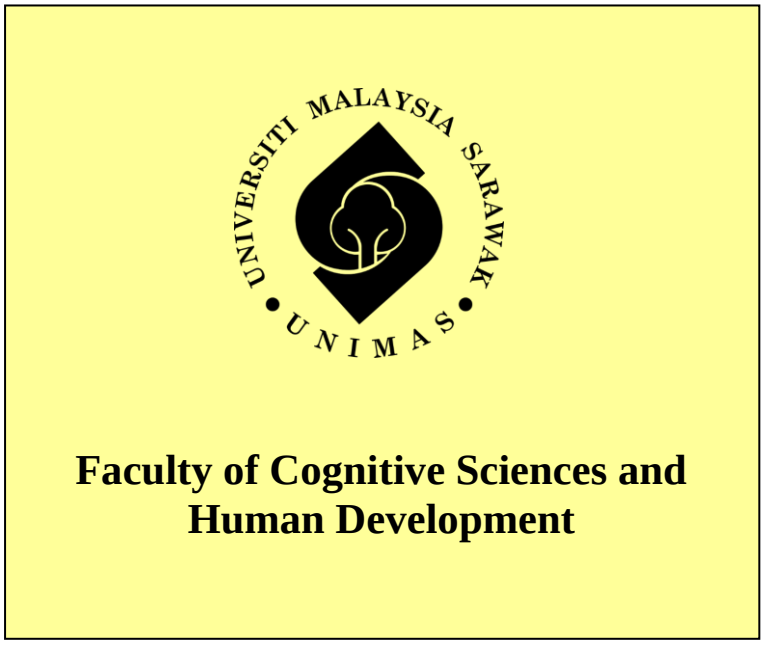

EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMICIANS DURING COVID-19 DURING ONLINE LEARNING IN UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

KALVINAH A/P CHANDRAN

Bachelor of Science with Honours
(Human Resource Development)
Year 2021

EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMICIANS DURING COVID-19 DURING ONLINE LEARNING IN UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

KALVINAH A/P CHANDRAN (68552)

This project is submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Science with Honours
(Human Resource Development)

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
(2021)

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SAWARAK

Grade: **A**

Please tick (√)

Final Year Project Report	√
Masters	
PhD	

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This declaration is made on the 9th day of August 2021.

Student's Declaration:

I Kalvinah a/p Chandran, 68552 Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development hereby declare that the work entitled, Experiences of Academicians during Covid-19 during Online Learning in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak is my original work. I have not copied from any other students' work or from any other sources except where due reference or acknowledgement is made explicitly in the text, nor has any part been written for me by another person.

9 August 2021	KALVINAH A/P CHANDRAN (68552)
Date submitted	Name of the student (Matric No.)

Supervisor's Declaration:

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GRADE
A

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ABSTRACT

EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMICIANS DURING COVID-19 DURING ONLINE LEARNING IN UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

Kalvinah a/p Chandran

Since the Covid-19 pandemic has spread throughout the whole world, the Government itself decided to do a subsequent lockdown in many countries. So, the tertiary education institutions have decided to have online classes and sessions. This transition has not only been stressful to students, but the one who is conducting the classes, the academicians and lecturers are facing so much of struggles. It is not easy as physical classes where they can teach their students. Online classes itself has so much of challenges. The pandemic has been much so worse, so they have to stick to online classes. This goes beyond digitalization in the narrow senses and also facing issues and challenges such as students financing and network issues. The objective of this study is to learn the experiences of academicians during Covid-19 in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. This study was carried out in a government university, by interviewing five (5) lecturers as informants. The data analysis procedure which was used in this study is thematic analysis.

Keywords: Covid-19, lockdown, online classes, academicians, experience, issues, challenges

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of 8 sections. The sections are background of study, statement of problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of study, limitation of study, definition of terms and also summary.

1.1 Background of Study

The Corona Virus disease (COVID-19) has been identified as the outbreak of respiratory disease in Wuhan, China in the beginning of December 2019 (WHO, WHO, 2020). This disease has spread to at least 19 countries. The virus is easily spread because via respiratory droplets that has been produced during coughing and sneezing (Adhikar, 2020).

To ensure the safety of everyone, the Government of Malaysia has decided to conduct Control Movement Order (MCO) or which is known as being lockdown where the public are advised to stay at home to prevent the spread of the disease. The first lockdown was on 18th March 2020 till 31st March 2020 (Shamsudin, 2020). This leads to physical distancing between the people in our country. The ‘new normal’ has begun at the beginning of the pandemic. People started to have face-to-face conversation since the virus spread through air.

Everyone had faced their own circumstances. While they face their own problem, the Ministry of Education have another idea of closing all the educational institutions such as kindergarten, schools and also universities on March 18 (Kanyakumari, 2020). To resume the classes, especially for the tertiary education institutions, the Ministry of Higher Education have decided to conduct online class or online learning to ensure that there will be no face-to-face sessions to avoid physical contact (n.d., 2020).

Everyone should understand that online classes are not as easy as physical classes. It has its own consequences to both parties- academicians and students. It is because the online classes itself has it own issues and challenges. It is not easy to gather a group of people in an online platform since most of them face their own difficulties such as financial impact and network issues (Yee, Penang Institute, 2020). When most of them thought that only students face issues and challenges, we should also know that the academicians have their problems too.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has conduct the academicians to online education readiness. According to a research from Phan (2017), causes such as technical competence, time constraints, methodology and also attitude are some of the major distance in learning education elements. Another research conducted by Rey (2018), there are a limited experience in distant education for the readiness of Department of Education teachers such as time management, technical skills and attitude in online education yet they still able to cope with these trends.

Conducting online classes are not an easy task. It is because it requires a lot of time, money and also energy. The difficulties of online learning are just exceeding. Challenges such as providing

stimulating learning experience compared to face-to-face approaches, examination misconducts and also plagiarism (Alexander, 1998). This period might be very challenging for women rather than men (Rafidi, 2020). Especially during the pandemic season, where the academicians have to work from home and have to prepare certain tasks such as taking care of their home if they have family and also preparing for the online classes. They do face certain distractions on the whole process. Even they are not get used to the 'new norm' and yet they still able to do their responsibilities (Rafidi, 2020).

The environment changes in the workplace or overload work in the workplace can cause stress and will affect the employees' performance (Judge, 2013). This is because when they Work From Home (WFH) during the pandemic, they have to do multitasking because they have to do house chores and also online classes. All these stress symptoms will later affect by considering themselves to accept or create a problematic issue to the employees' (Robbins, 1996). Some employees whom are working from home for the first time, which means they are figuring out how to stay on the task in a new surroundings that may not lend itself to productivity (B., 2020).

Taking care of our health should be our first priority. Our health is important for us to stay alive. Unmanaged workload can have a high impact on overall health, stress on the body and also can be affecting mood and thinking (Johnson, 1982). Thinking about all the consequences of doing online session with the students will make them to stress more especially when it exceeds its level, it will turn to burnout. Burnout occurs in a terminal stage of a physical stage, emotional and mental exhaustion will occur from which it is hard to recover (W.B. Schaufeli, 2001). Burnout is a continuous negative mental state characterized by an emotional exhaustion related

to stress (Holt, 2009). According to Lesage, (2013) if there are excessive works, employees will react in a negative manner and it will lead them a desire to turnover.

On the other hand, online education will not be successful when the faculty members are not well-trained because when they did not plan well, they might have to face financial management because online education requires money (Hughes, 2002). For researchers who are studying in science stream, their online classes cannot be simply replace with face-to-face class since most of their research have to be done in the laboratories (Yee, Penang Institute, 2020).

1.3 Objective of The Study

1.3.1 General Objectives

i. The general objective of this study is to investigate the experience of academicians during Covid-19 in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

i. This study will explore the view of academicians about the pandemic.

ii. This study will investigate the issues that academicians faced during Covid-19 in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

1.4 Research Questions

- What is online learning among the lecturers' perception?
- What are the issues of having online classes that affect lecturers' the most?
- How do the academicians feel about the pandemic?
- What kind of support do academics wish to have when dealing with teaching and learning during Covid-19?

1.5 Significance of Study

The following are the significance of study:

- The importance of this study is to find out how academicians are viewing online classes.
- This study will find out how much issues that all the academicians faced during online classes.
- The outcome of this study will bring a solution to all of the academicians on how to conduct online classes effectively.

1.6 Research Framework

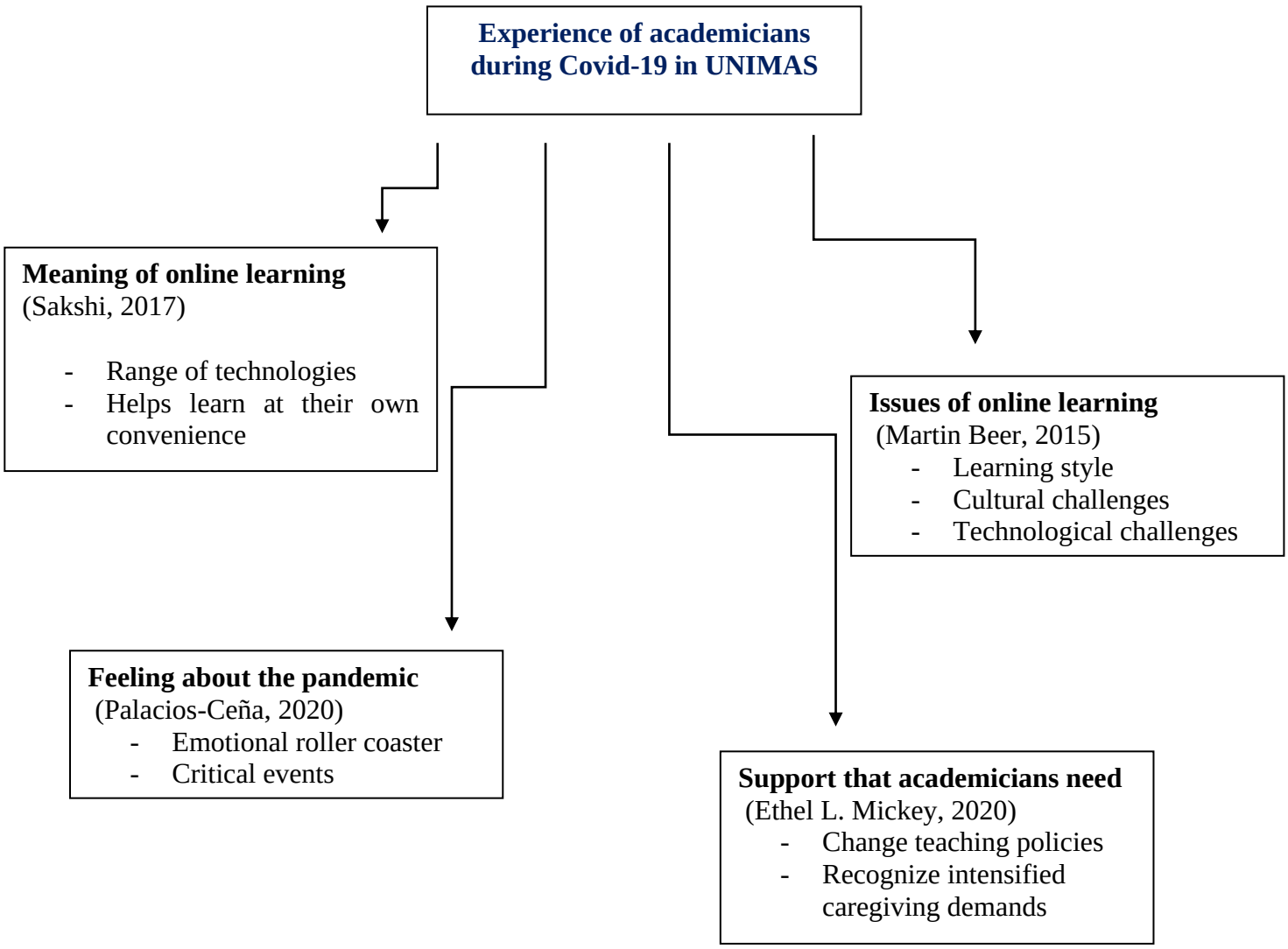

Figure 1: Research Framework

1.7 Definition of Terms

Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition
Online Learning Online learning is a form of distant learning or distant education. This system has been a long part in the American Education system. It has also become the largest sector of distant learning in the recent years (J.H., 2004). Blended learning or hybrid learning is also considered an online learning because it consists of face-to-face and distant learning (Horn, 2011). Online learning will help someone to learn at their own pace, according to their own convenience. Online education requires a great deal of resources and careful planning (Sakshi, 2017). Online learning embrace a wide variety of programs that use the network within and beyond school walls to provide continuous access as well as to facilitate interaction among the	Online learning refers to a delivery of education and collaboration using various electronic media, but mostly the tool will be Internet (Abiagam, 2009). Online learning in tertiary education is part of the trend in lifelong learning. The main reason tertiary education facilities increased their online courses are related to demand (Allen, 2004).

academicians and students (Marianne Bakia, 2012).	
Covid-19 Coronavirus or which is probably known as Covid-19 is one of the pathogens that cause respiratory tracts infection in humans (Ahmed, The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): A Review, 2020). According to Merriam-Webster, (2020), coronavirus is any of a family of large single-stranded RNA viruses that have a lipid envelope studded with club-shaped spike proteins and many mammals including humans and include the causative agents of MERS and SARS. This virus will spread through person-to-person mainly via respiratory droplets produced hen an infected person sneezes or coughs (Ahmed, The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): A Review, 2020).	According to WHO, World Health Organization (2019), coronavirus is a large family of viruses transmitting between animals and humans that cause illness. Covid-19 infection can cause mild to severe disease and be fatal in some. In more severe cases, these infection can cause pneumonia or respiratory problem (WHO, WHO, 2020)

Academicians According to Illinois (2016)**,** academicians are the ones who is responsible in teaching, research and scholarly activities of the Education institutions- which are probably Universities which inherent rights in academic policy and governance. Other academic experts are recognized within the academic staffs are lecturer, instructor, teaching associate and also research associate (Illinois, Definition of "Academic Staff", 2016). Teaching is their main business. When the transfer of knowledge is happening, the academicians themselves should motivate and provoke their students to create and share ideas and insights (Nasuruddin, 2018).	Academicians are the ones with these personal 'E' factors which is 'empowerment' (Handy, 1990). Fried (2001) explains that teachers and educators need to have a passionate feeling if the students are to engage.

Table 1: Definition of terms

1.8 Limitation of Study

There are few limitations in restraining the interpretation of the findings of this study. Firstly, this study only focuses on qualitative method by conducting interviews among the lecturers. Hence, by only using one method to collect the data, lack of information might happen. In addition, time to allocate the research is also limited.

Not only that, this research can be only conducted among the lecturers of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. There are 5 lecturers who is going to be interviewed for this study. All five lecturers are from the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development. The lecturers are selected randomly. The limitation of place is only at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

1.9 Summary

This chapter is highlighted about the problem statements and background of study. Next, we have decided on the research objectives and also the research questions. Few concepts have been defined in this chapter as well. Last but not the least, the significance and limitation of study is also explained in this chapter as well.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature is the main source of ideas for determining a research direction and research methodology and procedures. Literature is basically a written document that is disseminated via printed materials or online databases. It provides useful information that are related to particular areas of study and profession (Ahmad, 2014). This chapter comprises the concepts of this study. The first one will be related theory and models and the last one will be theories from past study.

2.1 Issues Related to the Study

2.1.1 Online classes

Online media does provide few benefits for the lecturer's and students' learning experiences especially the isolated students (Graham, 2004). It is because online learning has become the new era of the modern society (Jacobs, 2008). This new trend will continue and will lead to 21st century. The students also being used to gadgets and also the Internet. So, it is quite familiar for them since the students are using it everyday.

Students should be engage in online class as same as traditional class because to identify their level of effectiveness towards getting knowledge. Different teaching strategies should be approached for online classes in order to make the classes effective and successful (Dasher-Alston & Patton, 1998). Sometimes, during online class, the interaction is absent between an educator and student (Brunet, 2011). When the students have lower interaction, they might not concentrate on their learning course and it will lead them to fail the course. In

order that the students have to pass their course, they have to find other ways to let the students get interested in the course during online session.

According to Smith (2008), when the traditional learning happens, the students will meet their instructors face-to-face and discuss their assignments and ask comments from instructors. The students will be encouraged and it would help them to remain on their task and complete their assignments. But, all these will not be present in online learning (Jacobs, 2008). In e-learning, cooperation and interaction plays an important role in support the whole learning process (Rana, 2014). When one person is unable to cooperate with the learning process, it will spoil the whole mood of the educator and also the students. E-learning would be a boring class for the students and the educators if there are issues like this. According to Orlando (2015), they stated that teaching with technology is not a one size that fits all the attitude because it depends on the category of technology in use at the time. Adapting to the online environment can be a challenge for the facilitators (Kirkwood, 2014). It does not necessarily mean that a facilitator with less proficiency or confidence in navigating digital technologies will not be able to provide suitable and also beneficial learning experiences for external students.

2.2 Related theories and models

2.2.1 Connectivism

George Siemens and Stephen Downes (Downes G. S., 2009) have created this theory for the digital learning age which is known as connectivism. Connectivism is a combination of behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism. This particular learning theory has issued over whether this is a learning theory or an instructional theory. Connectivism is also a type of theoretical framework and its purpose to understand learning process (Hill, 2008).

Siemens (2014) is one of the early pioneers of Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) he has been the main proponent of this theory. The main reason of this theory is to explain how the network and Internet technologies have created new chances for the people to learn and share new things across the world. One of the key features of this theory is that most of the learning occurs online nowadays, a teacher will guide students on the information in order to support the students sharing and learning on their own (Downes S. , 2010).

To accept a theory, the theory itself needs a lot of observations and tests. In this era, Internet made a huge change globally which involves people from all over the world. Knowledge from the Internet is constantly changing and getting broad. It is because the content of knowledge in the Internet is not formal and it is shared by everyone all over the world (Bates, 2015). If a person understands a type of knowledge, that means he/she has a deep connection towards it. Connectivism learning can also be considered as actionable knowledge (Herlo, 2016).

According to Siemens (2014), concepts can be viewed as many mediums such as mind maps which would be easier to view rather than progression of ideas. Connectivism is also a type of actionable knowledge (Betsy Duke, 2013). When the technology increases day by day, the

digital cities will collaborate each other and they will link globally and locally (Betsy Duke, 2013). Not everyone can experience everything through connectivism, the learner can share and learn via collaboration such as online conference and seminar.

Connectivists advocate a learning organization whereby there is not a body of knowledge that need to be shift from the educator to learner and where learning does not take place in a single environment, instead the knowledge is distributed across the Web, and people's commitment with it constitutes learning (Kop, 2011).

2.3 Discussion on past similar findings

There are only few studies based on COVID-19 but they have been other studies based in other pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and SARS. Conducting online class is linked with an educator's commitment. If they do not give full commitment to it, then no one will get benefit from the online session. Students are depending on their lecturers to conduct online classes for them to study at home and it will lessen their physical contact.

According to a research by Nguyen (2015), some of the benefits having online class sessions are it is cost-effectiveness, it is also used as professional development. It will also have a world class education with strong broadband connection. As long as they have access to Internet, they will able to attend the class. According to a research by Curtis (2006), most college students are creating more online events and programs to make it competitive and the outcome in response would be a demand for the students for online offerings. When there is a lack of face-to-face among the students and the educators, it might be one of the negative feature in online learning because they might have miss out some of the information which