

## Online Learning Readiness among University Student in Thailand

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to investigate the levels of online learning readiness among Thai university students in a Business Administration Program, and to find out the differences in the readiness levels between the first and the fourth-year students. 138 Business Administration Program students at a public university in Bangkok, Thailand participated in the research. The research instrument used was an online questionnaire asking for their online learning readiness in five dimensions. The results suggested that the participants were very ready for online learning, especially in the dimension of learning and computer/internet self-efficacy. The dimension of online communication self-efficacy was ranked third, while self-directed learning and learner control dimensions ranked the lowest. When exploring the difference between two groups of the students, it was found that the fourth-year students were slightly more ready than the first-year students; however, they were in the same readiness levels in all dimensions.

**Keywords:** Online learning, Online learning readiness, Thai university student

### Introduction

Corona Virus or Covid-19 is the infectious and fatal disease that causes vastly impacts on the world's economy. It has become an unprecedented tragedy that stunned the education sector as well with fear to extend throughout the global education sector Dhawan (2020).

Most universities worldwide are currently becoming digitalized in their operation to answer for the changing demand of the current circumstance. Thus, there are different choices that the online pedagogical approaches have provided and it requires all the institution to accept them with the attempt to apply better technology. The emerging of online learning is

the best way to be an assisting tool during this turmoil and thus, the vital thing in this stage is online teaching-learning quality enhancement (Dhawan, 2020) In order to better understand how to reach effective online learning approaches in today's pandemic time, recognizing the university students' and institutions' readiness of online learning dimension is necessary.

## **Literature Review**

### **Definition of Online Learning**

The definition of the term “online learning” might vary regarding the context. To define technology-based learning in all its perspective, “online education” is the most commonly used term. Allen and Seaman (2015) defined online learning as one in which a minimum of 80% of the content material is educated online, whereby for face-to-face instruction uses, zero to 29% of the content material is online. Anderson (2011) considered online learning as a subset of distance education that has always been concerned with the provision of access to an educational experience that is more flexible in time and in space than campus-based education.

### **Online Learning Situations in Thailand in 2020-2021**

Due to the global spread of COVID-19, all higher education institutions worldwide have been hit with the same crisis while they are attempting to continue the teaching and learning online. In February 2020, the Thai government decided to close all universities and schools to help control the spread of Covid-19. The nation went into the lock down by March 2020. This has had an effect on over 20 million kindergarten through university students Thomas (2020).

In late 2020 and early 2021, the situation had deteriorated. The new surge of COVID-19 hit Thailand only a couple of weeks after the second semester began in early December 2020. All education institutes (except small schools) in 28 red-zone provinces, including Bangkok, were directed by the Education Ministry to close, and the teaching and learning be implemented online again during January of 2021. Since the beginning of the pandemic, therefore, it can be said that most Thai students have experienced online learning for approximately 1-2 semesters.

### **Students' Online Learning Readiness**

Hung et al. (2010) proposed that student readiness in online learning consists of five dimensions: 1. Learner Control, 2. Self-Directed Learning, 3. Motivation for Learning, 4. Online Communication Self-efficacy and 5. Computer & Internet Self-efficacy (CSE/ ISE)

### Previous Related Studies

Martin et al. (2020) examined 177 students' perceptions of their readiness for online learning in The United States of America. In the study, a questionnaire was used. The findings revealed that students should understand and improve their characteristics as online learners, including their ability for time management, coordination, and technological competence. It is critical that students be trained in all said aspects.

Aldhafeeri and Khan (2016) conducted a study to find the online learning readiness of teachers and students at a high school in the State of Kuwait. The researcher used a questionnaire to collect data. The results showed that more teachers than students believed that in online learning, the ethical issue is essential. On the contrary, students perceived that interface design is more essential for online learning readiness.

Hung et al. (2010) explored college students' readiness for online learning. The researcher used a questionnaire to collect data college students in Taiwan. The findings showed that students' levels of readiness were high in computer/internet self-efficacy, motivation for learning, and online communication self-efficacy and were low in learner control and self-directed learning. Additionally, the study found that higher grade students demonstrated slightly greater readiness in the dimensions of self-directed learning, online communication self-efficacy, enthusiasm for learning, and learner autonomy than lower grade students. Moreover, in the dimension of online networking self-efficacy, juniors and seniors were slightly more prepared than freshmen and sophomores.

Chung et al., (2020) explored online readiness among students in a university in Malaysia. The questionnaires used in this study. The result showed that students' readiness levels were high in computer and internet self-efficacy, moderate for self-directed learning and motivation for learning, and low for learner control, while gender had no effect on students' online readiness. Additionally, the second-year students showed significantly higher level of readiness in the dimension of computer and internet self-efficacy while the third-year students were significantly more ready in the dimension of learner control.

## Research Methodology

### Subjects, Materials, and Procedures

138 Thai first and fourth year university students in the Business Administration program in a public university in Bangkok, Thailand participated in the study. The research instrument used was an online questionnaire adapted from Hung et al. (2010). The

questionnaire was comprised of 18 closed-ended items. The questionnaires were distributed and collected via online method during March, 2021. All 138 participants were asked to complete two parts of the questionnaire online starting from the first part: demographic information and the second part: levels of online learning readiness in five dimensions.

### Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using the Microsoft Excel program to obtain statistical information of percentage, mean, median, mode, and standard deviation and presented in tables. As the questionnaire used five-point Likert scale statements asking for participants to indicate their level online learning readiness, the ranges of mean scores used to interpret the data are displayed as follows:

**Table 1** The data collected were analyzed

| Mean score | Interpretation of Readiness Level |
|------------|-----------------------------------|
| 4.21-5.00  | Very high                         |
| 3.41-4.20  | High                              |
| 2.61-3.40  | Moderate                          |
| 1.81-2.60  | Low                               |
| 1.00-1.80  | Very low                          |

### Results and Discussion

Difference between the first-year student and the fourth-year student on Levels of online learning readiness

**Table 2** Difference between the first-year student and the fourth-year student on Levels of online learning readiness in computer/internet self-efficacy dimension

| Item   | First-year  |       | Fourth-year |       |
|--|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|
|  | Mean (SD)   | Level | Mean (SD)   | Level |
| 1. I feel confident in performing the basic functions of Microsoft Office programs (MS Word, MS Excel, and MS PowerPoint). | 3.76 (1.01) | High  | 3.83 (0.79) | High  |
| 2. I feel confident in my knowledge and skills of how to manage software for online learning.                              | 3.61 (1.00) | High  | 3.94 (0.87) | High  |

| Item   | First-year  |       | Fourth-year |       |
|--|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|
|  | Mean (SD)   | Level | Mean (SD)   | Level |
| 3. I feel confident in using the Internet to find or gather information for online learning. | 3.93 (0.83) | High  | 4.17 (0.91) | High  |
| Total  | 3.77 (0.95) | High  | 3.98 (0.86) | High  |

Table 2 the overall first-year and fourth-year students' readiness of online learning were both in high level as presented by mean score of 3.77 and 3.98 respectively.

**Table 3** Difference between the first-year student and the fourth-year student on Levels of online learning readiness in self-directed learning dimension

| Item   | First-year  |       | Fourth-year |       |
|--|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|
|  | Mean (SD)   | Level | Mean (SD)   | Level |
| 1. I carry out my own study plan.                          | 3.56 (1.13) | High  | 3.72 (0.97) | High  |
| 2. I seek assistance when facing learning problems.        | 3.94 (1.12) | High  | 4.13 (0.89) | High  |
| 3. I manage time well.                                     | 3.55 (1.13) | High  | 3.85 (1.03) | High  |
| 4. I set up my learning goals.                             | 3.62 (1.07) | High  | 3.92 (0.97) | High  |
| 5. I have higher expectations for my learning performance. | 3.93 (1.03) | High  | 3.98 (1.00) | High  |
| Total  | 3.70 (1.08) | High  | 3.92 (1.00) | High  |

Table 3 the overall first-year and fourth-year students' readiness of online learning were both in high level as presented by mean score of 3.70 and 3.92 respectively.

**Table 4** Difference between the first-year student and the fourth-year student on Levels of online learning readiness in learning control (In an online context) dimension

| Item   | First-year  |          | Fourth-year |       |
|--|-------------|----------|-------------|-------|
|  | Mean (SD)   | Level    | Mean (SD)   | Level |
| 1. I can direct my own learning progress.  | 3.75 (1.01) | High     | 3.87 (1.03) | High  |
| 2. I can focus on lesson even there are many distraction on other online activities when learning online (instant messages, Internet surfing, chat application). | 3.20 (1.22) | Moderate | 3.53 (1.25) | High  |
| 3. I repeated the online instructional materials on the basis of my needs.   | 3.69 (1.00) | High     | 3.91 (0.85) | High  |
| Total  | 3.55 (1.08) | High     | 3.77 (1.04) | High  |

Table 4 the overall first-year and fourth-year students' readiness of online learning were both in high level as presented by mean score of 3.55 and 3.77 respectively

**Table 5** Difference between the first-year student and the fourth-year student on Levels of online learning readiness motivation for learning (In an online context) dimension

| Item                                     | First-year |       | Fourth-year |           |
|--|------------|-------|-------------|-----------|
|  | Mean (SD)  | Level | Mean (SD)   | Level     |
| 1. I am open to new ideas.               | 4.01(1.11) | High  | 4.21(0.86)  | Very High |
| 2. I have motivation to learn.           | 3.56(1.15) | High  | 3.75(1.09)  | High      |
| 3. I improve from my mistakes.           | 3.94(1.03) | High  | 4.09(0.94)  | High      |
| 4. I like to share my ideas with others. | 3.90(1.05) | High  | 4.17(0.91)  | High      |
| Total                                    | 3.80(1.08) | High  | 4.01 (0.98) | High      |

Table 5 the overall first-year and fourth-year students' readiness of online learning were both in a high level as presented by mean score of 3.80 and 4.01 respectively.

**Table 6** Difference between the first-year student and the fourth-year student on Levels of online learning readiness online communication self-efficacy dimension

| Item  | First-year  |       | Fourth-year |       |
|---|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|
|   | Mean (SD)   | Level | Mean (SD)   | Level |
| 1. I feel confident in using online tools (email, discussion) to effectively communicate with others. | 3.75 (1.01) | High  | 3.87 (1.03) | High  |
| 2. I feel confident in expressing myself (emotions and humor) through text.                           | 3.20 (1.22) | High  | 3.53 (1.25) | High  |
| 3. I feel confident in posting questions in online discussions.                                       | 3.69 (1.00) | High  | 3.91 (0.85) | High  |
| Total   | 3.75(1.09)  | High  | 3.94 (0.98) | High  |

Table 6 the overall first-year and fourth-year students' readiness of online learning were both in high level as presented by mean score of 3.75 and 3.94, respectively.

Research question 2 aimed at exploring whether there were any differences in the readiness levels between the first- and the fourth-year students in Business Administration program. Overall, the students in this program reported the highest level of readiness in motivation dimension. Additionally, as seen in Table 4.6, the fourth-year students were at a higher level of readiness than the first-year students even though both groups reported at a high level in this dimension. It was possible that the more mature the students were, the more they were ready for online learning. This result was in accordance with Hung et al. (2010) who explored college students' readiness for online learning in Taiwan, and they revealed that maturity could be the most essential factor in students' abilities to monitor, manage, control, and motivate their online learning.

In regards to computer self-efficacy dimension, referring to Table 4.3, there were few differences between the first- and the fourth-year students, indicating that both groups were very ready in this dimension. These results were opposite from Unal et al. (2014) who investigated students' readiness for online learning in Turkey. They found that as students' grade levels increased, they became more positive in their use of technology.

Ranking in a third place was communication self-efficacy dimension as discussed in Table 4.7. The first-year and the fourth-year students marked themselves at a high level of

readiness for this dimension. As suggested by Hung et al. (2010), higher-grade students were perhaps more accustomed to communicating with their teacher and peers through computer-mediated communication in the online learning context.

Last but not least, learner control and self-directed was in the lowest ranking. As seen in Table 4.4 and 4.5, the findings reported that when compared to other dimensions, the participants in both years had the lowest readiness level in the dimension of learner control and self-directed learning. The data do support the results of Martin et al.'s (2020), the participants rated the activities of “staying on task” and “avoiding distractions while studying” very low, suggesting that it was challenging for them to stay focused during online learning sessions. Time is another challenging factor as the researchers suggested that students in online learning environment have to manage their time and schedule well and to balance between work and family. They also have to stay focused while participating in the course and be self-disciplined.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate levels of online learning readiness among first and fourth year university students in the Business Administration program in Thailand. The research instrument used was online questionnaire. In terms of online learning environment, there are the five dimensions of student readiness which are computer/internet self-efficacy, self-directed learning, learner control, motivation for learning, and online communication self-efficacy.

To answer the first research question, it was discovered that the participants believed that they were very ready for online learning. Motivation for learning was ranked first and this result could positively affect their learning since motivation enhances their desires and enjoyment to learn, and it also facilitates student's efforts to study. Moreover, the perceived value of learning, learning behaviors and attitudes of student are highly influenced by motivation. Computer/internet self-efficacy dimension was ranked second in the participants' online learning readiness. This might be because these days, university students are highly exposed to technology-rich environment so they are very familiar with and are skillful in using digital technological tools. The dimension of online communication self-efficacy was ranked third. In this dimension, asking question is a necessary part of the learning experience which a good way to get a better understanding of a subject matter. Lastly, the lowest level of online



learning readiness in this study are self-directed learning and learner control dimension. This means that students should be trained more in the aspects of self-disciplined so that they can devote enough time to the course, post discussion-related messages, and send their work on time. Student must also be encouraged to improve their time management skills when learning online.

The second objective was to investigate the differences in the readiness levels between the first and the fourth year students in Business Administration program. In the motivation, computer self-efficacy, and communication self-efficacy dimensions, the fourth-year students appeared to be slightly more ready than the first-year students, but they were in the same level of readiness. This was possible that the more mature the students are, the more they are ready for online learning. Also, it is possible that the older students are more familiar with communicating with their teachers and classmates than the younger students because of their experiences. Additionally, in the technology-rich surroundings, the older students tend to be more skillful in using digital technological tools (Aldhafeeri & Khan, 2016). Last but not least, the participants in both groups had the lowest level of readiness in the dimension of learner control and self-directed learning. The researcher believed that individual students have to find the most suitable way to motivate themselves to stay focus on the content while participating in online courses. Furthermore, they should be able to balance work and personal time by planning and managing their schedule well.

### **Implications of the Study**

The findings of the present study could be beneficial to teachers to understand if students are ready for the online classes so that they can improve the online learning and teaching experiences. First of all, it is suggested that teachers may need to train and encourage students to develop learner-control skills and self-directed learning for online learning contexts such as to improve their time management skills. Secondly, to encourage students to be more interactive in the online classes, teachers could create a positive and inviting learning community by having various cooperative activities such as group sharing and group discussions. Additionally, teachers may add activities that urge student to express their voices through voting or commenting on issues relating to the subject of learning.

### **Recommendations for future research**

The findings of this study were concerned only with a specific group of Business Administration major students, and therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other groups of university students. The future research may compare the results among various

students in difference majors or across universities to gain more interesting results. Last but not least, due to time limitations, this research used only the quantitative method. In the future, an incorporation of a qualitative data from interview or focused group can yield more in depth and insightful findings regarding students' online learning readiness.

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