E-learning Mode: Benefits, barriers, and favorite platforms of ESL learners

BY

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Abstract
E-learning has fast become a popular electronic media utilized by educational institutions to conduct their educational activities virtually. This descriptive research aims to explore the ESL learners' perceived benefits and barriers faced in e-learning and identify their most favorite online platforms. For this purpose, a total of 250 ESL undergraduates from a private university in Selangor, Malaysia was selected using convenient sampling to participate in this present study. A questionnaire developed on Google form was utilized as an instrument, and a quantitative technique was applied for the data analysis. The findings show that the learners had obtained numerous benefits although they sometimes faced some common moderate barriers when attending e-learning classes. Most of the ESL learners chose Zoom, WhatsApp, and Google Classroom as the most favorite online platforms. The present study has revealed some pertinent implications for e-learning improvements, contribution to the body of knowledge, and recommendations for future research.

Index Terms- e-learning, COVID-19 pandemic, virtual learning, benefits, barriers

INTRODUCTION

E-learning tools and education delivery methods have expanded rapidly with the introduction of computers and internet in the late 20th century. "The invention of the first MAC (Macintosh computer) in the 1980s enabled individuals to have computers in their homes, making it easier for them to learn about subjects of their interest and develop computer skills" (Al Jaber & Elayyan, 2018). Subsequently, in the next decades, virtual learning environments begin to truly thrive, with people gaining access to a wealth of online information, knowledge, and opportunities. Today, e-learning is becoming more popular and pivotal than ever and is utilized extensively as people are realizing the benefits that online learning can offer. Moreover, with the occurrence of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic that has caused the closing of educational institutions, e-learning has become more vital to conduct virtual teaching and learning activities. The crisis caused by the pandemic has greatly affected the education sector globally (Dhawan, 2020). Hence, the best solution and alternative available for all educational institutions to survive and thrive during this critical time is by harnessing the e-learning platforms. Kuimova, Kiyanityna, & Truntyagin (2016) contend that e-learning is a useful apparatus that enables information sharing, and quality of instruction through the utilization of rapid instructive global properties.

Scholars have come up with comparably related definitions of e-learning. Hall and Snider (2000) characterize e-learning as the method of learning by generally means of computers over the web and intranets in a sort of significant way. They added that it is regularly referred to as web-based preparing, online preparing, disseminated learning, or innovation for education. E-learning is a "correspondence and learning works out through PCs and frameworks (electronic strategies)" in a by and large enormous way (Schank, 2002; Roffe, 2002; Tsai & Machado, 2002). The main issue during this challenging time is not about the quality and good standards of education that distance education could offer, but on how educational institutions can significantly embrace e-learning. Many educational institutions, educators, students, and education stakeholders are having a hard time adapting to and accepting this new shift in the education mode. Today, as life is gradually returning to normal after the COVID-19 pandemic, the application of e-learning in education continues to develop even more rapidly. In sum, it has become an indispensable technology in 21st century education globally.

In Malaysia, like in many other developing countries, many people are unable to experience the full benefits of e-learning. The inability of developing countries to gain these benefits has hindered lots of people from attaining further studies, improving their knowledge and lifestyle (Bukhari, 2011).

Some developing countries are making gradual attempts to utilize the beneficial of E-learning systems, however, they are unable to attain the benefits fully. For instance, Gunawardana (2011) claims that e-learning systems have become the necessity of the present time, however, some developing countries are unable to achieve the desired objectives. although they are spending a lot of resources to obtain these systems. In some states, cultures and mind-set have become a major problem in implementing e-learning systems. Several research studies carried out in this context discovered the benefits of e-learning and student perceptions on e-learning. In one of the studies, it was found that e-learning gives more advantages than disadvantages to learners (Bahramnezhad et al., 2016). Nedeva and Dimova (2010) convince that using information technologies can contribute towards 95% quality of education.

Although research on online learning has grown rapidly in the last two years, more research in this field is expected especially in the Malaysian contexts. Currently, there is limited understanding of the involuntary adoption of e-learning during the crisis (Looi, 2021), and still a lack of research in this field (Adams et al., 2018). Bakhmat, et al, (2021) highlight the insufficiency of facts and studies involving online studies at university level. Thus, the present study which involves the ESL learners of a university in Selangor, Malaysia is beneficial because they have been engaging in online learning for a year since the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. The present study is anticipated to fill in these gaps and add to the body of knowledge in e-learning. In view of the need for more research in this field of study, this present study aims to discover answers for these three research questions: (1) What are the ESL learners' perceived benefits of e-learning mode in their varsity studies? (2) What are the ESL learners' perceived barriers of e-learning mode in their varsity studies? (3) What are the most favorite online platforms of the ESL learners during virtual classes?

LITERATURE REVIEW

"E-learning is mainly referred to as the application of technology and network communication for teaching and learning" (Kulal & Nayak, 2020). It is rapidly evolving with time and the development in education. With the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, online learning has become even more essential and exploited more extensively by all educational institutions worldwide to conduct the teaching and learning processes. In the past three years, research on online learning has grown rapidly. Most of this research involved university students and researchers employed either qualitative or quantitative research designs. Most of these past studies explored three main themes which include students' thoughts on online learning (Goh & Ng, 2009; Radha et al., 2020), respondents' readiness and satisfaction towards online learning (e.g., Chung et al., 2020; Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Saleh et al., 2020) and challenges faced in online learning (e.g., Tukiman et al., 2020; Ismail et al., 2020; Ilias et al., 2020). These past studies revealed some similarities and differences in their findings.

Despite the drastic change, there are some positive effects that have emerged from the utilization of online learning mode. Several researchers have found that students have been adapting well with online learning. According to Goh and Ng's (2009) study that analyzed the thoughts of students and teachers about online learning, it was deduced that some of them found online learning to be more convenient in terms of teaching and learning at the comfort of one's home and reduced the burden in travelling back and forth to schools or universities. This indirectly also reduces the consumption of time and energy taken in the traveling. Most of the students preferred online learning because they could listen to the recording of the lecture even after the class and did not have to worry about being left behind. On the other hand, the teachers claimed that online learning enabled them to take up a new challenge in adventuring the technology world and they learnt as well as gained a lot on how to incorporate technology-based lessons and materials into their teaching (Goh & Ng, 2009). This finding is supported by Radha et al (2020) who also discovered that students had a generally positive thought about e-learning, and there was also an overwhelming interest and increase in the use of e-learning programs for academic purposes.

Similarly, some literature on students' readiness and satisfaction towards online learning show positive findings. Chung et al (2020) who performed a study on online learning readiness among Malaysian university students discovered that they were between slightly to moderately ready for online learning. Females were found to have better readiness than males. Besides, female students and degree students had better satisfaction with online learning and possess better learning experiences than male and diploma students. Likewise, Anwar et al (2020) also found that students had positive acceptance and readiness for distance learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic**.** According to the findings, most of the 152 respondents were willing to engage in online courses actively. They preferred social media platforms such as WhatsApp as a means of communicating with their lecturers. Many respondents recommended the Google Classroom application as the preferred online platform for teaching and learning. Furthermore, majority of the students favoured platforms with low data applications such as WhatsApp and Google Classroom due to a moderate strength of internet connection at their place.

In addition, there are some conflicting findings in past studies. Saleh et al (2020) found that majority of the students were pleased with online learning and only a small number of students was dissatisfied in a study that explored about student satisfaction for online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The overall findings of the analysis indicated that student contact with lecturers resulted in a high level of satisfaction. The level of communication with peers, on the other hand, was insufficient. However, contradictory findings were obtained by Selvanathan, Hussin, and Azazi (2020) who gauged the university students' learning experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown with the implementation of online learning in Malaysia. For this study, 384 students were

sampled from 12 independent public and private universities. It was discovered that students were incredibly dissatisfied because they were unable to interrupt lecturers during class. During online teaching, there were several obstacles to the interaction between lecturers and students. Furthermore, a restricted internet access made online teaching more difficult for students in rural areas. The students were also dissatisfied with the group interaction during the pandemic. However, a case study by Kamal, et al. (2020) discovered that students' positivity about online learning had improved during the pandemic, and online learning had enhanced students' participation despite the challenges faced.

Past studies also employed a mixed-methods research design to complement the weaknesses of both the quantitative and qualitative research designs. For example, Aguilera-Hermida (2020) performed a mixed-methods research on 270 college students' use and acceptability of emergency online learning during the pandemic. According to the findings, students' attitudes, motivation, self-efficacy, and technological use all have a role in their cognitive participation and academic performance. It was also found that students' excitement dropped when they moved to online learning, and engagement was a motivating element for students. In the qualitative data, students stated that a lack of communication with instructors and other students was an issue for them. In contrast, Baber's (2020) research claims that online learning boosts student engagement and satisfaction while also lowering online course dropouts.

Evidently, numerous literatures reveal that there are many difficulties and challenges faced by students in following online learning. A literature review by Islam et al. (2015) categorised the e-learning challenges that higher education institutions faced into five main categories which include learning style and cultural challenges, pedagogical e-learning challenges, technological challenges, technical training challenges, and time management challenges. In their study, Tukiman et al (2020) found that students felt that online learning was inferior to face-to-face learning. The findings revealed that the challenges students faced could be categorised as the internet facility, electronic devices, and self-discipline. Among other challenges, majority of the students had bad internet coverage to follow the online learning effectively. This finding is supported by Ismail et al (2020) who also found that majority of students experienced difficulties accessing the Internet. The most serious issue and impediment, however, was that many students lacked both internet access and proper mobile devices. This is also supported by Chung et al (2020) who found that the degree students faced internet connectivity as the biggest challenge while diploma students found it difficult to understand the subject content.

Also, Ilias et al (2020) conducted an exploratory study during the Covid-19 pandemic among 147 students from 16 Malaysian universities using various online platforms. According to the results, seven challenges could limit students' willingness to use online learning. The concerns raised include the administrator's appraisal, accessibility

issues that impede social interaction, technical issues, poor internet connections, and insufficient storage capacity. This finding is supported by Muslimin and Harintama (2020) who found that students were facing poor internet access, competing interests, a limited WhatsApp functionality, and anxiety. Similarly, Aboagye et al (2020) also discovered that accessibility issues were the main challenge for students to study online, followed by numerous other issues such social, lecturer, academic, and generic issues. They conclude that students were not prepared for an online learning experience in this pandemic era.

This analysis and synthesis of literature shows that there are some similarities and differences in the findings of past studies on e-learning. This is due to the different research contexts and sample employed by the researchers. Thus, further research in this field of study is beneficial as past findings related to e-learning, especially in Malaysia have not been conclusive. The present study is anticipated to fill in these gaps and add to the body of knowledge in e-learning.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design that utilised the quantitative method for its data collection and analysis. By employing a convenient sampling method, 250 respondents of ESL learners from a total population of 609 participated in this study. They were year 1, 2, and 3 of Bachelor of Education in Teaching English as a Second Language (BTESL) undergraduates of a private university in Selangor. A questionnaire was employed as the data collection method for this study. It consists of two sections - Section A consists of demographic items such as gender, age, year of study, etc., and an item on their most favorite online platform. Section B consists of 7 items adapted from Arkorful and Abaidoo (2014) about the benefits of using e-learning while Section C consists of 10 items adapted from Nambiar (2020) about the barriers of e-learning in a higher learning institution. All the items in Section B and C were rated based on the 5-point Likert scale: The scales for Section B items are 1- Strongly Disagree, 2 -Disagree, 3 -Neutral, 4- Agree, and 5 -Strongly Agree; and Section C items are scaled as 1 - Never, 2 – Rare, 3 – Sometimes, 4 - Often, and 5 - Very Often. The result of the pilot study that was conducted a week before the actual study involving 30 participants had proven that the instrument has an acceptable reliability with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.77. The questionnaire was administered using Google form entitled "E-learning mode: Benefits, barriers, and favorite platforms of ESL learners." The questionnaire was distributed through WhatsApp application to all the respondents. All the 250 respondents of this research responded to the questionnaire. It takes approximately 20 minutes to answer this questionnaire, and to meet the ethical concern, students were required to sign a consent form of participation in this research. For the data analysis, this study employed descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, table, and figure. The data collected from all the 250 ESL participants was computed using SPSS version 25.0 to determine the results of this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The E-learning benefits of the ESL learners

This section reports the analysis on the ESL learners' benefits of E-learning in a higher learning institution. The researcher posted and shared the link of the questionnaire through WhatsApp application. All the 250 respondents responded to the questionnaire. The data obtained was computed into SPSS version 25.0 and then the descriptive analysis (frequency and percentage) was run to generate the results of the study.

The results of the descriptive analysis in Table 1 reveal that the participants had positive perceptions on the benefits of utilizing e-learning. Majority of them strongly agree and agree that e-learning gives no time barrier (148/59.2%; 53/21.2%), offers an interactive learning mode (163/65.2%; 25/10%), enhances computer and internet skills (151/60.4%; 148/59.2%), provides fun and good learning experience (148/59.2%; 32/23.2%), makes lesson more organized (158/55.2%; 39/15.6%), provides different learning styles (149/59.6%; 35/14%) and makes lesson more effective compared to the traditional face to face (143/57.2%; 43/17.2%). However, quite a high number or percentage of the participants i.e., more than 10% (between 27 – 42) were uncertain with all the items.

The E-learning Barriers of the ESL learners

This section analyses the ESL learners' perceived barriers of using e-learning. All the 250 respondents responded to the questionnaire. The data obtained was computed into SPSS version 25.0 and the descriptive analysis (Frequency and Percentage) was run to generate the results of the study.

Table 2 shows that majority of the participants stated that they 'Sometimes' encountered 7 of the 10 barriers of e-learning in this study. Based on their sequence (from the highest to the lowest), it is revealed that they sometimes faced barriers in terms of poor internet coverage (120/48%), difficulties attending group discussion (100/40%), technical problems (92/36.8%), distractions during online classes (85/34%), facing problems attending online classes (85/34%), feeling sleepy during online classes (83/33.2%), and difficult to jot down notes (79/31.6%). Overall, the ESL learners of the present study experienced the highest three barriers in terms of distractions (40+73+85 = 198/79.2%), hard to jot down notes (39+60+79 = 178/71.2%), and difficulties in attending group discussion (27+47+100 = 174/69.6%). In sum, the ESL learners of the higher learning institution in this present study encountered some common moderate barriers in e-learning as majority of them stated 'Sometimes' for all the 7 barriers.

The most favorite online platforms of the ESL learners during virtual classes.

To identify the most favorite online platforms preferred during online learning, all the 250 TESL learners were asked to mark their best choice from the six types of online tools listed.

Table 1: The e-learning benefits of ESL learners

Items	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. E-learning gives no time barrier as it allows students to learn anywhere at any time.	148	59.2	53	21.2	27	10.8	5	2.0	17	6.8
2. E-learning offers an interactive mode of learning.	163	65.2	25	10	34	13.6	15	6.0	13	5.2
3. E-learning enhances my computer and Internet skills.	151	60.4	58	23.2	25	10.0	7	2.8	9	3.6
4. E-learning provides fun and good learning experience.	148	59.2	32	12.8	42	16.8	19	7.6	9	3.6
5. E-learning helps me to make my lesson more organised.	158	55.2	39	15.6	32	12.8	32	12.8	9	3.6
6. E-learning provides me with different learning styles.	149	59.6	35	14.0	30	12.0	20	8.0	16	6.4
7. E-learning makes my lesson more effective compared to the traditional face-to-face.	143	57.2	43	17.2	29	11.6	19	7.6	16	6.4

Table 2: The e-learning barriers of ESL learners

| Items	5 Very Often		4 Often		3 Sometimes		2 Rare		1 Never	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. I have technical problems with my device.	20	8.0	33	13.2	92	36.8	76	30.4	29	11.6
2. Interaction between my lecturer and I is reduced.	35	14.0	31	12.4	23	9.2	31	12.4	130	52.0
3. Interaction between my friends and I is reduced.	35	14.0	26	10.4	29	11.6	27	10.8	133	53.2
4. I feel sleepy during online classes.	37	14.8	44	17.6	83	33.2	60	24.0	26	10.4
5. I get distracted during online classes.	40	16.0	73	29.2	85	34.0	41	16.4	11	4.4
6. I don't feel connected with my university and lecturers using e-learning.	41	16.4	21	8.4	26	10.4	32	12.8	130	52.0
7. I have poor internet coverage during online classes.	19	7.6	34	13.6	120	48.0	65	26.0	12	4.8
8. I face difficulties attending group discussion through online platform.	27	10.8	47	18.8	100	40. 0	52	20.8	24	9.6
9. I find it hard to jot down notes during online classes.	39	15.6	60	24.0	79	31.6	48	19.2	24	9.6
10. I face problems attending my online classes.	32	12.8	31	12.4	85	34.0	55	22.0	47	18.8
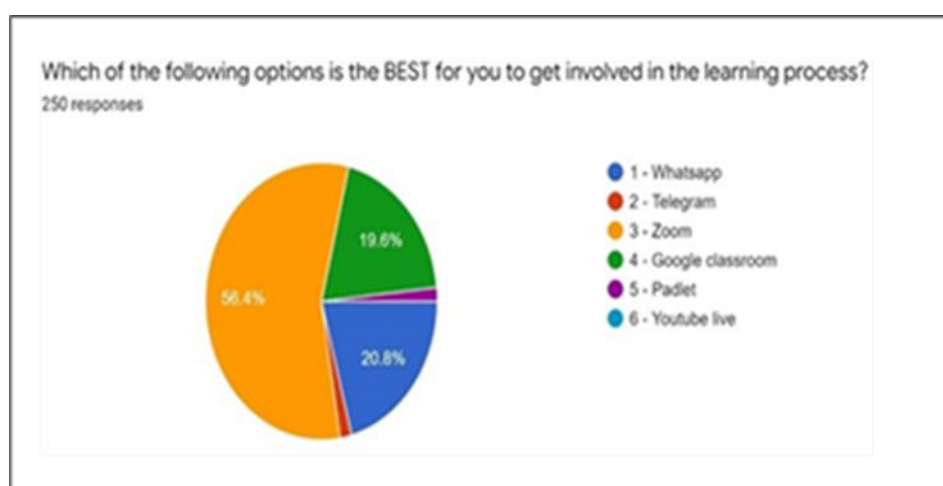
Figure 1. The respondents' most favorite online platforms

Figure 1 shows that 56.4% or 141 respondents stated Zoom as their most favorite online platform. The other two popular platforms are WhatsApp and Google Classroom with 20.8% or 52 respondents and 19.6% or 49 respondents respectively

Discussion

The results of the present study indicate that the ESL undergraduates have positive perceptions on the utilization of e-learning in their university studies. Majority of the students claim that they have gained important benefits from online learning in terms of the absence of time barrier, enhancement of ICT skills, providing interactive, fun, and good learning experience, providing different learning styles, and enabling a more organized and effective lesson compared to the traditional face to face. This is in disparity with a recent finding by El-Sayed Ebaid's (2020) study which discovered that majority of the students claimed that they did not benefit from e-learning. However, many past studies (e.g., Mamattah, 2016; Rahim & Chandran, 2021; Darius, Gundabattini & Solomon, 2021; Nazilah et al., 2021) support the present findings. Mamattah (2016) established that e-learning platform and tools are perceived to be easy to use and concluded that students have very good technological abilities that ease their participation in e-learning. Furthermore, in a recent study, students perceived e-learning mode as a better substitute to conventional face-to-face classrooms (Rahim & Chandran, 2021). This is supported by Darius, Gundabattini, and Solomon (2021) who also found that many factors contributed to the effectiveness of online learning. Nazilah et al. (2021) revealed that majority of the respondents in their study agreed that the online learning approach was essential during the pandemic because they could continue their studies, it was safer to study at home, and it helped meeting the requirements to graduate on time. This finding is consistent with Kostaki and Karayianni's (2022) finding that students enjoyed time efficiency and home comfort the most in online learning. Thus, the present findings approved that e-learning is a convenient method that offers many benefits to undergraduates in their studies in the higher learning institution, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite the numerous benefits gained, the ESL undergraduates are also facing some common moderate barriers in e-learning. This ascertains the finding by Kaisara & Bwalya (2021) that "e-learning is still faced by a myriad of challenges that need to be addressed if it is to be a success." In the present findings, most of the ESL learners sometimes encountered four main categories of e-learning barriers which include distractions, technological issues, health-related issue, and personal issues. These findings are supported by findings of some past studies (e.g., Gyampoh et al, 2020; Mut, Zain, & Mohd, 2020; Dangal & Maharjan, 2021; Kostaki & Karayianni, 2022; Subon & Baskaran 2022 etc.). The ESL learners of the present study experienced the highest barrier in terms of distractions during e-learning. This finding is supported by Coman, et al. (2020) who also found that the students easily get distracted and lose focus because teachers do not have effective implemented strategies. This is further strengthened by Kostaki and Karayianni (2022) who discovered that the main concern in online learning was reduced focus and technical problems. In terms of technological issues, most of the present participants perceived that they had poor internet coverage, encountered technical problems, and faced problems attending online classes. This ascertained the finding by Gyampoh et al, (2020) that both learners and lecturers go through technical issues during the virtual classes due to the unstable connection and absence of digital knowledge. Furthermore, Mut, Zain, and Mohd (2020) also found that the problems caused by the poor internet speed and quota affected the e-learning effectiveness.

Third, the participants of the present study also sometimes encounter health-related issues in e-learning. The participants admit that they feel sleepy during online class which might be because of insufficient sleep, or insomnia. This health-related issue is supported by Dangal and Maharjan (2021) who ascertained that both lecturers and students faced various health issues which include back pain, neck pain, eye pain, headache, insomnia, and anxiety. Finally, the learners also faced personal issues like difficulties in attending group discussion and hard to jot down notes during online classes. This could be due to the distractions that they faced and their inability to keep focused during e-learning. However, there are a few conflicting findings with past studies related to personal issues in terms of interaction and communication with the lecturers, friends, and the university which were not affected in the present study. These new findings are in contrast with the findings by Coman, et. al. (2020) who found that there is a lack of students' interaction especially with teachers. Besides, other past studies (e.g., Akyildiz, Kak, & Nie, 2020; Bisht, Jasola, Bisht, 2020; Selvanathan, Hussin, & Azazi, 2020) also found the lack of communication and interaction with peers, lecturers and faculty staff are some of the challenges faced by students in the online mode of education. Thus, it can be perceived that the present participants probably had better adaptability with the new norm and e-learning as this study was conducted in early 2021 when people had gradually been able to adapt with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is an important finding as it reveals that learners and educators have gradually been able to adapt and accept this new education mode, especially with all the positive benefits it has to offer.

Finally, from among the six online tools listed in this study, most of the respondents prefer Zoom as their most favorite online platform. This is followed by WhatsApp and Google Classroom. This present finding is supported by Khair Anwar et al (2020) who also found that students preferred social media platforms such as WhatsApp as a means of communicating with their lecturers. Besides, he also discovered that majority of the students favoured platforms with low data applications such as WhatsApp and Google Classroom due to a moderate strength of internet connection at their place. Many respondents recommended the Google Classroom application as the preferred online platform for teaching and learning. However, in contrast, Darius, Gundabattini, and Solomon (2021) contend that G Suite for education and Microsoft Teams are employed widely by schools and colleges to conduct classes online during the COVID-19 pandemic. In view of students' preference of online tools for e-learning, it is fundamental for higher

institutions to meet the needs of their learners by adopting the most suitable platforms, and ones which are more affordable in terms of data consumption. Importantly, higher learning institutions need to accommodate the needs of wide and diverse learners because the effectiveness of course delivery depends on the suitability of the tools utilized in engaging the learners and catering to their diverse learning styles (Darius, Gundabattini, & Solomon, 2021). With a plethora of online tools available, it poses a challenge for decision-makers, higher institution management, educators, and teachers to choose the best tools for online teaching and learning.

In sum, the result from this present study shows that the ESL undergraduates approved that e-learning brings many benefits despite facing some common and moderate barriers in utilizing it in their learning. Most of the respondents preferred Zoom, followed by WhatsApp, and Google Classroom as their most favorite online platforms. The participants of the present study were perceived to be more adaptable and receptive of the new shift in the education mode as they had experienced the impact of COVID-19 for a year when the study was conducted. Hence, this is an important development that portrays the positive implication of the pandemic which has brought a new paradigm shift in education around the globe in the 21st century.

Implications

The findings of the present study leave some positive implications on the implementation of e-learning by institutions of higher learning. The respondents' positive perceptions can help to alleviate negative interpretations about the utilization of e-learning in institutions of higher learning. Besides, these findings also can help to support the implementation of universities' online programs such as blended learning, flipped classroom, ODL (Open and Distance Learning), micro-credentials, MOOC, and other online courses. Hence, these present research findings enable educators and students to comprehend that E-learning can bring many positive benefits with their adaptability and acceptance of the new shift in education delivery. The findings on the barriers faced also enable the university and lecturers to understand the obstacles faced by learners in e-learning and they can take necessary measures to overcome them for a more effective implementation that can meet their learners' learning needs. Moreover, it can create awareness among decision-makers, higher institution managements, educators, and teachers to employ the most suitable online tools that can meet the learners' needs and ease their learning process in the new education mode.

Limitation of Study

This study was only conducted among the ESL undergraduates of one university in Selangor, therefore, the results may not be applicable to other universities and programs. Besides that, the findings are not conclusive as this is a descriptive study which only attempted to describe one specific phenomenon i.e., the perceptions of ESL undergraduates on the benefits, barriers, and favorite platforms utilized in e-learning.

CONCLUSION

This present study ascertains the findings of some earlier studies and offers a few new findings that add to the body of knowledge. The participants, namely the ESL learners of the university involved adopt positive perception towards the utilization of e-learning. They perceive positively that e-learning offers many benefits as an alternative teaching and learning method for the traditional face-to-face instruction. It helps to ease the learning process as it is free from any time barrier, offers an interactive learning mode, enhances technological skills, provides beneficial learning experience and learning styles, and propels a more organized and effective lesson. Despite the benefits, the undergraduates are not exempted from facing the common barriers of e-learning. However, the challenges faced are moderate as compared to challenges found by past studies because this present study is conducted when the COVID-19 pandemic has been around for almost a year. Although the positive COVID-19 cases have continuously reached four figures since December 2020 and the state of emergency was declared in Malaysia from January to August 2021 to curb and address the spread of the virus, educational institutions, educators, and students have become more adaptable and receptive, and experience the benefits of online education mode. They encounter moderate barriers mainly in terms of distractions, technological issues, health-related issues, and personal issues. Practically, these Gen-Z learners do not face serious technological issues as they possess technological and digital literacy, able to interact and communicate with their lecturers, friends, and the university. However, learners who encounter the three highest barriers in e-learning namely distractions and personal issues such as hard to jot down notes, and difficulties in attending group discussion still need positive support and attention from decision-makers, the management of the university and their lecturers in order to gain the optimum benefits and success in employing this e-learning platform. It can be concluded from this present study that the respondents are positive about utilizing the e-learning mode. In view of this present study's implications, educational institutions should make a gradual preparation in terms of human resources and technological resources to face this new paradigm shift in education to avoid any negative impact on students' learning, academic performance, and achievement. As a recommendation, future researchers should choose a bigger sample size from different programs or universities as the current study's sample was only 250 respondents from the same university and program. Besides, a mixed research methods can be employed to obtain richer data and triangulations can be implemented to gain more impactful results.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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