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(IJLGC)**[www.ijlgc.com](http://www.ijlgc.com)**A META-SYNTHESIS STUDY ON ADAPTATION OF  
ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH MANAGEMENT DURING THE  
COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**Syahrudin Awang Ahmad<sup>1</sup>, Intan Soliha Ibrahim<sup>2\*</sup>, Haslinda Hasan<sup>3</sup>, Lai Che Ching<sup>4</sup>, Aisah Meri<sup>5</sup>

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This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

The ability of a tertiary institution to pursue academic studies and research during the pandemic and now endemic covid-19 is a measure of the strength of the university or college in facing the biggest test of this decade. Thus, various measures and approaches have been taken by the university management, especially in ensuring the momentum of study operations and even research at the university does not stop just like that. However, the biggest challenge seen and felt by all parties including students as the most important stakeholders is the online teaching and learning mechanism. Similarly, research planning and the ability of researchers are seen as very critical, especially in the success of data collection activities with the community and matters related to the study location. This meta-synthesis study portrayed the continuous efforts of the university in adapting and at the same time maintaining the quality of knowledge and skills taught are so significant and become the reason for the development of academic activities in crisis situations especially covid-19 pandemic. Studies from 2020 to 2021 were referred specifically to review teaching and learning situations as well as research during pandemics and endemics show that academics and researchers have an optimistic and dynamic attitude in adapting their respective teaching and research approaches.

**Keywords:**

Pandemic, Endemic, Academic, Research, Online

## Introduction

The crisis that is still continuing because covid-19 in our country is now reaching the ninth month and the situation felt by all parties, especially government organizations can be felt since the first month of the Movement Control Order (PK) enforced by the Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH) through Act 342, Infectious Diseases Prevention and Control Act 1988. Shereen et al (2020) explained that scientists around the world are still investigating the causes and ways coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) is transmitted in communities.

The direct effect received by government employees is a change in the mode of time and place of work that forms a new culture in the environment and way of working. Sections and human resources divisions in every government agency and department have started implementing work from home instructions and work rotation instructions to all staff for all grades and types of positions. However, the side effects received by staff or public sector staff can be viewed from various angles, especially in terms of the ability to increase productivity, quality of service delivery, transparency in assignments and the like.

Even so, the aspect of job security and scope of duties is still a priority and demand because without government agencies such as MOH, Royal Malaysian Police, Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) and Inland Revenue Board (IRB) for example, any form of business required by the people will stunted. As such, online operations among public sector staff are good for meeting, implementing action plans and continuing frontline services has become more bitter not to mention the existence of areas and districts classified as red zones, areas declared as tightly controlled areas through The Tightened Movement Control Order (PKPD) and cross-district and state bans on factors preventing intra- and inter-regional infections.

Nevertheless, the morale and identity of the administrative and management staff in the public sector in all types of services is at its best. Civil servants have responsibilities to shoulder and they consciously have the sensitivity and standards to function at any time when directed by the management of their respective organizations. Most importantly, the work output targeted to be produced is in line with the will of the organization which is in fact strategically planned to reflect the functions of the relevant government agencies.

Thus, in terms of efforts to continue the function of the public service delivery system, the agencies and departments in the public sector in Malaysia are now at the best level. Heads of departments are always alert in accepting any changes in instructions and strive to adjust the form of instructions at the level in their respective departments to be in line with the requirements of the rules enforced by the National Security Council (NSC) and MOH at the national level and also in the state- states throughout Malaysia.

However, in terms of the basis of action in proper crisis management, government agencies and departments need to be sensitive to the following three things, namely, 1). existing government policies and government policies modified or adapted according to the needs of the covid-19 pandemic; 2). human resources are modified according to the needs of online teaching and learning, and; 3). equivalent work output before and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Azlan et al (2020) in a study related to Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) covid-19 found that, continuous and consistent messages from health authorities are important and need to be

adapted to specific health education programs to improve the level of knowledge, attitudes and practices. healthy living required by the relevant health authorities.

These three aspects are critical especially in the management and administration in each government agency to evaluate the form of instructions and work results required not only to meet the *Key Performance Index* (KPI) of the organization but more than that to continue the plan in government policy according to the scope of responsibilities of the relevant government agency. For example, management work in a University as one of the components of government agencies with Federal Statutory Body status should aim to ensure that University students can study and graduate according to the syllabus and at the same time help students obtain degrees according to scheduled time.

However, the constraints in terms of movement controlled through Act 342 certainly change many things especially in terms of lecture procedures, tutorials and specialized laboratories to prevent infection among University students if physical attendance is allowed on University campuses in the country.

There have been many studies conducted during the covid-19 pandemic period and a year after covid-19 was declared an epidemic by the WHO. Most of studies conducted at the university level, health authorities and government agencies point to several themes and scopes of the study. Among them were studies themed on measures to prevent viral transmission, compliance with standard operating procedures, level of virus transmission, pandemic implications to human life and adaptation of human life to covid-19

### ***Adapting Teaching and Learning Approach***

In Malaysia, like many countries around the world, the Movement Control Order (MCO) was enforced to flatten the curve of the spread of Covid-19. The Ministry of Higher Education announced that all public and private universities in Malaysia are to conduct teaching and learning activities via online learning until the end of December 2020 (Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, 2020). The academic fraternity were very resilient, quick to adapt and proactive in overcoming the challenges presented by MCO. Lessons, projects, groups work, presentations and assessment were all prepared within two weeks and carried out with the aid of technology. Although it is undeniable that online learning is deemed the best solution to ensure continuity in learning in the era of what has been coined the “new norm”, there may be some setbacks such as lack of human touch such as sensing students’ incomprehension via facial expressions, cracking small jokes to enlighten mood, student engagement and interaction which can be done more effectively in traditional face to face learning. The absence of social interaction and the inability to form study groups previously enjoyed by students are also some of the challenges they now have to contend with (Chung, Geetha & Dass, 2020).

COVID-19 pandemic somewhat accelerates the end of the traditional semester-based system for college enrolment, progress, and graduation (Wan Mohd. Azam, Siti Khadijah, Siti Aisyah & Firdaus, 2021). The dilemma faced by the University management which is given autonomy by the MOHE can be overcome through the adaptation of crisis management at the campus level itself. This is because, there are demands and needs on behalf of the academic development center and syllabus planners at the University management level, especially the Faculty to improve the quality of delivery of their respective academic services. There are also discussions at various levels within the University that take into account the importance of

students in accessing lectures online and at the same time measure students' understanding of teaching materials in a virtual mode.

Grynyuk, et al., (2022) underscore the importance of type of ways of teaching which is teaching methods that are the most appropriate for offline education are not suitable for the distance mode of instruction whereas Mahdy (2020) stipulate that online education helps to keep the students up and running with an opportunity for self-study. However, the main challenge online education faces in some academic programmes is how to give practical lessons as Nurhidayah, Siti Norida and Nor Diana (2020) pointed out several issues such as ineffective real-time communications, technology incompetence, low rate of interactivity, and interaction as well as lack of understanding of learner's characteristics and attitude were among problems arise during first phase of pandemic covid-19 in 2020.

Most institutions of higher learning have not only succeeded in promoting practical and logical teaching and learning approaches in the pandemic era but more than that, exhibited a high attitude and belief that online teaching and learning is relevant and can be activated during the pandemic period (Carroll 2021).

Rashid and Yadav (2020) entail Carroll statement by stating that the universities will need to pay serious attention to having educators trained and equipped with digital technology for a smooth teaching-learning process. The government will also have to step up and commit to sustained programs for professional development to boost educators teaching capabilities as the pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities and shortcomings of the current education systems

In this case, the approach of modifying the syllabus, technical briefings to academics, setting the form of teaching, learning and supervision through instructions and official circulars in the University specifically for academic staff as well as modifying the duration of teaching and learning may have a win-win impact on the University and its students.

By referring to this situation Al Kumaim et al (2021) suggest that university resource planning people are advised to focus more on the quality of the online learning platform interface, in which educational software should also stress the function of interactivity, ease of use, and students' enjoyment for completing learning tasks with less stress.

### ***Planning for Adaptation and Implementation of Research Activities***

In term of research activities, Sohrabi et al (2021) surfaced some difficulties faced by clinical researcher as basic scientific research has been particularly hard hit in light of nationwide lockdown measures, whilst clinical scientists have witnessed similar hardships in response to the suspension of healthcare services and an abrupt return to full-time clinical duties and this idea similar to what Tremblay et al (2021) found in their study that conducting research amid the Covid-19 pandemic requires adaptation, while ensuring the quality of research is maintained.

Issues faced among students who find it difficult to get internet access in their respective hometowns can actually be addressed at the campus level. The University management can amend and determine the direction of teaching, learning and supervision on a policy basis where, management actions that are sensitive to the needs of students who are diverse in terms

of economic status, problems, locality, etc. are necessary in ensuring that the University's KPIs can be met in total. Among the initial steps that need to be taken by the University is to make a series of studies in a dual-scope that is to students and also to lecturers. The study conducted on University students should take into account the nine scopes of things that supply the University with demographic, psychographic and geographical information of students, namely, a). the economic status of the family; b). locality; c). the tendency of students to seek ancillary income while at home; d). moral support of family members (including *broken families* ); e) .cost of data plan for online learning per day/week/month (students need to complete the syllabus for at least 11 to 14 weeks per semester; f). comfort, safety and well-being while undergoing online learning; g) .measurement of understanding and success in acquiring knowledge and skills while studying online; h). self-motivation to be online throughout the study sessions conducted, and; i) .the level of relationship between lecturers/tutors/demonstrators and students whether it helps towards successful learning according to the University's KPIs.

All nine of these aspects are among the issues and challenges that are crisis and need to be managed wisely by the University management in addressing higher education plans specifically for students in their respective Universities. It should also be noted that, the management should not focus only on the group or social class of students among the B40 alone when talking about the failure of internet access, loss of family income and the ability to continue their studies at the University. This is because students among the M40 and T20 exits are also affected both in terms of the family's subsistence economy as well as efforts to adapt to the online learning environment.

Keep in mind, changes have occurred during the covid-19 pandemic period and according to Moore et al (2020), covid-19 virus transmission has led to transitions in the daily lives of children, adolescents, youth and their families.

Thus, the adaptation of crisis management in government sectors such as Universities is subject to the openness of management to modify existing government policies related to higher education, adapt human resources among academics from thorough conventional teaching to fully hybrid and online teaching and learning and most importantly, the output of work from such government agencies is equivalent to the output of work as before the Covid-19 pandemic era. The two main prerequisites in the adaptation of crisis management in public universities in our country are, 1). openness to make the syllabus and pedagogy more flexible and meet the welfare needs of students as a key stakeholder of the University, and; 2). changes in the mentality and attitude of academics in facing the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic so that online teaching and learning in helping not only academics as a source of knowledge but also students as KPIs of knowledge taught by such academics.

Academic activities including the covid-19 post-pandemic research work now provide opportunities for researchers at public Universities to open new pages in the academic world. The approach of conducting field research is now back to the situation as before the pandemic. Researchers can conduct fieldwork by distributing boring questionnaires, setting appointments for face-to-face interviews, conducting field observation activities and physically visiting study locations.

Covid-19 presented an opportunity to evaluate and gain important new insights into online group interviews with a vulnerable group. Enforced social distancing practices meant field research originally being conducted face-to-face, had to be transferred online during this unprecedented pandemic (Dodds & Hess, 2021).

We really need a high level of preparation because in this way we are able to act quickly and adapt to changes in the environment where we can adapt delivery methods, determine the content of teaching and learning at a distance as in the covid-19 pandemic situation. Thus, institutions and organizations need to prepare contingency plans to meet the challenges posed by pandemics and natural disasters in the future (Seville et al., 2012)

However, the use of face masks and adherence to standard operating procedures are still maintained as a preventive measure as well as a precaution against covid-19 virus infection among the researchers and respondents involved.

A number of universities take the initiative to collaborate with local communities by way of sharing methods, approaches and ways to control and preserve communities from covid-19 virus infection (Hadfield, 2022). An integrated but focused measures are essential in ensuring that every plan to be implemented can be optimally accomplished.

As a matter of fact, Villani, et al. (2021) explained that universities have a high sensitivity to the side effects of this covid-19 pandemic and have been prepared to help students so that students either individually or in groups do not face any problems during the period of starting and continuing their studies at the university.

There are several reasons behind the permission to carry out the study work physically including, 1). Official permission by the government specifically for scholarly related activities is carried out face to face, 2). The level of group immunity that is vaccination in this country has reached a level of 90%, 3). The readiness and responsiveness of the community towards activities related to the crowd and the community, and; 4) community acceptance of the endemic as a situation that needs to be faced and adapted to the daily routines of community members.

Rejection of change will not succeed in any planning in the world of academia and research. This is because, the momentum of the adaptation process in the changes that take place will determine the quality and reputation of educational institutions, especially institutions of higher learning ( Dhawan, 2020). Changes in the pandemic situation are certain and all parties need to abide by the demands of the authorities.

Now, educators and researchers can breathe a sigh of relief and re-coordinate teaching and learning activities as well as research as they did before the pandemic. Detailed planning involving respondents in the field is critical from the point of view of community cooperation but practical from the perspective of academics and researchers because the support by the government for the form and type of official activities is now known by the people of this country.

Rapid advances in technology have facilitated teaching and learning activities conducted online (McBrien et al., 2009). This statement is in line with the view of Iurcov and Iorga (2021) that,

the COVID-19 pandemic should be seen as a stepping stone that motivates academic and research activities as well as long-term planning to form specialized educational structures in ensuring educational innovation can help educators deliver knowledge and skills to students.

Mukhtar, Javed, Arooj and Sethi (2020) encapsulate online learning concept as a flexible and effective source of teaching and learning as most of students and lecturers agreed upon the fact that this helps in distant learning with easy administration and accessibility along with less use resource and time. The aspect of flexibility in this research demands the sensitivity of the researcher to plan the research work to suit the situation in the field especially in the situation of infectious diseases are contagious.

Haron et al (2022) asserted that the position or stance to adapt is of an intellectual nature that highlights the prerequisites to the action of adapting in a particular pattern to drive decision - making in complex situations. continuous efforts to ensure that the research project can be successful in practice but meet all the requirements of maintaining the safety and health of both the researcher and the respondents as well as the subjects studied.

### Conclusion

The adaptation and enculturation aspect of the community towards the endemic is important in instilling the confidence of community members, especially students and their families on the importance of conducting academic activities including research at the University and in the field. The level of community cooperation in the academic environment at the university is dependent on the level of understanding of community members of the endemic scenario.

Therefore, it is important for university authorities to examine any possibilities and implications of a pandemic before planning teaching and learning approaches as well as research activities. Adaptation of methods and approaches that are realistic but beneficial to both students and lecturers and even researchers will be able to ensure that the basic activities and routines of the university can still be implemented even in a pandemic situation

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