

Uncovering Students' Perception of Online Learning: A Case of EFL Undergraduate Students

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Abstract. Online learning practices have gained much attention recently not only as a result of the developments in network technologies, but also due to the Covid-19 pandemic. While there have been many up-to-date studies examining the students' perception of online learning, there remains a need to examine it in a context of higher education students whose internet access in region is still limited. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to uncover the students' perception of online learning through quantitative research design. There were 226 students who participated in this study and responded to a five-Likert scale questions on their perceptions of online learning. Having computed and analyzed statistically the responses, the findings of this study reveal various perceptions of undergraduate students of online learning. In light of the finding of the present study, some pedagogical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Student's perception; online learning; technology

1 Introduction

Since the Covid-19 pandemic emerged in late 2019 and its spread instigated in early 2020 to all over the globe, it has brought tremendously significant shifts in higher education. The abrupt shift from in person contexts to remote learning has a huge impact in the way traditional higher education institutions deliver their courses to the students. Since then, there has been much attention gained to online learning recently due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Online learning has become a wide-spread practice in education sector since the spread of the COVID-19 began to occur globally. The pandemic compels the schools and higher education to make some necessary changes or adjustments to their teaching and learning process. The transition from the conventional teaching setting or face-to-face to the online learning is indispensable. Schools and educational institutions need to be aware of technological tools to facilitate their teaching and learning experience.

The integration of technology in education has been highlighted by some experts. The implementation of online learning in higher education is perceived to be beneficial on account of its low costs and flexible accessibility of education [1], e-learning courses enhance not only in terms of information sharing but also in terms of teacher feedback [2], improve and enhance the comprehension of the course content [3], gives ESL learners the sense of freedom, motivation, and encouragement they need for learning process [4], allows students to evaluate their course progress and instructional needs, leading to positive students' perceived learning outcomes [5].

Despite of all the promises of technology integration in the classroom, there are some points that need to be paid attention to by the teachers or lecturers. In order the integration of technology implemented effectively in teaching it requires commitment and adequate resources [6], must be highly authentic, interactive, and collaborative [7], and learning process must be students centered [8]. Therefore, when designing online class, the teachers and the lecturers need to bear in mind about the internet access to learning materials, the interaction with content, instructors and other students in order to gain knowledge and experience [9] and there is an interplay of five related factors of online learning processes, learners, teachers' prior exposure to online learning, technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and the support system against five levels of engagement [10].

There have been numerous studies concerning online learning. Rojabi [11], Kashoob & Attamimi [12] discovered that online learning motivates students and leads to easy comprehension of learning materials, enhances student engagement and satisfaction in online classes [13] and increases students' academic performance [14]. However, some studies have stressed that students' acceptance of the online learning environment has no impact on the use of the learning environment [1], a lot of potential uncertainty surrounding communication and interaction of online mode, as well as challenges for creating authentic connections [15].

The change from face-to-face teaching and learning process seems to be unplanned. As a matter of fact, many schools and higher education institutions opt for online learning voluntarily either by the teaching staffs or obligated to do so due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, studies on how this sudden shift impact on students learning have been dearth. It has been little knowledge known to us about the perception of students of their experiences and beliefs on online learning. Therefore, the present study explores the undergraduate students' perceptions of online learning at Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng. The question underpins this study is how do students perceive their online learning experience during the Covid-19 pandemic?

2 Method

The present study applied descriptive exploratory study design by using survey in order to uncover the students' perception of online learning. Applying purposive sampling, there were 226 students who participated in this study and completed the survey. The data collected in this study was gathered from the students through the questionnaire which was distributed via Google form. The questionnaire was composed of two parts. The first part was about the demographic information of the respondents, the second part was about capturing students' online learning perception. Designed based on a five-Likert scale ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree, this questionnaire was formerly developed by and adopted from [16]. The data was computed and analyzed statistically in order to identify the frequency and the percentage of students' perception of their online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

3 Result and Discussion

The results from the survey used to uncover students' perception of their online experience are presented in the table 1 and figure 1 bellow. Table 1 reveals that the total

number of students who responded to the survey of the present study were 226 students. Their responses are varied in number from one item to the other. In addition, in order to know the students' perception of online learning the data are presented in the form of percentage as revealed on figure 1 below:

Table 1. The Number of Students Who Responded to The Survey on Online Learning

| Criteria | Frequency | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Item 1 | Item 2 | Item 3 | Item 4 | Item 5 | Item 6 | Item 7 | Item 8 |
| Strongly Disagree | 54 | 47 | 66 | 36 | 81 | 37 | 40 | 48 |
| Disagree | 43 | 38 | 41 | 32 | 48 | 37 | 38 | 38 |
| Neutral | 46 | 66 | 34 | 47 | 38 | 47 | 44 | 44 |
| Agree | 48 | 43 | 42 | 59 | 33 | 56 | 56 | 44 |
| Strongly Agree | 35 | 32 | 43 | 52 | 26 | 49 | 48 | 52 |
| Total | 226 | 226 | 226 | 226 | 226 | 226 | 226 | 226 |

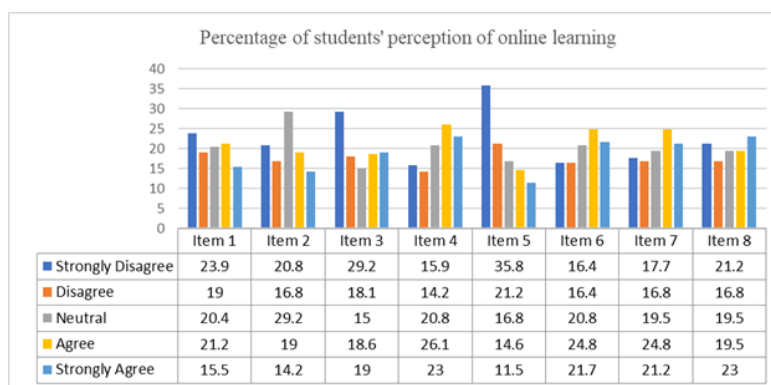


Fig 1. Percentage of Students' Perception of Online Learning

Based on the data presented on table 1 and figure 1 above, it reveals that 97 or 42.9% of the students disagree to the statement taking an online-course involves more time than taking an in-person course, while 20.46 or 20.4% of them choose neither agree nor disagree and 83 or 36.7% of them agree to the statement. Moreover, when the students are asked about their opinion on the statement I have to come to the instructor for help/clarification more frequently during an online course than an in- person course, there are 79 or 37.6% of them disagree, 66 or 29.2% choose neutral and 75 or 33.2 % of them agree to the statement. Another question in the survey was about the comparison of time spent in completing the assignments in an in-person course than an online course. For this statement, there are 107 or 47.3% of the students disagree and 34 or 15% neutral and 85 or 37.6% agree to the statement.

"I spend a lot of time troubleshooting technical issues when taking an online course" was another question asked to the students and there are 68 or 30.1% of the students disagree to the statement, 47 or 20.8% neutral and 111 or 49.1% of them agree. Moreover, the students were also asked their opinion with respect to whether or not they have had any experience on technical issues during online class. From the result of the survey as revealed on table 1 and figure 1 above it can be inferred that 129 or 54% of them disagree, 38 or 16.8% neutral, and 59 or 26.1% of them agree that they have had technical issues during online class. For the statement I am comfortable with the technology required in my online course, there are 74 or

32.5% of them disagree, 47 or 20.8% neutral and 105 or 46.5 agree to the statement. “I have contacted the instructor about the technology issues related to my online course” was another question asked to the students. The number of students who disagree to this statement is 78 or 34.5%, 44 or 19.5% neutral and 104 or 42.5% agree. “Technical issues with this course have been frustrating” was another statement asked to the students. There are 86 or 38% of the students who disagree, 44 or 19.5 neutral, and 96 or 42% agree to the statement.

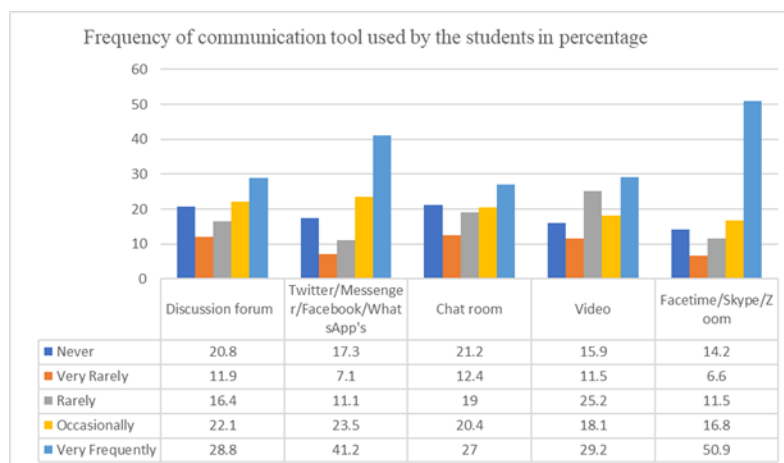


Fig 2: Frequency of Communication Tool Used by The Students

Figure 2 above reveals some data on the frequency of communication tools used by the students. It reveals that the students who use discussion forum ranging from never to very frequently respectively is 20.8%, 11.9%, 16.4%, 22.1% and 28.8%. While the frequency of using social media such as Twitter, Messenger, Facebook and WhatsApp ranging from never to very frequently respectively is 17.3%, 7.1%, 11.1%, 23.5% and 41.2%. Moreover, the use of chat room presents respectively from never to very frequently is 21.2%, 12.4%, 19%, 20.4% and 27%. And the use of video, arranged respectively from never to very frequently is 15.9%, 11.5%, 25.2%, 18.1% and 29.2%. Lastly, the frequency of using Facetime/Skype/Zoom, arranged respectively from never to very frequently, is 14.2%, 6.6%, 11.5%, 16.8% and 50.9%.

The findings of this study reveal that 97 or 42.9% of the students disagree to the statement taking an online-course involves more time than taking an in-person course, while 20.46 or 20.4% of them choose neither agree nor disagree and 83 or 36.7% of them agree to the statement. It can be inferred that most of the students think that only learning does not involve more time when comparing to in-person course or face-to-face learning process. This finding seems to confirm the findings of previous studies. For instance, [1] Larmuseau et al. who investigated the effect of students' acceptance on actual use (i.e., time spent) found a positive impact of perceived usefulness on the quantity of use. [17] Zilka, Cohen & Rahimi discovered that online learning gives the students the sense of more flexibility, comfortability and convenience in terms of time management.

Moreover, Kaufmann and Vallade [15] have highlighted that the most unembellished differences of online learning from face-to-face setting are time and space. These two points need to be carefully taken into consideration when designing online learning since it may potentially impact the overall communication processes and elements that instructors and

students use in these particular contexts. The thought offered by [18] might be beneficial reminder for the teachers when designing online learning. He said that teaching online might be difficult due to time lags, engaging students naturally in turn-taking and limited gestures and body movement to support comprehensible input. In other words, this finding requires new skills and talents from the teachers or lecturers to adapt in order to conduct online learning effectively and bring impacts to students' learning experience and gain knowledge.

Another interesting finding of this study is related to the troubleshooting technical issues when taking online course. Most of the students (111 or 49.1%) have had technical issues when taking online class. This finding is in line with some previous studies which discovered similar issues experienced by the learners during learning online such as [14] and [16]. These technical issues might also affect the emotions of the students in the present study since most of the students (96 or 42%) find frustrated in online learning.

Another finding of this study revealed that mostly the students frequently use Discussion forum, Messenger/twitter/Facebook/WhatsApp, Chat room, Video and Facetime/Skype/Zoom may due to their online learning experience in daily bases with their lectures. The reason of high percentage of students' preference might be well explained by [19] who discovered in their study that students preferred due to facility for knowledge sharing and construction, interactivity, usability, respect for privacy and instant communication.

5 Conclusion

As far as the findings of the present study are concerned, the researchers are completely convinced that this study provides useful information for the instructors when designing online learning in their respective schools or institutions. It is because this study brings some insights about the online learning viewed from the students' perception and experience. Therefore, some pedagogical implications need to be paid attention by the instructors in order the bring meaningful impacts on students' learning. In addition, in this study the researchers applied survey method and questionnaire as an instrument in order to gather the data from the respondents. Therefore, applying qualitative method and interview or FGD as data collection method are advised in order to deepen and widen the knowledge on online learning.

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