



Moving from Conventional to Online Instruction: Students' Perspectives from the Global COVID-19 Lockdown

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Abstract:

The effects of COVID-19 caused (and is still causing) incomparable disruption to higher education everywhere although it has improved in 2021 to some extent with students now returning (or returned) to campuses. In 2020 somewhere around February, in a matter of days or weeks, campuses around the world went quiet as countries were locked down to contain the spread of the virus. Universities had to develop quick and innovative responses that would enable them to continue to offer teaching and learning when staff and/or students did not have access to a physical campus. An immediate, practical challenge for campus universities was to mobilize and assist teachers

in designing and implementing alternative assessment models and scale learning support for specific units that did not rely on face-to-face presentations. This study examined the digital devices students use to access online lectures, the perceived benefits they gained, and the challenges they faced during the lockdown when they had to resort to distance learning during the global lockdown. A non-experimental descriptive design was chosen in which a number of undergraduate and graduate students were randomly selected to participate in the study. A sample size of 260 students was drawn with a simple random sample in which the subjects responded to a carefully designed structured instrument. It was found that there was no correlation between the use of technology for online teaching and the challenges they faced during the period. It was also found that students gained experience attending online lectures during the pandemic. There was an overwhelming response of motivation for students to engage in online lectures. Students were happy with the student-teacher interactions as they affirmed there was enough time given by instructors for them to ask questions or sought clarifications on issues that were not clear to them. In a sharp contrast, it emerged that there were some difficulties going online as compared to face-to-face instruction. They indicated again that there was frustration and lack of interest in learning while being locked down. Conversely, there was lack of direct face-to-face contact with lecturers which respondents deemed was quite frustrating.

Keywords: *Remote learning, global lockdown, technology, challenges, student-teacher interactions, digital devices.*

Introduction

The past couple of years has seen a huge investment and development in the use of

learning management systems (LMS) in higher educational institutions, with various levels of support provided to staff and students by these institutions. In some instances, various



governments of respective countries have also come in handy to support online instruction in diverse forms. These provided the potential for rich learning environments built on social constructivist theories and available to all students, both on campus and those studying from a distance (Hawkes & Terry, 2003; Papasergiou, 2005; Ng, 2007). Much has been researched into what makes up good online teaching (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996; Oliver, 2003; Bates, 2005) and the fact that higher educational institutions now recognise the significance and impact of online instruction especially at a time when lack of funds has stifled the provision and expansion of infrastructure on various campuses. There is this change of trajectory by many institutions in integrating online components in various undergraduate and graduate programmes. Technology has come to stay and for that matter calls for its integration not only in the field of education but in almost all other spheres of life.

Evaluating quality in online teaching is problematic, both due to a lack of agreement over standards and criteria for assessing learning outcomes, and for mixed approaches of teaching, which many believe that faculty may not necessarily have what it takes to deliver online instruction. This study thus attempts to ascertain vital problem areas in online teaching and learning at a higher educational institution. This study tries to obtain some understanding into how students use LMS and how beneficial it is to them in their studies.

Never before has the world witnessed an educational disruption of this magnitude in recent times. Unlike Ebola which affected mostly some parts of Africa, Coronavirus (COVID-19) has had to bring the world on its knees bringing almost all social, economic and educational activities to a halt. The global academic calendar was thrown into a state of disorder by the Coronavirus outbreak. Most schools from basic to universities shut down their doors and students returned home to their parents and together self-quarantined (UNESCO, 2020). Convocations and graduations have been annulled, classes have been stopped, examinations have been

abandoned; university research programmes have been postponed. Leaders around the world were struggling with the decision to finish their respective terms/semesters in most cases. Coronavirus (COVID-19) related decisions will forever change the course of history, so it must be thoughtful and accurate for future plans to contain pandemics should they ever arise. Most academic heads are now promoting online education as a solution to this crisis (UNESCO, 2020). It is necessary to acknowledge the fact that online education is not an adhoc solution to face-to-face delivery. Face-to-face instructional delivery has the biggest advantages yet that notwithstanding, under the present circumstances, we are compelled to go online even when an antidote has been found for the pandemic. Bigger universities over the past decade are gradually moving their programmes online and minimizing face-to-face delivery (Bao, 2020). Bao (2020), and Filius et al. (2019) contend that going entirely online requires significant amount of planning and investments. So, if the university has not hitherto taken the students and instructors through an online teaching training, and may not have enough resources including recording platforms both on campus and at home to get the instructor to record and present the work in a manner that can be accessed by students, then the online plan ends right there (Yang & Li, 2018). Therefore, before institutions decide to use the online platform to teach during the Coronavirus era, they should assess this issue very well, such as posting PowerPoint slides for students to read because that does not constitute online teaching. Suppose the university has a robust online platform and the instructors can record and present the material for students to access even from their homes and, if students do not have the means to access these materials such as a laptop/tablet or a smartphone, then they are stuck (Filius et al., 2019).

The abrupt end of activities and sending of university students packing home and closure of the campuses across Africa and other parts of the world has boosted the virtual delivery of instruction to students. However, there has been a number of challenges in an attempt to deliver

instruction to students via online. According to observers, there is a possibility that the future might have become the present (Bao, 2020; Donitsa-Schmidt & Topaz, 2018; Filius et al., 2019). Within the last couple of decades, there has been various developments in using technology in the field of education. There have been improved levels of complexity and efficiency in a number of schools that have accepted digital learning (Murphy, 2020). According to UNESCO (2020), over 1.5 billion learners in 165 countries have been attacked by COVID-19 school closure with Europe and America being the hardest hit. This translates to about 87% of the world's student population (UNESCO, 2020). This is huge and calls concern especially for stakeholders in education, globally.

It is predicted that technology will restructure universities by the year 2030. Though the online system of education is seen as comparatively new, according to research, in the future, it will just be as effective as school-based teaching methods (Murphy, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). The US Department of Education analysed more than 1,000 learning investigations. It was discovered that students who take their course online outperform classroom-based students across most subjects. One other evaluation that was published in the same year revealed that online students had the advantage of time, and according to the authors, the gap is likely to widen with the evolvement of programs and technologies. Higher institutions of learning have been pushed into investigating e-learning as the world of medicine tries to find solutions to a pandemic that has led to more than one million people being infected with COVID-19 and about millions too succumbing to the disease (UNESCO, 2020; WHO, 2020).

In Ghana, South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and others, the premature closing of all institutions of learning by respective governments was to protect all learners from probable dangers of contracting COVID-19 because school settings are locations where a lot of students converge, interrelate and handle surfaces such as desks, boards, chairs, and even walls of buildings. Moreover, they use public places of convenience and taps for drinking

water and washing of hands. This poses a great danger and an outbreak like COVID-19 can easily spread. This is consistent with Sintema (2020) who also hypothesised that schools could be breeding grounds for COVID-19 and dangerous enclaves for the spread of the virus. For this reason, most students or learners are required to stay at home and learn. Regardless of this unfortunate situation, students are still expected to learn with the use of Web 2.0 tools. Quickly accessible devices like computers, phones, laptops and tablets either at home or school at affordable costs have come within the reach of the greater majority, and policy makers and significant partners are anticipating hopes to see learning go in a different direction globally during the COVID-19 crisis. Perienen (2020) contended that with the coming of technology impacting almost all areas of life, the education sector is equally seeing a paradigm shift from the normal conventional standards of teaching to online instruction. Due to restrictions imposed by respective governments and their ministries of health because of the crisis, almost all higher educational institutions worldwide shifted to digital learning with immediate effect until normalcy is restored. As a result of this, most universities have released statements to notify students on the adoption of technologies for digital learning. For example, the University of Ghana resolved that in this closure, learning will proceed through its e-learning platform. The University of Cape Coast in Ghana also directed all its teaching faculty to immediately shift into using e-learning to complete the disrupted semester. This was the case in most of the universities worldwide. Subsequently, it was seen that academic staff of most universities were requested to secure course materials to facilitate teaching and learning using e-learning platforms. Likewise, students were also guided to make sure that they register and get connected to the e-learning platforms to avoid missing out on learning. All these were done to ensure that learning continues unabated in the comfort of their homes. However, it was observed that most students who for the first time had to continue instruction online, found it difficult following clearly defined protocols to guide them to get hooked onto the online learning platforms. It is

for this reason and several others that this investigation was carried out was to ascertain how difficult it was or otherwise getting hooked to the online learning platforms and navigating around them for instruction.

Many of the universities the world over that were using e-learning partially to attend to students and those that never used it have now fully migrated to digital-learning platforms to make sure that students do not miss out on learning or remain behind on the completion of course outlines or start new ones since they are still expected to write their final exams at the end of the semester. This is not surprising as for example, Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020) also investigated the capacities of some countries and their populations to continue the education process at the schools in the online form of distance learning with different digital platforms. Thus, due to the coronavirus outbreak, teachers in basic, secondary and tertiary institutions have been forced to learn digital methods of teaching and delivering content to students. COVID-19 has become a catalyst for appreciating digital devices, online resources, social media technology and e-learning activities. Literature reveals that no paradigm shift in the educational settings can be successfully projected without first including teachers as partakers of the intention. Today there is mounting pressure on them to tap into the affordances of technology to bridge learning gaps (Akaadom, 2021; Perienen, 2020). Teachers who are not tech savvy have been compelled to either learn it or improve looking at the turn of events. Online instruction seems to have come to stay and for that matter, heads of institutions and stakeholders in education are encouraging schools to organise workshops for teachers to equip them with skills enough to deliver online instruction.

Research solely focusing on the COVID-19 global pandemic and digital learning are on the increase in the year 2020 and perhaps beyond because the virus with its new variants is still with us. Several researchers have conducted studies on the knowledge that is required for the adoption of digital technology during the COVID-19 crisis. For example, Iwai (2020),

conducted a study on online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. He argued on what students stand to gain or lose when classrooms go virtual. Agnoletto and Queiroz (2020), in their paper “COVID-19 and the challenges in Education” postulated that the logic of going “digital” is not simple but there is an ongoing outcry to launch tools of emergency measures, mostly, “adopting” the use of digital-technologies for learning. Another study in China where the outbreak begun (e.g. Zhao et al., 2020) looked at how social media technology like Sina Microblog can be used to get the attention of the public to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was revealed that social media platforms (e.g., WhatsApp) can be used to disseminate information and evaluate public attention to public health emergencies. Through social media platforms, governments could disseminate important information to the general public, revising health guidelines and conscientizing the citizenry. A study by Roy (2020) in Australia offered some tips that could help children learn from home during the COVID-19 period. In one of the tips, he suggested that teachers need to download some teleconferencing tools such as Skype, Zoom, Lifesize, etc that may be used to deliver lessons remotely.

E-learning has several advantages for both faculty and students. One of the most significant features of e-learning is to provide a setting for learning and teaching without the limitations of time or distance (Epping, 2010). It can take place anywhere and at anytime provided both faculty and learners agree on common grounds. E-learning is widely used in many higher educational institutions globally. According to Morris (2004), Allen and Seaman (2005), if any institution planning to operate traditional courses online is anything to go by, a Learning Management System (LMS) is the top most necessity followed by the proper organization of content, courses, faculty, students and grades. LMS also has the ability to provide tools for multimedia content, assignments, and supporting interaction, including discussion groups, chat sessions, and online quizzes and examinations. Online learning is one of the best

solutions in cost effectiveness in higher education as it provides an opportunity for reaching a large, globally dispersed audience in a short period of time with consistent content delivery although it comes at a cost.

One important construct this study sought to ascertain from participants was student satisfaction in being introduced to the use for e-learning for instruction. Student satisfaction is defined as the perceived value of one's educational experiences in an educational institution (Astin, 1993). "Significant differences still exist in the way students perceive their online experiences during learning" (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005, p.36). In designing, developing, and delivering education courses, student needs and perceptions should be key for consideration (Sahin & Shelley, 2008), as a course failing to meet student expectations and needs may lead to low levels of student involvement and motivation (Bradford, 2011; Hall, 2001). Therefore, many efforts have been made to adapt education systems to be more student-friendly (Despotovic-Zrakic, Markovic, Bogdanovic, Barac, & Krco, 2012; Mihailovic, Despotovic-Zrakic, Bogdanovic, Barac, & Vujin, 2012; Petrovic, Drakulic, Isljamovic, Jeremic, & Drakulic, 2011). The perception of a student's learning experiences can impact their resolve to carry on with a course (Carr, 2000) and affect their levels of satisfaction with their overall online learning experiences (Kenny, 2003). Student satisfaction, according to the American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC, n.d.), is the most important key to continue learning. Several elements influence student satisfaction in an online environment, and Bolliger and Martindale (2004) have identified three key factors key to a student's online satisfaction: *the instructor, technology, and interactivity*; other components include communication with all other course elements, course management issues, and the course websites or course management systems used. In this study, the researchers investigated to know how instructors fared, the kind of technology used, teaching and learning resources used as well as how interactive teaching and learning sessions were. Drennan, Kennedy, and Pisarski (2005) found that positive

perceptions towards technology and independent learning modes do impact student satisfaction. Additionally, student perceptions of task value and self-efficacy, social ability, the quality of the system, and multimedia instruction have also been identified as important constructs (Liaw, 2008; Lin, Lin, & Laffey, 2008). Bearing this knowledge of the factors contributing to student satisfaction in an online learning environment in mind, one may act accordingly to provide appropriate support and to design appropriate online learning environments, which would positively impact student satisfaction and their engagement with learning, as well as would ultimately positively influence student learning outcomes (Hollis & Madill, 2006; Lu & Law, 2012; Smart & Cappel, 2006). This is one of the reasons why the researchers embarked on this study.

Students in combined learning groups (cooperative groups) have shown significantly greater satisfaction levels than those in traditional learning groups, while no significant differences have been found between online learning and combined learning groups (Lim et al., 2008). Noel-Levitz (2004) reports that satisfied learners in higher education are more likely to be successful in academic achievement, and that the key to measuring satisfaction is in determining what is important to the learner. This study was carried out at a university southwest of Ghana. It is worth noting that the university had in place an e-learning platform for instruction. Workshops were organised to train its faculty to equip them with skills to be able to use the platform for instruction although it was not compulsory for faculty to use the e-learning platform for instruction until the emergence of the pandemic. However, with the advent of COVID-19, the university management instructed all its teaching faculty to use the e-learning platform to continue instruction to end the disrupted semester when the university closed down. The researchers for this study who himself is a teaching faculty, had issues with students' engagement online. Issues ranged from connectivity to assessment and therefore wanted to investigate by looking at students' views regarding the use of e-learning which seemed to

be new to quite a number of the students. This is because most of the times, a lot of the students could not come online for instruction. Researchers's thinking was that it could be due to lack of connectivity, devices to connect to the instruction, time, distractions at home, skills needed to engage, sequencing of instruction for learners, tasks and a host of others. All these culminated into investigating about their experiences related to their use of the e-learning platform.

Theoretical Framework

There are several theories and models related to the study of online learning, but for this study, the researchers found Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) to be the most suitable model to be used in this research. The reason behind using Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) is to help understand how students and educational institutions accept and use technology for teaching and learning. The OCL is a theory that was proposed by Linda Harasim. The theory focuses on the internet as a source of learning through fostering collaboration and building of knowledge. Harasim describes the new theory of acquiring knowledge as one that is focused on collaborative learning, internet use, and knowledge building. Harasim (2017) can be described as a way of reshaping formal, non-formal, and informal education. Just like Siemens (2006), Harasim (2017), points out that many benefits are associated with moving to teach and learning to the internet and predict a large-scale network of education being created from the concept of e-learning. In some instances, he utilizes Alberto Barabasi's (2002) point of view on the power of networks. OCL is believed to support three phases of knowledge acquisition and construction. They include the following *Idea generating* indicating a phase that involves brainstorming. In this phase, divergent thoughts are put together. The second is *Idea organizing* where different ideas are compared, analysed, and put into a category using organized discussions and arguments. The third and final, *Intellectual convergence* synthesises and consensus building take place. Agreeing to disagree is

embraced; assignments are made in the form of essays as well as joint pieces of work (Harasim, 2017).

OCL is also based on social constructivism. This is because the learners are encouraged to solve problems collaboratively by way of discourse. The major aspect of OCL is that the work of a teacher is to facilitate the process of learning. In other constructivism theories, the teacher is an active facilitator of knowledge acquisition. Due to the significance of the duties of the teacher, online collaborative learning is not easy to scale up. OCL is mainly suited for smaller instructional environments, unlike connectivism, which is mainly large-scale based. Therefore, when seeking commonality among online education theories, OCL becomes significantly important. Several theories are closely related to online education. However, instead of coming up with many theories and trying to keep up with the major aim of the research, it is essential to determine whether an integrated or unified theory of online education is something that can be adopted and successfully implemented.

Methods

The researchers adopted a quantitative (descriptive) research approach which is in a position to reduce researchers biases by not controlling or manipulating any of the variables, but only observes and measures them. Considering the purpose of this study, the non-experimental descriptive survey design was adopted as a result of the above given reason. This was because it specified the nature of the given phenomena and involved the collection of data to assist the researchers answer questions framed about the problem under the investigation.

The target population for the study comprised both undergraduate and postgraduate students who took part in the online instruction during the 2020 lockdown of institutions at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic that rocked the globe. The sample was classified into two categories; undergraduate and postgraduate students. Then

a simple random sampling procedure was used to select a total of 260 respondents of which 179 were undergraduates and 81 were postgraduate students all pursuing various programmes at a university.

The data that were collected from the field were cross-checked first and corrected to ensure that no mistakes existed in the responses and the information given. The data was then coded and entered into the computer for analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 19) was employed to process and analyze the questionnaires. Errors, such as typographical errors, which could mislead and adversely influence results were checked and corrected using frequencies for all the categorical variables. The data was analyzed statistically by use of descriptive statistics (Mean, Percentages and Frequencies) and inferential statistics (Correlation Coefficients). Frequencies,

percentages, averages, proportions and tables were used to present the data about participant demographic information. Bivariate analysis was done to analyze data about relationships to determine patterns and strengths about pre-service teachers' challenges and their use of technology to enhance instruction. To determine characteristics of single variations among the groups, the researchers used univariate descriptive statistics to analyze the characteristics of a distribution such as technology knowledge and technology dexterity of respondents. Pearson's correlation was used to investigate relationships between variables under investigation.

Results

The demographic characteristics distribution of respondents is shown in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. Distribution of Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic variables	Variable description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	186	71.8
	Female	81	28.2
Total		260	100
Age	Under 25 years	124	47.7
	26 – 35	88	33.8
	36 – 45	36	13.8
	46 – 55	9	3.5
	Above 56 years	3	1.2
Total		260	100
Academic level	Undergraduate	179	68.8
	Postgraduate	81	31.2
Total		260	100
Programme of Study	Bachelor of Education	179	68.8
	Master of Education	39	15.0
	Master of Philosophy	42	16.2
Total		260	100

The number of male respondents was 186 (71.8%) whilst that of females was 81 (28.2%). The age distribution of respondents from the results in Table 1 above indicated that those under 25 years of age constituted 47.7% (n=124), 26-35 years constituted 33.8% (n=88), 36-45 years was 13.8% (n=36), 45-55 years of age was 3.5% (n=9) with those above 56 years constituting 1.2% (n=3). Looking at the academic level of respondents, 68.8% (n=179)

were undergraduate students with 31.2% (n=81) making those that represented respondents from the postgraduate level. Students studying on various programme areas under the Bachelor of Education programme in the university selected to respond to the instrument indicated that 68.8% (n=179) were Bachelor of Education students, 15% (n=39) were Master of Education students and 42% (n=162) were Master of

Philosophy students. In all, 260 respondents responded to the instrument.

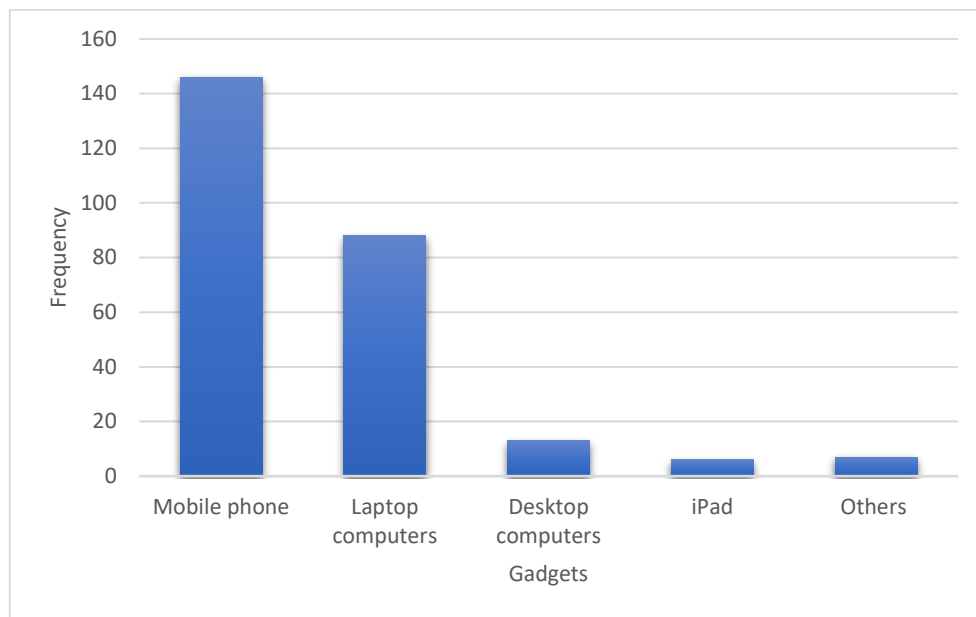


Figure 1. Mode of Accessing LMS

The researchers found that technology tools respondents used to access the learning management system (LMS) included all the above as indicated from Figure 1. From Figure 1, 56.2% (n=146) used mobile telephones, 33.8% (n=88) used laptop computers, 5% (n=13) used desktop computers, 2.3% (n=6) used iPad whilst other forms of gadgets used in accessing the LMS was 2.7% (n=7). From the

foregoing, the use of the mobile telephone was popular among respondents with the least popular being the use of the iPad.

ICT Tools/Proficiency of learners

To be able to access the LMS and navigate around it, the researchers wanted to ascertain the proficiency level of respondents. Given below in the table is the results from the data analysis.

Table 2. ICT Tools Used in Accessing Online Instruction and Proficiency of Learners

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA	Total	M	ST.D
I have sufficient computer knowledge and skills to manage my online learning.	17 (6.6)	37 (14.3)	18 (7.0)	131 (50.8)	55 (21.3)	258 (100.0)	2.34	1.16
I had sufficient equipment and facilities(computer/laptop/internet/Software) to participate in online lectures.	23 (8.8)	71 (27.3)	16 (6.2)	109 (41.9)	41 (15.8)	260 (100.0)	2.72	1.27
I preferred to have training or orientation on preparation before online lectures.	11 (4.2)	15 (5.8)	21 (8.1)	81 (31.3)	131 (50.6)	259 (100.0)	1.82	1.08
Online tools were easy to use during lectures.	11 (4.3)	84 (32.7)	44 (17.1)	89 (34.6)	29 (11.3)	257 (100.0)	2.84	1.13
Guidelines on how to use the LMS was provided before lecturers started the online instruction.	39 (15.1)	65 (25.2)	23 (8.9)	84 (32.6)	47 (18.2)	258 (100.0)	2.86	1.38
Navigating through online platforms was easy.	18 (7.0)	81 (31.5)	40 (15.6)	96 (37.4)	22 (8.6)	257 (100.0)	2.91	1.14

Contributing to online discussions using available tools was okay for me.	24 (9.4)	62 (24.3)	29 (11.4)	110 (43.1)	30 (11.8)	255 (100.0)	2.76	1.21
I had difficulty to ask questions or clear doubts I had about content during online lectures	38 (15.3)	47 (18.9)	38 (15.3)	79 (31.7)	47 (18.9)	249 (100.0)	2.80	1.36

Note: M=Mean; ST.D=Standard Deviation

An overwhelming number of students (72.1%, n=186) indicated that they had sufficient computer knowledge and skills to manage their online learning. Again, majority of respondents (57.7%, n=150) had sufficient equipment and computers/laptops/internet/

software to participate in online lectures. The researchers wanted to find out if there was the need for prior orientation/training to equip respondents with skills enough to start the online instruction. To this, majority of respondents (81.9%, n=212) revealed that they preferred to have had training or orientation on preparing them adequately before the beginning of the online lectures. How easy or otherwise were online tools to be used by respondents? To this, it was revealed that 45.9% (n=118) found

using online tools easy for instruction. A greater number of respondents (50.8%, n=131) stipulated that guidelines on how to use the LMS was provided before lecturers started the online instruction. Almost half of the respondents (46%, n=118) pointed out that it was easy navigating through the online platform(s) during the online instruction they received during the global lockdown. Furthermore, more than half of the respondents (54.9%, n=140) divulged that they were able to contribute to online discussions using available tools. How difficult or otherwise was it for respondents to ask questions about the contents they learned during the online instruction? It came to light from the analysis of the data that 50.6% (n=126) had difficulty to ask questions or clear doubts they had about content during online lectures.

Table 3. Benefits of Online Instruction

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA	Total	M	ST.D
I gained experience attending online lectures.	13 (5.0)	34 (13.1)	21 (8.1)	110 (42.3)	82 (31.5)	260 (100.0)	2.18	1.16
I was happy about online teaching methods and lecture materials that were provided.	19 (7.3)	47 (18.1)	57 (21.9)	111 (42.7)	26 (10.0)	260 (100.0)	2.70	1.10
Online lectures were effective than traditional/live classroom lectures.	53 (20.4)	99 (38.1)	42 (16.2)	52 (20.0)	14 (5.4)	260 (100.0)	3.48	1.18
I was motivated during online lectures.	28 (11.1)	47 (18.7)	41 (16.3)	107 (42.5)	29 (11.5)	252 (100.0)	2.75	1.21
I was happy about the student-teacher interaction during online teaching and learning.	34 (13.2)	36 (14.0)	43 (16.7)	113 (43.8)	32 (12.4)	258 (100.0)	2.72	1.24
Students were given the opportunity to ask questions to which they got answers during the online instruction.	16 (6.4)	43 (17.1)	55 (21.9)	97 (38.6)	40 (15.9)	251 (100.0)	2.59	1.14
There was flexibility participating in online lectures.	22 (8.6)	65 (25.4)	29 (11.3)	115 (44.9)	25 (9.8)	256 (100.0)	2.78	1.18
There were flexible hours for online instruction.	31 (12.1)	82 (32.0)	37 (14.5)	82 (32.0)	24 (9.4)	256 (100.0)	3.05	1.23
Motivation was high in participating in online lectures.	21 (8.1)	82 (31.8)	39 (15.1)	85 (32.9)	31 (12.0)	258 (100.0)	2.91	1.20
During online sessions, I was given proper breaks so that I could have time	30 (11.7)	52 (20.2)	53 (20.6)	86 (33.5)	36 (14.0)	257 (100.0)	2.82	1.24

to think about topic and frame questions to be asked.								
I would like to participate for online lectures mixed with conventional/traditional lectures after COVID-19 pandemic over.	21 (8.1)	33 (12.7)	41 (15.8)	102 (39.2)	63 (24.2)	260 (100.0)	2.41	1.21
Sharing videos of lessons with us that we can watch at any time was useful.	15 (5.9)	22 (8.6)	33 (12.9)	104 (40.6)	82 (32.0)	256 (100.0)	2.16	1.14

Note: M=Mean; ST.D=Standard Deviation

One of the themes of this investigation was to verify if there were any benefits of the online instruction respondents received during the global lockdown. So they were asked to indicate if they gained any experience attending online lectures. Results showed that majority of them (73.8%, n=192) gained some experience using online as an instructional medium for lectures. Consequently, a greater part of them (52.2%, n=137) indicated that they were happy about online teaching methods and lecture materials that were provided. In contrast, 58.5% (n=162) of the respondents alleged that online lectures were not as effective as traditional/live classroom lectures. However, they were motivated during the online instruction where majority (54%, n=136) of them said so. Accordingly, 56.2% (n=145) revealed that they were happy about the student-teacher interactions during online teaching and learning. Incidentally, 54.5% (n=137) responded that they were given the opportunity to ask questions to which they got answers during the online

instruction. Additionally, 54.7% (n=140) divulged that there was flexibility participating in online lectures. In a sharp contrast, 44.1% (n=113) a greater part of them revealed that there were not flexible hours for online instruction. On the other hand, 44.9% (n=116) pointed out that motivation was high in participating in online lectures. Furthermore, 47.5% (n=122) shown that during online sessions, they were given proper breaks so that they could have time to think about topic/content and frame questions to be asked. If that was the case, what then was the motivation to have blended learning going forward? Indeed, an overwhelming 63.4% (n=165) pointed out that they would like to participate for online lectures mixed with conventional/traditional lectures after COVID-19 pandemic over. Moreover, 72.6% (n=186) pointed out that sharing videos of lessons to watch at any time was useful and helpful for a clearer understanding of the content that was being taught.

Table 4. Challenges Learners Face During Online Instruction

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA	Total	M	ST.D
Going online was difficult than classroom face-to-face instruction	11 (4.2)	33 (12.7)	9 (3.5)	115 (44.2)	92 (35.4)	260 (100.0)	2.06	1.13
There was frustration and lack of interest in learning while being locked down	22 (8.5)	43 (16.5)	23 (8.8)	107 (41.2)	65 (25.0)	260 (100.0)	2.42	1.26
Lack of direct face-to-face contact with lecturers was problematic	10 (3.9)	44 (17.2)	33 (12.9)	122 (47.7)	47 (18.4)	256 (100.0)	2.41	1.09
It was difficult getting immediate feedback on what was being taught	19 (7.3)	45 (17.3)	27 (10.4)	120 (46.2)	49 (18.8)	260 (100.0)	2.48	1.19
Online environment simply takes more time than a face-to-face class to effectively accomplish	17 (6.5)	56 (21.5)	28 (10.8)	107 (41.2)	52 (20.0)	260 (100.0)	2.53	1.22
Lecturers' personal attention and touch were less	20 (7.9)	62 (24.4)	45 (17.7)	91 (35.8)	36 (14.2)	254 (100.0)	2.76	1.20

There was lack of direct contact with other students/colleagues/friends	7 (2.8)	45 (17.8)	23 (9.1)	111 (43.9)	67 (26.5)	253 (100.0)	2.26	1.12
Inconsistent/poor contact and communication with the lecturers	6 (2.3)	55 (21.2)	24 (9.2)	103 (39.6)	72 (27.7)	260 (100.0)	2.31	1.15
Home environment was suitable for participating in online lectures	61 (24.0)	51 (20.1)	32 (12.6)	65 (25.6)	45 (17.7)	254 (100.0)	3.07	1.46
Possibility of distractions from other family members during online lectures was high	17 (6.7)	40 (15.9)	23 (9.1)	74 (29.4)	98 (38.9)	252 (100.0)	2.22	1.30
Lecturer gave lectures using video or audio or notes	13 (5.3)	25 (10.1)	30 (12.1)	113 (45.7)	66 (26.7)	247 (100.0)	2.21	1.11
Lecturer sets activities for us that we can download from our institution's LMS	7 (2.8)	14 (5.6)	27 (10.8)	99 (39.8)	102 (41.0)	249 (100.0)	1.90	1.00

Note: M=Mean; ST.D=Standard Deviation

With regards to challenges going online for instruction, a number of items were outlined to ascertain if there were any of them. From Table 5, majority of respondents (79.6%, n=207) revealed that going online was difficult as compared to classroom face-to-face instruction. In addition to that, 66.2% (n=172) said that there was frustration and lack of interest in learning while being locked down. Again, 66.1% (n=169) said lack of direct face-to-face contact with lecturers was problematic. Furthermore, 64.6% (n=169) pointed out that it was difficult getting immediate feedback on what was being taught. As a consequence, 61.2% (n=159) showed that the online environment simply took more time than a face-to-face class to effectively accomplish. Much more, 70% (n=127) of respondents suggested that lecturers' personal attention and touch were less. Subsequently, 70.4% (n=178) showed that there was lack of direct contact with other students/colleagues/friends during the online instruction at the time of the global lockdown. Conversely, 67.3% (n=175) pointed out that inconsistent/poor contact and communication with the lecturers was a challenge. Accordingly, 44.1% (n=112) indicated that home

environment was not suitable enough for participating in online lectures. Even more, 68.3% (n=172) suggested that possibility of distractions from other family members during online lectures was high. Nonetheless, 72.4% (n=179) specified that lecturer gave lectures using video or audio or notes which was very commendable. Furthermore, 80.8% (n=201) revealed that lecturers set activities for them that they could download from the institution's learning management system (LMS).

Relationship Between Respondents' Computer Knowledge/IT Skills and the Challenge of Going Online for Instruction

A test was run to determine if there was any relationship between respondents' challenges they faced in their online instruction during the global lockdown. Pearson's correlation was employed to determine the relationship and the strength of that relationship. To be able to do this, the Likert scale responses were computed into interval scales for all the independent and dependent factors. These mean scores on the factors were used in the Pearson's correlation analysis. The results are as shown below.

Table 5. Pearson's Correlation Showing Respondents' Computer IT Skills and the Challenge They Faced Going Online for Instruction

Correlations		Computer Knowledge	Online Instruction
IT Skills	Pearson Correlation	1	-.081
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.193
	N	258	258

Online Instruction	Pearson Correlation	-.081	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.193	
	N	258	260
**. Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The association between computer IT skills and the challenge variables for going online for instruction were tested to develop an understanding of their possible relationship. The relationship was explored using Pearson's correlation. IT skills was found to have no significant correlation ($r = -.081$) with the challenge variables as seen from Table 6. The two variables; IT skills and challenges faced during online instruction correlated at 0.193. There was no correlation between the dependent and the independent variables. It means that those who used technology in the online instruction did not significantly encounter challenges as presumed ($p > 0.01$).

Discussion

The global pandemic of the COVID-19 sweeping across continents the world over with new variants still being recorded is making its fight more and more challenging. This has had a toll on governments' budgets stifling economic growth for most countries worldwide. On the other hand, there has been high demand for digital devices to enable quarantined people access content and work from home. In this study, the researchers sought to verify the digital devices students used to access online instruction. It came to light that the use of mobile phones was most popular with students. This concurs with Filius et al. (2019) study that if students do not have the means to access online instruction, they get stuck. Other digital devices such as laptops were equally popular with students for accessing online content during instruction. It is expected that the pandemic would become a catalyst for appreciating digital devices as it looms until an antidote is found finally to contain the situation. Students again indicated that they had sufficient equipment to participate in online lectures and that they equally had sufficient skills enough to use online tools during lectures. Once there is an

increase in acquisition and access to digital devices, students are likely to explore more Web 2.0 tools to learn to improve understanding of concepts and procedures pertaining to classroom instruction. This can lead to satisfaction as put forth by Noel-Levitz (2004) that satisfied learners in higher education are more likely to be successful in academic achievement.

In addition to that, it was discovered that students had adequate computer knowledge and skills to manage online learning. According to Muilenburg and Berge (2005), significant differences exist in the way students perceive their online experiences during learning. In this study, it emerged that students preferred to have had some training or orientation on preparation before online instruction although they still indicated that they had adequate knowledge and skills to go online for instruction. This finding is in line with that of Sahin and Shelley (2008) that in designing, developing and delivering education courses, students' needs and perceptions should be key for consideration. This is because according to Bradford (2011) and Hall (2001), if a course fails to meet students' expectations, it may lead to low levels of their involvement and motivation. On the contrary, respondents affirmed that navigating through online platforms was not difficult, their ability to contribute to online discussions was easy using the available tools and again, asking questions using the same web tools was okay for them. In a study that was conducted during the pandemic by Iwai (2020), it was argued on what students stand to gain or lose when classrooms go virtual. From this study, it appears that respondents were satisfied going online for instruction during the lockdown.

Benefits can be defined as something that produces good or helpful results or effects that promotes well-being. In this study, it was found that students gained experience attending online lectures during the pandemic. There was an

overwhelming response of motivation for students to engage in online lectures. Students were happy with the student-teacher interactions as they affirmed that there was enough time given by instructors for them to ask questions or seek for clarifications on issues that were not clear to them. In a study by Roy (2020) conducted in Australia, it was figured out that students were happy and could learn from home during the lockdown period because facilitators provided the needed impetus to facilitate online instruction where instructors would not behave like behaviourists who believe that they are the repositories of knowledge. Facilitators were open and provided room for students to ask questions and contribute to discussions online. Agnoletto and Queiroz (2020) postulated that going digital is not simple and needs adequate preparations in terms of resources, planning, delivery, etc. To Morris (2004), LMS has the ability to provide tools for multimedia content, courses, faculty, students and grades which all have to be factored into making online instruction effective and engaging. It appears that in this study, most of these considerations were made culminating in students saying they were satisfied in these areas. On the contrary when students were asked to state their preference for online lectures and traditional/live classroom lectures, they admitted traditional classroom lectures were more effective as compared to online lectures. Perhaps it might be as a result of the fact they are very much used to the face-to-face classroom instruction more than online instruction as at the time of the lockdown. This presupposes that e-learning still has more several advantages for both faculty and students to explore. Many efforts have to be made to adapt to online learning systems to be more student friendly (Despotovic-Zrakic, Markovic, Bogdanovic, Barac, & Krco, 2012; Mihailovic, Despotovic-Zrakic, Bogdanovic, Barac, & Vujin, 2012; Petrovic, Drakulic, Isljamovic, Jeremic, & Drakulic, 2011). In this study accordingly where students' satisfaction was high out of which no relationship was found between students challenges and their ability to use digital devices for online instruction concurred with that of Bollinger and Martindale (2004) where it was

found that key factors to students' online satisfaction was basically related to the instructor, technology and interactivity. Accordingly, as found by Drennan, Kennedy and Pisarski (2005), there was positive perceptions towards technology learning modes to impact the satisfaction of respondents in this study. Here in this study, they indicated the flexibility provided by facilitators for participating in online lectures by way of motivation, interactivity, hours for lectures, proper breaks during lectures, sharing videos of lessons, etc leading to respondents' assertion that they would like to have blended learning going forward.

Conclusions

In this study, a challenge is defined as a difficult task or problem that tests someone's ability or skill to perform an activity. In a sharp contrast, it emerged that there were some difficulties going online as compared to face-to-face instruction. They indicated again that there was frustration and lack of interest in learning while being locked down. Conversely, there was lack of direct face-to-face contact with lecturers which respondents deemed was quite frustrating. These were expected perhaps because respondents were not used to this kind of situation that could compel them to take online instruction. It was reported that lecturers' personal attention and touch was much less likewise the direct contact with their other colleague students and friends. Home environment was not conducive enough for online learning, possibility of distractions from family members during lectures among others were reported. Murphy (2020) and UNESCO (2020) advocate for improved levels for some of these challenges in order to accept digital learning. Undoubtedly, there is every need to improve in certain areas of our endeavours in order to accept the new trajectory of online learning. In the final analysis, it is recommended that considerable improvement is made to improve students' engagement online to promote distance and remote learning whenever the need arises.

Based on the results, it is recommended that before online instructions go ahead for students, institutions must do well to organize orientations to equip students with skills and knowledge to successfully take part in the instruction.

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