

Identifying Challenges and Risk Factors During Online Distance Learning (ODL) among Malaysian University Students

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the education system in this world, forcing students to navigate challenges and risk factors. Hence, this study was conducted to understand the challenges and risk factors faced by university students in Malaysia due to the sudden shift to online distance learning. It utilised a qualitative method and the data was obtained using open-ended questions via Google Form. The findings discovered that there were 4 themes under challenges, namely cultural (44.4%), individual (33.3%), technological (25.0%), and academic (i.e. their studies) (13.9%). The challenges were compounded by the risk factors, which were family (36.1%), health-related factors (27.8%), individual (25.0%), the pandemic (19.4%), social (8.3%), and geographical (2.8%). It can be inferred from the findings that students faced challenges during ODL and the risk factors may worsen the effects of the challenges on the students. Interestingly, it was observed that the students sought outlets to share their stressful experiences and were willing to use tools such as personal reflections. Since university students struggle with many mental health challenges, further research could look into students' reflections to determine their potential as a therapeutic tool in the classroom.

Keywords: Risk Factors, Challenges, Online Distance Learning, COVID-19, Mental Health

Introduction

The pandemic of COVID-19 has impacted the world's economic, social, and educational development (Wang, 2021). Since its outbreak, a colossal number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection has been reported globally causing the world to be on lockdown. Various sectors, including the education sector, were badly affected. Many schools, colleges, and universities had to be temporarily closed (Zalat et al., 2021), and some, permanently closed. As such, teaching and learning had to be switched from the traditional face-to-face mode to online mode (Li & Che, 2022). This abrupt switch inevitably posed numerous challenges to

policymakers, administrative staff, teachers, and students alike (Mheidly et al., 2020). The higher education institutes faced the most radical change during the pandemic (Garcia-Morales et al., 2021). Given that the students of this age group are usually considered to be the most emotionally and mentally vulnerable population (Browning et al., 2021), university students are at the most risk of being negatively affected by events that are as stressful as the changes caused by a pandemic (Sabri et al., 2021).

The forced shift in education worldwide was something that policymakers, the government, educators, and students were obliged to endure. Although research has shown and proven that online distance learning (ODL) brought many benefits to the education sector, there are also many negative effects of such a sudden transformation (Maqableh & Alia, 2021). One of the main, and worrying, negative effects of ODL is its effects on university students' mental wellbeing (Moawad, 2020; Al-Kumaim et al., 2021; Balta-Salvador et al., 2021). This is because university students suffer from various mental health issues (Liu et al., 2019; Rogowska et al., 2020) even before the COVID-19 pandemic, with depression and anxiety being the most prevalent (Brown, 2018; Naser et al., 2020). The global-scale pandemic has consequently increased the intensity of these mental health issues among university students. Hence, it is of crucial importance to identify the challenges and risk factors to better mitigate learning, during and post a pandemic. Additionally, an understanding of the challenges and risk factors from the perspectives of the students could enable a safe transition and lead to a successful transformation in the education sector.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the challenges and risk factors during ODL, which is being implemented as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, among Malaysian university students through their reflections. Hence, the research questions guiding this study are: i) what are the challenges faced by Malaysian university students during ODL, and ii) what are the risk factors during ODL?

Literature Review

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused various changes to the teaching and learning (T&L) process of higher learning institutions. The T&L process had to be shifted online almost instantly in an effort to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. This shift, known as online distance learning (ODL), had to be conducted through various online platforms. Internet connection is key to the success of ODL because it ensures that T&L can be implemented efficiently despite the location of educators and students (Masalimova et al., 2022). With the availability of the internet connection, lecturers were still able to deliver lessons to students, and consequently, the T&L process resumed. However, in order to have comprehensive and well-designed online teaching, online learning, and online assessment materials, it takes substantial time to be developed (Weldon et al., 2021). They have to be interactive, available at all times, and easily operated (Ozudogru & Hismanoglu, 2016) to meet the needs of the current generation of university students. Another almost immediate change of ODL was that T&L had to become almost fully student-centred. Although educators were still facilitating T&L, students had to become independent learners almost instantaneously (Almahasees, 2021). Thus, these rapid changes of the T&L process presented some major adjustments for the educators as well as the students to adapt.

In an attempt to adapt to the changes, university students experiencing ODL faced numerous challenges. Almaiah et al (2020) found four notable categories of these challenges: i) technological, ii) individual, iii) cultural, and iv) courses/subjects. A plausible explanation for this is that the stakeholders (ministry, universities, faculties, educators, students) did not expect such immediate and abrupt changes that they needed to cater to in order for the T&L process to be continued. Additionally, the instability of one's internet connectivity is a constant challenge for the T&L in ODL. The reliability of the assessments became an issue, especially for online group assessments (Gillet-swain, 2017), and the inability to focus and concentrate while doing their online assessments caused students to feel upset and frustrated. Apart from internet connection, other commitments at home caused more excessive stress to students as they were expected to complete their house chores as well as their required academic tasks (Allam et al., 2020). All these brought about one particular challenge experienced by the students that is crucial to note: their mental health (Barrot et al., 2021). Financial complications, boredom and isolation due to the imposition of lockdown, and grief of the loss of a loved one (to the virus), caused depression, stress, and anxiety among university students. These were the challenges that they experienced throughout ODL.

In consequence, there were many risk factors of the challenges during the T&L process in ODL. Previous studies have shown that many of these risk factors impacted university students negatively, thus worsening the challenges experienced by them. Being at home during ODL, they were expected to be responsible students, e.g. completing tests and assessments, and family members, e.g. taking care of younger siblings, causing them to be at risk of a multitude of mental health issues, e.g. suicidal thoughts, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Copeland et al., 2021; Fawwaz et al., 2021). The mental health issues among university students going through ODL were increasingly becoming more severe and should not be taken lightly by academicians, family members, and/or the government (Lyubetsky et al., 2021; Ahmad et al., 2022). In addition, the risk factors associated with mental health issues were also found to be due to socio-demographic, economic, social, and health-related factors (Wathelet, 2020). Age, geography, the frequency of socialisation, expected teaching methods, and experience of online learning were other risk factors discovered by (Tan, 2022). Therefore, it is crucial to identify the potential challenges and risk factors among Malaysian university students studying in a public university during ODL to have a better understanding of these issues.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach. This method was chosen to explore the experiences of participants who were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and were indirectly forced to attend the T&L process through ODL. The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on those who had experienced ODL and were undergraduate students in different semesters. The participants were also from different fields of studies. 38 students volunteered to participate in this study. Responses to the open-ended questions utilised by this study were collected when the participants filled in the attendance for their English classes. Students of the selected classes could choose whether or not to answer the questions for the research. At the end of the attendance form, the participants could indicate their consent to have their data and responses included in the present study. The data later was analysed into different themes by using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and was

explained and discussed based on the analysis done. Thematic analysis was chosen as the interpretive tool to avoid and minimise the researchers' prejudice in the interpretation of the data analysed.

Findings and Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented global event that took everyone by surprise. The participants were forced to adapt to ODL without a smooth transition period when the Malaysian government imposed the Movement Control Order (MCO) nationwide almost overnight. This is supported by Thandevaraj et al. (2021), that the pandemic caused unpredictable and critical impacts to the education system including the students. The participants faced challenges from the cultural (44.4%) individual (33.3%), technological (25.0%), and academic (i.e. their studies) (13.9%) perspectives. The challenges discovered in this study were in line with Musingafi et al (2015) where there were specific items that represented each theme such as lack of time, materials, support, and facilities. This section will first discuss the challenges faced by the participants while participating in ODL during the COVID-19 pandemic before examining their relationship to the risk factors.

In general, many of the challenges highlighted by the participants can be considered cultural, as they are changes or reactions to changes brought about by policies introduced or imposed at the national level during the pandemic. Cultural change is changes in ideas, norms, and behaviours of a group of people as a reflection of changes that happen over time (Varnum & Grossmann, 2017). One change is the closing down of educational institutions and the MCO mandated by the government. This led to the unprecedented situation where a separation between the academic and home lives of the participants was non-existent. As a result, many participants struggled to balance the demands of being a student while simultaneously being a child at home who is expected to contribute in some ways towards the family, for instance helping with household chores, looking after younger siblings, or caring for elderly grandparents *(P5; P9; P13; P14; P16; P19; P26; P27; P32; P33; 36). As noted by P9,

People may be think that student studying at home doesnt look tiring since we are at home, the foods are free, no need to pay college rent and else. But they forgot that we also have commitment not only as student but also as a son or daughter. We have to help our parent and family, sometimes it makes us feel guilty because we are too busy with classes and assignment until we dont have time to help our family.

P12 argued that ODL has caused there to be "no sense of reality and life because everything revolves in the same place everyday regardless if it is the weekend or the weekdays". In essence, the pandemic caused a breakdown in social and cultural continuity that led some participants to question their sense of reality. A natural consequence of such a situation is an increase in mental health issues *(P5; P11; P12; P18), which can be exacerbated by the inability to grieve amidst tight schedules *(P12; P36). This finding echoes Fawwaz et al. (2021) that found the pandemic to contribute to psychiatric disorders.

While cultural changes may impact the participants' outlook as a generation, individual challenges faced by the participants vary in nature. Some participants struggled with time

management. P1, “*thinks the most difficult challenges during ODL is time management and adapting to the assessment method*”, a sentiment also shared by P11, P35, and P36, while others felt burdened by the need to take care of the family. This is illustrated by P7, P30 who felt “*guilty for not helping my mother to do housechores such as cooking*”, and P32 who, as the eldest child, found it hard to “*focus on two things. I had to watch her [their youngest sibling] during the odl lesson and also mine*”. Some participants also had to deal with illness and death of family members *(P13; P30; P34; P36) and burdensome expectations of academic excellence from the family *(P18). Quite a few participants noted that they “*can easily lose focus*” *(P10), were mentally or physically “*exhausted*” *(P3; P17; P21), felt “*drained*” and “*anxious with the untouched assignments*” *(P7), and “*burnout*” *(P11; P33). Besides their studies, the participants also found it challenging to juggle their part-time jobs, with P11 noting that “*works/notifications about work keep popping up during our breaks*”.

Another notable finding that emerges under the theme individual challenges is the participants’ struggle with abstract notions on top of practical issues and considerations such as their uncertainty about the future; P7 was “*overwhelm[ed] thinking of [their] future that will completely be affected by the pandemic*”, P14

wonder how, would we, as the students, cope when the situations get better and classes will resume physically. It is unknown the fact that when will it actually get better but the thought that things will change entirely later scares me

while P15 felt that “*this country it never heal*”. Conversely, some participants lamented about being robbed of their youth, as they were “*not being able to create memories and just stand still watching the time pass by, it hurts*” (P19), and “*we can't even go out to have a laugh or a chat with friends in between classes*” (P11). The findings suggest that the participants were not only unprepared for the sudden shift to ODL, but they did not expect that ODL would extend beyond one semester. There is certainly a notion that the ODL becomes harder to participate in the longer it went on *(P13; P17; P18; P36).

The prolonged isolation caused by the pandemic brought about existential crisis in some participants (Temple et al., 2016; Tomaszek & Muchacka-Cymerman, 2020). P15 expressed their disbelief that they would experience a pandemic in their lifetime while others struggled to find meaning in their academic endeavour when faced with their mortality. For instance, P8 deemed what they “*study is useless*” since “*I don't know if I can survive this pandemic or when will this pandemic will end*” and P13 felt “*like everything I had done during ODL was just an avoidable waste of time*” following the death of their parent. Meanwhile, P7 found their confidence in the traditional education system and the promise of a bright future shattered when the pandemic caused many highly skilled people to become jobless,

Will there be any advantage if i graduate from college? Even there are many people out there that are not able to work, even pilots, engineers, and others skillful people. This has been going on my mind since i started my degree, that sometimes it affected my concentration on my studies.

P12 registered their disillusionment with the political system, observing that:

the news I hear every day has been nothing but depressing from the number of cases to the number of deaths to the poor governance of handling the situation. It has been seen that greed is king and politics is nothing but for personal benefits.

This means that not only does the younger generation feel uncertain about their future prospects, they are unable to trust that their prospects can be salvaged through politics (Wangchuk, 2021).

Being the backbone of ODL, technology poses a few challenges for the participants. Many participants *(P24; P25; P26; P29; P31) faced connectivity issues, which may be affected by the weather *(P29). Furthermore, P22's response of "*High internet usage for odl*" and P33's observation that group work may be disrupted because "*data internet each person are different*" suggest that the financial cost for smooth internet connection may be beyond the means of some participants or their peers. To add to the issue, some participants lacked the necessary technological tools to participate in ODL. For instance, some participants "*don't have suitable equipments to use for my studies*" *(P5) or they faced "*laptop problems*" *(P29). Moreover, the participants note that prolonged use and exposure to screens can cause health problems *(P10; P11; P26) such as getting "*headaches due to lack of sleep and back pain due to sitting for too long*" *(P26). Interestingly, an emergent theme under technology is geographical. P26 noted that they "*do not have a suitable space for me to study*", while P25 mentioned that "*Since I live in a rural area, I have to go out to the city or town every day, as early as 8 am follow the Open and Distance Learning (ODL)*". These findings are in line with studies done by Ozudogru (2021) in Turkey, Idris et al (2021) in Brunei and Ng (2021) in Canada that found that students face the challenges mentioned above in terms of technological obstacles. This is possibly because the facilities provided by the university or the government were not fully ready or fully equipped as COVID-19 pandemic hit the world unexpectedly.

Another challenge faced by the participants is the experience of ODL itself. P33 became frustrated to the point of tears "*sebab tak rasa nikmat belajar*" (because I did not experience the joy of learning). P33 states that,

The method for doing our assignments always related to research. Of course we need to do a research but for instance our lab. Lab supposedly in physical to determine the machine, to touch the sample and so on. but because of online, we only can watch through the youtube. We could not have experience in handling machine.

This thought is echoed by P28, from whom ODL "*just not feeling the real learning environment*". Furthermore, although ODL offers unique opportunities for collaboration, it does not automatically bridge obstacles like "*lacks of communication with groupmates during assignment*" *(P20) and the fact that "*not everyone always free at the same time*" *(P33). Thus, P1 found "*adapting to the assessment method*" to be one of the "*the most difficult challenges*" possibly because of the online nature and the high volume of assignments, as noted by P13. In fact, P13 struggled to maintain their initially positive outlook when their "*closest family member, dad, died in the middle of my assignments, tests, presentations, and*

finals". The findings for both individual and course challenges are parallel with a study conducted by Lischer et al (2021) in Switzerland where they found that students experienced high levels of anxiety as they had to deal with many stressors such as economic impact, academic delays, loss of social contact, and personal and family health issues. This may be due to abrupt changes that happened in the education system in every country all over the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the education system or stakeholders should ensure that students' education is uninterrupted while catering to everyone's needs, since these challenges have a direct impact on the participants' attitude, behaviour, and emotional functions (Copeland et al., 2021).

Furthermore, participants' ability to face challenges can be impaired by risk factors, which are "the individual, family, and social characteristics that are associated with ... increased vulnerability" (Parritz & Troy, 2017, p. 38). The risk factors during ODL identified in this study are family (36.1%), health-related factors (27.8%), individual (25.0%), pandemic (19.4%), social (8.3%), and geographical (2.8%).

For most participants, family proves to be a stressor rather than something reassuring. Spinelli et al (2020) found out that children's stress level and behaviours were affected by parents' stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many families find their routine disrupted when many family members are confined at home. It can be inferred that the student-participants unintentionally become their family's supportive factor by helping with household chores *(P33), providing childcare *(P32), supplementing household finances *(P7), caring for sick or older family members *(P7; P13; P16; P36), shouldering family expectations *(P18), and even facing bereavement *(P13; P30; P34; P36). In effect, the family becomes a risk factor for the participants who felt compelled to contribute to the family while trying to focus on their studies. Only P13, whose family is "very understanding of and has respect for my situation", and P23 "live in a very understanding family" while other participants struggle to juggle their household and studently responsibilities. Even then, P13 notes that they find it difficult "to keep it together" when

...your dad is sick and always leaves for the hospital every other week, and because you're at home you have to face the hard truth of that while trying to study...

This means that during the COVID-19 pandemic, families can either help or hinder the participants' ability to participate in ODL lessons effectively. However, Dong et al (2020) indicated that the parents in China were worried that they could not help their children during ODL due to their lack of digital skills. This difference happened maybe because parents in Malaysia and China had different priorities and concerns in their children's education.

Health-related issues also constitute risk factors for the participants as they participate in ODL. Lack of both physical and mental health from reduction of physical activities and social distancing can affect the participants' ability to focus or even participate in lessons (Idris et al., 2021; Xiang et al., 2020). However, the participants viewed mental health as a bigger risk factor; surprisingly, the only physical health issue highlighted is physical exhaustion *(P16; P17; P21; P33) rather than something more serious like COVID-19 itself. Instead, they highlighted experiencing "mental breakdown" *(P5; P33), feeling "anxious" *(P11), being

“mentally exhausted” *(P3; P16), and getting *“burnouts”* *(P11; P23). It should be noted that in some cases, issues of other people’s physical health, especially if they led to death, can impact the participants’ mental health *(P7; P13; P16). In some cases, these illnesses or deaths did not even concern a person close to the participant, such as the father of a classmate and the general public *(P12). These findings suggest that both mental and physical health may be the risk factors that may affect students’ participation and engagement in classes during ODL (Guo et al., 2021; Hamaideh et al., 2022).

Some participants displayed a high sense of self-awareness and admitted that their own self and the way they view things may constitute a risk factor. P11’s response encapsulates this notion:

From my experience, despite the privilege i have (wifi, laptop, and comfortable home), i always struggle with my mental capacity that once i stared at my laptop for class even a short one it'll drain my energy which leads to procrastinating.

P12, as noted above, is highly empathetic and is thus more easily affected by events that happened around them even if the event had no direct connection to them. P15 found themselves blindsided by the pandemic (*“I have never thought thing like this can happen”*) and struggled to adjust as swiftly as they needed to. P19’s sentimentalism hurt them when they realised that they are *“not being able to create memories and just stand still watching the time pass by”*. In short, the participants possess unique ways of viewing the world. However, for some of them, their perception of their own self and the world may incapacitate rather than spur them on during the pandemic. Hence, students’ level of self-motivation was very important for them to be able to face the challenges during ODL as they had anticipated the obstacles that they might experience (Muslimin & Harintama, 2020).

Although a few of the participants mentioned that their initial experience with the ODL was positive, including P18 who was glad that they *“didn't have to deal with face to face learning especially during presentation”*, it worsened over time *(P13; P17; P18; P36). P17 felt *“exhausted to face odl for further semester”* while P18’s *“perspectives change after I becoming a 2nd years student. I can't understand anything and I don't know what's the purpose I still studying here”*. Interestingly, although some participants *“just wish the COVID-19 cases dropped and i can go to the college”* *(P5), P14 expressed apprehension about adjusting to a post-pandemic world where *“classes will resume physically”*. Wathelet (2020) argues that the level of exposure to a stressful event can determine how much an individual is affected by it; coupled with the suggestion that the seemingly unending pandemic began to manifest as a sense of despair and hopelessness in some participants as discussed above, it is clear that the pandemic is considered a risk factor by the participants.

Finally, the remote nature of ODL caused a sense of isolation to the participants. Reduced social interaction with classmates corresponded with the participants’ reduced enjoyment of their student life *(P19), even as the difficulty of coordinating group projects frustrated them further *(P4; P20; P33). Moreover, another risk factor that contributes to a sense of isolation is geography. While complaints about bad internet connection in general

*(P24; P29; P31) could be attributed to any number of reasons such as lack of infrastructure or insufficient finances, P25 directly mentioned their physical isolation:

Since I live in a rural area, I have to go out to the city or town every day, as early as 8 am to follow the Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

Moreover, after being geographically displaced from their residential college due to the MCO, P26 is forced into sharing a common space with their entire family, where a lack of “suitable space for me to study, make assignments and attend classes” meant that their experience of the ODL was less than ideal. Thus, a sense of isolation both socially and geographically may constitute risk factors for students who are forced to participate in a prolonged ODL experience (Idris et al., 2021; Ng, 2021; Ozudogru, 2021; Tan, 2020; Temple et al., 2016; Tomaszek & Muchacka-Cymerman, 2020).

*(To see responses from P1 - P36 please refer to Appendix 1).

Conclusion

Based on the results, it can be inferred that there are many effects of the COVID-19 pandemic towards the education system, especially to the students. Moreover, in the event of an abrupt shift in the education system brought about by the pandemic, the students' mental health conditions are also impacted. It is also found that the challenges faced by the students proved to be consistent with the risk factors that were identified, for example death of a family member and an overload of assignments, can compound on each other, causing some participants' experience to become unbearable. The study also concluded that the participants were comfortable in sharing their mental health struggles due to heightened awareness and reduced stigma of mental health brought about by the pandemic. As for future research, the researcher could explore more in-depth on students' feelings and emotions through their reflections via the platforms provided by the educators during classes using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Therefore, this study can motivate educators to include another section or slot in the classroom to engage the students to share their mental health conditions. The findings of this study could contribute towards making this a common practice in education, in line with changes in the times and education system.

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APPENDIX 1

NAME	EXCERPTS
P1	For me, I think the most difficult challenges during ODL is time management and adapting to the assessment method
P2	I couldn't think of any right now, but thank you for asking! ✨
P3	Mentally exhausted
P4	odl is quite hard when it comes to group project
P5	Environment challenge. I can't fully focused on my studies, classes and assignments when I'm at home. There's other things that I need to care about and the problem within the house and myself seems affected my studies also mental health. I'm having mental breakdown most of the time. I don't have suitable equipments to use for my studies. I just wish the Covid-19 cases dropped and I can go to the college.
P6	Hope everyone keeps strong 🤝
P7	Having odl as a new learning/studying method is very helpful to me because I get to help my family around, take care of my parent's health, and have a part-time job to lessen the financial burden off my family. The only challenge that I'm facing right now is the overwhelming thinking of my future that will completely be affected by the pandemic. Will there be any advantage if I graduate from college? Even there are many people out there that are not able to work, even pilots, engineers, and others skillful people. This has been going on my mind since I started my degree, that sometimes it affected my concentration on my studies. Not only that, the financial and health problem of my family has also become my concern.
P8	I don't really have any challenges that I'm facing right now but sometimes I feel like giving up my life because I don't know if I can survive this pandemic or when will this pandemic end. I feel like what I study is useless, I don't even know either get the chance to work using my degree or end up stay at home doing nothing. This pandemic really drain out my energy, mentally and physically
P9	People may think that student studying at home doesn't look tiring since we are at home, the foods are free, no need to pay college rent and else. But they forgot that we also have commitment not only as student but also as a son or daughter. We have to help our parent and family, sometimes it makes us feel guilty because we are too busy with classes and assignment until we don't have time to help our family.
P10	The challenge that I've faced throughout this online learning is that sometimes I can easily lose focus. Probably because it's a bit tiring looking at the computer for too long.
P11	From my experience, despite the privilege I have (wifi, laptop, and comfortable home), I always struggle with my mental capacity that once I stared at my laptop for class even a short one it'll drain my energy which leads to procrastinating. prior to this pandemic, it is common for students to procrastinate their work or studies but it was an option and a choice but now it is not a choice anymore. the body and the head is struggling to keep up but then burnouts happened leaving us feeling anxious with the untouched assignments. not too forget there is no break inbetween classes. we still talk about works/notifications about work keep popping up during our breaks. we can't even go out to have a laugh or a chat with friends in between classes.

P12	<p>I have been following the SOP by staying at home and never went outside other than getting vaccinated, but the news I hear every day has been nothing but depressing from the number of cases to the number of deaths to the poor governance of handling the situation. It has been seen that greed is king and politics is nothing but for personal benefits. Sitting in front of the laptop and desk for hours (inclusive of classes, finishing off assignments and doing researches from day to night) that seems to be an endless cycle every week for months has made the situation even more depressing to the point that I no longer look forward to anything nor has anything been mildly interesting anymore. When sleep, rest and entertainment used to be a way to destress, they no longer seem real because every minute spent is a minute closer to needing to get back to the priorities in front of the laptop and the desk, which all happen in the same room. There is no sense of reality and life because everything revolves in the same place everyday regardless if it is the weekend or the weekdays. If I may say that I am still privileged to have access to what is needed in the comfort of my own home and stay safe, my own close friend contracted and lost her father due to COVID-19, they contracted the virus from the hospital when her father was bound to get dialysis treatment, the only time they must go outside when they had been following the SOP rigidly all this while. The timing was not in her favour either, for the worst circumstance to happen happened in the midst of the final examination. Life must go on, but she never had the proper time to properly grieve. These fears, depression and lives are not mere numbers or statistics on paper, they are real and someone's parents, siblings and friend. Not a political stance.</p>
P13	<p>I was doing well during the first two semesters of ODL -- not the current one, though. Home is just not the place to learn, I had a hard time attending to both classes and quality family time. My family is very understanding of and has respect for my situation, and I even promised to spend more time with them once I've managed to get to my semester break. The assignments are just too much, and I don't even blame the lecturers, in fact, I'm grateful that they are understanding and open to discussion. It's just that when you unnecessarily work too hard for something, while at the same time your dad is sick and always leaves for the hospital every other week, and because you're at home you have to face the hard truth of that while trying to study and keep it together. My closest family member, dad, died in the middle of my assignments, tests, presentations, and finals. From there on, I felt like everything I had done during ODL was just an avoidable waste of time.</p>
P14	<p>I find it hard to accept the new norm of doing almost everything online. I wonder how, would we, as the students, cope when the situations get better and classes will resume physically. It is unknown the fact that when will it actually get better but the thought that things will change entirely later scares me. While we are getting better at doing things online, I feel like it will definitely be hard later, unless the university is flexible. But truly, who am I to say for sure, these thoughts will always come across my mind.</p> <p>As to other challenges, such as family problems, distractions at home, laziness, procrastination are the usual challenges as students and I would say that I am able to cope.</p>

P15	Challenges will come in any stages of life, but during this pandemic I have never thought thing like this can happen, and for this country it never heal. Just feeling overwhelmed with everything right now but then wil try to overcome it
P16	I currently stay with my grandma, she just did her eye operation last ramadhan. Now she's recovering herself well. I'm in dilemma for staying odl at home or going back to campus (if uitm allows to do so). Taking care of people while studying online sometimes make us feel exhausted mentally, emotionally & physically. But somehow i feel grateful to take care of her. During this mco, i spent a lot of time with her. I hope this pandemic end very soon, because she really miss her grandchildren.
P17	I feel exhausted to face odl for further semester
P18	At first, I thought I can handled this since I didn't have to deal with face to face learning especially during presentation. This is one of the reasons why I want to proceed with ODL but my perspectives change after I becoming a 2nd years student. I can't understand anything and I don't know what's the purpose I still studying here if I can't get what I want. To be honest, this recent semester I had decided to quit and I had told my mom about this but she told me to wait for a while and I did so. After all, I don't know where and what should I do if I quit at first place. I'll still become a burden for my family. Also, two of my brothers had quit from their studies before and I; as a youngest, want to get a degree for my mom and make them proud but I don't know if I can make it or not. To make it worse, I've got some anger issue and sometimes I let it out to my family and friends and I end up locked myself in my room for a whole day and until know, I feel awkward to make a simple conversation or share any problems with them because it will end with arguments over and over again. My friends and I have discussed before to apply for college but im not sure. Is it worth it esp. during this pandemic.
P19	Tempus edax rerum. I hate the feeling when everytime I woke up, I'm at my home not at my college. I love my home and my family. Its just this is not the right place for me to persue my study. I want my friends back, my old life, where covid were never exist. Each day pass by, it felt like im getting further from what I was. From what the world was. Now the things that makes me happy are the old memories, the past laughter with friends, the feeling of being free, and everybody was happy. Half of my degree years are gone. And i didn't even get to know each of my classmates properly yet. Being accepted to Uitm Shah Alam is one of the best things that ever happened in my life. But not being able to create memories and just stand still watching the time pass by, it hurts. Thats all from me madam. Stay safe.
P20	During ODL lessons, i faced problems like lacks of communication with groupmates during assignment and not easy and comfortable to study at home
P21	As for now, it is nothing just in this semester break i really need a break from study because for me this semester were so exhausted and challenging for myself
P22	High internet usage for odl,
P23	For my perspective, I dont think that i have a massive break down during ODL. Thank God that I live in a very understanding family, but sometime when things get too much (work load, burnt out). It seriously hit me in many ways. But, I always think about it thru and said to myself "it always seems impossible until it is done" and when i received my result i always be proud of what i did during the semester. Thank you so much madam. Good luck with your research. Stay safe ❤️.

P24	Internet connection problem sometimes
P25	Since I live in a rural area, I have to go out to the city or town every day, as early as 8 am to follow the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) 😞
P26	Do not have a suitable space for me to study, make assignments and attend classes. The situation at home with many people made me less focused and comfortable to study. Moreover the network problem in my area is very unhelpful and sometimes not having a direct network makes it difficult for me to attend classes and find reference materials. Sometimes I also face headaches due to lack of sleep and back pain due to sitting for too long.
P27	Quite stress being at home for months
P28	so far okay. just not feeling the real learning environment. It takes more effort to understand what is being learned.
P29	Internet slow when rain and blackout and laptop problems
P30	I miss my father after three years he passed away
P31	The most challenges that I'm facing right now is slow internet connection. Sometimes I can ease stress and sad because of this poor connection especially during my classes.
P32	During this pandemic, my parents do not wfh. I have 4siblings. 3 of us are in uni meanwhile the youngest is still in school (year 4). Since Im the eldest, it is hard for me focus on two things. I had to watch her during the odl lesson and also mine.
P33	<p>The challenges i faced right now especially during online learning are</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group discussion. If there are required to brainstorm any idea for group discussion assignments, not everyone always free at the same time and we have limit of time to do our discussion because of the data internet each person are different. 2. Responsibility as a student and children. Most of the time, i will stay in my room but at the same time i will feel guilty for not helping my mother to do housechores such as cooking. 3. Mental breakdown when i do not understand for subject that i take in semester then when i want to ask my friends, they are not in their free time to help me. Of course i asked the lecturers when i do not understand the instructions but for further explanation, i prefer ask my friend and discuss with them in details. 4. Tired with assignments because only focus on the laptop. Or in simple words, i felt burnout to do my works. Sampaikan during doing my works i cried so much sebab tak rasa nikmat belajar. The method for doing our assignments always related to research. Of course we need to do a research but for instance our lab. Lab supposedly in physical to determine the machine, to touch the sample and so on.but because of online, we only can watch through the youtube. We could not have experience in handling machine. <p>Sorry madam for my english errors 😊😞</p>
P34	Recently, I just lost my father 😞
P35	Time management between life and odl class

P36	<p>At first I was sceptical about ODL because it is obviously something new for both lecturers and students. I have experienced two semesters of ODL and not going to lie that the first semester of ODL feels quite hectic and my life schedule was unsystematic. However, as time goes by, ODL can actually offer a lot of advantages for both students and lecturers. Hence, the second semester of ODL was going smoothly for me as a student. I know how to divide my time for classes, assignments, and doing the house chores.</p> <p>However, the challenges faced in the second semester (semester 4) of ODL were very burdensome. At first, it was going smoothly until my whole family in Sabah was tested positive Covid and my grandpa was admitted to the hospital for his kidney problems. Not long after, he passed away due lots of complications from Covid, Kidneys, and some bacterias found in him. I have been very close to him since I was a baby. He took care of me, fed me, and provided me with everything he could while my mom was working in Sarawak. I love him so much. So, obviously this affected me a lot. And of all these happened when I was on my final.</p> <p>Other obstacles such as house chores, the need to feed my cat, and making sure my mom is happy with a clean house while having online classes is inevitable. As long as ODL is being applied, students must know how to divide their time wisely. Inshaallah, everything will be eased.</p> <p>As for the loss of my grandpa, it took some time for me to accept all of these up till today, I still cry hoping he's still here. However, life must go on and I'm proud of my finals.</p> <p>Hope this will help with your research Madam! And thank you so much for everything that you have taught us. May god bless you and family always!</p> <p>Stay safe!</p>
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