



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**ONLINE LEARNING AND ITS EFFECTS ON UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT**

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Final Year Project Report

Masters

PhD

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**ONLINE LEARNING AND ITS EFFECTS ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS'
ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT**

EDA LIEW XINYU

This project is submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Psychology with Honours

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UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
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ABSTRACT

The migration of education to online platform due to the Covid-19 pandemic raises the need to examine the influence of learning environment on students' academic self-concept. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of online learning on university students' academic self-concept. This study was conducted by using the quantitative method where a Google Form link of the questionnaire is shared among the undergraduates of University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). The Academic Self-Concept Scale developed by Reynolds was used in the questionnaire to assess the academic self-concept of the respondents. A total of 79 responds were collected and these responds are analyzed by using version 26.0 SPSS. This scale was proven to be reliable based on the reliability analysis. To determine the difference in academic self-concept between online learning and traditional learning, Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used. The findings of this study indicates that there is no significant difference in terms of university students' academic self-concept between online learning and traditional learning. This suggests that learning environment may not have a significant impact on students' academic self-concept. Future researchers are recommended to collect a larger amount of respondents to reduce the risk of biased results. It is also recommended for future researchers to use both questionnaire and interview to obtain true and honest data.

Keywords: Academic self-concept, online learning, learning environment

ABSTRAK

Pemindahan sesi pembelajaran fizikal kepada sesi dalam talian akibat Covid-19 mengakibatkan kepentingan untuk mengetahui apakah pengaruh pertukaran tersebut kepada konsep sendiri akademik pelajar. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji kesan pembelajaran dalam talian terhadap konsep sendiri akademik pelajar universiti. Kajian ini dijalankan dengan mengaplikasikan kaedah kuantitatif dengan menggunakan pautan Google Form dbahagi dalam kalangan mahasiswa Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). Academic Self-Concept Scale yang dibangunkan oleh Reynolds digunakan dalam soal selidik untuk menilai konsep sendiri akademik responden. Sebanyak 79 maklum balas telah dikumpul dan maklum balas ini dianalisis menggunakan SPSS versi 26.0. Skala ini terbukti boleh dipercayai berdasarkan analisis kebolehpercayaan. Untuk menentukan perbezaan konsep sendiri akademik antara pembelajaran dalam talian dan pembelajaran tradisional, Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test telah digunakan. Pendapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa tiada perbezaan yang signifikan dari segi konsep sendiri akademik pelajar universiti antara pembelajaran dalam talian dan pembelajaran tradisional. Ini menunjukkan bahawa persekitaran pembelajaran mungkin tidak memberi kesan yang signifikan terhadap konsep sendiri akademik pelajar. Penyelidik akan datang disyorkan untuk mengumpul jumlah responden yang lebih besar untuk mengurangkan risiko keputusan yang berat sebelah. Mereka juga disyorkan untuk menggunakan soal selidik dan temu bual untuk mendapatkan data yang benar dan jujur.

Kata kunci: *Konsep sendiri akademik, pembelajaran dalam talian, persekitaran pembelajaran*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of Study

The Covid-19 outbreak was declared a global pandemic in 2020 which disrupted the teaching in all sorts of institutions. Typical face-to-face (traditional) classes had been suspended during this pandemic in order to protect the students, lecturers, and patients from being infected with the Covid-19 virus (Bączek, Zagańczyk-Bączek, Jaroszyński, & Woźakowska-Kapłon, 2020). Hence, all institutions were forced to migrate to online platforms to resume functions. Online learning can be defined as the use of internet and other technologies to create educational materials, instructional delivery, and management of program (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020).

Online schooling definitely has its own perks and advantages. It is said that online learning is cheaper, more flexible, and accessible for the students (Dhawan, 2020). This could be true for well-developed countries with high budget for education system but for less well-developed countries, a lot of students might be forced to suspend their online classes due to the unavailability of learning and management systems (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). Online learning can prove to be challenging for students due to the limited non-verbal communication among students and between students and the educator (Khalil, et al., 2020). Furthermore, studies show that facing screens, tablets, or any other smart devices for long can increase an individual's stress and anxiety, not to mention additional stressor relating to quarantine and lockdown (Mheidly, Fares, & Fares, 2020). Exhaustion and burnout have a higher chance of happening within students more than ever. Distance learning education increases the level of stress for students as assignments and exams are a significant source of

stress for them because of the lack and concern of time to fulfil the demands while dealing with other responsibilities (Pavlakis & Kaitelidou, 2012). This can affect students' self-concept, which in turn, can affect their academic performance. Self-concept of a student refers to the student's perception of their capabilities in terms of succeeding on academic tasks (Susperreguy, Davis-Kean, Duckworth, & Chen, 2017).

1.1 Problem Statement

As mentioned in the background study, students face burnout and exhaustion easier when attending classes online which may lead to negative self-concept within the students. Self-concept is a motivation-related factor that plays a crucial role in students' learning (Zhan & Mei, 2013). There are many studies that discovered positive correlations between motivation level in students and their academic achievement and that the lack of time and motivation are the contributors to learner attrition in online learning settings (Kim & Theodore W, 2011). With online learning becoming the norm in this day and age, the downside of online learning, in terms of students' academic self-concept, should be identified in order to create more room for improvement. Therefore, in this research, the researcher wants to determine the impact of online learning on university students' academic self-concept. By understanding students' struggles and worries for online learning, respective authority can be notified on these matters so they can take charge upon the issues and help ease the students' burden (Ismail, Bakar, & Wafa, 2020).

1.2 Research Objectives

1.2.1 General Objective

To investigate if there is a difference in university students' self-concept between traditional learning and online learning.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objective of this research is:

1. To investigate if university students' academic self-concept is the same during traditional learning and online learning.

1.3 Research Questions

1. Do university students' academic self-concept changes base on their learning environment – traditional learning and online learning?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

H₀: The median between the academic self-concept of university students during traditional learning and online learning is equal.

H_a: The median between the academic self-concept of university students during traditional learning and online learning is not equal.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

The independent variable of this research are online learning and traditional learning whereas the dependent variable is students' academic self-concept. The conceptual framework is shown in the table below (Figure 1.0).

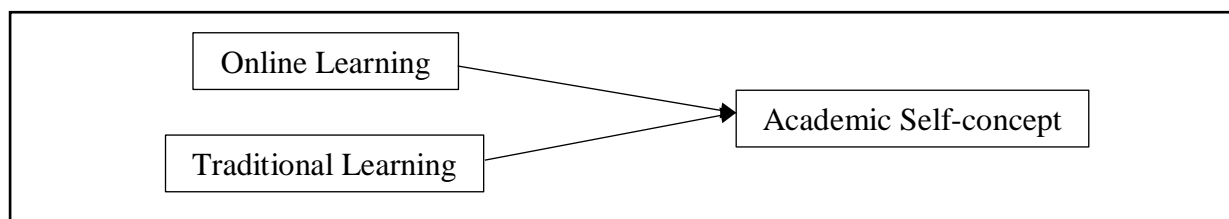


Figure 1.0 Conceptual Framework

1.6 Significance of Study

The significance of this study is to determine if online learning impact students' academic self-concept negatively. This research hopes to aid future researchers in researching about similar topics and better awareness on how online learning can affect students both positively and negatively. Furthermore, this study highlights on how self-concept can impact students' academic performance in online schooling settings. Lastly, this study hopes to shine a light on possible university students' struggle in online learning so the distance learning education system can be improved in the future for better quality of learning.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Online Learning

Conceptual Definition: Online learning can be defined as the learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments with the aid of different devices such as computers, mobile phones, laptops, and others accompanied by internet access (Dhawan, 2020).

Operational Definition: Online learning can be operationally defined as learning environment that is not the traditional classroom learning environment but through internet access in devices such as laptop and mobile phones.

1.7.2 Academic Self-Concept

Conceptual Definition: Academic self-concept can be defined as an individual's knowledge and opinions about themselves in accomplishment situations (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003).

Operational Definition: Academic self-concept can be operationally defined as the overall confidence or self-efficacy towards their academic performance (Hanousek-Monge & Hegarty, 2015).

1.8 Summary

To summarize this chapter, this chapter included the background of online learning and its effect on students, the problem statement, the research objectives, questions and hypotheses, the conceptual framework which includes the independent and dependent variables, the significance of this study and also the conceptual, as well as the operational definition of online learning and academic self-concept.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter emphasizes on previous research the impact of online learning on university students' self-concept and academic performance. This chapter helps the researchers to reach a better understanding of the existing research regarding this topic.

2.1 Online Learning

Since 2 decades ago, online learning has been on the rise especially for higher education (Martin, Sun, & Westine, 2020). The increase in online instruction can date back all the way to the mid-1990s (Lockman & Schirmer, 2020). With the existence of the Internet, a lot of researchers and educators showed an interest in online learning as it can improve student learning outcomes and combat the declination in resources, particularly in higher education (Nguyen, 2015). Furthermore, the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic has made online learning the most common education delivery method in the world (Martin, Sun, & Westine, 2020). There are two types of online learning: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous class is live, and it occur through audioconferencing or videoconferencing between the educators and the students whereas asynchronous class involves delays in time between instructions and its receipt such as discussion forum or tasks (Khalil, et al., 2020).

Many researchers had investigated the pros and cons of online learning. Online learning is beneficial for students who favours self-regulated learning, and it is more flexible and accessible as well (Gilbert, 2015). For students that strive with self-regulated learning, online learning is found to be conducive for them (You & Kang, 2014). According to previous studies, some of the positive learning outcomes of online learning are improved

results, students' interactions, improved perception of learning and reduction in withdrawal or failure (Nguyen, 2015). However, there are plenty of challenges when it comes to online learning as well. Based on a study done in Malaysia, it is found that some of the more common challenges faced by students during online learning are internet connectivity, different online learning methods by instructors, slow technological devices, difficulty focusing on class, lack of motivation and difficulty in understanding what is being taught (Chung, Subramaniam, & Dass, 2020). In another study as well, it was reported by students of one of the public universities in Malaysia that non-conducive environment is one of the factors why online learning has been a challenge for them (Ismail, Bakar, & Wafa, 2020). It is difficult to focus and engage in class in a non-conducive environment as students might feel restless over personal problems. Furthermore, the concern of online learning can put extra stress on students especially for students who have no other choice but to commit to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Limited internet connectivity and lack of technical wares are also heavy burdens for students who face financial difficulties.

It is crucial to understand students struggles and worry for online learning during these trying times so that respective authority can take charge upon the issues and help ease the students' burden (Ismail, Bakar, & Wafa, 2020). We can help students transition into online learning easier by understanding how to support learners in different contexts and modes (Gillett-Swan, 2017).

2.2 Self-concept

Self-concept has multiple definitions. Rosenberg defined self-concept as the totality of a person's thoughts and feelings while referencing to oneself as an object (Rosenberg, 1979). Epstein, on the other hand, defined self-concept as a theory where an individual holds about himself/herself as an experiencing and functioning being that is interacting with his/her surroundings (Gecas, 1982). Self-concept is important to social and humanistic psychologist. Carl Rogers, a humanistic psychologist, believed that self-concept is made up of ideal self, self-image, and self-esteem. An individual can achieve a state congruence when the way they perceive themselves (self-image) is aligned with their who they want or wish to be to be (ideal self) (Ismail & Tekke, 2015). Once the person is in congruence, they can achieve self-actualization which means they are a fully functioning person (Ismail & Tekke, 2015). The reason why people tend to compare themselves with others is because they need constant reassurance about their abilities and the legitimacy of their opinions (Morse & Gergen, 1970). A study done in 1970 shows that just a casual exposure to someone else is enough to create a significant impact on an individual's momentary self-concept (Morse & Gergen, 1970). Hence, our concept of self is dependent on others, and it can change time to time. Self-concept is important to our psychological well-being. Greater levels of self-concept were found to be associated with less depressive symptoms (Lee-Flynn, Pomaki, DeLongis, Biesanz, & Puterman, 2011). A clear concept of self can help the individual to cope with negativity effectively because they have clear self-beliefs to help them through frightening and uncontrollable stressors. (Oh & Roh, 2019).

2.3 Academic Self-concept

Academic self-concept can be defined as an individual's knowledge and opinions about themselves in academic situations (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Assumptions were made that improvements in self-concept will improve a person's academic achievement as well (Marsh & Craven, 1996). For this very reason, a lot of researchers are interested in the relationship between self-concept and academic performance. However, academic achievements and greater academic performance are not the only benefits of having positive self-concept in students. Positive self-concept also contributes to greater happiness, more pro-social behaviors, and better overall well-being in students (Herrera, Al-Lal, & Mohamed, 2020). There are 3 factors that can shape a student's self-concept which are the student's prior behaviors and performance, how other individuals behave towards them, and the expectations other have for the student's future performance (Asma-Tuz-Zahra, Arif, & Yousuf, 2010). Based on these factors, the student can have either positive or negative self-concept. When a student is being evaluated by someone significant in their life, it will affect the way they see themselves. Furthermore, when one perceives themselves as high-achieving individual, they will take the chance to learn new things and tackle difficult tasks. Hence, it is recommended for schools or universities to promote self-concept among students by preparing self-concept enhancement activities. Rogers also believed that there is a relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. He conducted a research in 1978 that suggested self-concept can influence academic achievement when students compare their own level of achievement with others in class (Rogers, Smith, & Coleman, 1978).

2.4 Online Learning and Academic Self-concept

We know that self-concept is important and that it has its influence on students' academic performance and achievements. As of now, many classes are obligated to be conducted through online platform to accommodate the COVID-19 pandemic situation. So, does online learning impacts students' academic self-concept even more so than in a traditional classroom setting? The physical environmental difference between traditional face-to-face learning and online learning can often affect students' mental which might cause differences in students' concept of self (Zhan & Mei, 2013). It was also reported that without the presence of physical social presence in activities such as sports or social clubs can negatively affect the students' self-concept and academic performance (Kumi-Yeboah, Dogbey, & Yuan, 2017). Distance learning or online learning, especially when conducted in asynchronous form, means the students are expected to learn the materials by themselves most of the time. A concern found in a study was that some students are confident in their abilities to learn from a distance successfully while the others feel less confident and competent in distance learning (Gibson, 1996). This poses as a concern because if the educators' instructional design is leaning towards benefiting efficient self-learners, those who lack confidence and competency in their studies might have to struggle in class (Gibson, 1996).

2.5 Summary

This chapter focused on the past studies on online learning, self-concept, and academic self-concept. It also touched on studies about academic self-concept in online learning. This was helpful in terms of better understanding on the research topic chosen.