

## ONLINE DISTANCE LEARNING: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO STRESS AND IMPACTS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE DURING COVID-19

Faizan Abd Jabar<sup>1</sup>, Nik Husna Nadira Nik Shuhairazi<sup>2</sup>, Nor Syuhada Yahaya<sup>3</sup>, Nur Atiqah Mohd Azahar<sup>4</sup>, Siti Rohaida Mohd Rahim<sup>5</sup>, Mohd Faizal Azrul Azwan Mohammed<sup>6</sup>, Mohd Zainuddin Mohamed Azudin<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1,6,7</sup> Faculty of Business and Management Universiti Teknologi Mara UiTM Pahang, 26400 Bandar Jengka

<sup>2,3,4,5</sup> Faculty of Applied Management Universiti Teknologi Mara UiTM Pahang, 26400 Bandar Jengka

\*Corresponding author: faizan@uitm.edu.my

**Abstract:** COVID-19 is an infectious Coronavirus recently discovered that has become a pandemic. Since this pandemic might have stress consequences, this study explored the factors contributing to stress and the impact of academic performance during Covid-19 outbreak among Office System Management (OSM) Undergraduate students in UiTM Pahang Kampus Jengka during the implementation of Online Distance Learning (ODL). The research questionnaires were adapted and adopted from the previous study, distributed online to 235 respondents via Google form. Stratified sampling was used as a technique for collecting data. Cronbach's Alpha to measure scale reliability, and the score is .873, which internal consistency is good. The findings showed that ODL makes students feel burden with its implementation. Many factors contributed to stress among students during ODL and caused their academic performance affected. This is the signs of the negative impacts on students in higher education. The university should be aware of these consequences and take preventive action to handle this situation. Future research should be more focused on overcoming the problems so that both sides can benefit from this nature.

**Keywords:** Online Distance Learning, stress, Covid-19, undergraduate students, Academic performance

### Introduction

Online Distance Learning (ODL) has been practiced indirectly in Malaysia. According to Ghosh et al. (2012), in their research state that the concept of open learning and distance education framework centre on open access to education and training to make the learners free from the imperatives of time and put, and advertising adaptable learning openings to people and bunches of learners. Open and distance learning (ODL) is one of the preeminent quickly developing areas of instruction presently a day, and it is significantly affected on all instruction conveyance frameworks. ODL education came from the idea that the learners and instructors cannot exceed the lesson room. They sought to be isolated by a few geographical distances or could too be they will not compare to each other to make the full instruction framework adaptable. On 27 May 2020, the Ministry of Education has instructed all educational institutions in Malaysia to implement online distances learning (Palansamay, 2020). This statement is due to the outbreak of the pandemic Covid-19. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered Coronavirus. According to Cennimo (2020) and Umair et al. (2020), Covid-19 was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. Based on Glass et al. (2020), most individuals who fall sick with COVID-19 will encounter mild to direct side effects and recuperate without special treatment. The government has announced a Movement Control Order (MCO) in Malaysia to curb the spread of Covid-19. It also causes the government to implement online learning for every educational institution. According to Johnson (2020), 71% of survey respondents reported increased stress from this educational disruption based on high school or college students experiencing an educational disruption during pandemic COVID-19. The survey showed that 66% of students in their households were increasingly stressed, while 81% of current adult students reported increasing stress. Learning using an ODL method has significant differences rather than using conservative method learning approaches. According to Will (2014), the conventional method, such as

face-to-face, maximizes the social contact between lecturers and students in teaching, impacting the students to understand the chapters learned during and outer sessions. They can have private meetings between students and lecturers in their free time to discuss topics with less understanding. Lecturers are free to teach their students without limits in movements, free in students' grouping.

In contrast, discussions, and many materials such as activities, papers, and teachings materials for students can be handed out by the lecturers to improve students' understanding and preparation for the following examinations. While learning the ODL method brings great pressure to students, especially breaking out students' grouping and changes in the student environment while using conferencing software or applications. Online Distance Learning changed the teaching and learning method and provided more challenges for students to normalize this current studies method. Students hardly need to push themselves to learn from home, which leads to fewer social interactions, and they expect the Covid-19 disaster to affect their academic performance (Allam et al., 2020). Therefore, this paper aims to identify the factors that contributed to stress and impacted the academic performance of the Office System Management Undergraduate Students using Online Distance Learning (ODL) during the Covid-19 outbreak.

## **Literature Review**

### **Online Distance Learning**

Physical separation of students and teachers during instruction and various technologies to facilitate student-teacher and among students' communication is the main element of form education called online learning, distance learning, or distance education or e-learning (Berg & Simonson, 2016). They just learned remotely and were separated from each other, which are students, teachers, and peers (Anonymous, 2020). This is supported when in the United States, distance education, correspondence learning, e-learning (electronic learning), online learning, online education, virtual learning, and remote learning are the several synonyms that refer to distance learning (Anonymous, 2020). University students continue their studies using the online distance learning method. The Covid-19 has resulted in schools shut all across the world. As a result, instruction has changed significantly, with the unmistakable rise of e-learning, whereby instructing is embraced remotely and on advanced stages (Farah & Li, 2020). Online distance learning works by utilizing personal computers, tablets, phones, and the web so that students can think about it from remote locations like home instead of going to a campus. It's a flexible arrangement for fitting higher instruction around work and family commitments (Anonymous, 2019). Many countries adopted this approach globally. According to Angdhiri (2020), online learning by distributing gadgets to their student is a preparation for online learning to ensure they have access to learning materials in New York, United States, by distributing around 500,000 laptops and tablets to their students to participate in online classes.

### **Factors Contribute to Stress During ODL**

Stress has a different meaning for other people under different conditions. According to Shiel (2018), stress may be a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes substantial or mental pressure in a medical and biological context. Stress can be external (from the environment, mental, or social circumstances) or inner (ailment or restorative strategy). Signs and indications of stress can be emotional or physical. Emotional indications can include being effectively agitated, feeling disappointed, feeling overpowered, mood changes, losing control, having difficulty unwinding and calming the mind, feeling terrible about self (low self-esteem), depression, sadness, and low energy. Stress's physical side effects can include migraines, upset stomach, diarrhea, constipation, nausea, aches, pains, tense muscles, chest pain, and quick heartbeat. Furthermore, it also caused a sleeping disorder, frequent colds and infections, loss of sexual craving and/or ability, anxiety and shaking, and clenched jaw and grinding teeth (Anonymous, 2019). Online Distance Learning (ODL) can affect various stresses, significantly mentally affecting student performance.

On the other hand, according to Zalaznick Matt (2020), it said that due to online distance learning, 75% of college students reported feeling stress and anxiety and support by Son et al., (2020) that conduct interview survey said that out of 195 student, 138 (71%) were identified increased stress during ODL. Different factors can cause student stress. According to Harmsen et al. (2018), the factor that leads to

stress is the perceived lack of feedback and lecturer interaction. Due to the nature of ODL, there's a lack of face-to-face (F2F) contact with the lecturers. Students may have inconvenience in learning and self-evaluation. The student must get prompt input in any organization setting, especially ODL, where they are disabled by F2F contact with the lecturers and other students. It is particularly imperative for those students who do not live in huge cities where network system and accessibility might be the additional deciding factors for a satisfactory ODL instructive involvement (George Essel & Patrick Owusu, 2017). They may not have got to reliable broadcast communications, computers, and technology. The frustration resulting from the problem leads to stress among students during ODL. Some student struggles over ODL mode due to many assignments and task needed during ODL. According to Ida (2020), some lecturers did not conduct online classes but only provided notes and assignments to students. Some lecturers provided a lot of classes activities and assignments that needed to be submitted early. However, some students will not be able to complete it on time. The students get burdened with many tasks and assignments, and this will cause a lack of sleep and affect student health (Anita Schlarb et al., 2017). According to Hashim et al. (2020), the internet coverage problem is also one factor that leads to stress during ODL. It is supported by Ida (2020) that state the situations of lagging internet speed obstruct the learning process because it would cause students to miss out on parts of classes through live video sessions. The affected students require extra effort to hunt for additional material or refer to their friends who wrapped up the lesson. The anticipated long-term impact is that the influenced students will most likely confront stress issues and expanded discouragement (Simpson, 2018).

## Materials and Methods

The research design used in this research is descriptive. A stratified sampling technique is used for this study based on BA232 undergraduate students of Bachelor Office Systems Management (Hons) at University Technology MARA (UiTM) Pahang Branch, Jengka Campus. This research was selected the respondents who are applying the ODL during the semester. There are 235 students from semester 1 to semester 6 who participated in this study. Researchers adapted questionnaires from several authors (Naziya & Khan, 2020 and Maajida Aafreen et al., 2018). To collect the data from respondents, the Likert Scale 1-5 will be used to obtain the findings. The items in this questionnaire will cover the demographic profile as sections A and B; the factors contributed to stress when students use Online Distance Learning (ODL) during the Covid-19 outbreak during the semester. Statistical Package for the Social Science software (SPSS) version 26 for data analysis to obtain the exact outcome of the results. Based on Krijic and Morgan (1970), the sampling for 281 population is 235, are as below according to gender:

Table 1: Gender of Students According to Semester

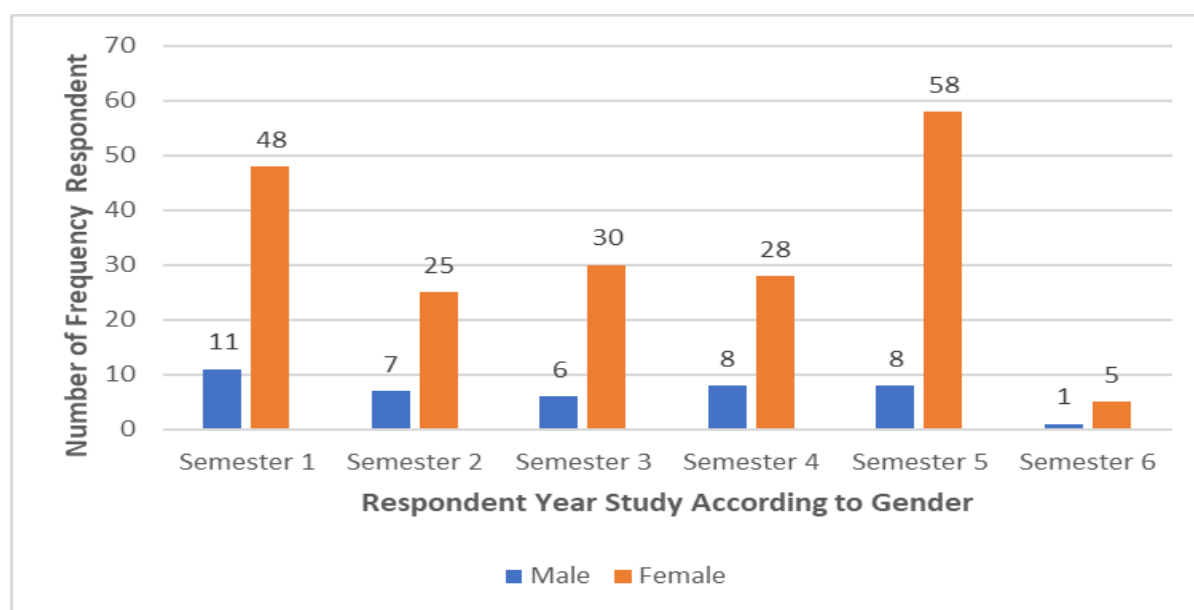
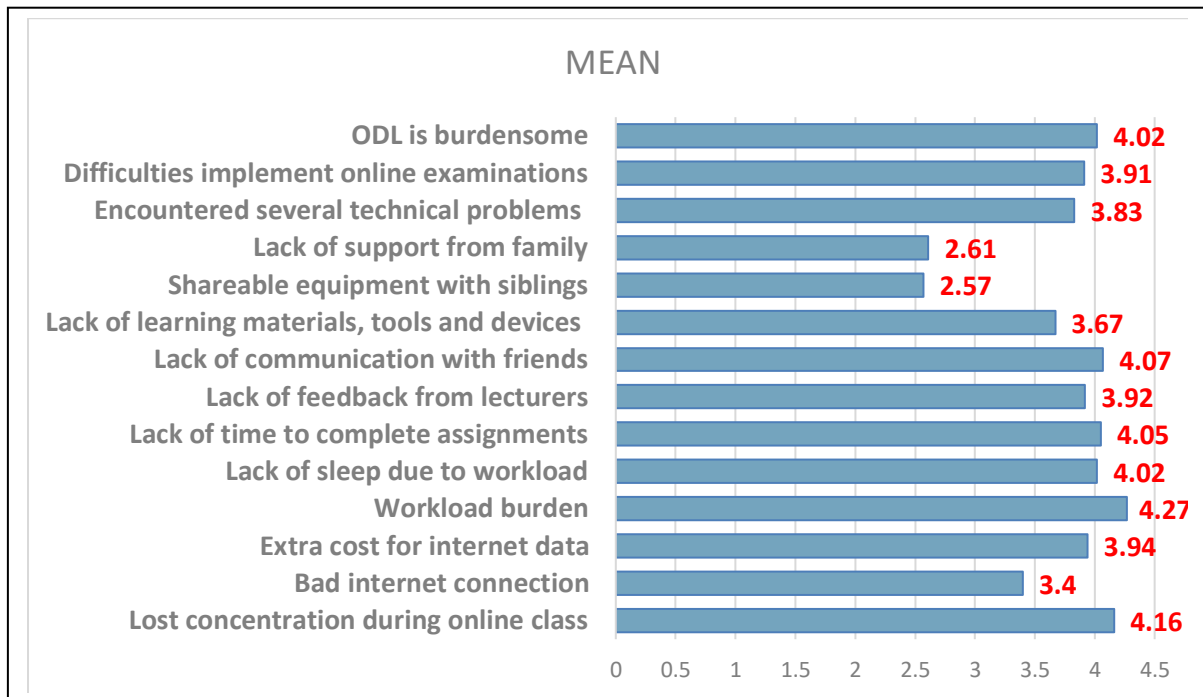
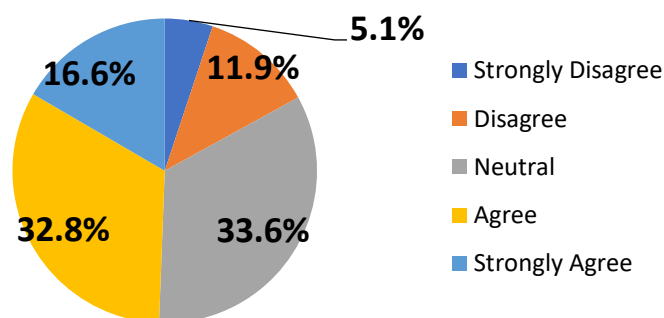


Figure 2: Factors Contribute to Stress Among Students



The data shows that the total mean for factors that contributed to stress. The mean for workload burden is the highest among others which is (m=4.27). While the lowest factor total of mean is shareable equipment with siblings, which is (m=2.57). It can be concluded that respondents strongly agreed that workload burden could contribute to stress to respondents while shareable equipment is the least factor contributing to stress.

Figure 2: Academic Performance Affected Among Students



The majority of respondents agree that their performance is being affected when implementing ODL during the semester. At the same time, 33.6% of respondents stated neutral about their academic performance. Out of 235 students, 17% disagree that their academic performance is affected due to stress. This showed that the students have confronted with dropping academic performance during the semester.

## Results and Discussion

The result showed that students are very burdened with the implementation of Online Distance Learning (ODL), as supported by (Son et al., 2020 and Zalaznick Matt, 2020). In order to identify the factors

that contributed to the stress using ODL during Movement Control Order (MCO), the researchers outline the possible factors from the previous study such as hard to pay attention, relationship with lecturers, adapt with extra cost for internet data, too much workload and poor connectivity (Ida 2020; Anita Schlarb et al., 2017 and Hashim et al. 2020). From the data, researchers found that OSM students feel burdened due to increased assignment and homework workload, need to adapt to extra costs for internet data, and do not have enough sleep due to a lot of workloads. Students were hard to pay attention during online classes because they could not understand as well as physical classes. They are also easily got distracted by other things. The students also need to adapt with extra internet data because online class requires a lot of internet data. Besides, assignment and homework workload also be the factor that leads to stress. The students need to complete the assignment and homework on time. Online distance learning is not conducive because all family members stay at home and have limited space to attend online classes. Besides, technical destruction such as laptop problems, poor connectivity to perform the tasks is the factor that leads to stress.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that stress can influence students in terms of mental health and academic performance. The students are very burdened with the implementation of online distance learning (ODL). The findings have proven that OSM students feel burdened due to increased assignment and homework workload, need to adapt extra costs for internet data, and lack of sleep due to many workloads. Students were hard to pay attention during online classes because they could not understand and easily got distracted by other things. Furthermore, the students must bear an extra cost for internet data because online class requires a lot of internet data. In addition, assignments and workload also be the factor that leads to stress when the students need to complete the assignments and homework on time. Online distance learning (ODL) is not conducive when all family members stay at home. The reasons are that they have limited space and less focus to attend online classes. More factors contributing to stress include technical destruction, laptop problems, and poor connectivity due to poor internet data. Therefore, the university should find the best way to overcome the phenomena because it could affect its vision and mission achievement.

## References

- Allam, S. N. S., Hassan, M. S., Mohideen, R. S., Ramlan, A. F., & Kamal, R. M., 2020. Online Distance Learning Readiness During Covid-19 Outbreak Among Undergraduate Students. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(5). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v10-i5/7236>
- Angdhiri, R. P., 2020. Challenges of home learning during a pandemic through the eyes of a student - Lifestyle - The Jakarta Post. In *The Jakarta Post.com*.
- Anita Schlarb, A., Friedrich, A., & Claßen, M., 2017. Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment Dovepress sleep problems in university students-an intervention. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*, 1989–2001.
- Anonymous., 2019. *How Does Distance Learning Work Anglia Ruskin Distance Learning*. <https://distancelearning.anglia.ac.uk/blog/how-does-distance-learning-work/> (27 September 2021)
- Anonymous., 2020. *Advantages Of Video Conferencing In Education. Mac Cormac College*. <https://www.maccormac.edu/blog/advantages-video-conferencing-education> (27 September 2021)
- Berg, G. A., & Simonson, M., 2016. Distance learning education. Britannica. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/distance-learning> (28 September 2021)
- Cennimo, D. J., 2020. *What is COVID-19? Pediatric Dermatology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pde.14218>
- Farah & Li., 2020. The rise of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic | World Economic Forum. In *World Economic Forum Covid Action Platform* (pp. 1–8). <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/>
- George Essel & Patrick Owusu., 2017. *Causes of students' stress, its effects on their academic success, and stress management by students*. Faculty: School of Business and Culture. Seinajoki University of Applied Science.
- Ghosh, S., Nath, J., Agarwal, S., & Nath, A., 2012. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Education System : Past , Present and Future – a Systematic Study of an Alternative Education System. *Journal of Global Research in Computer Science*, 3(4), 53–57.

- Glass, C. A., Cash, J. C., & Mullen, J., 2020. *Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)*. Family Practice Guidelines. <https://doi.org/10.1891/9780826153425.0016b>
- Harmsen, R., Helms-Lorenz, M., Maulana, R., & van Veen, K., 2018. The relationship between beginning teachers' stress causes, stress responses, teaching behaviour and attrition. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 24(6), 626–643. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2018.1465404>
- Hashim, H., Abd. Kadir, N. A., Mansor, F., & Azudin, M. Z. M., 2020. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) During Movement Control Order (MCO): Conceptualizing the Relationships between Self-Efficacy, Learning Motivation and Performance of Higher Learning Education Students. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(8), 258–269. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v10-i8/7530>
- Ida, L., 2020. Reality for Malaysia's university students: Online learning challenges, stress, workload; possible solutions for fully digital future until Dec. In *Malay Mail* (pp. 1–7). <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/05/30/reality-for-malaysias-university-students-online-learning-challenges-stress/1870717>
- Johnson, R., 2020. *Students Stressed Out Due to Coronavirus*. *BestColleges*. <https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/coronavirus-survey/> (28 September 2021)
- Krejcie & Morgan., 1970. Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, no.30, pp. 607-610.
- Maajida Aafreen, M., Priya, V. V., & Gayathri, R., 2018. Effect of stress on academic performance of students in different streams. *Drug Invention Today*, 10(9), 1176–1780
- Naziya, H., & Khan, N. H., 2020. *Online Teaching-Learning During Covid-19 Pandemic :Students ' .* 8(4), 202–213.
- Palansamy, Y., 2020. Higher Education Ministry: All University Lectures to be Online-Only Until end 2020, with a Few Exceptions, *Malay Mail*,. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/05/27/higher-educationministry-all-university-lectures-to-be-online-only-until-e/1869975> (26 September 2020)
- Umair, S., Waqas, U., & Faheem, M., 2020. COVID-19 pandemic: Stringent measures of Malaysia and implications for other countries. *Postgraduate Medical Journal*, 2–4. <https://doi.org/10.1136/postgradmedj-2020-138079>
- Simpson, S., 2018. Stress Triggers, the Effects Stress Has on Social, Mental and Physical Behavior in College Students, and the Coping Mechanisms Used. *Stress*.
- Simpson, Stacy., 2018. "Stress Triggers, the Effects Stress Has on Social, Mental and Physical Behavior in College Students, and the Coping Mechanisms Used". *Integrated Studies*. 215. <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/bis437/215> (26 September 2020)
- Shiel, W. C., 2018. Definition of Stress. In *Eating Disorders in Women and Children*. <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781420039405.pt2> (28 September 2021)
- Son, C., Hegde, S., Smith, A., Wang, X., & Sasangohar, F., 2020. Effects of COVID-19 on college students' mental health in the United States: Interview survey study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 22(9). <https://doi.org/10.2196/21279>
- Will., 2014. *Key differences between classroom and online learning*. *EF Publication*. Accessed at at <https://www.ef.com/wwen/blog/general/key-differences-classroom-online-learning/> (26 September 2021)
- Zalaznick Matt., 2020. *Another survey shows college students' mental health struggles*. *Universiti Business*. <https://universitybusiness.com/college-students-mental-health-anxiety-stress-depression-online-learning-coronavirus/#:~:text=In%20a%20survey%20of%20%2C500,a%20student%20housing%20development%20company.> (26 September 2021)