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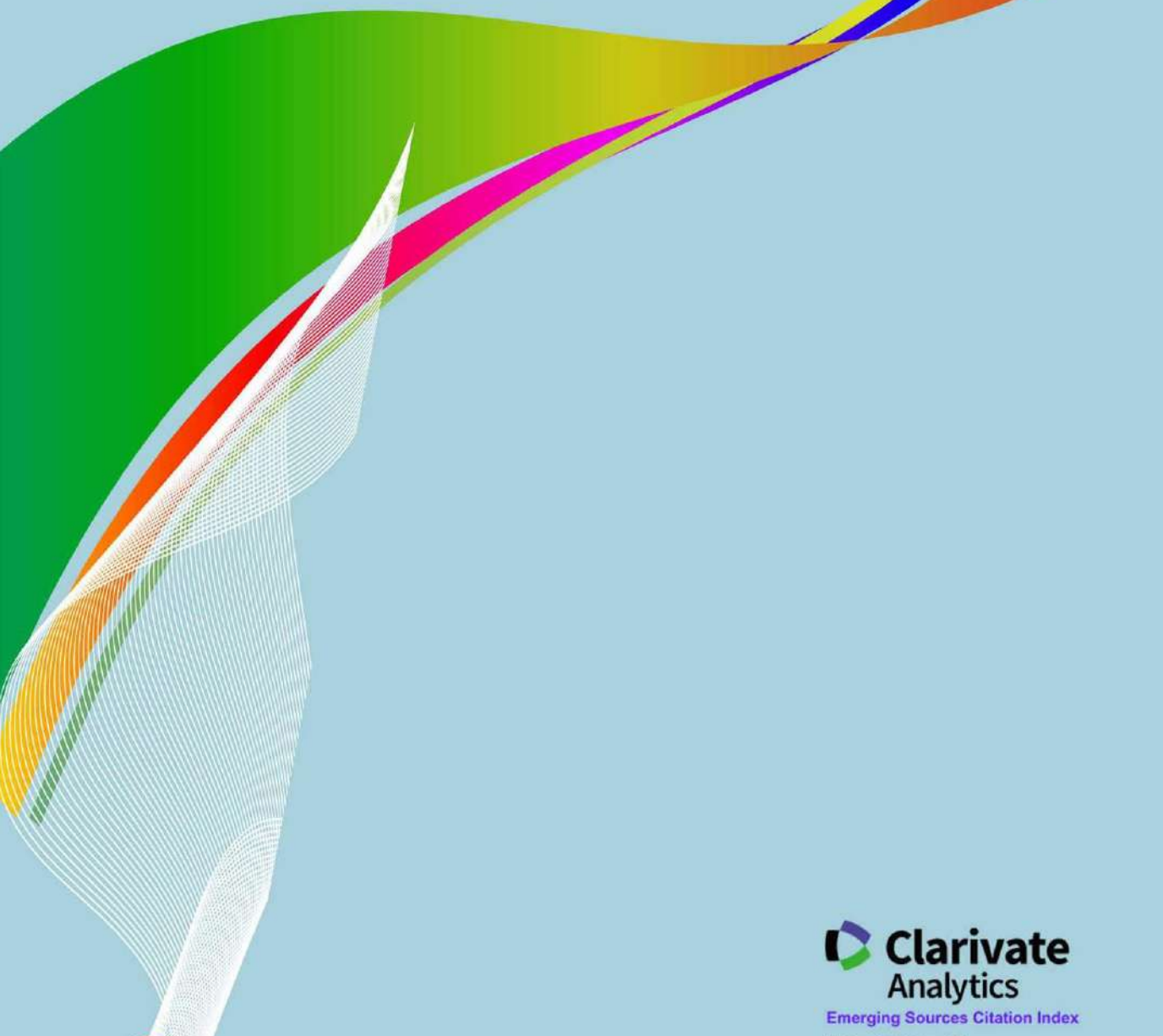
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A View of Time in Open and Distance Learning

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A VIEW OF TIME IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

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Abstract

Time is a significant and massive worry in behaviour that causes difficulties amongst instructors and learners in ensuring an effective process of teaching and learning in open and distance learning (ODL) environment. This study aimed to identify instructors' and learners' ability to allocate time in ODL. The study was conducted with 320 respondents, and the instrument used was questionnaires. The results showed that ODL instructors and learners were challenged with many obstacles to prioritizing tasks and allocating time accordingly in their teaching and learning. A close inspection of the role of time management is much required. The most reported challenges were managing the academic schedule on ODL and multitasking while teaching and learning on ODL. Lastly, it was deemed unnecessary to have additional time to satisfy the expectations of ODL. It was found that both instructors and learners from public and private higher education institutions needed effective educational practices to succeed in ODL and blended learning. In short, time allocation in prioritizing tasks is still an obstruction to achieving effective and balanced teaching and learning system with ODL that satisfies the desire of the instructors and learners. This research suggests investigating social, cognitive, teaching and emotional presence to successfully conduct the teaching and learning process.

Keywords: Challenges; ODL, Dropout; Late Completion; Time Management.



A. Introduction

A universal perspective on the pressure for making distance-learning universities more accountable during the Covid-19 pandemic is seen as a worldwide phenomenon. Academics and higher education institutions (HEI) worldwide are responding to this escalated pressure, and it never seems to be any easier as times pass by during this pandemic. The HEI is undergoing significant change, a change that no one can stop. Thus, it is essential to know the barriers that could hinder a successful teaching and learning process in the education system since Covid-19 has started.

There were complex challenges experienced by distance-learning HEIs, namely time, finances and technology, even before the COVID-19 pandemic and even more during the pandemic. These factors could result in the lessening of instructors-learners' enthusiasm in their process of teaching and studies, respectively. Ambiguous standards of quality assurance mechanisms will result in low-quality distance education. Besides that, lack of support may cause non-affirmation of participation, brought about by a lack of considerable size of human and infrastructure capacity.

Learning is vital in distance learning because it can be inferred that a considerable amount of workload is involved in the overall working of open distance-learning environments for both the instructors-learners. Through the practice of Online Distance Learning (ODL) throughout the time when pandemic Covid-19 started in the early year of 2020, there were many articles and research written and focused on the more obvious problems such as financial (Alvarez, 2020) and most all on the technology constraints faced by instructors and learners. However, there was a lack of studies on the time problem as the focus was not on that (Au et al., 2018; Musingafi et al., 2015). Instructors and learners deemed that time should not be a problem if financially and technologically were well supported in ODL, but this was not the case.

Time is a significant and massive worry in behaviour that causes difficulties amongst instructors and learners in ensuring an effective process of teaching and learning in an ODL environment (Wladis et al., 2014). Identifying



the factors contributing to this worry could help institutions better understand and rectify the underlying problem of time to achieve more significant results for both the instructor's and learners' ability and capability to be persistent in teaching and learning. ODL is here to stay permanently or otherwise, allowing everyone to access education from a distance besides being more flexible in terms of time and space (Chin, 2020).

Nevertheless, there is a lack of research about the effectiveness of time management in ODL (Arguedas et al., 2016). Hence, this study offers insight into how much is needed and the willingness to spend time practising ODL for instructors and learners in association with academic achievement in online learning. According to Brint & Cantwell (2010), a blended learning setting can be successful if instructors and learners allocate time for online and face-to-face components. Time is devoted to both in-class and out-of-class activities, which has proven to predict academic success. The results in this study indicate that, in the ODL context, instructors' and learners' time management could potentially be a promising approach for advancing the understanding of the choices instructors and learners make when managing their teaching and learning success in a blended learning setting. Mathew & Chung (2020) also viewed time as a motivational challenge whereby the respondents in their research claim that time management must be improved, especially in timetabling, whereby students hope that educators follow the official timetable so that they will be able to cope in the learning process.

This study uses a time management framework known as PRIDE (Priorities, Reflection, Implementation, Deadlines, and Emotions) to support one's well-being, which neglects (Chan Hilton, 2017). There are five components to consider when making decisions about individual tasks and setting plans for each day, week, or semester or for a complex project. Time management is an aspect of our lives that everyone hopes to improve. Ironically, we claim that we do not "have the time" to learn how to change our approaches. Studies have shown that being in a mode of being busy or completion bias is not productive (Gino & Staats, 2016). Time management is not a matter of being



more "efficient" in one's time use. It is also not to ensure that one is "productive" or simply "doing more" but to identify and prioritize one's goals and define what it means to be productive for oneself. Reflection is needed to identify and prioritize one's goals, and only then does time management become prioritization.

This research aims to determine how instructors and learners can allocate time to complete classes in the ODL environment. Even though the teaching and learning sessions need to be implemented to avoid postponement of the study duration during a pandemic, instructors and learners will face difficulties adapting to this new educational environment, which may remain for a while. Therefore, the findings will answer the research question regarding what extent the instructors and learners can allocate time in the practice of ODL to investigate the effectiveness of blended or fully online learning conducted full time with the constraints of time.

B. Method

This study uses using quantitative method with a questionnaire as the main instrument. Questionnaire items have been developed based on several criteria and issues involved in the time factor surrounding online learning at the moment ODL is practised. With ten items and a 5-point Likert scale, the instrument has been through content validity by two experts in the educational field. At the same time, reliability testing resulted in Cronbach's alpha value of 0.875 for internal consistency. Respondents were selected by a random sampling approach among instructors and learners from public and private HEIs. Questionnaires are distributed online through WhatsApp groups among instructors and learners of the faculty of education at public and private HEIs. Taking into consideration the total population of lecturers and students in the range of 1,500, the sample size required for this study is a total of 306 with a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of less than 5% to reach a high level of reliability (Johnson & Gill, 2010).

A total of 320 respondents have responded to the questionnaire, as presented in Table 1. According to Kant & Shukla (2021), a simple random



sample means that all combinations of sampling units with a specified sample size have the same chance of being chosen. It means that each sampling unit has an equal chance of being selected. The data collected is summarised by descriptive analysis to explain the findings based on respondents' feedback.

Table 1: Respondents' Types Based on Institutions

No.	Academic Institution	Occupation		Total
		Instructor	Learner	
1	Public University	41	225	266
2	Private University	12	42	54
	Total	53	267	320

This paper investigates determining the level of usability of the system. The data retrieved from the respondents were treated with the Average Weighted Mean (AWM), as stated in Table 2. The mean was determined, and its point scores and descriptive ratings were used through the Likert Scale. The ratings between 2.60 to 5.00 is considered helpful because it implies the strength of the developed online system. In contrast, a rating between 1.00 to 2.59 is interpreted as unusable because it implies the weakness of the developed online system (Limson, 2016).

Table 2: Mean interpretation adapted from Limson (2016)

Mean Range	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very High
3.40 – 4.19	High
2.60 – 3.39	Moderate
1.80 – 2.59	Low
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low

Based on Table 2 above, the mean interpretation is adapted from Limson (2016), which explained that between 4.20 to 5.00 rating is considered very high because it implies respondents' high capabilities to allocate time while involved in ODL sessions. The rating between 1.00 to 1.79 is interpreted as very low because it implies the lowest capabilities among respondents managing time in ODL.



C. Result and Discussion

Table 3 below shows the time factor in online and distance learning practised by instructors and learners. The results indicate that the willingness of instructors and learners to practice ODL in terms of time was at a moderate level for all items, as stated in the table below. This could be due to the immediate shift of the education system from traditional face-to-face classroom-based teaching and learning to ODL, which was too drastic. The phenomenon forces instructors and learners to adopt and adapt to the new norm of education physically and mentally to the circumstances in terms of time.

Table 3: Time factors in online and distance learning

No.	Online and Distance Learning (Time Factors)			
	Items	Mean	SD	Level
A1	I can manage time well while teaching and learning on ODL.	3.35	.789	Moderate
A2	I can manage my leisure time well while teaching and learning on ODL.	3.27	.888	Moderate
A3	I can manage my academic schedule well while teaching and learning on ODL.	3.38	.841	Moderate
A4	I can manage my family's well-being well while teaching and learning on ODL.	3.27	.981	Moderate
A5	I can manage my well-being while teaching and learning on ODL.	3.28	.951	Moderate
A6	The average time I spend each day on weekdays on ODL.	3.32	.887	Moderate
A7	The average time I spend interacting with students/ teachers while teaching and learning on ODL.	3.08	.993	Moderate
A8	The average time I spend with family members while teaching and learning on ODL.	2.90	1.017	Moderate
A9	The average time I each day on weekends on ODL.	2.93	1.027	Moderate
A10	The additional time I am willing to sacrifice to satisfy expectations in teaching and learning on ODL.	3.16	.880	Moderate

Item A3, with a mean of 3.38, was rated the highest moderate mean among the ten items listed. Most respondents believed they could manage their academic schedule moderately while teaching and learning in ODL.



Instructors and learners were given schedules despite learning online. The teaching and learning process took place by abiding by the timetable given by the academic institutions. Nevertheless, with the correct platforms used, lectures, activities, and assessments could run as usual. Thus, respondents perceived they were able to manage their academic schedule without any barriers if both parties were to act by the time given. This is in line with Claessens et al. (2007). They define time management as “behaviours that aim at achieving an effective use of time while performing certain goal-directed activities” that include time assessment, planning (i.e., goal setting, prioritizing-prioritizing and planning), and monitoring. However, respondents rated this item moderate as unforeseen circumstances such as low internet connectivity could pose a problem for both parties when the schedule was given for teaching and learning. Learners who are not morning persons may have to fight off yawns for morning classes. The expectations from instructors to students to be self-disciplined and to practice self-regulated behaviour in learning can be significant factors for learners to feel the pressure of allowing learning to take place. This could lead to anxiety and a severe "I do not want to". Instructors set a pre-determined schedule, and without flexibility could also disrupt the academic schedule.

Item A1, in terms of time management only, with a mean of 3.35, was rated lower than academic time management. It resulted from managing time for other responsibilities while carrying out an academic schedule. Responsibilities such as running errands, managing household chores, other family members' safety, health and online learning were a burden whilst performing the task of teaching and learning. Most parents believe that children must help with chores at home and might get upset seeing their young adult children spend hours in front of the computer (Chin, 2020). Besides, the initial relief of having children safely at home could become tension caused by misunderstanding if parents worked from home. Instructions were deemed as commands, and children felt that their parents were not understanding enough for them to have their ODL in their own space and time. Parents working



from home demand children to allocate time to help with other responsibilities, and frustrations were displayed if otherwise. This multitasking can lead to poor time management and productivity while learning online. In the PRIDE framework, deadlines refer to time-bound and scheduling aspects of time management. Underestimating the time to complete or complexity of a task can result in common challenges, including interruptions and distractions, physical and mental clutter, multitasking, not including breaks, and ineffectively scheduling tasks (Brans, 2013; Dudovski, 2013).

Item A10 with a mean of 3.16 showed a lower moderate level in terms of willingness to sacrifice additional time to satisfy expectations in teaching and learning on ODL. The closure of educational institutions because of the Covid-19 outbreak has left educators and learners flocking to online platforms and instant messaging apps for teaching and learning. However, somehow the process was not smooth sailing for many. Low-income (B40) students (Shahar et al., 2019) were at a disadvantage, while access to gadgets was an issue for some students. Internet data was also an issue for the process of teaching and learning to take place. Instructors were also at a low readiness level to practice ODL, such as preparing lesson plans and worksheets and executing digital lessons properly. This situation involuntarily hindered the delivery of information and lessons in the teaching and learning process, resulting in both parties' unwillingness to spend additional time just to satisfy the expectations in ODL. Through PRIDE, making decisions on what tasks and activities to allocate one's time to and when these will be done involves establishing one's priorities for the day and week (a micro, detailed, zoomed-in view) in alignment with their projects and longer-term goals (a macro, big picture, holistic perspective). This includes work and personal life priorities supporting one's overall well-being (Levine, 2005).

The table also showed a low, moderate level in item A9 with a mean of 2.93, whereby respondents were not willing to spend time on weekends just for ODL. Instead of spending time on teaching and learning tasks, respondents instead spend time doing enrichment activities to avoid unnecessary stress.

Teaching and learning from home and the lack of social interaction amidst Covid-19 have induced stress and anxiety in emotional well-being amongst instructors and learners. As stated by Goda et al. (2015), building up stress and pressure backfires as we could see a lack of feedback from instructors, procrastination from learners and lack of engagement among instructors-learners. It is paramount that instructors and learners be given time to themselves during the weekend to take a break. The need to balance activities that include time away from screens is considered essential for them, hence, the unwillingness to use the weekends for ODL. The need to reach out to others and uplift motivation to create a continuous meaningful teaching and learning environment to ensure success in academic performance reflects the need to divert from ODL in this challenging situation.

Item A8, with a mean of 2.90, displayed the lowest moderate level regarding spending time with family members whilst performing ODL. Respondents showed the slightest satisfaction with not being able to spend time with other family members during ODL. The focus has turned to online learning as more than just a substitute to ensure that education continues. According to Chin (2020), the director of the Centre for Development of Academic Excellence (CDAE), Universiti Sains Malaysia, Professor Dr. Abdul Karim said online learning and online education are no longer options. It is a must considering the situation that the world is facing now. There is a huge responsibility to make good of the potential of online learning.

Nonetheless, there are still dire necessities for an overall efficient system that need to be fulfilled. The process of teaching and learning was emphasized too much to reach the objective of producing excellent academic results. The focus was a distraction and has taken much time off from other family members while conducting ODL. Teaching and learning from home have resulted in piling on additional work and numerous and burdening updated requirements. This has yet to consider not having the capabilities to keep up with the same work level. A lot are making it more complicated than more accessible.



D. Conclusion

The summary of the results shown in the table above reflects reluctance among instructors and learners to sacrifice time in the practice of ODL willingly. A close inspection of the role of time management is much required. As the results showed above, academic schedules fixed by the HEIs were deemed workable if managed with the correct use of online platforms, good lectures carried out at the given time, including activities and assessments done within the allotted time by both the instructors and learners practise of self-regulated and self-disciplined.

Furthermore, multitasking is not practical while carrying out an academic schedule. Other responsibilities should be put aside while performing academic tasks. Underestimating the importance of managing time to complete tasks or the complexity of tasks could cause detrimental effects on mental health and well-being during the practice of ODL. Moreover, additional time spent to satisfy expectations in ODL is unnecessary. Priorities set to achieve long-term goals were reckoned essential for instructors and learners to succeed in online learning.

Unfortunately, the potential complications that lie with ODL are primarily out of the control of the universities. The teaching and learning process is entirely dependent on a solid internet connection, which varies, autonomous learning that is deemed difficult to be done, the readiness to adapt and adopt ODL is still at a low level, and the degree of personal motivation is time-consuming. Even with much time to rectify or overcome these barriers, patience and encouragement are thin. Without natural support in class, instructors and learners can easily drift off and lose track of time.

Ironically, successfully online learning typically requires instructors and learners to commit more time, but it is not the case in this paper. The results for this paper portray only a moderate level of willingness of respondents to allocate time to the practice of ODL. Thus, this research suggests ODL or blended learning to be attentive to social, cognitive, teaching and emotional presence so that the teaching and learning process can be conducted successfully. Future replication studies are warranted for this research paper to ensure a more effective and successful online and blended learning in HEIs.



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