

The Challenges of Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Culinary Program via Open and Distance Learning

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Abstract

The Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode, encompassing teaching, learning, and assessment processes, has garnered increased acceptance among hospitality educators post-COVID-19. This is attributed to its flexibility, accessibility, and the potential to reach a global audience, offering preparation for unexpected events, such as pandemics. However, ODL implementation is not without challenges. To ensure effective implementation, this study investigates challenges faced by lecturers and students from Kolej Yayasan Pelajaran Johor (KYPJ), aiming to understand pitfalls and propose strategies for smooth implementation. Interviews were conducted with ten students and eight lecturers, and the resulting data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes. A total of twelve themes emerged, with six each from students and lecturers. Common challenges among both groups include internet connections, lack of social interaction and motivation, adaptation to the new learning environment, and disturbances/distractions. Additionally, students face unique challenges related to a lack of practical application and resources, while lecturers grapple with difficulties separating home life and work life, along with health-related anxieties.

Keywords:

Open and Distance Learning, Challenges, Teaching and Learning, Psychomotor Assessment

1 Introduction

In the wake of the global health crisis, exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, the imperative for substantial transformations in the realm of education has become indisputable. This exigency has propelled Malaysia's higher education sector to scrutinize methodologies conducive to the virtual dispensation of academic courses and associated activities (Wang et al., 2021). Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has emerged as a pivotal paradigm adopted by numerous higher education institutions, owing to its inherent flexibility and accessibility (Malaysia Qualification Agency, 2013, p.1). The MQA succinctly defines ODL as an avenue providing flexible educational opportunities characterized by versatile access and diverse modes of knowledge acquisition, encompassing correspondence education, home study, distance teaching, independent study, technology-based or mediated education, and flexible learning.

Extensive research has been undertaken to investigate the implementation, benefits, and challenges of ODL across various contexts, including the hospitality industry (Ernawati, 2023; Enoch et al., 2023; Mbagga et al., 2021; Zanal et al., 2023; Zamri & Mohamad, 2023, et al., 2023). Despite the manifold advantages offered by ODL, it is imperative to acknowledge and address the challenges it poses to ensure the efficacy of the teaching and learning processes. Consequently, this study delves into the challenges associated with teaching, learning, and assessment within the Culinary Program at Kolej Yayasan Pelajaran Johor (KYPJ). The selection of the culinary program is deliberate, considering its intricate psychomotor components integral to both delivery and assessment processes. Through a meticulous exploration, this study aims to provide valuable insights into refining and optimizing the ODL implementation within the specific context of culinary education. The findings can also be transferred to other relevant hospitality programs.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

In recent decades, ODL has significantly grown thanks to effective teaching methods and technological advancements (Kossen & Ooi, 2021). It addresses issues of access and serves as a practical option for building capacity. ODL is seen as a viable alternative to traditional learning, which struggles with quality due to overcrowded classrooms (Tzavara & Wilczek, 2019). Over the past few decades, ODL has evolved into an effective learning mode, shifting the focus from teaching to facilitating and supporting inquiry (Starr-Glass, 2020). Throughout its development, from correspondence courses to modern forms, ODL has adapted well to changing learning needs by leveraging (Kant et al., 2021).

ODL excels in ensuring both teachers and learners can connect regardless of time and place, making it resilient like floods, conflicts, or pandemics like COVID-19 (Nikou & Maslov, 2023). Its effectiveness in these situations has gained recognition. ODL's unique

features have led to significant growth, utilizing technology to tap into global education opportunities. However, this expansion brings challenges such as psychological impact, design and instructions, infrastructure and resources, technological skills, social implications, thus it require proactive development from ODL in the future (Aisha & Ratra, 2022).

2.2 ODL Challenges Faced by Students

The recurring challenge of limited face-to-face interaction with instructors and peers fosters feelings of isolation and hampers the development of a supportive learning community (Rizvi & Nabi, 2021). This is particularly pertinent in practical and psychomotor elements of education, where hands-on experiences and real-time feedback are integral to the learning process.

Technological barriers present hurdles for many students, as navigating online learning tools becomes challenging with limited access to reliable internet, hardware, or software (Sabbah, 2023). This technological challenge extends to practical elements, where proficiency in digital tools is crucial for effective engagement in hands-on activities. The demand for self-managed schedules introduces challenges in time management, especially for those juggling work, family, and academic responsibilities (Anthony Jnr & Noel, 2021). This is particularly relevant to the acquisition of practical skills, which may require dedicated time and resources.

Practical skills, especially in utilizing digital tools and engaging in hands-on activities, emerge as crucial in overcoming these challenges and fully engaging with ODL (Saleeb, 2021). Addressing challenges in both practical and psychomotor elements of ODL is vital for ensuring a comprehensive educational experience for students (Alhusban et al., 2023). The virtual learning environment's inherent lack of immediate feedback and encouragement, due to the absence of physical presence, contributes to motivational issues for some students, impacting their overall commitment to the learning process (Attiogbe et al., 2023). This is particularly significant in the context of psychomotor elements, where real-time feedback is essential for skill refinement and improvement.

2.3 ODL Challenges Faced by Lecturers

Lecturers, on the other hand, encounter challenges in course design, particularly in creating engaging and interactive content that facilitates effective learning experiences for students (Sari et al., 2023). This becomes especially complex when addressing practical and psychomotor aspects, which demand innovative instructional strategies. Establishing clear communication channels is crucial for lecturers but maintaining regular and meaningful communication with students becomes challenging in the virtual realm of ODL (Alaskar, 2023). Effective communication is essential for providing timely feedback, particularly in practical and psychomotor domains.

Developing fair and effective assessment methods is a constant challenge for lecturers in ODL. Ensuring academic integrity, preventing plagiarism, and offering assessments that accurately measure learning outcomes are ongoing concerns, particularly when assessing practical skills (Aisha & Ratra, 2022). Lecturers may also face challenges in adapting to and effectively utilizing various technologies in ODL. Integrating new tools for communication, collaboration, and assessment requires ongoing professional development and support, especially in the context of practical and hands-on learning (Sarker et al., 2019).

Taking everything into account, addressing challenges on both the student and lecturer sides is paramount for the success and effectiveness of ODL programs. Acknowledging and overcoming these challenges will contribute to a more robust and inclusive learning environment for all stakeholders involved.

2.4 Informational Teaching and Learning in ODL

In the dynamic landscape ODL, teaching, learning, and assessment undergo continuous evolution, shaping educational paradigms to meet the demands of a digital age. Research underscores a shift towards innovative instructional strategies in ODL, with educators exploring multimedia presentations, virtual simulations, and interactive online modules to engage and facilitate learning (Al-Awidi & Al-Furaih, 2023). Effective communication channels are established through various online tools and collaborative platforms, emphasizing the creation of a supportive learning community in the absence of physical presence (Eutsler et al., 2021).

ODL places a premium on self-directed learning, requiring students to take increased responsibility for their education. Successful ODL learners demonstrate strong self-motivation, time management skills, and the ability to navigate digital resources independently (Lo et al., 2021). The flexibility offered by ODL in terms of learning pace and location is recognized as a positive factor, allowing learners to adapt study schedules to personal and professional commitments (Bakir & Alsaadani, 2022).

Assessing student learning in the ODL context presents unique challenges, including ensuring academic integrity, preventing plagiarism, and developing assessments that measure learning outcomes effectively without direct supervision (Aisha & Ratra, 2022). To address these challenges, educators are exploring innovative assessment methods, such as e-portfolios, online quizzes, and collaborative projects, leveraging digital tools to assess not only knowledge acquisition but also skills development and critical thinking (Sengupta & Blessinger, 2022).

In the realm of psychomotor assessment, which is particularly relevant in practical and hands-on learning, ODL faces distinct challenges. The virtual nature of ODL can make it complex to evaluate physical skills and coordination. Researchers and educators are actively exploring ways to incorporate psychomotor assessments into the online learning environment (Chiew et al., 2022). This may involve the use of virtual simulations,

video submissions, or live demonstrations conducted via online platforms, providing a comprehensive evaluation of skills acquisition (Mampane, 2020).

To summarize, the evolution of teaching, learning, and assessment in ODL reflects a dynamic response to the opportunities and challenges presented by digital education. Ongoing research and exploration of innovative approaches, including psychomotor assessment, are essential for adapting to the evolving landscape of ODL and ensuring its continued effectiveness in providing accessible and flexible educational opportunities.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study utilizes an exploratory research design with a qualitative approach to investigate the challenges experienced by students and lecturers, specifically within the culinary program. Drawing on Garcia and Gluesing's (2013) assertion that qualitative research is well-suited for exploring phenomena and understanding individuals' characteristics and perspectives, this research employs open-ended questions to gather insights. Furthermore, the study adopts a non-contrived setting, employing a cross-sectional data collection method, with individuals as the unit of analysis.

3.2 Population and sample

This study targeted the entire population of hospitality students and lecturers at Kolej Yayasan Pelajaran Johor. However, the sample was specifically limited to students and lecturers within the culinary program who underwent ODL during the COVID-19 pandemic. This program was chosen due to its substantial psychomotor component in teaching, learning, and assessment, providing a robust theoretical basis for sample selection. The sample comprised 18 informants, including 10 students and 8 lecturers who were recruited via purposive sampling, a strategy advantageous in exploratory studies with limited empirical support for the theory (Chaddad & Reuer, 2009).

3.3 Instrumentation and procedure

For comprehensive interpretation and data richness, this study employed semi-structured interviews. The questions were carefully crafted to foster a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, aligning with the approach advocated by Solimun and Fernandes (2017) to elicit high-quality information. To ensure clarity, following Prince et al.'s (2009) guidance, efforts were made to ensure informants comprehended the meaning of each question, minimizing potential confusion. The interview instrument was designed bilingually in English and Malay. Permission to record the interview sessions were made with informant consent. Probing questions were judiciously employed for deeper exploration and to elicit in-depth responses. To enhance trustworthiness, the interview protocol was scrutinized by two experts, and a familiarization interview was conducted as a prelude to identify potential issues prior to data collection (Buschle et al., 2021).

The interview protocol was meticulously developed to maintain focus, consistency across interviews with diverse informants, and to bolster the reliability of the information obtained.

3.4 Data Collection

Approval to conduct the study was secured from the Head of the Department. Individuals meeting the sample criteria were contacted and invited to participate in the study through telephone communication. Upon obtaining consent, informants received detailed research information via email. After this, interview scheduling took place through phone calls or emails, accommodating respondents' availability. To ensure informants' comprehension of the process, a guide containing the consent form and contact details was provided before the interview. All interviews were conducted at locations convenient for the informants. Basic demographic questions were administered at the outset to establish rapport, followed by the exploration of primary inquiries and further investigation to gather essential data for the study.

3.5 Data Analysis

The interview data was transcribed and manually coded, with thorough re-reading of the transcripts to ensure researchers' familiarity with the content. Deductive analysis was employed to categorize the initial data into predetermined codes or themes, following the methodology outlined by Bingham and Witkowsky (2022).

4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Analysis

A total of ten (10) students and eight (8) lecturers participated in the study. Among the student informants, gender representation was balanced (50%), and their ages ranged between nineteen (19) and twenty (20) years. Students typically enrolled in approximately two or three practical courses and 5 theory courses per semester, with an exception in the final semester. All students were in either the fourth (n=5) or fifth (n=5) semester. Regarding the lecturers, the majority were female (62.5%), with ages ranging from twenty-six (26) to thirty-five (35) years. Seven out of eight lecturers held a bachelor's degree. The majority (n=6) were married and had served more than one year at Kolej Yayasan Pelajaran Johor (KYPJ). Additionally, most lecturers (n=6) had an average of four to five years of working experience. The next section explains the themes regarding challenges faced by the students regarding ODL.

4.2 Themes related to challenges in ODL among culinary students.

Six (6) themes have emerged from the transcripts regarding the challenges of ODL among culinary students. The themes are Internet connectivity, lack of social interaction and motivation, adaptation to the new teaching and learning environment, disturbance, lack of practical application and lack of resources. Further explanation on the themes is elaborated in the following section.

4.2.1 Internet Connectivity

All informants (n=10) identified the primary challenge as potential disruptions and delays in the work process for the entire class due to unreliable internet connections for both lecturers and students. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that many informants rely on personal internet connections, and a significant portion of students face limitations in internet accessibility. Furthermore, some students reside in remote areas with poor internet connectivity. As highlighted by Shahriar et al. (2021), students in rural areas often lack sufficient technological resources, creating difficulties in accessing high-quality online education. This scenario underscores the collective responsibility of faculties, authorities, the government, and the education ministry to address these challenges and ensure equitable participation for all students in online classes.

Below is the expression of the informants regarding the challenge on Internet connectivity:

"The internet connection was the most challenging for me. I worry sometimes that my internet connection will prevent me from arriving on time for the lesson. As a result, I often test the internet to ensure that it is at least functional."

Student 4

"The hardest problem I've had since was getting an internet connection. I'm staying in a rural region that isn't yet completely developed; ...the location's internet service was really bad. When I previously had similar issues, I had to pay money merely to get a booster to remain connected."

Student 7

4.2.2 Lack of Social Interaction and Motivation

Six (6) informants expressed shared concerns about experiencing disconnection from colleagues, leading to a lack of social interaction. Some acknowledged the positive impact of being with friends, noting that it enhances their happiness and enthusiasm for learning, as they can seek assistance from peers or lecturers when needed. Notably, learners who identified as slow learners emphasized that Online Distance Learning (ODL) exacerbates feelings of being lost, loneliness, and a lack of motivation to study. This sentiment aligns with the findings of Baber (2022), who identifies the absence of social connection as a key challenge in online learning. To address this issue, it is recommended that lecturers ensure online classrooms are engaging to enhance the effectiveness of ODL and alleviate social isolation anxiety.

Feedback made by the informants include:

"It is quite challenging when learning at a distance because we used to learn in a classroom with our friends and with that suddenly changes it disrupt our usual way of learning. I could not get any support from my friend, and everything is done alone at home."

Student 1

"The most challenging thing when learning online is that I didn't have my friend close to me. Honestly, I'm quite a slow learner and usually, I get support from my friends, and when we have to learn online, it's quite challenging for me."

Student 6

"I can say that staying motivated is a big challenge for me in this situation where I'm staying at home. It's hard to focus when u see your family members all the time and all the distractions make it really hard for me."

Student 8

4.2.3 Adaptation to the new teaching and learning environment.

The third identified challenge in ODL pertains to informants' dissatisfaction with the new teaching and learning environment. This dissatisfaction stems from a perceived lack of technical expertise in using the platform and an unfamiliarity with its application, presenting significant barriers. A total of eight (8) informants highlighted challenges related to platform usage and management. This observation aligns with Zhang et al.'s (2022) findings, which emphasize that adopting online learning methods, coupled with issues such as poor learning quality, inadequate information infrastructure, and a lack of learning resources, poses challenges for students in traditional classes conducted via ODL. To address these challenges, a robust support system is essential for both students and those involved in teaching and learning to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching and learning process.

The informants' remarks on this challenge include:

"The challenge I have had so far is using the online platform. The platform used is not permanent and keeps on changing, and it causes a challenge for us to study the function all over again."

Student 2

"Online learning using online platform is challenging. Now they used Microsoft teams, and I was frustrated on the Microsoft team's platform itself because of the heavy software, making my computer becomes slow just to open up the platform."

Student 9

4.2.4 Disturbance

The fourth prominent challenge of ODL, as highlighted by most informants (n=8), revolves around significant disruptions faced by informants while learning and conducting assessments from home. Despite the flexibility offered by ODL, it introduces various distractions that can hinder learning outcomes. Challenges include an inconducive learning environment at home, particularly for informants with numerous

siblings or limited space. Some informants also faced distractions due to household chores conflicting with online class schedules, often stemming from a lack of parental understanding regarding the implementation of ODL.

Mohammed (2022) suggests that the home environment's impact on space requirements becomes significant when people must work and study at home due to the COVID-19 situation. Increased items at home may lead to inefficiency, prompting potential adjustments in how individuals utilize their homes. Furthermore, as discomforts, noise levels, and disruptions at home rise, there is a growing preference for flexible spaces. Additionally, Rana (2021) notes that e-learning, when replacing traditional learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, couldn't fully capture its advantages, serving as a supplementary rather than a sufficient learning platform. In the context of ODL, students face challenges in maintaining focus on expected outcomes amidst domestic noises and demands for attention from family members, as not every home provides a suitable learning environment comparable to a classroom.

Among the feedback being highlighted are the followings:

"Other challenge that I had facing during the period of OL at home is disturbance. There are noises everywhere. One of them is during my father mow the lawn. I easily get distracted by the sound and cannot focus my learning at the time."

Student 5

"There were also challenges that are coming from noises of my surrounding and it is really caught me out of focus during the class. My Father had a renovation at our home.... So the noise come from all the machinery disturb me at one time."

Student 10

4.2.5 Lack of Practical Implementation

The fifth significant challenge faced by informants in ODL revolves around the lack of practical application when studying at home. While ODL provides flexibility, it introduces various impediments that hinder effective learning, particularly in meeting industry needs. Every participant (n=10) raised concerns about this issue, emphasizing that face-to-face learning offered higher social presence, interaction, satisfaction, and overall quality compared to online learning. Despite the convenience of online classes, both lecturers and students perceive them as less structured and practical than traditional classroom learning.

This perspective is corroborated by Khalil et al. (2020), who found that while online learning was generally well-received and acknowledged for saving time, leading to improved performance through better time utilization, participants encountered various challenges. These challenges encompassed methodological issues, content perception, technical difficulties, and communication challenges during sessions and online assessments. The collective sentiment underscores the importance of addressing

practical application limitations in ODL to enhance the overall effectiveness and quality of the learning experience."

Below are the comments from informants about the disruptions they experienced:

"When we talk about developing skills in practical classes, the medium use using the online platform is not sufficient to develop our skills. It's a challenge for me to understand and not perform in the actual cooking classroom."

Student 7

"Skills are best developed when we have a hands-on experience rather than watching videos online. This is a challenge for me because I love cooking and cannot perform actual cooking with the subject that we learn is a bit stressful."

Student 9

4.2.6 Lack of Resources

The final challenge participants encountered in ODL was the scarcity of resources. Despite the flexibility that ODL offers, students grapple with accessing essential tools crucial for effective learning and assessment processes. This issue was highlighted unanimously by all informants (n=10). For instance, some informants face challenges in securing a dedicated space for studying or obtaining necessary equipment for hands-on learning, especially in practical classes like basic western and basic pastry within the culinary arts field. Financial constraints compound the problem, making it difficult for students to afford study materials essential for practical classes, given their often expensive and hard-to-obtain nature. The informants consistently expressed a preference for face-to-face learning, particularly in practical subjects, citing a greater sense of social interaction and satisfaction compared to online classes, which they find less structured and practical. The pervasive challenge of limited resources underscores the pressing need to address this issue for the enhancement of the overall quality of ODL.

This theme is backed by Rana (2021) who emphasizes that, when replacing traditional learning with online methods, ODL falls short of fully capturing the advantages of in-person instruction, functioning more as a supplementary rather than a comprehensive learning platform. Within the ODL context, students encounter challenges in acquiring sufficient resources for study materials, particularly for practical classes requiring specific ingredients or equipment to meet class requirements. The demands of certain courses may exceed the resources available to students, especially in households that cannot provide a learning environment comparable to a traditional classroom.

The following evidenced the informants' feelings about the challenge on lack of resources:

"When we talk about fulfilling the needs in practical classes, I've face difficulty obtaining essential materials, such as ingredients or equipment, for practical classes..."

Student 1

"I can't give my 100% ability to meet the specific class requirements."

Student 6

4.3 Themes related to challenges in ODL among culinary lecturers.

Themes regarding challenges in ODL implementation among the lecturers seems like the students. The transcribed data revealed six (6) themes of challenges: internet connectivity, feeling disconnected from colleagues/lack of social interaction, difficulty separating home and work life, adapting to a new teaching mode, disturbances, and health anxiety. The next section further explains about the themes.

4.3.1 Internet Connectivity

Internet connectivity emerged as a primary challenge during Online Distance Learning (ODL), as revealed by information gathered from the informants. Participants encountered disruptions in teaching and learning activities due to poor internet connections. All informants (n=8) unanimously expressed concerns about this issue, underscoring that a lecturer or student experiencing a suboptimal internet connection can disrupt the entire class and cause delays in the work process. Gavrila and de Lucas Ancillo (2021) noted that unreliable residential broadband access posed a significant technical challenge when companies transitioned to ODL during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, Hamdan et al. (2021) reported that a substantial portion of respondents faced "IT pains" during the rapid shift to support remote workers, with nearly a third still encountering technical difficulties. Shahriar et al. (2021) added that challenges such as inadequate technological infrastructure development, limited access to devices or the internet, and financial constraints—common in developing countries—could impede the smooth online learning experience. These findings highlight the critical role of addressing internet connectivity issues to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of ODL, especially in the context of remote work and learning transitions accelerated by the global pandemic.

The challenge on internet connectivity has created significant stress and illustrated via the following comment:

"The hardest thing for me was the internet connection. Sometimes I'm afraid that my teaching didn't deliver to the students."

Lecturer 7

“So... most of the time, I'm prepared early so that the student can receive what I'm about to teach. Even worst if I get to go somewhere where I can get the internet connection to teach my student.”

Lecturer 8

4.3.2 Disconnected From Colleague

The second prominent challenge in ODL was informants (n=5) experiencing a sense of disconnection from colleagues and a notable lack of social interaction. The year-long adjustment to ODL during the Covid-19 pandemic presented challenges in seamlessly integrating this transition into the daily lives of informants. A recurring theme among informants was the absence of peer coaching, which had been a significant support mechanism when working from the office. While operating remotely, most informants encountered difficulties in accessing peer support, resulting in a loss of organizational network benefits and collaborative knowledge sharing.

This challenge aligns with the observations of Rocha and Almeida (2021), who noted that employees faced behavioural and cultural challenges in extended and long-term remote work scenarios. Despite having the necessary technology for remote work, employees identified the most significant challenges as a lack of social interaction with colleagues and a feeling of disconnection from organizational happenings. Addressing this challenge becomes crucial to fostering a sense of connection and maintaining collaborative efforts within the remote learning and working environments."

The informants' expression regarding this theme is summarized as follows:

“The difference when working from home and ODL was that the social interaction we received was totally different. Before this, we have friends available all the time rather than ODL.”

Lecturer 3

“So, when we need helps, or anything was easier, but when we are working remotely, it's hard to ask for helps or anything.”

Lecturer 6

4.3.3 Difficulties to Separate between Home Life and Work-Life

The third challenge informants faced in ODL was the difficulty in establishing a clear separation between home life and work life. Five (5) out of eight (8) informants mentioned this issue, highlighting the struggle to maintain a distinct boundary between their work and personal lives. When working remotely, informants found it increasingly challenging to allocate between managing household affairs and work responsibilities simultaneously. This challenge aligns with the findings of Prodanova and Kocarev (2021), who suggested that employees are less likely to face conflicts between work and

personal lives when they establish clear boundaries, allowing them to dedicate sufficient time to both aspects separately.

Below are some of the comments from the informants regarding this challenge:

“Honestly, I said to separate work and home life was quite a challenge. At first, it was a challenge for me because this was the first time I was working and handling my family at the same time.”

Lecturer 1

“When we don’t manage our time, of course, we are going to drag our time on working longer than usual. Even if already getting used to ODL but still managing work and life-related activities were not an easy task.”

Lecturer 2

4.3.4 Adaptation to New Teaching Mode

The fourth significant challenge faced by informants in ODL was frustration with the new teaching platform. All eight informants expressed difficulties stemming from their limited technological experience with the new apps provided by the management and insufficient knowledge of the software. Additionally, all informants highlighted challenges in assessing students' psychomotor skills, citing insufficient resources on the students' part and difficulties in accurately measuring the students' actual skills. The introduction of ODL posed new challenges for the informants, who grappled with an unfamiliar platform due to their lack of experience and knowledge, resulting in heightened stress levels. This challenge is consistent with the findings of Almahasees and Qassem (2021), who observed that many academics, unfamiliar with e-platforms and learning management systems, encountered additional challenges while working remotely.

The transition to online platforms has impeded educators' ability to effectively deliver practical education. Particularly, instructors of hands-on courses have expressed reservations about online distance learning (ODL) due to the inherent difficulty in remotely assessing psychomotor skills. The physical nature of practical classes presents challenges in translating the learning experience to an online setting, making it hard for instructors to evaluate hands-on skills, manipulate equipment, and offer personalized guidance.

This difficulty aligns with Franco's findings (2021), indicating a broader reluctance among educators, especially in disciplines heavily reliant on hands-on experiences. In practical fields, instructors often resist online teaching methods as they believe it compromises the depth and quality of psychomotor assessment, thereby affecting the overall educational experience for both educators and students. The apprehension and

challenges faced by these instructors highlight the necessity for innovative solutions and adaptations in online education to meet the unique demands of practical classes.

Below are some of the comments from the informants about the adaptation on new teaching and learning mode such as ODL:

"If we talk about changing for the better, it's great to do that. But when I'm facing this kind of change, it's a problematic thing for me."

Lecturer 5

"Hard things for me when I'm always thinking are the T&L is sufficient? What if it was not?"

Lecturer 6

"I need to learn how to use the technology alone without support, and I'm seriously lacking knowledge on tech usage."

Lecturer 7

"The changes is good, but it's hard to asses some of the rubric requirement, like taste and some skills such as kitchen management or kitchen cleanliness."

Lecturer 8

4.3.5 Distractions

While ODL provides a serene environment free from regular office disturbances, it introduces its own set of challenges. Informants encountered distractions from family members, neighbours, and various external factors, negatively impacting work productivity and posing challenges to efficient work in a home environment. All eight informants reported facing similar disturbances while working from home. This challenge is consistent with the findings of Prodanova and Kocarev (2021), who underscored the struggles associated with minimizing distractions in ODL, emphasizing their potential to reduce work productivity and overall work quality. Furthermore, Appel-Meulenbroek et al. (2020) highlighted the necessity for employees to concentrate to achieve expected results while working. Distractions such as family seeking attention or household noises can pose challenges to maintaining focus. It's essential to recognize that not every home can offer optimal working conditions comparable to a traditional office space."

The followings are some of the comments regarding the distractions faced by the informants:

"I've faced a lot of disturbance when working at home, such as my noisy neighbour, sometimes even my family making such noise when I'm working..."

Lecturer 3

“... when the workplace that I've set up was lacking things that I needed it's going to cause disturbance on my work activities also. Such as my printer ink finished, my paper finished, and all sorts of things.”

Lecturer 4

4.3.6 Health Anxiety

The transition to ODL proved unexpectedly stressful for informants. The sixth and final theme emerging from the challenges of teaching and learning via ODL centred around concerns regarding health. Several informants emphasized significant drawbacks, particularly the adverse impact on mental and physical well-being. This concern aligns with the findings of Abas et al. (2021), who reported an increase in work-related injuries unique to the home environment as more people shifted to ODL. Kuswari et al. (2022) further underscored the effects on mental health, isolation, and a sedentary lifestyle contributing to issues such as weight gain and obesity. Additionally, the absence of workplace-related health services in the home environment may exacerbate pre-existing health issues, and preventative care could be compromised.

Below are some of the comments regarding health anxiety experienced by the informants:

“Of course, it's giving a bad impact on my health. When too long staying at home, I think I'm gaining weight, and the laziness keeps disturbing my focus on doing something.”

Lecturer 2

“Maybe because of lack of exercise making me lose focus and not as sharp as before.”

Lecturer 6

5 Conclusion.

This research delves into the challenges faced by students and lecturers within the culinary program at KYPJ in the context of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) as education transitions to digital platforms. The study reveals that ODL presents similar challenges for both groups, emphasizing the critical need to understand and address these issues as technology increasingly integrates into education. Through candid insights and experiences shared by informants, the study provides an overview of challenges inherent in ODL, spanning technological involvement, adaptation, assessment techniques, and broader impacts on the teaching and learning process. Assessment methods vital to the educational process, are also explored in the context of ODL, emphasizing the necessity for adaptable and reasonable evaluation approaches. The study underscores the intricate balance lecturers and students must strike in the

digital realm, considering elements such as connectivity, social interaction, and practical application.

The dynamic landscape of ODL necessitates continuous adaptation and collaborative problem-solving. The researchers recommend the importance of ongoing efforts to refine and enhance the ODL environment, fostering open dialogue and innovative solutions. The insights are hoped to assist management to better understand the challenges so that they can strategically allocating resources for effective ODL implementation. Furthermore, the study seeks to inspire further research, dialogue, and action to contribute to the evolution of ODL into a more inclusive and enriching educational experience. Acknowledging limitations, the study focuses specifically on culinary programs and employs a qualitative approach. Future research is recommended to explore overall hospitality and tourism programs using diverse methods, including quantitative or mixed methods, for a more holistic understanding of ODL phenomena in hospitality and tourism education.

6 About the author

Associate Professor Dr Norzuwana Sumarjan is a passionate hospitality educator with extensive expertise in the field of hospitality management. As a Certified Hospitality Educator, Norzuwana earned her Ph.D. in Hospitality Management from Iowa State University. With more than two decades of experience in academia, and a wealth of experience in the industry, Norzuwana currently serve as the Dean of the Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management, in UiTM. Her research interests include Hospitality Management, Quality Management, Ageing Population and Organizational Behaviour.

Fikri Hanif bin Muhamad, an experienced hospitality educator with a master's degree from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), has dedicated over ten years to teaching at Kolej Yayasan Pelajaran Johor (KYPJ). Previously lead the School of Hospitality and Tourism at KYPJ, Fikri Hanif loves studying and teaching about Hospitality Management. His career marked by dedication and a commitment to excellence.

Ruzaini bin Ahmad Rashdaine Basha, a hospitality educator with almost a decade of experience with a master's degree in gastronomy from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). He is currently serving as the leader of commercial cookery at Kolej Yayasan Pelajaran Johor (KYPJ), expertly combines theoretical knowledge and practical skills in culinary arts education, demonstrating a profound commitment to excellence and a deep interest in gastronomic research.

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