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ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS TOWARDS BLENDED LEARNING

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Abstract

Blended learning is a learning system that combines both online and face to face learning. It has come with its advantages as well as its disadvantages thus resulting in either positive or negative attitudes of users. The study sets out to understand the attitude of postgraduate students towards blended learning and the factors that influences their attitude. The study adopted a survey method, it makes use of questionnaire for data gathering. Data was gathered from a population of 130 post graduate students in department of Information Management, sampling a number of 97 using Krejce and Morgan table. 95 of the questionnaire which was I Google form was filled and analyzed using simple statistical table while the hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis via SPSS statistical software package. The study revealed positive attitude of postgraduates towards blended learning with 94.7% accepting that BL is beneficial and that it should be encouraged. Moreover, nearly nine in ten 89.5% concurred that BL is intriguing and engaging. 94.8% of the respondents agreed that the major challenge is network or internet connectivity issues. 84.2% of the respondents agreed that some topics are better treated in physical classes while 89.5% of the respondents making majority agreed that blended learning reduces the touch of human. The Null hypothesis that there is no joint significant influence of subjective norm, behavioural control and external factors on the attitude of post graduate students towards blended learning was rejected with at a significant level of ($Adj.R^2 = 0.517$, $F(3,91) = 34.595$, $p = 0.000$). The researcher recommends that Higher institution of learning should embrace Blended Learning as the two (face to face and online learning) can create a balanced learning experience.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Attitudes, Postgraduates, Online learning, E-learning, Learning Management System.

Number of words: 278

Introduction

It is self-evident that we are living in a technologically advanced era, as predicted several decades ago. Because of the extraordinary changes brought about by digital technology, any organization seeking relevance in its industry today has a touch of ICT integrated in its products and/or services. Universities are progressively utilizing current technology to provide quick and unrestricted access to information resources and services as part of their attempts to pave the way and set the pace. Simply put, a postgraduate student is someone who is enrolled in a postgraduate program that needs an undergraduate degree as part of the admission criteria, such as a master's degree, an MPhil, or a PhD. Postgraduates are an essential component of society since their research is thought to contain problem-solving insights and also acts as knowledge frontiers in their field of study. They are unavoidable stakeholders in the academic world, and their intellectual quality has the potential to impact society in a variety of ways, both directly and indirectly. Their attitude as well as perceptions of a learning system might be utilized to assess its efficacy or inefficacy.

Attitude is a way of thinking, feeling, belief, or opinion of approval or disapproval towards something. In psychology, attitude refers to a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors toward a particular object, person, thing, or event. Attitudes are often the result of experience or upbringing, and they can have a powerful influence over behavior. While attitudes are enduring, they can also change. (Kendra Cherry, 2021).

Blended learning techniques have exploded in popularity because of technological advancements and ubiquitous access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) in both higher education and business training. In both higher education and corporate contexts, the phrase blended learning is relatively new. Prior to the introduction of the word "blended learning," the term "hybrid course" was often used in higher education, and the two concepts are now interchangeable (Dias, Diniz, & Hadjileontiadis, 2013). However, because the concept is still relatively new, there are still continuing discussions over its specific definition and significance. The most widely held perspective is that blended learning settings mix face-to-face and technology-mediated training.

Sleator (2010) asserts that the continuing merging of two archetypal learning environments: the conventional face-to-face (F2F) environment and the dispersed (or technology-mediated) environment is what blended learning is. It means that blended learning mixes conventional

face-to-face training with computer-assisted learning. According to Purnima (2002) Blended learning is defined as "a system that combines several different delivery techniques, such as collaborative software, Web-based courses, the Electronic Performance Support System (EPSS), and knowledge management methodologies." Blended learning encompasses a wide range of event-based activities, including face-to-face classrooms, live e-learning, and self-paced learning. Whether blended or hybrid learning, the third world has come to terms with this concept as a result of the unexpected emergence of a novel virus that will rock the world in late 2019 to mid 2020, forcing academic institutions to shut down completely and halting several economic and academic activities. The Corona virus exposes the African continent's technical shortcomings, confirming that we are lagging far behind.

According to the literature, the term blended learning has been in vogue in advanced countries, albeit with several different nomenclatures; however, Africa as a continent has been forced to embrace it, primarily through social media platforms such as (WhatsApp and Telegram) and some other communication platforms that were enabled by internet (Zooms, Google meet, Google themes, Google classroom etc). Furthermore, educators use a hybrid method to investigate tradeoffs between many goals at the same time (e.g., increasing the convenience to students afforded by an asynchronous distributed environment without completely eliminating the human touch from the F2F environment). (Bala, 2016). Moreover, blended learning appeals to many people because it allows them to benefit from the "best of both worlds." (Christensen, Horn, & Staker, 2013). However it was found adoption of this innovation, particularly in the developing nations, is difficult and it was reported that attitudes predicted student satisfaction as an outcome (Kintu, Zhu, & Kagambe, 2017) Therefore this study sets out to understand the attitudes of postgraduate students towards blended learning.

Objectives are:

1. To find out the attitudes of post graduate students towards blended learning in Lead City University Ibadan.
2. To find out factors that predicts post graduate student attitudes towards blended learning in Lead City University Ibadan
3. To examine the challenges faced by post graduate students in blended learning in Lead City University Ibadan.

Null Hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance

- There is no joint influence of subjective norm, behavioural control and external factors on the attitude of post graduate students towards blended learning.

Literature Review

Based on the assertions of some authors, attitudes toward blended learning can be studied through the six learning components of learning flexibility, study management, technology, online learning, online engagement, and classroom learning (Tang & Chaw, 2013). According to Zhu, Au, and Yates, (2013) attitudes are markers of a student's preparation for blended learning when they are studied or investigated in these ways. However, in the adoption of any innovation, the factors that influences adoption are referred to as characteristics of innovation and they are five namely; Relative advantage; Compatibility, Complexity, Trialability and observability (Rogers, 2003), Graham et al, (2013) and Porter et al, (2014). Furthermore, Zhu, Au, and Yates, (2013) asserts that students who have generally good attitudes (and high levels of motivation) toward studying also have more positive attitudes toward learning whatever means.

Blended learning according to Friesen (2012) is an educational technique that mixes traditional place-based classroom approaches with online instructional resources and chances for online participation. Simply expressed, it is the merger of online and face-to-face education as against the traditional classroom system of learning (Mozelius & Hettiarachchi, 2017). It seeks to make meaning out of two learning styles of module-face to face and the online learning. Advantages of blended learning is numerous. It necessitates both the teacher's and the student's physical presence, as well as some student control over time, location, path, or speed. it generates interest in the class, enhances students' language skills, fosters deeper learning, motivates students, as well as makes them inspired, active, and more involved in technology (Abdelhak, 2015). Besides, Slomanson, (2014) founds that blended learning yielded better academic performance compared to learning delivered only online. Furthermore, students prefer blended learning to the traditional one and it seems blended learning is a more effective way of enhancing students' critical thinking skills and their interest in a particular school subject or academic course they are enrolled in (Korkmaz & Karakuş, 2009). Ashraf, Yang, Zhang, Denden, Tlili, Liu, and Burgos, (2021) Conducted a thorough review of literature on blended learning and identified the benefits of blended learning, including increased student engagement, flexibility, and access to resources. A literature review on blended learning effectiveness from the perspective of learner characteristics/background, design features, and

learning outcomes found that student backgrounds and design features are significant predictors for student learning outcomes in blended learning. The review also identified factors that are considered significant for blended learning, such as the use of technology, the design of the learning environment, and the role of the instructor (Kassner nd.) According to Graham (2006), the three main rationale for the adoption of blended learning are: to improve learning efficacy, to improve convenience and access, and to improve cost efficiency. On the adoption of blended learning, Mozeilius and Hettiarachchi (2017) argue that because there are so many stakeholders, a multi-stakeholder approach should be taken, taking into account the perspectives of all of them, including the university, the learners, the teachers, and the global environment.

Theoretically, several theories have come up as to factors that influences or affects human behaviour in relation to use and adoption of technological of innovation or innovations generally. For instance, according to the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), human behaviors are influenced by intentions, human intentions are determined by three factors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. It is also possible for external factors to directly force or prevent behaviors, regardless of the intention, depending on the degree to which a behavior is actually controlled by the individual, and the degree to which perceived behavioral control is an accurate measure of actual behavioral control.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a widely used social-psychological theory that posits that an individual's behavior is influenced by their attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, which in turn influence behavioral intention (Asare, 2015). The TPB has been applied in various fields, including music participation tourism, leisure, and hospitality management and entrepreneurial intention. A systematic literature review of the TPB found that it is focused on the motivational influences that determine behavior. This means that use of blended learning is motivated by subjective norm, perceived behavioural control and external factors.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey method, it makes use of questionnaire for data gathering. Data was gathered from a population of a total of 130 sampling a total number of 97 according to Krejcie and Morgan table. The google 95 Google form were filled and the data was analyzed using simple statistical tables while the multiple linear regression analysis was done via SPSS statistical software package to test the hypothesis.

Data Analysis.

Table 1.1. Demographic Information of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
	MALE	40	42.1
	FEMALE	55	57.9
	Total	95	100.0
	PhD	5	5.3
	MASTERS	85	89.5
	PGD	5	5.3
	Total	95	100.0

Table 1.1 above revealed that majority of the respondents (57.9%) are females while males (42.1%) are the minority. More so, from the same table majority (89.5%) are masters students, 5.3% are at PhD level so also is PGD with 5.3%.

Table 1.2. Attitude

	SA	A	D	SA	Mean	Std. Deviation
I like the idea of blended learning	75 (78.9%)	15 (15.8%)	5 (5.3%)		3.74	.550
I think blended learning is an innovative concept and must be encouraged.	75 (78.9%)	20 (21.1%)			3.79	.410
I think e-learning platform will be fun to us	70 (73.7%)	15 (15.8%)	10 (10.5%)		3.53	.944
I would like to have my classes online rather than in the classroom	35 (36.8%)	35 (36.%)		25 (26.3%)	2.84	1.188
Blended learning motivates me to prepare well for my studies.	55 (57.9%)	30 (31.6%)		10 (10.5%)	3.37	.935
Blended learning makes me more responsible for my studies.	50 (52.6%)	25 (26.3%)	15 (15.8%)	5 (5.3%)	3.26	.913

I organize my time better when studying online.	65 (68.4%)	10 (10.5%)		20 (21.1%)	3.47	.823
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Table 1.2 above showed that summatively, 94.7% of the respondents like the introduction of the concept of blended learning. All the respondents believed that blended learning is an innovative concept and that it must be encouraged. 89.5% of the respondent agreed and strongly agreed that e-learning which is an aspect of blended learning is enjoyable and exciting. However, on preference of either online or classroom classes, majority, (73.6%) of the respondents preferred online classes. However, 26.3% of the respondents prefers having physical classes. Majority (89.5%) of the respondents agreed that blended learning makes them prepare well for their studies while 10.5% disagreed. More so, majority (78.9%) of the respondents agreed that blended learning makes them more responsible for their studies while 21.1% disagreed. Finally, 78.9% of the respondents agreed that they organizes their time better when studying online while 21.1% disagreed. Based on the foregoing, we can infer that generally, postgraduate students behaved positively in relation to blended learning.

Table 1.3 Factors that influences attitudes towards use of blended learning.

Subjective Norms	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.
I believe face-to-face learning is more effective than online learning	45 (47.4%)	20 (21.1%)	30 (31.6%)		3.16	.879
I like to learn in a group, but I can learn on my own as well.	40 (42.1%)	30 (31.6%)	20 (21.1%)	5 (5.3%)	3.11	.916
Behavioural Control						
I don't have option than to love blended learning	55 (57.9%)	30 (31.6%)	5 (5.3%)	5 (5.3%)	3.42	.820
If I have my way I will not choose blended learning	25 (26.3%)	45 (47.4%)	25 (26.3%)		3.00	.729

External Factors						
I love blended learning because my friends loved it	10 (10.5%)	10 (10.5%)	70 (73.7%)	5 (5.3%)	2.26	.718
My classmate are always lively on-line	10 (10.5%)	15 (15.8%)	55 (57.9%)	15 (15.8%)	2.21	.837
My classmates likes blended learning	20 (21.1%)	45 (47.4%)	30 (31.6%)		2.89	.722
I love blended learning because of what people use to say about it	40 (42.1%)	40 (42.1%)	15 (15.8%)		3.26	.718

Subjective Norm

From the table 1.3 above 68.5% of the respondents believed that face-to-face learning is more effective than online learning while 31.6% disagreed. This means that although quite a large number of respondents believed in face to face learning or the traditional teaching style, a substantial number still believed that online learning is better than the traditional system. Secondly, while 73.7% of the respondents believed in group learning a substantial number (26.4%) disproves that they although they like to learn in a group, but they can learn on their own as well. This means that majority (73.7%) would prefer group learning which is only enhanced by tradition learning system however, due to reasons unknown they still can cope with personal learning like being alone online in a remote place without other students. However, minority, (26.5%) but a substantial number of respondents disagreed with this perception. This means that they prefer online learning than the traditional learning style.

Behavioural Control

Majority (89.5%) of the respondents accepted that they choose blended learning because they were left with no option while 10.6% of the respondents completely disagreed. This means they majority would not have chosen blended learning if they can ignore it, but it seems they

don't have a choice. However, a few number of the respondents loved blended learning willingly. Furthermore, from the same table, 73.7% of the respondents asserted that if they have their way, they would not have chosen blended learning while 26.3% loved blended learning. It shows that majority chose blended learning because they seems not to have a better option or they were not given the opportunity to choose.

External factors

Looking at the external factors that influence the attitude of respondents towards blended learning. The table above shows that minority (21%) loved blended learning because their friends loved it. However, majority (79%) doesn't. More so, 26.3% of the respondents agreed that they love blended learning because their classmates are always active while online. However, majority (73.7%) disagreed, this means that, classmates are not lively while online. Furthermore, 68.5% of the respondents agreed that their classmates likes blended learning. This means that the love of others influence their affection for blended learning. However, 31.5% of the respondent disagreed they love blended learning because they friends love it. 84.2% of the respondents agreed they love blended learning because of what people use to say about it while 15.8% disagreed.

CHALLENGES

Table 1.4 Challenges of Blended Learning.

Descriptive Statistics						
Options	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Deviation
It encourages Laziness on the side of the students	30 (31.6%)	25 (27.4%)	25 (27.4%)	10 (10.5%)	2.47	1.435
Network or internet connectivity issues	70 (73.7%)	20 (21.1%)		5 (5.3%)	3.63	.745

Some topics are better treated in physical classes	50 (52.6%)	30 (31.6%)	15 (15.8%)		3.21	1.061
It reduces the touch of human unlike the traditional style	45 (47.4%)	40 (42.1%)		10 (10.5%)	3.26	.913
Power problem (battery low)	60 (63.2%)	20 (21.1%)		15 (15.8%)	3.32	1.084
Deception associated with digital presence	40 (42.1%)	35 (36.8%)		20 (21.1%)	3.00	1.130

From the table above, 59% of the respondents agreed that blended learning encourages laziness while a substantiate number (37.9%) disagreed. 94.8% of the respondents agreed that the major challenge is network or internet connectivity issues. 84.2% of the respondents agreed that some topics are better treated in physical classes while 15.8% disagreed. 89.5% of the respondents making majority agreed that blended learning reduces the touch of human unlike the traditional system while minority (10.5%) disagreed. Furthermore, 84.3% of the respondents agreed that electricity power is a major challenge for blended learning, 15.8% of the respondents disagreed. However, majority 78.9% agreed that deception associated with digital presence is a disadvantage of the blended learning while 21.1% disagreed.

Test of Hypotheses

The trio of subjective norm, behavioural control and external factors have significant influence on attitude of post graduate students towards blended learning

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1				

1	.730 ^a	.533	.517	.44026
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a. Predictors: (Constant), SUJECTIVENORM, EXTERNALFACTORS, BEHAVIOURALCONTROL

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	20.117	3	6.706	34.595	.000 ^b
Residual	17.639	91	.194		
Total	37.755	94			

a. Dependent Variable: ATTITUDE

b. Predictors: (Constant), SUJECTIVENORM, EXTERNAL FACTORS, and BEHAVIOURALCONTROL

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.864	.347		5.377	.000
EXTERNALFACTORS	.583	.090	.505	6.508	.000
BEHAVIOURALCONTROL	.239	.078	.241	3.055	.003
SUJECTIVENORM	-.241	.057	-.309	-4.231	.000

a. Dependent Variable: ATTITUDE

The coefficients table shows that there is significant joint influence of subjective norm, behavioural control and external factors on the attitudes of post graduate students towards blended learning. This is in tandem with a study on Factors propelling the adoption of mobile learning among students in higher education where it was found that revealed that all three constructs of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control significantly influenced students' intention to adopt mobile-learning, that is learning through mobile technology (Yeap, Ramayah, & Soto-Acosta, 2016).

Discussion of Findings

This study set out to investigate the perspectives of post graduate students on blended learning and the elements that contribute to those perspectives. According to the findings of the survey, nearly all participants (94.7%) believe that blended learning is beneficial and that it should be encouraged. Moreover, nearly nine in ten (89.5%) concurred that e-learning, which is an element of blended learning, is intriguing and engaging. Nearly ninety-five percent of students surveyed said they feel more prepared for and more responsibility for their academic success when using a mixed learning approach. In addition, blended learning facilitates improved time management. In conclusion, it indicates that postgraduate students perceive hybrid learning favorably. Adas and Shmais's (2001) results that students have good attitudes of BL in the three domains of processes, contents, and ease of use are supported by the data presented here (2011). Both Akbarov, Gönen, and Aydogan (2018) and Aladwan, Fakhouri, Alawamrah, and Rababah (2018) indicated that students viewed integrated learning in a positive light. Positive opinions towards blended learning have been reported across the board, validating past study.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that

Blended learning should be encouraged by University of higher learning as it combined both face to face and online learning. It will create a sort of balance between the traditionally inclined learners and the new generation students. Moreover, the emergence of Covid-19 has proved to the developing nations that technologically mediated system is inevitable therefore, blended learning must be embraced synchronously and asynchronously.

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