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RESEARCH ARTICLE

COVID-19 AND ITS EFFECTS ON MENTAL HEALTH: CASE STUDY FOR HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTION STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

COVID-19 is at risk of setting off global mental health crisis. The effect is also extended to the students in higher learning institutions. This research looks at the effects of COVID-19 on the mental health aspect among students from higher learning institutions in Malaysia. The study sample consists of 79 respondents who are randomly selected from various higher learning institutions. All respondents had attended online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research instrument used in this study is a questionnaire. Two things that were assessed on respondents are the situations or constraints encountered while pursuing online learning and its impact on their mental and emotional health. The research data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The research findings show that majority of respondents agreed that they encounter situations or constraints while attending online classes. Moreover, majority of respondents agreed that such situations or constraints affect their mental and emotional health. The findings of this research are supported by previous studies that reported the same thing.

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Introduction:-

A statement from United Nations (UN) demonstrates that the COVID-19 pandemic is at risk of triggering a global mental health crisis. This takes place due to the thought of the risk of COVID-19 infection, on top of having to face movement constraint order that complicates many aspects of daily life. Many countries had implemented movement control orders (Kuensel 2020; Palden 2020). In fact, students are not exempt from dealing with the effects of COVID-19. According to the United Nations (2020), as of July 2020, 98.6% of students worldwide were affected by the pandemic, representing 1.725 billion children and youth, from preschool to the higher education levels in 200 countries. The most significant aspect is that this pandemic has caused face-to-face teaching and learning (T&L) methods and assessment to no longer be possible. Instead, they shall be carried out online (Pokhrel & Chhetri 2021). Some of the online platforms adopted so far include unified communication and collaboration platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Canvas, Blackboard, Zoom, and Google Meet (Petrie, 2020). The use of this

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platform results in another problem because not all students have decent internet access. Furthermore, the study requirements demand students to complete the required assignments. Group assignments can no longer be done as before. Besides, a search for reference material cannot be physically conducted in the library (Basilaia&Kvavadze 2020). This gets worse when all students are already in their hometowns. Not all students stay in locations with good internet access, thus some of them are unable to attend teaching and learning sessions.

Research Methodology:-

This research is descriptive and based on surveys rooted in qualitative and quantitative as the primary methods. This descriptive research shall describe the impact of COVID-19 on students. For the primary data collection, this research uses structured questionnaires. The questionnaires require respondents to answer a series of statements and questions via online survey forms. This questionnaire contains three sections, namely the demographics of the respondents, the situation or constraints encountered while taking online classes, and the impact of the situations on their mental and emotional health.

Sampling

The target group for this research is students from higher learning institutions in Malaysia. The questionnaire is openly distributed to students of all levels of study including those in Foundation, Diploma, Bachelor, Master, and Doctor of Philosophy levels. The 79 respondents involved in this research are from the following level of education, as well as year and field of study:

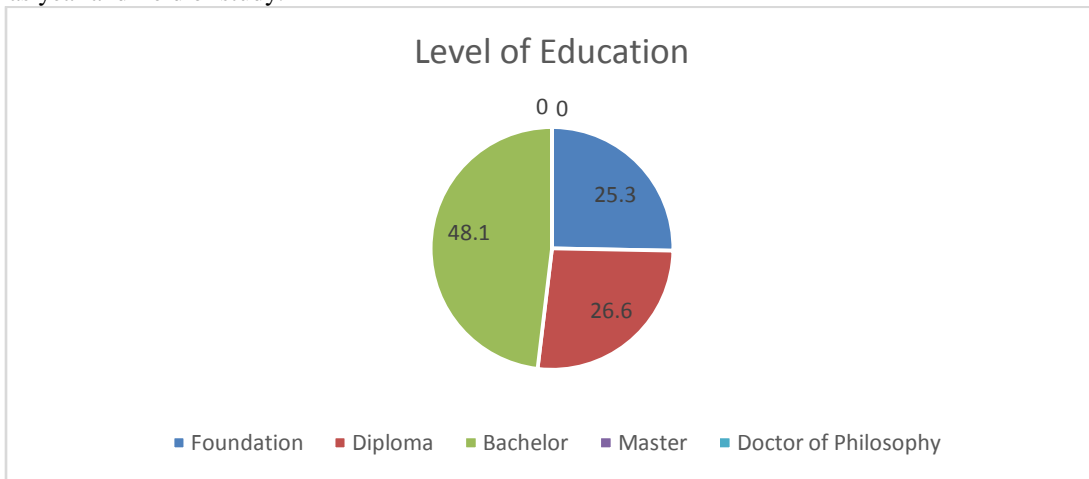


Figure 1:- Percentage of respondents according to the level of education.

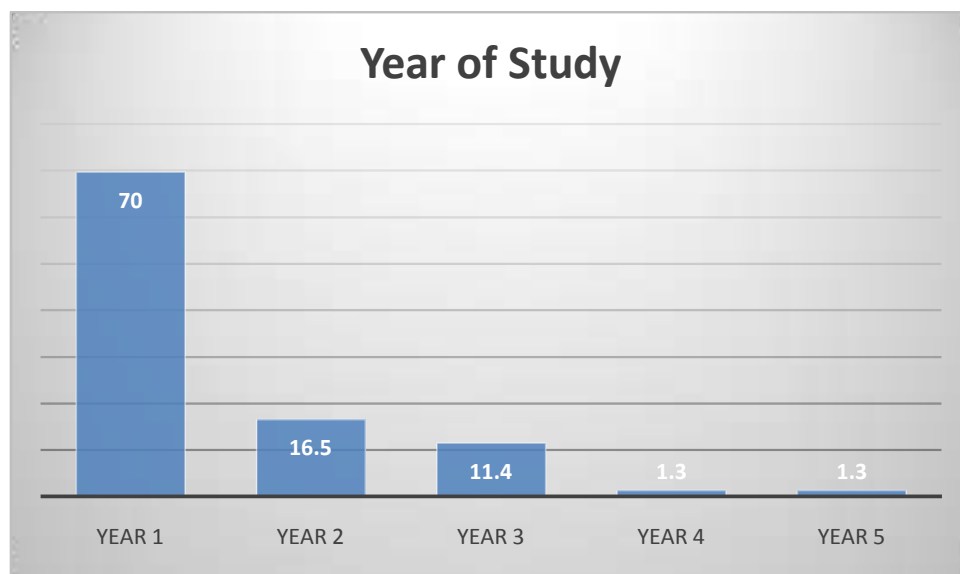


Figure 2:- Percentage of respondents according to the year of study.

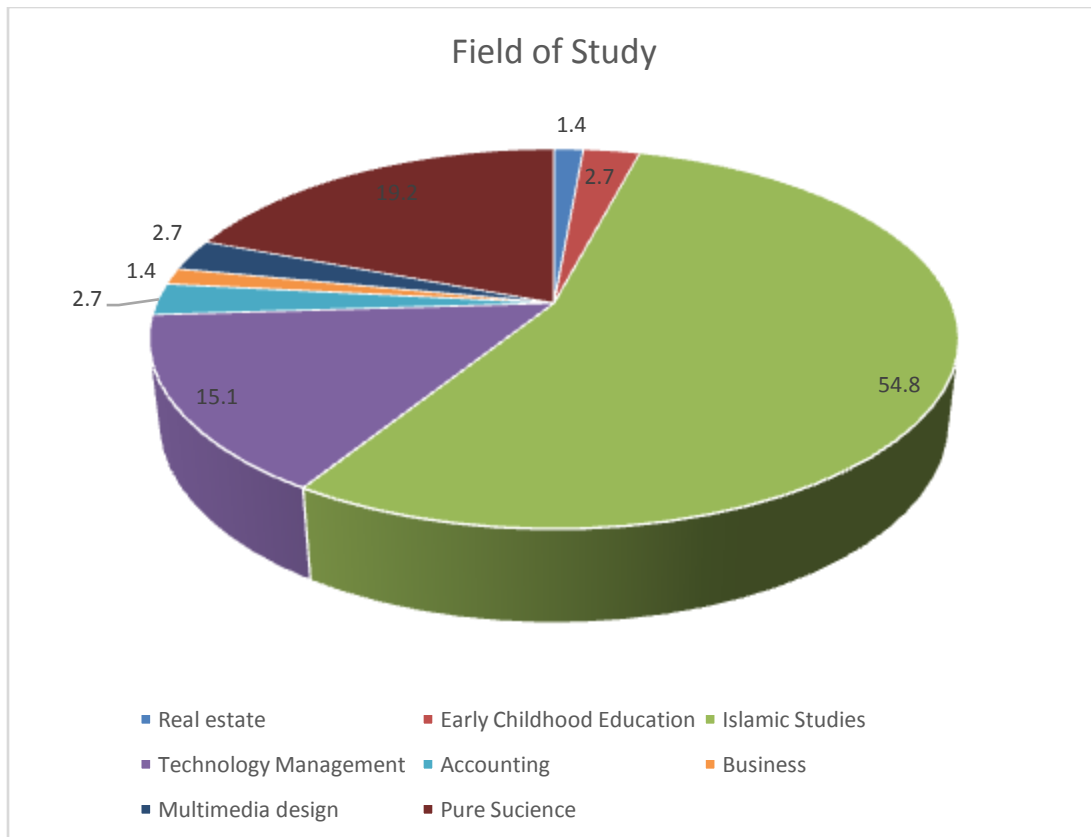


Figure 3:- Percentage of respondents according to the field of study.

All respondents had participated in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two things that were assessed on respondents are the situations or constraints encountered while taking part in online learning and its impact on their mental and emotional health.

Anticipated Outcome

These are the initial findings from the survey of mental health status among students of higher learning institutions following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Situations or constraints encountered while taking part in online learning

This section shows the findings on respondents' level of agreement in relation to situations or constraints encountered while taking online classes. The level of agreement is assessed using Yes, No, and Not Sure.

These situations or constraints are crucial to be determined because the respondents come from different backgrounds, as illustrated in Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3. The respondents' locations of higher learning institutions also vary as follows:

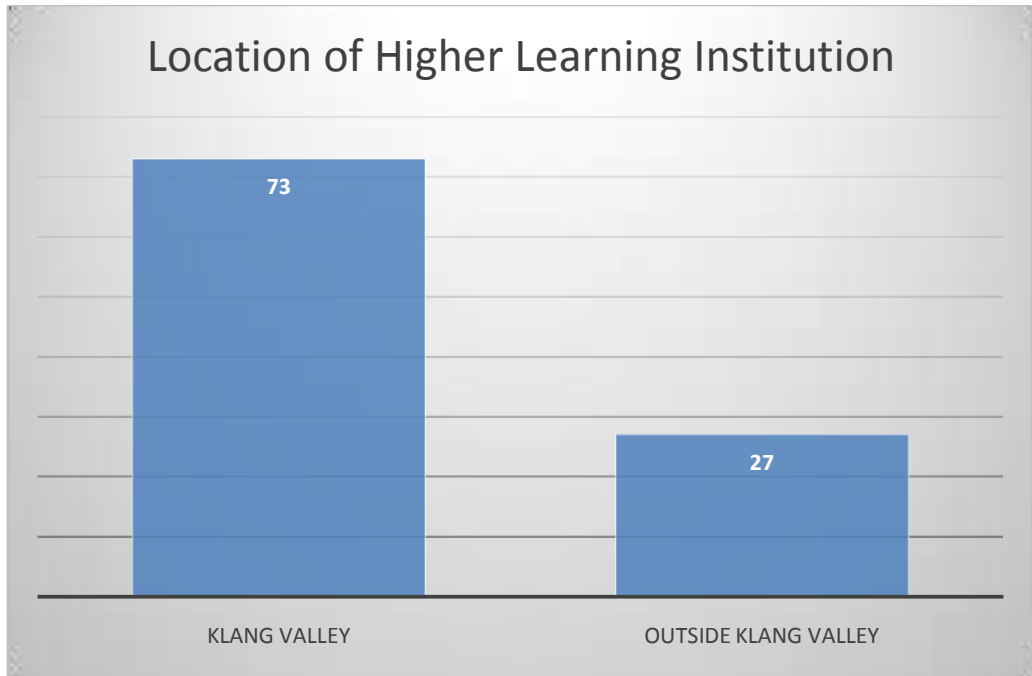


Figure 4:- Percentage of respondents according to the location of higher learning institutions.

Figure 5 shows the level of agreement by respondents on situations or constraints encountered by them while participating in online learning.

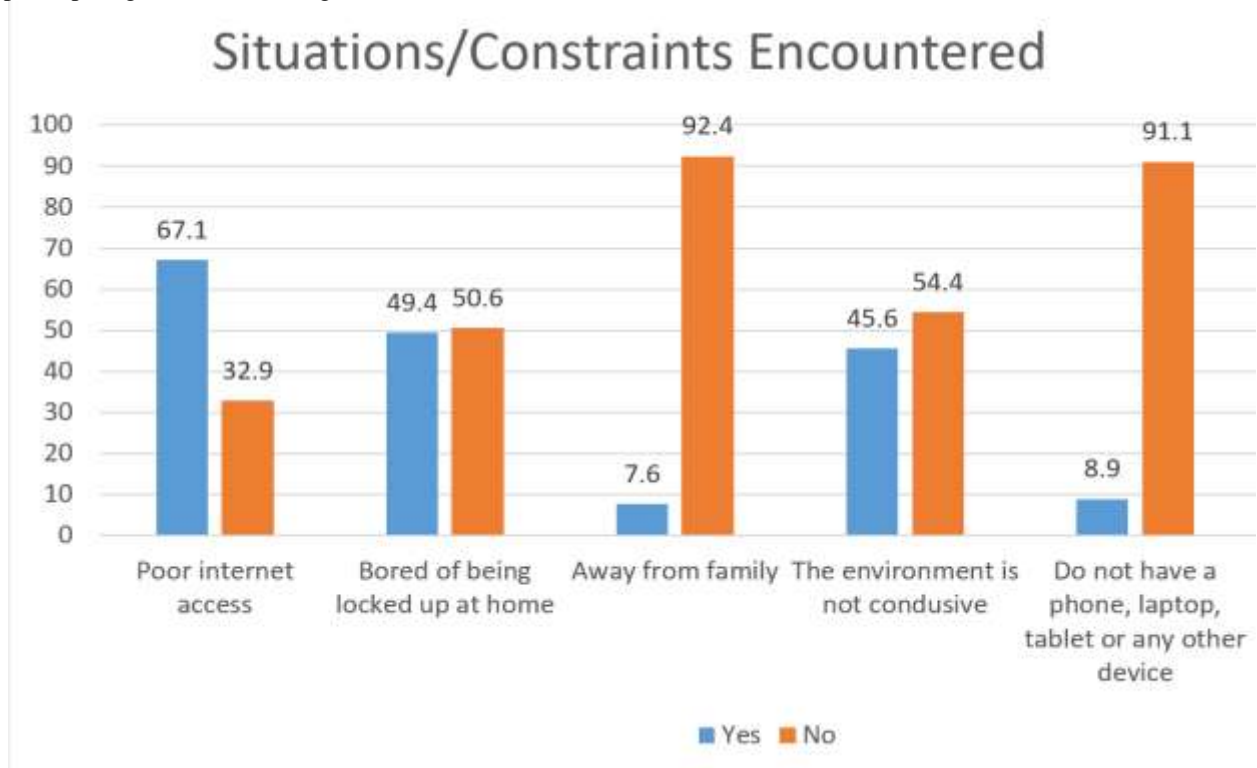
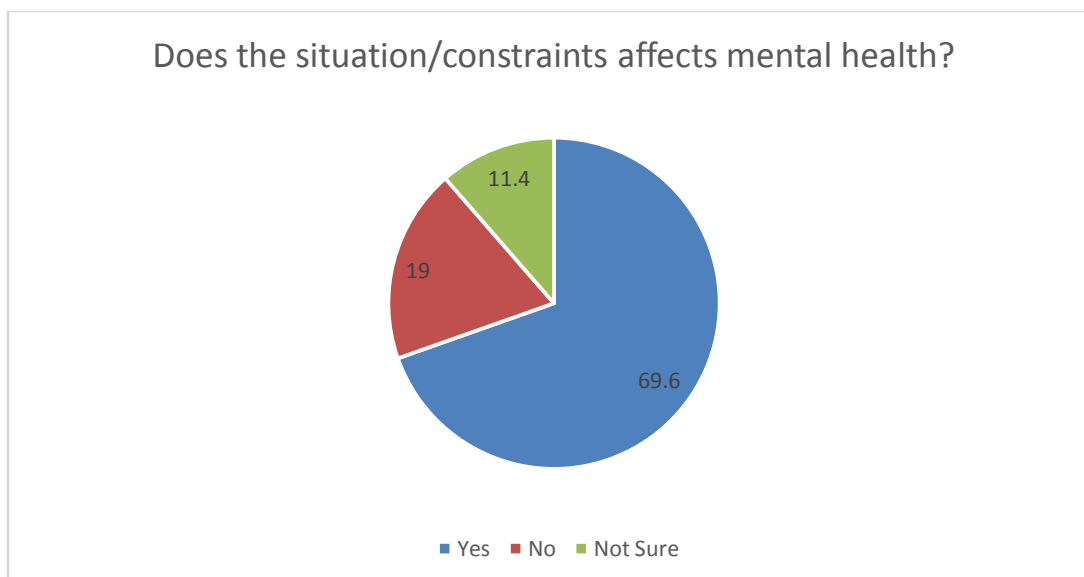


Figure 5:- Situations/constraints encountered by respondents.

The effect of the situations/constraints on mental and emotional health

This section reflects respondents' initial findings on the impact of situations or constraints encountered on their mental and emotional health.



Majority of respondents agreed that the five situations encountered by them while pursuing online learning do affect their mental and emotional health. The findings are supported by previous studies, indicating that COVID-19 does affect students' mental health (Zhong et al. N.d.; Duong et al. 2019; Chao et al. 2020; Huang et al. 2020; al-Rabiaahab 2020; <https://www.chronicle.com/article/ShockFearFatalism-As/248240>)

Conclusion:-

This study is beneficial to the university management and counselors in ensuring the continuity of education in higher learning institutions in any situation. In fact, the current update of COVID-19 does show an increasing trend with the emergence of new variants.

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