

THE CHALLENGES AND IMPACTS OF ONLINE LEARNING TOWARDS UNISEL UNDERGRADUATES

Mohd Bakri bin Abu Bakar
Universiti Selangor
mbakri@unisel.edu.my

Nor Rabiatal Atiqah Mohd Yazid
Universiti Selangor
rabiatalatiqah22@gmail.com

Nurain Nabilah Mahdi
Universiti Selangor
nurainabilah20@gmail.com

Abstract

The spread of Covid-19 has made educational institutions have a sudden shift to online learning. Despite it, students are still required to continue their studies in this new norm of learning. Therefore, students have started to encounter numerous online learning challenges and it could impact them. This study is to identify the challenges of online learning and the impacts on UNISEL undergraduates. The research design of this study is descriptive, which uses the quantitative method involving 70 UNISEL undergraduates. The questionnaires focused on two parts: 1) online learning challenges, adapted from Muilenberg and Berge (2005) 2) the impacts of online learning, which was adapted from Nambiar (2020), with a five Likert scale ranging from never to always. The data were tabulated into a percentage by using a simple equation. The findings revealed that most of the students encountered the challenges but on different scales. Some of the challenges they faced were related to their preference (face-to-face vs. online learning), increasing workload, and online learning costs too much. Most of the respondents in this study found that online learning has left some negative impacts on them. Some of the impacts are easily frustrated or irritated when interruptions occur, having a lack of rest, dissatisfied with their performance, and experiencing some physical pains most of the time. To sum up, despite the challenges and impacts that they need to face, most students can slowly adapt to online learning now.

Keywords: Covid-19, Online learning, Challenges, Impacts, Undergraduates

INTRODUCTION

At the end of December 2019, the first case of Covid-19 was discovered in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. Then, it has affected the global economy and become an international concern.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the coronavirus (Covid-19) as a pandemic in March 2020. The chances of getting infected by this virus are high, especially when people are in crowded places. That is why most of the government instructed to close down the sectors that involved crowds, such as the working industry and educational institutions.

Due to the sudden increasing cases in Malaysia, the government decided to implement the restriction of Movement Control Order (MCO) starting from 18 March 2020 to break the chain of Covid-19 in the community. Therefore, all schools, institutions, and the working industry are required to close temporarily. However, education needs to continue despite the prolonged MCO. This outbreak has caused a shift in teaching and learning methods; the traditional face-to-face classroom is now substituted by online learning (Aboeagye et al., 2020). Thus, online learning is now becoming the new norm during this pandemic era. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine online learning challenges and how it impacts UNISEL undergraduates.

Problem Statement

The rapid advancement in technology has helped distance learning and teaching to become more accessible (McBrien et al., 2009). Thus, it is expected that online learning would be easier for the students as they are allowed to be more flexible according to their learning preferences (Gilbert, 2015). Students are expected to be ready for online learning as they are quite used to the technology.

However, it is not as easy as expected since the students have faced many challenges during the online learning session. Learning at home requires students to have high discipline and motivation. Thus, one of the challenges students will usually face is related to time management. Some students stated that having online classes at home was burdensome as they were unable to balance their time for their assignments and housework (Nambiar, 2020). Besides that, many disturbances could occur when they are in their classes, which could also affect their time as they might need to pause for a while. One of the most common situations is when they need to go back and forth doing the house chores between their classes or discussions. Thus, their plan to do their work or revision might be interrupted.

Therefore, the disturbances would take more of the students' time. If this situation continues to happen, they might need to sacrifice their rest or sleep to complete their ongoing tasks and assignments. Furthermore, it will cause them to feel more lethargic and stress throughout the online learning session since they have less time to rest and sleep. Besides that, they might also lose the motivation to continue learning at home due to their inability to arrange their time wisely.

Many causes could lead the students to have problems managing their time during online learning sessions. One of them is having too many tasks, which are given and required to complete in a short time. Besides that, some of them might be time-consuming. Thus, it would drag the students' time to do other work or revision. Other than that, having a limited internet connection could also interrupt the students' plan since it would delay their work. However, some of the students may be lacking in discipline and motivation when they are at home. Thus, such a habit as procrastinating could also be the main reason for their poor time management.

Hence, in this study, the researchers will be focusing on the impact of online learning on students. Through this study, it will help to share more awareness about their current condition in the online learning session. It will also help the lecturers and parents to have a better understanding of their struggles and also provide more support for them to get through their studies. Furthermore, this study will also provide some insights for other researchers to continue their studies in ways to overcome or fulfill the students' online learning needs in the future. The objectives of the study are to identify the challenges of online learning faced by UNISEL undergraduates as well as its impacts.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study utilized the quantitative method and used a descriptive design. The data gathered were about the challenges and impacts of online learning towards UNISEL undergraduates.

Participants

Data received from 70 respondents aged 18 to 27 years old. The majority of the respondents were from Bachelor's Degree (46) and followed by Diploma (23) and Foundation students (1). Most of them are currently in a second-year study (30), while the others are in their first (19) and third (20) year of study. Besides that, there were 70 UNISEL undergraduates from different courses participating in this study. The respondents were from TESL (42), Library Science (6), Early Childhood Education (5), Islamic studies (5), Science Computer (4), Bachelor English for Industry (2), Business and Management (2), Visual Art Department (1), Game Design (1) and two of the remaining respondents did not write their real courses.

Instruments

The first set of questionnaires was adapted from Muilenberg and Berge (2005). Out of the eight key factors of the challenges in online learning proposed by Muilenberg and Berge (2005), the researchers only selected seven key factors to be used in this study. The seven key factors used were lecturer issues, interactions issues, technology skills, motivation, accessibilities issues, time and support during studies, and technical problems. This questionnaire contains 10 items based on the challenges of online learning. Meanwhile, the second set of questionnaires were adapted from Nambiar (2020). This questionnaire contains 10 items focusing on the impacts of online learning towards UNISEL undergraduates. Both of the sets of questionnaires were using the 1-5 Likert scale ranging from never to always.

Data collection & Procedure

For this study, the questionnaires were created in the Google Form and distributed through WhatsApp in January 2021. The data were collected through Google Form and analysed using Microsoft Excel. The data is then presented in a percentage form.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the percentage of the online learning challenges faced by UNISEL Undergraduates. It shows that 7 (10%) respondents always found unclear instructions during

online learning. 29 (41.43%) respondents stated that sometimes while only 2 (2.86%) have never experienced the situation.

Table 1: Online Learning Challenges faced by UNISEL undergraduates

No.	Items	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	Always
1.	I find instructions during online learning are not clear.	2.86% N=2	11.43% N=8	41.43% N=29	34.29% N=24	10.00% N=7
2.	I find some of the lecturers are hard to contact.	11.43% N=8	20.00% N=14	32.86% N=23	24.29% N=17	11.43% N=8
3.	I find learning content poorly presented.	5.71% N=4	24.29% N=17	42.86% N=30	18.57% N=13	8.57% N=6
4.	I find there is a lack of interaction among students and lecturers in online learning.	7.14% N=5	18.57% N=13	27.14% N=19	31.43% N=22	15.71% N=11
5.	I find online learning is not engaging.	10.00% N=7	8.57% N=6	38.57% N=27	22.86% N=16	20.00% N=14
6.	I am afraid of feeling isolated.	15.71% N=11	8.57% N=6	34.29% N=24	22.86% N=16	18.57% N=13
7.	I find that online learning requires less collaboration.	11.43% N=8	10.00% N=7	41.43% N=29	25.71% N=18	11.43% N=8
8.	I prefer to learn face-to-face.	2.86% N=2	4.29% N=3	22.86% N=16	20.00% N=14	50.00% N=35
9.	I fear using new applications and websites for online learning.	14.29% N=10	25.71% N=18	35.71% N=25	11.43% N=8	12.85% N=9
10.	I feel lacking in online learning software skills.	14.29% N=10	17.14% N=12	34.29% N=24	21.43% N=15	12.86% N=9

As many as 8 (11.43%) respondents always struggled to contact their lecturers, while 23 (32.86%) experienced it sometimes. However, 8 (11.43%) respondents never had any problem reaching their lecturers. Other than that, 6 (8.57%) respondents stated that the learning content is always poorly presented. On the other hand, 30 (42.86%) of them sometimes found that learning content was not presented properly, while 4 (5.71%) respondents had never faced it throughout online learning.

Besides that, 11 (15.71%) respondents always found that the lack of interaction among students and lecturers would be a challenge during online learning. As many as 19 (27.14%) respondents sometimes would feel the same. However, 5 (7.14%) respondents found that the interaction between the lecturers and students was sufficient. Furthermore, online learning always felt not engaging for 14 (20%) of them. Although 27 (38.57%) respondents sometimes felt less engaging, 7 (10%) of them had never felt that way in an online learning session.

Other than that, 13 (18.57%) respondents always feel afraid of feeling isolated during online learning. Meanwhile, 24 (34.29%) of them sometimes shared the same feeling. However, as many as 11 (15.71%) respondents stated that isolation was never a problem for them. Moreover, 8 (11.43%) respondents always feel that collaboration during online learning is less than before. However, 29 (41.43%) of them found that online learning requires less collaboration, while 8 (11.43%) respondents found that online learning requires more collaboration among students.

50% (N=35) of the respondents always prefer to have physical classes. 16 (22.86%) of them sometimes would be fine with it, but a minority, 2 (2.86%) respondents favour online lectures more than physical lectures. Next, the use of new applications and websites in online learning has always been feared by the 9 (12.85%) respondents and sometimes 25 (35.71%) of them. In contrast, 10 (14.29%) respondents were confident to use new applications and websites. Then, 9 (12.86%) respondents always felt lacking when using online learning software skills. Another 24 (34.29%) respondents would feel the same sometimes. Nevertheless, 10 (14.29%) never felt the same.

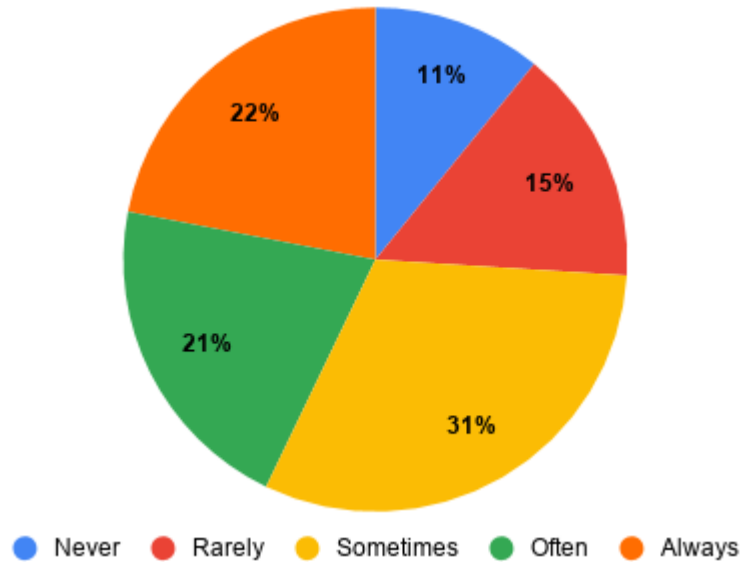


Figure 1: Online learning challenges faced by UNISEL undergraduates

Figure 1 demonstrates the overall percentage of online learning challenges faced by UNISEL undergraduates. 22% of the respondents encountered online learning challenges all the time, but 21% of them experienced it oftentimes. Meanwhile, 31% of the respondents faced challenges in online learning occasionally. Even though 15% of the respondents seldom came across the challenges, 11% of them never faced them at all.

Table 2: Impacts of online learning towards UNISEL undergraduates

No.	Items	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	Always
1.	I have experienced neck pain, eye strain, and migraine (others as well).	10.00% N=7	7.14% N=5	22.86% N=16	25.71% N=18	34.29% N=24
2.	I have a lack of rest due to having excessive workload.	8.57% N=6	7.14% N=5	27.14% N=19	20.00% N=14	37.14% N=26
3.	I find online learning is boring and unengaging.	8.57% N=6	10.00% N=7	31.43% N=22	22.86% N=16	27.14% N=19
4.	I feel unmotivated to join and participate during lectures.	11.43% N=8	8.57% N=6	31.43% N=22	17.14% N=12	31.43% N=22

5.	I feel unmotivated due to incompetency in computer skills.	12.86% N=9	22.86% N=16	27.14% N=19	17.14% N=12	20.00% N=14
6.	I find it difficult to understand the lectures.	5.71% N=4	12.86% N=9	34.29% N=24	14.29% N=10	32.86% N=23
7.	I feel anxious during the lectures.	11.43% N=8	14.29% N=10	28.57% N=20	14.29% N=10	31.43% N=22
8.	I feel lazy and disinterested during online classes.	5.71% N=4	12.86% N=9	30.00% N=21	22.86% N=16	28.57% N=20
9.	I am easily irritated and frustrated due to interruptions (internet, environment, etc.).	4.29% N=3	15.71% N=11	24.29% N=17	17.14% N=12	38.57% N=27
10.	I am not satisfied with my performance during online learning.	4.29% N=3	14.29% N=10	27.14% N=19	17.14% N=12	37.14% N=26

Table 2 shows the percentage of the impacts of online learning faced by UNISEL undergraduates. It shows that 24 (34.29%) respondents always experienced physical health problems such as neck pain, eye strain, and migraine. However, 16 (22.80%) of them occasionally experienced it during online learning, while only 7 (10%) stated that they never experienced physical health problems during online learning.

Furthermore, 26 (37.14%) respondents stated that they always did not get enough rest during online learning due to the excessive workload; but 19 (27.14%) respondents stated that they only experienced it sometimes. Only 6 (8.57%) respondents said that they were not tired.

Besides that, 19 (27.14%) respondents always found that online learning was boring and unengaging. Although 23 (31.43%) respondents felt that online learning was not stimulating sometimes, 6 (8.57%) of the respondents felt the opposite. It was found that 22 (31.43%) respondents always feel unmotivated to join and take part during the lectures, while another 22 (31.43%) of them would sometimes feel reluctant to be active in class. However, 8 (11.43%) of them never felt the same way as other respondents did.

Furthermore, 14 (20%) respondents would always feel unmotivated because of their incompetence in computer skills. Meanwhile, another 19 (27.14%) respondents sometimes felt demotivated with their computer skills deficiency. Another 9 (12.80%) respondents' motivation was not affected despite their lacking computer skills.

Other than that, another impact that could be seen was 23 (32.86%) respondents always struggled to understand the lectures and another 24 (34.29%) of them would sometimes experience the same thing. In contrast, a minority of respondents, which is 4 (5.71%), never felt the hardships in understanding the online lectures.

It was revealed that 22 (31.43%) respondents were always anxious during the lectures, while another 20 (28.57%) of them would feel anxious from time to time. Meanwhile, 8 (11.43%) respondents had never felt perturbed during the lectures. Furthermore, 20 (28.57%) respondents stated that they were always lazy and not interested during the class. However, 21 (30%) of them would act like this sometimes. A minority of the respondents, 4 (5.71%), remained spirited in the online class.

Moreover, 27 (38.57%) respondents stated that they were always easily irritated and frustrated when interruptions happened. Meanwhile, the other 17 (24.29%) respondents would be affected by it sometimes. Only 3 (4.29%) had never experienced the impact. Lastly, as many as 26 (37.14%) respondents always felt dissatisfied with their performance during online learning, while 19 (27.14%) of them would occasionally feel that. A minority of respondents, 3 (4.29%), stated that they were satisfied with their performance.

The study demonstrates a correlation between online learning challenges and the impacts of online learning towards UNISEL undergraduates. One of the findings in this study showed that 50% of the students had some challenges during online learning since they always prefer to learn face-to-face. It is because the students could have more interactions with their lecturers and friends. However, it is hard for students to have their usual interaction as they wished during online learning (Dhawan, 2020). In a study done by Amir et al. (2020), most of their respondents stated that satisfaction during online learning was different from face-to-face learning. Students were more satisfied with face-to-face classes rather than online learning (Tratnik, 2017). Besides that, online learning has also caused the students to have fewer social

interactions than a face-to-face class. In line with the previous study done by Bali and Liu (2018), their results showed that students perceived face-to-face learning more than online learning. The lack of social interaction and presence in online learning had made them preferred face-to-face learning more.

Next, 37.14% of the respondents always noticed that the workloads were more than before. It could happen due to the lecturers' unfamiliarity with the new norm of teaching and learning (Aristovnik et al., 2020). The result here is similar to the study by Ellis and Han (2018), especially for the students who preferred face-to-face learning. They found that the number of online workloads was irrelevant. It was also relevant to the study done by Aristovnik et al. (2020), where 78% of Malaysian students also stated the same. Plus, doing the online assessment has made 54.2% of the students feel more anxious than doing the usual ones (Chakraborty, 2020). Aside from their compulsory assessments, they also need to complete numerous tasks, forums, or discussions for most subjects as their participation marks or as their attendance for their classes.

Furthermore, 34.29% of the respondents found that online learning always costs too much. Things like data, electronic devices like laptops, phones, printers, and scanners have become more crucial, especially in this new learning norm. According to Nambiar (2020), students who come from low-income families would feel more burdened as they need to spend more costs to top up their daily data. She also stated that the lack of online facilities and devices among them would add more worries during the online learning session. Based on the study done by Adnan and Anwar (2020), a majority of the Pakistani students would share the same view since most of them were struggling financially.

The results also indicate that online learning has left some impacts towards UNISEL undergraduates, especially on their emotions. 38.57% of the respondents found that they were always easily irritated and frustrated with the interruptions that occurred. This finding is in line with the study done by Irawan et al. (2020), where the participants also showed their irritations when sudden interruptions happened. Some of the common interruptions are a poor internet connection, an uncondusive environment, or others. They would also feel annoyed when technical issues happened since it would disrupt the flow of the class. The interruptions would halt and consume their time in completing the tasks and study. Other than that, students could

also feel more frustrated and confused as they were uncomfortable with online learning (Dhawan, 2020).

Through this study, it is also proven that the stimulus of this study did impact the UNISEL undergraduates. 37.14% of the respondents in this study always experienced a lack of rest due to having excessive workloads. Students also complained that they felt stress as they were always under pressure to complete their assignments (Nambiar, 2020). The result is parallel with the second findings of the online learning challenges. Besides that, the result is also in line with a study by Chakraborty et al. (2020). Most students stated that their rest time was disturbed due to the need to settle their work and revisions during online learning. Students are required to complete a lot of extra tasks. In addition to that, some of the tasks would need them to take a long time to settle. Thus, they need to sacrifice their sleep or rest time to complete them.

Interestingly, the percentage of the respondents that were dissatisfied with their performance during online learning was the same as the impact stated previously, which is 37.14%. Students might feel that they are unable to give their best like how they normally used during face-to-face learning due to lack of computer skills and excessive workload (Aristovnik et al., 2020). Some of the challenges such as unstable internet connection, technical issues, limited time, and others since it might restrict them from giving their best performance. Besides that, some students could not practice or apply their knowledge during online learning (Dinh & Nguyen, 2020). Thus, it could affect their performance in the course.

Furthermore, the results show that 34.29% of students always experience eye strain, migraines, and others during online learning. Mheidly et al. (2020) reported that excessive exposure to the devices and screen had caused the students to feel more stress and exhaustion. This result ties well with a previous study done by Shetty et al. (2020). The majority of the medical students complained that they had some headache, eye strain, and excessive watering of the eye due to the prolonged hour of the online lectures. Doing long hours of assignments or revisions could cause them to have excessive screen time. Thus, leading them to have migraines and headaches frequently. Furthermore, students also experienced pains and aches related to the ears, eyes, back, and head due to the long hours of use of earphones and online devices

(Nambiar, 2020). Thus, the findings in this study had proven that the challenges and online learning had mostly impacted the students' emotional and physical.

CONCLUSION

In the study done by Aristovnik et al. (2020), almost 80% of the students in some countries felt that their workload has increased during the online learning sessions, while only 37.14% of the students in this study encountered it. Another one is from Shetty et al. (2020), where 75% of the students showed some impacts of online learning on their physical, which is eye-related issues. However, only 34.29% of the students in this study experienced the same pain. It could be deduced that the students are slowly adapting to the situation and challenges faced after almost a year in the online learning environment. They might find some other solutions to overcome their challenges and help themselves during the online learning sessions. However, other people should not neglect the students' emotions, well-being and health even if they look fine throughout the time. Therefore, the university needs to provide more guidance and support for the students to endure a hard time during online learning.

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