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Assessment of learners' satisfaction in distance learning programme: A case study of science education students at Distance Learning Institute, University of Lagos

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Abstract
Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has over time been a major educational strategy in Nigeria. It provides education for those who would not have gained admission into the regular school setting. This study described learner satisfaction with the components of a distance learning program. Three research questions on learner total satisfaction level, interaction with the lecturer, and online learning environment were raised to guide the study. A descriptive survey design was adopted through the administration of a structured questionnaire to 100 randomly selected final-year Science Education students of the Distance Learning Institute, University of Lagos. Data were collated through frequency counts and mean scores. The findings revealed high levels of satisfaction by learners on the total program, lecturer interaction, and online learning component. Based on these findings, this study recommends that facilitators and administrators of distance learning should further enhance quality learning experiences, especially regarding its online components so as to improve learner achievement and retention.
Keywords: Therapeia, Healing, Miraculous Healing, Salvation, Christ Apostolic Church

Introduction
Open and distance learning (ODL) has become very important as modes of admission and education delivery in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. This is primarily due to the large growth spurt experienced by information and communication technology, ICT, and the Internet in the 21st century. According to Adedoja & Oguntunde (2007), it defines distance learning as internet-connected computers being used to make learning happen anywhere anytime. Thus, the ODL delivery mode has also been characterized by online learning, which may take place under moodle among other online platforms such as learning management system(LMS), google classrooms and many more virtual video delivery learning platforms. However, on a very low note related to online delivery modalities of most of distance learning centers across interacting physically face-to-face with learners.

The net studying is presently regarded as very pertinent in ODL due to the fact that it does not involve constraints related to time, place, or any other factors (Singh and Thurman, 2019; Miller, 2020; Itasanmi and Oni, 2020). Some of the alternative names with which people refer online education include e-learning, blended learning, virtual learning, remote education, online education, web-based education, web-based instruction and online courses. As defined by Singh and Thurman (2019), it covers anything from merely posting reading materials onto some platform to teach and learn 'live' through various applications facilitating "the bridging of the space between the teacher and the student through the use of web-based technologies".

Since after the COVID-19, Online learning has become a more popular and acceptable modes of delivering teaching and learning (Miller, 2020; Choi and Chung, 2021). A number of studies show that online learning can provide many positive learning experiences to online learners (Arbaugh, 2014, Su and Chen, 2020). However, one of the challenges of online learning relates to students' learning experiences and achievement. Mark (2013) stated that students' satisfaction and outcomes are good indicators for assessing the quality and effectiveness of online programs. It is a concern for institutions to know whether its students, in general, are satisfied with their learning experience.

Satisfaction is defined as the graduation and post-graduation students' experience from the time they begin their education. Students will be satisfied if academic performance or experience matches what they had expected when opting for a particular program or institution. Learning satisfaction can be viewed as the feelings by learners toward learning activities which directly indicates the extent to which expectations are met during the learning process. Learner satisfaction can be considered as an aggregated feeling or emotional response to factors of online learning in interacting with an e-learning system. Satisfaction with teaching mode, course content, learning environment as well as their own learning state and effect is taken into consideration by learners; therefore, these are the major elements that constitute areas of learner satisfaction in online delivery. Many factors play in student satisfaction with online courses, such as instructor characteristics, communication, technology, course management and website, interactivity, and student responsibility. The satisfaction of students in Open and Distance Learning bears a direct effect on the successful completion of distance learning programs and carries meaningful weight toward assessing an ODL institution about its strengths and

weaknesses that require redress. In this regard, learner satisfaction is a basic determinant of success across different learning environments but more particularly in online modalities.

Some studies learning (Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2018; Riddle and Gier, 2019, Baber, 2020) note that learners post greater satisfaction ratings for online systems than on the traditional face-to-face systems. Other studies note results for online learning that are less satisfying as compared to face-to-face and note results of poorer engagement of online learners with online learning (Pickering and Swinnerton, 2019). The different arguments among scholars requires a more systematic comprehensive study about satisfaction in online learning which is very important to improve the service quality of online learning courses besides perfecting the evaluation system for the quality of online teaching.

In these focuses, student satisfaction is the key leading factor to the success of any higher education institution. The study of student satisfaction with online learning as part of the open distance learning ecosystem is important. This study seeks to assess learner satisfaction in distance learning, students' reported engagement with lecturers, and their general satisfaction levels in the distance learning programme in Lagos.

Statement of the Problem

Student satisfaction serves as the primary indicator of their academic experience and performance in distance learning programs. The major factor that determines the quality of distance education is how much the learners think that they have effectively and adequately participated in the learning process through online facilitation. Participation includes personal motivation of the learner to relate with course content, interact with tutors as well as other peers. Since most interactions in the distance learning program are conducted online, it is imperative to determine students' satisfaction concerning their learning activities and engagement in the program. The focus of this study was therefore an assessment of learners' satisfaction in a distance learning program, satisfaction of learners with their interaction with instructors, and their satisfaction with online learning in such programs.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been formulated to guide the study.

1) What is the level of satisfaction of learners in distance learning programme?
2) What is the level of satisfaction of learners–lecturers interactions in distance learning programme?
3) What is the level of satisfaction of learners in the online learning environment in distance learning programme?

Participants and Sample

The study targeted all 400-level students at the Department of Science Education from the Distance Learning Institute at the University of Lagos. The choice of these students was based on their large and extended contact with the distance learning system, which placed them in a very good position to deliver an informed assessment of such a program. 100 students made up a reasonable proportion of the final-year cohort of the department who took part in this study. This sample size is apt to be described as adequate under a descriptive survey design that accommodates an appropriate level of generalization and, at the same time, provides manageability for in-depth analysis. It was selected through stratification by gender across the programme to ensure representation and balance. There were 60 males and 40 females.

Besides their gender, other demographic factors were also noted. These included their age, which mostly fell within the 23 to 40 years bracket, and an earlier experience with online learning. Most of the participants had already undertaken not less than two years using the distance learning platform, thus making their feedback very relevant in assessing satisfaction with the programme.

Instruments

A structured questionnaire titled Distance Learners Satisfaction Questionnaire, DLSQ was the major instrument used for collecting data. The researcher developed it in line with the objectives as well as the questions that guided this study. Specifically, fifteen items make up the DLSQ grouped under three subscales which include satisfaction with the general distance learning program, and satisfaction with learner lecturer interactions, and satisfaction with the online learning environment.

For content validity, three experts in Educational Technology and Distance Learning reviewed the instrument. Based on their comments, further adjustments were made to ensure better clarity of questionnaire items in relation to the goals of the study and their appropriateness. A pretest was administered to a small group comprising 20 distance learners who were not among the target sample. The reliability of this instrument was determined through the use of Cronbach's alpha formula, which came out to be 0.81, thus implying quite adequate internal consistency and reliability.

A 4-point Likert scale that runs as Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Dissatisfied, and Very Dissatisfied was used purposely to eliminate a midpoint so that the respondents might be induced to express an explicit opinion hence increasing the discriminatory power of the responses. Such an approach in satisfaction surveys is common where the intention is to find out a directional leaning and not neutrality.

Data Analysis

Three research questions were stated in this study. To test these, frequency count, mean scores and standard deviation was used.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the satisfaction of learners in the distance learning programme?

Table 1: Satisfaction of learners in the distance learning programme

S/N	Items	VS 4	S 3	D 2	VD 1	N	Mean	Decision
1	I enjoy my activities as a distance learning student	50	33	10	7	100	3.26	**Accepted**
2	I have more opportunities to collaborate with other students	45	42	8	5	100	3.27	**Accepted**
3	I enjoy my learning pace in distance learning program	52	38	6	4	100	3.38	**Accepted**
4	I am pleased with the exam schedule in distance learning program	48	45	12	5	100	3.56	**Accepted**
5	I enjoy the registration process in distance learning program	51	40	6	3	100	3.39	**Accepted**
Total							**3.37**	**Accepted**

From table 1, results show that items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 with mean 3.26, 3.27, 3.38, 3.56 and 3.39 respectively agree with the respective item stated. This affirms the satisfaction of learners in distance learning program. The learners are satisfied with the learning activities, the learning pace, registration and exam schedule in distance learning program. Hence, 3.37 of the overall mean is a strong indication of the respondents' affirmation.

Research Question 2: What is the level of satisfaction of learners to the lectures in distance learning programme?

Table 2: Satisfaction of learners to the lectures in distance learning programme?

S/N	Items	VS 4	S 3	D 2	VD 1	N	Mean	Decision
6	I am pleased with my lecturers in distance learning	40	56	3	1	100	3.35	**Accepted**
7	I am pleased with the lecture time in distance learning	38	58	2	2	100	3.32	**Accepted**
8	I am satisfied with the lecture notes in distance learning program	31	60	4	5	100	3.17	**Accepted**
9	I am satisfied with the lecture days in distance learning program	32	59	6	3	100	3.20	**Accepted**
10	I am pleased with the lecture materials in distance learning program	48	48	2	2	100	3.42	**Accepted**
Total							**3.29**	**Accepted**

From table 2, results show that students' response to items 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 with mean 3.35, 3.32, 3.17, 3.20 and 3.42 respectively agree with the respective item stated. This shows the satisfaction of learners to lectures in distance learning program.

Research Question 3: What is the level of satisfaction of learners to the online learning environment in distance learning programme?

Table 3: Satisfaction of learners to the online learning environment in distance learning programme?

S/N	Items	VS 4	S 3	D 2	VD 1	N	Mean	Decision
11	I am pleased with distance learning online portal	43	45	2	10	100	3.21	**Accepted**
12	I am pleased with distance learning online lectures	35	40	15	10	100	3.0	**Accepted**
13	I am satisfied with distance learning online course registration	33	42	17	8	100	3.0	**Accepted**
14	I am satisfied with distance learning online module	30	50	5	15	100	2.95	**Accepted**
15	I am pleased with the online video lectures in distance learning programme	30	40	20	10	100	2.9	**Accepted**
Total							**3.01**	**Accepted**

From table 3, items 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 with mean 3.21, 3.0, 3.0, 2.95 and 2.9 respectively disagree with the respective item stated. This means that the learners are satisfied with the online learning environment in distance learning program. Distance learners are satisfied with the online lectures, online portal, online registration, online modules and videos in distance learning program. Hence, 3.010f the overall mean is a strong indication of the respondents' affirmation of satisfaction of the online delivery mode.

Result and Discussion

Research Question 1: How satisfied are learners with the distance learning program?

Table 1 shows that respondents have a generally positive perception of the program. Mean scores ranged from 3.26 to 3.56 on major items about how enjoyable learning activities are, how collaborative opportunities are, and how satisfied they are with the examination and registration processes. Since the aggregate mean score is 3.37, this indicates that respondents typically agree with the statements suggesting positive experiences.

Results point to a relatively high rating of the structure and management of the distance learning programme. This goes in line with findings by Kuo et al. (2013) who noted that accessible support services at online learning institutions, which have to be student-centered, play a great role. According to Olaniyan & Fakuade (2024), factors that tilt the scales favoring learner satisfaction in distance education between institutional flexibility and learner autonomy, particularly in African contexts where technological infrastructure does not favor such practice.

Research Question 2: What has been the level of satisfaction of learners with lecturers in the distance learning programme.

Learners indicated satisfaction with dimensions of instructor engagement aspects which included availability, lecture schedules, and quality of materials provided. Mean scores for these dimensions ranged from 3.17 to 3.42, yielding an overall mean score of 3.29. The ratings though high should not mask the fact that satisfaction is a function of the fulfillment of individual learning needs as well as on access to technology.

This finding tallies with the conclusion of Bolliger et al. (2014), who had brought out the importance of instructor interaction and timely feedback to promote student satisfaction in a distance learning setup. This goes further in line with what Olaniyan and Fakuade (2024) said, "Most of the time, distance learners from Sub-Saharan Africa appreciate more when instructors assume the role of mediators between content and technology due to varying degrees of digital skills among students."

Research Question 3: What is the level of satisfaction of learners with the online learning environment in the distance learning programme?

Table 3 shows a somewhat lower but still basically good level of happy feelings about the online learning setting. Mean scores for items went from 2.90 to 3.21, making an overall mean of 3.01. These results say that while students were somewhat pleased with how well and ready the online setup is, parts like online video service and class sign-up steps might still need some work.

Digital infrastructure is very critical in molding the experience of a learner at ODL. As stated by Olaniyan and Fakuade (2024), the major impediments that can be categorized under technological inadequacies include inconsistent internet connectivity and limited access to digital devices, which remain the main constraints against achieving full effectiveness through distance learning within African contexts. Usability improvement for the platform, reduced complexity for digital navigation, and access through mobile phones would make learner satisfaction achievable under resource constraint environments (Wei & Chou, 2020).

Put together, results from all the three research questions show that students in the program generally express high levels of satisfaction across dimensions under study. However, results are best read against broader systemic and infrastructural limitations. A nuanced understanding of learners' satisfaction must take into account not only the pedagogical quality but also socio-technical and institutional readiness.

Conclusion

The study investigated learners' satisfaction with different components of the distance learning programme at the Distance Learning Institute, University of Lagos. Findings revealed that learners mostly expressed a high level of satisfaction with the entire programme, instructor engagement, and online learning environment; however, all these were not on equally high notes when broken down into specific aspects of the online platform inside which video lectures and course registration take place. Findings inspire, findings call for more infrastructure, more training, more support for learners. The better distance learning sits at the heart of educational access in that region. These are the insights towards a better understanding of sustaining and improving student satisfaction which is very important to academic success and program retention.

Implications

The results of this study have important implications for policymakers, programme coordinators, and instructors in the field of distance education systems. High levels of satisfaction, particularly with the dimension of lecturer interaction, indicate that human elements are still very much alive and kicking in digital learning environments. Thus, there should be a long-run embracing of responsive and engaging lecturer-student interactions by distance learning programmes.

Also, as Olaniyan and Fakuade (2024) put it, learners' satisfaction is not just a pedagogical concern but a holistic one that hinges on such systemic factors as the availability of

reliable technology and institutional support mechanisms. Such systemic gaps must therefore be addressed to advance equity, learner engagement, and educational outcomes in Nigeria or any other context like this.

Also, results back up earlier views (Wei & Chou, 2020) that easy tools and a well-set digital learning space are key to fostering joy in online learning. So, spending on platform quality and user experience is not a choice–it is basic to the success of ODL models.

Recommendations

On the basis of findings and their implications, the following recommendations are made:

1) Continuous Assessment: As part of the programme monitoring systems, regular assessments of learners' satisfaction should be taken into consideration to ensure that new needs are identified and addressed adequately and timely.
2) Improvement of Digital Platforms: The online learning infrastructure should be upgraded where necessary as per the video content quality, registration systems, and usability of the platform to ensure learners' engagement and reduce frustration.
3) Faculty Development and Support: Provide continuous training of digital pedagogy to faculty, inclusive of the usage of interactive tools and methodologies for sustaining their presence in virtual spaces, which has a direct bearing on student satisfaction.
4) Targeted Learner Support: Extra support service provision should be considered by the institution. This includes new user onboarding as well as technical assistance to support learners who have varying levels of digital literacy and internet access.
5) Policies of distance education should keenly observe infrastructural challenges at local contexts, as has been highlighted in studies from regions, ensuring that interventions are both equitable and locally relevant.

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