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ATTITUDES TOWARD ONLINE LEARNING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC AMONG MALAYSIAN TAHFIZ STUDENTS

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Abstract

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, educational institutions were forced to close, and efforts were made to adopt online learning in higher education institutions. Unlike traditional face-to-face learning, online learning has various effects on student attitudes. This study investigates *Tahfiz* students' perceptions of online education during the COVID-19 pandemic in higher education institutions. An online questionnaire survey was used to gather information about participants' attitudes regarding online learning. The number of responses from *Tahfiz* students was 473. The findings revealed that Google Meet is the most popular application used in *Tahfiz* classes for teaching and learning, while WhatsApp is the most popular medium for *tasmi'*. The results revealed that online learning saved them the most time. There were no evident differences between male and female *Tahfiz* student attitudes toward online learning. However, there was a considerable disparity in students' perceptions of institutes or colleges and universities. The findings also reported that *Tahfiz* student attitudes differ significantly among students in different programmes and fields of study. The findings of this study provide new light on *Tahfiz* student attitudes towards online learning.

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Keywords: Attitude, COVID-19, online learning, Tahfiz students

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has halted various activities worldwide, including educational activities at all levels. The disruptions have forced a massive shift from face-to-face to online learning at all academic levels, particularly in Higher Education institutions (HEI). Online learning is an educational activity conducted in synchronous or asynchronous settings using various internet-connected devices (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

When the government of Malaysia issued a movement control order (MCO) that entirely stopped the institutions' operating activities, the impact of the global pandemic on the HEI was observed. While the epidemic has disrupted conventional face-to-face education, it has also presented HEI and students with a special and opportune chance to develop online education, allowing students to quickly become familiar with it. As a result, HEI should adopt online learning as a substitute for the common standard, as there are few to no other options. However, the movement presents significant difficulties, particularly for the study. For example, students need access to technology, which is the key sign of readiness for online learning (Rasheed et al., 2019). Additionally, independent learners will encounter technical and adaptability challenges.

This study focuses on the *Tahfiz* students' experiences coping with online learning. Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN) has thus provided certificate of UNITEN-JAKIM *Tahfiz* Al-Quran in accordance with the *Tahfiz* Educational Policy, which aims to generate professional huffaz (a plural noun of hafiz, a title given to individuals who memorise the entirety of the Quran). This program aims to develop professional Al-Quran, engineering, computer science, and accounting graduates (Abd Hamid & Ishak, 2019). It is believed that *Tahfiz* students are impacted due to the migration of this online learning. Students may undergo the acquisition, retention, and retrieval stages when learning the Quran (Salihan et al., 2020). The *Tahfiz* learner should receive proper training on reciting the Al-Quran while adhering to stringent guidelines like Tajweed because if they misread it, it will possess a distinct consequence (Musa et al., 2018). In standard practice, a proper instructor or tutor interacts physically with the students during Al-Quran reading, which will help them be more efficient and ease the learning process (Mohamad Shokri et al., 2021). Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate how *Tahfiz* students perceive about online education in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic.

2. Literature Reviews and Hypothesis Development

In general, an attitude refers to a person's readiness, temperament, and propensity to act in a given way based on specific characteristics (Nadeem et al., 2021). Meanwhile, one's perception of engaging in educational activities might be referred to as a student's Attitude (Sun et al., 2008). According to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), a system's perceived usefulness and usability influence user attitudes (Davis et al., 1989). Prior research on online learning claimed that attitudes are significantly impacted by the perceived utility and simplicity of use (Cheng, 2011; Tran, 2016). Students' perceptions regarding the online learning environment have generally been favourable (Ismaili, 2021). Based on a previous work (Yue et al., 2013), the learning environment enabled by online learning tools depends critically on the student's attitude toward the medium. In the perspective of this study, "student attitudes"

refers to how positively a given *Tahfiz* student perceives online learning during the COVID-19 epidemic. According to Nadeem et al. (2021), during COVID-19, student attitudes toward online learning were favourable at the university level. The previous study shows that online learning for *tahfiz* students has saved their time and provides an attractive learning environment and *Quran*ic memorisation (Buniamin et al., 2021). Besides, students can access online courses wherever they are available (Yousaf et al., 2021). It was reported that the students became more favourable toward online learning by the end of the course (Yue et al., 2013). However some negative impacts from online learning still need to be refined, such as integrity, less effective communication, less effective learning atmosphere, and as technical related problems such as internet access and appropriate device capabilities (Abu Hassan et al., 2021).

The previous study shows that online learning for *Tahfiz* students has saved their time and provides an attractive learning environment and Quranic memorisation (Buniamin et al., 2021). Besides, students can access online courses wherever they are available (Yousaf et al., 2021). By the end of the course, it was discovered that the students had a more positive attitude about online learning (Yue et al., 2013). However, some negative impacts from online learning still need to be refined, such as integrity, less effective communication, less effective learning atmosphere, and technical-related problems, such as internet access and appropriate device capabilities (Abu Hassan et al., 2021).

Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, there is an increasing number of online students with multiple ethnic, ethnic, and educational backgrounds (Yu, 2021). Ibrahim et al. (2002) found out that male students had significantly more positive attitude than female students. This outcome is not consistent with the discovery of a previous research by Chung et al. (2020), where female students cherish better learning experiences than male students and are more satisfied with their online education. Male and female students exhibit similar levels of average involvement, grade, motivation, and satisfaction, according to Garcia et al. (2010). They discovered that there are just a few differences in how men and women use specific Moodle resources, as well as a small number of factors relating to how much men and women value their feeling of duty and how much they consider e-learning activities to interfere with their social lives.

3. Research Methods

The questionnaire method was employed since it makes it easier to generalise the results from a significant amount of data. The survey was created using validated items from earlier literature (Abdul Rahim et al., 2018; Kamal et al., 2020; Mishra et al., 2020; Yusuf et al., 2019) The platform for data collecting was the Google form. Google Forms offer an infinite number of surveys and responses, which is the reason this survey platform was chosen. In addition, the survey responses and data are directly collected in Google Spreadsheet (Vasantha Raju & Harinarayana, 2016), which results in efficiency in terms of cost, time and energy savings, useful features and accurate findings (Sari et al., 2020). The final questionnaires were distributed to *Tahfiz* students in Malaysian institutions through their institutional representatives. When the poll was open between February and June 2021, 473 valid responses were received. Descriptive and regression analyses were performed using the SPSS.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Descriptive analysis

Table 1 shows the respondent's distribution according to institutions. There are sixteen institutions involved in 121 respondents from UNITEN, Muadzam Shah, and Putrajaya campuses. Meanwhile, the highest number of respondents come from ITQAN (67), UPSI (39), and USAS (31).

Table 1. Number of respondents according to institutions

Institution	Frequency	Per cent
ITQAN	67	14.2
IKMAS	20	4.2
INTIM	34	7.2
INSPI	33	7.0
KIAS	29	6.1
KUIM	13	2.7
KUIS	29	6.1
KITAB	8	1.7
UNITEN Muadzam Shah	65	13.7
UNITEN Putrajaya	56	11.8
UPSI	39	8.2
UNISEL	23	4.9
USAS	31	6.6
UNIKL MIMET	3	0.6
UTEM	9	1.9
UNISZA	14	3.0
Total	473	100.0

Note. Institut Tahfiz Al-Quran Negeri Sembilan (ITQAN), Gemenceh Negeri Sembilan, Institut Kemahiran Islam Malaysia Sarawak (IKMAS), Maahad Tahfiz Al Quran Wal Qiraat Negeri Perak, Ipoh Perak (INTIM), Institut Pengajian Islam (INSPI), Kemaman Terengganu, Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Sultan Ismail Petra (KIAS), Kelantan, Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka (KUIM), Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS), Kolej Islam Teknologi Antarabangsa (KITAB), Pulau Pinang, Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN), Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Universiti Selangor (UNISEL), Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah (USAS), Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UNIKL), Universiti Teknikal Malaysia, Melaka (UTeM), Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UNISZA)

Table 2 reports the demographic profiles of the respondents. There are 473 respondents in total, where 51% are students in university with Tahfiz, and the remaining 49% are Tahfiz students in an institute or a college. On the other hand, 51.8% of the students are male, and the other 48.2% are female. The majority of the program's respondents—57.1%—were from the diploma programme. There were fewer respondents—21.4%—from the bachelor's programme, 19.5%—from the foundation programme, and 2.1%—from the certification programme. There are 64.7% of the students in the Tahfiz programme. Meanwhile, some Tahfiz students are also majoring in academic programmes. The students' majors are the Accounting Programme, 13.3%; Engineering, 9.5%; and Computer Science, 4.7%. Regarding the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of the students, they were derived from two ranges for the student's cumulative grade point average (CGPA). Additionally, 49.7% of students have a CGPA above 3.5, whereas 17.1% have no CGPA because it is only the first semester.

 Table 2. Demographic profiles

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Type of Institutions	Institute/College	232	49.0
	University	241	51.0
Gender	Male	245	51.8
	Female	228	48.2
Program	Foundation	92	19.5
	Certification	10	2.1
	Diploma	270	57.1
	Bachelor Degree	101	21.4
Major	Engineering	45	9.5
	Accounting	63	13.3
	Finance	2	0.4
	Business	8	1.7
	Computer Science	22	4.7
	Tahfiz	306	64.7
	Others	27	5.7
CGPA	<2.5	13	2.7
	2.5-2.99	36	7.6
	3-3.492	108	22.8
	>3.5	235	49.7
	Not Applicable	81	17.1
	Total	473	100.0

Table 3 details the several online teaching and learning modes performed. The most popular application instructors have used for teaching and learning is Google Meet, which is 77.6%. It is followed by WhatsApp at 66.4%, Telegram at 54.1%, and Google Classroom at 43%. Other than that, Learning Management System (LMS), which the institutions typically provide, is another mode that has been used, the application results being 37%. Microsoft Teams, YouTube, email, Zoom, Facebook Streaming, Webex, telephone calls, and Skype are different applications used in teaching and learning.

Table 3. Mode of teaching and learning

Teaching & Learning Mode	Frequency	Per cent	
Google Meet	367	77.6	
WhatsApp	314	66.4	
Telegram	256	54.1	
Google Classroom	204	43	
Learning Management System (LMS)	175	37	
Microsoft Teams	142	30	
YouTube	120	25.4	
Email	119	25.2	
Zoom	108	22.8	
Facebook Streaming	59	12.5	
WebEx	56	11.8	
Other	48	10.1	
Telephone Conversation	28	5.9	
Skype	19	4	

The *tasmi*' modes employed during the pandemic are listed in Table 4. The teachers have utilised a variety of online teaching and learning techniques, as well as online *tasmi*'. WhatsApp is the mode that instructors utilise the most for online *tasmi*', accounting for 73.6% of all modes used. Due to its simplicity, lack of internet issues, and low data usage requirements, instructors utilise WhatsApp for *tasmi*'. Google Meet is used for online *tasmi*' the second most, with a 55.2% usage rate. These two programmes are typically used by the professors to deliver online *tasmi*' lessons. Meanwhile, 11.2% of students use Google Classroom for *tasmi*', while 16.9% used Telegram.

Table 4. Mode of Tasmi'

Mode	Frequency	Percent	
WhatsApp	348	73.6	
Google Meet	261	55.2	
Telegram	80	16.9	
Google Classroom	53	11.2	
MS Teams	42	8.9	
Telephone Conversation	40	8.5	
Other	25	5.3	
Fb Streaming	15	3.2	
Skype	4	8	

Table 5 presents descriptive information on the student attitudes, which signifies the level of an individual *Tahfiz* student's perceptions of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The statements are formulated in positive form; thus, the overall attitude represents the positive perceptions toward online learning. The statements were evaluated by the students on a measure of 1 to 5, or "extremely untrue for me" to "very true for me". The results demonstrate that *Tahfiz* students, with an average score of 3.53 and a 25.2% "very true of me" response rate, had the strongest perceptions of how using online learning was time-saving. The mean scores, however, were 2.924 and 2.918, indicating a small to moderate level of their opinion that online learning is a good idea and made it easier to memorise the Quran. They favour online learning generally. However, the statement of spirit to memorise the Quran online received the lowest mean score of 2.539.

Table 5. Student's attitude

Student's Attitude	Very untrue for me (%)	Untrue for me (%)	Neutral (%)	True for me (%)	Very true for me (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
SA1. The use of online learning has eased <i>Quran</i> ic memorisation	12.7	24.7	29.6	24.1	8.9	2.918	1.161
SA2. The use of online learning has saved my time	7.8	14.2	20.1	32.8	25.2	3.533	1.228
SA3. I am able to exercise <i>Quran</i> ic revision better through online learning	15.2	30.9	25.8	19.5	8.7	2.755	1.184
SA4. I feel more spirited to memorise the <i>Quran</i> through online learning	22.0	28.8	29.4	13.1	6.8	2.539	1.166

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SA5. Using the online learning system is a good idea	14.4	22.0	31.3	21.6	10.8	2.924	1.200
SA6. The online learning system provides an attractive learning environment	18.0	26.8	29.6	18.0	7.6	2.704	1.178
SA7. Overall, I like using the online learning system	15.2	23.5	31.9	20.9	8.5	2.839	1.170

Table 6 compares the student attitudes towards online learning according to gender and type of institutions. There was no critical difference in student attitudes between male and female students. This finding is consistent with (Chung et al., 2020; Nadeem et al., 2021). On the contrary, there was a significant difference between perceptions of students in institutes or colleges and universities. It shows that the attitude of university students toward online learning is higher than institute/college students. This fiding is consistent with the findings of (OECD, 2020), which suggest that differences are found between students in public and private institutions. In the Malaysian context, institutes or colleges are commonly grouped in private, while universities are categorised as public or government link universities such as UNITEN. Institutes or colleges are often smaller than universities and focus on undergraduate education in various academic fields. Meanwhile, universities are often larger than institutes or colleges that provide a wide range of undergraduate and graduate degree programmes. It is believed that the students in institutes or colleges and universities have been exposed to online learning differently.

Table 6. Students' attitudes according to gender and institution

Description		Mean Rank	Z-Value	P-value
Gender	Male	244	1 202	0.220
	Female	229	-1.203	0.229
Institutions	Institute/College	200	-5.712	0.000*
	University	272	2.,12	0.000

^{*}Significant p value < 0.05

Table 7 compares student attitudes according to programmes and field of study. The results reveal significant differences in student attitudes in different programmes. Foundation student attitudes toward online learning is the highest, while certification is the lowest. Meanwhile, accounting student attitudes toward online learning is the highest among all fields of study. The observations also agree with the results reported by Chung et al. (2020). This could be because different programme levels relate with age and maturity the of the students. However, these findings are in contrast in contrast with Nadeem et al. (2021), which showed the difference between undergraduate and postgraduate student attitudes towards online learning.

Table 7. Students' attitudes according to program and field of study

Description		Mean rank	p-value
Program	Foundation	292.61	
	Certification	163.60	0.000%
	Diploma	216.17	0.000*
	Bachelor Degree	249.29	

	Engineering	241.30	
	Accounting	309.11	
	Finance	248.00	
Field	Business	234.00	0.000*
	Computer Science	275.45	
	Tahfiz	220.25	
	Others	220.15	

Note: *Significant p value < 0.05

In terms of field of study, the results show a significant difference in student attitudes toward various field of study. *Tahfiz* students in the accounting field show the highest perspectives on online learning. Alshurafat et al. (2021) revealed a significant attitude toward online learning among accounting students. While students in purely *Tahfiz* field show the lowest. The difference may be attributable to the nature of each field in using computer or information technological aids in the study.

5. Conclusions

In this study, *Tahfiz* students' perceptions of online education during the COVID-19 pandemic are examined. Tahfiz students from sixteen Malaysian universities responded with 473 responses. The findings presented in this paper provide new light on Tahfiz student attitudes regarding online learning. Some of the significant conclusions taken from the results include that Google Meet is the most popular application used for teaching and learning in Tahfiz classes, while WhatsApp is the most used mode for tasmi'. According to the findings, Tahfiz students perceived that online learning saved them the most time. There was no statistically significant difference in male and female student attitudes towards online learning. This result is similar to a previous work (Chung et al., 2020; Nadeem et al., 2021). On the contrary, there was a considerable disparity in students' perceptions of institutes or colleges and universities. The findings show that student attitudes differ significantly among programmes and fields of study. The study is limited in that it only looks at the *Tahfiz* student attitudes at one point of time. It would, therefore, be more intriguing to conduct long-term research to evaluate alterations or developments in student attitudes. Because this study solely focuses on Tahfiz programmes, caution should be given when extrapolating the study's findings and conclusions to other education levels and programmes because their opinions may differ. This study is limited to an evaluation of general attitudes. It may be valuable in future studies to investigate specific characteristics of attitude, such as positive and negative attitudes. The quick pace of technology and the prevalence of the COVID-19 epidemic force the educational process and Tahfiz's learning to embrace modernity without sacrificing quality and values in generating the comprehensive huffaz..

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