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BOOK OF EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

iVCPPTS 2021

1ST INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC POLICY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

iVCPPTS 2021:

**REGIONAL ISSUES IN PUBLIC POLICY
AND SOCIAL SCIENCE
DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC**

CO-ORGANIZED BY:

**FACULTY OF ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCE
AND POLICY STUDIES, UTM KEDAH
& FAKULTAS ILMU SOSIAL DAN ILMU POLITIK
UNIVERSITI OF AIRLANGGA (UNAIR)**

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THE CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL POVERTY IN PURSUING ONLINE DISTANCE LEARNING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

Digital poverty can be defined as the lack of the goods and services based on ICT (Barrantes, 2002). In other words, it is a situation of the person has the limited devices to access the internet and low access of internet connection where the student may face limited learning resources and tools such as computer and internet access. Currently, the issue of "Digital Poverty" were raised by the elected representative from Sabah which is most people view it as the economic capacity of an individual to own a computer, laptop or tablet and have access to a high-speed internet connection (The Sun Daily, 2020). The implementation of Movement Control Order (MCO) has made Ministry of Higher Education to come up with new learning approach which is Online Distance Learning (ODL) that has made a tremendous change in society. Hence, due to this situation, digital poverty becomes a new phenomenon in today's world, which is many people are connecting with each other through online. Due to the spread of COVID-19 transmission and the closure of physical classes, online learning through the uses of several devices like computers, laptops, tablets and mobile phones with internet access in synchronous and asynchronous environments become the alternative learning methods (Selvanathan et al., 2020). Perhaps, the use of technology gadgets becomes an effective way of education, as it presents chance for students to be more imaginative and innovative for self-learning and education especially in time of the pandemic. Hence, due to the pandemic, technology is now one of the most important requirements in human life and the majority of the people use the gadget technology as a tool for communicating, learning and the medium to find information in sync with the purpose of technology developed (Ashari et al., 2018). However, online distance learning can be difficult for disabled, disadvantaged, and marginalized students who have limited resources and access to online learning (The Regional Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) Working Group, 2020). Therefore, with this type of constraint, challenges encountered by students are also expected due to the unplanned move to pure e-learning approach (Nassr et al., 2020). In other words, to make computers and internet accessible, people have to be technically able and financially affordable (Yaakob et al., 2016). The following section discusses the purpose and background of this study. The Methodology section discusses the research method, sample, and data used by the researchers. The

Findings and Results section discusses results reported from previous studies. Lastly, this paper concludes the findings, and recommendations of the study.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

Higher education which significantly affected by this disease faced major changes that impacted the students in higher education sector by introducing courses through online portals (Shazad et al., 2020). The education industries are adopting the technologies available such as digital Video conferencing platforms like Zoom, Microsoft platform, and Webex Blackboard and Google Classroom (Larry 2020). Nevertheless, the closure of all higher learning institutions in Malaysia has made academic institutions turn to online systems to continue the education process (Li & Lalani, 2020), (Othman, 2020), (Lim, 2020), (Arumugam, 2020) which may not be sufficiently ready to handle the entire process (Dickinson & Gronseth, 2020). Besides that, it is also difficult to guarantee that all students have access to unlimited and stable Internet connection (Li & Lalani, 2020), (Lim, 2020), (Arumugam, 2020). The challenge faced by these students might give a negative impact on students since they must adapt with new learning method as their main concerns might be due to several reasons such as inability to keep up with online classes and assignments due to internet connection problems and difficulty to learn from home (Nassr et al., 2020). Although it is shown that universities' online systems are ready for such transformation of online learning technically, however, students were not perfectly ready for this situation because due to unequal internet accessibility, students encountered interrupted live streams of the lectures, which burdened them (Nassr et al., 2020). Limited internet access is challenging to the students in both urban and rural areas for their studies, which also resulted in delay for the task submission which it showed that Malaysia is not ready for implementing any new type of learning system virtually (Selvanathan et al., 2020). Besides, due to the lack of proper digital devices, some students were forced to use a smartphone to watch lessons without optimised digital content (Ferri et al., 2020). Although mobile learning offers the possibility of ubiquitous computing, there are many technological limitations related to the inferior functionality involved compared to desktop computers (D'Andrea et al., 2009). And the main question is how ready students are for online learning model of instruction (Adams et al., 2018) as students are struggled to adapt to the change from traditional classrooms to virtual classrooms (Sanchez-Gordon & Luján-Mora, 2014), higher education institutions lack the necessary facilities and amenities, such as high-speed internet connections (Panyajamorn et al., 2018). In terms of finances, the students were concerned with their ability to manage their educational financial commitments due to family loss of income and loss of opportunities to work and self-finance their studies (Sundarasan et al., 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This paper is a conceptual review, written based on available literature in the context of digital poverty in Malaysia that has impacted online distance learning. To develop focus, outstanding literature on technological (device and internet) challenges and financial challenges during COVID-19 pandemic were also analyzed.

FINDINGS/RESULTS

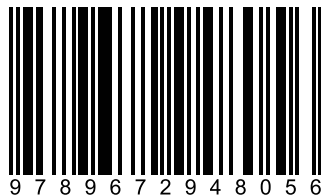
In the study conducted by Nassr et al., (2020), in terms of challenges, most respondents reported a combination of challenges. A few of the respondents, 5.6% and 10.9% reported no challenges and minor challenges, respectively. The majority reported many challenges (four individual challenges and six combinations). For example, 34.2% of respondents reported not having computers/laptops (old computers, lack of software) reported by 13.4% of respondents (Nassr et al., 2020). It reported by 23.6% of the respondents was difficulty to achieve tasks with online learning system, difficulty to login, and difficulty to use the new tool (Microsoft Teams). Many respondents reported that due to old laptops (and computers), they failed many times to login, download, and upload assignments, and run Microsoft Teams in a single or concurrent session with other necessary software due to small memory (Nassr et al., 2020). Meanwhile, in the research conducted by Selvanathan et al. (2020), data were collected from 328 respondents of 12 different public and private universities. Out of 328 respondents, there were 155 (47.3%) male and 173 (52.7%) female. From the results, the students showed a high dissatisfaction with, limited internet access affected the implementation of online teaching harder for the students in rural areas ('Limited Internet', 2020). This issue was reported by 33.66% of the respondents. Many respondents attributed it to limited Internet connection (via their mobile hotspot) as the major reason of not maintaining good online class attendance. There was a major negative perspective impacted by lockdown as investigated with respondents, which is financial. The mean value on finance was in agreement, which revealed that a considerable number of respondents' financial statuses were negatively influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic (Nassr et al., 2020). Hence, it showed that financial constraint is one of the major challenges for students in adapting to online distance learning. According to the research by Manduna (2016), there was a wide financial discrepancy among the respondents' parents and/or guardians. Classifying students according to their parents' or guardians' income levels revealed that 58.6 percent of the students' parents or guardians were poorly remunerated, 28.6 percent were averagely remunerated whilst 12.8 percent were well paid.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The pandemic has surprised the student worldwide and fully changed the education and learning process. Malaysian students

are part of those who impacted by the lockdown and students all over the world are being taken by surprise due to the radically changing the process of education. According to the literature, university online systems are technically capable of such transformation. The study has shown that universities online systems are ready for that drastic transformation. But not for the students who are still shocked and not perfectly ready for this situation; have a hard time to adapt with new situation and norm. They were not ready physically as they only have a basic and simple Internet connection via their mobile phones, rely heavily on university facilities to meet group members, complete assignments, and do project (Nassr et al., 2020) Most of the students were dissatisfied with the implementation of virtual learning mode during this pandemic (Aiman, 2020). Some Malaysians cast doubt on the effectiveness of teaching mode using virtually due to their insufficient preparation to adopt online learning as the new method of learning throughout the pandemic (Selvanathan et al., 2020). A substantial number of respondents of this study mainly complained about Internet access instability (Nassr et al., 2020). Due to the limited internet accessibility, the students are constantly meet interrupted live streams during the lectures, which it burdened them. Currently, online education of Malaysian universities only serves to support face-to-face education process. The university in this study found it a challenge to fit curriculum and assessment into pure online teaching approach, which seems to be impacting education globally (Nassr et al., 2020). Despite the government's initiative to provide 1GB of free mobile data, however, it is not enough to support the online class that use the google meet as the medium and video display activities due to high data requirements. At the same time, instructions and guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education were too abrupt and insufficient time was given to adapt to this new normal (Nassr et al., 2020). It is recommended that the telecommunication companies should consider providing the free additional data to assist teachers, parents and students (Hamid, 2020). And Universities should prepare for post COVID-19 as education has been significantly exposed to changes (White et al., 2021) that may anytime transform it in the future (Stambough et al., 2020), (Dickinsons & Gronseth, 2020), (Rajhan et al., 2020).

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