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THE RELATIONSHIP OF TEACHING CLARITY AND STUDENT ACADEMIC MOTIVATION IN ONLINE CLASSES

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Abstract

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19, a large number of educational institutions had to temporarily discontinue their offline delivery models in favor of online courses. Teaching clarity has always been an important factor in teaching and learning, but due to the implementation of online courses, teaching clarity has been greatly impacted by various factors of new course delivery model. It is unknown how student academic motivation will be affected by teaching-clarity behaviors in this context. This study collected data from undergraduate students who adopted an online course delivery model to explore the relationship between teaching clarity and student academic motivation during covid-19. The regression result indicated that student motivation was significantly and positively related to teaching clarity in the online course delivery model, and that higher teaching clarity in online courses was associated with higher student motivation. The finding of this study shed light on the teaching-clarity behavior as a key to motivating students in the online course delivery model, with revelatory implications for teachers to design online courses and motivate students in the future.

Keywords

Teaching Clarity, Student Academic Motivation, Online Course Delivery Model, Covid-19, Higher Education

1. Introduction

During Covid-19, the course model underwent a completely different transformation. Student motivation has always been an important influence on student learning, so this paper focuses on whether teacher clarity during online classes has an impact on student motivation. The paper begins with a literature review to explain several important concepts, including the online educational delivery models, student academic motivation, teaching clarity, as well as the relationship between student motivation and teaching clarity in the in-person classroom. Then, it introduced an experiment design of data collection and result analysis from the undergraduate student group. The result is derived from STATA correlation analysis. Finally, the paper discusses the findings and gives some insights and recommendations to help improve the clarity of teaching and motivation during online classes.

2. Literature Review

The literature review first discusses about the transformation of course delivery model influenced by outbreak of Covid-19. It also mentioned the previous research about student motivation and teaching clarity to better clarity the meaning of these two concepts.

2.1. Online Educational Delivery Models

Starting from April 2020, the entire system of higher education was completely upended by the onset of covid-19 and required to transform the delivery of all courses to an online format. Institutions in 185 countries had to develop a way to deliver course content with online sessions (UNESCO), and more than 1,000 million learners were affected around the world (Marinoni et al, 2020). According to a new research, student motivation attaches good importance to academic performance and is one of the most important factors in successful e-learning (Berestova et al., 2022). However, in Thomas et al.'s study (2014), the shift of online courses would affect faculty and their teaching practices, which means their teaching clarity behaviors could also be affected by the new course delivery model. Therefore, there is a shortage of research about teaching clarity affects student academic motivation in the online course delivery model. This study will increase awareness of the importance of teaching clarity in the context of the online learning and provide guidance on the impact of teaching clarity on student motivation.

2.2. Student Academic Motivation

Student academic motivation is a decisive psychological factor that encourages a student to get better performance in the academic field. It plays an important role in maintaining student satisfaction in the online learning environment (Berestova et al., 2022). However, students' academic motivation is likely to be affected, and students are hard to continue learning online as a result of the transformation of the learning model (Marler et al., 2021). Given that online learning has become a knowledge delivery form to which students must adapt, the dissipation of academic motivation is very detrimental to e-learning development. Teacher behavior plays a positive role in motivating the students during the teaching process (Pondan Perlindungan Leoanak & Kurniati Amalo, 2018) and is an essential part that affects the academic motivation of students. In this paper, we start by exploring one of the teacher behaviors—teaching clarity to discuss whether teaching-clarity behavior could lift students' academic motivation in online courses.

2.3. Teaching Clarity

Teaching clarity refers to the approaches and procedures that instructors use to guarantee that their students understand course topics completely (Zheng, 2021b). Good teaching-clarity behaviours always considered as an imperative component to effective teaching and good student performance (BrckaLorenz et al., 2012). According to (Blaich et al., 2016), teaching clarity has a positive relationship with student achievement, and it can positively engage students in learning activities. Student who reported higher level of teaching clarity has better student outcomes including leadership, openness to diversity and challenge, moral reasoning, and positive attitudes toward literacy (BrckaLorenz et al., 2012). The importance of teacher clarity is also mentioned by Tisworth (2015), who mentioned students who get clear instruction have a higher success rate in learning the course material. Although teaching clarity is always promoted as an effective component in learning, we know little about how academic motivation are exposed and reacted to this practice in online learning model. Therefore, doing research to define the relationship between teaching clarity and student motivation under online courses context is needed.

2.4. The Relationship Between Student Motivation and Teaching Clarity

The previous study shows that in the in-person classroom, student motivation is a very important factor. Teaching clarity could increase academic performance only on the condition that students are motivated (Bolkan et al., 2015). It also tells that teaching clarity and student motivation are essential to each other and play an important role in teaching-learning behavior. However, research on the relationship in online classrooms needs to be more extensive. The following essay mainly talks about how to define the relationship in the online course delivery model.

3. Research Methodology

This research used qualitative research methodology to explore the relationship between teaching clarity and student academic motivation. This section includes research objective, data collection, variables, and data analysis.

3.1. Research Objective

The objective of this research is to understand the relationship between teaching clarity and student academic motivation in the online course delivery model. Questionnaires were carried out among Chinese undergraduate students to implement the research goal.

3.2. Data Collection

In this study, 199 questionnaires were collected by means of an online survey, of which seven were invalid. Data for this study were collected from 192 undergraduate students in 19 regions of China. Of these, 72 (37.5%) were female and 120 (62.5%) were male. All participants took online courses during the semester in which they were asked to register an account on the Internet and answer the questionnaire carefully as required. The students were divided into four intervals based on the percentage of online courses. 102 of them were distributed in the 1-20% interval (53.12%), 61 in the 21-40% interval (31.77%), 20 in the 41-60% interval (19.6%), 8 in the 61-80% interval (4.17%), and 1 in the 81-100% interval (0.52%). All participant information will not be disclosed for privacy protection reasons.

3.3. Variables

The dependent variable in this study used a revised version of the Academic Motivation in Learning Biology Scale (AYDIN et al., 2014) to assess participants' academic motivation. The scale consists of ten-items and respondents responded on a linear scale. The motivation scale produced an internal reliability estimate of 0.8224 (Cronbach's alpha) in the present study.

The independent variables in this study were measured by the Teacher Clarity Scale, a 5-item scale with an internal consistency reliability of 0.8204. To ensure the accuracy of the correlations in this study, a range of variables in student background were controlled. Specifically, these variables included gender (female=1, male=0), parental educational level, student age, variables in institutional type (research university=1, regional universities=0), academic cohort (i.e., 2020, 2019, 2018 with cohort 2017 as the reference group), college GPA, interactions with peers, whether students worked on or off campus (work=1, not work=0), two dichotomous variables indicating student major in Non-STEM or STEM (non-STEM=0, STEM=1), academic satisfaction, and teaching satisfaction.

3.4. Data Analysis

Two scales are standardized prior to the analyses. Regression analysis was used to examine the correlation between teaching clarity and student academic motivation. The demographic variables academic cohort, student age, institution type, gender identity, student major dummy coded as dichotomous variables are included in the regression analysis. Control variables including college GPA, interactions with peers, and whether students worked on or off campus are included in determining if these factors significantly influence the relationship between academic motivation and teaching clarity. All analyses were calculated using STATA version 16.

3.5. Findings

The present study sought to determine the relationship between teaching clarity and student motivation. Results from the regression model are shown in Table 1. The R-squared of the regression model is 0.4439, which reveals that 44% of the variability observed in the target variable is explained by the regression model. The prob>F=0.000, and this implies that the regression model is meaningful overall.

Table 1: *Regression Model*

	Number of obs	**Prob > F**	**R-square**	**Adj R-squared**
Regression Model	192	0.0000	0.4439	0.3999

(Source: Authors' Own Illustration)

From table 2, the coefficient and t-value of dependent variables are showed. Analyses revealed the correlation between teaching clarity and academic motivation is highly statistically significant through coefficient equals to 0.23 and t-value equals to 3.39, which indicates that that teacher clarity is highly correlated with student academic motivation in online teaching, and as teaching clarity increased, student academic motivation increased. This verified that the teaching-clarity behaviour is indeed an essential factor in increasing student academic motivation. Through the statistics, the variable of class satisfaction also shows high significant with teaching clarity through coefficient equals to 0.389 and t-value equals to 6.52, which means that more teaching-clarity behaviour, more class satisfaction from students.

Table 2: *Variables Model Effect And T-Value*

Variable	**Model coef. /t**
Female	-0.018 (-0.19)
Parental education	0.007 (0.08)
Student age	-0.037 (-0.88)
Research school	-0.113(-0.78)
School1	-0.209(-1.07)

School2	-0.134 (-0.85)
School3	-0.084 (-0.63)
online	-0.035 (-0.61)
work	0.0135(0.15)
Academic satisfaction	-0.059 (-1.23)
Interaction with peers	0.067 (1.6)
Class satisfaction	0.389 (6.52)
motivation	0.230 (3.39)
College GPA	-0.004(-0.6)
constant	0.439 (0.38)
R-square	0.4439

(Source: Authors' Own Illustration)

4. Implication

In this section, the study discussed the implication of the findings from two aspects, including the theoretical and practical perspectives. From a theoretical perspective, the finding point out the theory that teaching clarity is a very vital factor in motivating students and increasing class satisfaction. From a practical perspective, it gives some actionable suggestions about how instructors can improve their pedagogical techniques.

4.1. Theoretical Perspective

The result shows that improving the teaching clarity became an essential task for instructors to motivate student and in online course delivery model. Also, in this study, the variable class satisfaction is even more significant in the correlation with teaching clarity. This arises to an assumption that better teaching-clarity behaviour could lead to the class satisfaction. So, the importance of improving the teaching clarity is undeniable.

4.2. Practical Perspective

In the case of online learning delivery model, the instructors need to use more techniques to apply the teaching skills and increase their clarity than in-person teaching since there are many factors that could influence teaching clarity in online learning. According to the research, connectivity, teaching method, and classroom management could be the three main challenges for teachers after the digital shift (Sahito et al., 2022). These challenges can significantly affect the teaching clarity in e-learning.

4.2.1. Internet Access: First of all, many teachers and students are in the remote areas, so internet access is major issue for them. Some of them are not able to get stable internet connection because they do not have WIFI, 3G, 4G at their places, thus the lecture delivery quality is very limited. In this situation, ensuring the quality of internet access is a good kick-off for instructors.

4.2.2. Teaching Method: In addition, the need for changes in teaching methods is also a factor that affects the clarity of teaching in online classes. According to Zheng, instructors who want to be good at communicating with their students clearly must talk clearly, organize their course material clearly, and provide clear explanations of the teaching materials (2021c). However, in teaching online classes, beyond these basic teaching skills, teachers need to pay more attention to the use of pedagogy that is applicable to online teaching. Some studies have pointed out that several principles of online pedagogy can help students learn better online. For example, letting students do most of the work, focusing on interactive teaching online, or working towards a sense of presence that includes cognitive presence, teaching presence could greatly help on online pedagogy (Pelz, 2019).

4.2.3. Classroom Management: Moreover, classroom management is a factor that affects clarity of instruction. In online teaching, classroom management becomes particularly important due to the distance among students and teachers, and there are a number of challenges in classroom management. Time management is a key to keeping online classroom management in order (Biggs, 2016). Among the online time management techniques, several of them can greatly improve the clarity of the classroom. The first is concise, clear writing of material, class requirements and paragraphs. The next is to organise class content into an easy-to-follow order.

4.2.4. Syllabus Improvement: Then, it is important to emphasise the importance of time within the syllabus. Finally, there is a focus on technical tools and asynchronous discussions (Biggs, 2016). Therefore, there are many ways to increase the teaching clarity in online learning, and if instructors could pay attention to those factors, the student motivation will increase effectively.

4.2.5. Limitations: The present study included traditional undergraduate university students and did not involve in graduate students and non-traditional students, who could be experiencing the course delivery model quite differently. Also, the sample consisted of Chinese students who from the same backgrounds. For using statistically significant results to find the relationship of two variables, the research was based on largely quantity research methods. While the studies were rigorously conducted, the results are limited by the sample size.

6. Conclusion

This paper discusses the relationship between teaching clarity and student academic motivation with quantitative method. In the covid-19 context, more and more schools started using online courses to delivery knowledge, which lead to the question whether teaching clarity-behaviour will influence student academic motivation under this circumstance. To tackle the problem, online surveys are conducted among 192 undergraduate students in China. The finding

shows us that the two variables are highly correlated, which means better teacher clarity could lead to better student academic motivation in online courses. This essay gives some recommendations about how instructors could improve their class clarity to promote student motivation, and it also points out that teaching clarity could improve the class satisfaction in some extend. The limitation of the research includes that there was only an undergraduate student's sample, the sample mainly focused on Chinese students, and the research was only based on a quantitative research method.

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