

Chapter 24

Profiling Student Readiness for Online Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the online learning readiness profiles of university students during the COVID-19 pandemic and to explain their profile membership through their background characteristics. For this purpose, data were collected from a total of 330 university students studying at a state university, and latent profile analysis (LPA) was conducted on these data. As a result of the analyses, two student profiles were identified as “high e-learning readiness” and “low e-learning readiness.” Other findings obtained in the study revealed that student family income level, mother’s education level, time and purpose of the internet use, having a computer or not, and their views on whether e-learning compensated for face-to-face education during the COVID-19 pandemic process explained the differences in the probabilities profile membership. On the other hand, gender and father’s education level were found to have no relationship with profile membership. The findings were discussed in line with the related literature.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in Wuhan, China, in the first half of 2020 and spread rapidly all over the world, affected all areas of life. One of the areas affected by this situation due to the temporary suspension of educational activities in schools is the education sector. According to UNESCO, numerous schools and universities in 192 countries were closed during the Covid-19 pandemic, which influenced 91.4% of enrolled students (UNESCO, 2020). Despite this challenging situation, most of the academic

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institutions in the world urgently had to shift to online teaching and learning to ensure the continuity of the learning process (Howard, Tondeur, Siddiq, & Scherer, 2020). For this reason, teachers and students tried to conduct their lessons through online classes (Lee & Ting, 2021). However, this rapid transition and adaptation to e-learning has been a challenging process for many universities in both developed and developing countries. In this process, both students and instructors faced a number of challenges, including psychological problems as a result of an inadequate learning approach (Alam, 2020; Bao, 2020). In the literature, these problems are mostly listed as economic problems, non-compliance with the etiquette of virtual classrooms, insufficient interaction, time limitations and infrastructure deficiencies and problems (Almaiah, Al-Khasawneh, & Althunibat, 2020; Hayat et al., 2021)

While the e-learning environment had a more supportive role for face-to-face education in the early days, it could be stated that it then started to be an alternative to face-to-face education due to the developing epidemic conditions (Nayci, 2021). There are common elements generally accepted in e-learning, which are technology, time, distance, interaction and educational context (Singh & Thurman, 2019). In general, e-learning is defined as a method of learning in which the interaction between the teacher, student and course content occurs synchronously or asynchronously through electronic communication systems such as the Internet, video, telephone and computer (Ally, 2004). E-learning allows flexible access to content and instruction regardless of time and place and provides a certain degree of interaction, collaboration and reflection (Means, Toyama, Murphy, & Baki, 2013). Accessible in e-learning environments, online courses provide teachers and other students from different schools and even from around the world with the opportunity to work collaboratively and closely (Hung, Chou, Chen, & Own, 2010). E-learning can be delivered by institutions or through any Learning Management System (LMS) which is free to use on the Internet. LMS is web-based software designed to process the learning content, student interaction, assessment tools, learning progress reports and student activities (Nasser, Cherif, & Romanowski, 2011; Srichanyachon, 2014). LMS allows accessing information through course instructions, uploading assignments and downloading marks, establishing active student-student and student-teacher interaction, establishing interaction between the student and the learning tools, sharing information, and accessing online exams and quizzes (Jurubescu, 2008). In these environments, students need technical equipment, tools and related skills to interact virtually with teachers and peers and to use hardware and software (Handel et al., 2020). Smith (2005) points to the importance of having basic knowledge and skills about the course as well as having motivation, technology and time management skills in order to be ready for e-learning. It is accepted in studies that students' readiness for e-learning affects their academic achievement in different ways (Gay, 2018). In this respect, students must be ready for e-learning so that they can take full advantage of e-learning environments (Chung, Noor, & Mathew, 2020).

What is Readiness for E-Learning?

In the literature, e-learning readiness is defined as “mental and physical readiness for some online learning experiences and actions” (Borotis & Poulymenakou, 2004). According to Kaur and Abas (2004), e-learning readiness refers to having such skills as using e-learning resources and multimedia technologies to increase the quality of learning. The concept of e-learning readiness, first proposed by Warner et al. (1998), is said to include three basic elements: students' competence and self-confidence in using computer-mediated communication, students' choice in course modality, and students' ability to participate in self-directed learning. Hung et al. (2010) presented a conceptual framework suggesting that e-learning readiness can be measured in six dimensions. These were computer self-efficacy, Internet

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