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Post Covid-19 Pandemic: Non-Accounting Undergraduate Students' Resilience Towards Accounting Course Learning

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Abstract

This study is a conceptual paper to further explore various factors that increase the resilience of non-accounting undergraduate students to learn accounting course in the post Covid-19 pandemic. This study is concerned with academic issues such as poor motivation and concentration problems faced by non-accounting undergraduate students. Therefore, this study will discuss the application of Resilience Theory to observe how non-accounting undergraduate students enhance resilience to assist them understand accounting principles. This paper would raise important concern about the personal struggle of non-accounting undergraduate students in taking accounting course in the future.

Keywords: Non-Accounting Students, Resilience Theory, Accounting Course, and Covid-19 Pandemic

Introduction

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic since 2020, it has changed the landscape of the education system worldwide including Malaysia itself. Face-to-face activities are less being used but more into online learning via various platforms. Rapid transition to online learning due to the pandemic has provided a various method of learning environments compared to traditional classroom activities and e-learning has become a widely used educational method (Ellaway & Masters, 2008). Hence, many students have been affected due to these changes especially non-accounting undergraduate students taking professional papers such as accounting subjects which is part of the undergraduate program requirements. According to Han et. al. (2019), social interaction among students can be improved by promoting more on customised learning for individual learners that allows them to learn on demand and at their own pace. This can be mediated by technology and providing easy access to learning resources via internet and online platforms. Furthermore, vast changes in the online learning environment have proven its

effectiveness and implications during the Covid-19 pandemic which increased students decision making group learning activities (Belovich et. al., 2022). Hence, this can produce positive learning outcomes such as increasing student engagement, intrinsic motivation and learning responsibility. This kind of learning atmosphere encourages students' attitudes towards lifelong learning (Belovich et. al., 2022).

Studying anywhere, at any time, with flexibility in learning and with improved pedagogy, instruction methods and curriculum design all have their benefits (Bailey & Lee, 2020). Online learning can increase classroom engagement, communication skills and self-confidence by making the learning environment more convenient for educators and students (Halim & Hashim, 2019). In addition, studies show that online education can enhance students' motivation and attitudes towards learning (Ramayah & Kumar, 2020). However, numerous difficulties for both academics and students were identified since the sudden change from physical classroom to a fully online class system in higher education during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the post Covid-19 situation, not all students will be taught entirely online. Blended learning that combines traditional classroom instruction and online instruction is likely to gain popularity in today's education system. In order to increase educational effectiveness, blended learning combines the advantages of in-person and online learning. Research on blended learning in health professions education has shown that it is more effective in terms of knowledge acquisition than conventional classroom instruction (Liu et. al., 2016; Vallee et. al., 2020). This method of teaching and learning has been used in higher education for about 20 years. This gives a problem to the non-accounting undergraduate students to learn the basic theory of accounting in degree program. Hence, there is a need to study the non-accounting undergraduate students' resilience towards accounting course learning in the post Covid-19 situation.

In the Malaysia context, introductory accounting courses are mostly covered at the undergraduate level as one of the core subjects for public and private institutions in Malaysia (Bakar et. al., 2019). According to Muda et. al. (2013), accounting subjects are offered for the Diploma in Business Study as well as the Diploma in Agriculture and Technology Management at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. It indicates that accounting subjects are not exclusively meant for pure accounting students. The university is facing a situation where a number of non-accounting students fail in accounting subject. This is because students perceive the accounting subject to be irrelevant to their study programme. It is proven by students of the Diploma in Agriculture and Technology Management who chose not to study this accounting course because of the completely different nature from their major course (Muda et. al., 2013).

On the other hand, Bakar et. al. (2019) stated that the purpose of offering accounting subjects to non-accounting students is to expose them to basic accounting methods and accounting processes. They assess the students' perception of the accounting course which allows the lecturer to instil the acceptance of the students to not perceive the accounting course as boring, heavy and trivial. It has been found that students are still generally in favour of introductory accounting course and programme structure because this subject is one of the core subjects for them to fulfill their diploma and degree studies (Bakar et. al., 2019). Besides that, Ismail and Kassim (2011) emphasized that non-accounting students should take

Management Accounting subject. They adopted a learning approach as an important indicator to analyze the resilience of non-accounting students at the International Islamic University of Malaysia. They stated that Management Accounting subject should be offered to higher level non-accounting students.

Specifically, accounting courses are offered to non-accounting students as part of their program course structure. This course is a core subject for non-accounting students that must be taken to fulfill degree requirements. Amir and Shabri (2022) stated that accounting courses are crucial as early exposure for those who want to become a businessman or an entrepreneur. Although, several non-accounting students are not interested in taking accounting courses but they have no choice. The accounting knowledge is important as initial preparation for non-accounting students to face the real business environment as long as money exists (Amir & Shabri, 2022), then it has accounting. Therefore, students need to be taught to understand and know the factors associated with positive outcomes in order to improve their knowledge in accounting subject.

In addition, non-accounting students will experience difficult situations at some point in their learning process especially to understand the accounting contents such as accounting process, accounting concepts and the preparation of a complete set of accounts. Considering, if most non-accounting students are from a science stream background and without majoring in mathematics, they tend to label accounting courses as high risk of failure. Beatson, Berg and Smith (2019) expected that students who have studied accounting during secondary school can achieve a higher academic level than those who do not have a foundation in accounting subjects. Besides that, the dropout issue among non-accounting students in a pandemic situation needs to be given proper attention and should not be omitted. According to Wulandari and Istiani (2020) paper, dropout issues will affect academic quality, accreditation and worst of all will affect students' mental health.

This study aims to explore various factors that increase the resilience of non-accounting undergraduate students to learn accounting course in the post Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, this study proposes a resilience framework to determine factors such as personal attributes, positive use of time, peer support and learning environment that will help non-accounting undergraduate students to overcome their academic issues such as poor motivation and concentration problems. The construct can be used to examine the relationship between influencing factors and students' resilience to learning accounting course. It is anticipated that outcomes will support the positive learning process and improve their academic performance in the post Covid-19 situation.

In this regards, this study would make an important contribution to emphasize students strengths rather than problems and to raise important concerns about personal struggle to pass accounting course. In addition, this study would assist students to practice effective strategies to improve their academic performance and better understand what they are learning. This conceptual study proceeds as follows. The next section summarises the relevant literature review from previous studies and proposes the hypotheses for this study. Next, the following section describes the methods and analysis used in this study. Then, the final section is to conclude the implications and importance of this study.

To address the aims of this study, this conceptual paper will highlight literature review related to resilience theory and factors that affects students' resilience to improve their academic performance. In addition, relevant literature from previous studies will be discussed in order to formulate the hypotheses for this study.

Resilience Theory

Resilience is the ability to adapt well when faced with adversity or stress. Nandy, Lodh and Tang (2020) defined resilience is about improving mental and emotional condition. The adoption of resilience can influence sustainability and improve the successful outcomes. Therefore, the concept of resilience was used in many studies to explain psychological well-being such as hedonic (pleasure), emotion regulation and mental health, but now it has been widely used in many fields including education sector. Despite of its importance, resilience concept can provide a better perspective towards building students' resilience to face challenges and overcome the problems in academics. This is because, resilient students have the ability to develop skills to reduce failure and increase success in their academics. In education, this theory is able to be used for the purpose of understanding the adversity and threats that could affect the non-accounting students in learning accounting course during the undergraduate program.

Prior Research Studies

As discussed in many previous studies, some non-accounting students are able to perform well in accounting courses eventhough they do not have any fundamental of accounting. Oppositely, some non-accounting students find it difficult to understand the principles of double entries, to record ledger entries properly and adjustment needed to prepare financial statements at the end of accounting period (Muda et. al., 2013; Bakar et. al., 2019). Likewise, Amir and Shabri (2022) stated that non-accounting students can sometimes understand accounting concepts and can prepare accounts but they are incapable to explain in depth what they learn. Hasbolah et. al. (2020) in their studies opined that non-accounting students lost focus and interest when they failed to absorb and master the accounting subject. Thus, they require a clearer explanations to encourage their interest and confidence to register in accounting courses.

Personal attributes

In education, motivation can help students to remain strong and learn through the tough times especially when the Covid-19 pandemic hits the world which has created an unprecedented level of challenge. Highly motivated students can learn more deeply, persist longer and perform well in class. According to McMillan and Reed (1994), high intrinsic motivation which is a strong self-efficacy can help resilient students to succeed in their academics. These personal attributes should be cultivated in early childhood and are embodied in adolescence when students seek new experiences and be independent to improve their academic performance regardless of their background or current circumstances. Mostafa and Lim (2020) investigated the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in relation to international

students' resilience in overcoming the inevitable challenges in their academic. They define intrinsic motivation as an interest or feelings of pleasure and get personal satisfaction from involvement in a certain activity. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is a behavior or action taken for something not for the inherent enjoyment but hopes of earning a reward. This study showed a positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and resilience among international students. While, there was a weak positive relationship between international students' extrinsic motivation and resilience. They suggested that students who are intrinsically driven to satisfy their own academic achievement are more likely to increase their resilience and can help them to overcome the various challenges. On the other hand, Wulandari and Istiani (2020) examined self-efficacy in shaping academic resilience among undergraduate students at private universities in Jakarta. Self-efficacy can be defined as people's success in solving problems and achieve their goals. It has been reported that numerous dropout undergraduate students occurred at private universities. Thus, they opined that self-efficacy is a crucial factor to improve students' resilience on academic. The results of the study show a positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic resilience. Chitra and Binuraj (2022) discovered that secondary school students face lots of difficulties in academics such as poor performance, low achievement, academic pressure and stress to meeting assignment deadline. Therefore, students should overcome all these challenges to succeed in their academics. In the study, self-efficacy has been assessed to know how this factor can influence secondary school students' resilience on academic. The results revealed that self-efficacy has significant affect in predicting academic resilience of secondary school students.

Positive use of time

Numerous studies have identified the positive impact of time management on student learning process. Time management is the process of how people plan to divide their time between specific activities and priorities. With effective time management, it will help students increase productivity, reduce stress levels, meet assignment deadlines and achieve their goals. When students use their time positively, it can eliminates distractions and boosts concentration in academic as well as extracurricular events. McMillan and Reed (1994) opined that students should participate in clubs and societies, get involved in extracurricular events or university programs. Students can spend time engaging in non-academic activities to build confidence and increase self-resilience. Adams and Blair (2019) examine students' insight in regard to the relationship between time management and student outcomes. Based on their research questions, they found that time management leads to an improvement in exam results when students organise their time well. Additionally, they agree that students' awareness of effective time management can help them complete tasks and engage in short-term planning. Furthermore, students should take responsibility for their own academics and only seek guidance from lecturers. Alyami et. al. (2021) investigated the effectiveness of pre-planning and instantaneous planning on academic performance. They found that students agree that pre-planning their studies has been beneficial for academic performance. In addition, they stated that when students manage their time well and meet all deadlines also have high academic grades. Thus, they believe that positive use of time can lead to students success. Likewise, Khan, Ashraf and Nadeem (2020) investigated the effect of students' time management on academic achievement. They emphasized that as a student, time management

is important and they should be well trained to manage their time especially when assignments are given to them, they are able to complete it before the deadline. The study indicated that self-directed learning allows students to achieve their academic goals. However, the study also indicated that students who are excessively involved in non-academic activities have affected their academic achievement. A study by Nigussie (2019) aims to identify the effects of time management behaviour with gender and academic performance. The researcher mentioned that lecturers are concerned about students spending enough time on academic while students are concerned with meeting several demands and deadlines. The results of this study in respect of gender difference in time management, it showed that female students have less knowledge in managing time effectively compared to male students. While, in terms of academic achievement, it showed that the better the time management behavior, the higher the students grades.

Peer support

David (2001) mentioned the peer support is engaged with the peer learning method that consist two way interaction between one students to another. He mentioned the first way of peer support is to ask another student when facing a problem. Students could reduce the stress level and happier for learning purposes. Fox and Stevenson (2006) investigated the peer support from the mentoring system of accounting and finance students at University of Dundee. There is a positive effect of the academic performance when a third year student mentoring first year student. Hence, students' confidence level can be increased in the learning process when their academic performance is improved. Furthermore, Marsely (2020) highlighted the peer support is an effective system to improve student performance through peer tutoring system of accounting learning at Politeknik Negeri Malang. It reveals that the tutor and tutees are having positive attitude to improve their academic performance. Similarly, Olulowo, Ige and Ugwoke (2020) found the peer support by the tutoring system in financial accounting concept also effective method to improve students' performance. The good performance students (tutor) will guide another students (tutees) in financial accounting concept. The study showed students will remain happy for their learning process. However, the study is conducted in secondary schools in Southern Nigeria. Besides that, Youde (2019) mentioned the peer support is negatively affect the learning process. Part-time students prefer to study alone and peer support is not important to achieve a good academic performance. It is because there are two learning platform after Covid-19 pandemic that refer to blended learning and online learning.

Learning environment

Doppelt and Schuann (2008) mentioned the learning environment consists of physical activities in the classroom, teaching method, method of learning and assessment method. The study was conducted in USA and found a good learning environment could influence the students' academic performance. Besides that, Raghunathan, Singh and Sharma (2022) indicated the learning environment has been changed after Covid-19 pandemic evolve. The learning environment is referred to the process, hierarchy and educator adaptation to maintain resilience in the learning process (Naidu, 2021). Furthermore, Bond (2020) found the learning environment must be good to support the learning process. There is many challenges during

Covid-19 pandemic for a new learning method. For instance, teachers were lack of professional development in the unprecedented technology. Therefore, Appolloni et. al. (2021) found administrative support for the system is needed to have a good learning environment in higher institution at Italy. It is consistent with Bartuseviciene, Pazaver and Kitada (2021) findings. The results showed support networks is one of the factor in maritime higher education. This factor lead to maintain a good learning environment.

Conceptual Framework

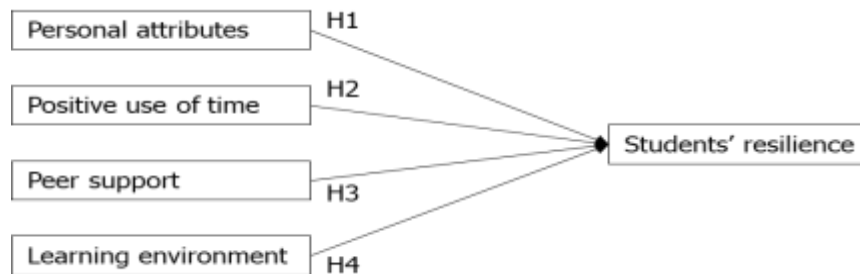


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

This study proposes a conceptual framework to examine whether there is a relationship between resilience theory that consist of personal attributes, positive use of time, peer support and learning environment towards students’ resilience towards accounting course learning. The constructs have been adopted from McMillan and Reed (1994) that seem to be related to resiliency. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed as:

- H1: There is a significant relationship between personal attributes and students’ resilience towards accounting course learning.
- H2: There is a significant relationship between positive use of time and students’ resilience towards accounting course learning.
- H3: There is a significant relationship between peer support and students’ resilience towards accounting course learning.
- H4: There is a significant relationship between learning environment and students’ resilience towards accounting course learning.

Research Methods

This study will use the quantitative method to explore various factors that increase the students’ resilience to learn accounting course in the post Covid-19 situation. The data will be collected through a survey questionnaire containing several questions designed to capture the constructed model proposed for this study. It is in progress and the questions are modified based on previous research-validated scales. The items will be developed to the context of the resilience theory that has been adopted from McMillan and Reed (1994) to measure the independent variables: personal attributes, positive use of time, peer support and learning environment. The survey will also ask a series of demographic questions and then more specific questions about students’ resilience. Therefore, the survey questionnaire will consist of two parts (Part A and Part B). Part A covers demographic data such as gender, degree programme and year of study. Meanwhile, Part B includes independent variables and dependent variable.

It will give a response in the form of 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

The target population for this study is non-accounting undergraduate students from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Kampar Campus who are registered in accounting course subjects. The reason non-accounting undergraduate students were chosen for this study is to analyse their persistence in taking accounting course subjects. It is interesting to obtain these students' responses to consider their academic performance in subjects that are not the students' main discipline (Muda et. al., 2013). Besides that, the unsatisfactory success rate, poor performance and repetition (Bakar et. al., 2019) of accounting course subjects led to attention to conduct this study for non-accounting undergraduate students.

A convenience sampling technique will be employed to select participants for this study. According to Awang (2012), convenience sampling method refers to a selected sample taken from a group of people who are at a convenient time and easy to reach. Before distributing the survey to the participants, a pilot study will be conducted to ensure the validity of the instrument and there is no ambiguity in the questions. Also, to ensure the survey questionnaire is reliable and valid to gather data for this study. In addition, for the purpose of analysing the data, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) will be used to extract the results.

Conclusions

Covid-19 pandemic has caused enormous disruptions in the education system which has a huge impact on educators and students. This study is important to the education sector which aims to highlight the factors of students' resilience towards academics in the post Covid-19 pandemic. According to Naidu (2021), resilience in the education system depends on various factors. Understanding such factors can help in promoting resilience to better academic performance. Therefore, resilience in the education system must start from early childhood education and this scenario can improve the level of resilience in the higher level of education system. In addition, this study can give a good impression to other students as well, especially pure accounting students to persist in achieving good results for their majoring subjects. It is possible for non-accounting students to obtain high scores in accounting subjects. Thus, accounting students will have positive and healthy competition with non-accounting students to perform well in accounting subjects. On the other hand, this study can provide useful information to educators in enhancing teaching methods to increase students' resilience to learning accounting course. In addition, this study can contribute to the limited literature on students' resilience towards academic performance in the post Covid-19 situation.

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