

Perceptions of parents toward online learning among secondary school students during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted education systems worldwide, including in Malaysia, leading to the widespread closure of school facilities to control the situation. This development heightened parents' awareness and concern about the quality of their children's education. This study aimed to determine the parents' perceptions towards their children online learning during the pandemic. This was a cross-sectional study conducted among the parents of secondary school children. The study based on online survey via Google Form. The questionnaire was mainly focused on parents' perceptions on benefits, challenges, and involvement on their children's online activities. Parents who were having secondary students were recruited using snowball technique which was a type of convenient sampling technique. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS (version 27). A total of 275 respondents participated in this study with the majority of parents agreeing that online learning could help their children develop technological competence (43.3%), followed by the ability to understand online learning materials (34.2%), despite the learning process being conducted through e-learning. However, parents claimed that their children could not maintain their concentration (31.3%) as well as their improvement in communication skill (30.5%). Most of the parents (62.5%) had limited time to accompany children's learning activities. As a result, online learning emerged as a new and demanding task, compelling parents to adapt to the evolving educational norm. Overall, this study highlighted the positive impacts on the education sector during the pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19; perception; online learning; secondary school students and education

INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has caused an unexpected crisis in all fields of human life. In the area of education, this emergency has led to the massive closure of face-to-face activities in more than 190 countries in order to prevent the spread of the virus and mitigate its impact (ECLAC-UNESCO, 2020). In Malaysia, the COVID-19 pandemic was announced twice, first in January 2020, and later in March 2020, when a nationwide "Movement Control Order" (MCO) was declared (Ahad et al., 2020). In response to the MCO and the intensifying concerns surrounding pandemic, all levels of institutions were replaced with virtual and online platforms, thus ensuring the continuation of education procedure (Kamaludin & Sundarasan, 2023).

Online learning as well as online education is the delivery of educational contents and instruction by means of internet or other digital technologies (Anh, 2022; Phanse, 2021). It makes the students more accessible, flexible and convenient. In addition, it provides the students to become independent as they can search for materials by browsing educational applications available online (Odhaib, 2018).

Previous research findings indicated that students generally preferred face-to-face learning in class rather than online learning because it was easier to understand the materials when the teacher explained it directly (Soliman et al., 2022). Moreover, they can interact and learn together (Lase et al., 2021). Besides, some teachers experienced increase

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spending on the internet quota, tired of staying too long at home and difficult to monitor students remotely. Also, the teachers need to take extra time to prepare online learning materials and collect feedback (Lase et al., 2021).

As the time spent for learning was mostly at home, parental participation became a crucial role to support the teaching and learning process (Johanisa et al, 2021). Parents needed to acquire certain skills and knowledge in handling their children's online learning. For some parents, this can be a challenge especially for parents who do not know how to handle technology (Johanisa et al, 2021). Given a sudden notice of school closure during the COVID-19 pandemic, it became an unexpected, new and burdensome for parents to adjust and adapt to the new norm of learning (Lase et al, 2021). Other than that, many parents were unfamiliar with the schools' performance in delivering a quality education (Haller & Novita, 2021).

In fact, conducting online learning can be stressful for parents as it increased parents' workload dealing with their own work as well as monitoring their children's activities (Prime et al., 2020). To create an atmosphere at home that can help their children to remain enthusiastic and active was one of the major challenges for parents (Spinelli et al, 2020). As well, many parents faced financial difficulties in supporting the online learning which required computers, laptops, software and internet access at home (Abuhammad, 2020). Such requirements could add on more financial burdens for those parents who lost their job or reduced income due to COVID-19 pandemic (Spinelli et al, 2020).

Research on parents' perceptions of online learning among secondary school students has been limited. This study provided valuable insights into how parents navigated the adaptation process during the pandemic, particularly for adolescents, a critical stage in children's development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

This cross-sectional study was conducted among parents of secondary school students in Malaysia. The inclusion criteria required participants to be parents of secondary school children while the exclusion criteria included those who did not provide consent or lack internet access. The following flow chart illustrates the recruitment, eligibility screening, exclusion criteria, and final sample selection of parents of secondary school students included in the study.

Figure 1

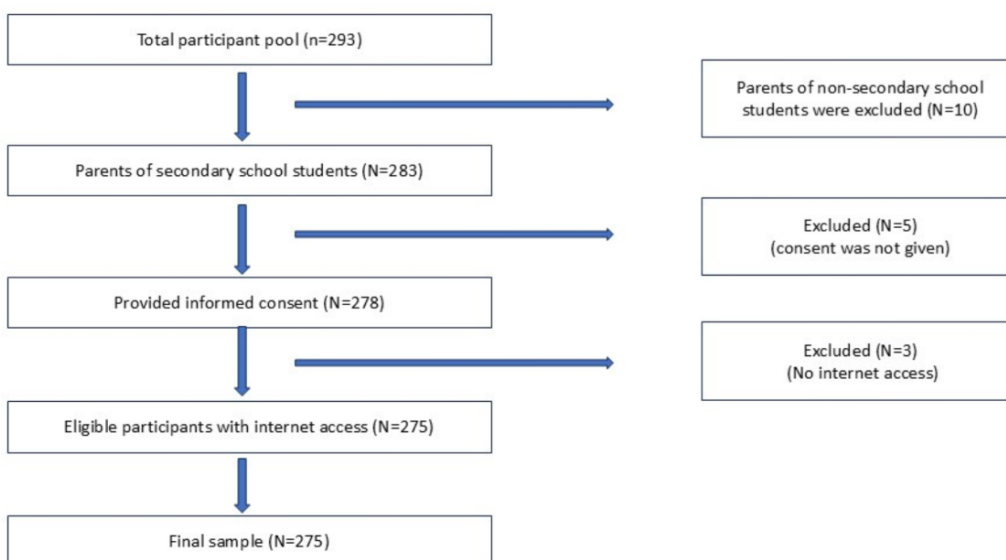


Figure 1. Flow chart illustrating the recruitment, eligibility screening, exclusion criteria, and final sample selection of parents of secondary school students included in the study.

Note: Flow chat of participants recruitment process

Sample size

Sample size was calculated by using Power and Sample Size Calculation [PS software] (Dupont & Plummer, 1997), based on a standard deviation of 1.13 and anticipated knowledge mean of 0.68 from previous study (Hamaidi et al., 2021), probability power of 0.8 and type 1 error probability associated with this null hypothesis was 0.05, minimum sample size of 88 was needed. With an anticipated attrition of 70% for online survey, the total number of sample size needed was $88/0.3=293$ based on calculation provided.