GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

FACULTY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ONLINE LEARNING AND ITS IMPACT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

BY

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

NOVEMBER 2021

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation of this dissertation was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of dissertations as laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

(Supervisor's signature)

DR. ALBERT- JAMES TAYMAN

DATE: … NOVEMBER 2021

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the work presented is the result of my own effort, original research, and findings and that no part of it has been presented for another degree or diploma in this University or elsewhere. All references to other people's work have been duly acknowledged. I am therefore to be held responsible for any error that might be detected in this project work.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God, my mother for her selfless support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I appreciate my supervisor Dr. Albert- James Tayman who has provided immense support in ensuring my work had the right builds and inputs. I wish to thank all staff members of the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) for their unyielding love and support.

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List of Abbreviations

CA	Communication Apprehension
FB	Facebook
GIJ	Ghana Institute of Journalism
ICT	information and communication technology
NUGS	National Union of Ghana Students
OUT	Open University of Tanzania
SNSs	Social Networking Sites
TDLT	Transactional Distance Learning Theory
WHO	world health organization

Abstract

In Ghana, following the onslaught of the novel corona virus, the president called for an immediate shutting down all schools in March 2020, the Ministry of Education was tasked to roll out distance learning programs to aid in continuation of the academic calendar academic institutions such as GIG rolled out online learning programs. This study aims to explore whether online learning influences communication between instructors and students. To achieve this objective the views of 150 students of GIJ was sought via a closed ended questionnaire using the simple random sampling method. Respondents view on statement that they always have access to course lecturers because of online learning showed respondents were neutral or undecided as to the extent to which virtual learning affects their ability to relate with their course lecture (Mean = 2.92, SD = 1.344). concerning the extent to which online learning has improved their ability to understand topics responses showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 2.846, SD = 1.384). Finally, most students rate the online learning system of the school as average or poor. This is a rating based on student perception and does not necessarily take into consideration details about the functionality or construction. The study concludes that online education has become the new way of learning and hence the institution must endeavor to harness its full potential. It was recommended that GIJ may need to consider having more physical sessions or classes so that people who are unable to obtain stable internet connections or get proper devices for the online calls can participate in the classes. Also, the online learning system of schools must be continually worked on to improve its functionality so that students can increasingly rely on the system for smooth communication with faculty and administration on academic issues. Finally, schools must also include ICT teaching and practice in their curriculum for all students, given that the success of students on such a system depends on their ability to learn and adopt new technologies and systems.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Education is often defined as the one key which can help an individual deal with any issue or problem that one could face throughout his or her life. However, in the last couple of years, it has been observed that there has been a tremendous increase in terms of getting high-quality higher education (Adnan, & Anwar, 2020). This has led to the popularity of other systems of education or learning. One such system of learning is online education or online classroom. It is an undeniable fact that there are many benefits which students can get by opting for online education or online classroom. However, there are also different challenges which are faced by students while trying to study in an online classroom (Schrum, 2019).

Communication especially in the education sector needs to be studied as communication between instructors and students to improve the learning experience and to create a positive setup (Karademir, Yaman, &Saatçioğlu, 2020). Communication is simply the transfer of information from one person to another, or group to another. Effective communication is a process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, knowledge, and information in such a way as to fulfil the purpose or intent in the best possible way. In other terms, it is nothing more than the sender's expression of views in a way that the recipient understands best.

According to Ali (2020) the aim of online communication is the same as that of face-to-face communications: bonding; exchanging information; being heard and being understood. Fostering a sense of community in online classes will make the students' learning experience more meaningful and it can help them stay connected during the course life. When instructors communicate with students, whether in a face-to-face class or an online class, they communicate for the purpose of offering knowledge or having information to gain understanding and develop relationships.

It was reiterated by Saqlain, Munir, Ahmed, Tahir, & Kamran (2020) that communicating with students in an online environment requires a little more thought and planning than communicating with students in the traditional environment because the online environment lacks body language. Instructors have the advantage of using body language and facial expression in a face-to-face class to help them connect and get their message across to their students. Saqlain et al., (2020) noted that when interacting in an online class, instructors do not have the advantage of using body language to help their students communicate. Knowledge of communication weaknesses within online environments can help them decide how to establish timely and appropriate communications, and how to interact effectively with their online students.

1.2 Problem statement

With the COVID-19 -a novel corona virus disease spreading across the globe, many countries have ordered closure of all educational institutes. Educational institutions have come to a functional standstill since they had to protect their students from viral exposures, which are likely in a highly socializing student community. In the beginning of February 2020, schools only in China and a few other affected countries were closed due to the proliferating contamination. However, by mid-March, nearly 75 countries have implemented or announced closure of educational institutions. As on 10th March, school and university closures globally due to the COVID-19 has left one in five students out of school.

According to UNESCO, by the end of April 2020,186 countries have implemented nationwide closures, affecting about 73.8% of the total enrolled learners (UNESCO, 2020). Even though the lockdown and social distancing are the only ways to slowdown the spread of the COVID-19 by breaking the chain of transmission, closure of educational institutions has affected large number of students.

In Ghana, following the onslaught of the novel corona virus, the president called for an immediate shutting down all schools in March 2020, the Ministry of Education was tasked to roll out distance learning programmes (Arhinful, 2020). However, most tertiary institutions including the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) were perplexed concerning the directive (Ababio, 2020; Anyorigya, 2020; NUGS, 2020). Hence, they were lagging in implementing the shift from on-campus learning to virtual or online learning due to the lack of a comprehensive plan or framework.

Whilst some researchers (Serhan, 2020; Paudel, 2021) have hailed the adoption of online education as being effective especially post the pandemic others (Nguyen, 2015; Aristovnik et al., 2020; Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020) have argued against it stating it is less effective as compared with the traditional face to face approach

1.3 Research Objective

1.3.1 General Objective

This study aims to explore whether online learning influences communication between instructors and students. As well as to evaluate and suggest ways of improving effective communication between instructors and students of GIJ in online courses.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

Based on the general objectives the following specific objectives have been designed.

a. Examine student's perception on how it affects their ability to relate with their course lectures

b. Examine student's perception on how it influences their ability to understand topics

c. Examine student's perception on accessibility issues related to online learning at the university.

1.4 Research Questions

In cognizance with the study specific objectives the following research questions have been predesigned.

a. What is the perception of students with regards to how virtual learning affects their ability to relate with their course lectures?

b. What is the perception of students with regards to how virtual learning influences their ability to understand topics?

c. What are the challenges encountered by students whilst accessing online learning platforms instituted the university?

1.5 Significance of the study

The significance of my research topic is cantered on two trajectories. Firstly, it will contribute to the literature on the perceptions students have of online learning. I identified within the research problem that there is an increasing concern of the challenges that are hindering the perception of online learning. Addressing the major challenges worth tackling in the context of Ghana will be of interest to other researchers to also investigate other context as a different developing country.

Secondly, it will contribute towards policy recommendation for stakeholders (tertiary institutions, government, students, teachers etc.) on how to implement and ensure the stable perception of online learning in the context of Ghana. It is hypothesized that the perception of online learning is specific to bespoke situations. Therefore, finding out the underlying student's perception relevant for the Ghana Institute of Journalism

(GIJ) will be of interest to other tertiary institutions to investigate and adopt a modified version specific to their needs. In the end it will help us demystify ourselves from any untruths and myths about this topic because the research will be based on evidence.

1.6 Scope and limitation of study

The study focuses on 150 students and 20 lectures as well as staff members of the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) located within the Greater Accra Region. The major envisaged limitation of the research has to do with lack of co-operation of the heads of departments from the various departments who may not desire to give out information they may consider sensitive.

It is also envisaged that some respondents have hidden some vital information from the researcher just because they felt that their weaknesses are being exposed. Due to that, most of the respondents may dismiss and refuse to grant survey and to answer the questionnaires.

1.8 Organisation of the study

Chapter One discusses the introduction to the study; it includes background of the study, statement of the problem, the research objectives, research question, significance of the study, limitations of the study and organisation of the study. Chapter Two reviews existing relevant literature in the subject area. It captures the various views on the topic under discussion from various business angles and shall seek to answer the set objectives. It shall also highlight authored views on the theme under consideration. This chapter is a

review of theoretical and empirical literature related to the need for efficient training and development in the banking sector.

Chapter Three discusses the research methodology employed for the study. It captures the various methods of data gathering, collation and data analysis technique to be employed in analysing and presenting this theme in the light of set objectives. Chapter Four of the study constitutes the presentation of data gathered, analysis and discussion. Data was analysed and interpreted with respect to the aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter Five constitutes the summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for the study as well as recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

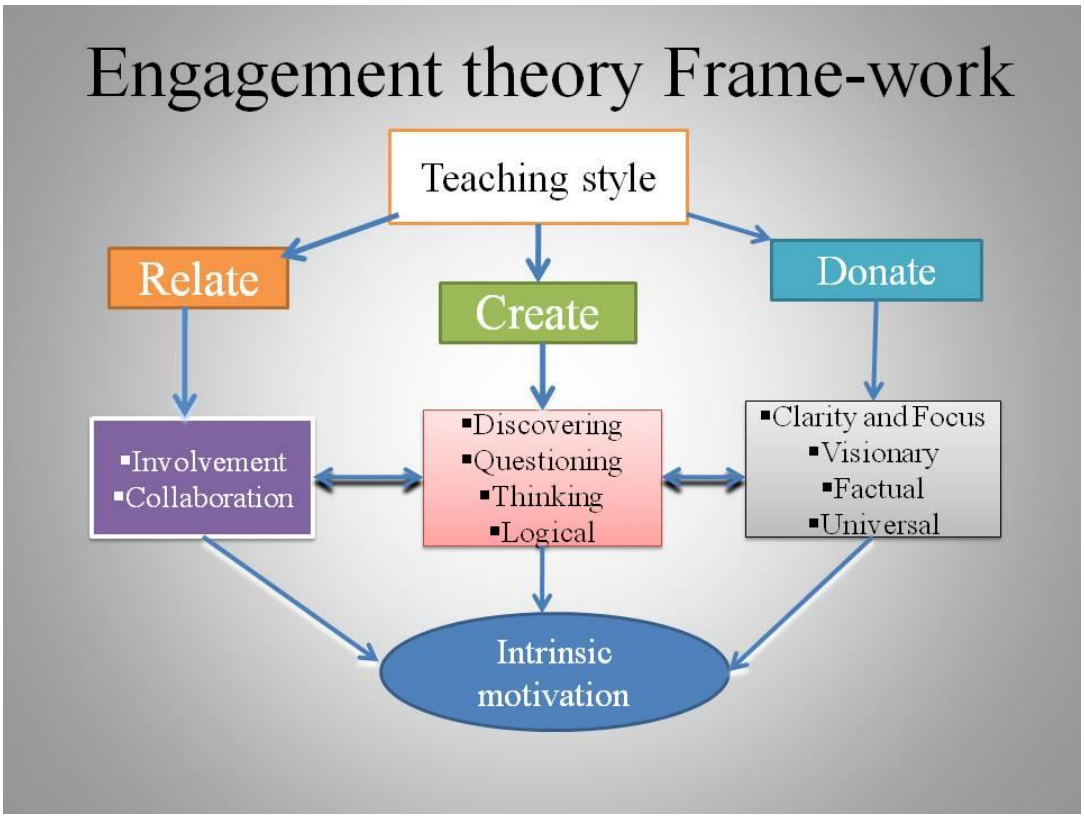
2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore existing theories and literature related to the theme under review. The chapter begins with the theoretical underpinning of the research and delves into the concepts such as communication, online study, and its associated benefits as well as attendant demerits. The chapter concludes by presenting empirical research conducted on the subject.

2.1 Theoretical background

Education is crucial for social and economic change. For students, new information and communication technologies, as well as the development of applications for mobile devices, have brought extraordinary changes not only in education but also in society (Concannon et al., 2005; Gómez- Ramirez et al., 2019). Although there are some studies on the use of social media in education, the research on how they impact students' skills is scarce. With this paper, we aim to fill this gap with the use of engagement theory as the theoretical lens. The engagement theory was introduced to the literature by Kearsley and Shneiderman (1998). The underlying principle of engagement theory is such that to make learning effective, students must be involved or "engaged" in their course of study through meaningful tasks and interaction with others (Tucker & Clarke, 2014).

Fig 2.1: Engagement theory



The engagement theory does not assume the need to support the educational process with the use of technology. However, technology may enable student engagement which could not have otherwise been accomplished. Therefore, it is used as a conceptual framework for technology-based learning and teaching (Pange et al., 2010). According to this theory, to achieve student engagement, three components, linked to learning skills that emerge, are required. „Relate" represents the need for collaboration in learning and development of soft skills. „Create" means that students should be involved in assignments that are project-based, which requires defining problems and conducting original projects. 'Donate" requires learning activities to be taken outside the academic

environment and emphasizes the need for students to actively participate and contribute meaningfully to the wider community while learning (Kearsley &Shneiderman, 1998; Thompson, 2009).

Collaboration and involvement of the students are achieved with the use of communication, planning, management, and social skills, which are integral to working in teams (Tucker & Clarke, 2014). As a result, students engage by working together, seeking input and clarification from each other, motivating each other as well as learning about one another (Kearsley &Shneiderman, 1998). Becoming a part of a successful collaborative team allows students to effectively engage in the learning process and might be found useful in their future professional life. Collaboration is not a new approach in learning. However, historically speaking, students have been taught to work and learn on their own rather than in a team. As Kearsley and Shneiderman (1998) argue, collaborative learning increases students' motivation to learn and gives them the opportunity to work in groups that are often quite diverse in terms of skills and backgrounds. It helps them to get an understanding of diversity and multiple perspectives.

Engagement theory in the computer-based learning environment does promote interaction. However, this interaction is understood as human interaction in the context of group activities, not individual interaction with an instructional program, measured, e.g., with the number of key presses or mouse clicks. Therefore, computers and the internet use are regarded as communication tools in the educational process, and not just a form of media delivery device (Kearsley &Shneiderman, 1998). In this study, we focus on the

online learning approach in education. Therefore, the role of technology in the engagement theory, which is to facilitate all aspects of student engagement, is of particular interest to us. As Kearsley and Shneiderman (1998) stress, "the use of e-mail, online conferencing, Web databases, groupware, and audio/videoconferencing significantly increases the extent and ease of interaction among all participants, as well as access to information". With this paper we intend to provide new insights into the "relate" element of the engagement theory by adding new communications and collaboration tools to the ones mentioned above, namely social media.

As reported by Duggan et al. (2015), in the United States, 71% of FB users are students. FB was launched in 2004 and has become the third most popular global website, after Google.com and YouTube.com (Alexa, 2016). Access to FB is available from various mobile devices, including desktops, laptops, tablets, and smart phones, via the Internet and mobile networks. LinkedIn is a professional Social Networking Sites (SNS) service designed specifically for business professionals. LKND was launched in 2003. It is the world's largest professional network and the most popular global website (Alexa, 2016). LinkedIn aims to enable registered users to establish professional documentation and maintain a network of people they know and trust professionally. Like other social media platforms such as FB and Twitter, LKND can be accessed on various computer devices (Debreceny et al., 2019). LKND is an example of a social networking site used by many students and instructors for academic purposes. Research has shown that 50% of adults with college diplomas, who are online, use LKND (Greenwood et al., 2016).

Some prior research (see among others: D'Aquila et al., 2019; Holmes & Rasmussen, 2018) found that social media are tools used by teachers and students to facilitate education. The rapid exchange of information and knowledge via social networks has significantly changed student learning (Chugh&Ruhi, 2018; Sharabati, 2018). Social media, which include blogs, discussion forums and social networks, have profoundly changed the way students and teachers communicate. With the increasing use of social media, the demand for communication and the exchange of information between people (Aydin, 2012) is growing.

2.2 Communication- An exploration

It is necessary to study communication since every administrative function and operation requires some sort of direct or indirect communication. The school administrators work with and through other individuals, whether planning and organizing or leading and monitoring. This means that the communication skills of each individual affect personal as well as organizational effectiveness (Brun, 2010; Summers, 2010). It seems fair to conclude that lack of effective communication is one of the most inhibiting forces for organizational effectiveness (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010).

Communication can be described as the process of transmitting information and popular understanding from one person to another (Keyton, 2011). The word "communication" was derived from the Latin "communis," meaning "common." Therefore, "communicating" means "making common," "making known" or "sharing" and involves

verbal, non-verbal and electronic means of human interaction (Velentzas and Borni, 2014).

The definition underlines the fact that no communication occurs unless a shared understanding emerges from the exchange of information (Cheney, 2011). This act of making common and known is done by sharing opinions, ideas, or the like. One can have the exchange of thoughts and ideas by gestures, signs, signals, expression, or writing. People are said to be in communication when discussing some subject, when talking on their telephone, or when exchanging information via letters. Communication is essentially the exchange of information, whether written or oral (Velentzas and Borni, 2014).

Furthermore, the communication process also draws from many interpersonal skills. They include talking, listening, watching, interviewing, analyzing, interpretation and evaluation. Message recipients must be able to identify the intent of the sender, consider the context of the message, resolve any misunderstandings, decode the information accurately and decide how to act upon it. Such skills are essential for learning, building healthy relationships, building a sense of community, and gaining workplace success (Velentzas and Borni, 2014).

2.2.1 Effective communication

According to Weast (2008) “great communication skills will add years to your tenure as a successful teacher”. Therefore, effective communication must be a priority not a forgotten thought for great teachers (Hilliard and Newsome, 2013). Effective communication occurs when a desired effect is the result of intentional or unintentional

exchange of information, which is communicated by different individuals and performed in a desired manner. This influence also ensures no distortion of the message during the contact process. Effective communication will achieve the desired effect and uphold the effect, with the potential to improve the message's effect. Therefore, effective communication serves the purpose it was intended or built for. Possible objectives may be to make change, to encourage action, to create awareness, to educate or to convey some idea or perspective. Good communication means talking and listening (Velentzas and Borni, 2014).

To succeed in their career, instructors need outstanding communication skills. Instructors need listening, interpersonal, written, and oral communication skills to promote comprehension of the teaching results and the ability to effectively fulfill their responsibilities. Instructors not only need to carry out technical tasks, they also do need to communicate effectively and efficiently with internal and external customers. Developing effective communication skills is an essential part of the ability for the instructors to succeed. To become a good professional, instructors must possess highly developed levels of communication skills. Developing these skills not only increases the potential of the instructors but will also improve the quality of the teachers created.

Advanced communication skills are important in all aspects of the teaching cycle. Also, instructors must have highly developed oral and writing skills to interact effectively with supervisors, learners, and collaborators. Communication skills are becoming increasingly necessary for success in the organizational environment of our time (Ihmeideh et al.,

2010). To increase communication effectiveness, schools need to gain knowledge of the value of the responsibilities of the sender and receiver and adhere to the active listening skills (Lunenburg, 2010).

2.3 Online Learning

There is a considerable development in education, where the mode of instruction has been changed from teacher-centered education to student-centered education. In teacher-centered education, the teacher plays a role as the source of education, and students are recipients of his/her knowledge. In contrast, student-centered education emphasizes the role of students in knowledge production in the class. In a student-centered approach, the teachers' role turns to "helper to students who establish and enforce their own rules. Teachers respond to student assignments and encourage them to provide alternative/additional responses. Student-centered instruction has currently benefited many new technologies by using the internet and other advanced technological tools to share, transfer, and extend knowledge" (Hancock, 2002).

Online learning has become a part of the 21st century as it makes use of online platforms. E-learning is defined as using online platform technologies and the Internet to enhance learning and provide users with access to online services and services (Ehlers and Pawlowski, 2006). Internet and education have integrated to provide users with the necessary skills in the future (Haider and Al-Salman, 2020). A study by Stec et al., (2020 indicated that online teaching has three main approaches, namely, enhanced, blended learning, and online approach. Enhanced learning uses the intensive use of technology to

ensure innovative and interactive instruction. Blended learning mixes both face-to-face and online education. The online approach indicates that the course content is delivered online. Online education is convenient for students, where they can access online materials for 24h (Stern, 2020). Online education turns education to be student-centered, where students take part in the learning process, and teachers work as supervisors and guides for students (Al-Salman et al., 2021).

Online platforms have different tools to facilitate conducting online interactive classes to reduce students' loss. Online education platforms are designed to share information and coordinate class activities (Martín-Blas and Serrano-Fernández, 2009). There are most famous prominent interactive online tools: DingTalk (interactive online platform designed by Alibaba Group), Hangouts Meet (video calls tool), Teams (chat, interactive meetings, video, and audio calls), Skype (video and audio calls), WeChat Work (video sharing and calls designed for the Chinese), WhatsApp (video and audio calls, chat, and content share), and Zoom (video and audio calls, and collaboration features) (UNESCO, 2020).

2.3.1 Online Learning during COVID-19

COVID-19 was classified by world health organization (WHO) as a pandemic disease on March 11, 2020. On March 19, emergency state was declared as a response to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is followed by a curfew, which lasted for 2 months. The mode of education has turned online due to the closure of universities. The closure of universities brings the importance of having good infrastructure and the readiness to conduct online classes. Jordan is considered as one of the leading countries in Internet infrastructure and

has a highly developed Middle East region (Jordan Times, 2017). Online learning becomes a tool to prevent the outbreak and ensure social distancing. Online education has useful learning tools and grants 24/7 access to education platforms around the clock at their time preferences. It also offers flexibility, regardless of place and time. It also gives students questions, answers freely, and provides feedback on the assigned courses' content (Rosell, 2020).

2.3.2 Online learning and communication

Like all previous ones, this global catastrophe has shown the consequences, even after a pandemic has dissipated. Many countries have introduced such curfew and lockout protocols from the outset to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic (Alawamleh, 2020). Educational entities have been shut down in Jordan from March 15 to May 30, 2020. Therefore, universities have resorted to continuing lectures online through websites such as Google meet. Obviously, this influences communication as communicating virtually differs from face-to-face communication.

2.4 Online learning and face-to-face learning.

First, most authors define online learning as accessing learning experiences using certain technology (Benson, 2002; Conrad, 2002). Both Benson (2002) and Conrad (2002) define online learning as a more modern form of distance learning that enhances access for learners identified as both nontraditional and ineffective to educational opportunities. Many scholars discuss not only the usability of online learning but also its connectivity, mobility, and interactivity (Ally, 2004). Hiltz and Turoff (2005), like Benson (2002),

make a clear statement that online learning is a modern form of distance learning, or an updated edition. Like many, these authors believe that there is a relationship between distance education or learning and online learning but appear uncertain in their own descriptive narratives (Moore et al., 2011). Second, face-to-face learning is one in which instructors and students meet concurrently and in the same location. Sessions are synchronous in the face-to-face learning process. As no communication technology is required for a face-to-face session (Caner, 2012).

2.4.1 The difference between face-to-face learning and online learning.

Over the last few years, digital media have improved the teaching and learning experiences and have become a common practice for university students and lecturers. The use of e-learning and of digital media for teaching and learning has grown rapidly in just a few years (Paechter and Maier, 2010). In a comparative study, Dabbagh and Ritland (2005) examined the differences between traditional and online learning environments, arguing that traditional learning environments are bound by the location and presence of the teacher and the students conducted in real time, managed by the instructor, and are linear in teaching methods.

However, the online teaching and learning environments are unbound and dynamic, using evolving information and communication technologies, asynchronous communication, and real-time information. Online learning environments involve a variety of educational practices and are often characterized by student-centered, active learning techniques (Keengwe and Kidd, 2010).

2.4.2 The benefits of online learning

There are a considerable number of studies that consider statistically significant positive effects for student learning outcomes in the online format, as opposed to conventional face-to-face format. Some of the positive learning outcomes include improved learning as measured by test scores, student engagement with the course material, enhanced understanding of learning and the online environment, a stronger sense of community among students and reduced withdrawal or failure (Nguyen, 2015).

Online learning often appeals to many students, as it offers versatility in participation, accessibility, and convenience. Furthermore, online learning will continue to be an integral part of higher education (Croxton, 2014). “Whether or not you’re keen on using technology for learning, the fact is that it’s here to stay. Technology has become an essential way to handle the education, training, and retraining needs of an expanding knowledge society” (Berge, 2007).

2.4.2.1 **Convenience**.

It cites the convenience attribute as the prime value of online learning. Students are in circumstances where they choose the convenience of online learning over the facetime provided by the brick-and-mortar classrooms. The ease of online learning enables direct communication between instructors and peers in the cyber class (Fedynich, 2013).

2.4.2.2 Participation.

Ease of participation is an aspect of the appeal of virtual classrooms. One of the many versatile aspects of cyber learning is the willingness of the students to participate in a mixed learning environment, either asynchronously or synchronously. Online education can take several forms, from blogs to mailing lists to courses management systems such as Blackboard. Students can participate in chat rooms in real time or asynchronously by posting to newsletters or forums (Morrison et al., 2019). By being equipped with all those forms of communication, students are given the easier route of communication with either the instructor or other students in the class. For communication purposes, the playing field is set, and everyone in the class can participate.

According to GarnhamandKaleta (2002), "Introverts, who are quiet in the face-to-face class, really participate online." Kupczynski et al. (2008) found that student participation increased in the asynchronous environment, as there is time to "post messages, read and respond to messages, reflect on responses, revise interpretations, and modify original assumptions and perceptions. . ." but in a face-to-face class this would not be the case (Fedynich, 2013).

2.4.2.3 Cost-effectiveness for the university.

Universities now understand the benefits of holding online classes, as the student population continues to grow. Combined with lower online student withdrawal rates, universities found that online learning is very cost-effective and efficient in many ways before online learning came to be possible (Steen, 2008). More students prefer to enroll

and take online courses, as these decreases the student and university's opportunity cost of an education (Dziuban et al., 2005). As more classes are delivered online, enrollment is growing, thereby adding more money to the university's bottom line.

Classroom distribution is an environment that can be simplified as more students participate in online courses. Demand for classrooms continues to decline, as space is not required as often as usual, thus reducing utility costs, and maintaining them. "Online programs have little or no cost to educational facilities, transportation and associated staff," Cavanaugh said. "The importance of distance education also grows when considering the wide range of online courses available" (Cavanaugh, 2009). It is good news in these days for budget cuts, in fact cuts in both the private and public sectors, along with decreasing enrollment for some universities.

2.5 Demerits of online learning

To date, online learning seems to have lots of benefits for everyone involved. While online learning is having a positive impact, problems need to be brought to light. Such drawbacks will prove to be considerable obstacles if fully understood, expected and planned. One study carried out by Boling et al. (2012) found that most of their study participants viewed online courses as individualizing learning and limiting interaction with others. Students described feeling isolated from their teachers, from the content of the course and from their classmates. Participants in these courses explained how their online interactions were text-based lectures and several reading and writing assignments completed. Many of those tasks limited the ability of the students to develop a higher level of cognitive abilities and imaginative thinking. For example, one student, John,

stated, “Most of our topics are generically produced as part of the course curriculum, and so it is usually very simplistic in what is being asked or what is being given information-wise.”

Another student, Pamela, commented that her course consisted of “Just reading and reading and reading until it fell out my ears, and then you had to repeat it back in a persuasive way” (Boling et al., 2012). Vonderwell (2003) described problems with students not engaging in conversation with each other and considered the online atmosphere to be impersonal. One student commented: “It is not like a person-to-person interaction. It’s more like computer-to-computer interaction” (Kear, 2010).

In addition, McConnell (2006) identified issues related to interpersonal aspects of online communication. Often the students felt alone, overshadowed by other members, or reluctant to publicly share their ideas. Murphy et al. (2001) drew up a series of case studies, in which early adopters of online learning communication explored their practice and experiences. Low engagement and interactivity, along with other problems caused by lack of immediacy and non-verbal clues, were a major concern. Some students perceived the medium as “faceless,” and there could be misunderstandings. The tone could turn unpleasant, leading even to “flame wars.” These problems were particularly off-putting to the students who were new to online learning (Kear, 2010).

Brown and Liedholm (2002) found in a study evaluating student learning outcomes in a microeconomics course that students in the online format performed substantially worse on tests than students in the conventional format while they had better GPA and ACT scores. For complicated questions this disparity was most pronounced, and less

pronounced for simple questions. One potential reason was that half of the online students reported spending less than three hours a week and none claimed to spend more than seven hours a week, while half of the students attended each class in the conventional format, at least three hours a week. Another study also found differences in time devoted to class or active involvement resulting in differential outcomes (Hiltz et al., 2000).

2.5.1 Motivation and learning online.

Schunk (2008) defined motivation as "The process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained." Motivation can influence what we learn, how we learn and when we choose to learn (Hartnett et al., 2011). Research shows that motivated learners are more likely to participate in challenging activities, participate actively, enjoy, and adopt a deep learning approach and exhibit increased performance, persistence and creativity (Schunk and Zimmerman, 2012). Contemporary views link motivation to cognitive and affective processes of individuals, such as thoughts, beliefs and objectives, and emphasize the interactive relationship between the learner and the learning environment (Brophy, 2010).

Studies that explore motivation online learning contexts are relatively limited both in number and scope (Artino, 2007; Bekele, 2010). Existing research has tended to take a limited view of motivation that does not recognize the complexity and dynamic interplay of underlying factors and influences the motivation to learn (Brophy, 2010). Motivation was more often seen as a personal trait that remains constant across contexts and

circumstances (Hartnett et al., 2011). Many studies have focused on identifying lists of traits of successful online learners (Wighting et al., 2008; Yukselturk and Bulut, 2007) and indicate that intrinsic motivation is a common characteristic (Shroff et al., 2007; Styer, 2007). Findings from comparative studies between online students and on-campus students also suggest that online students are more intrinsically motivated across the board than their on-campus counterparts at both undergraduate and postgraduate level (Rovai et al., 2007; Shroff and Vogel, 2009; Wighting, 2008; Hartnett, 2016).

Although intrinsic motivation can influence initial engagement as well as retention in online study, research that treats intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as two separate subjects can provide an overly simplistic view of both contextual effects and motivation itself (Hartnett et al., 2011). Viewing motivation exclusively as an outcome of the learning environment or as an attribute for learners does not consider that individuals may be motivated in any given setting and time to a greater or lesser extent, often in various ways (Turner and Patrick, 2008). Few online learning studies have recognized this contemporary "person in context" as a view of motivation and have done so only in a restricted manner (Shroff et al., 2007; Xie et al., 2006). These factors together point to the need to reconsider the motivation for learning in technology-mediated environments (Urdan and Schoenfelder, 2006).

2.6 The effect of online learning on communication.

Online learning can also include communication mediated by a computer. According to Hung et al. (2010), shy students appear to be more interested in online settings than in conventional settings. In Web-based learning, it is necessary to build opportunities for interactions and communication between students and their instructors. Similarly, active students could make the most of online forums, which might offer opportunities to engage fellow students and professors with deeper dialogue and insightful questions as a technique. Asking questions is a way of getting deeper into the subject and making the topic more comprehensible. Additionally, students should take advantage of opportunities to collaborate with other online students to avoid burn-out or lack of interest while learning online, use motivation and support to remain motivated.

Efficiency and efficiency of communication in online learning are an important aspect to overcoming the constraints of online communication (Hung et al., 2010). Also, a research conducted by Kinash et al. (2015) established that student attendance does not seem to decrease when online lectures are given, and whether they experience lectures live or online does not seem to affect the student achievement. Many scholars have argued that face-to-face and online formats are only comparable when used for instructive information which can be offered as a lecture. Students need learning tools, and intellectually rich spaces for conversation, debate, and deductive questioning. Moreover, the proposition that such educational activities are better conducted face to face was strongly endorsed. Meanwhile, educational researchers have also identified digital

scholarship as a disruptive innovation, enabling creativity and renewal in learning and teaching experiences (Kinash et al., 2015).

Bangert (2006) identified four factors related to student satisfaction in online courses, including interaction and communication between students and faculty; time spent on task; active and engaged learning; and cooperation between classmates (Gray and DiLoreto, 2016). Another research correlated the expectations of students about a sense of community and instructor presence in online courses with asynchronous audio feedback (Ice, 2007). They compared their findings based on receiving text-based feedback rather than audio input from the students. Students showed greater satisfaction with embedded asynchronous audio feedback as opposed to text feedback only (Ice, 2007). Students found that audio feedback was more effective because the slight gap in communication was simpler, their instructors were more worried about it, and they were three times more likely to adapt the material or recommend improvements to this form of feedback (Cavanaugh and Song, 2014).

2.7 The effect of student engagement on the online learning environment.

Student engagement has been described as the level of interest demonstrated by students, how they interact with others in the course, and their motivation to learn about the topics (Briggs, 2015). There are several affective factors related to student engagement which include attitude, personality, motivation, effort, and self-confidence. Jaggars and Xu (2016) found that in online courses the level of interaction within the course parameters was positively associated with the grades of the students. Through evaluating the level of

student interest and considering these affective factors, instructors will organize lessons and events more effectively that will enable students to participate more actively in their learning and course work (Jennings and Angelo, 2006; Mandernach, 2011).

When students are motivated to do well in their classes, engaged or invested in their desire to learn, and able to devote the effort their teachers expect, they are more likely to participate in their education. The course engagement extends beyond the traditional methods of measuring instructional effectiveness to include student mastery of course learning goals, retention, and student satisfaction perceptions, whereas "Consideration of the impact of instructional activities on student engagement provides a more complete picture of the teaching-learning dynamic." Measuring student engagement levels helps instructors to adapt their instructional practices in response to changes in the motivation, participation, and attitude of students toward their course and educational pursuits (Mandernach, 2011).

2.8 Empirical review

Nour Al-Din & Al-Otaibi (2020) aimed to explore the extent to which e-learning contributed to improving the performance of universities in the Arab world. They collected data through reviewing the relevant literature. They adopted a meta-analytical approach. They found that universities in the Arab World seek improving their performance through exploiting all the available internal resources and employing a strategy that improves the quality of their outcomes in terms of education and research. They found that it's challenging for those universities to keep up with the latest

challenges in the field of education. They found that those universities deliver e-learning in the aim of improving their performance. They found that improving the performance of those universities requires carrying out a strategic analysis for the workplace environment. It requires preparing all the stakeholder for e-learning.

Kayode (2018) aimed to explore the relationships between communication management indicators (i.e., communication practices, and communication tools) form one hand and students' cognitive engagement from another hand in distance learning programs. A conceptual framework for communication management was developed based on Moore's Transactional Distance Learning Theory (TDLT) and other references. The researcher employed quantitative research design. A questionnaire was used to explore the perceptions of 450 instructors who were randomly selected from 3 Malaysian Public universities. The latter universities deliver blending learning programs. It was found that effective communication practices and communication tools have a strong positive impact on distance students' cognitive engagement.

Dintoe (2018) aimed to shed a light on the way the faculty members find it difficult to use of information and communication technology (ICT) for teaching and learning at the University of Botswana. He aimed to explore the impact of demographic variables on the use of technologies. Data is collected through conducting interviews. 9 participants were sampled. Those participants were selected from the Department of Adult Education, at the Faculty of Education at the University of Botswana. The researcher found that the majority of the faculty members use teacher-centered instructional approaches rather than student centered approaches. The extent of using technology for delivering online education is low due to the poor infrastructure.

Hosseini (2018) aimed to explore the use of social media in the social and human sciences faculty. A survey was used to answer the questions of the study. The observation method was used for collecting data. The sample consists of 67 faculty members. It was found that most respondents use social media for communicating with people. The respondents use computers and mobile phones for browsing Facebook and YouTube pages. It was found that social media is used for searching for information around specialization. Gender doesn't affect the respondent's attitudes towards the use of social media in the social and human sciences faculty.

Durak et al (2017) aimed to shed a light on trends in distance education at higher education institutions in Turkey during the period (1986 -2015). They conducted a content analysis. It was found that the academic disciplines that are favored the most are: education and training, followed by Computer Engineering and computer science and control, science and technology, technical education, electrical and electronics engineering and business administration, respectively. In terms of the research area, it was seen that certain areas were dominantly favored. Such area include: "educational technology", instructional design, learner characteristics", distance education systems

Rahman (2014) aimed to explore the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in open and distance educational programs. He aimed to explore the role of social media which is very important for distance learners. It was found that ICTs improve the quality of the provided education. In addition, using ICTs aims to making reforms to the educational system. The rapid advancements related to information and

communication technologies (ICTs) provide students with new opportunities. ICTs enable government to address problems related to the quality of education and management of educational systems.

Nkingwa (2013) aimed to explore the barriers hindering people from communicating effectively in distance educational programs at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) - Tanga Regional Centre. The required data was collected through using a questionnaire. 69 faculty members were surveyed. It was found that the meaning condensation technique was used to analyze the qualitative data which was obtained. The researcher found that Low IT literacy and low English language competency are amongst the main barriers hindering people from having an effective communication in distance educational programs. He found that the management of the latter university did not provide students with internet service of high quality. The latter management didn't provide students with e-curricula for all courses.

Osaat & Nsereka (2012) aimed to explore the impacts of information and communication technology on the quality of distance education in Nigeria. They aimed to collect data through using a questionnaire. They collected data from 200 students. The reliability of the questionnaire was measured through calculating Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The collected data was analyzed. It was found that information and communication technologies (ICTs) have great impacts on the quality of the provided distance education and the academic success. It was found that the management of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) doesn't employ ICTs much. Such ICTs include radio/television broadcast of lectures, computer aided instruction and tele/video conferencing.

Kelsey (2000) aimed to explore the impact of communication apprehension (CA) on the students enrolled in distance education programs. He aimed to explore the impact of ICT skills on interaction in distance educational programs. Data was collected from 73 students through using a questionnaire. Nine students were interviewed to collect data from them. It was found that having a high communication apprehension affects students' desire to interact with others in distance education programs.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter highlights the various methods and procedures the researcher adopted in conducting the study to answer the research questions posed in the first chapter. The chapter is organized in the following structure: the research design, population and sample, data collection methods, sampling design and sample size, research procedures, data analysis methods and, lastly, the chapter summary.

3.1 Research Design

Monsen and Van Horn (2008) claim that the descriptive design is an effective way to obtain information used to formulate a hypothesis and propose associations. This study aimed at revealing the associations between relationship marketing and customer retention-a reason why descriptive design was used here. Monsen and Van Horn also add that while using this design, data collection may be spread over a large population or over a large geographic area. Since this study is going to collect data that will be applied to all tertiary institutions in Ghana, the descriptive design remains a feasible option. Descriptive studies describe characteristics associated with the subject population. According to Copper and Schindler (2000), descriptive statistics discovers, and measures cause and effect relationship among variables.

3.2 Profile of the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ)

The Ghana Institute of Journalism, formerly The Ghana School of Journalism, was officially opened on Monday, 16th October 1959, by the then Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Mr. Kofi Baako. The school was established by the Kwame Nkrumah government to provide training in journalism toward the development of a patriotic cadre of journalists to play an active role in the emancipation of the African continent. Initially a department of the Accra Technical Institute (now Accra Technical University), the school had as its first principal and journalism tutor, Mr Richard McMillan, then retiring as Director of British Information Services in Ghana. In 1966, the school moved to the present site which used to house the Ghana Press Club.

Over the years, the Institute has undergone significant changes and owes its current tertiary status to the following legislative instruments. The Parliament of the Fourth Republic and the President enacted the Ghana Institute of Journalism Act, 2006 (Act 717) to transform the Institute into a degree-awarding tertiary institution. Subsequently, the President granted a Charter to enable the Institute to award its own degrees, diplomas and certificates for programs accredited by the National Accreditation Board. This certificate was assented to by the President in August 2006, with a Gazette notification on 1st September 2006.

The Ghana Institute of Journalism has now become a fully-fledged communication training institution with the status of a university. As public policy demands, the Institute has now been placed under the Ministry of Education, and it is now directly under the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE). GIJ has embraced the responsibilities and challenges presented by its new tertiary status and

continues to fulfil its mission to serve the needs of students, the media industry and society. The Institute is administered by a governing council, an executive management board, the academic board, departments, units, and committees.

VISION: To be the preferred communications training institute in Africa, upholding high academic standards and producing world-class professionals for the transformation of society.

CORE VALUES

- Commitment to excellence
- Linking theory and practice
- Accountability with integrity
- Teamwork
- Excellent teaching and learning environment

3.3 Population

According to Sharp and Howard (2006), a population refers to the total collection of elements from which reference is made in a research process. The population for this study comprised of all students, lectures (both full time and part time) as well as management members of the institute.

3.4 Sampling and sampling technique

According to Williams et al. (2003) a sample size refers to a group of individuals in the population who are going to be interviewed in the study and whose responses will be used to generalize the characteristics of the population. The sample for the study

comprised a group of 6 management members and 14 lectures. This number was thought to be representative enough of the expected findings of the study. A sample of 150 students comprising of 50 level 1 students, 50 of level 2 and same number of level 3 students of the institution. This number was believed by the researcher to be representative enough for the student population of the institute. The sample size was thus 170. When combined, the two groups were representative enough to give results that could be generalizable to the whole population.

The researcher first stratified the sample size as top-level managers, lectures, and students. The three groups (Strata) are believed to be in the right positions to be able to give the researcher the kind of information needed. According to Coopers and Schindler (2000), stratification increases sample statistical efficiency and provides adequate data for analysing various sub populations enabling different research methods to be used on different strata. After stratification, the researcher used the purposive sampling method to select the sample population from each group (Stratum). Purposive sampling was used because it helped the researcher easily identify respondents, Accidental sampling was also used to sample the views of students present on sight to present their assignments or attend to other duties in the school since getting access to them was difficult.

3.5 Data Collection

The instrument used to collect primary data was the questionnaire that was developed by the researcher based on the research questions. A questionnaire minimizes the cost attached to collecting data in a research study. It collects a large amount of data within a short period and with limited costs attached to it. It also gives the respondent the

chance to answer questions at his or her own time (Dörnyei& Taguchi, 2010). Since the researcher was targeting the collection of data from people who were likely to be busy, questionnaires were the most appropriate data collection tools.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher started the data collection process by visiting the institute at Osu to seek permission to collect data from the respondents. The research questionnaire used in this study was pretested in a pilot study to ascertain the validity, reliability, and suitability of the instrument before the actual administration. Pretesting was done by administering the questionnaire to ten respondents selected randomly from the sample size.

Questionnaires were then coded according to each research question of the study to ensure minimal margins of error and accuracy during analysis and then administered on the actual study date through delivery by the researcher. After the expiry of the answering period, the researcher then collected the answered questionnaires on the set date and did the analysis to arrive at the findings of the study as presented in chapter four.

3.7 Data Analysis Methods

The study used the quantitative method of data analysis. This analysis is applied using descriptive statistics. According to Denscombe (1998), descriptive statistics involves a process of transforming a mass of raw data into tables, charts with frequency distribution and percentages which are vital part of making sense of the data.

3.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter describes the methodology used to carry out the study. The research design is descriptive in nature. The sample, sample size, the sampling technique, and the research questionnaire, as a primary data collection instrument, have all been described. The chapter also indicated that a pilot study was carried out before a refined questionnaire was administered to the respondents. The chapter also specifies that data analysis was accomplished using the SPSS among other methods and presented in the form of charts and tables. The next chapter looks at the data collected and presents the findings together with their interpretations.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The results obtained from the analysis of data are presented and discussed in this chapter. The biographic details of the respondents are first presented in the chapter. In later sections of the chapter, respondents' feedback on perception of the significance of online learning and how it has impacted their academic performance in Ghana are presented.

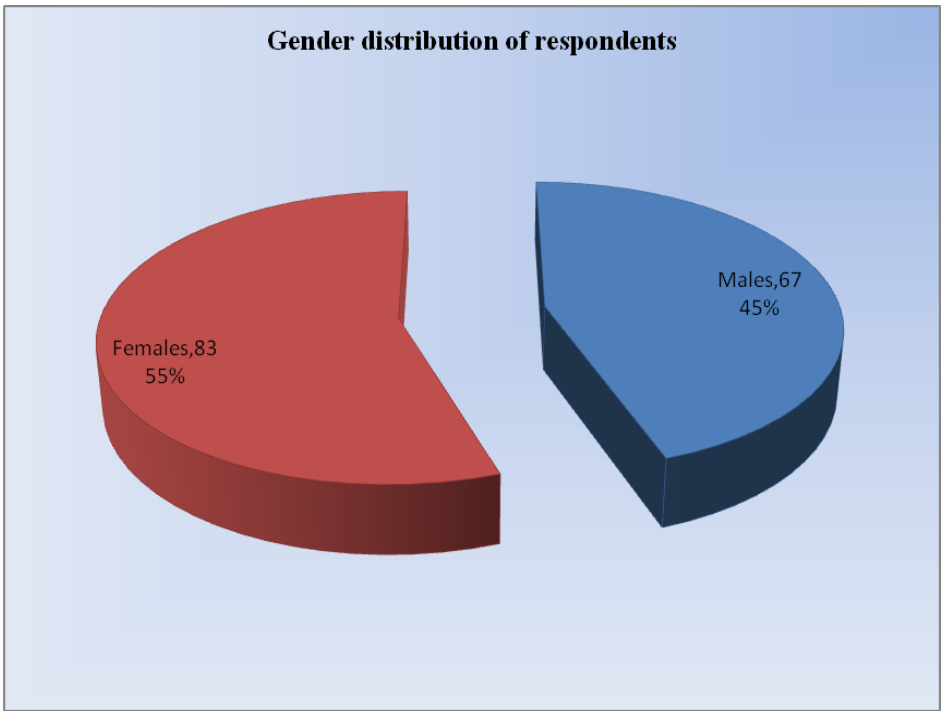
4.2 Biographic Data of Respondents

4.2.1 Gender of respondents

The results on the biography of respondents showed that 67 respondents, representing 45% of the sample were males whiles 83 respondents, representing 55% of the sample were females. It is however not unusual to find females dominating in terms of number. In general, the number of females in Ghana out numbers their male counterparts (statsghana.gov.gh date accessed 12/11/2021). According to Citi news(https://citinewsroom.com/2021/09/) women constitute a greater proportion of Ghana's population, according to the 2021 Population and Housing Census. According to the census, there are 400,000 more women in Ghana than men. Overall, women make up 50.7% of the population, while men make up 49.3%. The ratio of 97 men for 100 women in 2021, represented a slight increase over the ratio of 95 recorded in 2010. It can also be interpreted that more women are now seeking higher education as compared to the olden

days when education was seen as a prerogative of a man and women designated to matrimonial responsibilities.

Fig 4.1: Gender of respondents

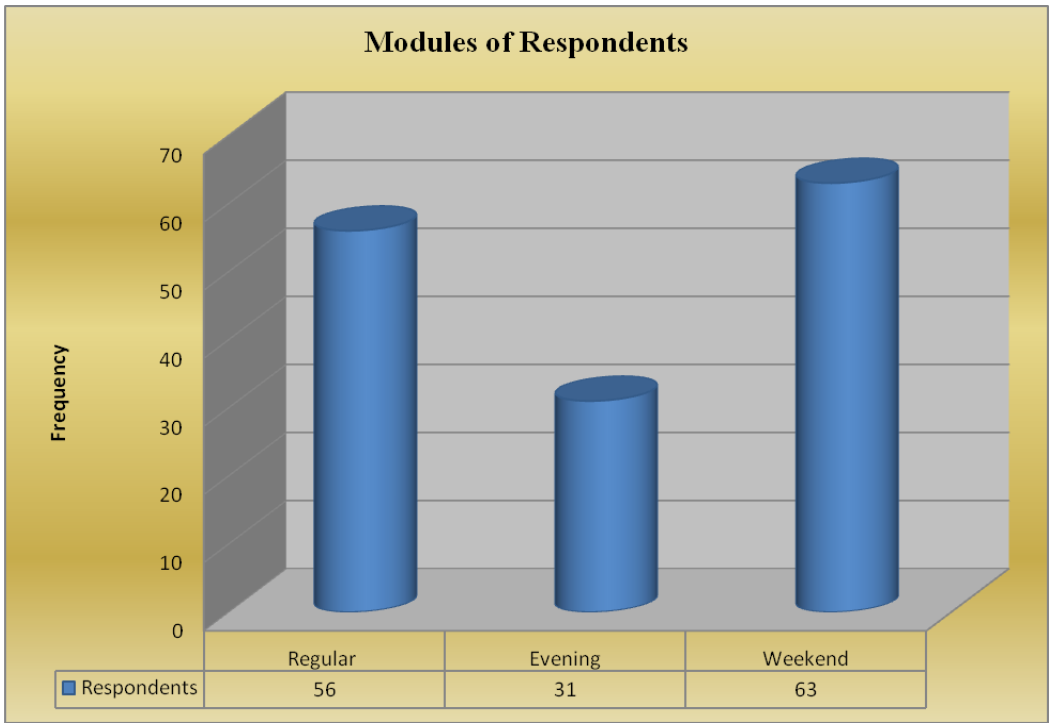


Source: Field Survey, 2021

4.2.2 Session of Respondents

As part of the bio-graphic date requirements respondents were required to indicate which session they belonged to. Data showed that most of the respondent belonged to the weekend school module. This is so because the weekend school students participated in the survey more as compared to the other streams.

Fig 4.2: Modules of Respondents



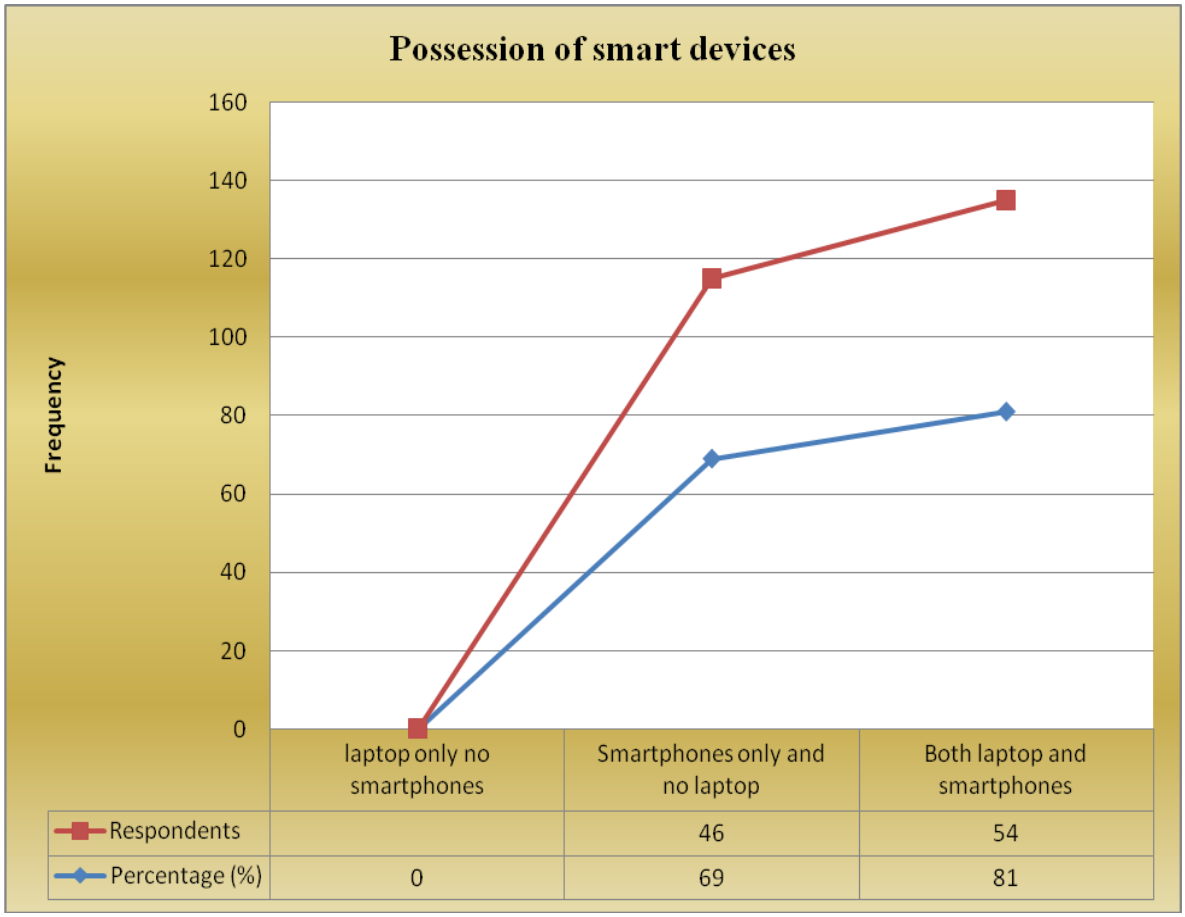
Source: Field Survey, 2021

Data on the educational modules of respondents was also gathered. The results on educational modules of respondents showed that most respondents (63), representing 42% of the sample, indicated that they were in the weekend school. This was followed by 56 respondents, who represented 37% of the sample, who indicated that they belonged to the regular school. This left 31 respondents, who made up 21% of the sample, and indicated that they had belonged to the evening school.

4.2.3 Ownership of Smart phone devices

The emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and internet facilities has drastically affected almost every facet of human life. Currently, it is greatly evident in the way of teaching and learning. Nowadays, smartphones have become a part of every person's life. The focus of the study is on online learning, hence, there was the need to determine if respondents were in possession of devices used to access online learning platforms. Details obtained showed respondents owned some form of smart device capable of accessing such platforms.

Fig 4.3: Ownership of Smart phone devices



Source: Field Survey, 2021

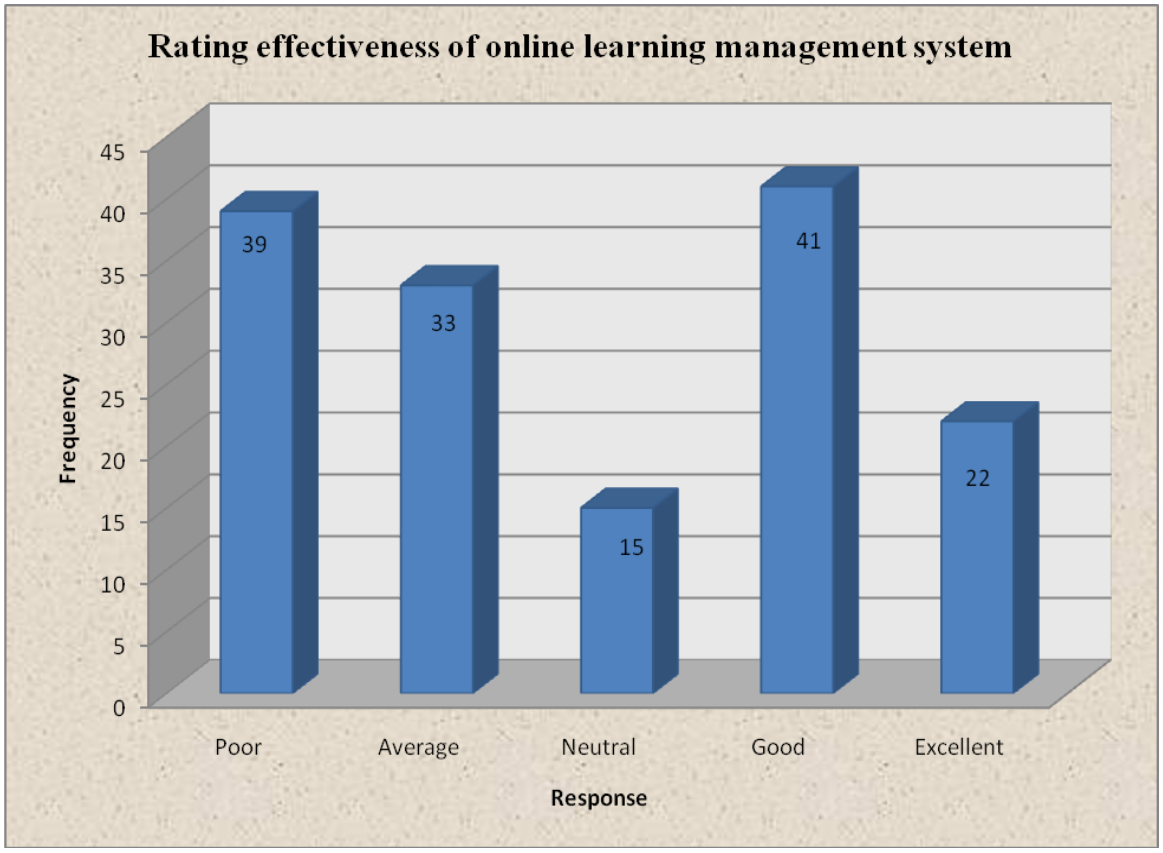
Respondents were further asked about their ownership of smart devices such as laptop computers and smart phones. The results obtained showed that most respondents (81), representing 54% of the sample, indicated that they owned laptop computers and smart phones. This left 69 respondents, who made up 46% of the sample, and indicated that they only smart phones and owned no laptops or computers. This result suggests that all respondents could engage in some form of school online learning with their devices. In cognsiance with the findings Tagoe (2014) noted that gglobally, the explosion of smartphones and its related devices has greatly transformed teaching and learning in developed nations where developing nations are not the exception. The proliferation of these facilities has changed the style of learning whereby students or learners no more solely depend on paper-based materials.

The introduction of the internet led to the emergence of smartphones which enables learning to take place irrespective of the geographical location or period. Arguably, smartphones came to the scene to replace the works of the camera, video recorders, digital watches, etc. For instance, it is becoming so rare for an individual to purchase a digital camera for personal use except for commercial purposes, and the extent at which people yearn for digital watches has reduced as a result of the introduction of smartphones. In effect, it becomes redundant for one to purchase such gadgets which can be found in smartphones. Fawareh and Jusoh (2017) postulated that having a smartphone is like having a tiny computer in a pocket

4.2.4 Rate of effectiveness of online education

According to technopedia (2019) “A smartphone is a mobile phone with highly advanced features. A typical smartphone has a high-resolution touch screen display, WiFi connectivity, Web browsing capabilities, and the ability to accept sophisticated applications.” Ebiye (2015) regards a smartphone as a smart device used for fast access to knowledge, geared towards students achieving their teaching and learning and academic research objectives.

Fig 4.4: Rate of effectiveness of online education



Source: Field Survey, 2021

Respondents were further asked to rate the effectiveness of online learning management systems in their school. The analysis of results obtained showed that most respondents (72), representing 48% of the sample, indicated that the online learning

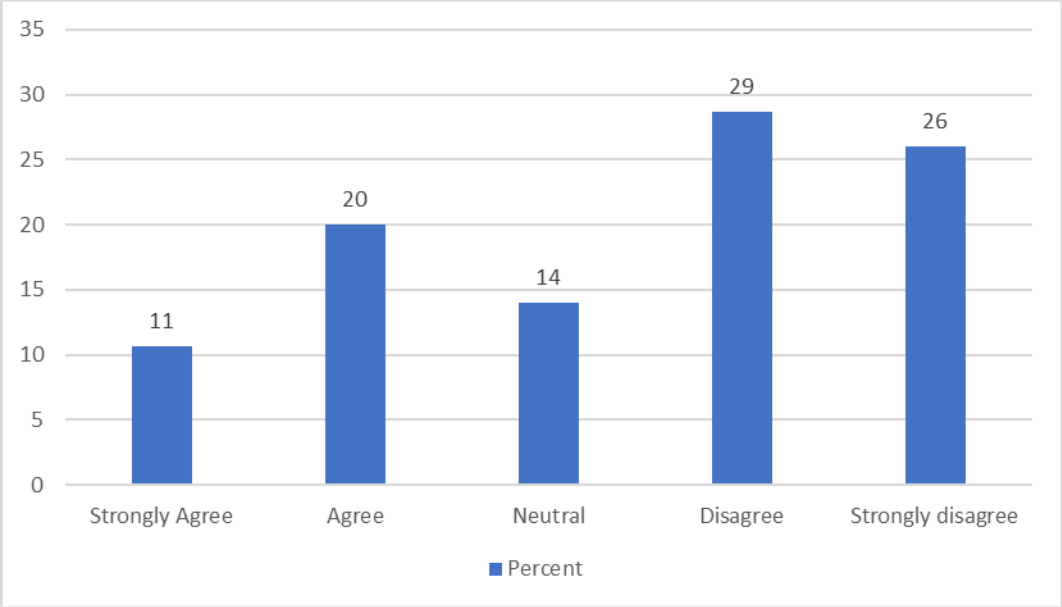
management systems in their school were poor or averagely effective. In contrast, 63 respondents, representing 42% of the sample, indicated that the online learning management systems in their school were good or excellent, in terms of effectiveness. This left 15 respondents, who made up 10% of the sample and remained neutral on the effectiveness of the online learning management systems in their school. The dramatic growth of smartphone users has also increased the growth of social media users. Also, in a report from the International Telecommunication Union, it was indicated that about 60% of the world's population has access to mobile phones (ITU, 2008 as cited in Sarfoah, 2017). In the same report, it is interesting to note that there are more mobile phone users in the developing nations as compared to the advanced ones (Henry & Quansah, 2013), which means, developing countries utilize smartphones the more.

Among the developing countries, Malaysia has the highest use of smartphone where "(55%) of Malaysians use their mobiles to listen to music, half (50%) play online games and almost seven out of ten (67%) Malaysians watch online videos on their phones." In the works of (Assabi, 2012 as cited by Quist and Quarshie, 2016), it was reported that as at 2013/2014 growth estimate, Ghana was placed on the 14th position by the World Bank in the Top 29 countries with the highest growth in the adopting mobile phones and ICT technology. In the same study, the author postulated that developing nations in Africa are adopting mobile technology and its related ICT infrastructure at an increasing rate.

4.3 Student's Perception on How Online Learning Affects Their Ability to Relate with Their Course Lecturers

In this section, the results from the analysis of responses regarding the student's perception on how online learning affects their ability to relate with their course lectures are presented. First respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that they always have access to course lecturers because of online learning. The results obtained showed that, generally, respondents remained neutral or undecided the statement (Mean = 2.92, SD = 1.344). Further analysis of responses showed that most respondents (43), representing 29% of the sample, disagreed with the statement. In addition, 39 respondents, representing 26% of the sample strongly disagreed with the statement. On the contrary, 31 respondents, representing 20% of the sample agreed with the statement. In addition, 16 respondents, representing 11% of the sample strongly agreed with the statement. This left 21 respondents, who made up 14% of the sample, and remained neutral or undecided on the statement. Further analysis also showed that out of the respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 42 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 3 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 35 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.5 Respondents perceptions on access to course lecturers because of online learning.

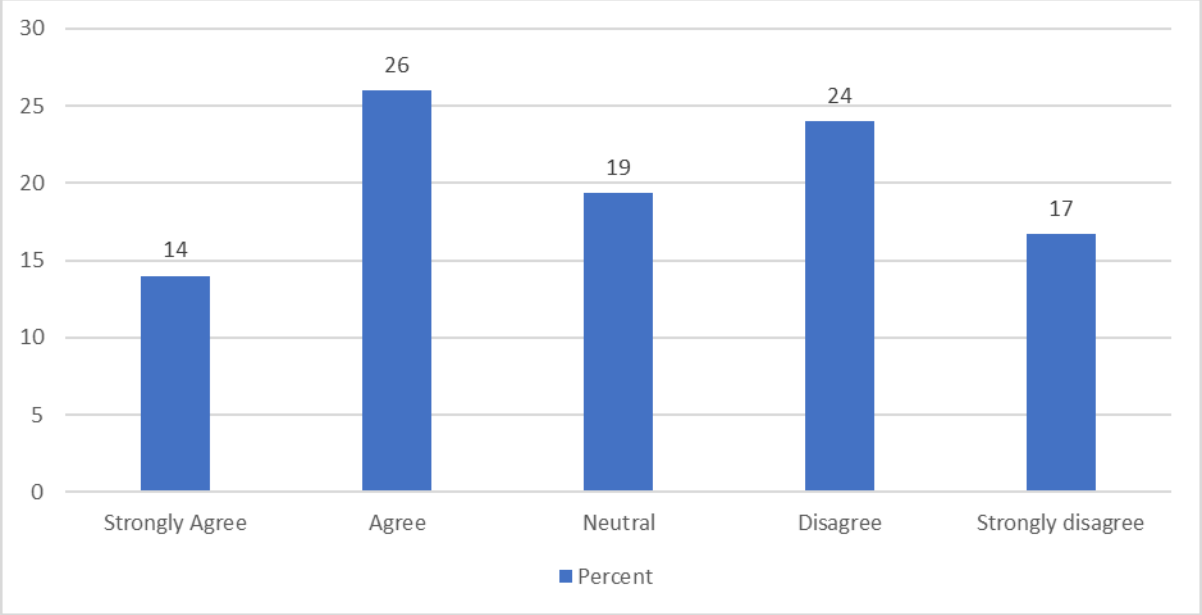


Source: Field data (2021)

Secondly, respondents again were asked their opinions on the statement that they can share my concerns directly with my lecturer because of online learning. The results showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided with the statement (Mean = 2.607, SD = 1.365). Further analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (39), representing 26% of the sample, agreed with the statement. In addition, 21 respondents, representing 14% of the sample strongly agreed with the statement. On the contrary, 36 respondents, representing 24% of the sample disagreed with the statement. In addition, 25 respondents, representing 17% of the sample strongly disagreed with the statement. This left 29 respondents, who made up 19% of the sample, and remained neutral on the statement. Further cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 32 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on

their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 24 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.6 Respondents perceptions on share my concerns directly with my lecturer because of online learning

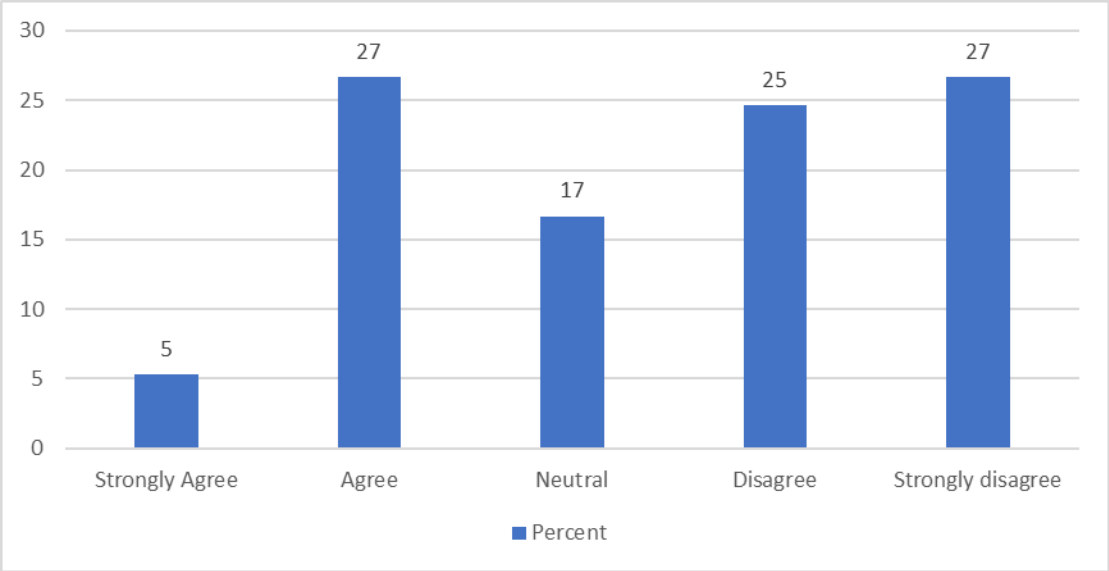


Source: Field data (2021)

Respondents were then asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that the course lecturer can reach them directly because of online learning. The results obtained showed that generally, respondents disagreed with the statement (Mean = 2.873, SD = 1.337). Further analysis of responses showed that most respondents (40), representing 27% of the sample, agreed with the statement. In addition, 8 respondents, representing 5% of the sample strongly agreed with the statement. On the contrary, 37 respondents, representing 25% of the sample disagreed with the statement. In addition, 40 respondents, representing 27% of the sample strongly disagreed with the statement. This left 25 respondents, who made up 17% of the sample, and remained undecided or neutral on the statement. Additional cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who

disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 41 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 31 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.7 Respondents perceptions on course lecturer reaching them directly because of online learning

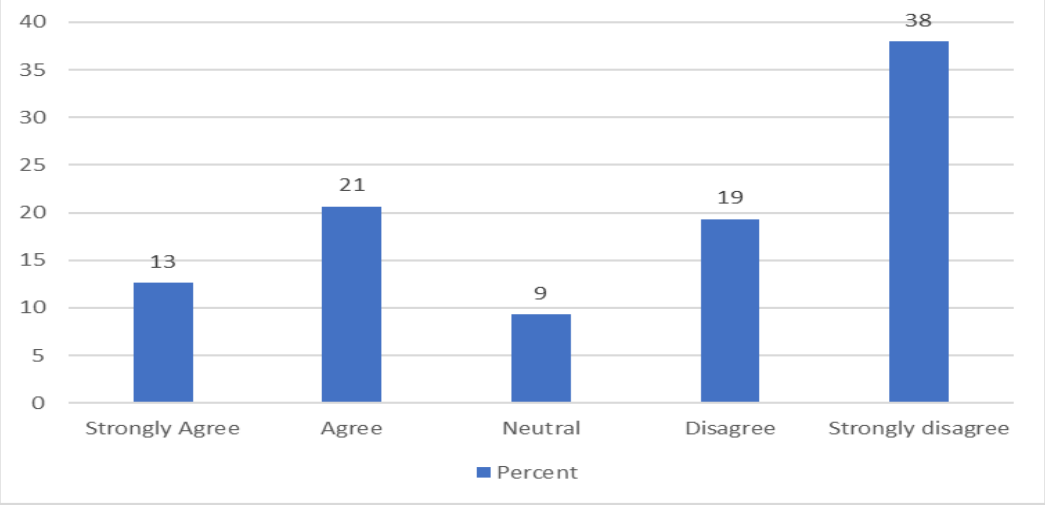


Source: Field data (2021)

Again, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that because of online learning, I feel that the course lecturer is empowered to do the work with ease. The results obtained showed that respondents generally remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 2.907, SD = 1.382). Further analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (57), representing 38% of the sample, strongly disagreed with the statement. In addition, 29 respondents, representing 19% of the sample disagreed with the statement.

On the contrary, 31 respondents, representing 21% of the sample agreed with the statement. In addition, 19 respondents, representing 13% of the sample strongly agreed with the statement. This left 14 respondents, who made up 9% of the sample, and remained undecided or neutral on the statement. Furthermore, cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 44 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 37 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.8 Respondents perceptions on lecturers' empowerment to do the work with ease because of online learning.

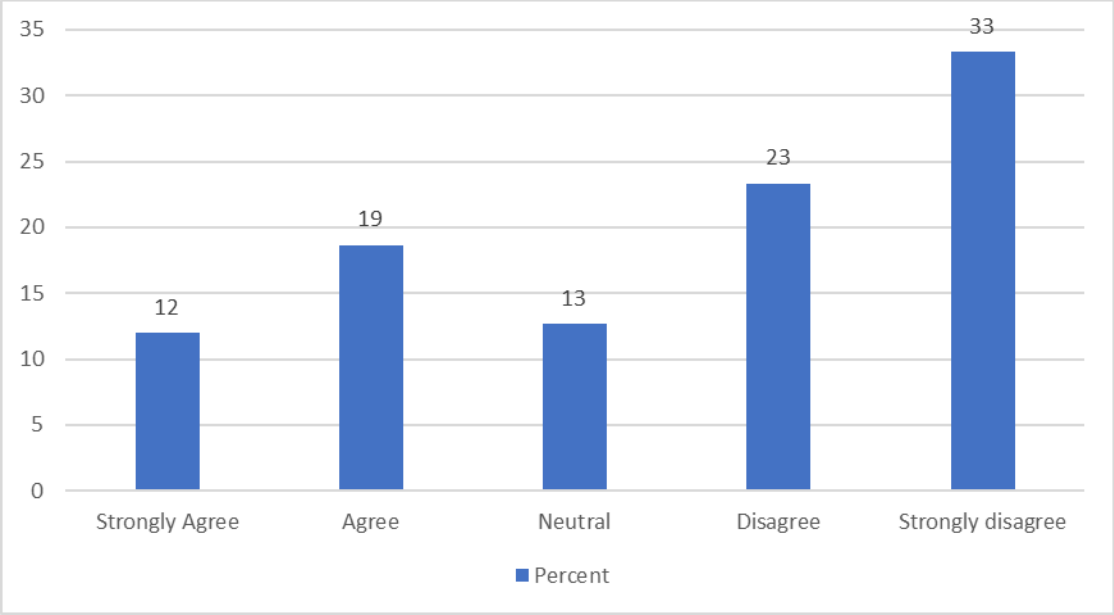


Source: Field data (2021)

Next, respondents were also asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that online learning has allowed us to benefit from instant email communication with course lecturers. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 2.953, SD = 1.342).

Further analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (50), representing 33% of the sample, strongly disagreed with the statement. In addition, 35 respondents, representing 23% of the sample disagreed with the statement. On the contrary, 28 respondents, representing 19% of the sample agreed with the statement. In addition, 18 respondents, representing 12% of the sample strongly agreed with the statement. This left 19 respondents, who made up 13% of the sample, and remained undecided or neutral on the statement. Furthermore, cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 44 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 36 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

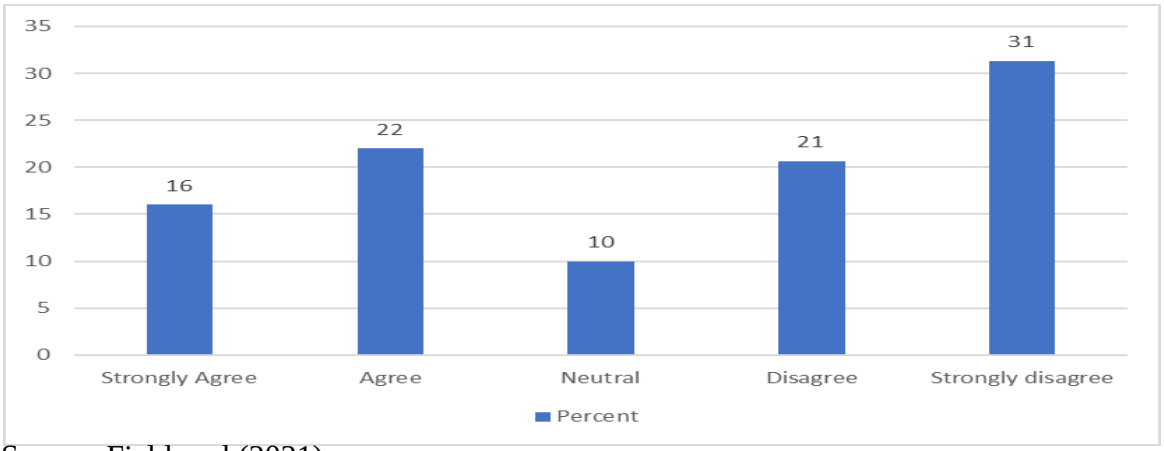
Figure 4.9 Respondents perceptions on benefit of instant email communication with course lecturers because of online learning



Source: Field data (2021)

Respondents were then asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that course lecturers can cover a lot more topics because of online learning. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 2.76, SD = 1.413). Further analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (47), representing 31% of the sample, strongly disagreed with the statement. In addition, 31 respondents, representing 21% of the sample disagreed with the statement. On the contrary, 33 respondents, representing 22% of the sample agreed with the statement. In addition, 24 respondents, representing 16% of the sample strongly agreed with the statement. This left 15 respondents, who made up 10% of the sample, remained undecided or neutral on the statement. Furthermore, cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 42 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 31 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

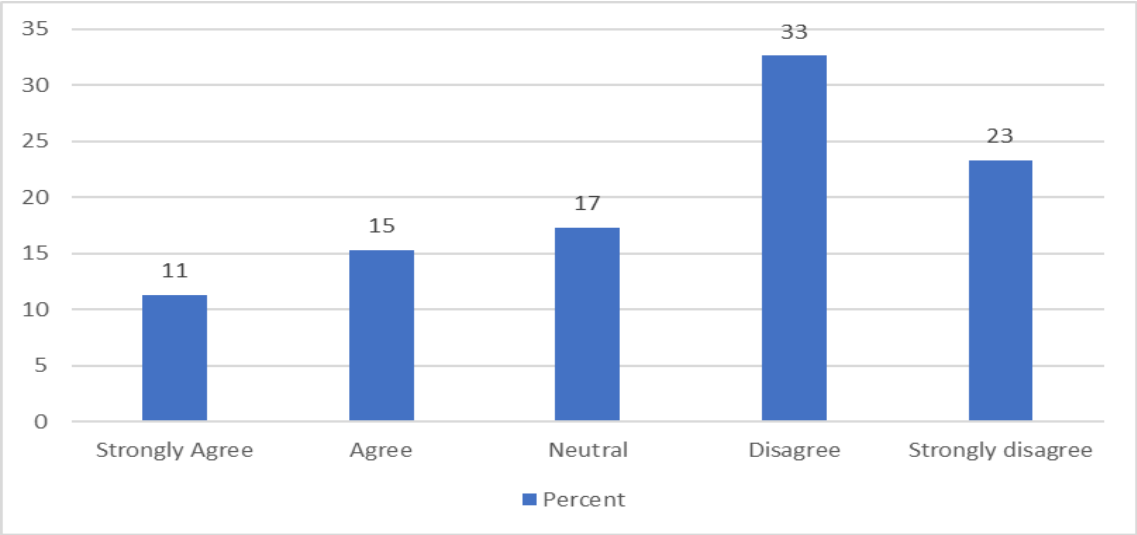
Figure 4.10 Respondents perceptions on lecturers covering a lot more topics because of online learning



Source: Fieldwork(2021)

Respondents were again asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that they appreciate better the course content from the lecturer when it is online. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 3.027, SD = 1.279). Further analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (49), representing 33% of the sample, disagreed with the statement. In addition, 35 respondents, representing 23% of the sample strongly disagreed with the statement. On the contrary, 23 respondents, representing 15% of the sample agreed with the statement. Also, 17 respondents, representing 11% of the sample strongly agreed with the statement. This left 26 respondents, who made up 17% of the sample, and remained undecided or neutral on the statement. Additional cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 44 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 35 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.11 Respondents perceptions on appreciating the course content better from the lecturer when it is online



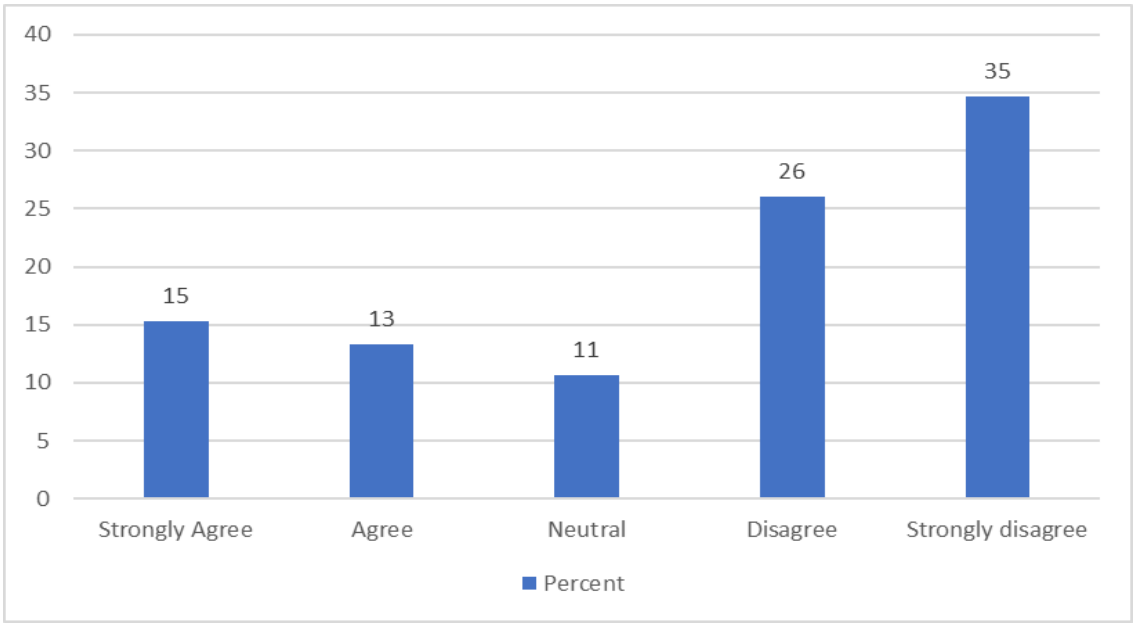
Source: Fieldwork(2021)

Also, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that they understand the course better because the lecturer uses online tools. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 3.033, SD = 1.328). Further analysis of responses showed that most respondents (52), representing 35% of the sample, strongly disagreed with the statement. In addition, 39 respondents, representing 26% of the sample disagreed with the statement. On the contrary, 20 respondents, representing 13% of the sample agreed with the statement.

Also, 23 respondents, representing 15% of the sample strongly agreed with the statement. This left 16 respondents, who made up 11% of the sample, and remained undecided or neutral on the statement. Additional cross-tabulations showed that out of the

respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 47 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 39 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.12 Respondents perceptions on understanding the course better because the lecturer uses online tools.

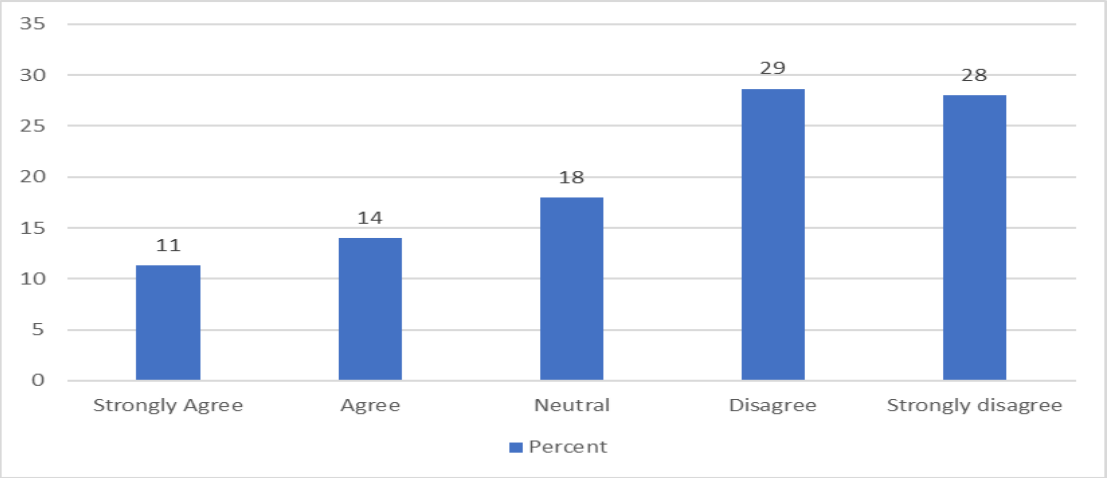


Source: Fieldwork(2021)

Finally, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that they are better able to engage with the online course because of the lecturer's presentation. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 3.06, SD = 1.259). Further analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (43), representing 29 % of the sample, disagreed with the statement. In addition, 42 respondents, representing 28%

of the sample strongly disagreed with the statement. On the contrary, 21 respondents, representing 14% of the sample agreed with the statement. Also, 17 respondents, representing 11% of the sample strongly agreed with the statement. This left 27 respondents, who made up 18% of the sample, who remained undecided or neutral on the statement. Further cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 44 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 36 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.13 Respondents perceptions on engaging better with the online course because of the lecturer's presentation.



Source: Fieldwork(2021)

Table 4.1 Summary Statistics on Student's Perception on How Online Learning Affects Their Ability to Relate with Their Course Lectures

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
We always have access to course lecturers because of online learning.	150	2.920	1.344	1	4
I can share my concerns directly with my lecturer because of online learning.	150	2.607	1.365	1	4
The course lecturer can reach me directly because of online learning.	150	2.873	1.338	1	4
Because of online learning, I feel that the course lecturer is empowered to do the work with ease.	150	2.907	1.382	1	4
Online learning has allowed us to benefit from instant email communication with course lecturers.	150	2.953	1.343	1	4
Course lecturers can cover a lot more topics because of online learning.	150	2.760	1.413	1	4
I appreciate better the course content from the lecturer when it is online.	150	3.027	1.279	1	4
I understand the course better because the lecturer uses online tools.	150	3.033	1.328	1	4
I am better able to engage with the online course because of the lecturer's presentation.	150	3.060	1.260	1	4

Source: Field data (2021)

The results obtained contradict the theoretical importance of collaboration in learning. Collaboration and involvement of the students are achieved with the use of communication, planning, management, and social skills, which are integral to working in teams (Tucker & Clarke, 2014). As a result, students engage by working together,

seeking input and clarification from each other, motivating each other as well as learning about one another (Kearsley &Shneiderman, 1998). Becoming a part of a successful collaborative team allows students to effectively engage in the learning process and might be found useful in their future professional life. Collaboration is not a new approach in learning. Nonetheless, the results suggest that online may have increasingly turned students towards working alone.

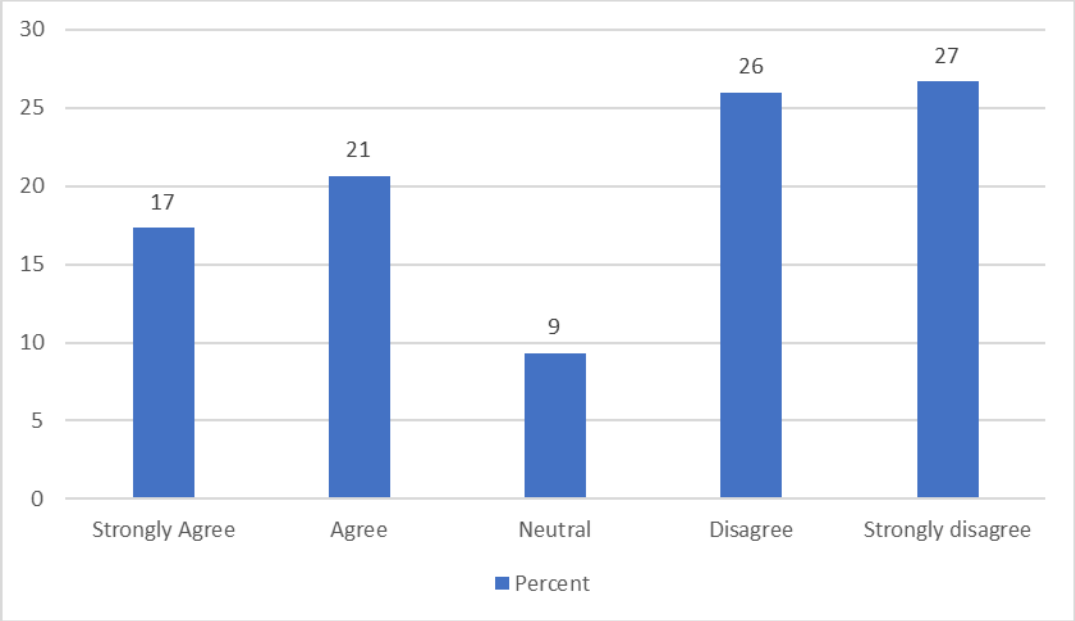
The results also relates to the finding of Boling et al. (2012) found that most of their study participants viewed online courses as individualizing learning and limiting interaction with others. Students described feeling isolated from their teachers, from the content of the course and from their classmates.

4.4 Student's perception on how Online learning influences their ability to understand topics

Respondents were then asked for their opinions on statements regarding student's perception on how online learning influences their ability to understand topics. First, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that online learning has improved my access to the course content. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 2.766, SD = 1.416). Further analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (40), representing 27 % of the sample, strongly disagreed with the statement. In addition, 39 respondents, representing 26% of the sample disagreed with the statement.

On the contrary, 31 respondents, representing 21 % of the sample agreed with the statement. In addition, 26 respondents, representing 17% of the sample strongly agreed with the statement. This left 14 respondents, who made up 9% of the sample, who remained undecided or neutral on the statement. Further cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 42 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 32 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.14 Respondents perceptions on online learning improving access to the course content

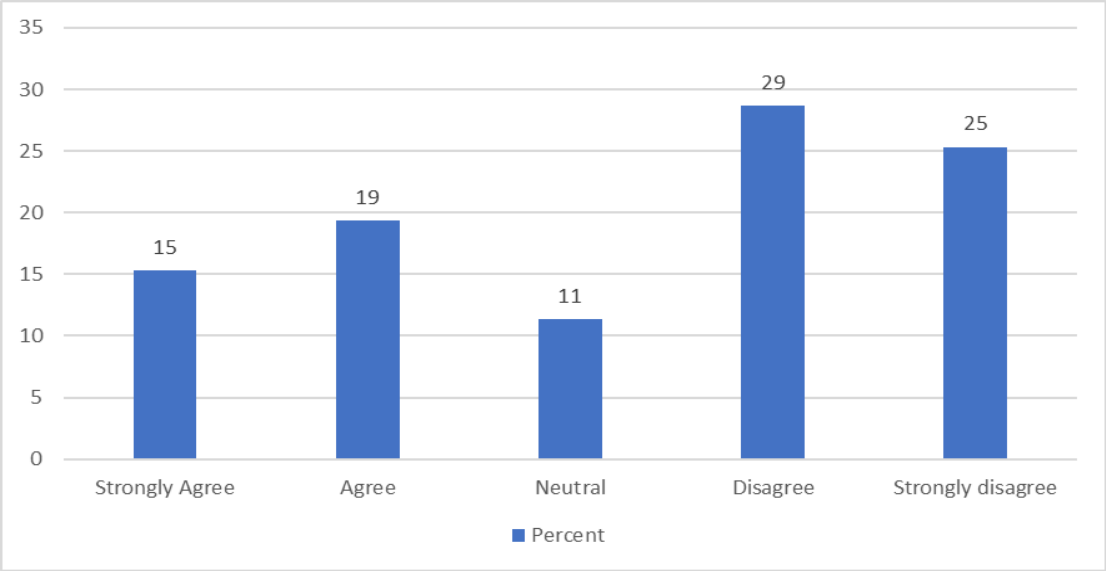


Source: Fieldwork (2021)

Secondly, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that online learning allows me to engage with the topics in my own way that helps my understanding. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 2.846, SD = 1.384). Further analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (43), representing 29 % of the sample, disagreed with the statement. In addition, 38 respondents, representing 25% of the sample strongly disagreed with the statement. On the contrary, 29 respondents, representing 19 % of the sample agreed with the statement. This was followed by 23 respondents, representing 15% of the sample, who strongly agreed with the statement. This left 17 respondents, who made up 11% of the sample, and remained undecided or neutral on the statement. Further cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents

who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 42 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 34 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.15 Respondents perceptions on engaging with the topics in their own way that helps their understanding because of online learning

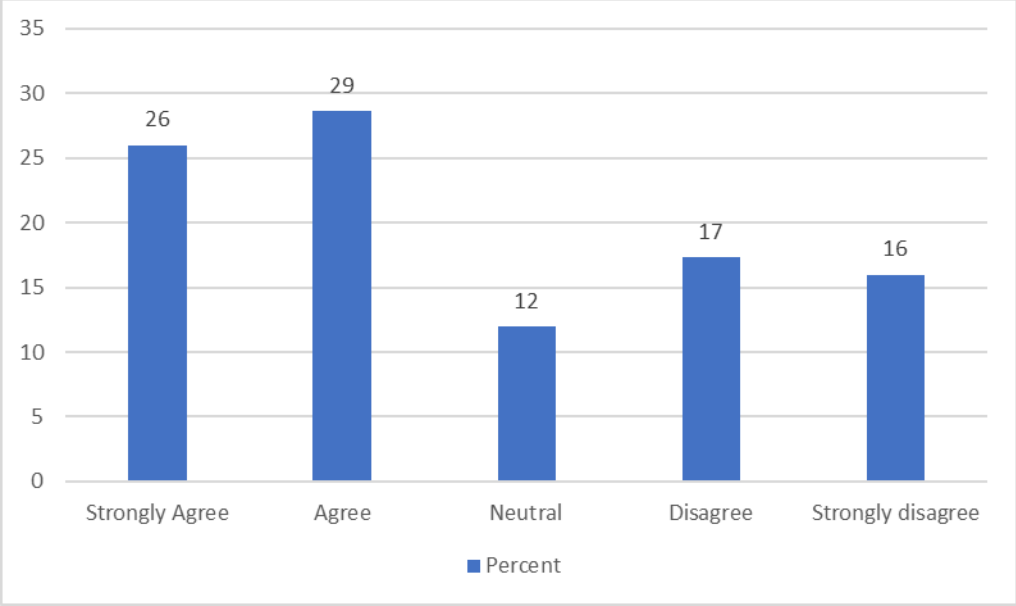


Source: Fieldwork (2021)

Again, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that Online learning has enabled me to improve my knowledge of ICT. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (Mean = 2.24, SD = 1.398). Further analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (43), representing 29 % of the sample, agreed with the statement. In addition, 39 respondents, representing 26% of the sample strongly agreed with the statement.

In contrast to this, 26 respondents, representing 17 % of the sample disagreed with the statement. This was followed by 24 respondents, representing 16% of the sample, who strongly disagreed with the statement. This left 18 respondents, who made up 12% of the sample, and remained undecided or neutral on the statement. Further cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 29 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 16 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.16 Respondents perceptions on being enabled to improve knowledge of ICT because of online learning

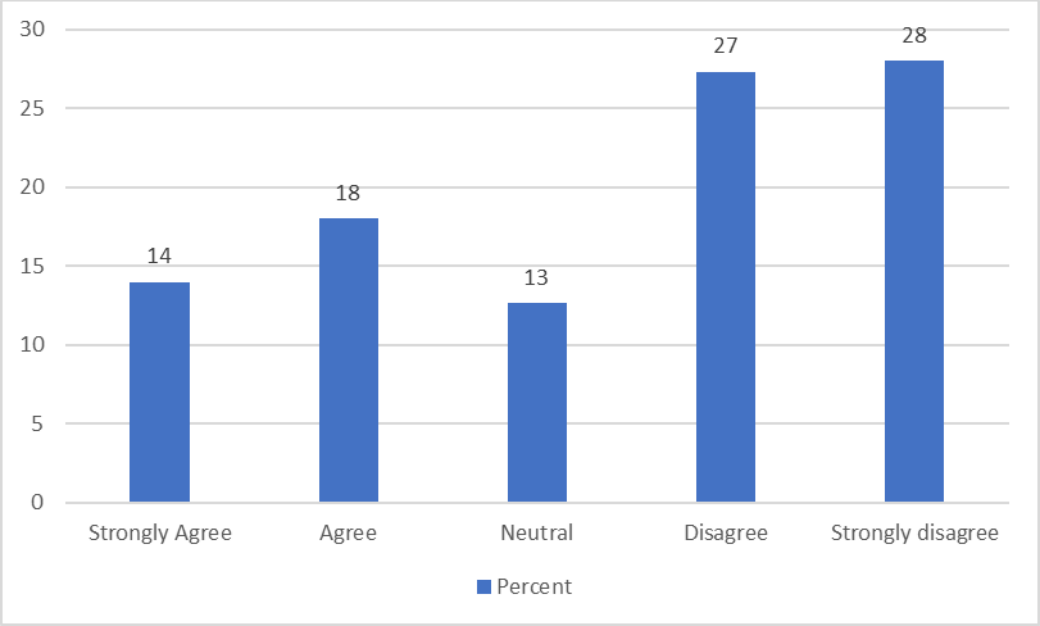


Source: Fieldwork (2021)

Next, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that because of online learning, they are assimilate topics easily, without distraction from other students. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 2.913, SD = 1.357). Further analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (42), representing 28 % of the sample, strongly disagreed with the statement. In addition, 41 respondents, representing 27% of the sample strongly disagreed with the statement.

In contrast to this, 27 respondents, representing 18% of the sample agreed with the statement. This was followed by 21 respondents, representing 14% of the sample, who strongly agreed with the statement. This left 19 respondents, who made up 13% of the sample, who remained undecided or neutral on the statement. Further cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 43 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 35 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.17 Respondents perceptions on assimilate topics easily, without distraction from other students because of online learning

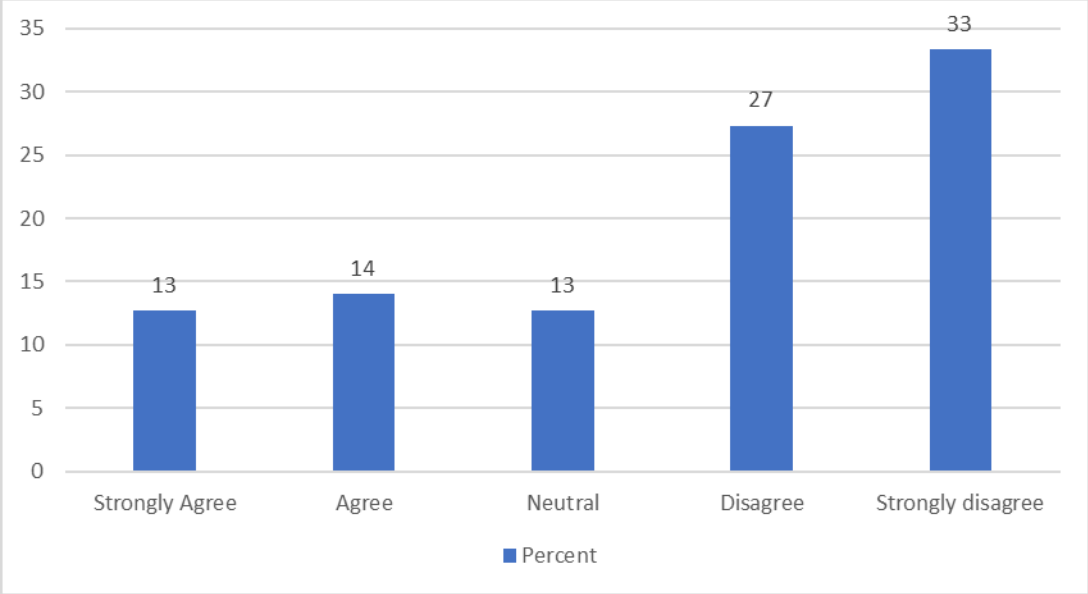


Source: Fieldwork (2021)

Finally, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that their ability to understand topics has improved because of the research that comes with online learning. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 3.073, SD = 1.296). Further analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (50), representing 33 % of the sample, strongly disagreed with the statement. In addition, 41 respondents, representing 27% of the sample strongly disagreed with the statement. In contrast to this, 21 respondents, representing 14% of the sample agreed with the statement. This was followed by 19 respondents, representing 13% of the sample, who strongly agreed with the statement. This left 19 respondents, who made up 12% of the sample, who remained undecided or neutral on the statement.

Further cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 47 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 39 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.18 Respondents perceptions on improvement in their ability to understand topics because of the research that comes with online learning



Source: Fieldwork (2021)

Table 4.2 Summary Statistics on Student's perception on how Online learning influences their ability to understand topics

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Online learning has improved my access to the course content.	150	2.767	1.416	1	4
Online learning allows me to engage with the topics in my own way that helps my understanding.	150	2.847	1.384	1	4
Online learning has enabled me to improve my knowledge of ICT.	150	2.240	1.398	1	4
Because of online learning, I am able to understand topics easily, without distraction from other students.	150	2.913	1.356	1	4
My ability to understand topics has improved because of the research that comes with online learning.	150	3.073	1.296	1	4

Source: Field data (2021)

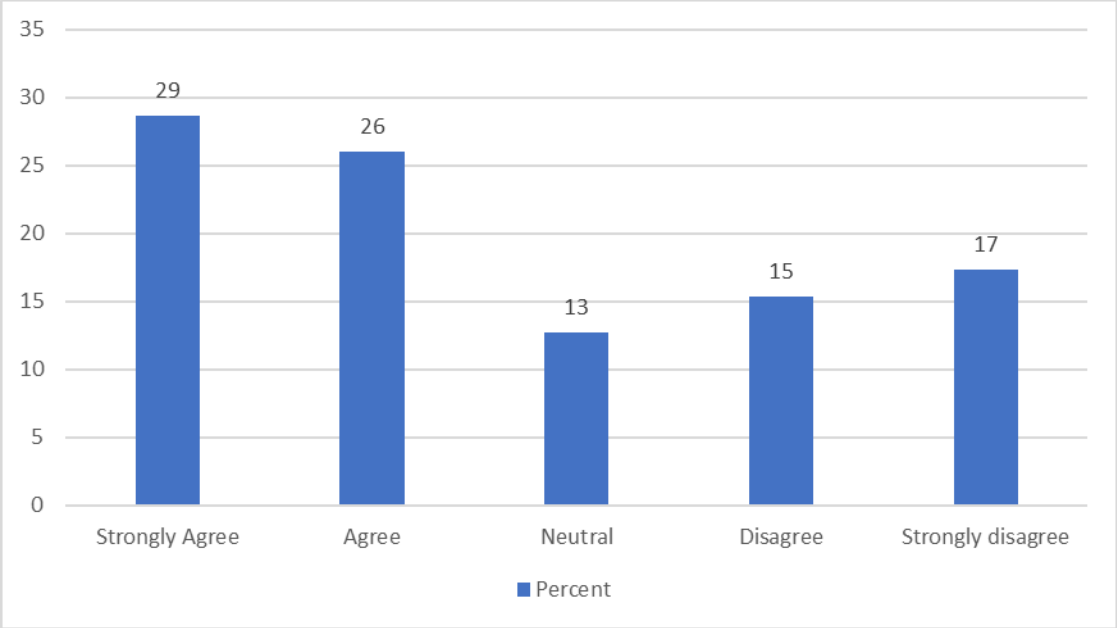
This finding also aligns with the finding of by Boling et al. (2012) who finds that most of their study participants viewed online courses as individualizing learning and limiting interaction with others. Students described feeling isolated from their teachers, from the

content of the course and from their classmates. This could influence the ability of students to understand the content presented.

4.5 Student's Perception on Accessibility Issues Related to Online Learning at The University

Respondents were now asked their opinion on statements regarding student's perception on accessibility issues related to online learning at the university. First, respondents were asked to provide their opinions on the statement that online learning at the university is easily accessible. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (Mean = 2.233, SD = 1.392). Further analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (43), representing 29% of the sample, strongly agreed with the statement. In addition, 39 respondents, representing 26% of the sample agreed with the statement. In contrast to this, 23 respondents, representing 15% of the sample disagreed with the statement. This was followed by 26 respondents, representing 17% of the sample, who strongly disagreed with the statement. This left 19 respondents, who made up 13% of the sample and remained neutral or undecided on the statement. Further cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 37 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 10 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 35 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.19 Respondents perceptions on easily accessible nature of online learning



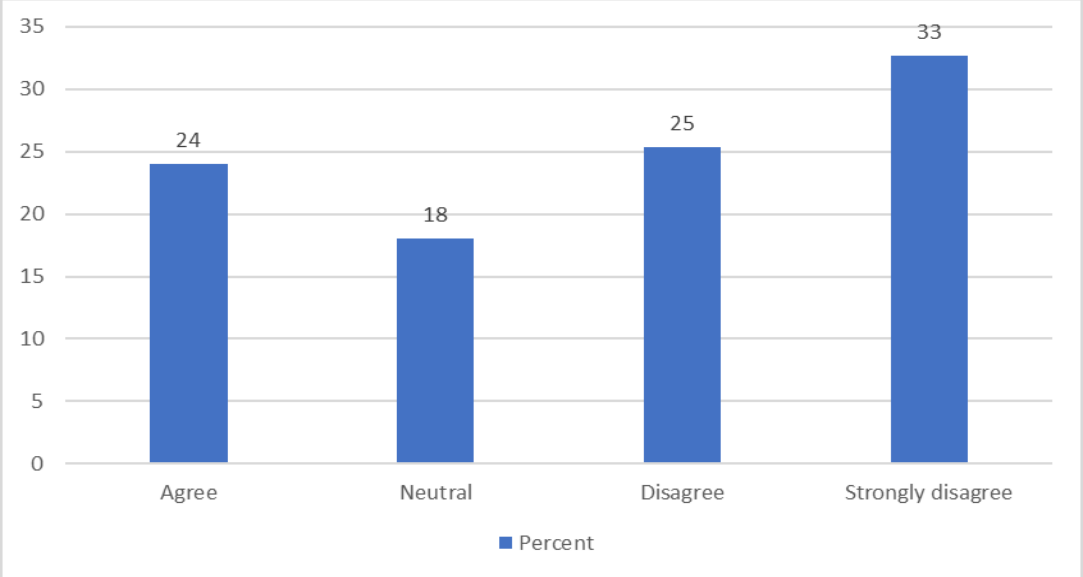
Source: Field data (2021)

Next, respondents were asked to provide their opinions on the statement that students are not restricted in the devices that can access online learning portals at the university. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 3.34, SD = 0.842). Further analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (43), representing 29% of the sample, strongly agreed with the statement. In addition, 39 respondents, representing 26% of the sample agreed with the statement.

In contrast to this, 23 respondents, representing 15% of the sample disagreed with the statement. This was followed by 26 respondents, representing 17% of the sample, who strongly disagreed with the statement. This left 27 respondents, who made up 18% of the sample and remained neutral or undecided on the statement.

Further cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 45 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 37 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.20 Respondents perceptions on the unrestricting of devices that can access online learning portals

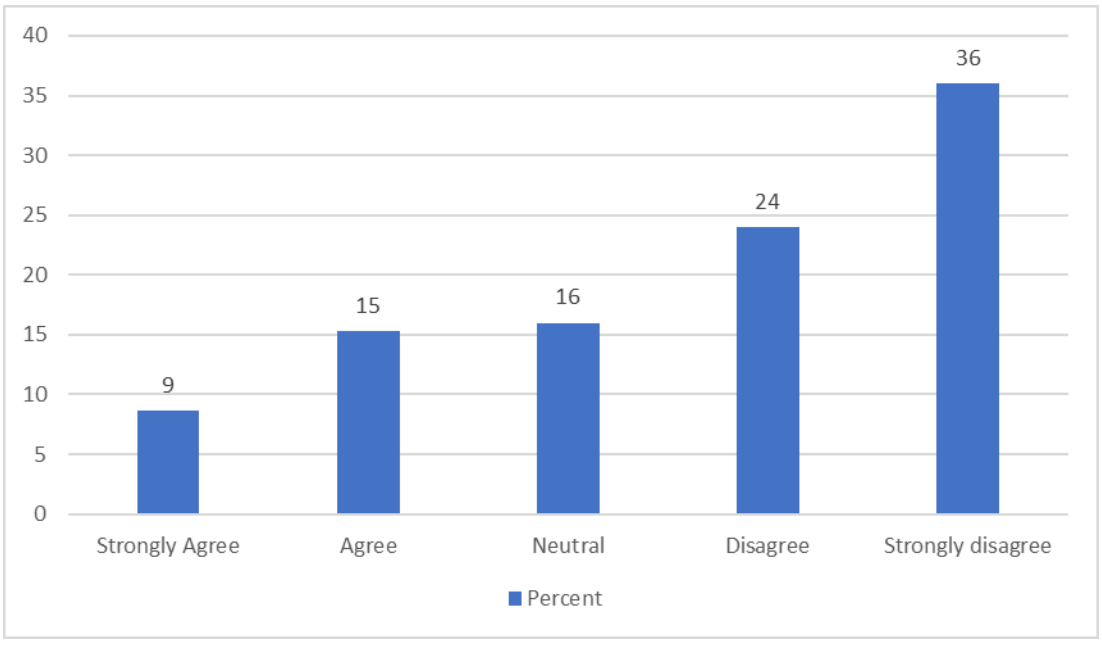


Source: Field data (2021)

Respondents were then asked to provide their opinions on the statement that students can easily contact the ICT department of the university whenever they have challenges accessing online learning platforms. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 3.12, SD = 1.247). Additional analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (54), representing 36% of the sample, strongly disagreed with the statement. In addition, 36

respondents, representing 24% of the sample disagreed with the statement. In contrast to this, 23 respondents, representing 15% of the sample agreed with the statement. This was followed by 13 respondents, representing 9% of the sample, who strongly agreed with the statement. This left 24 respondents, who made up 16% of the sample and remained neutral or undecided on the statement. Further cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 47 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 38 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.21 Easy contact with the ICT department of the university whenever they have challenges accessing online learning platforms

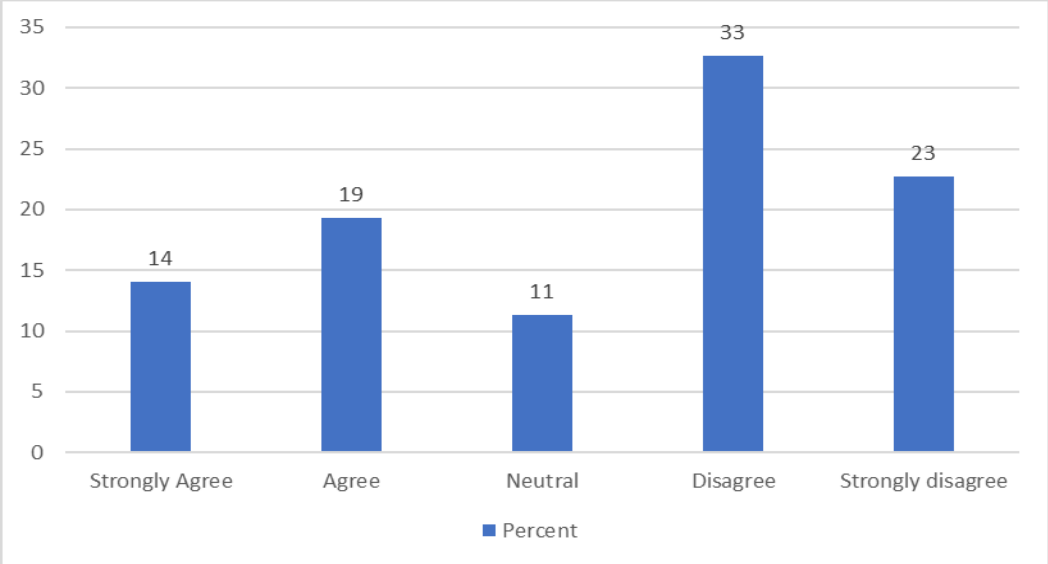


Source: Field data (2021)

Next, respondents were asked to provide their opinions on the statement that the online learning portals of the university are always active. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 2.886, SD = 1.373). Additional analysis of responses showed that the majority of respondents (49), representing 33% of the sample, disagreed with the statement. In addition, 34 respondents, representing 23% of the sample strongly disagreed with the statement.

In contrast to this, 29 respondents, representing 19% of the sample agreed with the statement. This was followed by 21 respondents, representing 14% of the sample, who strongly agreed with the statement. This left 17 respondents, who made up 11% of the sample and remained neutral or undecided on the statement. Further cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 43 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 5 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online learning management system whiles 35 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.22 Respondents perceptions on consistently active nature of online learning portals of the university.



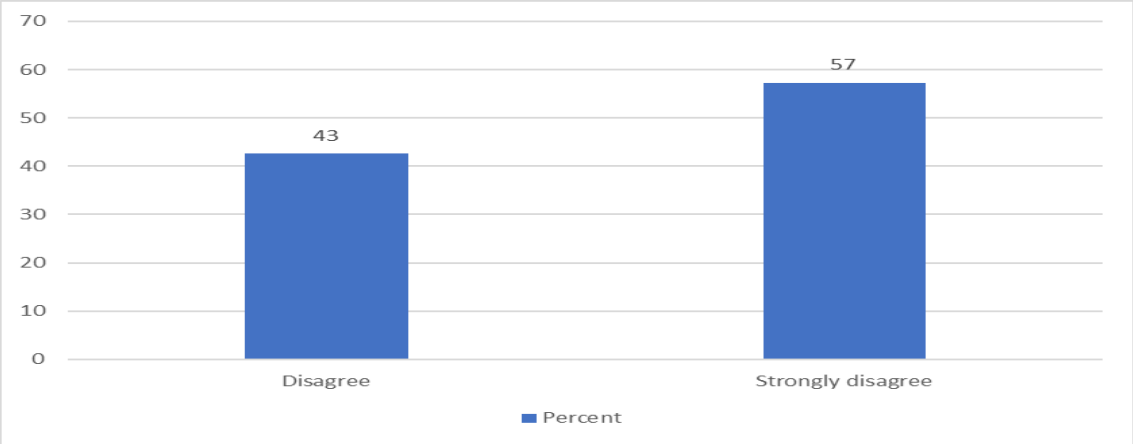
Source: Field data (2021)

Finally, respondents were asked to provide their opinions on the statement that the University gives laptops to some needy students to make sure that they can also access the online learning portals. The results obtained showed that on average, respondents remained neutral or undecided on the statement (Mean = 4.573, SD = 0.496). The frequency analysis of results showed that most respondents (83), representing 57% of the sample strongly disagreed with the statement. These were backed by64 respondents, representing 43% of the sample who disagreed with the statement. No respondent agreed or remained neutral or undecided on the statement.

Further cross-tabulations showed that out of the respondents who strongly disagreed with the statement, 43 respondents rated the online learning management system as poor or average, 11 respondents were neutral on their ratings on the online

learning management system whiles 32 respondents rated the online learning management system as good or excellent.

Figure 4.23 Respondents perceptions on University gives laptops to some needy students for online learning.



Source: Field data (2021)

Table 4.3 Summary Statistics on Student's Perception on Accessibility Issues Related to Online Learning at The University

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Online learning at the university is easily accessible.	150	2.233	1.392	1	4
Students are not restricted in the devices that can access online learning portals at the university.	150	3.340	0.842	2	4
Students can easily contact the ICT department of the university whenever they have challenges accessing online learning platforms.	150	3.120	1.247	1	4
The online learning portals of the university are always active.	150	2.887	1.373	1	4
The University gives laptops to some needy students to make sure that they can also access the online learning portals.	150	4.573	0.496	4	5

Source: Field data (2021)

These findings also do not align with earlier studies on the positive influences of online learning. Some of the positive learning outcomes include improved learning as measured by test scores, student engagement with the course material, enhanced understanding of learning and the online environment, a stronger sense of community among students and reduced withdrawal or failure (Nguyen, 2015).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the summary of key findings is first presented. After this, the study highlights the main conclusions, based on the findings obtained. The final section of this chapter presents recommendations for policy and further research.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

The study intended to determine perception of students regarding the effectiveness of online learning. Specifically, the study sought to examine student's perception on how it affects their ability to relate with their course lectures, examine their perception of online learning and its influence on their ability to understand topics and examine student's perception on accessibility issues related to online learning at the university.

First, the results on educational modules of respondents showed that most respondents (63), representing 42% of the sample, indicated that they were in the weekend school. This was followed by 56 respondents, who represented 37% of the sample, who indicated that they belonged to the regular school. This left 31 respondents, who made up 21% of the sample, and indicated that they had belonged to the evening school.

Secondly, the results obtained showed that most respondents (81), representing 54% of the sample, indicated that they owned laptop computers and smartphones. This left 69 respondents, who made up 46% of the sample, and indicated that they only

smartphones and owned no laptops or computers. This result suggests that all respondents could engage in some form of school online learning with their devices.

Regarding respondents' rating of the effectiveness of their school's online learning management system, the results obtained showed that most respondents (72), representing 48% of the sample, indicated that the online learning management systems in their school were poor or averagely effective. In contrast, 63 respondents, representing 42% of the sample, indicated that the online learning management systems in their school were good or excellent, in terms of effectiveness. This left 15 respondents, who made up 10% of the sample and remained neutral on the effectiveness of the online learning management systems in their school.

Now regarding students' perception on how online learning influenced their ability to relate with their course lecturers, results obtained showed that students largely disagreed with statements on this subtopic, implying that there had been a negative or no effect of online learning on their ability to relate with course lecturers. Students mostly disagreed with statements indicating that online learning had improved their access to course lecturers, improved their ability to engage with online courses of the lecturer, email communication, and dispute resolution of the lecturer. Even students disagreed that they always had access to course lecturers because of online learning. These findings are intuitive given that most institutions employed online in response to the pandemic and the lockdown regulations that were introduced by the government.

Furthermore, regarding students' perception on how online learning influences their ability to understand topics, students agreed mostly that online learning has helped

improve their knowledge of ICT. They, however, disagreed with the statements that suggested that online learning had influence their ease of understanding concepts presented even after the research that accompanies it has been presented.

Finally, regarding students' perception on accessibility issues related to online learning at the university, although students agreed that online learning is easily accessible, they mostly disagreed that the quality of the online learning system. Specifically, students disagreed that the online learning systems were always active, had ICT support staff who could assist always, had restrictions on the type of devices that could access the system and had students who received laptop donations from the University to aid their participation. The results suggest that the online learning management system of the school, although functional, may not have been fully efficient for the students to fully exploit. In addition, not all students had computers that they could use to access the online learning systems.

5.3 Conclusions

The following are key conclusions which can be drawn based on the findings obtained in this study:

- Students at the school are equipped with devices that can access online learning of the school. However, not all the students have computers that may give them full access to use the online learning management systems that the school has.
- Most students rate the online learning system of the school as average or poor. This is a rating based on student perception and does not necessarily take into consideration details about the functionality or construction.

- The online learning management system of the school did not improve much of the ability of the students to understand the concepts and theories that had been presented. This is especially possible for those who may have been struggling with poor internet connection or using other equipment aside computers.
- The online learning management system of the school did not fully guarantee constant access of students to learning materials, given that the systems and ICT support staff may not have been online around the clock.
- According to the students, online learning did not also improve the ability of students to communicate with lecturers. This is possible especially in cases where students had difficulty connecting to lectures and using the right equipment.

5.4 Recommendations

The following are the recommendations that are suggested, based on the findings and conclusions of the study:

- Schools may need to consider having more physical sessions or classes so that people who are unable to obtain stable internet connections or get proper devices for the online calls can participate in the classes.
- The online learning system of schools must be continually worked on to improve its functionality so that students can increasingly rely on the system for smooth communication with faculty and administration on academic issues.

- Schools must also include ICT teaching and practice in their curriculum for all students, given that the success of students on such a system depends on their ability to learn and adopt new technologies and systems.
- There should be an orientation provided to students to appreciate their responsibility to take up their own learning and academic performance without intense physical interference from faculty or administration. This is because globally competitive universities or schools are those that have succeeded in getting their infrastructure online and students understand that everything is done online in order to pass through their system. Students in this school also need to get to such a point.

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Appendix

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STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ONLINE LEARNING AND ITS IMPACT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction:

This questionnaire is a part of an MSc thesis to be submitted to the Ghana institute of Journalism (GIJ), as a partial fulfilment for the requirement of the degree. The purpose of the study is to assess students' perception of the significance of online learning and how it is impacted on their academic performance in Ghana. Please, be rest assured that the study is for only academic purposes; all and every information provided will therefore be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Thank you for your cooperation and participation.

Instructions: Please fill in the blank space provided or tick (√) as appropriate. Where there is any open-ended question, provide the response as honestly as possible.

Section A: Biographic Data of Respondents

1. Gender of Respondents

a. Male [ ]

b. Female [ ]

2. Educational module

a. Regular [ ]

b. Evening [ ]

c. Weekend [ ]

3. Ownership of Smart Devices

a. Laptop/computer only and no smartphone [ ]

b. Smartphone only and no laptop/computer [ ]

c. Both laptop/computer and smartphone [ ]

d. None [ ]

4. How would you rate the effectiveness of online learning management systems in your school?

a. Poor [ ]

b. Average [ ]

c. Neutral [ ]

d. Good [ ]

e. Excellent [ ]

Section B: Student's Perception on How Online Learning Affects Their Ability to Relate with Their Course Lectures

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding claims processing and performance of insurance companies in Ghana.

The following scale applies *1 – Strongly Agree (SA); 2 – Agree (A); 3 – Neutral (N); 4 – Disagree (D); 5 – Strongly Disagree (SD).*

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
We always have access to course lecturers because of online learning.					
I can share my concerns directly with my lecturer because of online learning.					
The course lecturer can reach me directly because of online learning.					

Because of online learning, I feel that the course lecturer is empowered to do the work with ease.					
Online learning has allowed us to benefit from instant email communication with course lecturers.					
Course lecturers can cover a lot more topics because of online learning.					
I appreciate better the course content from the lecturer when it is online.					
I understand the course better because the lecturer uses online tools.					
I am better able to engage with the online course because of the lecturer's presentation.					

Section C: Student's perception on how Online learning influences their ability to understand topics

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding claims processing and performance of insurance companies in Ghana.

The following scale applies *1 – Strongly Agree (SA); 2 – Agree (A); 3 – Neutral (N); 4 – Disagree (D); 5 – Strongly Disagree (SD).*

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Online learning has improved my access to the course content.					
Online learning allows me to engage with the topics in my own way that helps my understanding.					
Online learning has enabled me to improve my knowledge of					

ICT.					
Because of online learning, I can understand topics easily, without distraction from other students.					
My ability to understand topics has improved because of the research that comes with online learning.					

Section D: Student's Perception on Accessibility Issues Related to Online Learning at The University

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding claims processing and performance of insurance companies in Ghana.

The following scale applies *1 – Strongly Agree (SA); 2 – Agree (A); 3 – Neutral (N); 4 – Disagree (D); 5 – Strongly Disagree (SD).*

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Online learning at the university is easily accessible.					
Students are not restricted in the devices that can access online learning portals at the university.					
Students can easily contact the ICT department of the university whenever they have challenges accessing online learning platforms.					
The online learning portals of the university are always active.					
The University gives laptops to some needy students to make sure that they can also access the online learning portals.					