

Impact of Internet Access and Accessibility Initiatives in Facilitating Students, M40 and B40 groups' needs during COVID-19 Prevention Measure Period.

LEAD RESEARCHER: DR. SANTHI GOVINDAN, NILAI UNIVERSITY

CO-RESEARCHERS:

DR. SITI AISHAH HUSSIN, NILAI UNIVERSITY

ASSOC. PROF. DR. AMILY BINTI FIKRY, UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA (UITM)

ASSOC. PROF. DR. ZUHAL HUSSEIN, UITM

MS. THAMAYANTHI S. DEVAI SUNDRAM, TUV RHEINLAND MALAYSIA SDN BHD

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Introduction



Internet activities became essential during this Covid-19 pandemic with enforcement of Movement Control Order (MCO). In between, it is important to address that all individuals and communities in Malaysia have access and the use of accessibility initiatives for the new norm communications.

- ✓ Provides an important opportunity to advance the understanding of internet access offerings and accessibility initiatives relationships on internet use behavior with other contributing factors that affect students and working groups.
- ✓ Able to fill gap in past researchers' perspectives and also the limited evidences in the current context.

Key Findings



Internet Usage Patterns:

- Fixed broadband not widely spread among internet users in rural areas as majority rely on Prepaid Mobile by GB and Postpaid by GB.
- Daily average internet usage remain among university students and working groups even after the MCO period ends.
- Pusat Ekonomi Digital Keluarga Malaysia (PEDI) users lack in accessing internet in school/university/workplace.
- Students in urban and specifically primary school students in rural are lack of using laptop for internet access.

Key Findings

Internet Usage Patterns:

- Majority of students and working groups face internet interruptions during 2pm-6.59pm for both urban and rural.
- There are no clear urban-rural divide pertaining internet quality.
- B40 working group face internet interruptions in rural; and mainly on network quality and insufficient internet plans that suit their needs in urban areas.

Key Findings



Factors of Internet Accessibility	Inferences		Overall Inferences
	Students Group	Working Groups	
Internet Offerings impact on Internet Use Behavior	Internet offerings are not important as subscription done by parents/guardians.	Internet offerings are very important as will affect internet activities.	Type of internet plans that are being subscribed impact the internet use behaviour, namely for work, study, information seeking, and social cohesion during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Accessibility Initiatives impact on Internet Use Behavior	Highly relying on accessibility initiatives programmes to ease high internet usage at home or reaching internet facilities for study.	No significant impact as working groups started resume to work and using office internet facilities.	When it comes to the needs to use Internet while working from home (for working group), and using Internet for online education purposes (for students), with or without accessibility initiatives, these group of students and working group will still need to complete their school, university and office task.

Key Findings

Factors of Internet Accessibility	Inferences		Overall Inferences
	Students Group	Working Groups	
Internet Offerings & Accessibility Initiatives impact on Internet Use Behavior- Age as an intervene factor	Students and working groups' dependency on internet offerings and accessibility initiatives are differ to one another.		Different age group neither students nor working people have different needs in subscribing to internet offerings and reaching accessibility initiative programs during COVID-19 MCO period.
Internet Offerings & Accessibility Initiatives impact on Internet Use Behavior- Gender as an intervene factor	The purpose of getting a good internet accessibility for internet use activities, whether specific internet offering subscriptions or accessibility initiatives, did not differ by gender.		Gender did not play a vital role in differentiating the purpose and need for internet accessibility during the COVID-19 MCO period.

Key Findings

Factors of Internet Accessibility	Inferences		Overall Inferences
	Students Group	Working Groups	
Internet Offerings & Accessibility Initiatives impact on Internet Use Behavior- Location as an intervene factor	Internet offerings differ by location, eventually affecting the internet use behaviour of students.	No major significant impact among working groups.	There is homogeneity of internet use behaviour and facilities within urban vs rural areas.
Internet Offerings & Accessibility Initiatives impact on Internet Use Behavior- Mode of Access as an intervene factor	More than 96% of students and working groups using mainly smartphone for internet access.		Insignificant use of other mode of access such as laptops, desktops, and feature phones for accessing the internet.

Recommendations



Telecommunication Providers:

- Relook the availability of fixed broadband and fibre facilities with better package for able reaching to rural communities.
- To widen a variety of internet plans that fit for high usage and internet users': Example, Family Prepaid/Postpaid by GB/Unlimited Data were able to cater, internet packages for productivity purposes; device bundle packages that come with internet plan and easy installment payment tie-up with tablet.
- Necessary measurements to increase bandwidth for better network coverage; subsequently monitor the performance of the network quality periodically.

Recommendations

MCMC

- Enhancing the initiative like Pakej PerantiSiswa Keluarga Malaysia could be extended to school students, especially primary schools students in rural areas.
- Policy recommendations in ensuring appropriate services and support for internet access at home should be a priority.
- Constant monitoring system on how telecommunication providers' rectifying issues on network quality shall be essential.
- Require policy to ensure in having basic knowledge and skills of handling information technology and devices in Malaysian education system, neither at schools nor at tertiary levels.
- Awareness campaigns how to get aid if internet interruptions occur; and basic technical information on internet connectivity in terms of devices and facilities are needed.