

DIPLOMA STUDENTS' CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICES IN ODL AT UiTM TERENGGANU: A PILOT STUDY

*Cabaran Pelajar dan Amalan Terbaik dalam ODL di UiTM Terengganu: Satu
Kajian Rintis*

**Aileen Farida Mohd. Adam¹, Najlaa Nasuha Mohd. Radin², Nooryuhanis Hashim³, Mohd
Suhaimi Sulaiman⁴**

Submitted: 18-Sep-2020
Accepted: 12-Oct-2020
Revised: 30-Nov-2020
Published: 28-Jun-2021

¹Academy of Language Studies,
UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang Kampus Permatang Pauh,
13500 Permatang Pauh, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.

²Academy of Language Studies,
UiTM Cawangan Terengganu Kampus Dungun,
23000 Sura Hujung, Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia.

³Academy of Language Studies,
UiTM Cawangan Terengganu Kampus Dungun,
23000 Sura Hujung, Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia.

⁴Faculty of Electrical Engineering,
UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang Kampus Permatang Pauh,
13500 Permatang Pauh, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.

*Corresponding author's email: aileen@uitm.edu.my

Abstract

The objectives of this mixed method study were to determine challenges that students faced in open distance learning (ODL), and to find out their practices for handling the challenges. While blended learning has been fully integrated at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) since 2011, the spread of COVID-19 worldwide including Malaysia meant that all UiTM students had to complete the rest of the semester fully online, regardless of their readiness level. Data was gathered through an online questionnaire survey from 188 students and an interview was carried out with 19 semester two students at UiTM Terengganu. Multiple response set and thematic analysis were used to analyse the data. The results indicated that students experience issues with lecturers, family, personal problems, classmates, technical problems, class requirements and home environment. Although many previous studies have found that poor internet connection to be the biggest challenge of online learning among students, the results of this study indicated that personal issues are of a greater concern among the students. Further analyses of the interview responses showed that students' biggest challenges were related to lack of time management skills, have a poor internet connection and face a noisy home environment.

Keywords: challenges, coping strategies, MCO, ODL, online learning

Abstrak

Objektif kajian kaedah campuran ini adalah untuk menentukan cabaran yang dihadapi pelajar dalam pembelajaran jarak jauh (ODL), dan untuk mengetahui amalan mereka dalam menangani cabaran tersebut. Walaupun pembelajaran berasaskan internet telah dilaksanakan sepenuhnya di Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) sejak 2011, penyebaran COVID-19 di seluruh dunia termasuk Malaysia bermaksud semua pelajar UiTM harus menyelesaikan baki semester sepenuhnya dalam talian, tanpa mengira tahap kesediaan mereka. Data dikumpulkan melalui tinjauan soal selidik dalam talian daripada 188 pelajar dan temu bual dilakukan dengan 19 pelajar semester dua di UiTM Terengganu. Analisis tematik digunakan

untuk menganalisis data. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar mengalami masalah dengan pensyarah, keluarga, masalah peribadi, rakan sekelas, masalah teknikal, keperluan kelas dan persekitaran rumah. Walaupun banyak kajian terdahulu mendapati bahawa sambungan internet yang kurang memuaskan menjadi cabaran terbesar pembelajaran dalam talian di kalangan pelajar, hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa masalah peribadi menjadi cabaran yang lebih besar di kalangan pelajar. Analisis lebih lanjut mengenai respons wawancara menunjukkan bahawa cabaran terbesar pelajar adalah berkaitan dengan kekurangan kemahiran mengurus masa, mempunyai sambungan internet yang teruk dan menghadapi persekitaran rumah yang bising.

Kata kunci: *cabaran, strategi mengatasi, MCO, ODL, pembelajaran dalam talian*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The hit of COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected not only the lives of workers, and companies but also has simultaneously given massive impact to students, teachers, and learning institutions; schools and universities. The social distancing imposed has abruptly changed the learning environment where technology has been resorted to get teaching and learning to take place. Many studies have been conducted on students' readiness for online learning and it was found that students are moderately ready to have electronic learning at their respective universities (Adams, Bambang, Ahmed & Nur Syafika, 2018). Students have fewer barriers for social interaction, administrative/instructor issues, learner motivation, and time and support for studies when they have the highest comfort and confidence in using technology (Lin & Zane, 2005). In addition, Bao (2020) analysed Chinese university students' responses in social media and discovered that technical operational obstacles are not the main problem but lack of a good learning attitude, self discipline, suitable learning material and good home environments are the real obstacles when they are isolated at home. Being isolated at home has consequently given more stress to students (Dita & Nuzulul, 2020). Lai (2012) found that open distance learning requires the learners to have greater self-motivation, commitment and persistence compared to face-to-face mode of learning especially during this pandemic.

Most countries around the world have imposed tight restrictions on movement to halt the spread of this deadly virus, which forces many schools and universities to continue their lessons online. Nearly 5 million school students and over a million tertiary students in Malaysia were affected due to the closure of schools and universities. The implementation of MCO in Malaysia starting 18th March 2020, has forced both lecturers and students of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) to complete the rest of the semester fully online. According to Universiti Teknologi MARA (2020), the learning materials for the students have to be prepared digitally and then uploaded into various online platforms for the teaching and learning process. Implementation of the full online learning began on 13 April 2020 and all academic faculty and students have to go through 10 weeks of open and distance learning (ODL) Throughout the ODL semester, most of the students were at their respective hometowns. The classes and assessments were conducted using various online learning platforms such as UFuture, Google Classroom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, Telegram, Kaizala and many more, depending on the nature of the classes that they are required to learn and the availability of learning resources for both lecturers and students. These platforms offer synchronous and asynchronous learning, where the former offers more engaging discussions and human contact experience when the learning is technology problem-free and strong support provided by the facilitators or instructors (Farooq & Mattesan (2016).

Implementation of ODL at UiTM is a colossal change for everyone involved because the fully online learning mode was unprecedented, even when the students

have been exposed to blended learning; asynchronous learning, in the previous semesters. Due to the shift of the class mode and assessments, this study aims to identify the challenges faced by the students during online learning class and to determine their best practices in coping with the challenges of having ODL. The study addresses the following research questions:

- a) Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are the challenges faced by students during open and distance learning?
- b) Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are students' best practices to deal with the challenges of open and distance learning?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Challenges Faced in ODL

Lin and Zane (2005) have found eight factors that contribute to the students barriers in online learning. The factors are (a) administrative issues, (b) social interaction, (c) academic skills, (d) technical skills, (e) learner motivation, (f) time and support for studies, (g) cost and access to the Internet, and (h) technical problems. Rozana (2020) has reported the interview done by Higher ED in The News Straits Times, where students raised some concerns in doing online learning, such as internet stability, and students' ethics when sitting for tests or quizzes as there is nothing stopping them. However, there is also positive feedback in using online learning because of the plethora of mediums used in conducting the lectures, tests and assignments make the learning fun.

Osman (2015) has conducted a self-directed learning readiness assessment on a group of university students in UKM where the findings showed that low coverage of the internet has contributed to the low percentage of students' participation. This is supported by Henaku (2020) where he interviewed college students who did the class online and the findings revealed that online learning is a good move and initiative to ensure the learning gets done. Nonetheless, the problem with the internet has made the experience bad especially when the connectivity is bad plus it is costly (Dita & Nuzulul, 2020). These findings are similar to the one conducted by Mallillin, Carag, Mallillin and Laurel (2020), where a quantitative and qualitative research done on Higher Education Institute students showed that poor internet connection and devices have caused destruction of learning while the students are still in the crisis of adapting to the change of classroom setting from traditional to online.

Mallillin et al. (2020) found that poor quality video and audio through online learning hinders the learning process and feeling upset due to unstable emotion will cause one to experience negative feelings and lead to feeling unmotivated (Dita & Nuzulul, 2020). Comparing undergraduates' opinions and performance, Kemp and Grieve (2014) discovered that students preferred to have face to face rather than online lessons even though there are no significant differences in these two modalities. The students reported that having face to face discussion made them feel more engaged and they also received immediate feedback. This is similar to one study done Aboagye, Yawson and Appiah (2020) which they have identified the challenges faced by students of tertiary institutions in Ghana in doing online learning whereby two significant challenges are found to be social and lecturer issues.

Not only cautious about one's performance and readability, Ahmad and Majid (2010) highlighted the fact that students' level of readiness and development of selfdirected learning are influenced by culture especially among Malays. To add, the environment especially the family and society - when the students are staying at home due to MCO, is the key factor that nurture the students' readiness and self directed learning. This is supported by Bao (2020) who mentioned being isolated

during MCO has obstructed learning among students to take place and it is not merely due to technical issues. A study which interviewed college students found that participating in house chores such as cooking for the family and looking after the younger siblings, has given negative effects on the students' academic performance especially when they are at home to do online learning (Henaku, 2020; Mallillin et. al., 2020). Not being able to cope with circumstances in domestic lives, in work lives and lack of experience in studying are the main problems raised by 33 full time adult learners in doing online learning (Ostlund, 2005). Apart from housechores, another study done by Mustafa and Al-Hamadi (2016) showed that noisy learning environment yields negative effects on students' academic performance which is similar to the situation of overcrowding in classrooms.

2.2 Best Practices to Cope with ODL Difficulties by the Students

Previous literature indicated that many measures have been employed by learners to get themselves acquainted with the ODL challenges that they were facing. Hatmanto and Purwanti (2019) for instance, conducted a study on the challenges in implementing e-learning in the language education context found that in order to cope with online learning issues, their respondents implemented a few personal strategies like setting and managing their goals, managing self and time wisely for the online classes as well as evaluating themselves to adapt to the online environment. This finding is supported by Amadi and Orijji (2017) where they mentioned that online learning requires learners to have good self discipline to avoid procrastination and hold ample time management skills. They further added that since the learners are responsible for their own learning, being able to communicate effectively with their classmates and lecturers are crucial to be done throughout the online learning activity.

In dealing with anxiety in online learning, several strategies were adopted by the learners. For instance, Hilliard, Kear, Donelan and Heaney (2020) revealed that students who experienced anxiety in an assessed, online, collaborative project employed and problem-focused coping strategies experienced facilitative effects rather than those who employed avoidance strategies. This finding validated a paper review done by Kimotho (2018) on coping strategies used by male and female students in which he found that students manage their stresses differently in ODL. Some students adopted positive strategies in their ODL journey such as by looking out for support from others and doing leisure activities, while some resorted to negative strategies such as avoiding or escaping themselves from ODL.

Despite of many concerns placed on the internet issues in the previous literature, it is found that students managed to overcome the issue very well. For instance, Hatmanto and Purwanti (2019) found that their respondents sought for places with faster internet connection in the campus or relied on their friends' connections. Likewise, a study conducted by Nuhu, Owononi, Adedokun-Shittu and Shittu (2018), also found that in order to participate in online learning, their respondents reserved their internet subscription for their online studying only and stayed at the centre to access stable internet during exam period and for activities that require intensive network. They further added that students also searched for affordable internet service provider for their online learning activity. This shows that despite the fact that some students are experiencing technology and internet issues during their ODL, they still managed to overcome the obstacles.

A conducive learning environment is needed, hence, dealing with unnecessary disturbance help the learners to focus on their learning goals. Ekanem, Apebende, Ekefre, and Campus (2011) investigated the implications for counselling towards learning environment and pupils' academic performance and they concluded that some illiterate family members would be demanding in asking their

children to help them with labours and chores, thus, they needed to be advised by the counsellor regarding the children's need in learning. Similarly, a study conducted by Ndenje (2015) on secondary school students experiences of doing homework in home environment revealed that the home is not a conducive environment to study, therefore suggestions such as parents providing basic furniture to the students to study at home, providing support and students to have a well defined schedule to study privately without being disturbed were given. Ganga, Chinyoka and Mugweni (2018) in their study on the effects of parental schooling and family size on the academic performance of the adolescent learner found that parenting styles which include noisy siblings caused the students to have low cognitive achievements. Therefore, they emphasized on the importance of providing a positive home environment by the parents to boost their children's learning capabilities.

While much is known about online learning and its challenges such as unstable internet connection, unmotivated feeling and dissatisfaction from the students, there is still a lack of literature on practices or strategies used in coping with the barriers in online learning especially from the students. Thus, there is a need for a study to investigate what are the difficulties that the students face while having online learning as well identifying the best practices they have used to cope with the challenges during ODL.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed method approach, whereby both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. Convenience sampling was done by choosing the respondents based on the researcher's convenience and the availability of the respondents. A set of questionnaire was employed and distributed via Google Form while structured interviews were also conducted online.

The self-constructed questionnaire consists of five sections: (1) E-mail address, (2) Personal Information, (3) Personal Devices and Internet Connectivity, (4) Online Learning Challenges and (5) Preference of Online Learning Tools. The data collection was carried out in July and August 2020. With the purpose of identifying the challenges faced by students during online learning class (RQ1), section (4) of the questionnaire which consists of two questions were analysed. Question 12 requires students to choose from a list of challenges faced during their online learning. A total of 681 responses were recorded from 188 participants and analysed using Multiple Response Set in IBM SPSS Statistics Tool (SPSS). Question 13 probes more specifically the challenges the students faced that were not given in the list in the previous question and 108 responses were recorded. Next, responses from Question 12 and 13 were coded and sorted into themes. The coded themes were then validated by an expert person. The inter rater reliability method is used to re-check the codings and themes of the data to ensure reliability in the coding of the responses from the questionnaire. The inter rater chosen was an English lecturer with more than 15 years of teaching experience. A Cohen's Kappa reliability of 0.938 was recorded for this pilot study.

In the beginning, to determine the best practices in facing ODL challenges (RQ2), Question 11 (How did you overcome your Internet access problem (if you have one)?) was to be analysed. However it was later found that Question 11 is very limited in scope as it answers only how students overcome their Internet access problem. Questions 12 (What challenges did you face in doing your online classes?) and 13 (What other challenges did you face that were not mentioned in question 12?) had uncovered much more challenges faced by students than initially thought by the researchers. Therefore, to better answer RQ2, interview questions were created based

on the responses received for Questions 12 and 13 as the interview responses would give a richer and more accurate picture of how the students actually faced their ODL challenges. The responses were then coded in MS Excel, sorted into themes and validated by an expert person.

3.2 Participants

A total of 188 students who had taken ELC151 (Integrated Language Skills II) subject in UiTM Cawangan Terengganu were involved in this particular study. The participants, consisting of students from various faculties of applied sciences and humanities in UiTM Cawangan Terengganu, were chosen as they contributed to the largest number of students taking the same subject and involved in ODL classes throughout the March - July 2020 semester.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study is to identify challenges faced by students during their fully ODL semester and to gather their practices in overcoming those challenges. The analysis and discussion in this section will focus on answering the research questions.

4.1 RQ1: What are the Challenges Faced by the Students during Open and Distance Learning?

Table 1 shows the multi-response set analysis using SPSS. A total of 681 responses were gathered from 188 respondents for the ten challenges pre-listed in Question 12 (What challenges did you face in doing your online classes?). Teamwork or inability to work with classmates proved to be the biggest challenge in ODL at 13.5%. The other two main challenges selected by students were time management at 13.4% and house chores at 13.2%. Referring to the table again, the percent of cases column demonstrates that about half of the respondents selected teamwork, time management and house chores as the biggest challenges in ODL at 48.9%, 48.4% and 47.9% respectively.

Table 1: Multiple-Response Frequencies for Challenges Faced by Students during Online Distance Learning

Students Challenges Frequencies				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Student Challenges	Connectivity	76	11.20%	40.40%
	Time management	91	13.40%	48.40%
	Lecturer	32	4.70%	17.00%
	Teamwork	92	13.50%	48.90%
	Amount of task	83	12.20%	44.10%
	Limited time	65	9.50%	34.60%
	Family support	41	6.00%	21.80%
	House chores	90	13.20%	47.90%
	Unfamiliar with apps	62	9.10%	33.00%
	Outdated gadgets	49	7.20%	26.10%
Total		681	100.00%	362.20%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

From the 681 responses, six common themes emerged and they are presented in Table 2 below. Challenges related to students' own personal issues such as time management, health, motivation and adaptability to online learning topped the list

at 218 responses in total. Technical issues (141) and family issues (131) are the other two main challenges that concerned the students.

Table 2: Themes Emerging from Responses to Question 12 and Frequency of Responses

Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Lecturer issues (e.g. scheduling, communication)	32	4.69%
Family issues (e.g. less family time, (family) health problem, financial problem, siblings, chores)	131	19.24%
Personal issues (e.g. time management, health, motivation, adaptability to online learning)	218	32.01%
Classmates' issues (e.g. limited teamwork, communication problem)	76	11.16%
Technical issues (e.g. poor internet connection, device problems)	141	20.70%
Class requirement issues (e.g. due date, tasks, notes)	83	12.19%

108 responses were received for Question 13 (What other challenges did you face that were not mentioned in Question 12). The analysis revealed that apart from the six themes shown before, a new theme, 'Disruptive home environment', was uncovered as shown in Table 3 below. Challenges related to personal issues was still the biggest concern at a frequency of 31 responses, followed by technical issues with 27 responses and the third highest challenge faced by students in online distance learning was 'Disruptive home environment' with 22 responses gathered. Therefore, the combined analysed responses for both Questions 12 and 13 highlighted seven common themes of challenges faced by the students.

Table 3: Themes Emerging from Responses to Question 13 and Frequency of Responses

Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Lecturer issues (e.g. scheduling, communication)	5	4.63%
Family issues (e.g. less family time, (family) health problem, financial problem, siblings, chores)	11	10.19%
Personal issues (e.g. time management, health, motivation, adaptability to online learning)	31	28.70%
Classmates' issues (e.g. limited teamwork, communication problem)	6	5.56%
Technical issues (e.g. poor internet connection, device problems)	27	25.00%
Class requirement issues (e.g. due date, tasks, notes)	6	5.56%
Disruptive home environment (e.g. noisy, space)	22	20.37%

Having an open-ended question like Question 13 has uncovered that challenges in ODL are not just specific to technical issues like internet connection stability but also the respondents' personal issues and the environment they are in. In fact, this study has shown that respondents' face greater challenges related to personal issues than technical issues. The respondents have cited lacking time management skills, needing good health and motivation to pursue online learning and not having the skills needed to adapt to online learning as their main concerns. According to Schunk (2005), self-regulated learning skills which reinforce students' online learning achievement differences include time management and task strategies. Yen (2016) explained that time management includes allocation, schedule and distribution of time for studying while task strategies include activities like note taking, reading aloud, formulating questions and engaging in extra work. Barnard-Brak et al. (2010) stated that students with more developed self-regulated learning skills have more positive outcomes compared to their peers who do not show self-regulated learning skills in online learning environments. These studies show that lacking the skills to be independent learners could affect the students' achievements

in ODL. In addition, Adnan and Anwar (2020) reported that the general pattern of their research findings suggests that learners who experienced sudden change to a synchronous online learning format described it as a negative experience where a vast majority of their respondents disagreed to the statement that online learning is more motivating than conventional learning.

Technical issues which cover both internet connectivity and device problems, while ranked second in this study, still remain one the respondents' greatest concern in ODL. This result supported the research findings of Henaku (2020), Mallillin et al (2020) and Osman (2015). Most respondents reported that they do not have good internet coverage at home and they would face difficulties to join online classes if the lecturers were to use platforms like Zoom or Google Meet. The benefits of the different platforms would be rendered impractical if the students could not actually even access them.

Disruption at home that bothered the respondents the most was noise as it affected their ability to focus on the lesson as well as completing assignments which involved having videos or audios recorded and submitted. Mallillin et al (2020) stated that being unable to concentrate on the lesson will affect the students as programs or applications used in online classes feature heavily on attributes like audio, video clips or slides.

4.2 RQ2: Which are the Best Practices to Cope with the Challenges of having Open and Distance Learning?

In this section, the analysis and discussion will be conducted based on the top three themes emerging from responses to Question 13 (refer Table 3 in previous section). The top three themes are personal issues, technical issues and disruptive home environment. The frequency analyses for the three themes are shown in Table 4, 5 and 6.

Table 4 displays the sub-themes found within Personal Issues. Time management is the highest ranked personal issue faced by the respondents at 32.65%.

Table 4: Sub-themes of Personal Issues

Sub-Themes of Personal Issues	Frequency	Percentage
Time management	16	32.65%
Health	13	26.53%
Motivation	13	26.53%
Adaptability to online learning	7	14.29%

Time management was a critical issue for the students having had to do ODL at home as a student admitted that:

"Time management at the beginning of ODL is really hard because I have to divide my time as a daughter and student at the same time. However I have benefited the time during MCO to improve my time management skill so that if ODL is continued next semester, I can manage my time more effectively." (R10)

Table 4a shows the practices that the respondents had carried out in order to overcome their time management problem. The majority of them believed that creating a study schedule was the best way to manage their time effectively (44%).

Table 4a: Practices for Overcoming Time Management Issue during ODL

Practices for Time Management	Frequency	Percentage
Set reminder/alarm	6	38%
Create a study schedule	7	44%
Create a to-do list	3	19%

At least two respondents declared that it is important not to mix academic with other areas of their lives as explained below:

"I try not to mix my personal stuff with my classes if it is not an emergency" (R5)

"Time management is very important because you can't mix your studies with other things since you are a student so your studies is your first priorities and other unimportant things I always put aside."(R10)

Time management for some students was an acquired practice, especially being at home, where the environment is not necessarily conducive for studying:

"The personal issue that I have is whenever I'm at home, I tend to sleep really late and wake up late too. There were several occasions where I was late when attending class. At first online class was really hard for me but as time pass by, I adapted and now I'm quite comfortable with online class." (R13)

Table 5 displays the sub-themes found within Technical Issues. The main technical issue respondents implied they had was poor internet connection (68.75%).

Table 5: Sub-themes of Technical Issues Challenge

Sub-Themes of Technical Issues	Frequency	Total
Poor internet connection	33	68.75%
Device issues	15	31.25%

A respondent said that internet instability has stopped her from joining online classes:

"When poor Internet connection because of rain like in Selangor, Kelantan, Terengganu happens, all of us will inform the lecturer and reschedule the time and date." (R4)

Respondent no.8 said that poor internet connection also occurs in urban areas:

"Internet problem will happen even when I am in the city so I will try to find a place where there is faster connection."

Meanwhile, respondent no. 12 admitted that poor internet connectivity would be made worse if it was from the lecturer's side as it would affect everyone:

"Internet connection is very weak especially when it rains and makes it hard for me to join online class when the lecturer uses Zoom or Meet. Her video would be stuck so I couldn't understand what she was saying. This matter will be worse if the internet problem comes from the lecturer because not only me, but the whole class will not understand the topic for that day."

Table 5a displays the list of responses of practices conducted to overcome the setback in internet connection. Finding a place with good coverage and changing to another mobile data plan are the top two practices tied at 24.24% each.

Table 5a: Practices for Overcoming Poor Internet Connection during ODL

Practices for Poor Internet Connection	Frequency	Total
Find a place with good coverage	8	24.24%
Use family's hotspot/device	6	18.18%
Change to another data plan	8	24.24%
Inform lecturer	5	15.15%
Pull out from class that day	1	3.03%
Ask friends questions about missed classes	1	3.03%
Make notes from notes given in WhatsApp	1	3.03%
Study during off-peak hours	1	3.03%
Request recording of lessons	2	6.06%

Evidently finding a place with good coverage does not just involve moving around the house but require the respondents to actually travel to another place outside of their homes. A few respondents confirmed this by saying:

"I need to go to my aunt office for the Internet when I have Typing Speed Test." (R3)

"Sometimes when I had a problem due poor internet connection, I will find another place to study or to join the class like going to my friend's house because it's near to the Telecom so the internet connection is good." (R9)

Another practice carried out by the respondents is by changing their data plan. Respondent no. 17 stated that:

"Poor internet connection always happens when I was doing assignments. I overcame this problem by changing to another number, from U Mobile to Celcom. This is because internet connection for U Mobile in my area is so weak, so I changed to the better one and got the unlimited plan. Celcom in my area is better than U Mobile."

Table 6 shows the sub-themes found within the Disruptive Home Environment theme. More than half of the respondents have a problem with noisy surroundings (52.83%).

Table 6: Sub-themes of Disruptive Home Environment

Sub-themes	Frequency	Percentage
No suitable space	25	47.17%
Noisy surroundings	28	52.83%

A few respondents asserted that noisy surroundings have affected their studies:

"I have a neighbor who likes to be noisy in the evening. So I like to complete all my assignments in the morning and at night." (R6)

"Noisy environment is very disturbing me to study or to record videos for my assignment so I like to overcome this problem by searching for a peaceful place with no noise disturbance like sitting in the room or wearing earphones." (R9)

Table 6a lists the practices carried out by respondents in order to resolve noisy surroundings problem during ODL. The highest ranked respondents' practice was asking for their family's understanding (37%).

Table 6a: Practices for Overcoming Noisy Surroundings during ODL

Practices Noisy Surroundings	Frequency	Percentage
Ask for family's understanding	10	37%
Study/Complete tasks during a quiet time	8	30%
Wear earphone/headphone to cancel out noise	8	30%
Discuss with lecturer to relax class requirements	1	4%

A few respondents indicated that they told their family of their schedule in advance to avoid any noise disturbances:

"I needed to tell my parents and my family about my classes and gave them my schedule so that they would know when my classes started." (R15)

"I will remind my siblings in advanced not to bother me while I'm doing assignments." (R16)

Making and sticking to a schedule enabled the respondents to manage their lives more effectively during the ODL. This is because being at home was certainly a different environment from being on campus. Other than that, setting reminders or alarms while cooperating with their classmates had helped them to be more punctual for online classes or other tasks. The strategies employed by the respondents were very similar to those in Hatmanto and Purwanti's (2019) study. In their study, the students applied personal strategies such as setting and managing goals as well as managing themselves and time wisely for their online classes. In addition, Amadi and Orij (2017) affirmed that good self-discipline and time management skills are required for the students to be more efficient in their online learning.

Several studies (Osman, 2015; Henaku, 2020; Rozana, 2020) have reported that one of students' biggest concerns for online learning is internet stability. This is no different from this study where the internet instability is ranked as one of the biggest challenges. The interview responses have shown that in the effort of overcoming this particular challenge, the respondents had to invest some money in certain ways. For example, a few respondents stated that they needed to travel in order to access better internet coverage during the semester which could only be possibly done when the Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) was implemented beginning 4th May 2020. It is tough to think of the pressure the respondents were under prior to that period where they were not able to get out of their homes at all. While private telecommunication corporations such as Celcom, Digi, Maxis, UMobile and others have offered a free 1GB broadband data every day starting 1st April 2020 to enable students to participate in online learning (The Star, March 2020), the respondents have admitted that the free data was still not enough for them to join in ODL.

The respondents have learned to adapt to overcome their noisy surroundings but most of all, family support is seen to be vital in allowing the respondents to focus during their online classes or tests. Family members need to be empathetic especially since the bulk of the ODL was conducted during MCO, in which respondents were confined to within the same shared spaces with other family members throughout the day.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The study first set out with a limited perception of what students might face during their ODL and eventually uncovered much more unexpected challenges from the students' perspective. While technical issues have remained one of the leading challenges in ODL as proven by previous researches, this study has uncovered that students have other bigger issues other than just internet stability such as their time management skills and their respective home environments. This result is quite distinctive as the participants involved in the study were in the midst of a historical event in which they had to pursue the bulk of their ODL fully from home due to the Movement Control Order, regardless of their readiness level for online learning.

An effective study schedule is vital in order for students to organise their daily lives especially when the line between their family and study time are consistently blurred during the MCO. Universities could perhaps provide some training to all students in time management skills at the beginning of the semester. This effort can hopefully assist students to be more successful in their academics. Secondly, poor internet connectivity is an issue that needs to be addressed by both the public and private sectors. Even though UiTM has allowed students who have internet connection problems to move back to the hostels for better internet connection, the campuses' internet connectivity is still not desirable for a conducive online learning environment. It will be a costly and time-consuming effort to ensure better connectivity for all and the question remains, would equal access to online education for all remain a utopian dream? Finally, family's understanding and support should be encouraged to scaffold students' online learning capabilities. Family members could be made more aware of the importance of their roles in empowering their children's education.

In essence, this study has shed some light into the challenges faced during ODL by UiTM Terengganu students and the strategies they employed to handle those challenges. In the future, further investigations could be carried out to compare ODL challenges between students from different genders, faculties and even geographical locations. Future studies could also look into a comparison of academic performance of students who used different modes of learning environment. The results of these studies hopefully could contribute to the planning and execution of ODL at tertiary educations and curtail challenges to ensure more effective online education for all undergraduates.

6.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research team would like to express their heartfelt thanks to Wan Najmiyyah Wan Md Adnan for her insight and assistance as the expert person in validating our thematic analysis.

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