

## COVID 19 PANDEMIC: IMPACT ON STUDENTS' ACCEPTANCE TOWARDS ONLINE LEARNING

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### ABSTRACT

*COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the normal functioning of various activities across the world, including learning and education. The shift towards online education during the pandemic of COVID-19 has led many studies to focus on perceived learning outcomes and student satisfaction in this new learning environment. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the level of students' acceptance of online class during COVID-19 pandemic, concentrating on mental readiness, internet connection and excessive workload. The study involved 100 respondents among UiTM students in Malaysia. A set of questionnaires is distributed through online survey method in collecting the data using convenience sampling. Then, the data is analyzed using SPSS version and few analyses such as Normality test, Cronbach Alpha and correlation coefficient which were used to identify the factors affecting the level of students' acceptance of online learning during pandemic COVID-19. The result for Normal test shows that the study is normal distribution and overall findings of the analysis conducted for the study can be generalised to the whole population. Cronbach Alpha shows .80 demonstrates an acceptable result and remarkable significance. Moreover, the result for correlation indicates that all independent variables: mental readiness, internet coverage and excessive workload has positive relationship with students' acceptance towards online learning. This study is very pivotal and demanded by various parties such as academicians, university authorities, government bodies and others in developing new policies and strategies especially in academic and educational matters.*

*Keywords:* Online learning, mental readiness, internet coverage, excessive workload, SPSS

### INTRODUCTION

The educational system across the world has immensely been affected due to outbreak of COVID-19; it forced the shutdown of educational institutions, which adversely affected student fraternity across the globe. Due to its contagious nature, COVID-19 demanded containment and enforced isolation that tremendously affected personal interaction between lecturers and students. There are 66.5 million cases of COVID-19 around the world and in Malaysia, there are around 71 thousand cases since 4 December 2020. The virus has caused millions of deaths of people around the world that cause panic and fear of this disease. It also temporarily reduces the efficiency of the government administration system when the virus has infected the country.

In Malaysia, the government has enforced an Act called Prevention and Control Infectious Diseases Act 1988 to mitigate the infection of the virus. With this Act, the government has declared several series of movement restrictions to all states throughout the nation to reduce social gathering and closure of government and private buildings to curb the spread of COVID-19 virus. From the educational aspect, higher institutions in Malaysia were also hit by this issue whereby many of them have adopted online learning as the practicable approach in continuing the education (Chung et al., 2020). As a result, students experience 'new norm' in learning process where all materials, assessment and examination are conducted through online.

Online learning refers to the learning experienced through the internet either in the synchronous or asynchronous environment where students engage with instructors and other students at their convenient time and place. In a globalized digital age, government agencies, educational institutions, corporations worldwide are increasingly promoting online learning, resulting in a shift from traditional face-to-face classes to distance and online learning. With the advancement of new communication technologies, online learning can provide a rich, authentic learning ecology that can facilitate collaboration and interdependence between learners. With distance learning moving in the long run, experts say that the mental, emotional, and academic effects of the shift tend to be challenging.

With the existence of this online learning, it creates a lot of challenges to the students. Thus, the level of acceptance among them towards this new approach has varies. This situation gives good and bad impact on their studies. It is depending on how they can adopt and familiarized themselves with this new norm.

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

As a matter of fact, UiTM, being one of the of most respectful public universities in Malaysia has transformed their mode of learning process into open and distance learning (ODL) effectively on 13 April 2020. This action is in response to the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MoHE) that urges universities to continue the semester on online platforms and digital tools until further notice. Variety of platforms and applications such as UFuture, WhatsApp, Google Meet and many more are implemented according to the students' abilities to access. However, there has a lot of obstacle faces by students in practicing online learning. The students need to know how to use a variety of these online platforms because different lecturers use different platform in delivery the lessons. This becomes a problem to those lack of IT skills and knowledge. Besides, those living in rural areas experience poor internet connectivity where it interferes their learning process. Most students claim that there have a lot of

assignments, test and tutorials need to do compare physical class. The situation worsens when they do not know how to do it and difficult to discuss with the friends.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Referring to the problem statement, it come out with a few objectives of the study:

1. To study the relationship between mental readiness and the level of acceptance towards online learning.
2. To study the relationship between internet coverage and the level of acceptance towards online learning.
3. To study the relationship between excessive workload and the level of acceptance towards online learning.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Online Learning**

Jomana and Mohamad (2021) examined both advantages and challenges of online classes from students' perspective wherein 82 students from Hebron University in Palestine are involved as respondents. After analyzing data using SPSS, the result shows that most of the students were not satisfied with the online learning experience. Among their major obstacles are having interaction problem with the teacher and poor internet connectivity between them.

Consequently, online learning has been tremendously accepted as the most practicable common learning method in higher education institutions (HEIs) due to the rapid development of Internet technology in Malaysia (Sakarji et al., 2019). This study found that an appropriate educational system will have to be created to satisfy evolving demands. Technologies such as mobile phones, cloud computing, social networking and big data have provided an ability to develop a learning environment that allows for customized learning that is independent of time and place.

Furthermore, online learning is a type of education that takes place over the Internet. It is also referred to as "e-learning" in some circumstances. Sivo and Acharya (2018) defined online learning as an integrated e-learning approach that includes instruction, schooling, coaching, information, and any learning experience delivered digitally or remotely. In this situation, several platforms are used in delivering knowledge such as Google Meet, Zoom, Webex, WhatsApp etc.

### **Mental Readiness**

Namul and Yukun (2020) studied the relationship of e-learning with psychological distress among college students during pandemic Covid 19. An online survey was conducted amongst college students in Bangladesh. From this study, they found that students' mental health, students' anxiety and academic year loss give impact on their perception towards online learning. Besides, lack of motivation to use e-learning, shortage of English expertise, lack of technical support in e-learning content has caused mental health and weak acceptance towards online learning.

Furthermore, another research related to this study is from this journal by Nurshahidah Sah Allam et al., (2020). The purpose of the journal is to measure the level of students' readiness for ODL during Covid-19 outbreak. The findings of the study are the correlation between students' readiness with computer literacy, self-directed learning, and motivation to learn. The outcomes show that students have high skill in dealing with computers but low in self-directed learning and motivation to study. Both self-directed learning and motivation need a stable mental state to absorb and be familiar with this new norm situation.

### **Internet Coverage**

Universities around the world have been directly and indirectly affected due to the COVID- 19 pandemic. Within the span of less than one month, the traditional face-to-face learning has been replaced by online learning to ensure education continuity. However, there are many challenges that students have faced regarding the internet usage. Based on a study by Claudiu et al. (2020), the result shows that internet coverage contributes a huge impact on the online learning. This study has been conducted among 762 students from universities in Romania whereby majority of the students were complaining about the connection problems especially when the number of students involved in certain classes were high.

Furthermore, Dhruva and Prakash (2020) found that technology support integrated a significant relationship for the effectiveness of online mode in teaching learning process. Exploratory design using mixed method of qualitative and quantitative was applied in this study. 15 students from Kathmandu and Katmandu Valley were selected through snowball sampling Majority of the students (79%) mentioned that their classes remained ineffective with poor internet connectivity and many of them were lack of laptops or mobile phones to join online class effectively.

Logically, implementing online learning during pandemic Covid 19 requires a stable and speedy internet connectivity. Thus, Ellen et al. (2020) conducted a study to examine online learning readiness among university students in Malaysia. 435 undergraduate students from UiTM were selected in getting the data. The result shows that internet connectivity be the most obstacle in getting effective online learning among degree students. As most of the lecturers are using several platforms in delivering the lecture such as Google Meet, Zoom, Webex, WhatsApp and Telegram, high connectivity is much needed.

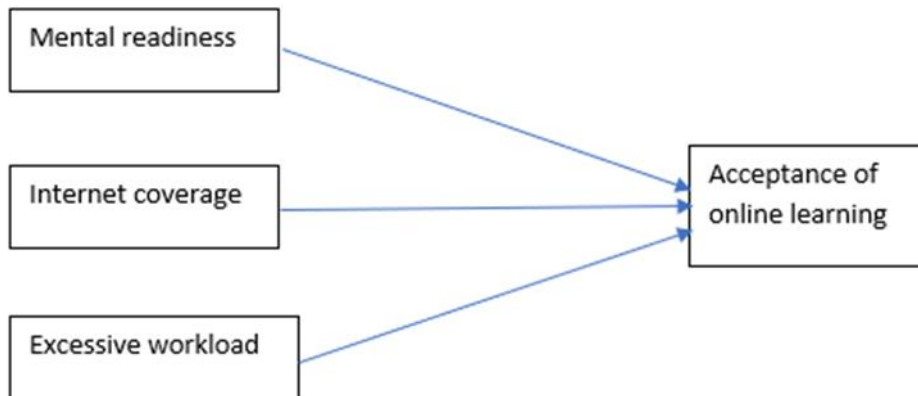
### **Excessive Workload**

Emily (2021) studied impacts of workload among adolescents in high school English. 439 of students on the West Coast of the United States were selected as a sample in this study. Surprisingly, the result shows that workload does not impact on their stress during online learning. They claimed that they have more or enough time to complete all the tasks compared to previous year since workload demand and time constraints are more manageable this year and not threatening to their self-worth or grade.

Mastering much knowledge through assignments, tests and examination in a short time would lead to academic pressure among the students. Hence, Chunjiang et al. (2020) examined the relationships between Chinese college students stress and health during the COVID 19 pandemic. 867 undergraduate students from four public universities in China were selected as the respondents in this study. The study found that academic workloads such as bulky online tasks or assignments, examinations and excessive online learning curriculum had contributed some negative impacts on students' stress and health. Thus, based on this finding, several parties should take an immediate action to resolve them.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

**Figure1: Theoretical Framework**



**HYPOTHESIS**

- H1: Mental readiness has positive relationship with acceptance of online learning.
- H2: Internet coverage has positive relationship with acceptance of online learning.
- H3: Excessive workload has positive relationship with acceptance of online learning.

**METHODOLOGY**

The population of this study is UiTM students in all campuses in Malaysia that join online learning during COVID-19 pandemic. The university had one main campus and 34 state campuses, that offers over 500 programs ranging from foundation to postgraduate level.

**Sample size and sampling technique**

100 students were chosen as a sample and online survey via google form were distributed to them. Non-probability convenience sampling was used in this study due to simplicity and convenience. In marketing surveys, there is often unknown target population to which the researcher wants to generalize the findings, thus convenience sampling is highly recommended (Hulland et al., 2017).

**Instrument**

The questions were divided into five sections which are demographic profile, online learning, mental readiness, internet coverage and excessive workload. All the questions in each section except demographic profile were measured by using a 5-point Likert Scale as a scaled response of this type takes no more values, the error introduced by assuming that differences between the discrete points are equal become smaller. In addition, it is a simple method to administer (Zikmund et. al., 2010).

Section	No of items
Online learning	5
Demographic data	5
Mental readiness	5
Internet coverage	5
Excessive workload	5

**FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

**NORMALITY TEST**

The determination of goodness fit of data involves the analysis of normality test. The results of the normality test for each dimension of the independent variable are shown in the table. Skewness and kurtosis should be zero near or near zero, indicating a perfectly normal distribution.

**Table 1: Normality test**

	Mental readiness	Internet coverage	Excessive workload
Mean	4.4899	4.5219	4.5148
Median	4.4000	4.6000	4.6000
Skewness	-1.155	-2.003	-2.144
Std. Error of Skewness	.187	.187	.187
Kurtosis	4.688	8.937	9.484
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.371	.371	.371

According to Table 1, the mean and median scores for each variable (mental readiness: mean= 4.4899, median= 4.4000; internet coverage: mean= 4.5219, median= 4.600; excessive workload: mean= 4.5148, median= 4.600) were nearly identical. Additionally, the skewness and kurtosis scores for each variable (mental readiness: skewness= -1.155, kurtosis= 4.688; internet coverage: skewness= -2.003, kurtosis= 8.937; excessive workload: skewness= -2.144, kurtosis= 9.484) were also within the range of +/-3. Therefore, the sample was considered normal. This means the overall findings of the analysis conducted for the study can be generalised to the whole population.

**RELIABILITY TEST**

**Table 2: Reliability test**

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.80	25

With regards to the reliability of the questionnaire, the Cronbach's alpha for student's acceptance towards online learning variable is .80, which is good. This means that the questions asked with respect to this construct are reliable and can be accepted (Bogie and Sekaran, 2009). According to Sekaran (2003), Cronbach Alpha must be more than 0.5. While Mohd Najid (1999) recommends a minimum value equal to 0.6. Therefore, the questions asked in this section can be used for the purposes of this study.

**CORRELATION TEST**

**Table 3: Correlation analysis**

		Online Class	Mental Readiness	Internet Coverage	Excessive Workload
Online Class	Pearson Correlation	1	.331*	0.546*	.353*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	0.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100
Mental Readiness	Pearson Correlation	.331*	1	0.275*	.371*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		0.04	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100
Internet Coverage	Pearson Correlation	0.546*	0.275*	1	0.294*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.04		0.003
	N	100	100	100	100
Excessive Workload	Pearson Correlation	.353*	.371*	0.294*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	0.003	
	N	100	100	100	100

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**The relationship between mental readiness towards the level of students’ acceptance of online class during Pandemic Covid-19**

The Pearson product moment correlation result indicates that the correlation value for mental readiness is 0.331 with significant value 0.001. Therefore, the hypothesis 1 (H1) is accepted. The relationship between online class and mental readiness is a weak uphill linear relationship and the direction of the relationship is positive. Even though it is a weak relationship it still leads to a positive direction. Thus, it answers the first objective in this study which there is relationship between the mental readiness and online class. From the result, it can conclude that the students’ skill and knowledge about IT influence them in accepting online learning.

**The relationship between internet coverage towards the level of students’ acceptance of online class during Pandemic Covid-19**

The Pearson product moment correlation result indicates that the correlation value for mental readiness is 0.546 with significant value 0.000. Therefore, the hypothesis 2 (H2) is accepted. The relationship between online class and internet coverage is a moderate uphill linear relationship and the direction of the relationship is positive. Even though it is a moderate relationship it still leads to a positive direction. Thus, it answers the second objective in this study which there is relationship between the internet coverage and online class. From the result, it can conclude that the internet coverage influences them in accepting online learning. Poor connectivity gives bad impact to them in receiving the lessons.

**The relationship between excessive workload towards the level of students’ acceptance of online class during Pandemic Covid-19**

The Pearson product moment correlation result indicates that the correlation value for mental readiness is 0.353 with significant value 0.000. Therefore, the hypothesis 3 (H3) is accepted. The relationship between online class and excessive workload is a weak uphill linear relationship and the direction of the relationship is positive. Even though it is a weak relationship it still leads to a positive direction. Thus, it answers the third objective in this study which there is relationship between the excessive workload and online class. From the result, it can conclude that the excessive workload influences them in accepting online learning. A lot of assignments and tutorials make them fatigue then effect to their performance in online class.

**COEFFICIENT OF DETERMINATION (R2)**

**Table 4: Coefficient of Determination**

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.554 <sup>a</sup>	.307	.293	3.19451		

a. Predictors: (Constant), Internet coverage, Student involvement

R square is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable which can be predicted from the independent variables which is mental readiness, internet coverage and excessive workload. This value indicates that 30.7% of the variance in student acceptances towards online learning can be predicted from the variables: mental readiness, internet coverage and excessive workload. The rest of 69.3% can be explained by other factors.

**CONCLUSION**

In a nutshell, this study was undertaken to identify the level of students’ acceptance towards online learning during pandemic Covid 19. The result from the analysis vividly shows that all independent variables: mental readiness, internet coverage and excessive workload have positive relationship with the students’ acceptance towards online learning during pandemic Covid 19. It is possible as currently the government is taking a stringent measure to flatten the curve of Covid 19 spread among the citizens, i.e., the Movement Control Order (MCO) was enforced throughout the countries. Hence, the Ministry of Higher Education announced that all public and private universities in Malaysia must adopt online learning in delivering the education to the students. This ‘new norm’ is a challenge that must be absorbed by all students as they need to face the drastic changes in their studies. Whatever obstacles and challenges received by them during the process, must be accepted open-heartedly in receiving knowledge and skill effectively. Finally, this study is very pivotal and demanded by various parties such as academicians, university authorities, government bodies and others in developing new policies and strategies especially in academic and educational matters.

**FUTURE RESEARCH**

Generally, the present study is only concentrating to all UiTM students in Malaysia. Therefore, the result is limited to the same university students. Thus, it was suggested to conduct a further study based on bigger populations that involve all universities in Malaysia for the improvement and development of learning strategies in the future. Besides that, a comparative study between the

universities is also recommended. Lastly, it is hoped that future research on this issue should clarify other factors that involved in student acceptance towards e-learning mode that could affect the student's performance in their studies altogether.

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