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INFLUENCE OF MOBILE AND BLENDED LEARNING ON E-COUNSELLING TEACHER'S EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITIES DURING COVID-19

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Abstract
The study examined the influence of mobile and blended learning on the academic performance of undergraduate students in e-counselling education in the Faculty of Education during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose was to determine whether the status of mobile and blended learning impacts the performance of the teachers-in-training. A survey-type descriptive research design was adopted. The sample for the study consisted of 48 students (counselling teachers-in-training) in the faculty of education at Veritas University Abuja who sat for first and second-semester examinations during the pandemic. The session results summary for each student was collated with their biodata. Two research questions were formed, while three hypotheses were postulated and tested at a 0.05 significance level. Inferential statistics were used to analyze the data that was gathered. The outcomes showed that students exposed to mobile and blended learning in the first semester performed better than those exposed to face-to-face learning in the second. It was also shown that a teacher's gender does not affect their ability to impart knowledge on e-counselling through mobile to the students during COVID-19. However, adopting blended learning has significantly impacted students' academic performance in e-counselling education courses. Based on the findings, it was recommended that mobile with blended learning be adopted for e-counselling teachers-in-training in universities during pandemics such as COVID-19.
Keywords: Mobile; blended learning; academic performance; e-counseling; education students; teachers in training; Veritas University; Abuja

Introduction
The experience of shutting down schools across the globe occurred as a result of a pandemic called COVID-19. However, education has changed with the rise of e-learning and counselling, where teaching takes place remotely through digital platforms on mobile devices. Mobile learning awareness is growing and providing a sound foundation for well-articulated blended learning in developed and emerging economies during a critical period like the COVID-19 pandemic. It is the backbone of any nation's educational development.

Mobile learning aims at equipping learners with basic communication skills with the competencies and creativity needed to provide opportunities for knowledge creation and counselling to improve their behaviour. This aim will remain a mirage if teachers and education students do not have the prerequisites needed for an engaged teaching and learning interactive classroom to enhance their productivity. Mobile learning is a potent tool focusing on education and the nation's sustainable goals. It's both laudable and advantageous, as it has all it takes to provide its recipients with the support they need for instant sharing and transferring learning content; this also enables them to use an instant feedback system. These aspects allow learners to live effectively in the global community when appropriately incorporated.

Sanders and Rosenfield (1998) described the e-counselling method through telecommunication technologies such as the telephone, the Internet, and teleconferencing. E-counselling can also be seen as an effective tool to leverage students' holistic self-management and development. During the COVID-19 `pandemic, it is also the best way to provide psychological and counselling services in teaching and learning.

However, education is a practical-oriented course that includes counselling, which needs appropriate mobile devices such as smartphones, tablet computers, and laptops rather than reading paper books; this is what mobile learning takes into account. On this note, educators plan the lessons that can be delivered and accessed through the digital gadget. Teachers need to know how to teach with mobile devices to deal with the growing challenges of a changing society. Ogunleye (2014) opines that teacher education is the set of policies and procedures designed to equip prospective counselling teachers with the knowledge and skills required to perform their tasks effectively within or outside the classroom. These things make learning better and make education courses more exciting and goal-oriented to teach.

It was clearly stated in teacher education policy that teacher training should include generating classroom instructors who are highly motivated, diligent, and effective at all levels of the educational system and further encouraging the spirit of inquiry and creativity in teachers to help them fit into the social life of the community and society at large. The Federal Government of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) states that the goal of teacher education in Nigeria is to give students the intellectual and professional foundations necessary for their assignments and to prepare them for any changing circumstances in their home country and the rest of the globe. In that way, mobile learning was employed to train and progress the learners' counselling while remaining safe during the high risks of COVID-19. Now that assembling in the classroom more than usual is no longer fashionable without observing proper protocol, in reality, the risk of infection, masks, and social isolation may not be enough to keep people safe from COVID-19 because it is not admirable to teach while fearful. However, at this crossroads, one thinks of a better alternative for learning in a secure environment.

Mobile learning was introduced to find a lasting solution to the pandemic and solve the urgent problem. Learners or teacher trainees can be taught remotely with e-counselling without

fearing COVID-19 infection. Otherwise, isolation and remote work may be the only options for remaining virtually immune to the pandemic. In any event, the adaptation of mobile learning can be easily integrated with remote work so that academic activities are not disrupted, even under critical conditions. Mobile learning can set students free and help them grow and move forward in their studies without being stopped by COVID-19.

Therefore, learning equipment can respond to growing and changing societal challenges. They should be able to teach learners the knowledge and skills needed for active, productive, and lifelong career opportunities in education counselling. It is essential for the teacher's impact skills and the right mobile learning platform and blended experience to be used for productive and engaging practical activities with the trainees during and after the pandemic so that they can learn and grow. In this phase of COVID-19, when there are a lot of unknowns and complicated things going on, it makes sense for teachers to take on responsibilities.

It's expected, therefore, that teachers and teachers-in-training at all levels of education should know about blended learning before delving into teaching and e-counselling. Since there are restrictions on time, pace, and place and a model that has too little structure to support students' effectiveness through the learning process, Horn and Staker (2014) emphasise that blended learning can be a flexible model that allows students to move on fluid schedules among learning activities according to their needs. Therefore, online learning with the support of mobile devices is the backbone of student learning and counselling in a flexible model. Conversely, teachers provide adjustable, as-needed support in instruction while students work through the course curriculum and content. This model can give teachers-in-training a high degree of control over their learning.

As a result, the proper participation of learners is critical to the success of such a program in which the fear of infection has restricted various activities, including teaching training. Based on this, mobile devices make movement possible even under the most austere lockdowns. In other words, mobile learning can liberate trainers and teachers-in-training from fear of infection and allow them to be open with one another during counselling. Veritas University Abuja successfully transitioned by using Google Classroom to manage teaching and learning activities by creating a classroom, uploading course content, and effectively and efficiently sharing documents during the pandemic. Many challenges worked and eventually overcame, mainly internet accessibility, which made the students struggle to participate in mobile learning. E-examination was adopted, whereby the scripts were captured as screen images and digitally marked by the programmed software tools. The ICT unit scanned and uploaded the hands into the lecturers' platform on the university website. Although some students' handwriting poses a severe problem before machine-readable computers can convert it,

An income gap in social and economic status within the country hinders the less privileged and disadvantaged teachers-in-training from accessing the Internet. Evidence suggests that, despite the pandemic, learning online can be more effective for teachers-in-training with access to the appropriate technology. According to several studies, students generally remember 25–

60% more information when learning online than 8–10% in a classroom. In a catchphrase and a utopia, technology was predicted to revolutionise education centuries ago (Ogunmodede, Ayinde, and Ogunlade, 2021; Selywyn, 2011; Postman, 1992). Another development is Bastani's (2019) vision of techno-optimism (without techno-determinism) and its predecessors (Fuchs 2020b). This argument is based on the common belief that education is "broken," so it should and can be fixed with technology (Williamson 2020b). If "broken" is to be defined empirically, it can be seen in the reactions and activities in the education sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Statement of the Problem

E-counselling is one of the significant courses meant to provide the basic concepts needed to enhance the total development of a counselling teacher in a country. Research reports reveal that the performance of the counselling teachers in training is appalling, hence the call for attention. The consequence of this might be that it might result from the COVID-19 pandemic that ravaged the entire universe and even hindered teaching and learning at all levels of education. COVID-19 has resulted in schools shutting down all across the world. Over 1.2 billion children are out of classrooms. Therefore, teaching and learning are done remotely on digital platforms due to sudden changes. Regardless, teachers are critical of the type of experience provided to students, especially in light of the technological changes implemented in the classroom. Several studies have been carried out on counselling education and COVID-19 researchers. Still, they fail to address the activities of teachers and students using mobile and blended learning to acquire basic skills and demonstrate efficiency in transmitting knowledge.

Mobile learning has become integral to learners' lifestyles and manifests its relevance in students' daily lives and activities. This trend is predicted to enhance it more in the long run, to the extent that mobile with blended learning will be a requirement for counselling at all levels of learners' work and educational development during COVID-19. Research suggests that online learning has been shown to increase understanding and take less time, meaning the changes the coronavirus has caused might be here to stay (Ogunlade, Bahago, & Ogunmodede, 2021). Nevertheless, Veritas University, Abuja, takes the bull by the horns to reach students more effectively and efficiently through video meetings, chart groups, and document sharing. Later, the institution will stick to Google Classroom, which is very easy for counselling, teaching, and learning. The study, however, will look at the impact of mobile and blended knowledge on teacher education at Veritas University Abuja during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Problems

1. Will there be a difference in the use of mobile/blended learning and academic performance of counselling education students at Veritas University Abuja during COVID-19?
2. How do lecturers use mobile/blended learning to help male and female counselling education students perform better during COVID-19?

Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses were evaluated at a 0.05 level of significance.

Ho1: There are no appreciable variations in mobile/blended learning and academic performance of counselling education students at Veritas University Abuja during COVID-19.

Ho2: There isn't a strong connection between male and female counselling education students using mobile/blended learning and their academic performance during COVID-19.

The methodology

The study employed a survey-type of descriptive research design. The study population consisted of all undergraduate counselling education students (teachers-in-training) in the Faculty of Education at Veritas University Abuja. Twenty males and 28 females were chosen among 48 students who agreed to take the survey using a purposeful sampling method. Respondents are education students who sat for first and second-semester examinations during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The session result summary for each student was collated with their biodata. The instrument to assess the students contains 21 structured questionnaires with four option answers. The Likert scale served as the basis for the evaluation. To analyze the gathered data and respond to study questions, the mean and standard deviation were used. At a significance level of 0.05, It was done using the T-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. assess the hypotheses.

Result

Research Question 1. Will there be a difference in the use of Mobile/blended learning and the academic performance of counselling education students during COVID-19?

Table 1: Mean score of both independent and dependent variables.

Variable	N	Mean	STD	Mean diff
Mobile and Blended learning	48	21	5.81	
Students' Academic Performance	48	17	4.21	1.6

Table 1 shows a difference in mean score performance of 1.6 exits between the counselling students' academic performance using mobile and blended learning during COVID-19. This difference favours the counselling education students using mobile and blended learning during the pandemic.

Research Question 2. How do male and female counselling students perform using Mobile and Blended learning during COVID-19 in the university?

Table 2: Mean score of male and female counselling education students

Sex	N	Mean	STD	Mean diff
Male	20	14.8	6.14	

Female	28	14.63	6.13	0.01

Table 2 shows a mean difference in performance scores of 0.01 exit between male and female counselling students using mobile and blended learning. However, the difference is insignificant in favouring male students.

Hypotheses Testing

HO_1: There are no appreciable variations in mobile/blended learning and academic performance of counselling education students at Veritas University Abuja during COVID-19.

Category (N)	N	Mean	S.D	Df	t calculated	P
Uses of Mobile and Blended Learning	48	18.83	2.82488	94	2.424	.016
Education Students Academic Performance	48	17.65	2.113965			

P>0.05

Results of the above t-test statistics in Table 3 showed a significant difference between those students who used mobile and blended learning in their academic performance and those who did not during the COVID-19 Pandemic at Veritas University Abuja. This position was confirmed as the calculated significant (P) value of 2.424 is higher than 0.05. In contrast, details showed that the mean mobile and blended learning usage was 18.83 and 17.65 for students' academic performance, respectively.

Consequently, the null hypotheses of no significant difference in the use of mobile/blended learning and academic performance of counselling education students in Veritas University Abuja during COVID-19 are rejected.

HO_2: According to the null hypothesis, there isn't a strong connection between male and female counselling education students using mobile/blended learning and their academic performance during COVID-19.

The hypothesis is tested, and the analysed result is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Male and Female Students' Teachers with Performance in their Education Courses

At a 2-tailed significance threshold of 0.05, the correlation is significant.

Variables	N	Mean	S.D	Df	r-calculated	P value
Male Education Students	20	11.8063	3.3077	48	0. 496	.014
Female Education Students	28	18.7129	2.7764			

P<0.05

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed (PPMC) statistics Table 4 demonstrated a substantial correlation between male and female counselling education students and their academic performance. The reason is that the calculated significant (P) value of 0.014 is less than the 0.05 tolerance level; this implies that students' academic performance during COVID-19 is significantly affected by the gender of the counselling teacher in training. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which claims that there is no meaningful connection between male and female education students using mobile/blended learning and their academic performance during COVID-19, is a result of this rejection.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis found answers to two research questions and a hypothesis and statistically described the demographic variables. The issues of counselling teachers-in-training using mobile and blended learning were considered against students' performance in education courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the research hypotheses are very revealing and exciting. For instance, it was confirmed that significant differences exist between students' use of mobile and blended learning and their academic performance. It was seen that students who made use of mobile and blended learning during COVID-19 had a better mean academic performance of 18.83 as compared with their mean academic performance of 17.65. Several reasons abound for this significant difference between the influence of mobile/blended learning and the student's academic performance during the pandemic. The most obvious is that not all counselling teachers-in-training have the skills to handle mobile devices to progress actively in blended learning activities online in university. Some counselling education students are happy to read enough and stay up-to-date with online tools to focus on schoolwork.

Also, a significant relationship exists between male and female counselling students using mobile/blended learning and their academic performance. The outcomes demonstrated that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, gender has a greater, better, and more favorable learning outcome on counseling students' academic achievement in Veritas University, Abuja. The main reason could be that female counsellors-in-training are more calm and ready to follow the COVID-19 protocol than their male counterparts, who are always tense.

The hypotheses' outcome revealed a significant relationship between the male and female counselling teachers' training and their academic performance. In other words, the level of counselling teachers' gender affects their academic performance. The greater the mobile/blended learning influence on the student, the higher his performance and vice versa. Of course, this has been proved exhaustively in this regard (Bahago, Ogunlade, Fadipe & Tyopenda (2022). The study's findings are consistent with those of Gambari et al. (2017) and Mclaughlin et al. (2015), who discovered no significant difference in achievement between male and female students exposed to blended learning. According to the results of the hypothesis, there is no crucial link between how well students do in accounting, management, marketing, and office and information management, all of which use a blended learning strategy to teach business management skills.

Conclusion

As the coronavirus spreads, universities are searching for alternative solutions to solve the teaching and learning situation that can be technologically driven without creating a healthcare crisis on their campus. Therefore, many institutions look to online learning to salvage students' educations after the pandemic. This study finds that Veritas University Abuja uses mobile and blended learning strategies and methods well enough to teach counselling education courses.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that:

1. Teachers-in-training in Nigerian universities should be able to use mobile devices as part of their blended learning resources for counselling in the classroom. To keep things simple, they should use strategies that lecturers and counselling education students already know and use.
2. Lecturers and counselling teachers-in-training who aren't ICT-ready should be given a chance to catch up through workshops on mobile and blended strategies.
3. Education professors should use a "blended learning" strategy to get counselling education students to be more involved and interact more with each other.

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