

## Student Engagement and Perceived Academic Stress: Open Distance Learning in Malaysia

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**Abstract :** Students' strong engagement in learning increases their motivation and satisfaction to learn, be resilient to combat academic stress. Engagement in learning is even crucial in the open distance learning (ODL) setting, where the adult students are learning remotely, lessons and learning materials are mostly delivered via online platforms. This study aimed to explore the relationship between learning engagement and perceived academic stress levels of adult students who enrolled in ODL learning mode. In this descriptive correlation study during the 2021-2022 academic years, 101 adult students from Wawasan Open University, Malaysia (WOU) were recruited through convenient sampling. The adult students' online learning engagement levels and perceived academic stress levels were identified through the self-report Online Student Engagement Scale (OSE) and the Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PASS). The Pearson correlation coefficient test revealed a significant positive relationship between online student engagement and perceived academic stress ( $r= 0.316$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The higher scores on PASS indicated lower levels of perceived academic stress. The findings of the study supported the assumption of the importance of engagement in learning in promoting psychological well-being as well as sustainability in online learning in the open distance learning context.

**Keywords :** student engagement, academic stress, open distance learning, online learning

**Conference Title :** ICPPAEE 2022 : International Conference on Possible Problems About E-Education

**Conference Location :** Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

**Conference Dates :** December 09-10, 2022