond to our parent call, then, after class, we have to look at the recording, look at the same thing, we to want to understand again, that's it."

(Respondent 3, pg. 37)

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Time Management

"Usually in the morning and in the afternoon I will charge my phone, charge my laptop, everything....In the evening , I will charge my phone, charge my laptop again to do the assignments or tutorials. So how many hours can I study? Last night I can't study because there are wild animals. I can't concentrate completely and study"

(Respondent 1, pg. 8)

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### **Objective 3: To suggest a guideline on the implementation of ODL for students and faculty**

A guideline on the implementation of online learning is created based on the analysis, findings and recommendations from the interview conducted by the researchers. The researchers have come out with suitable guidelines for students and the faculty as shown in figures 1 and 2.

#### **GUIDELINE FOR STUDENTS IN PREPARING FOR ONLINE LEARNING**

- ✓ Students need to have a stable internet connection. The internet is essential for the students to download learning materials, attend classes, find additional information and upload files to the platforms.
- ✓ Students need to have a conducive place for learning. The environment of the place needs to be quiet to ensure students can focus on their learning sessions.
- ✓ Students should prepare a schedule for daily work.
- ✓ Students should inform parents and other family members about class sessions during the day to avoid being distracted during learning sessions.

*Figure 1: A Guideline for Students in Preparing for Online Learning*

Source: Akif and Hakim (2021)

### **GUIDELINE FOR FACULTY IN PREPARING ONLINE LEARNING**

- ✓ The platform needs stable with few problems such as errors and crashes.
- ✓ Live sessions for lectures should be reduced. Reserve such sessions for tutorial or engagement with students.
- ✓ Recorded lectures can help those who have internet problems as it can be accessed anytime.
- ✓ Tutorials and assignments need to be given appropriate time to be completed, such as at least one week.
- ✓ Moral support needs to be given by the lecturers to the students to learn and study.
- ✓ Allow alternative platforms such as Telegram and email for submission of assignments, quiz, test, and final examination for those who did not have stable internet connection.

*Figure 2: A Guideline for The Faculty in Preparing for Online Learning*

*Source: Akif and Hakim (2021)*

## **6. Conclusion**

Based on this research, many motivational factors influence the students during online learning such as supportive friends, family and parents, the environment, facilities, and the internet connection. The factors may differ from one respondent to another due to the students' location during the learning process. Furthermore, due to the availability of facilities such as a conducive place with power supply, internet connection availability, students may react differently towards the learning method. As for online learning, students are more motivated if the environment is free from distractions and other facilities are provided to help the learning process. In addition, based on the analysis, students in UiTM Seremban 3 find that platforms for online learning are easy to adapt and use. However, some respondents find that the features of the platforms used are hard to navigate. Also, the use of different platforms by the lecturers is affecting their online learning process.

With the shifting to fully online learning due to the current situation of COVID-19, students in UiTM Seremban 3 face many challenges and problems. The significant challenges in online learning are the availability of the internet and other responsibilities when staying at home. These will not only affect the students' motivation, but the learning processes will also be affected as students are not able to focus and commit to learning. Furthermore, the problems of interaction with friends during online learning affected the learning process of students. Due to being at home, students have never met other students face-to-face. Therefore, relationships cannot develop and cause the students to have problems communicating with others.

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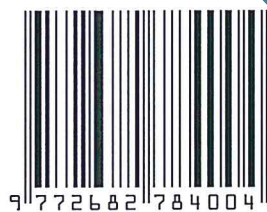
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