UNDERGRADUATES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF E-LEARNING FOR LEARNING IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

E-Learning, is significant mode of education, transforming the way human access and acquire knowledge, it equally facilitates learners' access to course materials and available resources through any internet-connected location. This study, therefore assessed students' attitudes towards e-learning espousing in Kwara State. The study also examined the influence of moderating variables of age and gender on attitude towards e-learning. The research design adopted is the descriptive research of survey. The sample for this study was 396 undergraduates in Kwara state. A researcher-designed structured questionnaire titled "Attitude Towards E-learning Scale" (ATES) was utilized to collect study data. The findings revealed that undergraduates in Kwara state have positive attitude towards e-learning. In addition, there was a noteworthy distinction in Kwara State undergraduates' attitudes on e-learning according to gender, but not according to age. The study's recommendations were based on the findings, which suggested that guidance counsellors provide gender-sensitive help by adjusting tactics and suggestions to accommodate the unique obstacles that male and female students have while embracing e-learning. It was also suggested that counsellors should offer age-appropriate advice, such as guiding younger students toward the development of efficient time management techniques and helping older students advance their technological proficiency. This will help newcomers adjust to the online learning environment by exposing them to techniques that will inspire them.

Keywords: Attitudes, E-learning, Espousing, Undergraduates

Introduction

E-learning is an online learning environment that makes use of digital technologies and resources. It can incorporate a range of multimedia components, including audio and video recordings, interactive tests, and more, and be either self-paced or instructor-led. E-learning is often used in educational institutions, corporate training programmes, and other settings where learners need to acquire new knowledge or skills (Liu & Yu, 2023). The manner that people access and gain knowledge is changing as a result of the growing popularity and significance of e-learning. Baruah (2018) asserts that e-learning makes education more accessible by allowing students to access course materials and other resources from any location with an internet connection. It removes geographical restrictions and gives students control over the times and locations of their education. Adult learners, working professionals, and people with varied schedules will find this very helpful.

According to Nganji (2018), e-learning is a crucial part of contemporary education since it provides flexibility, accessibility, and a customized learning environment. The pandemic's global trend to online learning and the need for ongoing skill improvement in a changing labor market have only served to highlight its significance. Since e-learning was used in higher education institutions, costs for students have decreased while teaching and learning quality has increased (Songkram, 2015). This demonstrates that students can use e-learning to save money and use their free time for other beneficial pursuits (Aparicio, Bacao & Oliveira, 2016). Another significant benefit of e-learning is flexibility, which allows students to attend classes at any time and from any location. Additionally, by employing a large amount of the interactive content that is readily available on the internet, e-learning accommodates a variety of learning styles (Songkram, Khlaisang, Puthaseranee & Likhitdamrongkiat, 2015). The need for web-based teaching and learning has increased due to the widespread availability of the internet and technology. Users of distance learning can become more flexible and work beyond location and time constraints in this ever-expanding environment. E-learning is defined in academic institutions as learning that occurs entirely or in part online (Gilbert, 2015).

Studying students' attitudes towards e-learning is crucial for several reasons, as it provides valuable insights that can inform educational practices and improve the effectiveness of online learning. Understanding students'

attitudes helps educators design e-learning experiences that align with students' preferences and motivations. According to Umar and Ko (2022) When learners approach e-learning with positivity, they are more likely to engage actively, stay motivated, and complete their coursework successfully. By gauging students' attitudes, instructors can tailor their e-learning materials and strategies to accommodate different learning styles and preferences. Some students may prefer video lectures, while others may prefer interactive quizzes or discussion forums.

Pupils' attitudes on e-learning are influenced by a variety of circumstances, including their perceptions of its benefits and drawbacks (Dhamija, 2016). Undoubtedly, having a flexible schedule is a huge benefit for students because it allows them to learn at any time and from any place as long as they have access to the internet or other devices that facilitate e-learning (Bertea, 2019). A study conducted by Al-Fraihat, Joy and Sinclair (2019) found that students perceived e-learning as a more flexible and convenient way of learning, allowing them to balance their academic pursuits with other commitments. Insufficient computer proficiency, tech anxiety, and hardware issues with computers can all contribute to students' negative attitudes about online learning. These issues can also include ineffective study techniques, low motivation, and an unwillingness to work independently (Smith et al., 2020, Govindasamy, 2015). The absence of in-person interactions between students and lecturers in online courses is another drawback. Prior research by Furlong, Sutherland, and Furlong (2015) and Ponzurick, France, Russo, and Cyril (2015) found that some students experienced emotions of loneliness and isolation while forced to look at a computer screen.

Pupils who are fortunate enough to own a laptop or personal computer avoid connecting it to the internet because doing so incurs additional costs that they cannot afford (Gautam & Tiwari, 2016). Low student attendance in online courses has also been caused by bad internet connectivity and expensive data plans (Eze et al., 2018; Oluebube, 2017). Because some families and students may not be able to afford basic necessities like food and clean water, let alone the pricey equipment and resources to support them for online study, low online class attendance has been connected to the high percentage of poverty in the nation (Oluebube, 2017). Eze et al. (2018) state that instructors' reluctance to help students acquire the knowledge and training necessary to maximize the effectiveness of the e-learning platform is another issue with e-learning. E-learning allows for the total absence of in-person contacts between students, instructors, and other students.

Research has indicated that e-learning can have a favorable impact on learners' insights (Gautam & Tiwari, 2016; Martínez-Caro, Cegarra-Navarro & Cepeda-Carrión, 2015; Chang, 2016). For instance, by using interactive video facilities for classroom activities, students might gain deeper understanding of the material (Gautam & Tiwari, 2016). This enables students to reply to online activities right away. Additionally, it has been shown that e-learning platforms improved teacher-student contact. Learning Content Management System (LCMS), Learning Support System (LSS), Learning Design System (LDS), and Learning Management System (LMS) are the four common types of e-learning systems that have been developed (Islam, Beer & Slack, 2015). To name a few, some professors employ Zoom, YouTube, and WhatsApp to enhance teaching and learning. Universities have made investments in ICT infrastructures, management information systems, email access, and library information services as a result of an increase in student enrollment (National Universities Commission, 2023). It is challenging for many institutions to envision and carry out these projects locally. This could be the result of problems with students' negative attitudes toward technology, issues with bandwidth, and the difficulty of an unpredictable electrical supply (Sasu, 2023).

According to Kisanga (2016), attitude is a brain or mental state of readiness that has been organized by experience and that directs or dynamically affects how a person reacts to things and circumstances. An easy and effective technique to explain recurring patterns in behavior is through attitude. Attitude condenses, clarifies, and forecasts behavior (Varshney, 2016). As long as there is an internet connection or other electronic devices that allow e-learning, students can learn regardless of their location, which is an advantage, according to Dhamija (2016). Students viewed e-learning as a more flexible and convenient method of learning since it allowed them to manage their academic endeavors with other responsibilities, according to a study by Al-Fraihat, Joy, and Sinclair (2019).

Teachers, counselors, and other stakeholders are becoming increasingly concerned about the way students feel about online learning (Bertea, 2019). This general concern stems from a number of factors, including the current unstable power supply, unpredictable internet access and connectivity, adaption problems, and the high cost of e-learning devices like laptops and smartphones. In Nigeria, an unstable power supply is a major danger to good teaching and learning. Students' everyday activities are primarily dependent on the availability of electrical power (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2019). However, the majority of students live in rural areas of Nigeria, where there is currently a poor, inconsistent, and unreliable supply of energy (Ikediugwu, 2023).

Due to the recent spike in fuel prices in the nation, the majority of students cannot afford to run generator sets constantly, even though power is essential for the success of online learning. Students' opinions can differ based on how the technology is used, but when looking at it from an optimistic angle, one of them is that it can greatly raise student achievement. Elfaki (2019) found that, in addition to favorable attitudes, there was a substantial difference in learning results between online and traditional learners. Because the learning activities and resources in e-learning affect students' motivation levels and academic achievement, e-learning is significant. Specifically, these e-learning resources can draw students in and establish a personal connection with them, which in turn gives them more self-assurance and a sense of fulfillment when they receive praise or prizes (Kew, 2020). The course work for students benefits from the computer-mediated training.

Sanders and Morrison-Shelter (2015) examined the attitudes of students in an introductory biology course regarding web-enhanced instruction, building on prior research on the subject. The study's conclusions demonstrated that students' attitudes toward online learning are positive. Furthermore, despite the fact that technology use was discouraged, Farooq and Javid (2017) noted that pupils understood the value of the tool. Research conducted by Knowles and Kerkman (2017), Erarslan and Topkaya (2017), and Şen (2018) demonstrated that students exhibited a positive attitude towards online learning. According to Omar, Hassan, and Atan (2017), e-mentoring was predicted in part by the attitude of the learners. According to Elfaki's (2019) research, there was a statistically significant difference between the final examination scores of the students in the e-learning group (experimental) and the traditional group. The attitude of university undergraduates toward e-learning in the research area, Kwara State, has not received much attention. Previous studies' sample sizes were also less than those of the present study, which highlights the necessity of the investigation.

Research Question
1. What are the attitudes of undergraduates towards e-learning in Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses
1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards e-learning in Kwara State on the basis of gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards e-learning in Kwara State on the basis of age.

Methodology
For the study, survey-style descriptive research was used. The design was deemed appropriate since the researchers want to learn about the attitudes of Kwara State undergraduates regarding e-learning by gathering data from a representative sample of these students. Undergraduates in Kwara State comprise served as the study population, while the target population were selected undergraduates in two selected universities in Kwara State (that is, one government and one private university). A sample of 396 undergraduates in Kwara State were used for the study. A researcher-designed questionnaire titled "Attitude Towards E-learning Scale" (ATES) was adopted for this study a combination of inferential and descriptive statistics were used in the data analysis.

RESULTS
Research Question: What are the attitude of undergraduates towards e-learning in Kwara State?

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Attitude towards E-learning

Item No	As a student:	Positive	Negative
1.	I am interested in studying courses that use e-learning	324 (81.8%)	72 (18.2%)
2.	I think e-learning enhances my learning experiences	354 (89.4%)	42 (10.6%)
3.	e-learning is efficient in bringing more innovation into the teaching and learning process	348 (87.9%)	48 (12.1%)
4.	I intend to utilize e-learning during the semester	282 (71.2%)	114 (28.8%)
5.	I am positive about electronic learning	294 (74.2%)	102 (25.8%)
6.	electronic learning environment makes studying easy for me	306 (77.3%)	90 (22.7%)
7.	I prefer to have courses on the internet, rather than face-to-face (classroom)	251.5%)	192 (48.5%)
8.	e-learning is more convenient for me to carry out my assignment	306 (77.3%)	90 (22.7%)
9.	e-learning is simple to work with	318 (80.3%)	78 (19.7%)
10.	I dislike the idea of using e-learning tools	258 (65.2%)	138 (34.8%)
11.	I prefer e-learning and I believe that it is better than old method of learning	240 (60.6%)	156 (39.4%)
12.	I believe using e-learning will improve the quality of my work	264 (66.7%)	132 (33.3%)

13.	I believe it will be a good idea to use e-learning tools	270 (68.2%)	126 (31.8%)
14.	I have a generally favourable attitude towards using e-learning	288 (72.7%)	108 (27.3%)
15.	e-learning supports individuals' learning styles and needs	276 (69.7%)	120 (30.3%)
	Grand Total	**4332 (72.9)**	**1608 (27.1%)**

Table one presents percentage distribution of respondents' attitude towards e-learning. According to the table, the majority of respondents (72.9%) have a positive attitude toward e-learning because they plan to use it during the semester, are interested in taking courses that use it, believe it enhances their learning experiences, and think it is an effective way to introduce more innovation into the teaching and learning process.

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards e-learning in Kwara State based on gender*

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value showing differences in the Respondents'   Attitude towards E-learning Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Male	138	26.61	2.002	394	4.12*	1.96	.000
Female	258	25.58	2.531				

*Significant, p<0.05

Table two presents the results differences in the attitude of respondents towards e-learning based on gender. Findings show that the mean for male is higher compared to female while the standard deviation was higher in the female at 394 degree of freedom. The calculated t-value was 4.12 and the critical t-value was 1.96, p= .000. Based on the result, there was significant gender difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards e-learning in Kwara State, hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards e-learning in Kwara State based on age*

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing differences in the Respondents' Attitude   towards E-learning Based on Age

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	P-value
Between Groups	15.120	2	7.560	1.30	3.00	.272
Within Groups	2275.426	393	5.790			
Total	2290.545	395				

Table three presents the results of Analysis of Variance on differences in attitude towards e-learning among undergraduates in Kwara State based on age. The findings revealed there was no statistical significant difference in the attitude of the respondents based on age $\{(F_{2,393}) =5.790, P>0.05\}$, this implies the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards e-learning in Kwara State based on age.

Discussion and Recommendations

The results showed that a higher proportion of undergraduates (72.9%) had a favorable attitude toward online learning. This result supports a study by Sanders and Morrison-Shelter (2015) that found students' attitudes regarding online learning are generally positive. In a similar vein, research conducted by Knowles and Kerkman (2017), Erarslan and Topkaya (2017), and Şen (2018) confirmed that students' attitudes regarding online learning were more positive during the final lecture week as compared to the first. According to Kirkwood (2018), students' attitudes toward the use of multimedia technology in online learning were similar. This might be because undergraduates can learn at their own speed and on their own time thanks to e-learning.

The results also showed that undergraduates in Kwara State had significantly different attitudes regarding e-learning depending on their gender. This suggests that respondents' attitudes on e-learning varied for men and women alike. This result contradicts Yang's (2016) study, which found that because online learning is feasible

and offers new learning opportunities, both male and female students had positive sentiments toward it. Khan (2017) discovered that there were no appreciable differences in the attitudes of engineering students, whether they were from rural or urban areas, regarding e-learning. It's possible that variables unrelated to the study's topic contributed to the notable difference found in this investigation.

Despite the age gaps among the respondents, they all had the same views about online learning. This is consistent with a research by Smith (2022) that discovered attitudes of students about e-learning were not significantly predicted by age. The study's findings revealed that students' interest, comfort level, and readiness to interact with e-learning platforms were similar across age groups. According to Johnson and Lee's study from 2021, there were no statistically significant differences in the positive sentiments that younger and older students had about e-learning. This could be because e-learning appeals to students of all ages because it provides flexibility in terms of study schedules and learning environments.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that guidance counsellors should offer gender-sensitive support by tailoring advice and strategies to address the specific challenges faced by male and female students. This could include providing resources to boost self-confidence in using technology, promoting gender-inclusive participation in virtual classrooms, and addressing any gender-specific concerns related to e-learning. The study also recommends that counsellors need to provide age-appropriate guidance, such as helping younger students develop effective time management strategies and assisting older students in building their technological skills. Tailored workshops and advocacy programmes should be initiated in partnership school management and other stakeholders to address the specific needs of different age groups. Counsellors should offer targeted support during transitional periods, helping freshmen adapt to the online learning environment and offering strategies to maintain motivation for upper class men. Group counselling sessions and peer mentoring programmes should be established to create a sense of community and support among students at similar academic levels.

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