CHALLENGES OF E-LEARNING FOR STUDENTS IN AKADEMI LAUT MALAYSIA (ALAM)

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ABSTRACT

The novel coronavirus identified as Covid-19 disease affected the education sector at the end of 2019. The disease has significantly impacted the education sector, especially the students and educators. The students must sacrifice to adapt to the new norms to continue online learning (E-Learning) instead of face-to-face learning. This disease directly impacts the educational system, such as institutional, informal, and non-formal education, closed face-to-face learning progress, and requires a shift towards online learning. The main objective of this research paper is to analyse the students' challenges and responses during online learning. This questionnaire was given to 40 students of Akademi Laut Malaysia (ALAM) in the cohort/batch of DME 41 and DNS 27. The results of this research explain that most students faced the challenges of connectivity issues and distractions from family members. The challenges significantly impact their studies, where the students find it difficult to focus in class. Based on the data, ALAM students have an average understanding of online learning. Some of them immensely enjoyed online learning.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to Huang et al. (2020), in the previous year of 2019, a new virus known as Covid-19 was discovered in a seafood market in Wuhan. The clinical investigation of the virus indicated that it passed from person to person. Li et al., (2020) and Paules et al. (2020) refer to a pandemic as "a disease epidemic that spreads over a large geographic area and affects a disproportionately large proportion of the population". This situation directly affects the educational system, where institutional, informal, and non-formal education has abandoned face-to-face learning in favour of online learning (E-Learning). The transition from face-to-face to online learning presents several challenges for instructors, especially when it occurs without any warning. Educators have used online channels to reach out to kids, webinars have acted as temporary classrooms, parents have been pushed to watch children at home, and students have been denied social connection with their classmates (Elsa R. et al., 2020).

The government's call to fight Covid-19 collaboratively by avoiding complex activities, social distancing, and psychological distancing, limiting leaving the house through work from home (WFH), and optimising activities that can be carried out remotely through the online system has had a significant impact on the educational system (Carducci et al., 2020). However, making the switch from traditional classroom instruction to online learning may be challenging (Mailizar et al., 2020). The Ministry of Education encouraged all institutions to switch to online classrooms to continue the education process. Unfortunately, the government should have been more flexible in adopting this scheme without first determining whether or not the lecturers were prepared. Similar conditions occurred in other nations (Almaiah et al., 2020).

The term "online learning" refers to using the World Wide Web and other key technological developments to develop and distribute course materials, conduct instruction, and administer educational programmes. There are two forms of online learning, asynchronous and synchronous online learning, which are compared extensively. However, for online learning to be effective and efficient, instructors, organisations, and institutions must be thoroughly aware of its benefits and drawbacks (Naemah et al., 2022).

The advent of online courses requires a considerable change in the communication patterns between lecturers and students, summative evaluations, and material delivery. One major issue was that few professors were qualified to teach online courses, especially those entirely online. (Reyes et al., 2020). On the other hand, E-learning was predicted to positively impact motivation, independence, and student engagement (Moreno et al., 2020). Mailizar et al., (2020), concluded that students' voices are important in this debate. Therefore, this study aims to examine students' thoughts and opinions on online learning during an outbreak.

Insufficient access, a lack of internet accessibility, a lack of technology and students' capacity to engage in digital learning, as well as a lack of an appropriate connection with instructors are just a few of the challenges that Zhong (2020) claims have had a significant impact on the implementation of online learning. Virtual classrooms will not appeal to those who learn best via physical interaction, and the absence of traditional classroom interactions is a critical component of online learning. Real-time exchange of ideas, knowledge, and information is constrained in the virtual learning environment since students can only communicate with their classmates digitally and not physically see them (Claudiu Coman et al., 2020).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to the pandemic, educational institution needs to be done in e-learning. Educators need to change their style of learning from physical classes to e-classroom. One of the challenges educators face is understanding students' learning styles during online classes. This is because each student has a preference for learning. Some prefer to learn using visual presentations, listening to instructions and writing notes (Islam et al., 2015). Academicians need to be expert and competent in their knowledge and be concerned with student learning styles so that educators can deliver their subject according to student learning styles. Educators are expected to recognise a variety of learning styles to help the students in their e-learning (Gopal et al., 2020). Educators must be familiar with the technology to have a successful learning experience. When educators have been trained to enhance their ICT skills to make meaningful e-learning, it can motivate and encourage the educators toward the positive outcomes of e-learning technology (Islam et al., 2015).

Time management is another challenge faced by educators. Educators struggle to manage their time (Islam et al., 2015). Maatuk et al. (2022) stated that educators need to communicate better with students during this pandemic due to no physical classes; educators need to have a

discussion page and visit at least once daily to ensure students' enquiries are answered. Educators must constantly engage with students by giving feedback and providing answers so they are not excluded from the syllabus. There are research says that online learning consumes 30% more time than physical classes (Islam et al., 2015).

Research from Aboagye and Yowson (2021) found students' challenges in dealing with online classes and whether they have prepared to study online. Most of them must prepare their gadgets, internet connection, and mental readiness. Online learning can be challenging because of the lack of face-to-face contact between students and lecturers. This will affect the motivation of the students to have online learning (Samir et al., 2014). The data from 82.29% of university students in India reported having a willingness to study online. It proves that most students have tried adapting a new norm to online learning, and it also shows there has been an improvement in self-study skills. Providing helpful materials from universities and lecturers motivates students to focus during online learning. Some students preferred physical classes because they had the opportunity to discuss, debate, and deliberate with their classmates and friends. They also prefer physical classes for practical sessions rather than online classes (Maatuk et al., 2021). Students feel that different learning styles affect students.

3.0   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers used a questionnaire as an instrument to conduct this research. There are nine questions in the questionnaire distributed to 40 students enrolled in the Diploma in Marine Engineering (DME) and Diploma in Nautical Studies (DNS). The students have provided their responses based on the questionnaire.

1. Do you have access to a device for online class?

25%

75%

- Yes
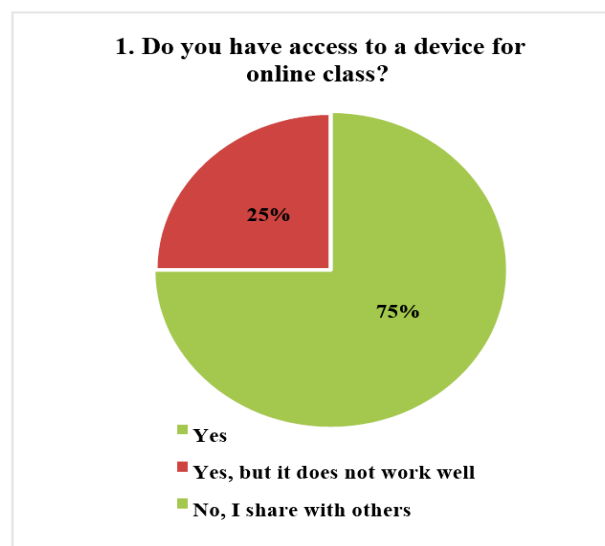- Yes, but it does not work well
- No, I share with others

Figure 1: Data for the Access Device

Based on Figure 1, the first question in the questionnaire regarding the accessibility of devices during online classes, 75% of students responded that they have their own devices to access the classes. The balance of 25% of students have the devices, but the device does not work well during online classes. This is due to the technical issues of the devices. The devices might have slow software or a lack of internet connection causing the devices not to work well during the online classes.

2. What device do you use for online class?
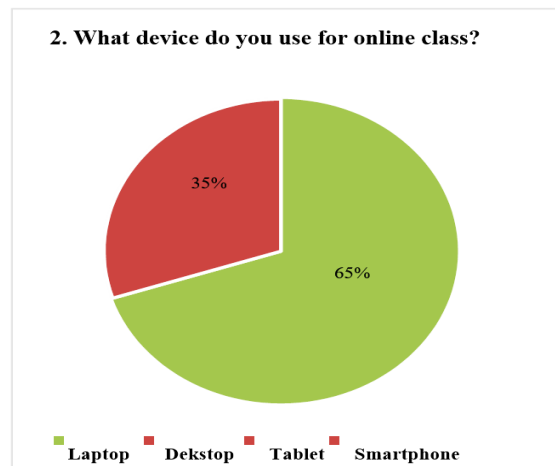
35%

65%

Laptop   Dekstop   Tablet   Smartphone

Figure 2: Accessibility of Device

Figure 2 shows that 65% of students use laptops as their devices during online classes, whereas the other 35% only use smartphones as their devices. The students who only use smartphones as their devices will cause a lack of focus during class due to the smaller size of the smartphones compared to those who use laptops as equipment for online education at home. Currently, the government has offered the students facilities where each student will be provided with a tablet as the device needs to be used during online classes.

3. How effective has remote learning been for you?

15%

50%

35%

■ Not at all effective   Slightly effective
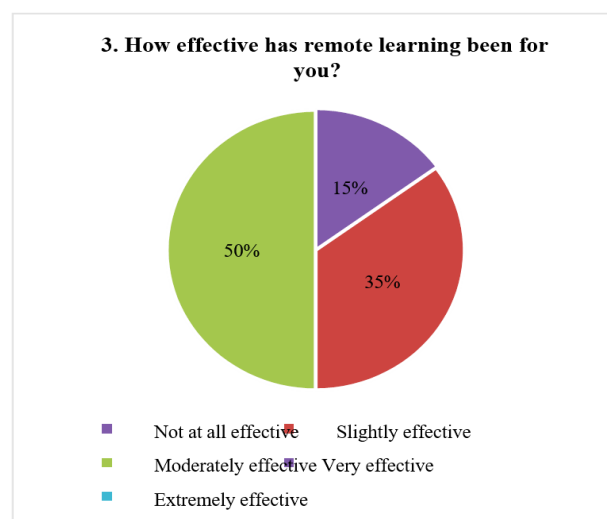■ Moderately effective Very effective
■ Extremely effective

Figure 3: Effectiveness of Remote Learning

According to Figure 3 above, 50% agree that remote learning is moderately effective. This shows that the lecturer's academic delivery in class can be improved by having the lecturers put in extra effort during the lecture delivery. As such, the lecturers may include quizzes, online games, animation videos, and many more to improve the effectiveness of online lectures. Next, 35% of students agreed that remote learning is slightly effective. The reason is that the students have to imagine and be creative to understand certain subjects. 15% of students mentioned that online classes are ineffective. The students might have difficulties understanding online classes because of their devices or surroundings.

2. What device do you use for online class?

35%

65%

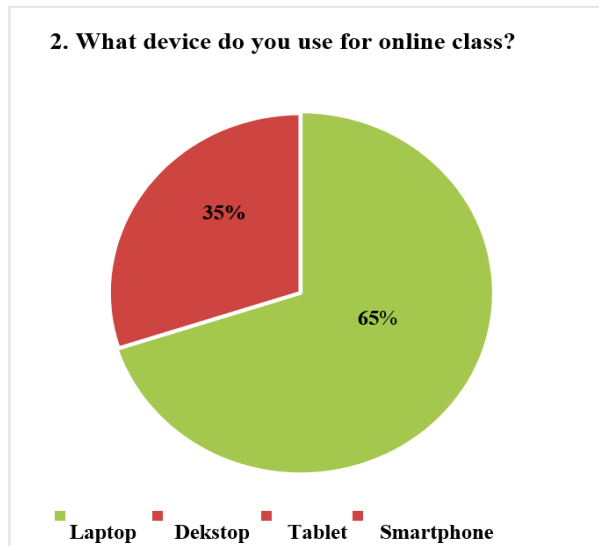■ Laptop   ■ Dekstop   ■ Tablet   ■ Smartphone

Figure 4: Time Spent by Students

In ALAM, the students usually have around 6 hours of classes per day according to the class timetable. By referring to Figure 4, 75% of students agreed that the students are using about 5-7 hours per day for online classes, and 25% spent 7-10 hours per day for online classes. This is mainly because some students will have extra classes or tutorials, which causes the students to spend extra hours completing the tutorials and assignments given by the lecturers.

5. How helpful your college has been in offering you the resources to learn from home

15%

53%

32%

■ Not at all helpful   ■ Slightly helpful
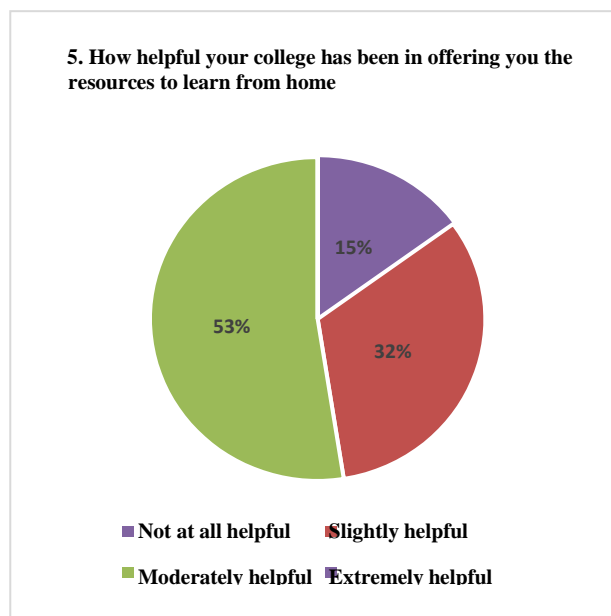■ Moderately helpful   ■ Extremely helpful

Figure 5: Favor Response from Friends

Based on Figure 5, the majority has voted for moderately helpful, at which the percentage is 53%. This percentage shows that the knowledge sources are limited because the students only depend on lecture notes and internet sources. If the students are on campus, the students may have consultation hours with the lecturers, enhancing the sources of knowledge.

6. What is most challenging do you faced during online class

- 13% Device issue
- 33% Connection issue
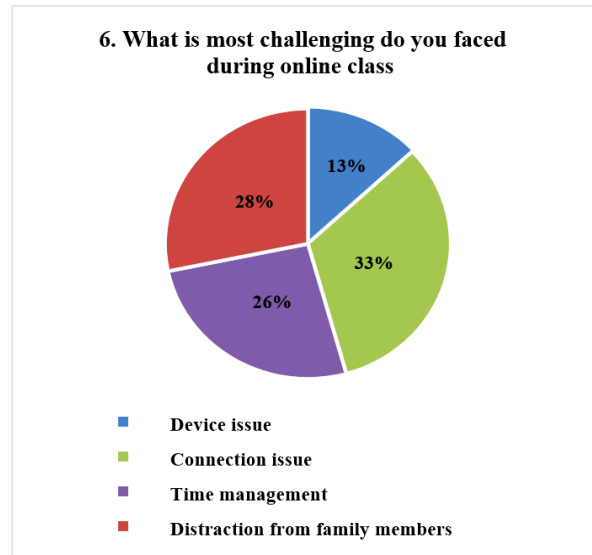- 26% Time management
- 28% Distraction from family members

Figure 6: Factors of Challenges

Based on Figure 6, most students voted for the connection issues, which are bound to happen in an online-only environment. The technical and connection issues add to the online environment's frustration and interrupt new distance learning sessions. Technical issues will happen when the students' computers shut down, or there are moments when Wi-Fi is spotty, and weak monitors can make it challenging to keep up with virtual classmates and the learning environment. The students must be alert that a reliable internet connection is critical. The students must have a fast home internet connection where the high-quality home service will help to avoid any connection issues. Moreover, the students need to find areas where Wi-Fi-connected places are stable for classes, such as a public library or coffee shop.

The most critical stage is to communicate with and inform the professors. In order to accommodate challenging connection scenarios, the instructor and students should be more understanding and adaptable. It can be highly advised that the professors take the initiative to record class sessions using learning platforms as a backup.

The students then cast their votes for time management. Since the time management technique is solely dependent on self-motivation, it may be the most challenging obstacle for students. The students must make studies a priority and develop autonomous time management skills. The students must choose the time and location where the schoolwork will be finished. These days, social media and internet surfing might divert students from their studies. When you need to concentrate on studying, it is advised to use techniques to shut off these distractions, such as distance learning and other time-wasters. The students may also accomplish more by making a to-do list for the week or each day and planning the optimal times for each assignment.

7. How difficult for you to stay focused on your online class?

- ■ I can stay focused easily. ■ It is quite difficult for me.
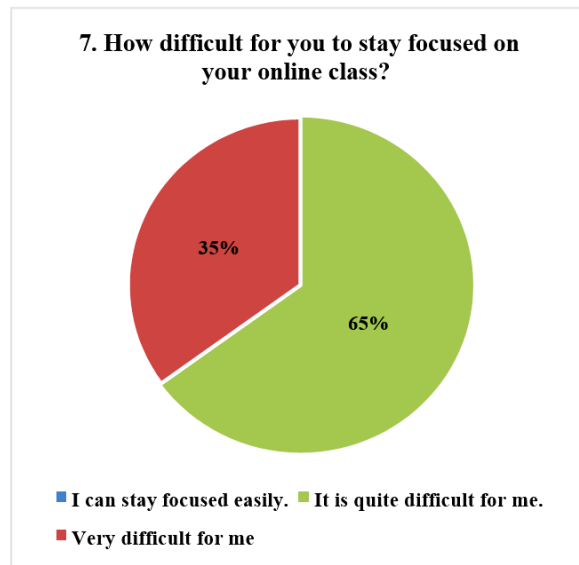- ■ Very difficult for me

Figure 7: Data for Students' Focus in Class

Figure 7 shows the students' difficulties staying focused in online classes, giving the 65% and 35% votes. The students have selected an exceptionally difficult and very difficult to focus on in class, respectively. The difficulties come from many aspects; for example, mentioned in the previous question are device issues, connection issues, time management, and distraction from family members. Nora Mahpar (2021) agreed with this statement, mentioning the main issues with E-Learning where students are absent during online classes. The students reported their absence due to an unstable internet connection. Therefore, the teachers also admit that some students become fatigued, causing a decline in attendance. This shows that the data obtained from the students is valid compared to other researchers' data.

8. Do you enjoy learning remotely?

- ■ Yes, absolutely.
- ■ Yes, but I would like to change a few things.
- ■ No, there are quite a few challenges.
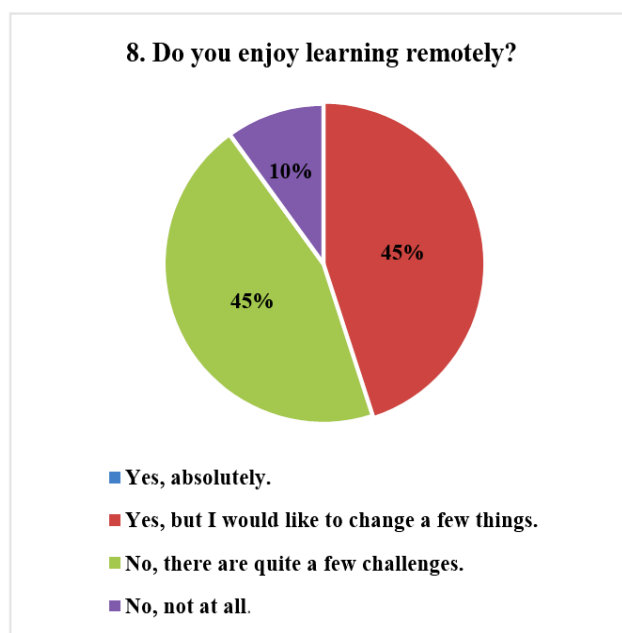- ■ No, not at all.

Figure 8: Students Feeling

Based on the data in Figure 8, the students voted for online learning, where almost half of the students enjoy online classes but need to change a few things. Then, almost half of the students faced challenges during online classes. Therefore, 10% voted did not enjoy online learning at all. This shows that each student has challenges in continuing studies at home. So, based on the questionnaire, the students have suggested making the online class more enjoyable. Firstly, the student requested the government to improve internet coverage in Malaysia. Next, the students requested more flexible hours for the online classes. The students might be tired due to the long screen time, so the colleges or schools can rearrange the schedule to more flexible hours for students.

9. How do you feel overall about distance education?
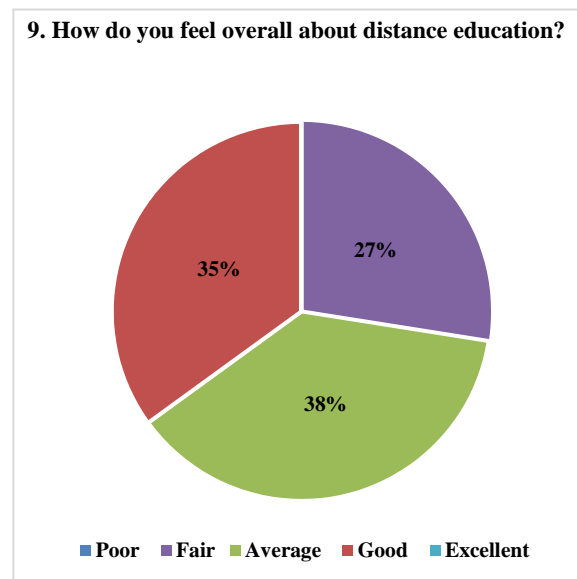
Poor ■ Fair ■ Average ■ Good ■ Excellent

Figure 9: Overall Satisfaction

Figure 9 shows that 38% of the students rated the overall online class as excellent, and another 35% mentioned they were in good condition during class. So, the total good and excellent give the 50% of the online class's satisfaction, whereas there is a balance of 50% mentioned as they only rated as a fair and poor condition. According to the data, 50% of students are satisfied with the conduct of online classes, and 50% are unsatisfied with online classes. This is due to the students might have difficulties with devices or surroundings during online classes.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This syndrome has a direct impact on the educational system. Institutional, informal, and non-formal education closed face-to-face learning progress and started adapting to the new norms of online learning (E-Learning). Due to the tight schedule, ALAM students have 5-7 hours of screen time daily. Most ALAM students have laptops to access online learning and feel that e-learning is moderately effective. This is because most students face the challenges of connectivity issues and distractions from family members. The challenges significantly impact their studies, where the students find it difficult to focus in class. Based on the data, ALAM students have an average understanding of online learning. Some of them immensely enjoyed online learning. Still, the students have requested certain things, such as the lecturer sharing videos of the lecture sessions with the students. The lecturer should conduct the class more slowly and give ample materials for each subject.

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