

**EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF UNIVERSITY
COMMUNICATION IN THE COVID-19 INDUCED ONLINE
LEARNING CONTEXT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 has impacted our world on so many levels, how we live and interact with each other, how we work and communicate, how we move and travel. When the pandemic hit many businesses were forced to close and schools were forced to move to online learning. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of University communication in the COVID-19 induced online learning context at the University of Namibia. The study was guided by the following questions: Does online learning have the same effect on communication as face-to-face between lecturers and students? Are students and lecturers affected positively or negatively by online learning? Does online learning have an impact on the student's productivity level? What are the challenges that both students and lecturers encountered during online learning? What are the students and lecturers' perspectives on blended learning? A questionnaire research method was used to evaluate the effectiveness of online learning. The study employed a quantitative research method and the findings were presented in forms of graphs and pie charts.

The study was conducted at the University of Namibia and it is hoped that the findings from this study will help Universities determine whether online learning is effective or not and whether they should implement blended learning.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicated this research to the following people: My parents, my siblings and Mrs Angela Naobes, thank you for your endless support and guidance during this journey.

This paper is also dedicating to my close friends for always being there, for the words of encouragement and for your endless support.

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Firstly, I would like to thank the heavenly father for never leaving me during my time of exhaustion as I was writing this paper, for the strength, skills and guidance during my journey from first year until now as I complete my studies.

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To my parents and siblings, I appreciate every word of encouragement towards completing this research paper. Thank you for always encouraging me to never give up when I was on the verge of dropping this paper, thank you for all the prayers.

DECLARATION

I, Elina Lugambo Shifotoka, declare that this study titled “Evaluating the effectiveness of University communication in the COVID-19 induced online learning context at the University of Namibia”, is my original work, and has not been submitted for an award of a degree in any other university before this below mentioned date.

No part of this research may be reproduced or stored in any retrieval systems or transmitted in any forms or by any means without the prior permission of the author or the University of Namibia on her behalf. I agree to deposit this study in the University of Namibia’s open access institutional or allow the library to do so on my behalf.

I declare that, where other ideas or words have been included in the study, I have adequately acknowledged, cited and referenced the original sources.

Elina shifotoka

24 January 2023

University of Namibia

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

According to Isaias, Issa & Kammers (2022), Since 2019, COVID-19 has significantly affected and impacted our world on social, mental, health, cultural and economic levels. Governments around the world have rushed to develop specific strategies, policies and guidelines to contain, control and reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus and minimise the negative impacts on individuals and communities (Isaias, Issa & Kammers 2022).

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2020) Namibia recorded its first two cases on the 13 of March 2020. To respond to this crisis, on the 17 of March the head of the state declared a state of emergency. As preventative measures higher education institutions across Namibia had to cancel face to face classes and move to online due to the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic and this has been hard for both students and lecturers to adapt to. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of communication between undergraduate students and lecturers in a COVID-19 online induced learning context at the University of Namibia.

1.1 Orientation of the proposed study

According to Simonson et al. as cited in Roy & Covelli (2021), online learning is not a new modality, he traced distance education in the United States back to the late 1800s to a correspondence program offered at the University of Wisconsin. Fast forward from then to now, the possibilities for correspondence and online education grew due to advances in fibre optics, communication satellites, and internet protocol.

By the 1990s, virtual schools or academies became more prevalent on college campuses as instructors and administrators experimented with growing options such as high-tech classrooms. During the COVID-19 lockdown period, many universities across the world were forced to embrace online teaching and learning (Simonson et al., 2019 as cited in Roy & Covelli 2021).

The pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on people's lives around the world, possibly causing the greatest socio economic disruption since World War II. The pandemic has had a negative impact on education systems around the world, resulting in the widespread closure of educational institutions in almost every country. (Kaisara and Bwalya 2020).

According to Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat (2020), the consequences of this global catastrophe can be seen even after the pandemic has passed. To deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries implemented curfews and lockout protocols from the start. Educational entities have been shut down, therefore, universities have resorted to continuing lectures online through websites such as Google meet, zoom and other eLearning platforms. Obviously, this has an effect on communication as communicating virtually differs from face-to-face communication.

Dabbagh and Ritland (2005), as cited in Alawamleh, Mohannad, and Raafat (2020), examined the differences between traditional and online learning environments, arguing that traditional learning environments are constrained by the teacher's location and presence, are managed by the instructor, and use linear teaching methods.

However, the goal of online communication is the same as it is in face-to-face communication: bonding, information exchange, and being heard and understood, because the online environment lacks body language, communicating with students requires a little more thought and planning than communicating with students in a traditional setting (Alawamleh, Mohannad, Raafat 2020).

Rasheed et al., (2019) as cited in Szopinski & Bachnik (2022) states that e-learning can cause tremendous difficulties for both students and teachers alike. Students often become isolated and alienated due to their hesitation to participate in online communities. This may stem from a number of factors, such as personality, sense of transactional distance in the online environment, lack of confidence and trust in the participants in an online community, lack of nonverbal communication (facial expression, voice tone, etc.), connection difficulties (e.g., low internet speed), poor writing skills or language barriers (Rasheed et al., 2019 as cited in Szopinski & Bachnik 2022).

Alawamleh (2020) described issues with students not engaging in conversation with one another and perceived the online environment to be impersonal. Furthermore, McConnell (2006), as cited in Alawamleh (2020), identified problems with interpersonal aspects of online communication. The students frequently felt isolated, overshadowed by other members, or hesitant to publicly share their ideas. Low engagement and interactivity, as well as other issues caused by immediacy and nonverbal cues, were major concerns. Some students perceived the medium to be "faceless," which could lead to misunderstandings. The tone could become obnoxious, even resulting in "flame wars." These issues were especially

bothersome to students who were new to online learning (Kear, 2010 as cited in Alawamleh 2020).

However, there are a large number of studies that consider statistically significant positive effects for student learning outcomes in the online format, as opposed to conventional face-to-face format. Some of the positive learning outcomes include improved learning as measured by test scores, student engagement with the course material, enhanced understanding of learning and the online environment, a stronger sense of community among students and reduced withdrawal or failure (Nguyen, 2015 as cited in Alawamleh 2020).

Some of the reported advantages of e-learning include cost savings, the provision of convenient and flexible learning, reduced environmental impact, and access to high-quality education (Alkharang and Ghinea, 2013 as cited in Kaisara and Bwalya 2020). With many resource-constrained African countries struggling with limited infrastructure that cannot accommodate all prospective higher education students, the promised benefits of e-learning may explain Africa's widespread enthusiasm for the technology (Lwoga, 2012 as cited in Kaisara and Bwalya 2020).

1.2 statement of the problem

For the past two years the University of Namibia (UNAM) students have been conducting most classes online and they have been writing their tests and exams online. This study aimed to assess the viability and adaptability of this online learning compared to face to face classes.

This study aimed to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning online compared to face to face learning. The purpose of this study was for the researcher to find out whether online education is effective compared to physical classes and to find out which mode of learning students and lecturers prefer to conduct. Moreover, the study aimed to assess the challenges encountered both by lecturers and students during online learning.

1.3 Research questions

- ❖ Does online learning have the same effect on communication as face-to-face between lecturers and students?
- ❖ Are students and lecturers affected positively or negatively by online learning?
- ❖ Does online learning have an impact on the student's productivity level?

- ❖ What are the challenges that both students and lecturers encountered during online learning?
- ❖ What are the students and lecturers' perspectives on blended learning?

1.4 Significance of the study

The data collected from this study was used to help determine which mode of studies students and lecturer prefer, moreover it determined the effectiveness of online learning and how it can be implemented on a broader scale for universities to consider blended modes of learning as a permanent way of doing things in light of COVID-19 and technological advancements.

1.5 Limitations

The study was limited to UNAM main campus students only and so the views only represented UNAM main campus and could not be generalised, this is because the researcher did not have the resources to travel and reach students from other campuses.

Due to limited time the study was only limited to third years and fourth years' students because they are the ones that attended online classes from the beginning of the pandemic until the academic year 2021 and there are still some that are attending some classes online in 2022.

The researcher also decided to only focus on lecturers from the main campus because of limited resources to travel to other campuses. Reaching students and lecturers from other campuses via online platforms was possible, however this can delay the researcher as they might not respond on time or they might not respond at all.

1.6 Literature review and Theoretical framework

According to Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat (2020) communication is simply the transfer of information from one person to another or from a group to another. He further described effective communication as a process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, knowledge and information in such a way as to fulfil the purpose or intent in the best possible way.

According to Velantas and Borni (2014) as cited in Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat (2020) this act of making common and known is done by sharing opinions, ideas or the like. One can have the thoughts and ideas by gestures, signs, signals, expressions or writing. People are said to be in communication when discussing some subjects, when talking on their phones or when exchanging information via letters, communication is essentially the exchange of information whether written or oral.

When a desired effect is the result of an intentional or unintentional exchange of information communicated by different individuals and performed in a desired manner, this is referred to as effective communication. This influence also ensures that the message is not distorted during the contact process. Effective communication will achieve and maintain the desired effect, with the potential to improve the message's effect. As a result, effective communication serves the purpose for which it was designed (Hilliard & Newsome 2013 as cited in Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat 2020)

How successful lecturers communicate has a lot to do with how well they deliver. They communicate ideas, information, and expectations in a variety of methods, including speech, gesture, and other body language, as well as written words (Duta et al 2015).

Following the outbreak of the pandemic and the closure of schools, colleges resorted to continuing online through websites such as Google Meet, which obviously has an impact on communication because interacting electronically differs from face-to-face conversation (Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat 2020).

In line with global trends, a number of African countries have implemented e-learning to broaden access to education in their own countries. The expanding number of students' in African universities, along with a dwindling number of qualified teachers, has fuelled demand for e-learning (Gunga & Ricketts, 2007; Jaycoba & Ilonga, 2019; Lwoga, 2012), with some universities mandating the use of e-learning platforms (Mpungose, 2020).

Some of the touted advantages of e-learning include cost savings, the provision of accessible and flexible learning, less environmental impact, and access to high-quality education (Alkharang and Ghinea, 2013).

The anticipated benefits of e-learning may explain the widespread enthusiasm for eLearning in Africa, as many resource-constrained African countries struggle with limited infrastructure that cannot handle all potential higher education students (Lwoga, 2012).

However, Coman et al (2020) argue that when using E-learning platforms, there are some elements that may be considered obstacles in students' learning processes, such as decreased motivation in students, delayed feedback or help due to teachers not always being available when students may need help while learning, or feelings of isolation due to lack of physical presence.

1.7 Theoretical framework

The study will be based on the pedagogue theory. Hamalainen (2020) stated that pedagogue was originally a term used for a slave who was responsible for the care of children in the household, however the meaning of the word later expanded to mean educator and a teacher. According to Hamalainen (2020) Pedagogic theory is a system conceptualization of the process of education and conditions of the human development in both the individual and societal life sphere. It deals with the process of upbringing, teaching, learning and social and culture development.

The interaction between humans and computers is the focus of this theoretical approach. It is critical for learning expansion through the use of instruments, tools, mediation, and other methods. This theory focuses on learning development and social interaction, and it highlights the potential impact on teaching and learning using new tools as vehicles for modernizing, contextualizing, and transforming activity procedures (Hamalainen 2020).

Covid-19 pandemic transformed the whole education system to online, thus this study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of online learning in the covid-19 induced online learning at the university of Namibia.

1.8 Methodology

This method constitutes of the collection, measurement and analysis of data. The study was a process of analysing and interpreting numeric data generated from students and lecturers' perceptions about online learning compared to face to face learning and their opinions on how they feel about online learning and blended learning.

A quantitative research design was employed in this study, the study used a probability sampling using a random sampling method, this method is appropriate as it ensures that all participants have an equal chance of being selected for the study. The instruments were given to 100 third and fourth year students from all four faculties and four lecturers from all four faculties at UNAM main campus.

During the process of data collection, a quantitative method was used and questionnaires containing open and closed ended questions were given to 100 students and four lecturers from the University of Namibia main campus.

The researcher used students from the University of Namibia main campus as well as UNAM staffs, lecturers to be specific. UNAM's statistics indicate that UNAM main campus had a

total number of 16138 registered students in 2020, while in 2021 UNAM had 13803 registered students and in 2022 UNAM has a total of 12987 registered students.

20 students were randomly selected from four faculties, making a total of 100 students participating. Moreover, four lecturers will be randomly selected from four faculties to participate.

A sample of 100 students were taken from a population of 12987 students of which were third and fourth year students and four lecturers from all the four respective faculties. The researcher used questionnaires with open and closed ended questions designed in google forms. These questionnaires were sent to third and fourth year undergraduate students and lecturers via WhatsApp and email.

Heale & Twycross (2015) define reliability as the consistency of measure, they further stated that a participant completing an instrument meant to measure motivation should have approximately the same responses each time the test is completed. Validity refers to the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in a quantitative study (Heale & Twycross 2015).

The researcher achieved validity by cross checking, inspecting and scrutinizing the information that was entered in the questionnaires to ensure that the data collected is accurate and relevant. Moreover, reliability was achieved through designing open and closed ended questions.

A pre-test was used in this study to ensure reliability and validity. The researcher distributed questionnaires to 10 students which were randomly selected from the main study sample to avoid bias. Pretesting is a stage in survey research in which survey questions and questionnaires are tested on members of the target population/study population in order to assess the reliability and validity of the survey instruments prior to their final distribution.

The researcher approached students on campus as well as on various social media platforms to solicit participation, the researcher also made arrangements to meet lecturers for consent before forwarding them the google form for participation.

Data analysis is a process of summarizing data to discover useful information. Data analysis is important because it aims at categorizing, manipulating and summarizing the data as well as describing the meaningful terms (McCombes 2021) form using spreadsheets was used to analyse the data collected from the participants. The researcher made use of the graphic

analysis such as tables, pies charts and bar graphs to measure the data collected from the participants.

1.9 Research ethics

The researcher asked for the participants consents first before handing them the questionnaire. The researcher also approached lecturers from respective faculties for their consent to participate in the questionnaire and interview.

The aim of the study was communicated to the participants and the participants were informed of their rights to stop answering the questions should they feel uncomfortable. The participants were assured of their privacy, anonymity and confidentiality.

The researcher only published factual information and did not present false data, the researcher was also truthful and avoided plagiarism.

1.10 Summary

In this chapter, a brief introduction of what the study is about was discussed which encompasses how COVID-19 has affected and impacted our world on many levels, and when the first cases of COVID-19 were reported in Namibia including the measures that the president took in order to contain the spread of the virus.

The orientation of the proposed study was discussed, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study as well as the limitations of the study. The researcher also discussed the methodology. The researcher hopes that the findings of this study would help universities in deciding which mode of study is best for students and whether blended learning is an option.

The next chapter will focus on the literature review with regards to the effectiveness of university communication in the covid-19 induced online learning context at the university of Namibia.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature review of the research topic, highlights the research gap and discusses the pedagogy theory on which this study is based. It aims to further provide information on past studies that have been done on the research topic. This chapter will look into the communication definitions, defining effective communication, online learning in higher education, the difference between online learning and face to face learning, the effectiveness of online learning, the problems of online learning and the benefits of online learning during COVID-19 in higher institutions.

2.2 Defining Communication

Fatimayin (2018) states that many scholars have attempted to provide a definitive definition of communication. Communication, according to the Association of Perioperative Practice (2013), derives from the Latin word *communis*. Lunenberg (2012) as cited in Fatimayin (2018) agrees with them that communication derives from the Latin word *communis*. However, he claims that it means 'common,' implying that there must be a shared understanding of the message between the source and the receiver regarding the message being communicated.

Fatimayin (2018) defines communication as a social interaction. A sender (source) and a receiver are usually involved in communication. It entails the transmission of signals between the participants. These signals could be verbal, graphic, gestural, or visual in nature (photographic). In essence, communication entails the use of codes created by the eyes, body movement, or vocal sounds.

According to Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat (2020) communication is simply the transfer of information from one person to another or from a group to another. He further described effective communication as a process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, knowledge and information in such a way as to fulfil the purpose or intent in the best possible way.

According to Velantas and Borni (2014) as cited in Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat (2020) this act of making common and known is done by sharing opinions, ideas or the like. One can have the thoughts and ideas by gestures, signs, signals, expressions or writing. People are said to be in communication when discussing some subjects, when talking on their phones or

when exchanging information via letters, communication is essentially the exchange of information whether written or oral.

2.3 Defining effective Communication

Sharma & Sharma (2015) define effective communication as an interpersonal process in which people share and understand both verbal and nonverbal symbols (for example, body postures and facial gestures). It combines a variety of skills such as attentive listening, nonverbal communication, the ability to deal with stress in the present situation, and the ability to recognise and understand one's own and others' emotions.

They further defined effective communication as a set of skills that includes attentive listening, nonverbal communication, the ability to deal with stress in the present situation, and the ability to recognise and understand one's own emotions as well as the emotions of the person with whom one is communicating. Communication ability is defined as an individual's ability to communicate ideas and thoughts to others in order to elicit a desired response (Sharma & Sharma 2015).

2.4 Online learning in higher institutions/universities during COVID-19

According to Bordoloi, Das & Das (2021) the 21st century education requires personalised, productive, and collaborative teaching–learning experiences that are expected to transform the entire education system from traditional face-to-face (F2F) mode to techno-based independent mode, with the primary focus on developing the potentials and creativity of the learners in the best possible ways.

However, providing equal access to education, ensuring equity and justice, ensuring timely delivery of need-based educational content, and engaging learners through carefully planned pedagogical support with the latest online/blended learning technologies could be viewed as both a catalyst for change and a solution for establishing the democratic principle of education as a whole (Bordoloi, Das & Das 2021).

He further stated that as a result of the rise of online technologies and the increasing use of the internet and social media for education in the twenty-first century, a new social constructivism has emerged, allowing teachers /lecturers to reach out to each learner/students or students to directly interact with their teachers/ lecturer and share their ideas and thoughts with their peers. Several studies have been conducted to examine how online learning has transformed the field of education in the twenty-first century and why it is such a rewarding experience (Bordoloi, Das & Das 2021).

According to Simonson et al. as cited in Roy & Covelli (2021), online learning is not a new modality, he traced distance education in the United States back to the late 1800s to a correspondence program offered at the University of Wisconsin. Fast forward from then to now, the possibilities for correspondence and online education grew due to advances in fibre optics, communication satellites, and internet protocol.

As instructors and administrators experimented with new technologies such as high-tech classrooms, virtual schools or academies became more common on college campuses by the 1990s. (Simonson et al., 2019 as cited in Roy & Covelli 2021).

The pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on people's lives around the world, possibly causing the greatest socio economic disruption since World War II. The pandemic has had a negative impact on education systems around the world, resulting in the widespread closure of educational institutions in almost every country. (Kaisara and Bwalya 2020).

According to Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat (2020), the consequences of this global catastrophe can be seen even after the pandemic has passed. To deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries implemented curfews and lockdown protocols from the start. Educational entities have been shut down, therefore, universities have resorted to continuing lectures online through websites such as Google meet, zoom and other eLearning platforms. Obviously, this has an impact on communication because virtual communication differs from face-to-face communication.

According to Coman et al (2020) a study involving 424 universities around the world revealed that institutions were affected by the pandemic in terms of research, conferences, international mobility and education delivery, most universities stating that they had to adopt online learning and had to face many challenges, the most important being access to technology and lecturers' ability to deliver online courses.

Coman et al (2020) argued that even though some universities had used E-learning as an additional method before the Coronavirus pandemic, most of them were not ready for a full online experience. Thus, in order to continue providing quality education, the E-learning process must be optimized. This optimization should also consider student-teacher interaction, and the language used in communication between students and teachers should be clear while also containing terms specific to their field of study.

Furthermore, Sun et al., as cited in Coman et al. (2020), found that students believe teachers should know how to adapt their lectures to the online environment, not just simply transfer online the information that is usually taught in the traditional way, and that they should give an adequate number of projects and assignments in their study on students' experiences during online courses.

Coman et al. (2020) states that although some studies conducted reveal that online learning is ineffective, online education has the potential to transform the education system by increasing educational opportunities, changing student populations, and encouraging the development of new pedagogical methods, making the learning process more dependable, efficient, and less stressful for both instructors and students.

2.5 Difference between online learning and face-to-face learning

Digital media has improved teaching and learning experiences in recent years and have become common practice for university students and lecturers. In just a few years, the use of e-learning and digital media for teaching and learning has increased dramatically (Nguyen 2015 as cited in Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat 2020).

According to Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat (2020) the differences between traditional and online learning environments, is that traditional learning environments are bound by the location and presence of the teacher and the students conducted in real time, managed by the instructor, and are linear in teaching methods. Body language, facial expressions, and the teacher's voice have all been important learning tools in traditional teaching.

Online teaching and learning environments, on the other hand, are limitless and dynamic, utilising evolving information and communication technologies, asynchronous communication, and real-time information. Online learning environments incorporate a wide range of educational practices and are frequently distinguished by student-centred, active learning techniques (Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat 2020).

However, the goal of online communication is the same as it is in face-to-face communication: bonding, information exchange, and being heard and understood. Because the online environment lacks body language, communicating with students requires a little more thought and planning than communicating with students in a traditional setting (Alawamleh, Mohannad, Raafat 2020).

2.6 Effectiveness of online learning on communication

Africa as a continent has become one of the fastest-growing market places for the internet in the world. For instance, “there are many universities which offer online education in Ghana” (Kotua, Ilkan & Kilic, 2015). On the same note, the majority of Kenya's private and public universities have begun to offer online education (Kashorda & Waema, 2014). However, studies in African higher education have revealed that the implementation of online education has been ineffective due to a number of challenges associated with policy, program development, user characteristics assessment, and academic performance (Makokha & Mutisya, 2016; Kisanga, 2016).

Muuro (2014) as cited in Paschal & Mkulu (2020) conducted a study in Kenya using a descriptive survey, the study revealed that physical interaction with facilitators, face to face learning, group discussions are more effective learning tools than e-learning.

It should be noted that many African students dislike online learning because they require timely feedback from their educators or during group discussions. Therefore, this indicates that online education is not effective in African universities. Chawinga (2016) demonstrated that online education has a negative impact on students' academic performance because it delays the provision of assessment and feedback (Paschal & Mkulu 2020).

According to Coman et al (2020) teaching staff must take into account three elements when designing the content for online courses: theoretical materials, pedagogy, and technology. If these elements are perfectly combined, they ensure efficient and high-quality teaching.

The transmission of content using technology is much more efficient if the teaching staff creates collaborative, reflective activities and establishes clear criteria for evaluation, which is carried out using digital technologies in online education. The transition from traditional to online courses, according to Kebritchi et al. and Duncan, necessitates content redesign strategies that incorporate technology (Coman et al 2020).

The effectiveness of E-learning is determined, according to Tham and Werner as cited in Coman et al (2020), by three elements: institution—which refers to teachers knowing how to use the tools in order to enhance learning, how to interact with students and create a comfortable learning environment and how to creatively bring students closer and capture their attention, students—that may feel isolated because of the absence of physical colleagues, a case in which teachers should know how to establish connections and relationships with them, and technology.

2.7 Problems of online learning

Doculan (2016) as cited in Paschal & Mkulu (2020) evaluated an E-learning tool for Philippine higher education institutions. According to the study, online education can only be practiced if the institution is properly equipped. According to the study findings, the advancement of online education will address gaps in teaching and learning, increase productivity, increase accessibility of education, and reduce costs.

However, these findings contradict those of Nwana (2014), who stated that Africa faces numerous challenges such as a lack of videophone and teleconferencing systems, widespread computer illiteracy, a problem with IT utilization, and limitations in the use of the World Wide Web (www). Other factors include development opportunities, a lack of multimedia systems or an inconsistent power supply, as well as technophobia and resistance (Paschal & Mkulu 2020).

One study carried out by Boling et al. (2012) found that most of their study participants viewed online courses as individualizing learning and limiting interaction with others.

Rasheed et al., (2019) as cited in Szopinski & Bachnik (2022) states that e-learning can cause tremendous difficulties for both students and teachers alike. Students often become isolated and alienated due to their hesitation to participate in online communities. This may stem from a number of factors, such as personality, sense of transactional distance in the online environment, lack of confidence and trust in the participants in an online community, lack of nonverbal communication (facial expression, voice tone, etc.), connection difficulties (e.g., low internet speed), poor writing skills or language barriers (Rasheed et al., 2019 as cited in Szopinski & Bachnik 2022).

Alawamleh (2020) described issues with students not engaging in conversation with one another and perceived the online environment to be impersonal. Furthermore, McConnell (2006), as cited in Alawamleh (2020), identified problems with interpersonal aspects of online communication.

The students frequently felt isolated, overshadowed by other members, or hesitant to publicly share their ideas. Low engagement and interactivity, as well as other issues caused by immediacy and nonverbal cues, were major concerns. Some students perceived the medium to be "faceless," which could lead to misunderstandings. The tone could become obnoxious, even resulting in "flame wars." These issues were especially bothersome to students who were new to online learning (Kear, 2010 as cited in Alawamleh 2020).

Mukute et al (2020) argued that many educators, learners and parents in southern Africa have inadequate or no access to computers, laptops and cell phones, which are necessary for online teaching and learning. Some lack money to buy data bundles, while others do not have radio or television. Families with too few computers have to compete for the limited resource, with parents needing to use the computers for work and adult learning, and children needing to use them for school and college work Mukete et al (2020).

In a study evaluating student learning outcomes in a microeconomics course, Brown and Liedholm (2002), as cited in Alawamleh, Mohannad, Raafat (2020), discovered that students in the online format performed significantly worse on tests than students in the conventional format, despite having higher GPA and ACT scores. This disparity was most pronounced for complicated questions and less pronounced for simple questions.

One potential reason was that half of the online students reported spending less than three hours a week and none claimed to spend more than seven hours a week, while half of the students attended each class for at least three hours per week in the traditional format.

Another study also found differences in time devoted to class or active involvement resulting in differential outcomes (Hiltz et al., 2000 as cited in Alawamleh, Mohannad, Raafat 2020).

2.8 Benefits of online learning

According to Alawamleh (2020) There are a large number of studies that consider statistically significant positive effects for student learning outcomes in the online format, as opposed to conventional face-to-face format. Improved learning as measured by test scores, student engagement with course material, improved understanding of learning and the online environment, a stronger sense of community among students, and reduced withdrawal or failure are some of the positive learning outcomes (Nguyen, 2015 as cited in Alawamleh 2020).

Some of the reported advantages of e-learning include cost savings, the provision of convenient and flexible learning, reduced environmental impact, and access to high-quality education (Alkharang and Ghinea, 2013 as cited in Kaisara and Bwalya 2020). With many resource-constrained African countries struggling with limited infrastructure that cannot accommodate all prospective higher education students, the promised benefits of e-learning may explain Africa's widespread enthusiasm for the technology (Lwoga, 2012 as cited in Kaisara and Bwalya 2020).

It cites convenience as the most important benefit of online learning. Students are in situations where they prefer the convenience of online learning over the face time provided by traditional classrooms. Due to the obvious convenience of online learning, instructors and students in the cyber class can communicate directly (Fedynich, 2013).

Participation, ease of participation is an aspect of the appeal of virtual classrooms. One of the many versatile aspects of cyber learning is the willingness of the students to participate in a mixed learning environment, either asynchronously or synchronously. Online education can take many forms, including blogs, mailing lists, and course management systems like Blackboard.

Students can participate in chat rooms in real time or asynchronously by posting to newsletters or forums (Morrison et al., 2019). Students who are equipped with all of these modes of communication have an easier time communicating with the instructor or other students in the class. The playing field has been set for communication purposes, and everyone in the class is welcome to participate.

Introverts who are quiet in class can really participate online." Kupczynski et al. (2008) as cited in Kaisara and Bwalya (2020) discovered that in an asynchronous environment, students have more time to "post messages, read and respond to messages, reflect on responses, revise interpretations, and modify original assumptions and perceptions." which would not be the case in a face-to-face class (Fedynich, 2013).

E-learning is very important in the E-learning process because it has the ability to improve its quality by allowing learners to personalize and adapt courses to their needs (Coman et al 2020).

2.9 Theoretical framework

The study is based on the pedagogue theory. Hamalainen (2020) stated that pedagogue was originally a term used for a slave who was responsible for the care of children in the household, however the meaning of the word later expanded to mean educator and a teacher. According to Hamalainen (2020) Pedagogic theory is a system conceptualization of the process of education and conditions of the human development in both the individual and societal life sphere. It deals with the process of upbringing, teaching, learning and social and culture development.

The interaction between humans and computers is the focus of this theoretical approach. It is critical for learning expansion through the use of instruments, tools, mediation, and other methods. This theory focuses on learning development and social interaction, and it highlights the potential impact on teaching and learning using new tools as vehicles for modernizing, contextualizing, and transforming activity procedures (Hamalainen 2020).

According to Kapur (2020) the pedagogy theory is an important concept that provides instructors with the understanding that they must be well-aware and supplement their knowledge in terms of important factors. These are educational goals and objectives, teaching-learning methods, teaching-learning materials, student needs and requirements, and aspects related to the overall educational system.

He further argued that the importance of high-quality education in the educational process cannot be overstated. It leads to the attainment of objectives, goals, and standards. Pedagogy determines the quality of instruction. As a result, instructors' use of relevant pedagogical methods in their teaching is an important part of their job responsibilities Kapur (2020).

According to Rutto (2017) Pedagogical theories postulate how teaching should be done in order to bring one to learn. In a practical perspective, the theories are much related to pedagogical strategies. Pedagogical theories stem from Herbatianism, The new London group and Learning theories.

Johann Friederich Herbart (1776-1841) is regarded as the father of pedagogy as his works conceptualized pedagogy. In his theory, he identified five components of pedagogy, Preparation which involves getting ready for the instructional process. Presentation which refers to the actual teaching and learning process. Association which is the process of bringing ideas or events together, in for example memory or imaginations, it can also refer to a mental connection or relation between thoughts, feelings, ideas, and or sensations. Generalization which refers to reasoning from detailed facts to general principles also can be explained as formulation of general concepts from specific instances. Applications which refers to putting into practice what was learnt. For effective pedagogy, teachers should incorporate the above components in their teaching and learning. Herbart (1776-1841) also highlighted the relationship between an individual's development and its societal impact (Rutto 2017)

The new London group (1996), refers to an international consortium of academics researching literacy pedagogy. Their research identified four major components of pedagogy

namely: Situated practice, Overt instruction, Critical framing, transformed practice (Rutto 2017).

According to Rutto (2017) Situated Practice Didactic methods of teaching conveys results, products or facts of inquiry to learners without engaging them in the processes through which they were achieved or even the impact it will have on their lives. Macleod & Colby (2003) as cited in Ritto (2017), observe that situation practice calls for the modelling in classrooms of the contexts in which "real life" learning is achieved. Situation practice takes learners through the processes that yield the desired knowledge. Basically it involves tangible activities (projects, practical, etc) and social contexts of learning (learner interactions).

Overt instruction involves construction of knowledge from what learners already know and also identifying learner's specific needs for further attention. Critical framing It is an aspect of pedagogy where learners stand back from what they have learnt and view it critically in relation to its context. Learners are guided to critically analyse and question the ideologies at hand and their relevance.

In critical framing, emphasis is placed on critique. Transformed practice, the new London group (1996) as cited in Rutto (2017), explain transformed practice as an authentic learning experience where students are both products and transmitters of literacy learning.

Pedagogical theories also stem from leaning theories. Learning theories serve as conceptual framework to teaching & learning Rutto (2017).

Covid-19 pandemic transformed the whole education system to online, thus this study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of online learning in the covid-19 induced online learning at the university of Namibia using the pedagogy theory.

2.10 Summary

This chapter provided further information on past studies that have been done on the research topic. It was divided into seven parts namely, defining communication, defining effective communication, online learning in higher institutions/ universities during Covid-19, difference between online learning and face to face learning, effectiveness of online learning on communication, problems of online learning and benefits of online learning. The next chapter will focus on the methodology.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

According to Leedy & Ormrod (2001); Williams, (2011) as cited in Apuke (2017) define research methodology as the comprehensive steps taken by a researcher before beginning a research project (p. 14). In this chapter, the researcher shared the methods that was used to collect data, the population, the sample. Furthermore, the chapter provides a comprehensive explanation of the research instruments, procedures and research ethics which have been put into consideration during the conduction of this study.

3.2 Research design

A quantitative research design was employed in this study. According to Apuke (2017), a quantitative research method is concerned with quantifying and analysing variables in order to obtain results. It entails the use and analysis of numerical data through the application of specific statistical techniques to answer questions such as who, how much, what, where, when, how many, and how.

Furthermore, Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) as cited in Apuke (2017), defines quantitative research methods are used to explain an issue or phenomenon by gathering data in numerical form and analysing it using mathematical methods, specifically statistics.

According to Williams (2011), quantitative research begins with the formulation of a problem, the formulation of a hypothesis or research question, the review of relevant literature, and the quantitative analysis of data. Quantitative research, on the other hand, "employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data," (Creswell 2003; Williams, 2011 as cited in Apuke (2017).

This method constitutes of the collection, measurement and analysis of data. The study was a process of analysing and interpreting numeric data generated from students and lecturers' perceptions about online learning compared to face to face learning and their opinions on how they feel about online learning and blended learning.

When comparing qualitative and quantitative, the primary goal of qualitative research is to comprehend and interpret social interactions, whereas quantitative research is concerned with hypothesis testing, cause and effect analysis, and prediction.

Furthermore, quantitative research is defined as "research based on traditional scientific research that generates numerical data and usually seeks to establish causal relationships (or associations) between two or more variables, using statistical methods to test the strength and significance of the relationships" (Fraser Health Authority 2011, p 6). Gelo, et al. (2008, p.) support this by stating that "quantitative and qualitative research approaches clearly differ in terms of how data is collected and analysed." In order to conduct statistical analysis, quantitative research necessitates the reduction of phenomena to numerical values.

Qualitative research, on the other hand, entails the collection of data in non-numerical forms, such as texts, photographs, videos, and so on." Variables are crucial in quantitative research because they are the phenomena that are classified and quantified.

The researcher decided to use this approach for the study because it crafts truthfulness and encourages participants to be free and courageous enough to give relevant and detailed answers. The study was aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of communication in universities in the Covid-19 induced online learning at the University of Namibia.

According to McCombes (2021) Quantitative research designs are more fixed and deductive in nature, with variables and hypotheses clearly defined prior to data collection.

He further said that If you want to test the effectiveness of an online teaching method, a quantitative approach is most suitable. You can use this type of research to measure learning outcomes like grades and test scores.

3.3 Data collection methods

First and foremost, the researcher ensured that everything is in place and fully prepared before any attempt in the data collection process. A Questionnaire was then formulated and the link was distributed to UNAM Main campus students via WhatsApp groups and E-mails.

During the process of data collection, a quantitative method was used and questionnaires containing open and closed ended questions were given to 100 students and four lecturers from the University of Namibia main campus.

3.4 Population

UNAM's statistics indicate that UNAM main campus has a total of 12987 registered students in 2022. The target population of the study was 12987 students that are registered for the academic year 2022 at UNAM main campus.

3.5 Sample

Shukla (2020) defines a sample as any subset of a population that represents all types of population elements. A sample is a subset of a population that completely represents it. It means that the units chosen as a sample from the population must represent all of the characteristics of various types of population units.

20 students were randomly selected from four faculties, making a total of 100 students participating. Moreover, four lecturers will be randomly selected from four faculties to participate.

A sample of 100 students were taken from a population of 12987 students of which were third and fourth year students and four lecturers from all the four respective faculties. The researcher used questionnaires with open and closed ended questions designed in google forms. These questionnaires were sent to third and fourth year undergraduate students and lecturers via WhatsApp and email.

According to Shukla (2020) random sampling is a sampling method in which subjects are chosen without bias or prejudice and in which all units of population have an equal or predetermined and certain probability of being chosen in a sample. Shukla (2020) argued that in this way, units of the population have a fixed or guaranteed chance of being selected in a sample. In this method, the subjects are chosen without bias or prejudice. Because of its unique characteristics, it is regarded as the best method for selecting a sample.

3.6 Research instruments

According to kazi & Khalid (2012) A questionnaire is a method of collecting data from respondents. It is a time-saving method of data collection. Kazi and Khalid (2012) argued that questionnaires should be written in a language that the participants can understand.

A close ended questionnaire was used, close-ended questions where respondents will answer with either yes or no and some questions with either agree or disagree, close ended questions

are often good for surveys because they result in higher response rates and users do not have to type many things.

Answers to close ended questions can be easily statistically analysed (Kazi & Khalid 2012). A questionnaire is a good research tool because it is recommended that questionnaires are believed to be anonymous, which I believed to crease the respondents' rates (Kazi & Khalid 2012).

The researcher formulated questions on Google forms, a research study questionnaire was distributed among students via online communications, specifically through using WhatsApp and emails.

3.7 Reliability and Validity

Heale & Twycross (2015) define reliability as the consistency of measure, they further stated that a participant completing an instrument meant to measure motivation should have approximately the same responses each time the test is completed. Validity refers to the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in a quantitative study (Heale & Twycross 2015).

The researcher achieved validity by cross checking, inspecting and scrutinizing the information that was entered in the questionnaires to ensure that the data collected is accurate and relevant. Moreover, reliability was achieved through designing open and closed ended questions.

A pre-test was used in this study to ensure reliability and validity. The researcher distributed questionnaires to 10 students which were randomly selected from the main study sample to avoid bias. Pretesting is a stage in survey research in which survey questions and questionnaires are tested on members of the target population/study population in order to assess the reliability and validity of the survey instruments prior to their final distribution.

3.8 Procedure

The researcher approached students on campus as well as on various social media platforms to solicit participation, the researcher also made arrangements to meet lecturers for consent before forwarding them the google form for participation

3.9 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process of summarizing data to discover useful information. Data analysis is important because it aims at categorizing, manipulating and summarizing the data as well as describing the meaningful terms (McCombes 2021).

Google forms using spreadsheets was used to analyse the data collected from the participants. The researcher made use of the graphic analysis such as tables, pie charts and bar graphs to measure the data collected from the participants.

3.10 Research Ethics

The researcher asked for the participants consents first before handing them the questionnaire. The researcher also approached lecturers from respective faculties for their consent to participate in the questionnaire and interview.

The aim of the study was communicated to the participants and the participants were informed of their rights to stop answering the questions should they feel uncomfortable. The participants were assured of their privacy, anonymity and confidentiality.

The researcher only published factual information and did not present false data, the researcher was also truthful and avoided plagiarism.

3.11 Summary

In this chapter the researcher discussed the research design which was quantitative, this research methodology helped the researcher gain more information on the research topic. As data collection method the researcher used questionnaires, this helped the researcher to gather information that was necessary for the research. To conclude the researcher used google forms to analyse data collected from the responded.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data findings that the researcher gathered during the conduction of the research project. In this chapter the data are presented along with figures, the data analysis and findings from 100 questionnaires completed by UNAM main campus students and four questionnaires completed by lecturers are discussed in this chapter. The goal of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of communication in the Covid-19 induced online learning context at the University of Namibia.

4.2 Questionnaire

There are a few participants who did not follow instructions. The Questionnaire was for undergraduate students only and clear instruction was given for students who are not enrolled in an undergraduate degree to discontinue the survey, the questionnaire was handed out virtually thus in the process of forwarding the survey, it resulted in an error in figure four, however a large percentage of undergraduate students followed all the instructions.

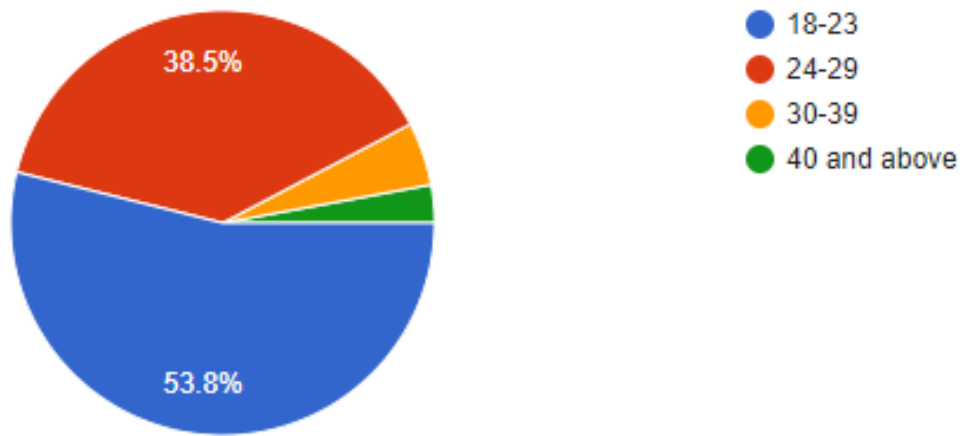
4.3 Demographic information

This section consists of the findings from the questionnaires and how and how the respondents responded.

4.3.1 Participant's age

Figure 1

Figure one represents the participants age group, these categories indicate the age were the respondent falls under. Looking at the chart most of the respondents are from the age group of 18-23 which makes up 53.8% of the respondents. The second highest group of participants are aged between 24-29, making up a total of 38.5% of the respondents, followed by the age group of 30-39 years with 4.8% and the last group being 40 years and above, making up a total of 2.9%.



4.3.2 Participant's gender

Figure 2

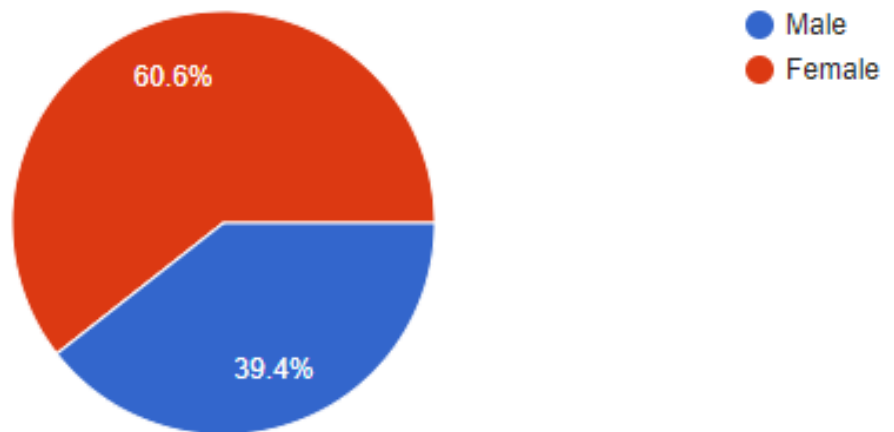


Figure two represents the percentages of the number of the respondents' gender. According to the data given in figure two 60% of the respondents who took part in the questionnaire are females, and males making up a total of 39.4%.

4.3.3 Participants marital status

Figure 3

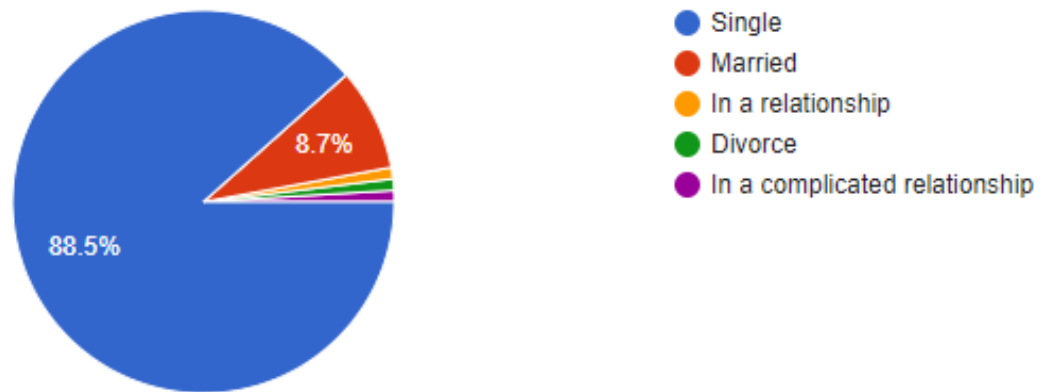


Figure three represent the marital status of the respondents, the pie chart shows that 88.5% of the respondents are single, with 8.7% being married. The chart shows one respondent in a relationship, one respondent is divorced and one respondent in a complicated relationship, making a total of 1% for each.

4.3.4 Programs in which participants are enrolled

Figure 4

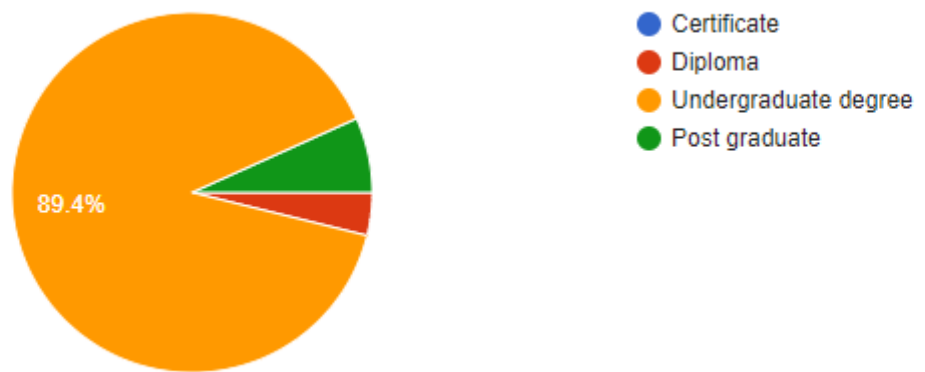


Figure four shows the programs in which the participants are enrolled, 89.4% is the undergraduate students, 6.7% represents post graduate students and 3.8 Diploma students.

4.3.5 Respondents faculty

Figure 5

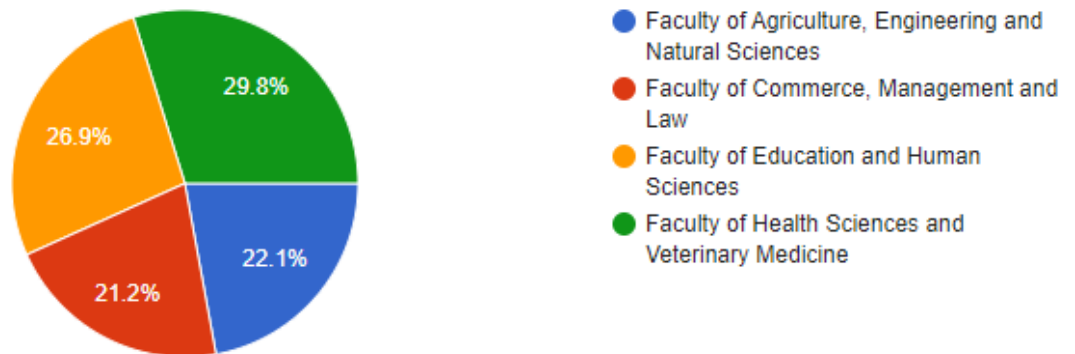
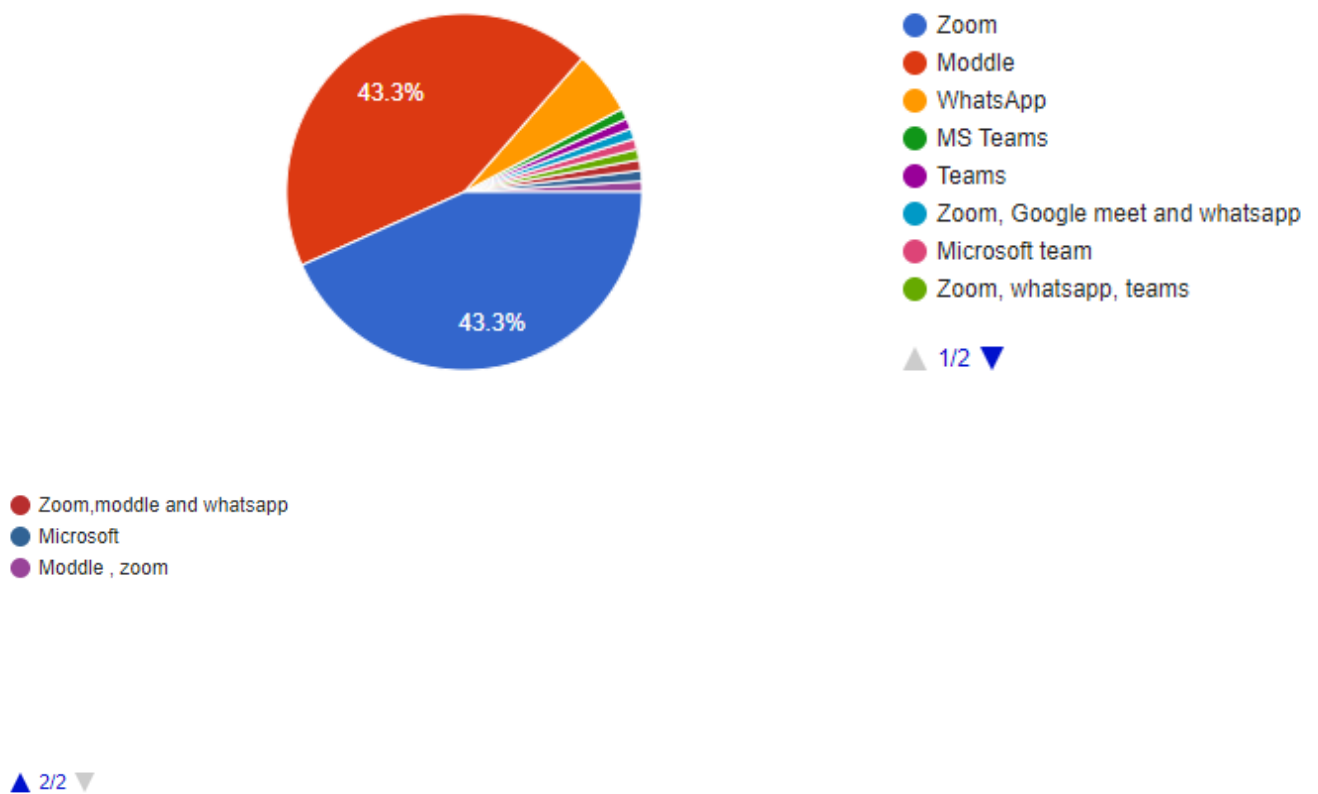


Figure five shows the faculty in which the respondents fall under, looking at the pie chart above most respondents fall under the faculty of Health sciences and veterinary medicine making up a total of 29.8%, followed by the faculty of Education and human sciences with 26.9% then the faculty of Agriculture, engineering and natural sciences with 22.1% and lastly the faculty of commerce, management and law with 21.2%.

4.3.6. platforms that participants were using during COVID-19

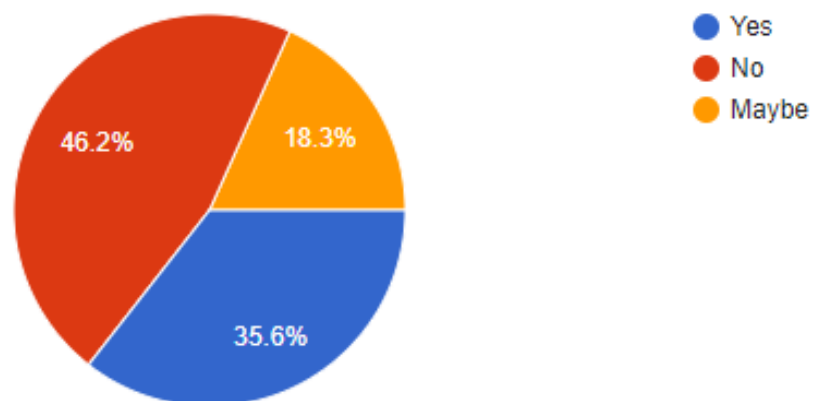
Figure 6



Respondents were asked to choose and state the platforms that they were using during online learning. 43.3% of the respondents indicated that they were using Moodle for learning during online classes and another 43.3% also indicated that they were using zoom for learning. Some respondents indicated that they were using WhatsApp, google meets and Microsoft team for learning.

4.3.7. Respondents preference

Figure 7



In figure 7 Respondents were asked to state whether they prefer online or if they don't, the pie chart shows that 46.2% indicated that they do not prefer online learning whilst 35.6% indicated that they prefer online learning. 18.3% of the respondents chose maybe as they are not sure whether they prefer online or not.

4.3.8. Does online learning have the same effect as face to face learning?

Figure 8

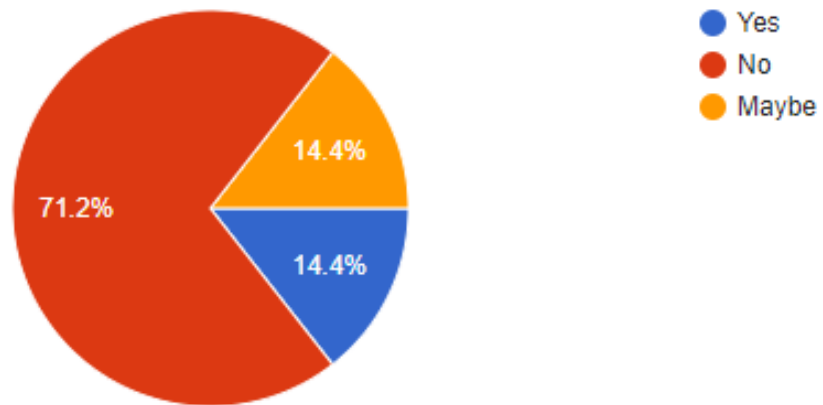


Figure 8 shows if the participants think that online learning has the same effect as face to face learning. The pie chart shows that 71.2% of the respondents thinks that online learning does not have the same effect as that of face to face learning, 14.4% thinks that it has the same effect and another 14,4% chose maybe as they are not sure if online learning has the same effect as face to face learning.

4.3.9. How participants were affected by online learning

Figure 9

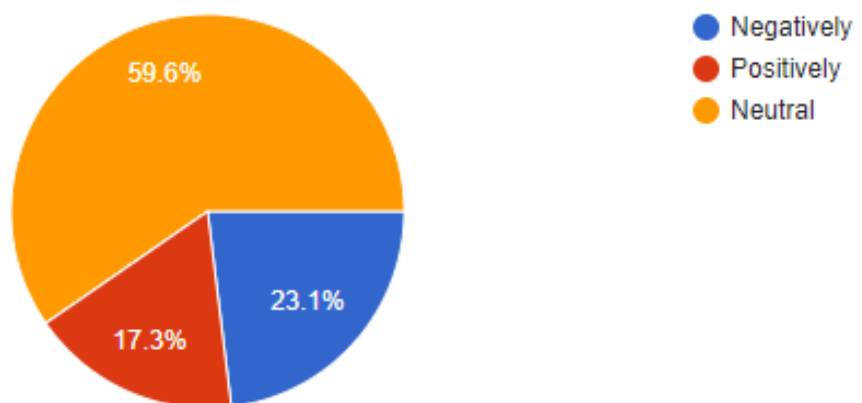
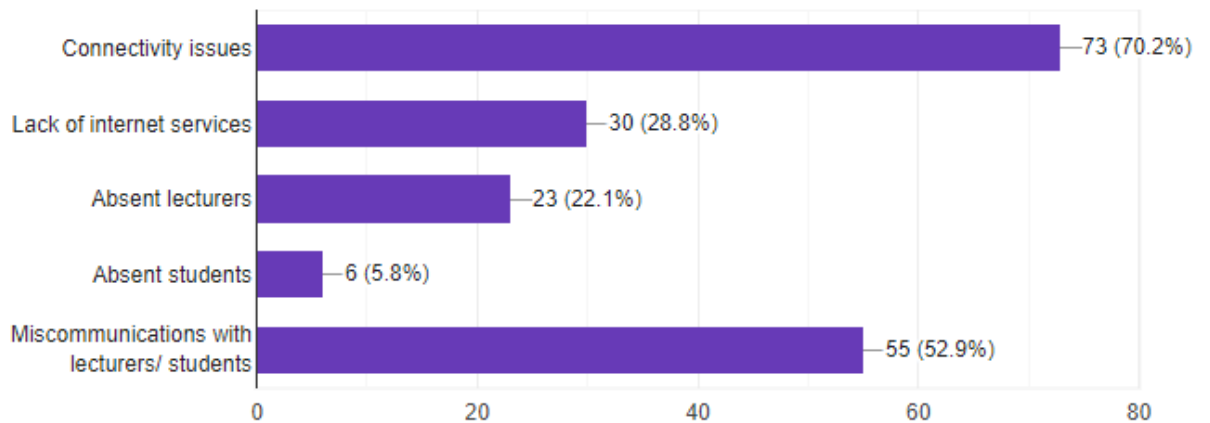


Figure 9 shows how participants were affected by online learning, the chart shows that 59.6% of the respondents are neutral, they did not indicate whether they were affected negatively of

positively. 23.1% of the respondents indicated that they were affected negatively while 17.3% of the respondents indicated that they were affected negatively.

4.3.10. Factors that affected respondents during online learning

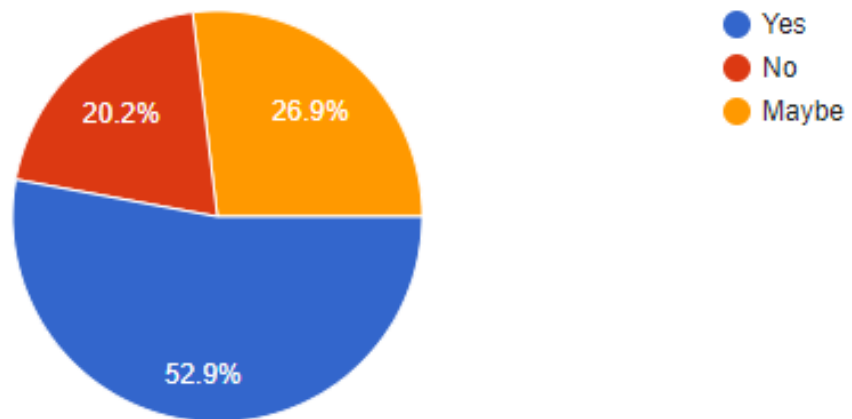
Figure 10



In figure 10 participants were asked that choose the factors that affected them the most during online learning. 70.2% of the participants indicated that they were affected mostly by connectivity issues, 28.8% indicated that they were affected by the lack of internet services, 22.1% indicated absent lecturers, 5.8% indicated absent students and 52.9% indicated miscommunications with lecturers/ students.

4.3.11. impact on productivity/ teaching level

figure 11



Participants were asked if online learning had an impact on their productivity / teaching level, figure 11 shows that 52.9% of the participants agree that online learning did have an impact on their productivity level, 20.25% indicated that that online learning did not have an impact on their productivity level and 26.9% indicated “Maybe” as they are not sure whether online learning had an impact on their productivity level.

4.3.12. Respondents that have encountered a lot of challenges with online learning

figure 12

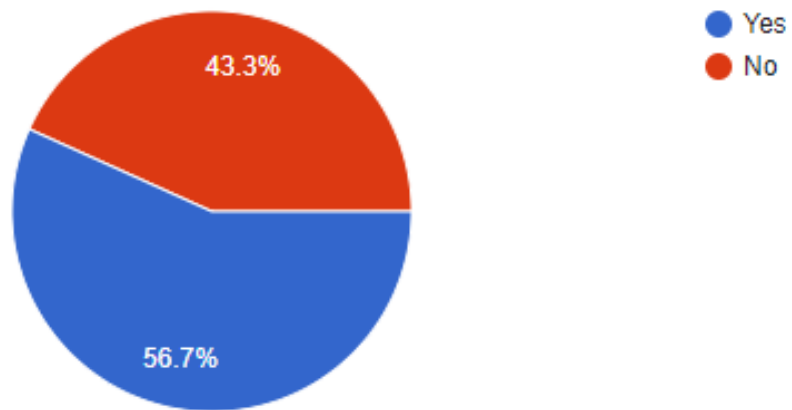


Figure 12 shows if respondents encountered a lot of challenges with online learning, the pie chart shows that 56.7 % of the respondents agree that they have encountered a lot of challenges while 43.3% of the respondents indicated that they did not encounter a lot of challenges

4.3.13. Respondents knowledge of blended learning

Figure 13

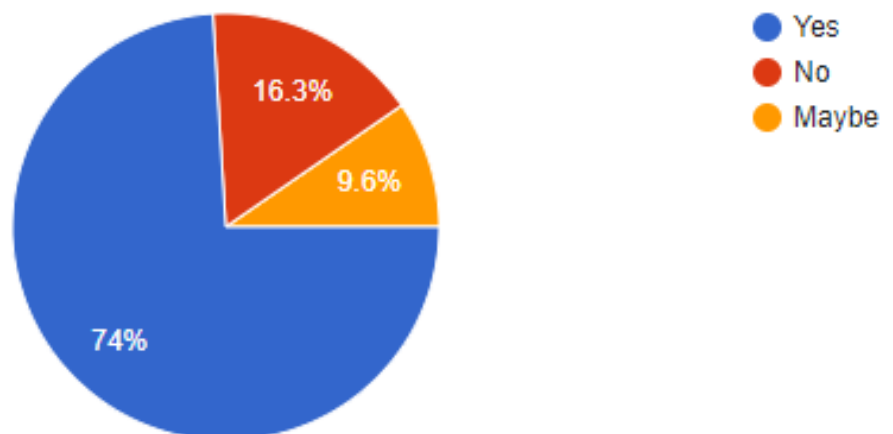


Figure 13 indicates respondent's knowledge of blended learning, 74% of the respondents indicated that they have knowledge and understand what blended learning is, 16.3% indicated

that they do not know nor understand what blended learning is and 9.6% of the respondents indicated “maybe” as they are not sure whether they know or don’t know what blended learning is.

4.3.14. Is online learning ideal for both students and lecturers?

Figure 14

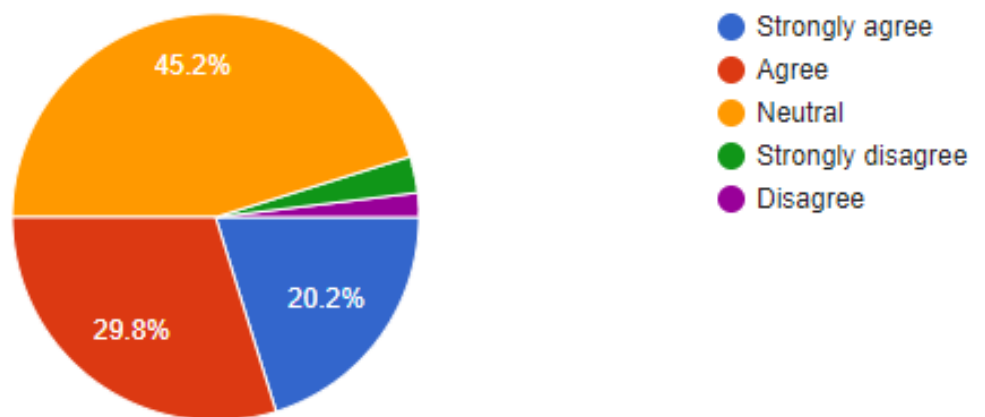


Figure 14 has shown respondents level of agreement to the whether blended learning is ideal for both students and lecturers. 45.2% of the respondents are neutral, 29.8% of the respondents agree and 20.2% of the respondents strongly agree. 2.9% strongly disagree and 1.9% of the respondents disagree.

4.4 Summary

The respondents who took part in the survey are from UNAM main campus and they filled in the questionnaire online, the questionnaire was shared via WhatsApp to students and via email to lecturers. The study evaluated the effectiveness of university communication in the COVID-19 induced online learning context at the University of Namibia.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the discussions of findings that the researcher had obtained during the data collection process in chapter 4. The discussion of findings gives details of what the researcher found in comparison to literature review in chapter 2.

Moreover, the conclusion focused on how the study's research questions were met and whether the answers provided were fully satisfactory, as well as the recommendations made by the researcher based on the results of the research project.

5.2 Discussion of findings

According to the findings, Undergraduate students have shown whether online learning is effective or not effective based on their experience of using online learning during COVID-19. The study shows that most undergraduate students and lecturers used Moddle, Zoom, WhatsApp, MS Teams and Google meets as their modes of learning during online learning. The study shows that 43.3% of students including lecturers used moddle and another 43.3% used zoom for online learning and a few percentages used MS Team, google meets and WhatsApp. This is confirmed by Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat (2020) when he stated that after educational entities were shut down universities resorted to continuing lectures online through websites such as Google meet, zoom and other eLearning platforms.

The study has shown that a large number of students don't prefer online learning, according to Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat (2020) online learning has an impact on communication because virtual communication differs from face-to-face communication, thus most students prefer face to face learning. The study showed that 46.2% of students do not prefer online learning, whereas 35.6% prefer online learning and 18.3% not sure if they prefer online learning or not.

According to Alawamleh, Mohannad, & Raafat (2020) the differences between traditional and online learning environments, is that traditional learning environments are bound by the location and presence of the teacher and the students conducted in real time, managed by the instructor, and are linear in teaching methods. Body language, facial expressions, and the teacher's voice have all been important learning tools in traditional teaching.

Online teaching and learning environments, on the other hand, are limitless and dynamic, utilising evolving information and communication technologies, asynchronous communication, and real-time information.

Although the goal of online communication is the same as it is in face-to-face communication: bonding, information exchange, and being heard and understood it may not be effective as face to face communication because the online environment lacks body language, communicating with students requires a little more thought and planning than communicating with students in a traditional setting (Alawamleh, Mohannad, Raafat 2020).

The study has shown that 71.2% of the respondents indicated that online learning does not have the same effect as of that of face to face learning and 14.4% indicated that online learning has the same effect, however another 14.4% are not sure, the conclusion drawn from the study is that online learning does not have the same effect as that of face to face learning. This has been confirmed by Makokha & Mutisya, (2016); Kisanga, (2016) when he stated that studies in African higher education have revealed that the implementation of online education has been ineffective due to a number of challenges associated with policy, program development, user characteristics assessment, and academic performance.

According to Muuro (2014) as cited in Paschal & Mkulu (2020) conducted a study in Kenya using a descriptive survey, the study revealed that physical interaction with facilitators, face to face learning, group discussions are more effective learning tools than e-learning.

According to Muuro (2014) as cited in Paschal & Mkulu (2020) It should be noted that many African students dislike online learning because they require timely feedback from their educators or during group discussions. Therefore, this indicates that online education is not effective in African universities. Chawinga (2016) demonstrated that online education has a negative impact on students' academic performance because it delays the provision of assessment and feedback (Paschal & Mkulu 2020).

The study has shown that students and lecturers have been affected both negatively and positively by online learning this is due to a number of factors, students were not taught online before the pandemic however it was an advantage to some students as it saves them transport money. Up to 59.6% of the respondents answered neutral and this is because they were affected both negatively and positively, the pandemic saved them from attending late classes on campus and getting robbed by taxi drivers, however some students were affected by lack of internet connection and connectivity issues.

There are a lot of factors that affected both students and lectures during online learning. The study shows that 70.2% of the students were mostly affected by connectivity issues.

According to Mukute et al (2020) he argued that many educators, learners and parents in southern Africa have inadequate or no access to computers, laptops and cell phones, which are necessary for online teaching and learning. Some lack money to buy data bundles, while others do not have radio or television.

The study findings show that 52.9% of the respondents were affected by miscommunications with lecturers/students, up to 28.8% were affected by lack of internet services, 22.1% were affected by absent lecturers and 5.8% were affected by absent students.

Rasheed et al., (2019) as cited in Szopinski & Bachnik (2022) states that e-learning can cause tremendous difficulties for both students and teachers alike. Students often become isolated and alienated due to their hesitation to participate in online communities. This may stem from a number of factors, such as personality, sense of transactional distance in the online environment, lack of confidence and trust in the participants in an online community, lack of nonverbal communication (facial expression, voice tone, etc.), connection difficulties (e.g., low internet speed), poor writing skills or language barriers (Rasheed et al., 2019 as cited in Szopinski & Bachnik 2022).

McConnell (2006), as cited in Alawamleh (2020), identified problems with interpersonal aspects of online communication.

The students frequently felt isolated, overshadowed by other members, or hesitant to publicly share their ideas. Low engagement and interactivity, as well as other issues caused by immediacy and nonverbal cues, were major concerns. Some students perceived the medium to be "faceless," which could lead to misunderstandings. The tone could become obnoxious, even resulting in "flame wars." These issues were especially bothersome to students who were new to online learning (Kear, 2010 as cited in Alawamleh 2020).

The study has also shown that online learning had an impact on productivity level on both the lecturers and students, 52.9% of 100 respondents indicated that online learning did have an impact on their productivity level. Students became more relaxed and lazy, and most do not study for tests as they would mostly write with their books open. According to Hiltz et al., (2000) as cited in Alawamleh, Mohannad, Raafat (2020). One potential reason was that half

of the online students reported spending less than three hours a week and none claimed to spend more than seven hours a week, while half of the students attended each class for at least three hours per week in the traditional format. Another study also found differences in time devoted to class or active involvement resulting in differential outcomes (Hiltz et al., 2000 as cited in Alawamleh, Mohannad, Raafat 2020).

In a study evaluating student learning outcomes in a microeconomics course, Brown and Liedholm (2002), as cited in Alawamleh, Mohannad, Raafat (2020), discovered that students in the online format performed significantly worse on tests than students in the conventional format, despite having higher GPA and ACT scores. This disparity was most pronounced for complicated questions and less pronounced for simple questions.

The study has also shown that both students and lecturers encountered a lot of challenges with online learning during COVID-19, 56.7% indicated that they faced many challenges. Absent lecturers, lack of online equipment, lack of ICT knowledge and internet services.

The study has revealed that a large percentage of respondents are aware and have knowledge of what blended learning is. According to Lalima & Dangwal (2017) Blended learning is an innovative concept that embraces the advantages of both traditional teaching in the classroom and ICT supported learning including both offline learning and online learning. It has scope for collaborative learning; constructive learning and computer assisted learning (CAI).

Although about 74% of the respondents understand what blended learning is there are still some students who don't understand what it means by blended learning. 16.3% have indicated that they are not aware of what blended learning is while 9.6% have indicated they are not sure.

In the study, respondents have indicated their level of agreement and disagreement towards the statement "blended learning is ideal for both students and lecturers." 45.2% of the respondents are neutral, 29.8% agree to the statement, 20.2% of the respondents strongly agree, 2.9% strongly disagree and 1.95 of the respondents disagree. The study has revealed that most respondents are neutral. According to Khan et al. (2012) as cited in Masagu et al (2021), blended learning is not easy to adopt. This means that there are certain things that need to be addressed.

According to Masagu et al (2022) The successful implementation of blended learning will largely depend on developing learning staff knowledge and skills, funding and sufficient technology support. This means that lecturers should have an understanding and skills to

blend both types of approaches, thus, the traditional and technological. This view is supported by Wahyudin (2020) and Magasu, Mutale, Gondwe, Mubita and Kombe (2021) who argue that until the teacher is properly trained, the desired end in the field of teaching learning process cannot be achieved. This means that the approach needs teachers who have a wider outlook and should be flexible. They should be ready to accept the changes and be innovative and dynamic. Parents should also be aware of this innovation to support it.

Although a large percentage are neutral on the matter of blended learning, 29.8% agrees to the statement because they understand the benefits that come with blended learning. This has been backed up by Bendania (2011) as cited in Lu (2021) whose study found that students hold positive attitudes toward the blended learning environment and the influencing factors mainly include experience, confidence, enjoyment, usefulness, intention to use, motivation, and whether students had ICT skills. The positive view was also reported in the study done by Akkoyunlu and Yilmaz (2006) as cited in Lu (2021), and it was found to be closely related to students' participation in the online discussion forum. Findings from other studies of Dziuban et al., 2006 & Owston et al., 2006 as cited I Lu (2021) also revealed students' positive attitudes toward the blended learning environment, and the satisfaction could be attributed to features like flexibility, convenience, reduced travel time, and face-to-face interaction.

However, the 2.9% of the respondents that disagree has been backed up by numerous studies that reported some negative perceptions of the blended learning environment. The results of the study conducted by Smyth et al. (2012) as cited Lu (2021) showed that the delayed feedback from the teacher and poor connectivity of the internet were perceived as major drawbacks of the environment. In another study conducted by Stracke (2007) as cited in Lu (2021), showed that the lack of reciprocity between traditional and online modes, no use of printed books for reading and writing, and use of the computer as a medium of instruction was considered as major reasons for students withdraw from the blended course. These findings indicate that students' negative attitudes toward the blended learning environment mainly come from the inadequate design (Sagarra and Zapata, 2008) as cited in Lu (2021).

5.3 Conclusion

The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of University communication in the COVID-19 induced online learning context at the University of Namibia, the aim was to find out whether online learning is effective, if online learning affects students and lecturers productivity level and if they understand blended learning. The study has revealed that online learning is not effective for both students and lecturer, students have faced a lot of challenges during online learning. Some students where in areas with no internet services which made is very hard for them to attend classes or complete and submit assignments and tests. Unstable internet connections were another problem facing students, absent lectures/ students and miscommunications between lecturers and students. Majority has indicated that they don't prefer online and it does not have the same effect as that of face to face learning.

The study has shown that online learning affected their productivity level, students became lazier and would not spend more than three hours on their school work, some students would log in and go do other work, some lecturers would not show up for lessons. The study revealed that respondents understand and have knowledge of what blended learning is, however, majority are neutral on whether blended learning is ideal for both students and lecturers.

This study found that online learning indeed has a negative impact on communication and its effectiveness between instructors and students.

5.4 Recommendations

The study established that majority of students don't prefer online learning because of the negative impacts it comes with, however, according to other research conducted online learning has positive impacts too, the researcher recommends that Universities start implementing blended learning so that students can get used to learning online too in case another pandemic hits. The researcher also recommends that asking questions is a way of moving deeper into the subject and going deeper makes the subject more comprehensible. The researcher recommends and encourage that lecturers try their best to keep in touch with their students through online office hours, as well as reach out to each student in their classes individually if there is a sudden decrease in performance.

5.5 Summary

Although online learning has negative impacts, universities need to implement blended learning. Blended learning can improve universities' flexibility and adaptation while also improving learners' digital skills and independence. Blended learning should be the new normal.

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COPY OF APPENDIX

Research Questionnaire

My name is Elina Shifotoka, a final year Media studies student majoring in Public Relations and advertising at the University of Namibia under the faculty of Education and Human sciences in the department of Information and Communication studies. I am conducting a research titled "Evaluating the effectiveness of university communication in the covid-19 induced online learning context at the university of Namibia" in partial fulfilment for the Degree of Bachelors of Arts in Media studies (Honors Degree). The information solicited in this questionnaire is intended for academic purposes only.

This questionnaire will take less than 10 minutes of your time to complete. Your honest and prompt support is of great importance to the success of this study. I guarantee that your response will be treated with highest confidentiality and that you will remain anonymous as a participant. Thank you very much for your participation.

The screenshot displays a digital questionnaire interface. The first question is "What is your age group?", which is a multiple-choice question with four radio button options: "18-23", "24-29", "30-39", and "40 and above". There is also an option to "Add option or add 'Other'". The question is marked as "Required" and has a "Required" toggle switch turned on. The second question is "Indicate your gender *", with two radio button options: "Male" and "Female". The third question is "Indicate your marital status *", with two radio button options: "Single" and "Married". The interface includes standard UI elements like a three-dot menu, a copy icon, a trash icon, and a close button (X) for each question.

Other...

⋮

Which program are you enrolled in? *

(please discontinue for anyone that picks certificate, Diploma and post graduate)

Certificate

Diploma

Undergraduate degree

Post graduate

Under which faculty does your course fall/ under which faculty do you teach? *

Faculty of Agriculture, Engineering and Natural Sciences

Faculty of Commerce, Management and Law

Faculty of Education and Human Sciences

Faculty of Health Sciences and Veterinary Medicine

⋮

Which platform were you using during COVID-19 for learning? *

Zoom

Moodle

WhatsApp

Other...

Do you prefer Online learning? *

Yes

No

Maybe

Does online learning have the same effect as face to face learning? *

Yes

No

Maybe

Did online learning affect you negatively or positively? *

Negatively

Positively

Neutral

⋮

Which one of this affected you mostly during online classes? *

Connectivity issues

Lack of internet services

Absent lecturers

Absent students

Miscommunications with lecturers/ students

Did online learning have an impact on your productivity/ teaching level? *

Yes

No

Maybe

Have you encountered a lot of challenges with online learning? *

Yes

No

⋮

Do you understand what blended learning is? *

Yes

No

Maybe

Do you think blended learning is ideal for both students and lecturers? *

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Strongly disagree

Disagree

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM.

Name of researcher: Shifotoka Elina

Title of the study: “Evaluating the effectiveness of University communication in the COVID-19 induced online learning context at the University of Namibia” in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of an Honors degree in Media Studies at the University of Namibia.

Name of department: Department of Information and Communication

You have been selected for this study because you are an undergraduate student at the University of Namibia (Main campus) and are in a position to give unique insights to the research problem. You will be asked to respond to questions about online learning.

Participation is voluntary and your responses will be treated in confidence except if you indicate otherwise. No discomfort, stress or risks are anticipated. Your participation will add a lot of value to my research findings.

I agree to participate in the study. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary and I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of this participation, to the extent that they can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research record or destroyed.

Researcher signature and date

Participant Signature and Date

Research at the University of Namibia that involves human participation is overseen by the Centre for Research and Publications Services. Questions and queries as regards your rights as a participant should be addressed to my supervisor, Mr Perivi Katjavivi (pkatjavivi@unam,na) +264 61 206 3195