

Preference And Attitude To Online Learning Among University Of Lagos Undergraduates At Post-Lockdown Resumption: Implications For Counselling

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Abstract

One of the innovative impacts of information technology in teaching and learning is the availability of different online teaching systems to facilitate learning amongst students. The importance of the various online teaching mechanisms in Nigeria was appreciably enhanced and utilized as a means of curbing the spread of COVID-19 on the resumption of academic activities after a long period of government-imposed lockdown. One of the systems adopted by the University of Lagos like other institutions of higher learning in Nigeria is the Learning Management System (LMS). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, regular undergraduate students were taught by face-to-face contact. With the change in medium of teaching, it is necessary to investigate students' preference and attitude towards online learning to serve as feedback for future policy adjustment and implementation. To achieve this, a descriptive survey research design was adopted. A sample of 467 undergraduates from 3 Faculties were selected using a snow ball sampling technique. Two researcher-developed instruments were used to gather data electronically (Preference for Online learning Questionnaire (POLQ) and Attitude to Online Learning Scale (AOLS) from the respondents. Six research objectives and three research questions were raised. Three hypotheses were tested. Analysis of data was done using frequency counts, simple percentage, content analysis and chi-square test for independence. The findings revealed that 57% of respondents prefer face-to-face contact learning to online learning, while 40% of respondents reported having a negative attitude towards online learning. There seems to be a significant gender difference in preference and attitude to online learning. There is also a significant relationship between students' preference and attitude to online learning. Recommendations were made in line with findings. The study advocates a collaborative effort of the school management, centre for information system unit (CITS) and counselling unit of the university in creating awareness of the importance of online teaching and as learning medium at critical periods like this.

Keywords: Attitude, Learning Management System, Online learning, Preference

I. INTRODUCTION

Different dimensions were introduced into regular or routine behaviours and habits of people across the world to control and stall the transmission of the coronavirus (covid-19) pandemic. These various changes had and are still having serious impacts in personal and social lives of all individuals, especially students of academic institutions. The change resulted in

the lockdown of all activities and the closure of schools for periods ranging from, a few months to a whole year. Academic institutions had to change from the usual face-to-face teaching and learning style to online learning. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the onset and surge of the covid-19 pandemic in 2019, disorganized the structure of schooling all over

the world, severely causing distress to susceptible younger school children and university students [1].

The covid-19 pandemic brought about difficulties and created disorder and confusion in tertiary institutions across the world [2]. Campuses of institutions were shut and face to face instructions, education, evaluation, and examinations changed to online pattern. The University of Lagos is one of the tertiary institutions that adopted the Learning Management System (LMS) as a medium of fostering online learning and teaching at resumption of academic activities after the lockdown. LMS is defined as “a web-based software platform that provide an interactive online learning environment and automate the administration, organization, delivery and reporting of educational content and learner outcomes” pp.1[3].

The online teaching and learning style might not be new to students and institutions in the developed and some developing countries (especially the private and well-funded institutions). This learning mode however may be new to students in public and poorly funded institutions in some underdeveloped and developing countries like Nigeria. This has made it necessary to investigate the preference and attitude to online learning among students of institutions of higher learning at post-lockdown resumption of academic activities. The importance of attitude can not be overemphasized because of the profound effect it has on learning [4]. Attitude determines whether learning will be seen as pleasant or otherwise regardless of the medium [4], while investigating students' preference for online learning may be a useful tool in the prediction of students' academic performance and the formulation and implementation of policies that will enhance students' learning experience.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study is to:

1. Investigate if regular undergraduate students prefer online learning to physical classroom learning.

2. Identify the reasons for regular undergraduate students' preference or otherwise for online learning.
3. Evaluate the attitude of regular undergraduate students to online learning.
4. Determine if a significant gender difference exist in the attitude to online learning among regular undergraduate students.
5. Ascertain whether male and female undergraduate students differ in their preference for online learning to physical classroom learning.
6. Assess the relationship between students' attitude to and preference for online learning.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do regular undergraduate students prefer online learning to physical classroom learning?
2. What are the reasons for regular undergraduate students' preference for online learning?
3. What is the attitude of regular undergraduate students to online learning?

IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant gender difference in the attitude to online learning among regular undergraduate students.
2. Male and female undergraduate students will not significantly differ in their preference for online learning to physical classroom teaching medium.
3. There is no significant relationship between students' attitude to and preference for online learning.

V. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was adopted. A sample of 467 undergraduates from 3 Faculties were selected using a snow ball sampling technique. This sampling technique was used because the students were not physically present on campus and could only be assessed by referrals through social applications like whatsapp and facebook. Two researcher-developed instruments were used to gather data electronically (Preference for Online learning

Questionnaire (POLQ) and Attitude to Online Learning Scale (AOLS) from the respondents. POLQ assessed demographic data of respondents like gender, faculty and level of study and an open-ended response to answer the question on the reason for preference for online learning. AOLS contained 12 statements measuring attitude to online learning on a 4-point Likert scale. AOLS has a strong Cronbach alpha measure of internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.83. Analysis of data was done using frequency counts, simple percentage, chi-square test for independence and content analysis of qualitative method.

VI. RESULTS

Research question 1: Do regular undergraduate students prefer online teaching to physical classroom learning?

Table 1: Preference for online teaching

	Preference		
Gender	Yes	No	Frequency (%)
Male	69	64	133(28%)
Female	133	201	334(72%)
Total	202(43%)	265(57%)	467(100%)

Table 1 reveals that more students 265(57%) prefer physical classroom learning to online learning 202(43%). However, among the few students that prefer online learning, female undergraduates (133) were found to prefer online learning than the males (69).

Research question 2: What are the reasons for regular undergraduate students' preference for online teaching?

Table 2: Reasons for online learning preference

S/N	Reasons	N	Percentage (%)
1	Convenience, safety and engagement in other activities	113	55.94
2	Cost of transportation	6	2.97
3	Means of compelling Lecturers to teach	3	1.49

4	Ease of learning (self-paced learning)	39	19.30
5	Aids concentration	8	3.96
6	Self-improvement (ICT and Research skills)	3	1.49%
7	Availability of adequate learning materials	3	1.49%
8	Aids timely completion of syllabus and schooling	19	9.40%
9	No reason	8	3.96 %
	Total	202	100 %

Table 2 revealed that a greater proportion 113 (55.94%) of students prefer online learning because it is convenient and gives room for engagement in other activities outside schooling. 39 (19.30%) of students prefer online learning because of the ease to learn at their pace. 19 (9.40%) of students choose online learning because it aids in timely coverage of syllabus and completion of schooling. 8 (3.96%) undergraduates attributed their preference for online learning because it aids their concentration. Reduction of transport cost to the physical classroom was accounted for by 6(2.97%) of respondents. A means of compelling lecturers to attend lectures, development of ICT and research skills and provision of adequate learning materials were the reasons given by 3(1.49%) of students respectively. However, only 8 (3.96%) mentioned they preferred online learning without any reason.

Research question 3: What is the attitude of regular undergraduate students to online teaching?

Table 3: Student's attitude to online learning

	Attitude		
Gender	Positive	Negative	Frequency (%)
Male	98	35	133(28%)
Female	180	154	334(72%)
Total	278(60%)	189(40%)	467(100%)

Table 3 shows that a preponderance of undergraduates 278 (60%) have a positive attitude towards online learning with females having more positive attitude than the males.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant gender difference in attitude to online learning among regular undergraduate students.

Table 4: Chi-Square analysis of gender difference in attitude to online learning

	Value	df	Asymp.Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.466 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction ^b	14.656	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	16.033	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	15.433	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	467				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 53.83.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 4 revealed 15.46 as the cal X^2 value of gender difference in attitude to online learning among regular undergraduate students. This value is significant since the sig. value of 0.00 is smaller than 0.05. This implies that there is a

significant gender difference in attitude to online learning among undergraduates.

Hypothesis 2: Male and female undergraduates will not significantly differ in their preference for online learning.

Table 5: Chi-Square analysis of gender difference in preference for online learning

	Value	df	Asymp.Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.636 ^a	1	.018		
Continuity Correction ^b	5.155	1	.023		
Likelihood Ratio	5.605	1	.018		
Fisher's Exact Test				.023	.012
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.624	1	.018		
N of Valid Cases	467				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 57.53.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 5 revealed that the cal X^2 value of 5.63, with an associated significance level of 0.01 resulted as the gender difference in preference to online learning among regular undergraduate students. This value is significant since the sig. value of 0.01 is smaller than 0.05. This implies that there is a significant gender difference in

preference to online learning among undergraduates.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between students' attitude and preference for online learning

Table 6: Chi-Square analysis of relationship students' attitude and preference for online learning

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig.(2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	224.577 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction ^b	221.735	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	276.214	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	224.096	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	467				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 81.75.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 6 revealed that the cal X^2 value of 224.57, with an associated significance level of 0.00 resulted as the relationship between students' attitude and preference to online learning among regular undergraduate students. This value is significant since the sig. value of 0.00 is smaller than 0.05. This implies that there is a significant relationship between students' attitude and preference to online learning among regular undergraduate students.

VII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It was found that most students preferred physical classes to online learning. This finding is similar with the investigation conducted with Jordanian medical students whose majority displayed moderate attitude towards online learning as reflected in their preference for classroom learning because of the excessive workload that is associated with online learning and the avenue for receiving and sharing their views with the classmates that traditional classroom learning provides [6]. The finding of the study is also similar with [8] which discovered that students have a low acceptance for online learning preferring traditional classroom learning. In contrast, study conducted by [9] proved that although a majority of students would prefer a combination of both online and classroom teaching, there were more

students who preferred online mode of learning to classroom learning in the future.

The smaller proportion of respondents who preferred online learning gave the following reasons in the following order; convenience, easy self-paced learning, timely completion of course outline and schooling, aids concentration, reduction of transport cost, means of compelling lecturers to teach, self-development and availability of adequate learning materials. This finding is similar to [5] as they found time effectiveness, reduced expenses and safety as the advantage of online learning as expressed by students. Also, more students especially the females, were found to have positive attitude towards online learning. In contrast, [10] concluded that students have a negative attitude to online learning. The finding of this study contradicts [6] which claimed that male medical students possessed more positive attitude than their female counterpart. The reason for the gender difference in attitude was attributed to previous familiarity with online tools and access to online services as facilitated by the urban area most male participants lived in. The finding of this study corroborates [7] which found that most students displayed positive attitudes towards distance learning. Female students also preferred online learning than males. There was also a significant association between students' preference and attitude towards online learning.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends a collaborative effort of the school management, centre for information system unit (CITS) and counselling unit of the university in creating awareness of among the students on the importance of online teaching and learning as a preventive measure for curbing the spread of COVID-19.

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