Vol. 7(1), pp. 14-19, June 2022
ISSN: 2026-8009

www.ium.edu.na/njms

NJMS
NAMIBIA JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

Research Paper

STUDENTS PERCEPTIONS TOWARD ONLINE LEARNING DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN AT NKURENKURU CAMPUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT (IUM), NAMIBIA

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ABSTRACT
This study intended to analyze IUM Nkurenkuru student's perceptions on the use of e-learning during the covid-19 lockdown. The study employed a quantitative methodology whose data was collected from a sample of 115 respondents, using the Google form which was sent to students via WhatsApp application. Probabilities value was used to analyze how students' confidence influence e-learning use by the students. The findings indicated that WhatsApp and learning management system (LMS) platforms were the most used by students to access educational materials and tutorials. Students faced more challenges using e-learning. The study concluded that the education sector, ICT sector, community, and other education stakeholders should corroborate to enhance and encourage online learning to achieve successful online learning.
Keywords: Covid-19 lockdown, e-learning; e-learning platforms, Pandemic,

INTRODUCTION
Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which is caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome-Corona Virus-2 (SARS-CoV-2), which was first isolated and genotyped from respiratory samples collected from patients in the city of Wuhan (China) after an outbreak of non-identified etiologic pneumonia in December 2019 (Farfán-Cano, 2020). Many countries in the world have put in place measures to prevent the virus from spreading by implementing lockdowns, curfews and reducing the number of people gatherings. During the lockdown, all the movements were restricted; the non-essential businesses were closed, including schools, sports events, religious gatherings, and all kinds of travels. Educational institutions had to operate their pedagogy through e-learning platforms (Sapkota, 2020). E-learning makes use of internet connection, digital devices (computers and smartphones) as well as software applications. Its delivery methods include online live lessons, uploaded tutorial notes and resources, online quizzes and other activities (Ngampornchai & Adams, 2016). E-learning is not new terminology, but COVID-19 exposed its importance and its relevance to help lecturers and students to facilitate teaching and learning during and after the pandemic in an interactive way (Almaiah, Al-Khasawneh & Althunibat, 2020).

The International University of Management (IUM) implemented a Learning Management System (LMS) to facilitate online teaching. LMS integrates student's assignments, forums, quizzes, and live and recorded tutorials through the BigBlue button. Lecturers upload teaching materials and student's assignments on the LMS. Other platforms such as Zoom meetings and Google hangout were used for live lessons. Emails and WhatsApp were used for communication and YouTube for all the recorded lessons. To access e-learning, resources such as smartphones, laptops, internet accessibility, and software applications are needed by students and lecturers (Sapkota, 2020).

The pandemic had a big impact on university students' academic work, especially switching from face-to-face to online learning, the closing of libraries, the change in communication channels between students and their lecturers (Aristovnik, 2020). There was lots of fear, anxiety, frustration, and consciousness among students and lecturers regarding COVID 19 (Shenoy, Mahendra & Vijay, 2020). Students were satisfied with the overall shift into the e-learning environment and the new

successful procedures of virtual problem based learning (PBL) sessions according to Aristovnik (2020).

Studying from home requires greater self-discipline and motivation to follow through with online lessons (Aristovnik, 2020) and students find it so difficult to discipline themselves. Students who are living in remote and rural areas are challenged by poor internet access, managing electronic devices, and a lack of electricity (Aristovnik, 2020; Sapkota, 2020). The main purpose of this study was to analyse IUM Nkurenkuru student's perceptions of the use of e-learning during the covid-19 lockdown. In doing so, the study identified the types of e-learning platforms students used most to access their academic materials, describe the factors that contributed to the students' choice of e-learning platforms during COVID-19 lockdown. Furthermore, the study examined challenges faced by students when using e-learning during the Covid-19 lockdown.

METHODOLOGY

This study focused on analyzing university students' perception of online learning during the Covid 19 pandemic emergency lockdown. In the year 2020, 900 students (new and continuing) enrolled in different courses at IUM Nkurenkuru. The population of this study was students who were studying at the IUM Nkurenkuru campus during the lockdown. Because of the social distance due to COVID-19, a convenient sampling method was used to select participants. The study applied Slovin's formula (n=N/1+Ne2) to arrive at the sample size of 167, with an error margin of 7%. An online Questionnaire link, designed with Google form, was sent to students through the WhatsApp application. Out of 167 students in the study, only 159 filed the forms of which 4 were rejected for their incomplete responses. Hence, only 115 forms which were completed (93% response rate) were used for the analysis.

Data was analyzed for the frequencies trends and probability values. A frequency trend was used to establish the perception and the use of e-learning platforms by students. The probability value was used to analyze the relationship between student's confidence in e-learning and recommendation for E-learning use.

RESULTS

Socio-Demographic characteristics

Characteristics that were used to describe the participants were the age, gender, level of study, and the courses they were studying, the type of study as well as the area in which they were residing during the lockdown period. Data presented in Table 1 indicated that the majority of the respondents 60 (52.2%) were in the age range of 20-24 while 8 (7%). Majority (65%) were females. When this study was conducted, 69 (60%) of the participants were residing in rural areas and 46 (40%) were in the urban area.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic characteristics of respondents (N=115).

Characteristics	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
under 20	8	7
20 - 24	60	52.2
25 - 30	40	34.8
over 30	7	6
Mean	24	
Gender		
Male	40	35
Female	75	65
Residence		
Urban area	46	40
Rural area	69	60

Most of the participants of 75.4% were enrolled in education, 7.9% were enrolled in Finance Management, 6.1% were enrolled in Business Information Systems, 5.3% were enrolled in Human Resource Management, 4.4% were doing Business Administration and 0.9% were enrolled in short course (Table 2). Majorities (63.3%) of participants were in their 1st year of study, 32.5% were in their 2nd year, 9.6% were in their 3rd year and 3% were in their year 4 of study. Furthermore, 95.7% of the respondents were enrolled in the full time mode of study and 4.3% were enrolled in part-time mode of study.

Table 2: Courses enrolled by participants (n=115).

Course enrolled	Frequency (n)	%
Education	86	75.4
Business Information Systems	7	6.1
Business Administration	5	4.4
Human Resource Management	6	5.3
Finance Management	9	7.9
Short courses	1	0.9

Factors affecting e-learning during the lockdown

a) Devices used to access E-learning

Respondents were asked to indicate the types of devices they used to access e-learning during the pandemic lockdown, 72% indicated that they used smartphones only, 25% of respondents accessed e-learning on both smartphones and computers, the least, 3%, of the respondents used only computers.

b) e-learning platforms data

WhatsApp was the most popular e-learning platform (67%) followed by IUM Learning Management system (39.1%), while google hangout was the least popular platform (1.7%) (Figure 1).

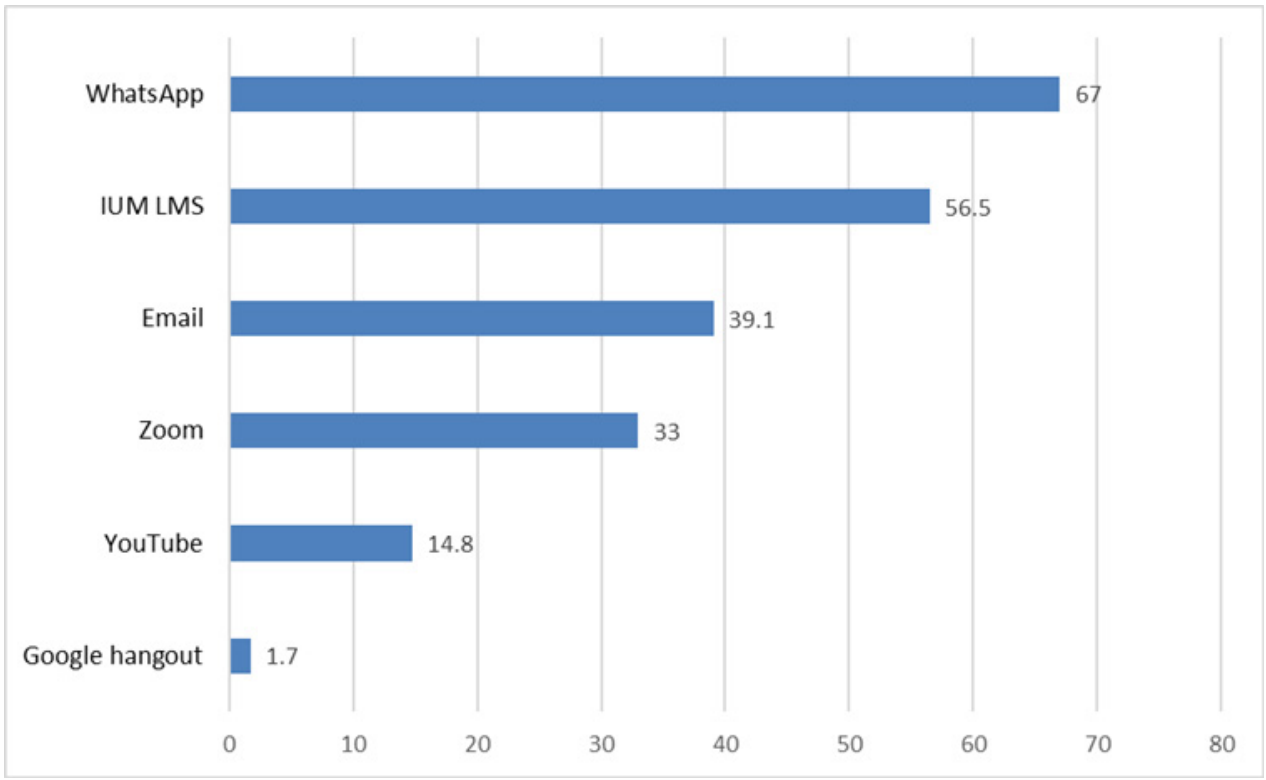

Figure 1: e-learning platforms (%) preferred by the respondents during lockdown

c) Reasons for using E-learning platforms during the pandemic lockdown data

Most of the respondents (58%) preferred using WhatsApp, 16% E-mails, 12% Zoom Meetings, 11% respondents IUM LMS, 2% YouTube and only 1% preferred Google Hangout (Figure 2). The various reasons for preferring a certain platform over others are presented in Figure 2.

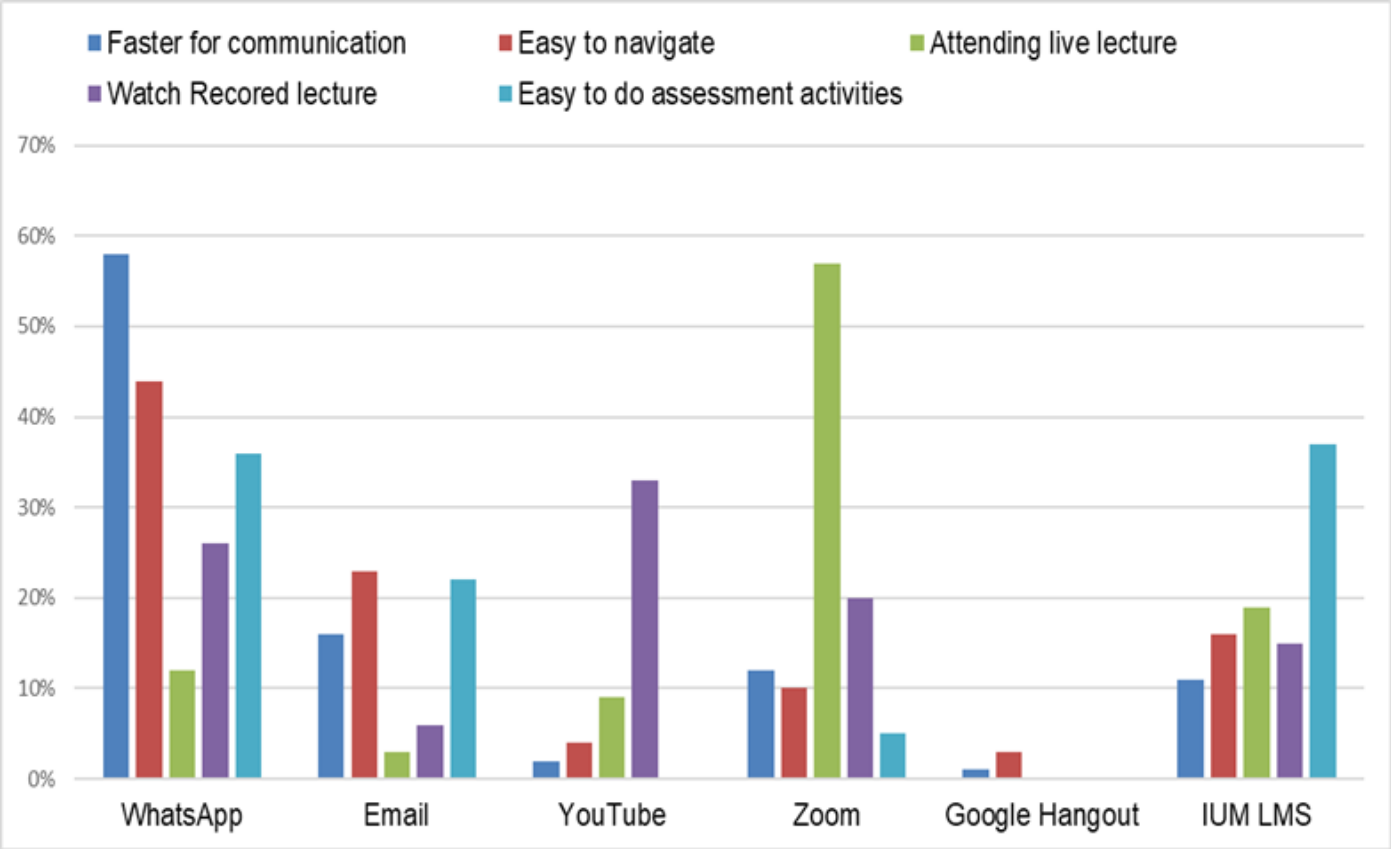

Figure 2: Reasons respondents preferred e-learning during lockdown.

d) Benefits and Challenges experienced when using e-learning data

Students have experienced have reported some benefits when they used e-learning. Majority of the respondents (84%) indicated that they developed and increased their IT skills, 41 (36%) of respondents indicated that it was an effective way of learning, 26 (22.6%) of respondents pointed out that it was flexible using e-learning (table 2). Some respondents faced challenges when using e-learning during the lockdown of which 71% had no access to the internet, 54.9% reported that it was expensive to use e-learning, 31% were stressed due to e-learning and 17.7% said that they did not have skills to use e-learning (Table 3).

Table 3: Benefits and Challenges experienced when using e-learning

Benefits experienced	**Frequency(n)**	**%**
Flexible	26	22.8
Enjoyable	20	17
Develop and increase IT skills	96	84.2
Cheaper	3	2.6
An effective way of learning	41	36
Challenges experienced		
Stressed due to E-learning	35	31
Lack of devices to access the e-learning	40	35.4
No Access to the Internet	81	71.7
Lack of Skills	20	17.7
Expensive	62	54.9

e) Confidence in the use of e-learning platforms

Of the respondents, 53% have confidence in the use of e-learning and 73% would recommend its use. Respondents were asked to state what should be done to enhance e-learning for students. Most of the respondents (44%) said that students must be provided with internet access gadgets such as pocket Wi-Fi devices. Another 25% wants to be provided with electronic devices such as laptops and smartphones where they could access e-learning platforms. Adequate training on the use of the e-learning platforms should be provided to students, especially the first year students and well as lecturers, said 14% respondents (Table 4). Network connection and inadequate electricity in rural areas have affected some respondents, 14% of the respondents said that the government could upgrade the network connection and supply electricity to the whole country. They believed that even if they may be provided with gadgets with no network and electricity still e-learning would not be accessed. Another 5% of respondents feel that funds should be given to students to assist themselves during the lockdown.

Table 4: Suggested improvement by the respondents (n=115).

Improvements	Frequency	Percentages (%)
To be provided with Internet access devices	50	44
To be provided with electronics devices (laptops and smartphones)	25	21
To be provided with e-learning platforms training	18	16
Rural areas to be provided with network and electricity	16	14
To be provided with funds	6	5

DISCUSSIONS

In this study, 71.1% used smartphones to access educational materials from e-learning platforms during the Covid-19 lockdown. Students prefer smartphones for e-learning because they are easy to carry around with they can fit in their pockets (Tuncay, 2016), as well as their multi-functionality, such as taking pictures, texting and making calls. The successful usage of E-learning platforms by students depends on how it was introduced and on how they adapt and embed technology into their learning activities (Moreno, Cavazotte & Alves, 2016). During the COVID-19 national lockdown in Namibia, the majority of the respondents 76 (67 %) from the study indicated that they preferred using WhatsApp for instant communication. Among the e-learning platforms, WhatsApp was the most considered and preferred by students during the lockdown. Indeed students would prefer WhatsApp because of its positive aspects such as increasing social interaction between student-student as well as student-lecturer (Cetinkaya, 2017), sharing of academic materials and information anywhere anytime. WhatsApp is more of the reason why students would prefer smartphones to access e-learning. To attend live lessons and to do assessment activities majority of students from the study preferred using IUM LMS. Some students would miss the live lecture, for some reason. In case students miss a live lecture majority of students indicated that they preferred YouTube to want re-recorded lectures.

Online and e-learning software have imposed many challenges to students during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown (Almaiah, Al-Khasawneh & Althunibat, 2020) especially to new students who were just being introduced to online learning and those that were from rural areas where the internet network connections and electricity were extra burden. From the findings of this study, 63.3% of students were in their first year of study at the university of which 97.7% of students were residing in rural areas during the national lockdown. Those are the reason why most of the respondents (71.7%) indicated that the main challenge they faced during online learning was internet connection and 62 (54.9%) felt it was expensive to do online learning during the pandemic. The COVID-19 cases are still on the rise, and many regulations, such as reduced number of gatherings and lockdowns are being implemented in some places. As long as those regulations are in place, the education system will not go back to how it used to be. Online learning will continue even after the pandemic.

Online learning has to be encouraged by educators and students. To enhance the smooth operation of online learning, education institutes needs to provide students with necessary training at all levels, from pre-primary learn to tertiary students, both in rural and urban areas. There is also a strong need of Cyber hubs with appropriate technology across the country to enhance access to internet services. The hubs will be used by students in rural communities to access and use e-learning.

CONCLUSIONS

The Education sector has changed drastically due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 brought a new normal which every university has to adopt e-learning as a way to teaching and learning and, the success of e-learning depends on the factors such as online platforms, internet connections, devices to access online platforms, and Information Communication Technology (ICT) knowledge. Therefore, students must be equipped with IT skills and ICT tools to accessed educational materials online. The education sector, ICT sector, community, and education stockholders must then corroborate to enhance and encourage online learning to archive successful online learning.

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