Motivation, experience and satisfaction among adult learners with fully online web-based courses

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The purpose of this paper is to explore the correlation between motivation, experience and the level of satisfaction among fully online adult learners in an Open Distance Learning (ODL) institution. These attributes is commonly studied separately to examine the level of its influence among online adult learners but infrequently collated as one in a study. Based on this, a survey was carried out to adult learners who are currently undergoing Bachelor of human resource and tourism management courses that are fully online. A structured questionnaire survey was used in data collection using Google Drive as the platform to distribute. Overall, 69 online students completed the survey. Although the sample is relatively small and may not contribute significantly to the literature, it does provide an essence to the institution of research as the fully online courses offered by the university are relatively new. Research from this viewpoint, shows that learners are highly motivated with the concept of online learning mainly agreeing that fully online courses allows them do well in class providing if the materials are studied appropriately. However, their experience and satisfaction with the fully online platform does not match the high level of motivation. Contributing factors to the dissatisfaction would be the limit of personal interaction and reliance on own self-discipline. Generally, the respondents showed an average level of satisfaction with the fully online courses. Nonetheless, flexibility of location and time provided by fully online learning remained to be the top reason for satisfaction. The implication of these findings discusses how instructors and course designers provide the necessary technical support to fully online learners in managing their level of motivation and satisfaction.

Keywords: Fully online, motivation, satisfaction, experience, ODL, adult learners

1.0 Introduction

The move towards incorporating ICT among universities is inevitable as the modern world is geared up with modern technology and creative technological tools. Malaysia too aspires to maximise the use of ICT for distance and self-paced learning. The aim is to expand access to high quality teaching regardless of location or student skill level into one that produces thinking and innovative students to meet the new economy (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025). Besides that, the Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF) exerts the importance of educated workforce for the nation to continue progress and to achieve global competitiveness. Currently, Malaysia is lagging behind. The country has a shortage of skilled worker and is highly reliant on immigrant workers to fill in the workforce gap.

Consequently, at this note, tertiary education providers have a role to play. For the university graduates to be able to continuously keep pace and be competitive in the challenging of the demands from workforce; the development of the education must continuously progress and be innovative in its form of instruction. Therefore, online learning is a way to project the advances in technology and instantaneously develop educated and technological savvy learners. Additionally, online learning becomes a way for universities to come out from the old form and create a larger pool of segments entering the universities. As a consequence, online education is continuing to expand at a rate faster than offline based education (Cole, Shelley & Swartz, 2014).

Open University Malaysia is amongst the universities in Malaysia that offers blended and flexible learning to working adults. Few years back, the Bachelor of Tourism Management (BTRM) was introduced as a fully online programme and few subjects in Bachelor of Human Resource Management (BHRM) were offered fully online. The

course is different compared to the traditional setup as the environment in online learning usually capitalises various supporting technologies to engage learners. The methods of teaching such as Moodle, podcasts, video lectures and constant virtual meetings complement the missing face to face interaction.

Over the span of few years, the courses have received good response however it encounter issues in sustaining the leaners in the programme. Based on this, the objective of this study is to explore the level of motivation, experience and satisfaction relating to the online delivery. Past studies shown that these attributes is studied separately to examine its level of influence among online adult learners but seldom had it collated as one in a study.

The idea of correlating these three components is to get a sound knowledge about the learner's involvement of before, during and after the online delivery. It is hoped that the findings could provide a valuable input to the organisation and to be able to provide with practical recommendations for instructors to design their online course delivery that may increase the efficacy and efficiency of the programmes.

2.0 Literature Review

In a fully online course, both synchronous and asynchronous communication influenced the way learners view the success of their study and their satisfaction level towards the online course. Giesbers, Rienties, Tempelaar, & Gijselaers (2013) discovered that synchronous communication have a positive impact towards student engagement in asynchronous communication in an online learning. This is relevant since synchronous communication happens just as a face-to-face interaction occurs in a normal classroom setting, with the only difference being in the locations and delivery platform. To follow-up from the synchronous communication, comes asynchronous communication that is vital in motivating and regulating the self-study. Motivation crucially plays a role in learner's participation and overall learning experience in the asynchronous communication (Xie & Huang, 2014).

Thus, in terms of learner's motivation to participate in an online discussion, the recognisation from other peers that is received online becomes an important factor; peers greatly influenced the learner's motivation to learn (Giesbers et al., 2013; Xie, 2013). As student influences each other's motivation, including a peer rating in an online discussion is highly recommended to support this attributes (Xie, 2013). Ultimately, in this age of technology, users are on the lookout for new technological tools and ways to communicate better. Utilising the latest technology and incorporating it into online learning is crucial for universities as consecutively, the use of mobile communication tools have been proved to enhance motivation among online learners (Chaiprasurt & Esichaikul, 2013).

Therefore, the learners' ability in internet technology fluency becomes a determinant to a learner's decision in undertaking an online course. To fully immerse in the online learning culture, online learners must at least have an access to the internet and are able to utilise it. The ability of learners to use the internet or being internet savvy, have a direct impact on their attitudes towards online learning and these influences their motivation to learn (Chang, Liu, Sung, Lin, Chen, & Cheng, 2014; Saadé & AlSharhan, 2015). Being internet savvy correlates with finding the relevance of them taking the online course (Saadé & AlSharhan, 2015). This means that the readiness of the learners to undertake an online course brings significant differences towards the way they see online courses and their attitudes towards online learning. High levels of readiness brings high level motivation towards online learning (Horzum, Kaymak & Gungoren, 2015) which then brings satisfaction towards the online courses itself (Kirmizi, 2015).

Similarly, Topal (2016) found that learners received satisfaction when they have readiness and motivation. Additionally, experiencing a good online course design also plays a major role in learner's satisfaction (Lee, 2014; Al-Azawei & Lundqvist, 2015; Fedynich, Bradley & Bradley, 2015; Kaufmann, 2015; Topal, 2016). However, higher levels of instructional design controls does not necessarily means higher satisfaction levels (Costley & Lange, 2016). The factor that can bring higher satisfaction levels in online learners are their relationship with the instructor and the experiences they have (Shih & Gamon, 2001; Rodriguez, Ooms & Montanez, 2008; Cortes & Barbera, 2013; Andersen, Lampley & Good, 2013; LaBarbera, 2013; Lee, 2014; Seiver & Troja, 2014; Topal, 2016).

From a learners point of view, the personal connections that they have with instructors, that is received via personalised emails and communication are giving the sense of satisfaction towards the online course (LaBarbera, 2013; Seiver & Troja, 2014). This is one of the reason why partially online courses were seen to be more satisfactory than fully online courses (AlHamad & AlQawasmi, 2014; Cole et al., 2014). The personalised

interaction and connectedness that is received in a face-to-face is treasured as satisfactory by learners. Therefore, this becomes a matter of convenience versus lack of interaction that decreases the level of satisfaction among learners in a fully online courses. This conforms with the fact that self-regulated learning ability does not affect learners satisfaction level because the interaction is what affects the level of satisfaction (Kuo, Walker, Belland & Schroder, 2013; Joo, Joung & Kim, 2014).

Similar to how motivation to learn are affected by peers' support and interaction (Giesbers et al., 2013; Xie, 2013); satisfaction also comes when learners presence socially are high in the online learning platform (Horzum, 2015). Lack of participation from peers and lack of feedback from instructor hinders effective online collaboration (Muuro, Wagacha, Oboko & Kihoro, 2014) whereas facilitation and monitoring are what is lacking in virtual environment (Chohan, 2014). Kuo et al. (2013) looks at the relationship between interaction, internet self-efficacy and self-regulated learning with learner's satisfaction in online learning and found that learner-instructor interaction, learner-content interaction, and internet self-efficacy predict learner's satisfaction.

Since motivation influences satisfaction (Kirmizi, 2015) and in a fully online courses, "satisfaction can be defined as fulfillment and pleasure level of the students about different aspects of learning service which they received in an online learning program" (Dziuban, Moskal, Thompson, Kramer, DeCantis, & Hermsdorfer, 2015), it is important that we look at the online learning experiences that the learners have. It is found that the motivation to learn in an online course is high at the beginning of a course (Giesbers et.al, 2013). This motivation, will then affect and/or be affected by the experiences that learners have including the interaction that the learners had with other learners and also with the instructor that will then impact the learners' satisfaction level. Learners' experiences especially in the past presumably would have an impact on their motivation and level of satisfaction as indicated in past literatures and this research seek to understand the correlation.

3.0 Methodology

A quantitative approach was used to study the linkage between motivation, experience and satisfaction level among learners. In order to get a comprehensive insight, a structured questionnaire survey was used and Google Drive was used as the platform to distribute the survey to the learners. In order to get a sound knowledge at this exploratory stage, surveys are distributed to students registered in an online Bachelor of Tourism Management with Honours programme (BTRM) and Bachelor of Human Resource Management (BHRM). Data were analysed using SPSS and appropriate descriptive analysis (e.g. descriptive and frequencies) were presented. The survey was distributed to all levels of students at random in the hope that this study could get an introductory perspective.

The list which was provided by the university's record admission unit indicated an overall of 306 learners undergoing online subjects under the BHRM programme and 90 active learners coming from the BTRM fully online programme. However, due to time constraint and because the learners are more acquainted to the facilitators because of its proximity, the respondents were randomly selected from Klang Valley area only. Basing on the specified area out of 150 distributed surveys, only 69 learners responded to the survey which is equivalent to 46% response rate.

The selection was based on simple random sampling technique since it is still at its exploratory stage and therefore deemed as suitable as it will provide a fundamental knowledge, quick and at a low cost (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013). Certainly, the percentage of response rate does not represent the intended population thoroughly. Nonetheless as mentioned by Freankle & Wallen, 1996 cited by Lindner et.al (2001) and the authors guidelines in determining sample size , the minimum number of subjects needed is 50 . Cook et.al (2000) as cited by Nulty (2008) proved that response rates to online surveys are nearly always much lower than those obtained using on-paper surveys.

4.0 Data Analysis

4.1 Profiles

Table 1 below shows the demographic profiles of the respondents. The demographic profile includes the gender, age, occupation and study hours. The sample also indicates that female respondents represented slightly higher percentage totaling to 58% compared to their male counterparts (42%). All respondents are undergoing the undergraduate programme under the OUM Business School specifically under Bachelor of Tourism Management and Bachelor of Human Resource Management programmes. Majority of the respondents are aged between 31 to 40 years of age (54%) followed by those between 20 to 30 years (23%) and 41 to 50 years (20%). The age group fits the normal registration age cluster since most of the respondents are working adults. With reference to their occupation, the majority comes from the services sector (41%), followed by business and management background with respective amount of 14.5% and 19%, while the rest comes from various backgrounds such as education (4%), engineering (13%), manufacturing (4%) and others (4%). The number of hours spent on studying found among the respondents are generally between 3 to 4 hours per week (38%), followed closely by 5 to 6 hours (30%). The remaining spent their time studying for more than 7 hours and only 10% allocate little of time studying i.e. between 1 to 2 hours per week.

Table 1: Summary of respondent's profile

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	40	57.97
	Male	29	42.03
Age	20-30	16	23.19
	31-40	37	53.62
	41-50	14	20.29
	50 - and above	2	2.00
Occupation	Education	3	4.35
	Manufacturing	3	4.35
	Services	28	40.58
	Engineering	9	13.04
	Business	10	14.49
	Management	13	18.84
	Others (Housewife, Oil & Gas)	3	4.35
Study Hours	1-2 hours	7	10.14
	3-4 hours	26	37.68
	5-6 hours	21	30.44
	7-8 hours	5	7.25
	9-10 hours	8	11.6
	Others: 13-17 hours	2	2.9

4.2 The Analysis of Learners Motivation and Satisfaction with the Online Courses

The results of both mean and standard deviations of motivation and satisfaction as indicated by the respondents are as shown in Table 2. The respondent's appeared to be highly motivated to undergo online courses because they find the materials are useful to learn (M=4.01, SD=0.866) which creates the inquisitiveness (M=4.01, SD=0.947) among them. Furthermore, the respondents was very keen to be taught about the courses that they have chosen (M=4.01, SD=0.849) and they believed that if studied appropriately they could comprehend the materials prepared (M=4.00, SD=0.939). The lowest mean ranked by the respondents was 'I think of how poorly I am doing' which is M=3.58, SD=. 1.090).

Respondents were generally satisfied with the web based courses and signified that web based courses should be utilised more often to deliver instruction (M=3.72, SD= 0.953) and provided the learners the opportunity of enhancing themselves with higher education (M=3.68,SD=1.169). Overall, the satisfaction rate showed an average mean score between 3 to above 3.5 slightly lower than their motivation. On the other hand, more than 50 percent of the respondents appeared to be moderately satisfied with the web based courses during the experience of learning online as indicated in Table 3.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Motivation and Satisfaction

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Motivation	Course material is useful to learn	4.01	.866
	I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity	4.01	.947
	I am interested in the content area of this course	4.01	.849
	Studying appropriately, I can learn the material	4.00	.939
	I want to get better grades than other students	3.99	.962
	I expect to do well in class	3.88	1.051
	I think of the questions I cannot answer	3.78	.820
	I think of poorly of how I am doing	3.58	1.090
Satisfaction	Web based courses should be utilised more often to deliver instruction	3.72	.953
	Web based courses provide me with learning opportunities that I otherwise would not have had	3.68	1.169
	Web based courses allow me to control the pace of my learning	3.59	1.089
	I will recommend web based courses to my friends	3.45	1.182
	Learning through web based instruction is convenient	3.43	1.169
	I would not have taken web based courses if I had some other means of acquiring course credits	3.43	1.007
	I enjoy learning from the web based lessons	3.28	1.083
	I feel isolated as a student when I take courses via the web	3.22	1.110
	I will enroll in another web based course	3.12	1.132
	I prefer web based courses to traditional classroom instruction	3.03	1.071
	Learning through web based courses is boring	2.97	1.098

Table 3: Respondents Overall Experience

Overall Experience with the online course(s)		
Dissatisfied %	Moderate %	Satisfied %
33.3	53.6	13

The contributing factor to the moderate percentage of experience would be the limit of personal interaction. Table 4 showed almost 50% pointed out that the online delivery quality could not match the personal interaction that respondents may gain from a normal traditional setup. In Table 5, flexibility of location and time provided by fully online learning remained to be the top reason for satisfaction. 60% of the respondents favored the flexibility of online learning. However, the flexibility still couldn't match up to the fact that the respondents prefer face to face

interaction (32.4%). In addition, the online delivery method (19%) and reliance on own self discipline (16%) contributed to the total dislikes about online learning.

Table 4: Review of Online Delivery Quality compared to classroom courses

Online courses quality standard compared to classroom courses			
Disagree %	Moderate %	Agree %	Do not know %
42	27.5	27.5	2.9

Table 5: Most and Least Favored about Online Delivery

Most Favoured		Least Favoured	
Items	Percentage (%)	Items	Percentage (%)
Flexibility of study time	32.9	Limited face to face interaction	32.4
Flexibility of study location	27.9	The online delivery method	19
Less need to go to campus	15	Reliance on my own self discipline	16.2
Spending time on the computer	7.9	Spending time on the computer	13.3
The online delivery method	7.1	Flexibility of study location	7.6
Reliance on my own self discipline	7.1	Less need to go to campus	6.7
Limited face to face interaction	1.4	Flexibility of study time	2.9
Others	0.7	Others	1.9

From these results it could be concluded that the respondents are receptive to web based courses and open to online learning in general but respondents tend to identify the flexibilities of location and study as the main strength and not the online learning process. Furthermore, respondent's preference for face to face classroom creates a query on the readiness and the acceptance among the learners on the existing of the existing online delivery.

5.0 Discussion

In determining how learners motivation, experience and satisfaction relates to web based courses, Shih & Gamon (2001) and Rodriguez et al. (2008) variables were employed in this study. Motivation variables were adopted from Shih & Gamon (2001) and questions/ variables extracted from Rodriguez et.al (2008) was used to investigate the degree of learners' satisfaction with online learning experiences and perceived quality.

The findings mirrors to both researches in that the learners are motivated because they are able to navigate their learning pace. Since the respondents have the online learning experience, the most liked aspects are the flexibility of location, study time and the less need to visit the campus. This attributes is certainly an advantage which is also similar to Rodriguez's et al. (2008) study. The findings which showed that the respondents were less favourable for online delivery because of the lack of personal interaction, implies that online learners desires for social interactions might be the probable solution. This also supports the findings from past researches (Cortes & Barbera, 2013; Andersen, Lampley & Good, 2013; LaBarbera, 2013; Lee, 2014; Seiver & Troja, 2014; Topal, 2016). A normal traditional classroom would provide all this as it enables the feeling of being a part of a community. As a student, knowing that they are not alone and are able to reach out for help with tasks among peers helps to boost their experience and satisfaction during the online learning process.

6.0 Recommendations

Thus, deriving from the findings, these are the recommendation to heighten the learning process in web based courses and ultimately elevate the learner's satisfaction and experience level that enrolled for the programmes. For the said recommendations to work, a well planned timeline is required to ensure the delivery will be ongoing and engages learners to participate and enjoy the web based courses.

1. Video conference a.k.a social presence. Video conferencing is an essential e-learning tool to support the learning environment. Personal communication is still a desired aspect in an online learning,hence it is suggested that the university provides a medium for the learners to arrange an online community to share their thoughts with other peers who may not be entirely academic related. The reason for this is to improve socialisation among peers and cultivate the 'sense of belonging'. Learners could perform web based video conferences through Google Hangout, Google+ , Skype conferencing and even through virtual classroom, which usually is created in a Learning Management System (LMS) such as Moodle.. Video conferencing allows learners to communicate virtually from any parts of the world. The significance of video conference, it links distant learners together for a common reason. It may provide a psychological and emotional support that learners require (Pandey & Pande, 2014; Hampel et.al.,2012; Grant, 2007). The functionalities of the virtual meeting or video conference should at least have audio, text and images including a button that allow students to chat, present and show video seamlessly also controls the 'noise' during the video chat. Something like Google + would do, if a person needs to speak then a red light will appear to indicate that a person will start talking. When students are able to communicate and engaged themselves through exchanging ideas, not only will it stimulate the students motivation but it will also get them actively involved in the learning process (Shih & Gamon, 2001).

2. Collaborative learning via peer review and peer assessment.
Student learning through peer review and assessment provides opportunity for them to develop the ability to learn from their peers about how to deal with matters of difficult approach (Rolando et.al. 2014 & Sit, Chung, Chow & Wong, 2015) as well as sharing ideas, thoughts and experiences with each other. They manage their group work including arranging their offline study environments and coordinating time for groupwork. Allow chance for the learners to critique and evaluate other learners ways of answering. The review among peers could help them in identifying the elements missing from their writing and keep them on track. Educators could facilitate the peer process by being the initiator, encourager, moderator and observer during the discussion or reviewing takes place (Swan, Shena & Hiltz, 2006).

3. Diversification of assessment tasks. To develop learner's higher order of thinking the assignments should be divided into several phases that requires from learners to submit interim feedback. It was recommended by Kearns (2012) for the assignment to be submitted in three phases 1) context description, 2) problem analysis and 3) recommendation for change. Rubrics are highly important as well to guide learners on the requirements of the assessment (s). Other than that, self tests, FAQs and quizzes could assist students in solving problems relating to the course.

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