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UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE ON VIRTUAL LEARNING DURING COVID-19 ERA IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study is set to examine the perspective of university students on virtual learning during the covid-19 era in Anambra State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted to collect the data. The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. The sample size for the study was 150 students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra state. An online survey (questionnaire) was designed and used to collect data with a reliability index of 0.79. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected, while t-test and ANOVA statistics was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Finds of the study revealed challenges of virtual learning to included lack of enough computers, shortage of internet facilities, students' lack of access to virtual learning facilities and tools, high cost of internet network services and erratic power supply, while prospects included that virtual learning will make education generally more effective and extend the frontiers of knowledge. Recommendations were made and some of the recommendations include that Infrastructural facilities should be given adequate priority and funding, training of lecturers and student on the technical skills required for virtual learning should be given maximum attention.


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Keywords: Virtual Learning, Perspective, University, COVID-19.

Introduction

The emergence of internet technology has brought profound growth in the e-learning culture of tertiary institutions in many countries. Unfortunately, most Nigerian schools are yet to fully embrace and implement this. Electronic learning can be defined as an alternate learning process that is done over the internet; no physical classroom, students, or lecturers. It allows for online communication between teachers and learners.Haghshenas, (2019) defined e-learning as the management of learning materials via electronic means such as satellite, CD-ROM. The importance of this alternate learning system in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized, especially in the face of this COVID-19 pandemic. E-learning outfits make it easier for teachers, institutions, and students to strategize, provide, and monitor the knowledge and instruction method (Almaiah, Al-Khasawneh, &Althunibat, 2020). It can also be inferred from Docebo that e-learning has the possibility to produce positive advancement over the years in Africa (Docebo, 2014).

Virtual learning is the process of using online classroom environments to disseminate information. Virtual teaching and learning processes involve some digital technologies that permit teachers and students not to necessarily be present in the same room. It is the only mode of teaching that can be of help in passing instructions to students in a time like this that social distancing is of utmost important (Miksand Mcilwaine 2020; Agbeleand Oyelade 2020).Virtual learning has proven to defy all long-distance/location barriers in the learning process: There will be no need for students to leave their respective homes. Modern learning technologies mean schools no longer need to have expensive infrastructures, students crowding the lecture rooms, etc. as witnessed in the traditional face-face learning method and enables the individual to plan and direct his/her own learning process (Mamattah, 2016).

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in Nigeria is part of the worldwide pandemic caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SAR COV-2) (Jones, & Blankenship, 2017). Coronaviruses are common in certain species of animals, such as cattle camels and bats which can be transmitted to humans. Some health experts believe that the new strain of coronavirus likely originated in bats or pangolins (Azevedo, Hasan, Goldemberg, Iqbal, &Geven, 2020).The

first transmission to humans was in Wuhan, China (Bozkurt, and Sharma, 2020). Since then, the virus has mostly spread through person-to-person contact. The most common way that this virus spreads is through close contact with already infected person. When people with COVID-19 breathe out or cough, they expel tiny droplets that contain the virus. These droplets can enter the mouth or nose of someone without the virus, causing the spread of infection to occur (Olcott, 2020).

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in Nigeria by the Federal Ministry of Health on 27th February, 2020. This was the case of an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria and returned from Milan, Italy to Lagos, Nigeria on the 25th of February, 2020 (Daniel, 2020). Since then, the number of confirmed cases of infection keep rising both in Nigeria and across the globe. As part of measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Education, through the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, on March 19th ordered the immediate closure of tertiary institutions, secondary and primary schools across the nation over the outbreak of the disease in the country. In addition to this, restriction was placed on inter-states movement, market places were locked, religious gatherings of more than 10 persons were banned, social activities such as parties, ceremonies and club meetings etc. were placed on hold (Kalyanasundaram& Madhavi, 2019). All public and private schools have to shut the doors of their schools following the government directive. The pandemic has unmasked substantial inequities in the education sector. While some private schools in urban areas are engaging their students through online teaching, a large number of students who are less privileged or are in rural areas were left out (Kalyanasundaram&Madhavi, 2019). Most schools lack facilities which hindered them to partake successfully in online teaching like they do in the developed countries (Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guàrdia&Koole, 2020).

Virtual learning has become imperative in promoting and sustaining educational development globally considering the disruptive effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on traditional learning. However, the closure of schools has once again highlighted the huge divide between the educational systems in developed economies compared to developing economies like Nigeria. Thus, this work is set to examine theperspective of university student's on virtual learning during the covid-19 era in Anambra State, Nigeria.

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Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's education system is still largely built around traditional pedagogical learning, which is more focused on the physical learning environment. However, the outbreak of COVID-19 has revealed the inadequacies of this mode of education. The low level of infrastructural development in Nigeria, in terms of energy and internet connectivity, also continues to constitute a setback for the adoption of virtual learning in the country. Although some schools have explored several media to keep their students engaged during the lockdown, many students are disadvantaged due to the prevailing inequality in the socio-economy. Students whose parents are unable to provide them with the requisite technology tools may not be able to participate. In addition, people living off campus that are mainly rural areas where connectivity is poor to nonexistent are also affected.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How efficient is virtual learning during the covid-19 era inuniversities in Anambra State?
2. What are the constraints to effective utilization of virtual learning as a mode of teaching and learning in universities in Anambra state?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female student's on how efficient virtual learning is in universities in Anambra state during the covid-19.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of students between the age of 17 – 20, 21 – 23 and 24 and above on the constraints to effective utilization of virtual learning as a mode of teaching and learning in universities in Anambra state.

Methodology

To meet the objectives of this study, descriptive survey research design was adopted to investigate students' perspective and experiences on the use of virtual learning for instructional delivery in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka during COVID-19 era. Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka is a federal university situated in Awka the capital of

Anambra State.All the students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University were targeted as participants for the study, but only 150 students participated. Participants were drawn from faculties of natural sciences, education and social sciences. The participants, whose age ranges between 17 and 24 were drawn from classes between 100 and 400 levels. An online survey (questionnaire) was designed and used to collect data. Online survey is considered suitable for this study because physical contacts have been discouraged by World Health Organization to avoid the widespread of COVID-19 disease. The online survey contained 30 items for general feedback on the use of online learning platform for virtual learning, degree of skills possessed by lecturers and students, and perceived challenges. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument, which yielded coefficient values of 0.80 with average coefficient index of 0.79. This value show that the instrument is sufficiently reliable. The data collected wasanalyzed using mean, standard deviation, t-test and ANOVA statistics. Standard deviation will be used to determine the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the respondents' response. The decision rule for testing the null hypotheses will be as follows; reject the null hypothesis if the calculated/sig. value is greater than the critical/p-value, otherwise do not reject the null hypothesis if the calculated/sig. value is lesser than the critical/p-value. This analysis will be done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 2.1).

Results

Research question 1: How efficient is virtual learning during the covid-19 era in universities in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on how efficient is virtual learning during COVID-19 era in universities (N=150).

S/N	Item statements on the efficiency of virtual learning during the COVID-19 era in universities	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I am comfortable communicating electronically.	2.00	.78	Disagree
2	I am able to easily access the internet as needed for my studies	1.49	.89	Strongly disagree
3	I am willing to actively communicate with my classmates and instructors electronically	3.21	.75	Strongly agree
4	I have taken virtual learning or online courses for a number of times	2.22	.83	Agree
5	I spend number of hours per week using a computer for virtual learning and other educational purposes	1.32	.70	Strongly disagree
6	My background and experience will be beneficial to my studies	2.61	.61	Strongly agree
7	I am comfortable with virtual communication.	3.41	.78	Strongly agree
8	I believe looking back on what I have learned in a course will help me to remember it better	3.61	.73	Strongly agree
9	In my studies, I am self-disciplined and find it easy to set aside reading and homework time	3.21	.70	Strongly agree
10	I am able to manage my study time effectively and easily complete assignments on time	1.48	.79	Strongly disagree
11	As a student, I enjoy working independently.	2.48	.77	Agree
12	As a student, I enjoy working with other students in groups	3.57	.58	Strongly agree
13	I like a lot of interaction with my lecturer	3.25	.76	Strongly agree
14	I possess sufficient computer skills for	3.47	.81	Strongly agree

virtual learning work

Grand Mean	**2.67**	**Strongly agree**

Data presented in Table 1 show the mean and standard deviation result on how efficient is virtual learning during COVID-19 era in universities. The respondents strongly agreed to eight (8) items, agreed to two (2) items, disagree to one (1) item and strongly disagree to three (3) items. On the whole, the grand mean stood at 2.67 this show that the respondents strongly agreed that virtual learning is efficient in learning during COVID-10 era. The standard deviation shows homogeneity in the respondents rating.

Research question 2: What are the constraints to effective utilization of virtual learning as a mode of teaching and learning in universities in Anambra state?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on theconstraints to effective utilization of virtual learning as a mode of teaching and learning in universities (N=150).

S/N	Item statements on the constraints to effective utilization of virtual learning as a mode of teaching and learning in universities	Mean	SD	Remark
15	There is poor power supply in my university	3.16	.67	Strongly agree
16	I feel comfortable communicating online in English	2.45	.87	Agree
17	I can ask my teacher questions and receive a quick response during internet activities outside of class.	1.76	.84	Disagree
18	I feel that face-to-face contact with my lecturer is necessary to learn.	2.66	.86	Strongly agree
19	I can discuss with other students during virtual/online activities outside the class	2.32	62	Agree
20	There is inadequate power supply in my university	1.06	61	Strongly agree
21	There is full time collaboration between students during virtual learning	2.38	.86	Agree
22	Learning is the same in class and at home on the internet	2.01	.62	Agree

23	I cannot practice English grammar during Internet activities outside the class	1.32	61	Strongly disagree
24	I believe that virtual/online learning on the Internet is more motivating than inside the class.	2.44	.89	Agree
25	I believe a complete course can be given online without difficulty	3.32	.67	Strongly agree
26	I could pass a course using virtual learning without any physical lecturer assistance.	3.81	.86	Strongly agree
27	Virtual learning is usually difficult due tolackof Irregular power supply	2.10	.75	Agree
28	Virtual learning is usually difficult due to of Lack of relevant software	3.22	.68	Strongly agree
29	Virtual learning is usually difficult because of Inadequate computer trained and certificated lecturers	2.51	.53	Strongly agree
30	Virtual learning is usually difficult because of Low awareness of application of Information Communication Technology to teaching and learning	3.24	.70	Strongly agree
	Grand mean	**2.49**		**Agree**

Data presented in Table 2 show the mean and standard deviation result on the constraints to effective use of virtual learning as a mode of teaching and learning. The respondents strongly agreed to eight (8) items, they agreed to five (6) items and strongly disagree to one item. On the whole, a grand mean stood at 2.49 this show that the respondents agreed to the items raised on the use of that virtual learning is efficient. The standard deviation shows heterogeneity in the respondents rating.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female student's on how efficient virtual learning is in universities in Anambra state during the covid-19.

Table 3: t-test statistics summary for significance of difference of male and female students on how efficient virtual learning is in universities (150).

Sources of variables	N	Mean	SD	df	p-value	α	Decision
Male	66	36.24	4.32				
				148	0.00	0.05	Significant
Female	84	38.45	3.39				

Results presented in table 3 shows the t-test summary for significance difference of male and female students on how efficient virtual learning is in universities. The result shows that at .05 level of significance, the significant p-value is less than the alpha value (0.00 < 0.05). Based on this the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on how efficient virtual learning is in universities.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of students between the age of 17 – 20, 21 – 23 and 24 and above on the constraints to effective utilization of virtual learning as a mode of teaching and learning in universities in Anambra state.

Table 4: ANOVA on the mean rating of students between the age of 17 – 20, 21 – 23 and 24 and above on the constraints to effective utilization of virtual learning as a mode of teaching and learning in universities (N=150).

Sources of variables	Sum of squares	Df	Mean of squares	SD	F	p-value	α	Decision
Between groups	36.24	2	24.01	4.32				
					4.467	0.00	0.05	Significant
Within groups	38.45	147	26.11	3.39				

Results presented in Table 4 shows the ANOVA summary for significance difference of the mean rating of students between the age of 17-20, 21-23, and 24years and above on the constraints to effective utilization of virtual learning as a mode of teaching and learning in universities. The analysis

revealed that the F-value is greater than the significant value at 0.05 level of significance, hence the null hypothesis will be rejected. This implies that students between the age of 17-20, 21-23, and 24years differ significantly in their mean rating on the constraints to effective utilization of virtual learning as a mode of teaching and learning in universities.

Discussion of Findingsand Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, majority of the students showed positive attitudes towards the use of virtual learning and has confessed that virtual learning has assisted their overall learning and that they are able to plan better for their learning with virtual learning. The study also revealed that modern learning technologies such as virtual teaching mean schools may no longer need to have expensive infrastructures, students crowding the lecture rooms, etc. as witnessed in the traditional face-face learning method This result is in consonance with the findings of Mamattah, (2016) who stated that virtual learning enables the individual to plan and direct his/her own learning process.

Findings from this study revealed that students of Nnamdi Azikiwe UniverityAwka donot have enough virtual learning facilities and equipment such as computers and laptops, internet facilities, projectors and screens, video cameras, compact disks and fax machines. This is also in line with the findings of Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guàrdia and Koole, (2020), who observed that most schools lack facilities which hindered them to partake successfully in online teaching like they do in the developed countries.

This research also found that university students do not have equal access to virtual learning facilities and tools, that they are afraid of operating virtual learning tools, and that the internet connection is not always available due to the high cost. The erratic power supply is a major challenge to virtual learning. All of these findings are consistent with those of a study carried out by Docebo, (2014).The findings of this study also revealed that virtual learning has promising prospects for the near future, as the majority of respondents revealed that virtual learning has helped them to overcome the problem of a shortage of learning resources, and they feel that virtual learning will make education generally more effective and extend the frontiers of knowledge. This is in agreement with the opinions of Agbeleand Oyelade,

(2020), and Almaiah, Al-Khasawneh, and Althunibat, (2020).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research and its conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Infrastructural facilities should be given adequate priority and funding.
2. Training of lecturers and students on the technical skills required for virtual learning should be given maximum attention.
3. Government should make concerted effort to provide the enabling environment, by establishing virtual learning facilities in all tertiary institutions in the state.
4. It should be made mandatory for all lecturers and students to have computer byproviding soft loan either by institutions or government.
5. Tertiary institutions should be adequately strengthened so as to meet up with the global trends in teaching and learning.
6. The problem of corruption in leadership should be aggressively tackled to create room for utilization of the nation's scare resources towards the advancement of virtual learning and other technological development.

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