

Open and Distance Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic: University Students' Learning Experiences and Academic Achievements

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Abstract: Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) has taken an approach of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system as a way to ensure the continuity of its education during the COVID-19 pandemic. This transformation leads to various challenges in teaching and learning. Hence, this study aimed to describe the ODL in terms of university students' learning experiences and their academic achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study involved a total of 3283 students during March-August 2020 semester in UiTM Negeri Sembilan. Data were collected via online surveys and were descriptively and statistically analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings showed that students were given sufficient information regarding the assessments of the course (mean=3.64) and the delivery of the course content (mean=3.65). The success factors on the students' academic achievements were due to the support from lecturers (mean=2.78), peers (mean=2.79) and family (mean=2.55). Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the students are satisfied with their ODL learning experiences and academic achievements. This study suggests that academic management should continue to provide effective support in the form of resources and services to increase performances by their students.

Keywords: Open and Distance Learning, Students' Learning Experiences, Academic Achievements, Covid-19

1. Introduction

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is the most recent infectious disease that is caused by the newest strain of coronavirus: SARS coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The COVID-19 pandemic is a huge challenge to education system and has resulted in the closure of schools and universities across the world. It has significantly disrupted the higher education in Malaysia and has certainly created challenges faced by the universities (Sia & Adamu (2020). In Malaysia, like many countries around the world, the Movement Control Order (MCO) was enforced to flatten the curve of the spread of COVID-19 (Ahmad, 2021). The Ministry of Higher Education announced that all public and private

universities in Malaysia have to conduct teaching and learning activities via online learning until the end of December 2020 (Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, 2020). Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), a public university in Malaysia, started online learning on 12th April, 2020. The university has taken an approach of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system as a way to ensure continuity of education.

The term ODL has been highlighted in the Code of Practice for Open and Distance Learning as documented by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (2013) to serve as a guideline for Higher Education Provider (HEP). ODL reflects that all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in time and space from the learner. In Malaysia, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has forced institutions to do away with physical classes and continue with fully Open and Distance Learning (ODL) as a result of the Movement Control Order (MCO) and Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO). Public and private universities were required to discontinue any physical lessons (Ag-Ahmad, 2020). According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], it aims to include greater dimensions of openness and flexibility, whether in terms of access, curriculum or other elements of structure (as cited in Malaysian Qualifications Agency, 2013). The central learning feature for education and training is to use the learning resources, rather than attending classroom sessions (Commonwealth of Learning, 2003 cited in Malaysian Qualifications Agency, 2013).

The rapid move towards the implementation of ODL has led to a multiplication of strategies by educators to replace, within a short period, classes, tutorials, project groups, lab works, and assessments with different and recently acquired technologies (Dietrich, Kentheswaran, Ahmadi, Teychene, Bessiere, Alfenore, Laborie, Bastoul, Loubie´re, Guigui, Sperandio, Barna, Paul, Cabassud, Line & Hebrard (2020). Similarly, in UiTM, the academic fraternity were very resilient, quick to adapt and proactive in overcoming the challenges presented by MCO. Lessons, projects, groups work, presentations and assessment were all prepared within two weeks and carried out with the aid of technology (Chung, Subramaniam, & Dass, 2020). Both synchronous and asynchronous types of teaching and learning have been implemented to ensure learning can be continued (Brady & Pradhan, 2020; Nasri, Husnin, Mahmud, & Halim, 2020; Scull, Phillips, Sharma, & Garnier, 2020).

Although it is undeniable that ODL is deemed to be the best solution to ensure continuity in learning in the era of what has been coined as the ‘new norm’ (Cheng, Lam, & Leung, 2020; Chung, Subramaniam, & Dass, 2020), most educators and learners face challenges created by COVID-19. They are not equipped with the use of technology in education and there is also lack of practice and motivation towards the use of technology in education (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Ahmed & Ikram, 2020; Alea, Fabrea, Roldan, & Farooqi, 2020; Jena, 2020a; Toquero, 2020). Studies on the implementation of ODL in higher education has increased rapidly particularly focussing on challenges and opportunities (Brammer & Clark, 2020; Chang, & Yano, 2020; Crawford, Butler-Henderson, Rudolph, Malkawi, Glowatz, Burton, Magni & Lam, 2020; Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020; Toquero, 2020).

A number of small-scale studies have focussed on students’ learning experiences (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Alea, Fabrea, Roldan, & Farooqi, 2020; Chen, Peng, Yin, Rong, Yang, & Cong, 2020; Chung, Subramaniam & Dass, 2020; Dinh & Nguyen, 2020; Fatonia, Nurkhayatic, Nurdiawatid, Fidziahe, Adhag, Irawanh, Purwantoi, Julyantoi, & Azizik, 2020; Gamage, Silva & Gunawardhana, 2020; Toquero, 2020; Henaku 2020; Quezada, Talbot, & Quezada-Parker, 2020; Wenzel, 2020). However, very few studies have focussed on students’ academic achievements (Aucejo, French, Araya, & Zafar, 2020; Gonzalez, de la Rubia, Hincz, Comas-Lopez, Subirats, Fort, & Sacha, 2020; Onyema, Eucheria, Obafemi, Sen, Atonye, Sharma, & Alsayed, 2020 Sahu, 2020).

In view of the COVID-19 situation and due to the limited number of previous studies, there is a need to evaluate the efforts made in ODL for students in higher education. UiTM, being the largest university in Malaysia and has its presence in each of the thirteen states intends to add to this body of knowledge. Hence, this study is intended to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the students’ learning experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What are the success rate of students’ academic achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. Literature Review

Previous studies on ODL prior to COVID 19 have suggested that this is the best solution to ensure learning to be continued despite the challenges faced by many. Higher education institutions have accepted the challenges and have tried their best to provide effective educational supports. Having analysed the recommendations for future research from the previous studies, relevant areas to study in-depth with regard to ODL have been identified. These include students' learning experiences and academic achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.1 Learning Experiences

Learning experiences among students during the pandemic of COVID-19 have essentially been highlighted in a number of Covid-19 studies. Chung et al. (2020) aimed to investigate whether demographic factors make any difference among university students' readiness to learn, online learning experiences and intention to continue using online learning. It also examined their preferred methods of online learning and challenges they faced. Data collected from 399 students in two different online learning courses in Malaysia showed that respondents were generally ready for online learning experiences. However, more than half of the respondents indicated that if given a choice, they do not want to continue with online learning in the future. Most respondents preferred online learning via pre-recorded lectures uploaded to Google Classroom and YouTube. While the biggest challenge for degree students is internet connectivity, for diploma students, it is the difficulty in understanding the content of the subject. This study concluded that the government, telecommunication companies and universities should invest in developing internet infrastructure across the country as online learning will be the new norm in the foreseeable future. Further training to enhance academics' online teaching skills should be provided to ensure lessons are delivered more effectively.

In support of Chung et al. (2020) study, other studies had shown illuminating results of students' learning experiences. In terms of understanding the content of the subject or courses as well as the assignments and assessments delivered to students, Jena (2020) found that lecturers, teachers and students were unprepared for online education. Not all of them were ready for this sudden transition from face to face learning to online learning. Lectures and classes were conducted on video platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet which may not be real online learning without any dedicated online learning platform. Similarly, Fatonia et al. (2020) in a study on 100 private university students in Indonesia had described the quality of the educational environment is poor during COVID-19 online learning. Students explained that the course contents were not conveyed accurately due to no direct interaction. A common response from students was lecturers made their own progress without interactions with students. Students were also dissatisfied with assignment changes and unprepared class design.

Gamage, Silva, and Gunawardhana, (2020), on the other hand, explained such issues on online learning were due to the lack of computer literacy in certain students. Online examinations and quizzes may be challenging for students who were challenged by technologies. Fatonia et al. (2020) further described in the study that online learning had resulted in more time needed for educators to develop e-content, longer screen time as a result of creating e-content and providing feedback on student work which became more intense and time-consuming for educators. Toquero (2020) described there was a need for educators to acquire online-driven competencies in planning, implementing, and assessing the performance of their students an online environment. Similarly, Alea, Fabrea, Roldan, & Farooqi, (2020) found that based on the responses of 2300 participants in the Phillipines, educators were not equipped with the facility and training to online learning education during difficult times. They viewed educators should be equipped with the knowledge and skills in online learning education. Quezada, Talbot, & Quezada-Parker (2020) in the study on educators' response to COVID-19 highlighted a more holistic approach to assessment. In their study, the faculty educators adapted and altered their course assignments for the new learning environment. They extended deadlines for their assignments and made deadlines flexible as students were feeling additional stress from not being on campus to study.

Studies on students' learning experiences during Covid-19 have also evolved around Internet connectivity. Chen et al. (2020) study on users' experiences with online learning in China during the COVID-19 pandemic concluded that the availability of the digital platform during the COVID-19

situation affected users' satisfaction. Users experienced difficulties to interact between teachers and students due to space distance of online learning. Therefore, this study recommended that in order to ensure the quality of online learning, it is essential to provide a better digital learning environment during the pandemic. Similarly, Henaku (2020) described connectivity problem students faced in Ghana in a study on the online learning experiences of college students and their perceptions of online learning. Students revealed that the poor mobile network denied them of constant internet connection for online learning. It was further described that they sometimes missed lectures or discussions on their online platforms because of the network problems they faced during online learning.

Adnan and Anwar (2020) found that online learning was a challenging experience for students in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan. Students were unable to access the internet due to technical as well as monetary issues. This was discovered when the researchers examined the attitudes of Pakistani higher education students towards compulsory digital and distance learning university courses amid Coronavirus (COVID-19). Undergraduate and postgraduate were surveyed to find their perspectives about online education in Pakistan. Similarly, Dinh et al. (2020) also highlighted that students faced multiple problems with their participation in online courses due to the Internet access quality, such as disrupted connection and low-quality sound. Although being unfamiliar with online learning, most students reported no major difficulty for their online learning. This study involved a total of 186 undergraduate-level social work students in a national university in Vietnam.

Other studies have discovered other issues with regard to students' learning experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Adnan and Anwar (2020) found the lack of face-to-face interaction with the instructor, response time and absence of traditional classroom socialization were among some other issues highlighted by higher education students. Kedraka and Kaltsidis (2020) conducted a small case study of 75 students from the Department of Molecular Biology and Genetics of the Democritus University of Thrace, Greece. This was a study on their experiences of the shift from face-to-face to distance learning through this crisis. A questionnaire with closed-ended and open-ended questions to record the students' "fresh" experience of their new educational reality was administered. Students stated their worries about lessons, examinations, and laboratory work. They also noted the difficulty they faced concerning the inability to interact with students and instructors along with the non-visual communication during online courses and the lack of collaboration and cooperation with their classmates. Jena (2020) proposed improvement in collaborative and cooperative work in teaching and learning. This would benefit both lecturers and students. Besides, collaborations could be enhanced among faculties across the world to benefit from each other. Wenzel (2020) also recommended collaborative group work in larger classes in his study on the use of synchronous remote teaching methods in two undergraduate courses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2 Academic achievements

Studies found have suggested that the transition from face-to-face teaching to online delivery has a serious impact on assessments and evaluation. Sahu (2020) described although technology was used earlier to support teaching and learning, the assessment aspect was often under-developed. Applying assessments online on those courses designed for face-to-face learning was a challenging task. Students, as well as faculty, were uncertain about the procedure for administrating outstanding assignments, projects, and other continuous assessments. Faculty members had to change the assessment types to fit online mode. It is difficult to monitor how they were taking it online and to ensure that students were not cheating during online tests. Again, lab tests, practical, and performance tests were not possible to conduct online. In addition, students who did not have an Internet facility will suffer a clear disadvantage while participating in the evaluation process, which would adversely affect their grade point averages (GPAs).

Gonzalez et al. (2020) analyzed the effects of COVID-19 confinement on the autonomous learning performance of students in higher education. Using a field experiment with 458 students from three different subjects at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Spain) students were divided into two groups. The first group (control) was from the academic years 2017/2018 and 2018/2019. The second group (experimental) was students from 2019/2020, which was the group of students that had their face-to-face activities interrupted because of the confinement. The results showed that there was a significant positive effect of the COVID-19 confinement on students' performance. An analysis of students'

learning strategies before confinement showed that students did not study on a continuous basis. Based on these results, it was concluded that COVID-19 confinement changed students' learning strategies to a more continuous habit, hence, improving their efficiency. For these reasons, better scores in students' assessment were expected due to COVID-19 confinement that could be explained by an improvement in their learning performance.

However, a study conducted by Aucejo, French, Araya, and & Zafar (2020) on the impact of COVID-19 on student experiences and expectations found that COVID-19 has led to a large number of students delaying graduation (13%), withdrawing from classes (11%), and intending to change majors (12%). Moreover, approximately 50% of our sample separately reported a decrease in study hours and in their academic performance. This study surveyed approximately 1500 students at one of the largest public institutions in the United States in order to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education.

Home-learning environment has also become another issue highlighted in studies on students' academic achievement. Home-learning environment is the most common place to participate in online learning as a result of COVID-19. It is expected that many homes are equipped with environments that allow online learning. It is an important element that can positively affect academic achievements. However, Henaku's study (2020) explained that the home was not conducive for online learning. Students encountered different forms of disruption in their home environment. These were the results of the need to participate in household chores such as cooking for the family and taking care of younger siblings and to help their parents at their workplace. Students themselves received complaints from their parents that they spent too much time on their phones during online learning. Besides, Fatonia et al. (2020) explained there seemed to exist increased responsibility of parents to provide facilities and guidance for online learning at home. Some educated parents were found to be able to guide but some may not have the adequate level of education needed to assist the students at home. Onyema, Eucheria, Obafemi, Sen, Atonye, Sharma and Alsayed (2020) described the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education had also resulted in pressure on parents.

To sum up, having looked at previous small-scale and few studies on the implementation of ODL by many attempted researchers, more research on students' learning experiences and academic achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic needs to be conducted. Results and findings in these two areas are increasingly important to enhance research perspectives. Thus, the aims of this study are to describe students' learning experiences and academic achievements among university students which would contribute to the body of knowledge on studies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Methodology

This research utilized quantitative method which aimed to describe the ODL in terms of university students' learning experiences and their academic achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data were collected using online survey forms.

The respondents were students from seven different faculties in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Negeri Sembilan. A total of 3283 students during March-August 2020 semester in UiTM Negeri Sembilan participated in this study.

A questionnaire was devised and consisted of three sections which were Section A (faculty - 1 item), Section B (ODL learning experiences - 10 items) and Section C (academic achievements - 16 items). Section A required the students to provide information on their faculty and Section B and C consisted of 26 items were measured using a five-point Likert scale range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire had been reviewed for face validity by the experts in ODL from the Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Reliability test was conducted and the results showed that Cronbach Alpha value were as follows: ODL learning experiences (.86) and academic achievements (.82). The data from the questionnaire were descriptively analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

4. Findings

A total of 3283 students during March-August 2020 semester in UiTM Negeri Sembilan participated in this study and they were from seven different faculties as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of Students by Faculty (n=3283)

Faculty	Frequency	Percentage
Applied Sciences (AS)	823	25.1
Computer & Mathematical Sciences (CS)	538	16.4
Sports Sciences & Recreation (SR)	308	9.4
Communication & Media Studies (CMS)	476	14.5
Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies (ACIS)	178	5.4
Business & Management (BM)	559	17.0
Information Management (IM)	401	12.2
Total	3283	100.00

Table 1 shows the frequency and the percentage of students by seven faculties located in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Negeri Sembilan with the total number of 3283 students sharing their responses in this study. The largest group of respondents (25.1%) were students from the Faculty of Applied Sciences, followed by the students from the Faculty of Business and Management (17%) out of 3283 total number of students who participated in this study. The lowest number of respondents came from the Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies (5.4%) who participated in this study.

4.1 Learning Experiences

Table 2 provides the mean score of the students' learning experiences. Likert scale was used to investigate the extent to which they agree or disagree with a particular item.

Table 2. Mean Score of Students' Learning Experiences by Items (n=3283)

Items	Scale					Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	
1. I am given enough information regarding the delivery of my courses.	31 (0.9%)	142 (4.3%)	1035 (31.5%)	1841 (56.1%)	234 (7.1%)	3.64
2. I am given enough information regarding the assessments in my courses.	23 (0.7%)	167 (5.1%)	995 (30.3%)	1845 (56.2%)	253 (7.7%)	3.65
3. I am given enough time to complete my learning tasks.	144 (4.4%)	518 (15.8%)	1282 (39.0%)	1151 (35.1%)	188 (5.7%)	3.22
4. I can access my online learning sessions without much difficulty.	171 (5.2%)	662 (20.2%)	1343 (40.9%)	944 (28.8%)	163 (5.0%)	3.08
5. I can access the resources (notes, textbooks, modules etc.) related to the courses without much difficulty.	153 (4.7%)	522 (15.9%)	1319 (40.2%)	1125 (34.3%)	164 (5.0%)	3.19
6. My learning sessions are appropriately scheduled	106 (3.2%)	311 (9.5%)	1016 (30.9%)	1651 (50.3%)	199 (6.1%)	3.46
7. In general, the duration of my learning sessions is appropriate.	66 (2.0%)	272 (8.3%)	1054 (32.1%)	1738 (52.9%)	153 (4.7%)	3.50
8. I am able to study collaboratively and cooperatively with my peers, online and at a distant.	230 (7.0%)	646 (19.7%)	1435 (43.7%)	895 (27.3%)	77 (2.3%)	2.98

Items	Scale					Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	
9. I receive feedback and answers to my questions from the lecturers.	47 (1.4%)	201 (6.1%)	947 (28.8%)	1847 (56.3%)	241 (7.3%)	3.62
10. I am able to study comfortably in my current location/home environment.	345 (10.5%)	699 (21.3%)	1136 (34.6%)	892 (27.2%)	211 (6.4%)	2.98

Note: 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

Item 2: “I am given enough information regarding the assessments in my courses” was at the highest mean score with 3.65 followed by Item 1: “I am given enough information regarding the delivery of my courses” at the highest mean score with 3.64. As per stated mean score presented in Table 2, all the items were at the scale of neither agree nor disagree. By looking at the two items closely, majority of the students agreed that they were given enough information regarding the assessments and the delivery of the courses by the lecturers. However, these results are not in line with Fatonia et al. (2020) that found students were dissatisfied with the course contents delivery by lecturers. As evident in Quezada, Talbot, & Quezada-Parker (2020), educators had to adapt and alter their course assignments for the new learning environment.

Item 8: “I am able to study collaboratively and cooperatively with my peers, online and at a distant” and Item 10: “I am able to study comfortably in my current location/home environment” at mean score 2.98. This showed that some students might face a problem to study collaboratively and cooperatively with their peers and some of them might not feel comfortable studying at their home environment compared to face-to-face learning in campus. This is in line with Henaku’s study (2020) that explained the home was not conducive for online learning. Thus, lecturers and academic administrators have to find ways to improve the ODL session from time to time. Feedback on ODL issues and challenges from students should closely be taken into considerations in order to provide better learning environments and experiences for students.

Item 4: “I can access my online learning sessions without much difficulty” and Item 5: “I can access the resources related to the courses without much difficulty” received the highest responses for neither agree nor disagree. Table 2 shows that the most of the mean scores are over 3.00, hence, the students are better off in accessing the online resources. The finding is contradictory as in other studies. The students might face a problem with internet access in their place and such challenging learning experiences were found in other studies such as Chung et al., 2020; Fatonia et al., 2020; Gamage et al., 2020; Toquero, 2020; Kedraka & Kaltsidis, 2020; Alea et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2020; Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Dinh & Nguyen, 2020; Quezada et al., 2020 and Wenzel, 2020.

4.2 Academic Achievements

In terms of describing the students’ academic achievements, this study had identified 1554 of the Dean’s list students in the March-August 2020 semester during the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 3 shows the breakdown of the Dean’s list students by faculty. The Dean’s list was earned by first, students from the Faculty of Applied Sciences (33.4%), followed by students from the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies (16.3%), then, students from the Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences (15.2%) and students from the Faculty of Business and Management (14.6%). The rest of the Dean’s list students came from the other three faculties, the Faculty of Information Management (8.8%), the Faculty of Sports Sciences and Recreation (5.6%) and the Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies (6.2%).

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage of the Dean’s List Students by Faculty (n=1554)

Faculty	Frequency	Percentage
Applied Sciences (AS)	519	33.4
Computer & Mathematical Sciences (CS)	236	15.2
Sports Sciences & Recreation (SR)	87	5.6
Communication & Media Studies (CMS)	253	16.3
Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies (ACIS)	96	6.2
Business & Management (BM)	227	14.6
Information Management (IM)	136	8.8
Total	1554	100.00

The findings in Table 4 show the mean score on success factors by faculty. Majority of the students agreed that one of the success factors on their academic achievements during ODL in semester March-August 2020 was due to their lecturers were helpful in their learning, with the overall mean score, 2.78. This showed that lecturers had played their roles as educators during ODL sessions. The Faculty of Applied Sciences gained the highest agreement with the mean score, 2.87, followed by the Faculty of Sports Sciences and Recreation with the mean score, 2.83 and the Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences with the mean score, 2.76. The Faculty of Communication and Media Studies met the lowest mean score of 2.67. Meanwhile, the students also agreed that the other success factors were due to peers and each other’s help in their learning sessions with the overall mean score of 2.79. Other than that, the success factor that led to the students’ academic achievements was the results of their own efforts. They really worked hard to achieve the best academic performance with the overall mean score of 2.75.

The students also agreed that family support and the use of more references/resources to study and complete their assignments played an important role on their academic achievements. While Item 15: “I found ways to manipulate the quizzes/assignments” with the overall mean score of 1.87 and Item 7: “I had fewer subjects to study” carried the lowest overall mean score of 1.67. This showed that the students strongly disagreed that the students’ academic performance success factors were not due to quizzes/assignments manipulation and number of subjects’ matter. The success factors were based on the efforts of lecturers, peers and family support as well as their hard work towards the achievement of academic during the unprecedented of COVID-19 pandemic. This is in contrast with Henaku (2020), Fatonia et al. (2020) and Onyema et al. (2020) studies in which they found students’ had difficulties to receive parents and family support as home-learning environment had also resulted in pressure on parents.

Table 4. Mean Score on Success Factors by Faculty (n=1554)

Items	Faculty							Overall
	AS	CS	SR	CMS	ACIS	BM	IM	
1. My lecturers were helpful.	2.87	2.76	2.83	2.67	2.74	2.71	2.75	2.78
2. My family supported and helped me.	2.58	2.51	2.75	2.40	2.67	2.55	2.58	2.55
3. My peers and I helped each other.	2.81	2.76	2.79	2.80	2.83	2.75	2.76	2.79
4. The assessment was manageable.	2.52	2.42	2.48	2.26	2.37	2.40	2.39	2.42
5. It was easy to score on the assessment.	2.08	1.92	2.05	1.89	2.02	2.04	1.97	2.00
6. The assignments given were interesting and engaging.	2.36	2.13	2.29	2.29	2.24	2.26	2.23	2.27

Items	Faculty							Overall
	AS	CS	SR	CMS	ACIS	BM	IM	
7. I had fewer subjects to study.	1.62	1.50	1.78	1.76	1.80	1.69	1.76	1.67
8. I did not experience final exam anxiety.	1.95	1.67	1.92	1.99	1.90	1.99	1.99	1.92
9. I had more time to work on my assignments.	2.22	1.95	2.16	2.10	2.09	2.22	2.08	2.14
10. I had more time to answer the tests/ quizzes.	2.21	1.92	2.07	2.11	2.18	2.11	2.00	2.11
11. I used more references/ resources to study and to complete my assignments.	2.60	2.61	2.53	2.56	2.45	2.65	2.54	2.58
12. I worked really hard.	2.71	2.76	2.79	2.84	2.62	2.72	2.78	2.75
13. I enjoyed learning via ODL.	2.24	2.02	2.10	1.98	2.06	2.24	2.10	2.13
14. I found more effective ways to study.	2.37	2.25	2.28	2.25	2.26	2.33	2.32	2.31
15. I found ways to manipulate the quizzes/ assignments.	1.83	1.83	1.79	1.87	1.88	1.96	1.96	1.87
16. I just had more luck.	2.24	2.04	2.14	2.28	2.24	2.20	2.21	2.20

5. Discussion

The objectives of this study were to describe students' learning experiences and academic achievements among university students which would contribute to the body of knowledge on studies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With regard to the students' learning experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was clear that enough information regarding the assessments and the delivery of the courses by the lecturers were given to students. Results have shown that majority of the students were satisfied with the learning experiences. Educators had to adapt and alter their course assignments for the new learning environment as evident in Quezada, Talbot, & Quezada-Parker (2020). However, these results are not in line with Fatonia et al. (2020) that found students were dissatisfied with the course contents delivery by lecturers. Similarly, Jena (2020) found that lecturers, teachers and students were unprepared for online education and students became dissatisfied of lectures and classes conducted online.

It was also discovered in this study that some students might face a problem to study collaboratively and cooperatively with their peers. The shift from face-to-face to open and distance learning caused them difficulties to interact with lecturers and students similarly found in Kedraka and Kaltsidis (2020). Besides, some of them might not feel comfortable studying at their home environment compared to face-to-face learning in campus and this is in line with Henaku (2020) that explained the home was not conducive for online learning. Hence, lecturers and academic administrators have to find ways to improve the ODL session from time to time. Feedback on ODL issues and challenges from students should closely be taken into considerations in order to provide better learning environments and experiences for students. This was further supported in studies by Jena (2020) and Wenzel (2020) that proposed improvement in collaborative and cooperative work in teaching and learning could be enhanced to benefit both lecturers and students.

Furthermore, this study also found that the students were better off in accessing the online resources. However, the finding was contradictory in other studies where the students faced challenging learning experiences with internet access in their place such as in Chung et al., 2020; Fatonia et al., 2020; Gamage et al., 2020; Toquero, 2020; Kedraka & Kaltsidis, 2020; Alea et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2020; Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Dinh & Nguyen, 2020; Quezada et al., 2020 and Wenzel, 2020. Such challenges also include monetary issues in Adnan and Anwar (2020) study on students in underdeveloped countries.

In terms of students' academic achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic, majority of the students agreed that the success factors on their academic achievements during ODL in semester March-August 2020 were due to their helpful and supportive lecturers as well as peers in their learning sessions.

This was enhanced with the students' own efforts to refer to academic references or resources to study and complete their assignments. There was no serious issue found such as quizzes/assignments manipulation in this findings unlike in Sahu (2020) that described the difficulty to monitor online tests especially for lab tests, practical, and performance tests. Besides, students also received continuous family support for their academic achievements in which this result was in contrast with Henaku (2020), Fatonia et al. (2020) and Onyema et al. (2020). They found students' had difficulties to receive parents and family support as home-learning environment had also resulted in pressure on parents, hence, affected the students' academic achievements.

Overall, this study has provided important findings and discussed with past studies and relevant literature to add to the body of knowledge on empirical studies of university students' learning experiences and academic achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. Conclusion

This study has revealed insightful findings on university students' learning experiences and their academic achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that the majority of students agreed that they were given enough information regarding the assessments and content delivery in terms of their learning experiences. This study has also revealed students' academic achievements during their ODL session were gained from the support of the lecturer, peers and family which contributed to the success factors on their academic achievements.

This study suggests that academic management should continue to provide effective support in the form of resources and services to increase performances by their students. However, further research needs to be conducted on lecturers' teaching effectiveness to enhance studies on university students' learning experiences and academic achievements. This is vital so that improvements can be put forward for ODL in the future.

In conclusion, this study has offered research findings on ODL during the pandemic of COVID-19 with regard to university students' learning experiences and their academic achievements. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the body of knowledge for ODL during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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