

Teaching and Learning Online During Covid-19 Lockdown, Encouraging and Discouraging?: The Perspectives of Students and Staff of Library and Information Science in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract: *The study examined the teaching and learning online during the covid-19 lockdown, in terms of whether it is encouraging or discouraging from the perspectives of students and staff of the Library and Information Science Department in Nigerian universities. Three Library and Information Science(LIS) schools were selected from three different universities. The population was the LIS lecturers and students. FIVE students and FIVE lecturers were selected from each of the three Library schools. This gave a total of 15 students and 15 lecturers which amounts to a total of 30 respondents who represent the sample for the study. A pure qualitative method was adopted using focus group interviews which were conducted for the students and the staff in each of the schools as a method of data collection. The findings show that the experience of lecturers and students in learning and teaching online during the Covid-19 lockdown was encouraging, the lesson is very easy to prepare and interesting and the learners are enthusiastic and wanted others to know they were part of the class. The respondents want learning and teaching online to continue due to its flexibility, interesting nature of teaching online, and a high percentage of participation. The benefits of teaching and learning online during Covid-19 include flexibility, ease of learning and teaching, increased interactivity and class participation, social presence, improvement in critical thinking skills, and high engagement of lecturers and students. The challenges of learning and teaching LIS during Covid-19 are slow bandwidth, poor network, cost of data (lecturers and students bear the cost of data), and unstable electricity, high withdrawal rate, inadequate skills for both lecturers and students due to their first experience, high cost of data and electronic devices among others.*

Keywords: *Library and Information Science, Online teaching and learning, Covid-19
Pandemic, Covid-19 lockdown, Nigeria*

Introduction

The outbreak of Coronavirus towards the end of 2019 in China and the eventual spread of the disease to the whole world is one of the global ugly experiences so far. Activities the world over have been at a standstill and there has been disruption since the outbreak of the deadly coronavirus in the city of Wuhan, Hubei province in China, towards the end of 2019, when a few cases of pneumonia of unknown origin emerged. Beginning in January 2020, many governments of the world have declared lockdown so that people can work from home to reduce the spread of the virus. The educational sector is not left out. Most schools worldwide from primary to the university were officially closed down. Despite this challenging situation, most academic institutions in the world tried to ensure the continuity of the learning process. They have shifted to an online mode of learning, where the students and teachers interact with each other using different kinds of technological tools and techniques.

Like many other nations, Nigeria's higher educational system, which is governed by the NUC, urged all public and private educational institutions to perform all of their teaching and learning activities online until the COVID-19 distribution curve flattened. As a result, institutions in Nigeria have been working hard to switch over to a virtual model for their teaching and learning processes. The majority of them have made the switch to online learning and are members of various online learning platforms. These online learning management systems have been used by teachers to upload their lessons, projects, group assignments, and reading materials. Virtual classes have also been set up using a variety of videoconferencing tools, including Zoom, Google Meet, Google App for Learning, Microsoft Teams, Moodle, and others. Without a question, online education appeared to be the most practical response to this novel circumstance.

SenzaArsendy and George Adam Sukoco (2020) urged teachers to infuse innovation into the classroom. This can be accomplished by employing online classroom management tools and video conferencing apps to carry out learning activities (Lipomi, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2020). (Ng, 2020). From the views of students and teachers, it has not been determined if the offered solutions are negative or good, motivating or discouraging. There are concerns from professors that some of the pupils don't participate and from students that the subjects are not fully understood by them (Purwanto et al., 2020). Online learning cannot replace traditional face-to-face sessions, even though both parties have recognized a variety of grievances and barriers. The Covid-19 protocol which everyone must observe makes physical classes not possible (Djalante et al., 2020).

Statement of the Research Problem

Amid the global Coronavirus lockdown and social distancing, most schools moved to online learning. But there can be a sense of isolation felt by students. It is also a new experience for many teachers and students which can either be encouraging or discouraging. It is in light of this that this study examined teaching and learning online during this period to determine whether the experience of Nigerian Library and Information Science students and academic staff is encouraging or discouraging.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the study was to examine the teaching and learning online during the covid-19 lockdown, in terms of whether it is encouraging or discouraging from the perspectives of students and staff of the Library and Information Science in Nigerian universities. The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the experience of lecturers and students regarding online learning and teaching during the Covid-19 lockdown in terms of whether it was encouraging or discouraging;
2. Find out from the perception of the lecturers and students on their preference for the continuation of teaching and learning online;
3. Identify the benefits of learning and teaching library and information science courses;
4. Identify the challenges encountered by lecturers and the students during teaching and learning online at Covid-19 lockdown.

Research questions

To achieve this, the paper will answer questions such as what is the experience of lecturers and students alike regarding online learning and teaching during Covid-19 lockdown; are the experiences encouraging or discouraging?; can learning and teaching online be continued?; what benefits are associated with learning and teaching library and information science courses online? What challenges were encountered during learning and teaching online during lockdown?

Literature Review

Following the discovery of the first Covid-19 case in the Chinese city of Wuhan, the illness quickly spread to every other region of the world, including Africa, where Nigeria is located. The Covid-19 pandemic's lockdown has had a tremendous impact on every aspect of life, including politics, education, health, the economy, and transportation (Sherman et al, 2020;

Singh and Singh, 2020). The pandemic caused educational institutions to close, and students were forced to adopt new learning methods, such as online and virtual learning, with which they were unfamiliar (Muthuprasad et al. 2021). Although it still seems unusual to many, more and more students are beginning to value and prefer online learning due to its adaptability, simplicity, and accessibility anywhere and at any time (Khan et al., 2021). The findings on whether the learning process is motivating or discouraging from the perspective of the students appear to be mixed, which is unfortunate given the advantages connected with this form of learning. Studies are being performed to examine students' opinions of online classrooms during COVID-19 in many industrialized and developing countries (Agarwal and Kaushik, 2020; Khan et al., 2020; Chick et al., 2020; Ferrel and Ryan, 2020). However, the majority of studies examined COVID-19's effects on schooling independently of other curricula. The results show that developing and industrialized nations have significantly diverse perspectives. While studies have looked at how students perceive themselves in a variety of disciplines, it appears that no specific study has looked at how students in Library and Information Science, particularly those from the African continent, perceive themselves.

It's crucial to comprehend how users perceive an online learning environment to improve its effectiveness. Both favorable and unfavorable student perceptions of online learning have been found in the literature. According to certain research, how an instructor interacts with students significantly affects how students view online learning (Muthuprasad et al., 2021; Rafique et al, 2021; Das et al., 2021). The impacts of online learning have been reported. These include but are not limited to course design consistency (Swan et al. 2000), the ability of student-instructor interaction to foster critical thinking skills and information processing (Hay et al. 2004), and the level of interaction in an online environment (Swan et al. 2000). Hay et al. (2004) added the flexibility of online learning and the degree of instructional emphasis on learning through interaction; the perceived benefits of online learning were recognized by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2002), Kim et al. (2005), social presence (Kim et al. 2005), academic self-concept (Lim et al., 2007), and technological competency requirements (Wagner et al., 2000).

So, according to Sun and Chen (2016), an effective online course requires well-structured course material, qualified teachers, cutting-edge technology, feedback, and directions that are crystal clear (Gilbert, 2015). However, the literature also discussed many online learning's shortcomings. Lack of community and/or feelings of isolation, Woods', (2002); Vonderwell (2003); difficulties collaborating with classmates, technical issues Piccoli et al.(2001); Song et al.(2004), issues related to instructor (Muilenburg& Berge, 2005), higher student attrition rates (Frankola (2001); Ryan (2001); delayed responses, Vonderwell (2003); skepticism of their peers' supposed expertise, Petrides (2002); Laine (2003), the need for greater discipline, writing skills, and self-motivation; and the need for online users to make a time commitment to learning (Serwatka (2003) are considered to be barriers or weaknesses of online learning.

There are analogous studies documented in the literature on learning and teaching online under the Covid-19 lockout. Through an online survey of 307 students, Muthuprasad, Aiswarya, Aditya, and Jha (2021) sought to explore how agricultural students perceived and preferred online learning. We also looked at what characteristics of online classes students preferred, which will help us create a successful learning environment there. According to the data, the majority of responders (70 percent) are prepared to choose online classes to handle the curriculum during this epidemic. The vast majority of pupils favored using their smartphones for online learning. We discovered through content analysis that students prefer recorded classes with a quiz after each lesson to increase learning efficacy. According to the students, while internet connectivity challenges in rural locations make it difficult for students to take advantage of online learning programs, the flexibility and convenience of online classes make them an appealing option. The insights from this article can help build the curriculum for the new normal in agricultural education systems, where switching totally to online mode may not be practicable and a hybrid model will need to be devised.

During the COVID-19 epidemic, Rafique, Mahmood, Warraich, and Rehman (2021) assessed the perceived readiness for online learning (OLR) of LIS (Library and Information Sciences) and IM (Information Management) students in Pakistan. Data from 340 LIS students from nine public sector universities in Pakistan were gathered quantitatively using a survey method and an online questionnaire. SPSS and AMOS were used to analyze the data that had been gathered. The results showed that during the COVID-19 epidemic, LIS students' decisions about their online educational activities were not fully individualized or successful. However, they were inspired to study through online courses and felt competent in using the internet and computers in general. Based on the respondents' gender, there was a substantial difference in perceptions of "computer/internet self-efficacy" and "online communication self-efficacy." Students from various degree levels also indicated significantly varied self-efficacy and learning motivation when using computers, the internet, and online communication. Additionally, it was shown that respondents' ages and academic standing were excellent indicators of their OLR. For library schools, universities, and faculty members in Pakistan, these findings would be useful in enhancing the standard of online education and putting in place precise norms and procedures. Based on the findings, this study offers some theoretical and practical implications.

Based on a telephone poll of 200 public university students in Bangladesh, Das, Hossain, and Akter (2021) investigated how students perceived taking classes online during the COVID-19 epidemic. According to the estimation of the ordered probity model, factors such as gender, place of residence, amount of money spent on online classes, academic standing, and internet issues, as well as whether or not students view online classes as a viable alternative and whether or not teachers are qualified, have a significant impact on how students view them. Students who have poorer facilities, such as poor internet, rural locations, teachers who lack

proper training, and smaller expenditures (due to poor economic standing), tend to have a negative opinion of online classes. Along with having lower grades, these students also tend to have very negative attitudes toward online learning and female classmates.

The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic and students' learning preferences from the Department of Biology Education during the COVID-19 pandemic were investigated by Surahman, Meylani, and Amarulloh -Palarch (2020). The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was used in conjunction with the Google Form software as the applied data collection technique. Additionally, the form-filling period ran from March 21 to April 15, 2020. The population of this study consisted of 107 first-year students from the Department of Biology Education who were enrolled in the Biophysics Course. Because the chosen samples were not homogeneous from a gender standpoint, samples were chosen using the purposive sampling technique. Ten respondents made up the samples. The Super Decision program was used to do the applied data analysis, which was the AHP represented as the geometric mean (geomean). Additionally, Kendall's concordance was used as the applicable data analysis to examine the relationship between the criteria. The analysis's findings showed that respondents strongly agreed with the relationship between the criteria. Additionally, during the COVID-19 epidemic, personal health was the most favoured preference criterion to be used in the learning process, both for the online and offline learning processes.

The efficiency of synchronized online learning was investigated by Khalil et al. (2020) at the Unaizah College of Medicine and Medical Sciences, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia. A discussion guide with seven open-ended questions was used to facilitate synchronous virtual focus group talks for a qualitative study. A maximum variation sampling strategy was used to gather a total of 60 medical students, who subsequently took part in eight focus group talks. All interviews were recorded, verbatim transcribable, and subjected to the conventional content analysis framework for thematic analysis. Four main themes emerged from a thematic analysis of the content: (1) the influence of education, (2) time management, (3) obstacles faced, and (4) preferences for the future. All participants acknowledged that online sessions saved time and that their performance had increased because of the better use of their time. However, they also mentioned that they had difficulty with methodological, content perception, technological, and behavioral issues during sessions and online assessments. For the future academic years, the majority of preclinical students favored online instruction. The study concluded that medical students welcomed synchronized online classes. The future of medical education, holds a great deal of promise. The study's conclusions suggested that the principles guiding the online learning model and its learning outcomes be systematically and frequently assessed to monitor its efficacy.

In the undergraduate dentistry study program at the Faculty of Dentistry Universitas Indonesia, Amir et al. (2020) assessed the students' perspectives of DL in comparison to classroom learning (CL). Methods: After the semester, an online survey was distributed. The

study had 301 pupils in total. Student preferences were influenced by the length of the course. Compared to their seniors, more first-year students preferred DL ($p < 0.001$). Students preferred CL over DL for group discussions because DL made communication more challenging and provided a lower level of learning satisfaction. Only 44.2% of students preferred DL over CL, despite agreeing that DL provided a more effective learning approach (52.6%), more time to study (87.9%), and the opportunity to examine study materials (87.3%). Challenges with DL included internal and external variables including time management and trouble focusing while learning online for an extended period. External factors included an inconsistent internet connection and additional financial load for the internet allowance. The study found that, despite certain difficulties, dentistry students could adjust to the new full-time distance learning methods, and that blended learning—which combines classroom and distance learning—could go forward. The present COVID-19 pandemic alters future pedagogy tactics as well as how technology is used in the classroom.

A critical examination of the above-related studies reveals that the focus was on health science students, and agricultural science students but not on library and information science students. It is also evident that most of the studies were conducted in developed nations. Most of the studies focused on preference for online learning during Covid-19 but ignored the aspect of whether the experience was discouraging or encouraging.

Methodology

Three University Library schools were purposively selected in Kwara State, Nigeria. From the three schools, FIVE students and FIVE lecturers were selected from each three Library schools. This gave a total of 15 students and 15 lecturers which amounts to a total of 30 respondents representing the sample for the study. A pure qualitative method was adopted using focus group interviews which were conducted for the students and the staff in each of the schools as a method of data collection. The interview focused on questions relating to capturing data on the focus of the study. Collected data were analysed thematically following the theme and variables in the research questions.

Findings

Experience of lecturers and students regarding online learning and teaching during Covid-19 lockdown in terms of whether it was encouraging or discouraging

To achieve the objective, lecturers and students were asked to indicate their experience regarding learning and teaching online whether it was encouraging or discouraging. The findings of the study revealed that lecturers' experience was encouraging. The lecturers indicated that it was more flexible and easy teaching online than what they initially envisaged.

They added that they were able to carry along those students who are ready and willing to learn. The results also showed that the lecturers were surprised with the number of students that turned up online for the lessons. On the part of the students, the experience was encouraging in the sense that some students were excited and enthusiastic about the development being the first time they were having the opportunity of learning online. The percentage of class participation was high based on excitement and everybody wanted his/her voice to be heard online. Some of the narratives of a lecturer and a student from the first focus group discussion read thus:

Lecturer A from University 1: *“very good and nice experience I must say. I have never taught online before, this is my first experience and it has been so wonderful. The teaching is very interesting. The lesson is easy to prepare and present”*.

Student A from University 1: *“The experience is fantastic. I felt so good during the period, it was very interesting. Seeing what is being taught on the screen with illustration enhances my learning and understanding; at the same time participants want to showcase themselves. You will always want other members of the class to see to show that you are in class”*

This implies, summarily, that the experience was encouraging, the lesson is very easy to prepare and interesting and the learners are enthusiastic and want others to know they are part of the class.

Perception of the lecturers and students on their preference for the continuation of learning and teaching online

On the continuity of online teaching and learning, the respondents were asked to indicate their preference for the continuation of teaching and learning online. The findings show that both the lecturers and the students indicated that the teaching and learning online should continue considering the flexibility, willingness and high percentage of class participation and the opportunity of being part of the class irrespective of location. Some narratives in support of this read as follows:

Lecturer B from University 2: *“Honestly, I want the lesson to continue....I will always like to teach online based on the flexibility of the platform”*.

Student B from University 2: *“The high percentage in-class participation is enormous. Therefore, it will be my joy if we can continue learning online”*

This implies that respondents want teaching and learning online to continue due to its flexibility, willingness, and a high percentage of participation.

Benefits of learning and teaching library and information science courses

To achieve this objective, respondents were asked to indicate the benefits they perceive associated with learning and teaching online during Covid-19. According to the findings, among the benefits identified associated with teaching and learning library and information science courses online are flexibility, ease of teaching and learning, and participation on the part of learners, as well as the ability to follow the class regardless of location.

Lecturer C from University 3: *“I can see many benefits. Ranging from flexibility, I have the opportunity to teach from anywhere so far I am connected”*.

Lecturers D and E from university 3 also share similar opinions pointing out that *“there is high-level interactivity which improvement in critical thinking and high engagement of teachers and peers”*.

Students C from University 3: *“I cherish the social presence, feeling of belonging which increases class participation, and ease of learning and teaching on the part of the lecturers and the students”*

This implies that the benefits of teaching and learning online during Covid-19 include flexibility, ease of learning and teaching, increase interactivity and class participation, social presence, improvement in critical thinking skills, and high engagement of lecturers and students.

Challenges encountered by lecturers and the students during teaching and learning online at Covid-19 lockdown

The respondents were asked about the challenges associated with teaching and learning LIS courses online during Covid-19. The findings revealed slow bandwidth, poor network, cost of data (lecturers and students bear the cost of data), unstable electricity, only the participants with properly charged devices have the opportunity to follow the class, inadequate skills on behalf of some lecturers and students to teaching and learning online, high cost of data, etc. Some narratives in support of the findings show that:

Lecturer A from University 1: *“Teaching and Learning are good however, there are associated challenges. The one that first comes to my mind is typical of Nigeria's situation. That is an incessant power failure. The devices used for online teaching use electricity. In the absence of electricity, online learning cannot hold”*

Lecturer C from University 2: *“it is good but some learners are extremely isolated. These are the ones in the rural areas (grassroots). If at all they want to follow the class, there is no network and without network, connectivity becomes impossible”*.

Lecturer D from University 3: *“Many challenges on the part of lecturers and students. Some lecturers and students are having the experience for the first. Therefore, the skills to learn and teach online are not there. We all gamble at the first instance”*.

Lecturer B from University 1: *“there is the lack of immediate feedback, lack of opportunity to work together, lack of opportunity to work as a team or in collaboration and high withdrawal rate due to inability to afford data, inadequate skills, inadequate finance to acquire electronic devices and the likes”*

The result implies that challenges of teaching and learning LIS during Covid-19 are slow bandwidth, poor network, cost of data (lecturers and students bear the cost of data), and unstable electricity, high withdrawal rate, inadequate skills for both lecturers and students due their first experience, high cost of data and electronic devices among others.

Discussion

The experience of both the lecturers and students regarding learning and teaching LIS courses online during Covid-19 was encouraging, the lesson was very easy to prepare and interesting and the learners are enthusiastic and wanted others to know they were part of the class. Understandably, anything people find so interesting usually encourages them to associate with it. This is the case in this study. Literature has also documented both favourable and unfavourable perceptions by students of online learning. Researchers have indicated that the instructor’s interaction with students has a considerable impact on the student’s perceptions of online learning (Muthuprasad et al., 2021; Rafique et al, 2021).

The respondents want teaching and learning online to continue due to its flexibility, interesting nature of teaching online, and a high percentage of participation. This finding aligns with Das et al. (2021) report that consideration of online classes is a good alternative. Similarly, Muthuprasad, Aiswarya, Aditya, and Jha, (2021) report about the majority of respondents' demonstration of readiness to opt for online teaching and learning supports this current finding. The students opined that the flexibility and convenience of online classes make it an attractive option. So also, the current finding corroborates the report by Rafique, Mahmood, Warraich, and Rehman (2021) which indicate that respondents in their study were motivated to learn through online learning and felt confident in performing basic functions of computers and the internet and did mind if the class continues.

The benefits of learning and teaching online during Covid-19 include flexibility, ease of learning and teaching, increase interactivity and class participation, social presence, improvement in critical thinking skills, and high engagement of lecturers and students. Earlier studies have identified the impacts of benefits of online learning and teaching to include the capability of the interaction with course instructors to promote critical thinking ability and information processing, increase the rate of interactivity in the online setting, the

extent of instructional emphasis on learning through interaction, the flexibility of online learning, chances of engaging with teachers and peers in online learning settings (Hay et al. (2004; National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2002; Kim et al., 2005) all of which lend good support to the current finding. The result by Khalil et al (2021) also buttresses the current finding by pointing out that the respondents in their study welcome online learning and teaching modality and they all agreed that online sessions were time-saving and that their performance was improved due to enhanced utility of time.

The challenges of teaching and learning LIS during Covid-19 are slow bandwidth, poor network, cost of data (lecturers and students bear the cost of data), and unstable electricity, high withdrawal rate, inadequate skills for both lecturers and students due to their first experience, high cost of data and electronic devices among others. The finding is in support of the weaknesses identified as related to online learning which include delay in responses, Vonderwell (2003), skepticism of users' supposed expertise, Petrides (2002); lack of a sense of community and/or feelings of isolation, Lin and Zane, (2005); problems in collaborating with the classmates, technical problems, Song et al. (2004), issues related to instructor (Mullenburg & Berge, 2005) and higher student attrition rates (Frankola (2001). In addition, the finding supports the report by Muthuprasad, Aiswarya, Aditya, and Jha, (2021) who revealed that broadband connectivity issues in rural areas make it a challenge for students to make use of online learning initiatives. Furthermore, Khalil et al (2021) identified challenges such as methodological, content perception, technical, and behavioral challenges during sessions and online exams; and Amir et al 2020 identification of external factors such as unstable internet connection, the extra financial burden for the internet quota and internal factors such as time management and difficulty to focus while learning online for a longer period are all in support of the current finding in this study.

Conclusion

The study's goal was to look at whether teaching and learning online during the COVID-19 lockdown is encouraging or discouraging from the perspective of students and faculty in library and information science at Nigerian universities. The study concluded that the experience was encouraging, the lesson is very easy to prepare and interesting and the learners are enthusiastic and wanted others to know they are part of the class. The respondents want learning and teaching online to continue due to its flexibility, interesting nature of teaching online, and a high percentage of participation. The benefits of learning teaching online during Covid-19 include flexibility, ease of learning and teaching, increased interactivity and class participation, social presence, improvement in critical thinking skills, and high engagement of lecturers and students. The challenges of learning and teaching LIS during Covid-19 are slow bandwidth, poor network, cost of data (lecturers and students bear the cost of data), and unstable electricity, high withdrawal rate, inadequate skills for both

lecturers and students due to their first experience, high cost of data and electronic devices among others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made for the improvement of learning and teaching LIS online. Since the study demonstrated that learning and teaching of LIS courses during the Covid-19 lockdown was encouraging, the LIS schools involved in the study should encourage the act to continue. Doing so will continually improve the act and will serve as a good complement to physical learning and teaching.

It is important that the LIS schools involved in the study should consider increasing the bandwidth, network, and alternative source of power, and organise training for the staff and students to develop additional skills for learning and teaching online. In addition, it is important to consider subsidising data and make the learning and teaching a bit more interesting to reduce the withdrawal rate, particularly on the part of the students.

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