

Pandemic COVID-19 and E-Learning in Higher Education: Creative Art Student's Experiences

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Abstract: With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education's learning environment is shifting toward online education. There are no exceptions when it comes to teaching and studying dance art in institutions. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of an e-learning system for learning and pedagogical purposes, as well as the students' attitudes toward knowledge sharing. As a result, the research was conducted to ascertain undergraduate students' programs in the field of art (dance and theater) education in Malaysian public universities. A quantitative study was conducted to assess undergraduate students' practices during the semester at Malaysian public universities, with a particular emphasis on student's readiness to adapt the online dance art learning. The study discovered that art students in higher education used social media platform and online networking to strengthen their art performances and technical skills. However, majority of the students showed less readiness to online learning and their experiences participating in it as part of their academic studies.

Keywords: E-learning, Higher education, COVID-19, Performance students, Art education

Introduction

The pandemic of Covid-19 that has engulfed the world today has jolted a country's economic, political, and social systems as a result of the implementation of a movement control order (MCO) or Lock Down (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). Considering the mode of transmission of the Covid-19 epidemic in Malaysia, one of the most effective prevention methods at the moment is to restrict community movement in order to break the epidemic's chain. However, this prevention strategy has had a substantial impact, particularly on the education sector. As a result, teaching and learning methods are shifting toward online learning, particularly at the tertiary level (Atabey, 2021; Hu & Huang, 2022; Kamal et al. 2020; Sia & Adamu 2020; Xhelili et al., 2021). This rapid change has created a new challenge for the tertiary education field, as online teaching and learning approaches have been implemented weakly to date.

The availability of higher education institutions in re-blending the teaching and learning process through online methods is an issue that needs to be seen and investigated further at this moment (Chung et al, 2020, Alqabbani

et al 2020; Widodo et al 2020). The implementation of online teaching and learning methods, or distance education, as recommended by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE), also has an effect on teaching and learning methods in practical courses such as performing arts courses, particularly theatre and dance, at Universiti Malaysia Sabah's Creative Arts Program, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. This has sparked discussions among academics, particularly in the fields of dance and theatre, about the method's quality and effectiveness in terms of knowledge transfer and student acceptance. Additionally, the availability of students to learn this new standard is considered by examining aspects of self-inclination, infrastructure facilities, self-study skills, motivation, technological skills, and perceived usefulness by students.

Significance of the Study

Online teaching and learning methods, also known as e-learning, are the most effective way to ensure that the student learning process continues uninterrupted during a pandemic. This new method is intended to ensure that the educational system continues to operate normally and does not interfere with students' studies. However, the benefits and drawbacks of this new normative educational system must be considered. As a result, the purpose of this study was to gather information about the availability of dance and theatre students in the Creative Arts Program (HA11) on online teaching and learning methods, also known as e-learning, since the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world.

Student experience is an important aspect that needs to be evaluated to help improve the quality of e-learning in universities, which will help strengthen this study. This is the first study to focus on the learning experiences of dance and theatre students in the UMS Creative Arts Program. Furthermore, this study will be conducted in real-time, providing an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of online teaching and learning, or e-learning, on dance and theatre students of the Creative Arts Program, UMS. This study's objectives are as follows: i) understand the online learning methods of students' choice; ii) assess the level of readiness of students for online learning methods through self-efficacy, subjective norms, experience, perception ease of use, perceived usefulness, and behavioral intention. Besides from that, iii) this study identifies the challenges and values that students face in continuing to use online learning methods or e-learning in the future.

Definition of Creative Arts Studies

The term "Creative Arts" refers to a variety of disciplines and expertise in art fields such as modern and traditional literature, film (documentary, video, and television), music, design art, and even dance and theatre performing arts (Mills 2014; Chen, 2016). The Creative Arts Program (HA11) is one of 11 study programmes offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS). The Creative Arts Program is also an interdisciplinary programme that combines three (3) major disciplines, namely writing, theatre, and dance (Undergraduate Prospectus UMS, 2020). This program's curriculum is specifically designed to improve and develop students' balanced skills in the theoretical and practical aspects of art, as well as having high analytical, research, and art perception skills. Aside from that, the programme prepares students to be more

creative and critical both inside and outside of the professional studio as artists, managers, and researchers.

Throughout this study, the term "Creative Arts" refers to current dance and theater students who are studying in the Creative Arts Program (HA11), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, UMS. Dance and theatre students specialise in the performing arts (Rajan, 2012; Bezrucka, 2011). Both of these disciplines, however, have their own areas of expertise and advantages. Both of these disciplines necessitate demonstrations, practical sessions, tutorials, spectacles, discussions, presentations, and field trips as methods of instruction. This clearly shows the importance of practical methods in imparting and receiving knowledge and skills.

Methodology

The research was carried out from April 2020 to December 2020, a period of nine (9) months. The online survey method is one of the methods used, with theatre and dance students from the Creative Arts Program, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, UMS serving as respondents. A total of 29 question items were processed and divided into six (6) important factors to determine students' availability and attitudes toward online teaching and learning methods, or e-learning, during the pandemic. Self-efficacy, subjective norms, experience, perception ease of use, perceived usefulness, and behavioral intention to use are among the six (6) factors considered in achieving the study's objectives. Apart from that, this study examines the factors that contribute to student learning, such as computers, a stable internet connection, and a variety of other factors that may influence their learning process when using online teaching and learning methods, or e-learning. The data collected will be presented in frequency and percentage form to determine students' readiness for online learning and to better understand the obstacles they face, which will provide some insight into how to conduct successful online teaching and learning sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results

The study surveyed two groups of respondents: dance students (35.5 %) and theatre students (64.5 %). Both groups total 31 individuals and are a special target group because only this group of students participated in practical courses from April to December 2020. The percentage of respondents is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Percentage of Respondents

Major Students	Frequency	Percent (%)
Theatre	20	69
Dance	11	31

Self-Efficacy

The total percentage of respondents' feedback to the five-point Likert scale questions is shown in Table 2. The

overall mean value for self-propensity (3.40) was acceptable, indicating that a large proportion of students possessed high levels of confidence and perseverance when confronted with difficulties, and that student performance was unaffected directly by the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of students (54.8 %) are proficient in using the e-learning platform (SmartV3UMS), and computer self-efficacy (58.1 %) is high among creative arts students.

Table 2. Student Self-Efficacy

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Quite Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
I can use the e-learning system (Google Classroom/ SmartV3UMS) without the guidance of others.	3.2%	3.2%	16.1%	54.8%	22.6%	3.90
I can use the e-learning system only guided by online instructions as a reference.	0.0%	6.5%	32.3%	48.4%	12.9%	3.68
I am able to deal with any technical problems when using the e-learning system.	0.0%	9.7%	25.8%	58.1%	6.5%	3.61
I can use the e-learning system even if I have never used the system before.	3.2%	25.8%	51.8%	16.1%	3.2%	2.90
I can use the e-learning system at any time.	6.5%	22.6%	48.4%	19.4%	3.2%	2.90
Overall mean						3.40

Subjective Norm

When subjective norms are considered, the data collection results indicate that the overall mean score for subjective norms is 3.48. This indicates that the student environment has an effect on students' readiness to use online for educational purposes (Table 3), particularly in terms of lecturer idol (61.3 %) and peer influence (51.6 %). To ensure that students are effectively prepared for online learning, lecturers and faculty must play an important role in not only monitoring student engagement in online classes but also modelling changes in educational styles to serve as an example to students, particularly in terms of roles. Students may also feel less stressed if they have the support and good communication of their peers and lecturers to complete assigned tasks.

Table 3. Percentage of students 'subjective norms

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Quite Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
My lecturer thought and expected me to use an e-learning system.	0.0%	9.7%	45.2%	35.5%	9.7%	3.45
My peers thought and expected me to use an e-learning system	3.2%	6.5%	51.6%	32.3%	6.5%	3.32
The management of my University/Faculty thinks and expects me to use the e-learning system.	3.2%	12.9%	38.7%	41.9%	3.2%	3.29
Generally, I will do what is expected by the lecturer on the use of e-learning system	0.0%	3.2%	22.6%	61.3%	12.9%	3.84
Overall mean						3.48

Experience

Students were given the opportunity to express their opinions on various aspects of their online learning experience via the survey form distributed, as shown in Table 4. According to the data collected, the majority of students (58.1%) expressed a high level of satisfaction with the use of computers in class. Meanwhile, 41.9 % and 38.7 % of students, respectively, agreed that they possess ICT skills necessary for conducting online learning, including internet operation, IT equipment, and software skills. However, students majoring in the creative arts (38.7 %) may have difficulty navigating and adapting to the screen display of e-learning platforms, particularly references and reading materials stored in the platform dashboard. Overall, the mean for student experience is 3.32, indicating that the majority of students have a low level of self-involvement, which should be considered by the programme and institution because it indicates students' unwillingness to fully transition to online teaching and learning methods.

Table 4. Percentage of student's experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Quite Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
I enjoy using computers	0.0%	16.1%	25.8%	58.1%	0.0%	3.42
I learned to use the Internet	0.0%	19.4%	29.0%	41.9%	0.0%	3.32
I am adept at saving and finding files online	0.0%	19.4%	38.7%	35.5%	6.5%	3.29
I enjoy using email	0.0%	16.1%	38.7%	41.9%	3.2%	3.32
I know how to upload and download files online	9.7%	12.9%	29.0%	38.7%	9.7%	3.26
Overall mean						3.32

Perceived Ease of Use

Aspects such as ease of use are also included in this analysis. This is because the majority of respondents indicated that they encountered numerous difficulties while implementing online teaching and learning, or e-learning. As displayed in Table 5, the overall mean (2.83) of students reporting on constraints encountered during online teaching and learning or in-progress e-learning. According to the data collected, 48.4 % of students reported that the e-learning system made learning difficult, while 41.9 % reported having difficulty obtaining required information. Additionally, 61.3 % of students reported having difficulty interacting with the e-learning system, and another 61.3 % stated that the e-learning system was not user friendly.

Table 5. Percentage of student's perceived ease of use

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Quite Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
The e-learning system simplifies my learning process.	9.7%	29.0%	48.4%	9.7%	3.2%	2.68
The e-learning system makes it easy for me to get the information I need.	6.5%	16.1%	41.9%	25.8%	9.7%	3.16
Interaction in e-learning system is clear and easy to understand.	16.1%	35.5%	38.7%	6.5%	3.2%	2.45
I find that e-learning systems are flexible to interact with.	9.7%	16.1%	61.3%	12.9%	0.0%	2.77
It was easy for me to become proficient in using e-learning systems.	6.5%	19.4%	58.1%	16.1%	0.0%	2.84
The e-learning system is easy to use.	6.5%	6.5%	61.3%	22.6%	3.2%	3.10
Overall mean						2.83

Perceived Usefulness

When the perceived use of practical courses is considered, the mean value (2.63) indicates that several factors, as listed in Table 6, have a major impact on respondents' readiness. According to the data collected, the majority of students (35.5%) believe that online teaching and learning techniques, or e-learning, would assist them in completing their assignments more quickly. Additionally, students expressed dissatisfaction with the online teaching and learning method, or e-learning, which helped them increase the effectiveness of learning dance and theatre by 58.1%. Similarly, the factor enhancing the effectiveness of dance and theatre art learning scored 48.4 %, the factor simplifying my learning scored 58.1%, and the factor assisting with practical learning in dance and theatre art courses scored 35.5%.

Table 6. Percentage of perceived usefulness of students

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Quite Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
The use of e-learning system to help me complete my tasks faster.	6.5%	35.5%	35.5%	19.4%	3.2%	2.77
The use of e-learning system improved my learning performance.	12.9%	19.4%	58.1%	9.7%	0.0%	2.65
The use of e-learning system increased my learning effectiveness.	9.7%	29.0%	48.4%	9.7%	3.2%	2.68
The use of e-learning system made my learning easier.	9.7%	22.6%	51.8%	12.9%	3.2%	2.77
I feel the e-learning system helpful to my learning in courses that require hands-on (practical) a lot.	25.8%	35.5%	25.8%	9.7%	3.2%	2.29
Overall mean						2.63

Behavioral Intention to Use

The results collected show that behavioral intention to use this online learning method is relatively low, with a mean of 2.64. The majority of students (45.2%) expressed slight interest in utilizing online learning methods for exams and assignment completion. Additionally, 38.7% and 45.7% of students, respectively, expressed low expectations for future use of online learning for dance and theatre courses. Furthermore, the dance and theatre students recorded a 58.1% possibility with not recommending the use of e-learning systems to field peers. Table 7 illustrates this percentage.

Table 7. Percentage of Behavioral Intention to Use of students

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Quite Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
I intend to use the e-learning system in preparation for exams and completing assignments	3.2%	32.3%	45.2%	16.1 %	3.2%	2.84
I plan to use e-learning system in the future.	12.9%	38.7%	35.5%	9.7%	3.2%	2.52
I will use the e-learning system more often in the future.	12.9%	29.0%	45.2%	9.7%	3.2%	2.52
I would recommend the use of e-learning systems to others.	12.9%	19.4%	58.1%	6.5%	3.2%	2.68
Overall mean						2.64

Discussion

The e-learning method has benefited dance and theatre students by allowing them to continue their education during the COVID-19 pandemic period. In general, the study's findings show that students' preparation for online learning ranges from minimal to moderate, with a large number of them being poorly prepared. Students in dance and theatre arts have shown a low degree of satisfaction with online learning and a low perception of its efficacy. Moreover, the majority of students indicated that they would not pursue online learning in the upcoming semester if given the option. As a result, the low level of readiness may be a result of a variety of factors relating to the infrastructure and instructor training provided.

The most challenging factor for students is internet connectivity (Isa and Latiff, 2020; Chung et al., 2020; Choong, 2020); this is also a barrier encountered in online learning among dance and theatre students of the Creative Arts Program, UMS, particularly those living in rural areas. Students in rural areas (Lee, 2020) will face additional challenges due to inadequate internet connections and limited broadband data. Correspondingly, students face computer hardware issues, as their computing devices are incapable of meeting the demands of online education. Students' economic circumstances are also a significant constraint, particularly for those from low-income families B40 (Free Malaysia Today 2020; Imm, 2021). The majority of dance and theatre students rely on faculty-provided facilities such as studio space, equipment, computer labs, and room. They no longer have access to this facility due to movement control orders (MCOs) and must rely on scarce facility alternatives.

According to the statistical analysis, the major challenges to online learning for dance and theatre arts students during the COVID-19 pandemic period were ease of use and perceived usability. Although students have a high level of computer self-efficacy, they need to improve their fundamental and intermediate computer skills, particularly in order to deal with technical issues such as screen display management of the operations, browsers, application mechanisms, and navigation that they encounter when using e-learning platforms. One of the difficulties for dance and theatre students to immerse themselves in online learning systems seems to be the unconducive and unfriendly platform environment.

Another concern is the behavioral intent of online learning; dance and theatre students prefer face-to-face learning for future education. They find face-to-face learning more comfortable and enjoyable because they receive immediate feedback and input while they are learning. It is also closely related to internet network issues caused by slow internet, which limits live broadcasts of classes in Google Meet, Webex, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams, preventing students from participating in online learning sessions. Internet speed also has an effect on their ability to download content, complete quizzes, and exams as part of their studies.

Conclusion, Recommendation and Future Work

The high level of acceptance, strong infrastructure facilities, the ability of e-learning teaching mode to achieve

learning outcomes, and technical support to support the use of e-learning as a teaching method are all crucial to the learning achievement of dance and theatre students in both theoretical and practical aspects of performing arts. To increase dance and theatre students' readiness, universities should hold more computer skills training sessions to equip both students and lecturers with the tools necessary to be more effective in receiving and delivering online learning content. The university's help desk and technical infrastructure may make it easier for students to receive assistance and referrals to online learning.

Correspondingly, universities' online platform for online teaching and learning must be enhanced with learning environment-appropriate features that enable academics and students to manage resources, obtain information, and actively participate in learning activities. Thusly, strengthening the university platform minimizes the issue of students having to deal with multiple platforms that do not meet the needs of local students. For the better part, the university's primary objective should be to enhance internet connectivity; as reported by Chung et al. (2020), the university's speed and internet system are critical for ensuring more successful learning. Students are permitted to return to university dormitories during a long-term pandemic period. As a result, expanding internet connectivity on campus is essential for fostering a more positive attitude toward and acceptance of new technologies in the educational process.

Satisfaction with online learning also requires additional investigation using various instruments such as interview sessions and factors to improve the platform's suitability for education in terms of display and function, particularly for dance and theatre learning. Alternatively, when developing platforms for e-learning systems, designers, researchers, and students should be consulted in order to arrive at collaborative solutions to the challenges of e-learning for dance and theatre students. Further research on students' academic performance is necessary to determine the efficacy of online education in the field of dance and theatre arts. By raising awareness and guiding art students toward IR 4.0, it is hoped that the study will provide data and information that will assist universities in improving teaching and learning, particularly the flexibility of teaching and learning processes to adapt to changing environments.

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