

The Journal of Positive Psychology and Counselling



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The Journal of Positive Psychology and Counselling is a peer reviewed journal that attracts well researched empirical and theoretical articles on areas of positive and counselling psychology such as psychotherapies, emotions, motivation, holistic wellness, marriage and life satisfaction, subjective well-being, leisure, interpersonal relationship, mindfulness and optimal performance, love and infatuation, excellence, aesthetics, creativity and giftedness. the focus also include optimism, resiliency, wellness across the life span, religions, spirituality and well-being, human strengths, virtues, meta cognition and happiness.

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Determinants Of Academic Staff Readiness For The Adoption Of Online Teaching-Learning Platforms In African Universities During Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Effective teaching-learning activities require considerable preparation in terms of knowledge of the content, pedagogical skills and provision of relevant instructional materials. The proliferation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and its adoption for teaching raised issues on the expected level of ICT efficacy, needed by lecturers for effective use of modern technologies for teaching. This situation was fueled by the advent of COVID-19 pandemic which warranted institutions at all levels to adopt online/remote teaching-learning platforms as the alternative means of continue education activities while learners are still at home due to the social distance policy. Using remote platforms has raised questions about its effectiveness as there was no prior training for lecturers and how their personal characteristics would promote the adoption of remote platforms have not been established. This creates impetus to examine institutional readiness determinants using staff personal characteristics as a test case. Ex post facto design was adopted for the study. The population comprised lecturers from Higher institutions who responded to an online questionnaire using "Google forms" (research instrument) titled Higher Institutions Academic Staff's Readiness (HIASR, $r=0.91$) from which 173 lecturers from higher institution in Africa were purposively selected. Data collected were analysed, using Ordinary Least Square regression and O-probit at 0.05 level of significance. Results revealed that joint contributions of independent variables (gender, academic cadre and self-efficacy) was significant ($R^2=0.204$, $F\text{-test}=3.475$, $p<0.05$); staff academic cadre ($\beta=-2.295$, $t=-1.88$, $p<0.05$) and self-efficacy ($\beta=-1.914$, $t=2.00$, $p<0.05$) made significant contributions but no significant contribution was made by gender ($\beta=-.426$, $t=-1.17$, $p>0.05$). It is recommended that external factors such as, internet facilities and bandwidth, alongside academic staff's personal characteristics, should be given high level of consideration.

Keywords: Staff readiness, Online platforms, COVID-19 pandemic, Remote learning

Background

Teaching at every level of education in years past, was associated with talking and chalking. This include traditional classroom education, where the teacher used books and blackboards as teaching aids and the possible means of learning was to have facial interactions with the teacher. Apart from face-to-face interaction, different efforts have been made in times past, to create or expand learning opportunities beyond the face to face interactions which includes audio and

video recordings of interactions and other means of documentation. Past literature revealed that individuals may be forgiven for thinking that the use of electronic media and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education has a limited past. But in the real sense, it has a long and relatively well-structured history, dating back to before the Second World War, when educational radio first made its appearance (Alan, 1998).

Not only that, the shift from face-to-face interactions to other platforms of teaching-learning have been fostered in the time past. The current era-where knowledge added is equivalent to the value added, knowledge is a compulsory factor than any other factors of production and knowledge provider assumed status of indispensable fuel in the engine of development necessitated that teaching-learning activities should not be confined to face-to-face interaction. The foregoing was also fueled by the advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) that redefined the role of teachers from being the providers of knowledge to mere facilitators of knowledge Fakeye (2009). Consequently, frontiers of education are constantly and continuously expanding, while ICT has brought great changes to the teaching and learning process and internet has become the amazing tool in this regard Bamiro (2006).

Also, the proliferation of digitization which is a process of taking traditional school materials that are in the form of hard paper books and converting them to electronic formats where they can be stored or manipulated by a computer accelerated stakeholders' shift from the traditional face-to-face mode. As electronic tablets, laptops, and other devices proliferate in classrooms, the traditional school setting, in which time, place, the content, and pace of learning are constant, has been restructured. Personal electronic devices are enabling a shift from classroom-centered learning to personalised, student-centered learning that can happen anytime and anywhere (Kish, Christian, Brent, and Alanna, 2013).

As a response to innovation in teaching-learning activities, some stakeholders in higher education considered mixed approach, otherwise known as 'Blended learning' to the teaching-learning activities, as a litmus test of efficacy of future adoption of purely online platforms of teaching and learning. This has however, led to the adoption of partly face-to-face and partly online modes which is highly welcomed by stakeholders in Higher education most especially in the sub-Saharan Africa. The report shows that most countries in the sub-Saharan Africa, have taken the advantage of the technological advancement in distance learning to make strides in the advancement of education, because, the innovation offers tremendous hope towards providing African students with access to a higher education (Selinger, 2002 and Shrestha, 2000).

It is pertinent to note that blended learning through distance learning programmes, brought a plus to higher education in Africa. As a pilot of its kind, World Bank established African Virtual University in 1997 in Kenya to control 57 annexes in 27 countries in Africa where upon the completion of their programmes(African Virtual University, 2012), which has also led to the adopt blended learning by existing higher institutions in different countries in Africa, into their programmes. For instance, in Ghana, the Institute of Distance Learning (IDL) was established at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Center for Continuing Education at the University of Cape Coast (CCEUCC) runs two dual distance-learning programmes in Diploma and Post Diploma.

In Nigeria, prominent among universities that offer online programmes are the University of Ibadan, the Pan-African UNICAF University, Ahmadu Bello University, Kano and the National Open University, Nigeria. In South Africa, the University of the Witwatersrand is prominent for blended programmes called 'wits plus'. It was also reported that a company called Edacy combines MOOCs with short industrial apprenticeships and distance learning in vocational education, as explicitly supported by the South African government (Stefan, 2018). Based on the numerous advantages of blended learning platforms over traditional face-to-face interaction, African universities are coming to terms with the full adoption of online teaching-learning platforms, probably due to increased student enrolment rate and the intention to cover wider geographical area. Although, this holistic shift from blended to complete online interaction is 'gaining momentum among university stakeholders. Apart from open universities, such as the National Open University of Nigeria and the National Open University of Kenya, the complete adoption of online learning platforms is not common among universities in Africa. Because this requires no face-to-face contact with learning facilitators during the interactions. However, online interactions could be in forms of 'knowledge based', when learning materials were only deposited online for learners and accessed by the instructor. It could be "online-support" when in addition to deposited learning materials, the learners also have other means of contacting the learning facilitator for possible explanations.

Other forms of online interactions, based on optional timing are "synchronous" which allows learners to discuss with the instructors and also among themselves via the internet at the same time with the possibility of receiving instantaneous feedback (Almosa and Almubarak, 2005). "Asynchronous" on the other hand, allows participants to post communications to other participants over the internet after the deposition of learning materials by the instructor (Algahtani, 2011). Another form of online interaction is "hybrid" of the aforementioned ones, which include possible combination of any of these learning interaction platforms.

Full adoption of any of these online interaction platforms for learning is highly rare among African universities. However, the current COVID-19 pandemic, created an impetus for higher education stakeholders to consider online platforms as the sole means of teaching-learning interactions. By May, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020), reported that the number of the infected people with this novel virus was 6, 057, 853 and had claimed 371, 166 lives at that period. The virus did not only challenge the health sector, but also put all other sectors into complete lockdown worldwide. As a result, different policies and configuration were made as attempts to stem the spread of the novel COVID-19 virus across nations of the world.

Preventive measures to curtail the spread of the virus include social distancing, quarantine, self-isolation and total lockdown of religious houses and educational institutions (Jordan, 2020). The lockdown of higher institutions', in particular, affected not only students' learning activities but also the mode of teaching in universities, if learning was to continue while students were on lockdown at their respective homes. The current pandemic of COVID-19 suggested online learning medium as potential option for teaching and learning now and in the future. However, many issues have been raised regarding adopting online learning platforms. Gewin (2020), observed that there is no prior training programme for students and lecturers in some institutions on how to facilitate learning via online platforms. Inequality tends to exist among the available online teaching-learning facilities available to lecturers. For instance, in a situation whereby

computers and other Information Technology equipment such as internet facilities, conducive atmosphere and a good network at home, are in heavy demand between parents (lecturers), their children, and other relatives who have to work from home, is at deficit due to lockdown of activities, as a result COVID-19 pandemic (Chronicle, 2020)

Also, the level of staff readiness in terms of self-efficacy, in using online interaction platforms have not been established, though research on lecturers self-efficacy started before the adoption of online platforms for teaching which are majorly in the area of computer usage. Hodges (2008) suggested that there is a need for more studies in the area teachers' self-efficacy in using online learning interaction platform. Although few studies have investigated multi-dimension of self-efficacy in online learning (Shen, Cho, Tsai, and Marra, 2013; Taipjutorus, 2014; Taipjutorus, Hansen, and Brown, 2012), but how self-efficacy in the use of online interaction platforms by higher institution lecturers influence its adoption are yet to be investigated. It is also not impossible that the adoption of online interaction platforms by staff to be connected to cadre in some institutions.

In like manner, findings on how lecturers' cadres and years of teaching experience, influence the adoption of technology for learning is not absolute as past studies have shown that teachers' experience in teaching did not influence their use of computer technology in teaching (Niederhauser and Stoddart, 2001). Most research showed that lecturers' cadre and/or teaching experience influence the effective adoption of ICT in for teaching-learning interaction (Wong and Li, 2008; Giordano, 2007; Hernandez-Ramos, 2005). However, the extent to which lecturers' cadre influence the adoption of online interaction have not been established. Another, prominent factors proximate to adoption of online interaction among higher education stakeholders is gender.

Gender differences have been reported in several studies on the adoption of technology for teaching. Prominent among these is the report on female teachers' low levels of computer use due to their limited technology access, skill, and interest (Volman and van Eck, 2001). Past literature report also that male teaching staff used more ICTs in their teaching-learning process than their female counterparts (Kay, 2006; Wozney et al., 2006). In addition, Markauskaite (2006), investigated gender differences in self-reported ICT experience and ICT literacy teachers, the study revealed significant differences between males and females in technical ICT capabilities, situational and longitudinal sustainability in favour of male against their female counterparts. From the foregoing, it could be concluded that lecturers' characteristics in respect to the use of technologies for face-to-face teaching-learning interaction were reported in literature. However, the extent of their preparedness for the online learning interaction platforms, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, is yet to be reported. Therefore, this study examined determinants of institutional readiness for the adoption of online teaching-learning platforms during COVID-19 pandemic among African universities

Adoption of technology for teaching-learning activities in African higher institutions is not a new innovation. Era of ICT has necessitated most activities to be technological driven at any level of education. Reports and literature showed that African higher education institutions have yet to fully adopt and adapt educational technology induced-innovations into their teaching and learning activities. For instance, the use of whiteboard interactions within classrooms, adoption

of blended learning etc. are innovations in teaching-learning activities that most African higher education institutions have not fully come to terms with.

However, the advent of COVID-19 pandemic, posts additional challenges to higher education stakeholders as it was reported in May, 2020, by WHO that a number of the infected people with this novel virus was 6,057,853 and it claimed 371,166 lives at that period worldwide. The spread of COVID-19 reached African nations by February, 2020 and the economy sector, religion and educational institutions' activities were all halted in March, 2020, which led to the closure of many sectors including the education sector, in which higher institutions were not left out. The pandemic has propelled some Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) while learners are still at home, to adopt online learning platforms for education activities, while others are yet to embrace it. The challenge to adopt online platform was heightened when stakeholders in primary and secondary levels of education were using platforms such as radio, television and social media to facilitate teaching-learning and ensure that learning was not halted.

Prior to COVID-19 pandemic, there is no report on the level of self-efficacy of higher education staff in facilitating teaching-learning interaction in an online platform. In fact, it was reported that there is no prior training for staff on facilitating online teaching. Also, there is dearth of literature on the influence of availability of online teaching facilities, gender and teaching experience in term of staff cadres on the use of online learning platforms by higher institutions' staff, this is the reason why this study examined determinants of adoption of online teaching-learning interaction among staff of higher institutions in Africa.

Research Questions

The following research question were raised to guide the study:

1. How reliable is the regression model used to predict academic staff readiness from the set of academic staff's gender, academic cadre and online learning platforms' self-efficacy as predictors??
2. Which of the predictors is most influential in predicting academic staff readiness among staff gender, academic cadre and online learning platforms self-efficacy?

Significant of the Study

The results of this study will be of immense benefits to higher education policymakers and other stakeholders such as university administrators, government and individuals. Also, it will be an eye opener to the government on why some universities could not fully adopt online teaching and learning platforms before, during and after COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, it will enlighten university administrators on factors to be given adequate consideration when planning to adopt online teaching and learning platforms for both lecturers and students. The result will also serve as baseline information not only for predicting future actionable responses to emergency situations among HEIs but also for research ventures in the field of higher education.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study; the population of the study comprised teaching staff of higher education institutions, specifically, university lecturers of African

universities. The electronic instrument designed in Google forms format titled "Academic Staff Readiness to Adoption of Online Teaching Learning Platforms" (ASRAOTLP, $r=0.91$). The instrument was constructed in such a way that item that addresses continent of respondent was built-in to sieve out responses from other continents. One hundred and seventy three (173) completely filled forms containing responses of staff from African universities (Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, Uganda and the Republic of Benin) were purposively selected from the pool of responses from other lecturers in other continents obtained from professional platforms such as Research Gate and Academia; groups' social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook and e-mails. The data collected was analyzed using Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression and O-probit at 0.5 level of significant.

Result and Discussion

Analytical procedure adopted for data collected were OLS regression and O-probit. What informed the choice of these statistics was that the study is interested in the result when the dependent variable is modelled as metric variable and when considered as categorical variable (Highly ready, moderately ready and low/not ready).

Research Question 1: How reliable is the regression model used to predict academic staff readiness from the set of academic staff's gender, academic cadre and online learning platforms' self-efficacy as predictors?

Table 1: Ordinary Least Square Regression Model for the Determinants of Academic Staff Readiness

Staff Readiness	Coef.	St. Err.	t-value
Male	0		
Female	-0.677	0.582	-1.16
Cadre (Professorial)			
Senior Lecturer	-5.723	1.71	-3.35***
Lecturer I	-4.157	1.679	-2.48**
Lecturer II	-4.33	1.691	-2.56**
Assistant Lecturer	-4.645	1.647	-2.82***
Teaching Assistant	-5.222	1.71	-3.05***
High Self-Efficacy	3.141	1.44	2.18**
Moderate Self-efficacy	0.737	0.986	0.75
Low Self-Efficacy	0		
Online Self-efficacy	0.613	0.17	3.61***
Constant	3.215	3.729	0.86
R-squared	0.204	Obs.	132
F-test	3.4752	Bre > F	0.00148
AIC	883.72		912.548

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Table 1 presents the result of OLS regression analysis for the determinants of institution's

readiness among three predictors (gender, academic cadre and online learning platforms' self-efficacy). The result revealed $R^2 = 0.204$ which is an indication that the independent variables could explain 20.4% of the variances observed in the dependent variable (Institution' readiness). The result further revealed that the joint contribution of all the independent variables is significant ($F\text{-test}=3.475, p<0.05$). This shows that the combination of higher institutions' academic staff's gender, academic cadre and efficacy in the use of online platform could allow reliable prediction of institution readiness for the adoption of online learning platforms. However, the percentage of variance (20.4%) accounted for by lecturers' personal characteristics though significant, was small compare with the percentage (79.6%) that external factors could explain. This shows that other institutional factors are key to institutional readiness for adopting online platforms compared with lecturers' personal characteristics.

Research Question 2: Which of the predictors is most influential in predicting Academic staff readiness among staff gender, academic cadre, online learning platforms self-efficacy and online learning facilities?

Table 2: Ordered logistic regression for the determinants of Academic Staff's Readiness for the Adoption of Online Learning Platforms

Academic Staff Readiness (Ranked)	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value
Gender (Male)	0	.	.
Female	-0.426	0.364	-1.17
Professorial	0	.	.
Senior Lecturer	-3.097	1.257	-2.46**
Lecturer I	-2.295	1.221	-1.88*
Lecturer II	-2.488	1.221	-2.04**
Assistant Lecturer	-2.308	1.203	-1.92*
Teaching Assistant	-2.91	1.239	-2.35**
High Self-Efficacy	1.914	0.958	2**
Moderate Self-efficacy	0.476	0.642	0.74
Low Self-Efficacy	0	.	.
Lecturer Readiness			
Constant	4.198	0.627	6.36***
Constant	6.061	2.703	.b
Pseudo r-squared			
Chi-square	0.098	Number of obs	132
AIC	28.04	Prob > chi2	0.001
*** p<.01, ** p<.05, *p<.1		BIC	311.361

Tables 1 and 2 present results of the analyses using OLS regression and O-probit. The results revealed no appreciable difference when dependent variables were modeled as metric variable and categorical (Highly ready, moderately ready and low/not ready). However, from the results, it could be observed that a female staff has less probability of being ready for the adoption for

adoption of online platforms when compare with her male counterpart ($\beta=-.426$, $t=-1.17$, $p>0.05$) but the difference in readiness between male and female staff is not significant. Also, senior lecturers have high probability of being ready when compared with staff in professorial cadres ($\beta=-3.097$, $t=-2.46$, $p<0.05$) and staff in lecturer I cadre has high probability of being ready when compare with staff in senior lecturer cadre ($\beta=-2.295$, $t=-1.88$, $p<0.05$). Generally, the results on the determinants of academic cadre showed that there are significant differences in the readiness for online platforms adoption based on academic cadre and the probability of being ready decreases with increase in rank along the cadre. More so, the results revealed that academic staff with high self-efficacy in using online teaching-learning platforms have a higher probability of being ready ($\beta=-1.914$, $t=2.00$, $p<0.05$) when compared with those of moderate and low self-efficacy. Also, staff with moderate self-efficacy in online teaching-learning platforms have a high probability of being ready ($\beta=.476$, $t=0.74$, $p>0.05$) compared with staff with low self-efficacy. The result further revealed a significant difference in readiness level among the three categories of staff in favor of staff with high level self-efficacy. This implies that only the staff with high level of self-efficacy in the use of online teaching-learning platforms that could significantly adopt online teaching-learning platform for interactions.

Discussion

Results from Table 1 and 2, revealed that academic staff's gender, cadre and self-efficacy in the use of online teaching-learning platforms, predicted institutional readiness for adopting remote learning platforms during COVID-19 pandemic. However, the result further indicated that more variance could be explain in the institutional readiness by other factors apart from academic staff personal characteristics. This result could be so, because there are factors such as ICT facilities to be put in place, level of internet bandwidth subscription to be made for academic staff and student for effecting interactions and technologists or experts to be employed for troubleshooting activities of which all boil down to level of funds available at the institutions. These results also corroborate the report of Gewin (2020), who observed that some institutions have no prior general arrangement on how to facilitate learning via online platforms.

In like manner, results in Table 1 and 2 further showed that there was no gender difference in the level of readiness for the adoption of online teaching-learning platform for interaction among academic staff of African universities during COVID-19 pandemic, the result further revealed that staff gender had no significant relative influence on the readiness for adoption of online platform for teaching-learning interaction. This result is in line with the report that male lecturers used more ICTs in their various teaching-learning processes than their female counterparts (Kay, 2006; Wozney et al., 2006) and contradicts the result of Markauskaite (2006), whose result revealed significant differences between males and females in adoption of ICT driven activities.

Furthermore, the influence of academic staff cadre on institutions' readiness for adopting teaching-learning platforms revealed that academic cadre made a significant contribution to adopting online learning platforms. The result revealed further that there is significant difference across the cadres in favor of low academic cadres. This implies that academic staff of low academic cadres are likely to be ready to adopt online teaching-learning platforms, compared to their colleagues in higher cadres. This could probably be "because most higher cadre academic staff are "digital immigrants"- most most higher cadre academic staff are "digital immigrants"-

most have not been born before 1890. The result is in alliance with the report that experience in teaching did not **influence** their use of computer technology in teaching (Niederhauser and Stoddart, 2001) which contradicts the report that lecturers' cadre or teaching experience influences the effective adoption of ICT for teaching-learning interactions (Wong and Li, 2008; Giordano, 2007; Hernandez-Ramos, 2005). As a result revealed that the higher the cadre of academic staff, the less ready they are likely to adopt online/remote learning platforms.

The result on the influence of self-efficacy in using online platforms revealed that academic staff self-efficacy significantly contributed to institutional readiness. However, it could be observed that staff with high level of self-efficacy can effectively adopt online teaching-learning interaction platforms in higher institutions in Africa. This implies that for adoption of online platform during COVID-19 pandemic to be effective it will requires that academic staff higher education institutions in Africa, should possess high level of self-efficacy.

Conclusion

Based on the "findings, it could be concluded that academic staff's personal characteristics could influence the institution's readiness to adopt online/remote learning platforms for teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there are factors external to academic staff which could predict the adoption of online/remote learning platforms for use at the higher institution level, beyond what academic staff's personal characteristics could do. It could also be inferred that gender has nothing to do with academic staff's readiness for the adoption of online/remote learning platforms but academic staff's personal characteristics such as cadre - which shows that majority of low level academic cadres are more ready than their higher level counterparts, and the level of self-efficacy in the use of online/remote learning platform shows that the high level self-efficacy academic staff could favour the adoption of Online/remote learning platforms during COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it could be concluded that academic staff's cadre and self-efficacy in using online/remote learning platforms are key determinants of higher institutions' readiness for adopting online/remote learning platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion, the following recommendations are made:

- Periodic training should be organised for higher education academic staff, most especially those in high rank cadres, to boost their self-efficacy in the use of online/remote learning platforms
- When planning for staff training, selection of participants should not be skewed to any categories of gender because both gender need to be trained in the use of online teaching-learning platforms.
- Other factors that are external to academic staff's personal characteristics such as ICT facilities, internet bandwidth, data subscription and availability to lecturers and students, etc. should be given high level consideration, as they determine institutional readiness more than academic staff's factors.

- Higher cadres' academic staff in Africa's higher institutions should imbibe the culture of ICT usage in order to be relevant in the present era and meet up with global best standards.

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