Students' Perceptions of Online Learning at the Universitas Terbuka

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to evaluate student perceptions of the online learning experience at the Universitas Terbuka, focusing on its impact on student satisfaction, active involvement, and achievement of learning outcomes. Educational program evaluation methods are used to detail and analyze various aspects of perceptions that emerge during the online learning experience. This research involved the active participation of students from various study programs at the Universitas Terbuka. Data collection was carried out through surveys, in-depth interviews, and analysis of student reflections on online learning experiences. The evaluation results are aimed at providing in-depth insight into the extent to which online learning meets student expectations, the obstacles faced, and suggestions for improving the quality of online learning in an Universitas Terbuka environment. It is hoped that the results of this research will provide valuable information for the Universitas Terbuka in developing online learning strategies that are more effective and responsive to student needs. This evaluation focuses not only on technical aspects but also on dimensions of students' personal and academic experiences, creating a holistic educational program evaluation framework.

Keywords: Student Perceptions, Online Learning, Educational Programs, Universitas Terbuka.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is undergoing a significant transformation as information technology develops, having a major impact on the way learning is delivered. One of the main changes is the adoption of online learning systems, which are becoming increasingly popular in various higher education institutions (Erianjoni et al., 2023). The Universitas Terbuka, as a higher education institution known for its inclusive approach, is also facing these changing dynamics. Therefore, this research aims to explore more deeply students' perceptions of the online learning experience in the Universitas Terbuka environment. An in-depth understanding of the views, hopes and obstacles faced by students is the key to detailing the effectiveness and quality of online learning implementation, as well as providing a basis for continuous improvement in the delivery of education in this digital era. With a focus on active student participation, surveys, in-depth interviews and analysis of student reflections are the methods used to explore the personal and academic dimensions of the online learning experience at the Universitas Terbuka.

Therefore, this research was initiated with the main aim of investigating students' perceptions of the online learning experience at the Universitas Terbuka. In an era where students are increasingly connected digitally, a deep understanding of their views on this learning method is essential (Henderson et al., 2017). This research not only includes an assessment of technical aspects but also seeks insight into the personal and academic

dimensions experienced by students during the online learning process.

Active student participation is considered a key component in data collection. Through specially designed surveys, in-depth interviews, and reflection analysis, this research aims to detail students' perceptions of their satisfaction, the obstacles they face, and the extent to which their expectations are met in the context of online learning at the Universitas Terbuka. By involving students from various study programs, this research seeks to provide a holistic and representative picture of the diversity of views that may emerge among this university's student population. With the continued development of technology and paradigm shifts in higher education, it is hoped that this research will provide a valuable contribution to our understanding of how students respond and adapt to online learning. In addition, it is hoped that the results of this evaluation will provide in-depth insight for the Universitas Terbuka to continue to improve the quality of their online learning, overcome potential obstacles, and strengthen student expectations regarding their learning experience in this digital era.

Meanwhile, online learning offers flexibility in time and space, allowing students to access learning materials anytime and anywhere according to their convenience and schedule. Mapuva (2010); Fettahine et al (2022) define e-learning as "pedagogy empowered by digital technology" meaning that e-learning can be simplified as education that is fully supported by digital technology. In other words, e-learning is a learning process that utilizes support from various digital technologies (Prastyaningtyas et al., 2023). The term technology is not only limited to internet connections, but also includes various other digital tools and applications that can enhance and support the learning experience, such as interactive learning software, simulations, and online platforms that allow flexible access to learning content.

METHODS

This research will focus on qualitative methods to gain an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions of online learning experiences (Trespalacios et al., 2023); Okyar, 2023); Greaves, 2024). Here are the details:
− In-depth interviews: Involves in-depth interviews with several students representing a variety of study programs. Interviews will be open-ended, allowing students to reveal their experiences in detail. Questions will cover aspects of satisfaction, active involvement, and the impact of online learning on achieving learning outcomes.
− Student reflection analysis: Analyze student reflections generated during or after an online learning experience. Examination of this text will help understand the feelings, challenges, and transformations students experience during the learning process.
− Online activity monitoring: Direct observation and monitoring of student activities on online learning platforms. This will provide an understanding of how students interact with the material, participate in discussions, and use online resources.

Through this qualitative method, the research aims to detail the nuances and complexity of students' perceptions of online learning. The focus on personal interactions, individual contexts, and the meaning contained in online learning experiences (Wong, 2023) is expected to provide deep and contextual insights.

RESULT

3.1 Online Learners

Online learning, or e-learning, offers significant benefits as a current learning method. The main advantages include efficiency in managing costs and time, providing flexibility for students, implementing a learning approach that is more suited to individual needs, creating an enjoyable learning experience, and providing opportunities for more personalized and customized learning. Thus, e-learning not only stimulates efficiency in the learning process but also improves the quality and satisfaction of students.

Online learning utilizes technology and internet networks, as well as various online applications, to deliver material, facilitate virtual brainstorming, and encourage interactive collaboration. Online learning resources include eBooks, journals, videos, recorded lectures, quizzes, discussion forums, live Q & A sessions, and interviews. This method not only enriches the learning experience but also increases students' independence and provides flexibility, allowing them to follow the learning process according to their individual needs and preferences. As a modern form of learning, Sofi-Karim et al (2023) explain that the online approach provides wider access and advances innovation in the delivery of knowledge.

In the context of the Universitas Terbuka in introductory social courses, students tend to have positive perceptions of online learning. The use of technology and various online resources in online learning in this course provides significant benefits. Students may find the use of eBooks, journals, videos, and online discussion forums as tools that enrich their learning experience. Bergene et al (2023) added. The flexibility factor in undergoing the online learning process can also create a positive impact, especially for students who are already working and come from various regions. With access to learning materials anytime and anywhere, students' perceptions of active engagement and enjoyable learning experiences can increase. In addition, Bender (2023) explains, that online learning methods that encourage student independence can strengthen understanding of the social concepts being taught. Students have greater control over their learning process, including participation in discussion forums, live question-and-answer sessions, and interviews. This can create the perception that they have a more active role in understanding and applying the social concepts taught. Thus, the link between online learning in introductory social courses at the Universitas Terbuka and student perceptions can be formed through positive experiences, flexibility, and self-empowerment in the online learning process.

3.2. Students

Students, as students at the higher education level, are individuals who have completed education at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. They enter the higher education phase after completing previous levels of education. An educational journey involving elementary, middle, and high school levels is the basis for students to develop deeper knowledge and skills and to prepare themselves to face challenges and diversity in the tertiary environment. Thus, higher education becomes a step that opens up opportunities for further personal, academic, and professional development. As academics, students are positioned as adult individuals who are responsible for developing their potential in higher education. They are expected to become intellectuals, scientists, practitioners, and professionals who contribute to the progress of science and society. In

their role as students, they have the responsibility to actively explore knowledge, hone skills, and broaden their horizons to achieve academic and professional success.

Online learning, especially the introductory social statistics course at the Universitas Terbuka, is very suitable for students. Students who register for online courses are generally individuals who have entered the world of work and come from various regions. The success of implementing online learning is reflected in its ability to support understanding of lecture material. Students, in this context, are individuals who already have work responsibilities and various distance and time limitations. Online learning is the right choice because it provides practical and flexible solutions. With this technology, they can access materials anytime and anywhere according to their needs and time availability. So, students can overcome geographical barriers and different schedules to take part in learning without having to be physically present on campus.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the discussion above, it can be concluded that the application of online learning is very suitable for introductory social statistics courses at the Universitas Terbuka. This is especially true considering that students who register for online lectures are generally individuals who are already working and come from various regions. The success of implementing online learning can be seen from its effectiveness in supporting the understanding of lecture material. With students spread across various regions at different distances and times, online learning is a practical and flexible solution. Students can access materials anytime and anywhere according to their needs and time availability. Thus, online learning not only meets geographical challenges but also provides efficient solutions for students who are active in the world of work. Another advantage lies in increasing learning motivation and optimizing study time management. Students taking online courses have the advantage of being able to access the material at any time that suits their schedule, creating great flexibility. This high level of motivation encourages students to be more proactive and involved in the learning process. Time flexibility also provides students with the opportunity to overcome distance and time constraints, allowing them to organize their study time more efficiently according to individual needs. In this way, students can optimize their study time management, achieve better results, and experience the positive benefits of active participation in online learning. The important role of lecturers as facilitators in online learning includes not only providing guidance and answering questions but also facilitating online discussions. Lecturers create a dynamic and interactive learning environment, which contributes to active student engagement. In this way, students not only gain a deep understanding of the material but also experience positive, motivating involvement in the learning process. Student activity in online discussions is a reflection of the effectiveness of the lecturer's role as a facilitator in creating meaningful learning experiences.

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