

Malaysian pre-university students' perceptions of their social presence and motivation in online learning during Covid-19

ABSTRACT

In March 2020, with the Movement Control Order (MCO) in effect, educational institutions at all levels transitioned into online teaching and learning. Research has shown that social presence plays a significant factor that affects online learning. Consequently, studies on perceived social presence and its relationship with the levels of motivation studies on the perceived social presence is rather lacking. To accomplish the purpose of this study, a quantitative research design was employed at Preparatory Centre for Science and Technology, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, involving 43 preuniversity students. A set of questionnaires consisting of items to measure learner social presence and motivation level in online learning contexts was developed and distributed to the participants. This study then investigated the correlation between two main variables: social presence and motivation in online learning among pre-university students. At the end of the study, in regard to the perceptions of social presence in online learning environments, participants showed a high awareness of the community's participation but a lower sense of proximity. This suggested that the participants' perceptions of social presence commonly came from their awareness of others but not so much from their proximity with others. Seemingly, the participants depicted having a high perception of motivation in online learning environments. Interestingly, though most of the items exhibited a mean score within the neutral range, proposing that the participants' responses to the items were leaning towards the general agreement, representing high perception of motivation. Therefore, it can be established that in an online learning setting, the students have generally average to high perceptions of motivation. On this basis, the results have proven that there was a positive correlation between social presence and motivation among the students in online learning contexts. Bearing this in mind, future studies may offer a more comprehensive view of social presence and level of motivation for the betterment of online learning and teaching.