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A Qualitative Discourse on Coping Strategies of Undergraduates for Continuity of Learning in the New Normal

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Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic has hit the whole world unexpectedly and has caught all of us off-guard. Malaysia was not an exception as the first case of positive COVID-19 was reported on Jan 25th, 2020. As the number of cases rapidly multiplied, the government announced an MCO as a mitigation strategy. MCO is indeed new water for everyone, as almost everyone is affected, including university undergraduates. Thus, this study aims to explore the coping strategies used by the undergraduates for continuity of learning in the new normal. A total of 143 undergraduate students in one of the public universities in Malaysia participated in the open ended online survey. The survey was set as an open-ended survey to capture various responses. Responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. Various socio-psychological impacts of COVID-19 on the daily life of undergraduates were captured, as well as their emotional rants. Thematic analysis reported on four types of positive coping strategies i.e., problem-focused, emotion-focused, spiritually-focused socially-focused strategies, and one negative coping strategy which is avoidant coping. These findings are valuable to understand the socio-psychological impacts towards undergraduates, and are important for decision-makers and healthcare providers to develop effective educational and psychological interventions for undergraduates to create a sense of security and to eliminate unnecessary fear and improve participation in online learning.

Keywords: COVID-19, Coping Strategy, Socio-Psychological, Online Learning, Qualitative.

Introduction

Coronavirus disease is an infectious disease currently known as COVID-19. It is caused by a new strain of virus named Corona which represents a big family of viruses that are commonly found in humans and most animals. The virus has rarely spread between animals and humans until recently with reported cases in Wuhan, China. To date, three types of Coronavirus have been known to be infectious among human originating from animals namely Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) which began in February 2003 in Asia;

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) which was first detected in Saudi Arabia in September 2012, and the recent COVID-19 (CDC, 2020).

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in Wuhan, China (WHO, 2020). The virus infection happened at the seafood market in Wuhan which started as a virus infection spreading among the animals. Later, the virus infected humans, and continued to be spread between one human to another. It seems that symptoms vary among patients; nevertheless, the common indications of the outbreak include fever, tiredness, dry cough, breathing difficulty and sore throat. The effects of this virus have a profound impact on the undergraduates, among others are the socio-psychological aspects. Hence, undergraduates would have to adapt to certain coping strategies in continuity of learning in the new normal. Thus, this paper will share some of the coping strategies used by them during Movement Control Order (MCO).

The Movement Control Order (MCO)

The alarming increase in COVID-19 cases left the government of Malaysia with little choice other than to implement the Movement Control Order (MCO). The government announced the MCO on 16th March 2020 for a two-week period from 18th March to 31st March 2020. The MCO prohibits mass assemblies nationwide and Malaysians were not allowed to meet for religious meetings, sports, social and cultural activities. To ensure full participation from the people, the government instructed that all religious places and business premises should be closed until further notice. During MCO, only markets, grocery stores and shops were given the permission to continue their operation to ensure continuous supply of food and daily necessities. International flights were put to halt and no tourists were allowed to enter Malaysia.

All schools and institutes of higher learning were instructed to close and stop all face-to-face academic sessions (Berita Harian, 2020). Most government and private sectors were also told to end operations and stop offering their services. It was unfortunate that the nation reacted in panic after the implementation and congested the highways heading back to their hometowns. Hence, public places like bus terminals were crowded with people. Even after the panic period, the people of Malaysia were still in denial and neglected important guidelines given by the government during MCO.

Because of this reckless attitude among the people, the government decided to involve Malaysian Armed Forces on 22nd March 2020 with the strength of 7,500 personnel to enforce MCO. Together with the police, the ATM enforced MCO rules and ensured that people abide by all the rules. The government also advised the people to practice one-meter social distance when in public places. On 25th March 2020, the MCO was extended to 14th April 2020 with stricter enforcement on movement. In the second phase of MCO, travelling was limited to 10 kilometers radius from home with only one person in the car. Food outlets were allowed operation only from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. On 8th April 2020, a compound penalty of RM1000.00 was announced for failure to abide by the MCO. Later, the government extended the MCO for another two weeks to 28th April 2020. As the nation became more aware of their individual responsibilities in preventing the spread of the outbreak, results were expected to be better over time. The nation was reminded to practice vigilant healthy habits and follow the guidelines prescribed by the government to stop the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia.

Socio-Psychological Impact of Disasters

According to Robert et al. (2003) in his research among staff at Mount Sinai Hospital, Toronto, four types of emotional impacts exist among patients and victims of the SARS pandemic namely fear, loneliness, boredom, and anger. In another research on the aftermath effects of SARS among Chinese students in Japan, Zheng and team (2005), reports that almost 60 percent respondents experienced fear, depression, and anxiety regarding the SARS epidemic, while 20 percent faced social discrimination. Hyunsuk et al. (2016) conducted a study on individuals who were quarantined during MERS and reported similar emotional impacts. Results from the research show that during the two weeks of quarantine due to close contact with MERS patients, respondents manifested high level of anxiety and anger. When the study was repeated four to six months after the quarantine period, the respondents showed some effects related to mental health as a result of quarantine during MERS, insufficient supplies, social network activities, psychiatric history and financial loss.

The effects of quarantine during pandemic is also reported by Johal (2009) particularly related to the duration of quarantine as well as restrictions like limited physical contact, use of face mask and staying at home for a long period of time. Due to quarantine, respondents seem to lose intimacy and social connections, also social and psychological distancing. Indeed, the most disturbing experience about living through a pandemic is little or zero knowledge about the virus. This ambiguity and uncertainty can contribute to psychosocial impacts [9]. Related research on psychosocial impacts of infectious diseases require three important elements namely systematic perspective, prospective research, and psychosocial intervention results.

Similar to victims of pandemic outbreaks, people that undergo natural disasters and calamities may also suffer from psychological effects. Yusof (2016) relates that the main after-effects of flood is sadness and stress. Untreated symptoms may lead to worsening conditions of victims and serious psychological impacts like loss of interest in living, fear and worry of repeated occurrence of flood, and traumatic loss (Yusof, 2016).

In Malaysia, a massive flood hit several states in the east coast of the country in December 2014. A study conducted in Kelantan, one of the states which was badly affected by the flood resulted in six main effects: loss of homes and properties, financial problems and loss of income, psychological problems, health problems among individuals, families and neighbors (Akhir et.al., 2017). A similar study conducted in Hulu Dungun, Terengganu among the flood victims shows consistent results especially related to movement of housing settlements, economy, health and change in lifestyle. Sarina & Rahimah (2017) added that most of the flood victims reported serious emotional states of well-being like feeling threatened, worried and sad due to loss of properties, physical disturbances, and fear of going through the same experience over again (Sarina & Rahimah, 2017).

In fact, psychological reactions and effects can be expected of difficult experiences like flood and outbreak. It is important that victims are given due attention and guidance so they could manage the situation and recover from the shock. Individual victims as well as the community can suffer from excessive effects if the alarming situation is not addressed accordingly and communication is not effective in handling the crisis [Zheng et. al., 2005]. On this note, Ahmad Marzuki and team, in their study discover that flood victims experience better quality of living when they get support both morally and physically (Ahmad Marzuki et. al., 2017). Also, there is negative correlation between levels of emotional factor with quality of life among the respondents. Higher levels of quality of life indicate lower levels of stress, worry and depression among the flood victims.

It is important to note yet another common socio-psychological impact among victims of crisis and unfortunate circumstances which is the tendency to return to God and bringing oneself closer to faith. This theory is called the religious coping behavior which emphasizes on how human relies on religion to help them face difficulties and uncertainties in life. By doing so, human will say and perform prayers and relate the tragic occurrences to God's will and powers (Pergament et. al., 2001; Sinding Bentzen, 2019). Although many socio-psychological impacts arise from disasters, research shows that stress level doesn't correlate with coping strategies employed (Othman et. al., 2019).

Coping Strategies

With the Movement-control order implementation, and the myriad of socio-psychological impacts toward undergraduate students, stress coping strategies are crucial to be adopted to ensure continuity of learning. According to Folkman & Lazarus (1984) stress is a dynamic process which is explained in transactional theory of stress and coping. In theory, stress is described as "a product of a transaction between a person (cognitive, physiological, affective, psychological, neurological) and his or her complex environment". Two important concepts of stress from the theory is appraisal and coping. Appraisal is "the individual evaluation of the significance of what is happening for their well-being" whereas coping is defined as "individual's effort in thought and action to manage specific demands) (Lazarus, 1993).

Role of coping strategies on psychological and physical well-being is emphasized by Nakano (1991), whereby six strategies were explored which are problem-solving, positive cognitive coping, wishful thinking, self-blame, avoidance and seeking social support. A recent research about the coping strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic, done in Germany, categorized the strategies to problem-focused coping strategies, emotion-focused coping strategies, socially supported coping strategies and avoidant coping strategies (Zacher & Rudolph, 2020).

To look into the education perspective, different coping strategies were implemented by students in order to continue with learning. A study was conducted in the Philippines during the lockdown period, and identified that students incorporate into their routine, relaxation activities, religious practices, and family-bonding activities as a coping strategy (Baloran, 2020). A specific study exploring coping strategies of undergraduates portrays many different coping strategies adopted (Mohammad et. al., 2020), but does not theme the strategies. Hence, this study complements the findings and structures it to a better arrangement.

Problem Statement

The COVID-19 outburst affects all sectors of the population and is particularly detrimental to university undergraduates. When the government announced the movement control order (MCO) on 13 March 2020, undergraduate students at UKM were in their fifth week of classes. At that time, they had just met with the lecturers and classmates as well as to understand the class assignments. When the government announced the lockdown, they had no choice but to return home in a hurry without proper preparation. Some of them left the university with minimal personal and academic belongings (books, laptop, etc.) because they thought they would be back on campus as soon as possible. When the MCO was extended until April 28, 2020, some of the undergraduates started to experience a lot of stress. How do they cope with the situation? What are the coping strategies used by them? This study was conducted to identify the coping strategies used by undergraduates during phase 1 (18-31st March 2020) and phase 2 (1-14 April 2020) of the MCO.

Methodology

Instrument

Surveys are useful in gathering data and feedback from informants particularly in getting opinions and a broad picture of ideas. They are useful for quantitative as well as qualitative research alike. For qualitative data collection, surveys can be limited to a small number of open-ended questions in order to best elicit qualitative insights on research matters. In view of the recent COVID-19 pandemic and MCO period where face-to-face meeting was forbidden, researchers could have encountered difficulties in gathering data using surveys. Nevertheless, thanks to the Internet, research was not affected during COVID-19 MCO period as surveys could be distributed online. Indeed, the internet has contributed tremendously to research as a source of information and updates. In fact, it is a reliable platform for researchers to disseminate new discoveries and research results for the benefit of society and target community.

The main objective of this present research is to highlight some of the socio-psychological impacts of unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic that have been experienced by Malaysian undergraduates and explore how undergraduates cope with the situation for the continuity of learning. This research uses the online survey with open-ended questions using Google Forms. The researchers decided to use online surveys or web-based surveys mainly because the administration costs are lower and the process is more manageable. Google Forms are free and available to all users. The tool will record users' responses automatically into a spreadsheet which makes data collection and analysis easier to handle. Interestingly, online surveys can reach out to a large population which is helpful during MCO period with restrictions for face to face interactions.

Google Form surveys is a methodology where surveys are distributed to respondents electronically by email, WhatsApp, and Telegram. Indeed, this is a new methodology for data collection and is gaining popularity among researchers. For the purpose of this study, the analysis will share emerging themes from the open-ended responses which contain questions and provide space for answers.

Sampling

Respondents for this study were 143 undergraduates registered for a program in one of the public universities in Malaysia. They were given one week (1st April to 7th April 2020) to complete the online survey regarding MCO experience with closed and open-ended questions. The online survey consists of several parts: background information, internet accessibility, problems faced, activities done and effects of MCO. These students are considered lucky because 95% of them had the chance to return home before the Malaysian government imposed nationwide lockdown which began on 18 March 2020. The remaining 5% were only allowed to return to their hometown in mid-April as their area of residence was identified as a red *zone*. The students involved in this research come from all parts of Malaysia.

The online survey forms (Google Forms) were given to them as soon as the Prime Minister of Malaysia announced that the second MCO was extended to 14th April 2020 with stricter enforcement on movement. As the MCO continued, it brought implications to the process of teaching and learning at institutions of higher learning in the country. Hence, the university has practiced a new norm, that is 100% online learning. This scenario would cause problems for some students because some of them do not have strong Internet access. Indeed, these two situations: MCO and online learning have big impacts on students.

Data Analysis

The open-ended questions from the online survey form were analyzed using thematic approach. Firstly, it is important to read the data carefully and review them thoroughly in order to manage them according to key passages. Next, coding the data enhances meaning to the process as common themes emerge from the analysis. Themes are common ideas and patterns that emerge after several cycles of reading. This proposed research will use inductive code frames of content analysis. In this perspective, the researcher will read the text of the interview transcript and interpret it according to the theme of the study (Marican, 2005). Content analysis is more difficult to create because researchers will have to read thoroughly and make inferences from the survey feedback. Still, it is a useful strategy to combat bias and capture new discoveries and insights. Besides, it is significant that researchers assign some weight to the emerging themes and findings by giving explanations and further descriptions to give a complete picture about the idea to the readers. Finally, data analysis is encapsulated in a summary report for the benefit of readers and other researchers.

Findings and Discussion

Demographic profile of respondents

Demographic profiling of the respondents is tabulated in Table 1. The respondents for this study consists of 92 female undergraduates and 51 male undergraduates. As the respondents are from one specific program, only two other questions were asked for profiling, which is the accessibility to teaching and learning materials, and speed of internet that respondents are accessible to at home. Both of this data can assist understanding coping strategies of students for continuity of learning.

Table 1. Demographic profiling of respondents

Items		n	%
Gender	Male	92	35.7
	Female	51	64.3
Accessibility to T&L materials	Highly accessible	18	12.6
	Accessible	92	64.3
	Moderately accessible	24	16.8
	Hardly accessible	9	6.3
	Non-accessible	0	0
Speed of internet	Very fast	6	4.2
	Fast	56	39.2
	Moderate	58	40.6
	Slow	14	9.8
	Very slow	8	5.6
	No internet	1	0.7

Socio-psychological Experience of Undergraduates

To analyze the coping strategies adopted by undergraduates in this study, specific socio-psychological experience of respondents during the first stage of COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in Malaysia was first identified. Although COVID-19 took some time to develop into a pandemic, most Malaysians were still not prepared with knowledge and readiness to face the threat. Like most Malaysians, the respondents in this study reported some of these symptoms and found it difficult to adjust their daily routine and lifestyle. They felt trapped at home with limited access to go outside. They felt uncomfortable and unhappy with the government's imposition of the MCO. At their young age, they would usually be studying, engaging in social activities and some sports and games. With MCO, their activities were restricted and they could not meet friends and do activities they enjoy.

The respondents were also mostly worried about their studies. The country was unprepared for the colossal calamity that universities were instructed to close in two days before MCO. Due to this emergency, universities decided to change the delivery to virtual or online learning. This becomes burdensome to some students especially those with limited internet access. Unlike face-to-face interaction, the respondents found it less effective conducting discussion online for projects and assignments. Some even missed classes and lost focus due to poor internet connection. On top of the concerns for online delivery, respondents also worried about the topics that they have not covered, evaluation and academic performance and that they might have to extend their studies.

As this study was conducted at the beginning of the MCO period in Malaysia, it is not surprising to find the respondents reacting quite emotionally to the alarming situation. Many respondents were sad with the continuously increasing fatality in the community and the world. The total number of positive cases detected in the country also amplified by day and there was no way to ensure that a healthy person could not succumb to the virus attack. To make matters worse, media coverage on the hectic work schedule that front-liners have to endure and their separation from their family to prevent contagious spread of the virus impacted the respondents. They found it disheartening and they were also concerned if the front-liners could get adequate rest to cope with the next-day challenge. Respondents were not only emotionally affected by death and the soaring number of cases, but also how families cope with their livelihood. One respondent related how his parents had to struggle financially to make ends meet as the MCO cut off their source of income.

One respondent in this study actually referred to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak as 'war' which even most elderly Malaysians have not encountered. Indeed, war brings about the sense of loss and fear among the victims. In this study, respondents reported fear repetitively through frequency of the word 'fear', metaphoric expressions, as well as explanation or description. In relation to the abovementioned findings on the impact of movement restrictions on the nation, respondents expressed fear if the MCO would be extended due to continuously increasing cases of infections and deaths.

It was observed in the early stage of COVID-10 pandemic that the people in Malaysia were in denial and rather reluctant in adhering to the guidelines during MCO. To strengthen the enforcement, the government decided to deploy the army to assist the police force in safeguarding the nation. When this took place, the respondents felt some fear as the deployment of the army is an indication of the seriousness of COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in Malaysia. Some respondents were afraid that they would get infected by the virus.

They were also fearful that the virus would be lingering in the air in their neighborhoods. This fear of contracting the disease was not only for themselves, but also for their family.

Respondents feared for the safety of their family mainly because the virus is invisible to the human eye, and there are cases that victims were confirmed positive even without manifesting the common symptoms.

In short, the respondents in this study were burdened by the pandemic which has affected their daily routine, studies and lifestyle. Also, they were sad with the spread of the virus, and developed the sense of fear due to the alarmingly continuous increase of death and infection among the nation.

Coping Strategies Adopted by Undergraduates for Continuity of Learning

With different socio-psychological experience, it is admirable that many of the undergraduates adopted different coping strategies to remain calm, positive and content during COVID-19 pandemic and continue to complete their online learning. From the responses collected, coping strategies are categorized into four i.e., problem-focused coping strategies, emotion-focused coping strategies, socially-supported coping strategies and avoidant coping strategies with reference to the categorization made in a recent study (Zacher & Rudolph, 2020). We also include spiritually-focused coping strategies into our categorization.

Problem-focused Coping Strategies

When the MCO was announced, most students were on campus as it was in the middle of a semester. From our study, most students mentioned that the first action taken was to find a ticket back home. This is mentioned to be important to continue learning in a safer and comfortable environment. Thus one of the strategies students take for coping with learning through the pandemic is to find comfort and a safe place.

When respondents are reunited with their families, they could spend time with family members and do a lot of activities together which is a rare opportunity mostly for undergraduates who usually stay far from home. This opportunity for family get-together was brought about by the Malaysian government's instruction for all universities and schools to be closed. Hence, all siblings who have been separated due to work and studies return home which has led to the gratifying effect among family members.

It is interesting to note that most respondents seem to relate home factor with safety. Since COVID-19 pandemic is a new threat among Malaysians, knowledge about the disease was scarce in the beginning with some likely comparisons of influenza in winter season, MERS in Arab countries and SARS. Still, most of the population were caught off-guard by the sudden hike in positive cases and deaths. Amidst this panic situation, results of the study shows that most respondents found comfort and security while being close to their family at home. Besides home, the respondents also felt safe when receiving government advice and reminders regarding COVID-19 do's and don'ts. To them, adhering to the COVID-19 guidelines provided by the government can ensure safety and security during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the findings, both family and government are significant factors that give people support and trust. In desperate circumstances like COVID-19 pandemic, people need assurance and both factors tell us that we are not alone confronting this pandemic.

Besides that, respondents also mentioned that among coping strategies implemented to continue learning is to use ample time at home for exploration of new knowledge besides that is provided by lecturers. Some respondents highlighted that they explored additional materials on their courses by browsing the internet and reading books. This problem-focused strategy doesn't only benefit the respondents in terms of coping, but also expands their

knowledge. Respondents were observed to continue their passion to study and discover new knowledge frontiers. They were relieved to have ample time to do revision, learn unfamiliar topics and engage in new activities. Besides enjoying the comfort of their home, some respondents turned the period of restriction to an escape from one semester of hectic schedules appreciating the long resting period of the MCO. Some respondents highlighted the 'me-time' factor which they seemed to realize after spending time alone at home being far from the normal commitments at the university.

Some respondents incorporate a healthy lifestyle routine with physical exercise done indoors. Some of the activities done were Zumba exercises in the morning or afternoon before on-line classes started. Others incorporate skipping, stretching and short exercises routine in between on-line classes. Respondents mentioned that the physical exercises make them more refreshed and focused, and gives a break from sitting in front of the laptop.

Emotion-focused Coping Strategies

Emotion-focused coping strategies are also employed by respondents during the MCO for the continuity of learning at home. Respondents adopted a calm routine, compared to the busy campus schedule. Despite packed on-line classes, respondents mentioned that physically, the condition is more calm as there was no travelling needed to move from class to class. Respondents controlled their emotions from being stress of the new learning environment

Respondents also reported that one of the factors that stabilizes their emotion is being spiritually connected to God. The routine prayers done, makes the emotion positive and hence, respondents are able to continue learning. One of the respondents mentioned doing self-reflection from time- to time as an approach for coping with the pandemic and on-line learning environment.

Socially-supported Coping Strategies

Besides problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, respondents also sort to socially-supported coping strategies. Socially-supported coping strategies are coping behaviors that involve social interactions. Respondents mentioned that they were relieved that they are able to come back home and reunite with their family during the MCO. Respondents quoted that having family around gives them the social support and assurance that they need to face the pandemic, and coping with online learning. This is supported by Rodríguez-Pérez et. al. (2017) that highlights socially-supported coping improves quality of life.

Apart from that, one respondent mentioned that one way of being focused and content during the MCO is to involve in volunteering work. Being outside the house for volunteering purposes, for a short period of time gives a boost to motivation and fulfil her social needs, before getting back to continue her assignments and online classes. This approach is in line with the coping strategy highlighted in a study about occupational uncertainty, mentioned that volunteering may help in coping with occupational uncertainty (Pavlova & Silbereisen, 2014). In a wide longitudinal study to older adults, it is observed that volunteering for more than 100 hours/year improves psychosocial outcomes of participants (Kim et. al., 2020) hence voluntary work serve as a great coping strategy to address psychosocial stress during a pandemic.

Few respondents adapt a socially-supported coping strategy by setting up a study place for all siblings in the house to study, and hence create the study atmosphere in the house. This will help in better coping of online learning for all siblings that have classes and

assignments. Social and physical learning space is pivotal in boosting motivation towards learning.

Spiritually-focused Coping Strategies

This positivity that prevails among the respondents in the study also relates to a spiritual dimension with respondents bringing themselves closer to god, Allah the Al-Mighty. In dire times like COVID-19 pandemic when many would lose hope fighting the invisible and seemingly invincible virus, man should have faith and strong belief in the Creator. This pandemic is beyond imagination which strikes the whole world notwithstanding political or economic power, geographical territories and culture. It flattens all ranks and echelons in society, and defeats social immunities. Even royalties and celebrities were infected by the virus and some have lost the battle. According to Henrich et al. previous empirical studies have reported that patients with cancer, heart failure, family death, divorce or injury who tend to relate their illness and misfortune to God have a higher level of religious devotion (Henrich et. al., 2019). In fact, Sinding Bentzen (2019), found that religious devotion prevails on a global scale which is 'causal' in nature. Calamities and disasters cause people to find a solution from religion and religious beliefs. For example, after the disastrous fire tragedy in Australia, many people are seen to be 'turning to religion'.

Most interestingly, the findings of this present study illustrate an important religious awareness among the respondents. Despite the constraints of MCO, the respondents seemed to engage in self-reflection (*muhasabah*) which allows them to muster strength to go through the challenging period. Also, respondents seemed to allocate more time for religious activities like reciting Quran (*mengaji*) and performing their dutiful prayer (*solat*) to Allah. Despite the challenging moments of COVID-19 pandemic, the respondents could remain calm and appreciate whatever goodness (*nikmat*) that is still available for mankind in this world. Research shows that individuals who suffer from depression can overcome it by regularly observing religious practices particularly for women who have health diseases as a result of depression (Goudarzian et. al., 2017). Additionally, some studies have highlighted religious roles as a means and solution to overcome sadness and anxiety resulting from outbreaks especially in the face of traumatic events (Goudarzian et. al., 2017; Henslee et. al., 2015). In fact, religious approaches have been claimed to be able to promote well-being such as increasing self-esteem and valuing life (Park et. al., 2018). In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sinding Bentzen (2019) has found that the 'return to religion' pattern is also evident among the people globally.

Avoidant Coping Strategies

Among responses documented from respondents are avoidant coping strategies, which are strategies that respondents apply which differs from online learning. Avoidance coping involves trying to avoid stressors rather than dealing with them. In our context, we theme avoidance coping behaviors which are behaviors that avoid online learning. Some respondents mentioned filling up their time doing home chores rather than doing assignments, while others mentioned that they are not able to control always walking to the kitchen to find something to eat. According to Agha (2020), many experience change in eating habits during the lockdown. Published research identified eating as one coping strategy for patients with chronic diseases, and is harmful to health in the long run (O'Loughlin & Newton-John, 2019). One respondent mentioned that, eating while following online class and doing assignments, is to avoid sleeping. Some even decided to just sleep throughout the day, and

are not motivated to attend any classes or do any assignments. Among many factors of this are due to poor internet and connectivity, as many respondents mentioned that they only manage to follow very minimal online lectures and complete minimum assignments. Hence, students in this situation might get frustrated and turn to doing other things besides learning i.e., eating and sleeping.

A different situation occurs for a different group of respondents whereby they sought to be more engaged with online activities such as watching movies, randomly exploring the web, watching YouTube, actively engaging in social media, and playing online games. This group of respondents are presumed to have good connectivity, but are distracted from online lectures and learning, with other online activities. Distractions online is a very common challenge, as the internet is a world without barriers, and students might surf through online content seamlessly. In a study towards medical students, students who engaged in social media, during a lecture or watching pre-recorded lecture video has lower scores, and are not able to meet learning outcomes (Zureick et. al., 2018). Online learning needs commitment, and is not easy to achieve with minimum monitoring. As respondents involved in this study are undergraduates, parents seldom monitor them. Therefore, self-discipline and internal values are crucial in order to meet with online learning objectives and outcomes.

Conclusion

January 24, 2020 marks the start of this episode of Covid-19 in Malaysia with the first three cases confirmed. COVID-19 pandemic that has led to the enforcement of the movement control order (MCO) from March 18 2020 to May 12 2020 and the enforcement of the conditional movement control order (CMCO) until June 9, 2020. This study concludes that students were still shocked because they did not expect the "study leave" this time could be unusually long. Obviously, teaching and learning online is the only option for learning continuity. The effects of the MCO and the CMCO and the online teaching and learning have given rise to psychological effects among the undergraduates as they are worried about their studies, reacted quite emotionally to the alarming situation, and reported fear repetitively. Still, their passion to study prevails and they have indeed discovered new knowledge frontiers, and many more benefits come along. This study has identified that students sought four types of positive coping strategy which are problem-focused, emotion-focused, socially supported and spiritually supported strategies. One negative strategy is identified and used by students which is the avoidant coping strategy. These results are significant for decision-makers and healthcare providers to develop effective educational and psychological interventions for undergraduates to create a sense of security and to eradicate unwarranted fear related to outbreaks especially COVID-19 pandemic.

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