CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS IN ONLINE LEARNING OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

BY

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Table of Contents

[CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 4](#_Toc12027611)

[1.1 Background to the Study 4](#_Toc12027612)

[1.2 Statement of the Problem 5](#_Toc12027613)

[1.3 Objectives of the Study 6](#_Toc12027614)

[General Objective 6](#_Toc12027615)

[Specific Objectives 6](#_Toc12027616)

[Research Questions 6](#_Toc12027617)

[1.4 Justification of the Study 7](#_Toc12027618)

[1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study 7](#_Toc12027619)

[Scope 7](#_Toc12027620)

[Limitation 7](#_Toc12027621)

[CHAPTER TWO 8](#_Toc12027622)

[LITERATURE REVIEW 8](#_Toc12027623)

[2.0 Overview 8](#_Toc12027624)

[2.1 Effective Online Learning 8](#_Toc12027625)

[2.2 Student motivation and Online Learning 9](#_Toc12027626)

[2.3 Information Technology and Online Learning 9](#_Toc12027627)

[2.4 Student collaboration and Online Learning 10](#_Toc12027628)

[2.5 Conceptual framework 11](#_Toc12027629)

[CHAPTER THREE; METHODOLOGY 12](#_Toc12027630)

[3.0 Overview 12](#_Toc12027631)

[3.1 Study Design 12](#_Toc12027632)

[3.2 Study Site 12](#_Toc12027633)

[3.3 Study population and Sampling 12](#_Toc12027634)

[3.4 Data needs, types and sources. 12](#_Toc12027635)

[3.4.1 Questionnaires 13](#_Toc12027636)

[3.5 Data Analysis 13](#_Toc12027637)

[3.6 Data Presentation 13](#_Toc12027638)

[3.7 Validity and Reliability 13](#_Toc12027639)

[3.8 Ethics 14](#_Toc12027640)

[CHAPTER FOUR; PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION 15](#_Toc12027641)

[4.1 Introduction 15](#_Toc12027642)

[4.2 Demographic Features of Respondents 15](#_Toc12027643)

[4.4 Correlation Analysis Results 16](#_Toc12027644)

[4.5 Student motivation and Online Learning 17](#_Toc12027645)

[4.6 Information Technology and Online Learning 17](#_Toc12027646)

[4.7 Student collaboration and Online Learning. 17](#_Toc12027647)

[CHAPTER FIVE; DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION 18](#_Toc12027648)

[5.1 Discussion of Study Findings 18](#_Toc12027649)

[5.1.1 Student Motivation and Online Learning 18](#_Toc12027650)

[5.1.2 Information Technology and Online Learning 18](#_Toc12027651)

[5.1.3 Student Collaboration and Online Learning 18](#_Toc12027652)

[5.2 Limitation of the Study 18](#_Toc12027653)

[5.3 Conclusion 19](#_Toc12027654)

[5.4 Recommendations for further study 19](#_Toc12027655)

[REFERENCES 21](#_Toc12027656)

[APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE 24](#_Toc12027657)

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background to the Study

Reddan et al. (2016) opine that for centuries, the common approach for instruction has been through words, lectures and books. Generally speaking, the teacher is usually the source of information by passing information to students in the classroom and encouraging them to do their homework (Ingason and Guỡmundsson, 2018). Ye et al. (2017) state that numerous terms have been coined to refer to online learning such as e-learning, distance learning, distributed learning and computer based learning. Hitherto, according to Huang (1997), distance learning has been used for years to provide students in remote locations with an alternative means of education. At the time, various media such as telephone lines, microwave radio, cable, satellite and videotapes were used between instructors and students at different locations.

Peltier et al. (2003) point out that distance education has expanded in recent years because of internet technologies that has allowed for teaching and learning to take place from different locations. Fleischmann (2018) reports about the fact that online education “allows any institution in the world to target any person interested in their program or discipline thereby reducing additional obstacles to international education such as visa requirements, travel cost, travel time and possibly relocating”. In other words, online education “has been shown to address some training challenges by supporting efficient content delivery, decreasing costs and increasing access” (Liyanagunawardena and Aboshady, 2017). To Forsey et al. (2018), online education is gaining ground particularly with the introduction of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) which are now inclining towards flipped classrooms. According to Mavromihales and Holmes (2016) MOOCs capitalize on the practice of presenting review multiple-choice questions once a subject has been covered, building on analysis when reviewing learning outcomes. Despite the popularity of MOOCs, due to problems with existing online courses (Larionova et al., 2018), the flipped classroom is also taking hold. The flipped classroom is whereby “students first gain exposure to new material outside of class, usually through reading or lecture videos and then use the class time to do the more difficult work of assimilating that knowledge, perhaps through problem-solving, discussion or debates (Reddan et al., 2016).

Simply put, Nelson (2008) states that online education is “cost effective, time-efficient and here to stay; it’s projected to grow exponentially in future.” Ye et al. concur that for students, online education not only “provides easy access to learning resources anytime anywhere” but also “enables self-paced learning, student collaboration and personalized interactions with faculty”.

Though Huang(1997) argues that many schools have a large number of online students because “people are now acquiring more skills that are demanded by the more competitive job market”, Peltier et al. (2013) decries the lack of research to understand the different needs and learning styles of online students in general. Monitoring and evaluation is a relatively new academic discipline and there’s limited research about how to build competence in Monitoring and Evaluation online learning. Therefore the main purpose of this study was to examine the critical success factors in online Monitoring and Evaluation learning.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

To succeed in the monitoring and evaluation sector, a monitoring and evaluation professional requires statistical and analytical skills, communication skills, managerial skills, knowledge of monitoring and evaluation software and keeping up-to-date with the monitoring and evaluation sector. (Smith, 2018).

Online learning is potentially an effective means for professionals and non-professionals to advance their skills in monitoring and evaluation while continuing to fulfil their work-related responsibilities.

Sadly, Hussey et al. (2015) report about the research findings reiterating that most online education students are enthused with the online course structure, irrespective of actual learning outcomes.

Besides, there’s anecdotal evidence that most online monitoring and evaluation learners seem to be pursuing online monitoring and evaluation courses offered by various institutions either concurrently or in succession, sometimes dropping out of the courses without thoroughly learning this subject. This research examined the critical success factors that are necessary to build the competence of learners pursuing online education in monitoring and evaluation.

Critical success factors such as motivation, information technology and collaboration were examined in order to find if they have an effect on online learning of monitoring and evaluation.

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

### General Objective

The general objective of this study was to examine the critical success factors in online learning of Monitoring and Evaluation.

### Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were the following;

1. To establish whether student motivation affects online learning of monitoring and evaluation.
2. To investigate the influence of Information Technology on online learning of monitoring and evaluation.
3. To determine whether student collaboration affects online learning of monitoring and evaluation.

### Research Questions

This research sought to answer the following research questions;

1. Does student motivation affect online learning of monitoring and evaluation?
2. Does Information Technology influence online learning of monitoring and evaluation?
3. Does student collaboration affect online learning of monitoring and evaluation?

## 1.4 Justification of the Study

Peltier et al. (2003) propose that “a conceptual and empirical research is needed to find ways to enhance the online educational experience of students.” The rationale for conducting this research was to enhance quality learning of online education in monitoring and evaluation to avoid what Moran and Young (2015) referred to as “the pitfalls of perpetuating another educational fad.”

## 1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

### Scope

The study was carried out at Strategia Netherlands. The respondents were the online students in monitoring and evaluation from August 2018 to June 2019 irrespective of whether they are pursuing diplomas or postgraduate diplomas in monitoring and evaluation.

### Limitation

The research project was carried out in two months which is relatively a short time to conduct quality research. The population of the study is relatively small and therefore the findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. The respondents of the study are scattered globally in differing time zones, most of them doing field work and they may not have had the time to take part in the study.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.0 Overview

This chapter sets out to review the critical success factors that influence online learning. Major concepts of the study were delineated in order to provide shared meaning. The existing literature including studies that are reasonably close to the research topic were reviewed, evaluated, research gaps identified and the contribution of this study towards the existing literature were highlighted.

## 2.1 Effective Online Learning

Monitoring and Evaluation professionals can hail from a range of backgrounds. The majority are trained in statistics, maths and research or with programmatic experience in specific sectors such as health, agriculture and governance (Smith, 2018). To succeed in online education, Huang (1997) advises that online students must; be self-motivated, learn new skills to interact with instructors and fellow students electronically, understand written information effectively and efficiently, express themselves clearly, participate in remote discussions and seek information from online sources.

Fitzgerald 1995 in Peltier et al. (2003) claim that “emerging interactive technologies offer considerable promise for bridging the gap between knowledge acquisition, skill development and real-world applications”. Burke and Fedorek (2017) insist that “educational experience should assist students in developing solutions to real world, complex problems which also relates to student satisfaction and consequently retention”. Amidst the notions that education gives you the confidence while skills give you the competence to perform a task, McLean and Attardi (2018) recommend that one question on all educators mind in an online setting should be “What are students getting out of this?” The answer is learning by gaining knowledge and competence because to Ye et al. (2017) “an educated person is someone who does not just know but can also do.”

Three critical success factors of online learning common to studies by Selim (2007) and Volery (2001) are Information Technology, Student collaboration and student motivation. This study determined whether these factors affect online learning of monitoring and evaluation.

## 2.2 Student motivation and Online Learning

Durak (2019) defines motivation as “a driving force behind individuals engaging in an activity voluntarily, intrinsically and extrinsically; this motivation is said to have a profound effect on learning performance.” Huang (1997) reasons that online students must be self-motivated instead of taking what he refers to as “an entertain-me attitude and passively waiting for actions from instructors.” Instead, Reddan et al. (2016) are of the view that “students want to do something meaningful with content instead of just listening to a lecture”. Nelson (2008) adds that if the student “loves the thought of attending class”, then the student will find happiness in an online education setting. This study sought to establish whether student motivation affects online learning of monitoring and evaluation

## 2.3 Information Technology and Online Learning

Peltier et al. (2003) discuss that world over, institutions of higher learning are beginning to utilise technologies that use internet for teaching. Nelson (2008) states that online students will be successful if they are familiar with technology. However, Fleischmann (2018) cautions that using technology does not translate to better learning outcome in a technology-enhanced classroom. One of the reasons could be that, as stated by Finch and Jacobs (2012), “iPad and iPhones do not support Adobe Flash player, making it impossible to view any content within the online course that includes flash animation.” Another could be the difficulty of guaranteeing good sound quality of the recordings due to disruptions, or faulty technical equipment (Ingason and Guỡmundsson, 2018). Due to discrepancy of opinions regarding the use of information technology in facilitating online learning, this study sought to investigate the influence of Information Technology on online learning of monitoring and evaluation

2.4 Student collaboration and Online Learning**.**

Peltier et al. (2003) argues that through online education, students and their peers can build close relationships with each other that are not constrained by time, space and geography. They also add that members learn from one another by exchanging information content but they lament that there is no research to investigate the quality of these relationships in an online educational setting. For learning to occur, Hurtubise et al. (2015) discuss that online education “promotes mentorship across the continuum where it may not have been otherwise possible.” Smallwood and Brunner (2017) are of the view that collaborative groups can help “adult learners retain and master information, develop reasoning and transfer knowledge but also caution that there is no guarantee that such interactions will occur”. Due to inconsistency of views regarding the relationship between student collaboration and online learning, this study determined whether student collaboration affects online learning of monitoring and evaluation

## 2.5 Conceptual framework

The critical success factors related to online learning were synthesized to form this presented conceptual framework. The dependent variable is Online learning, it is the variable of interest in which the variance was attempted to be explained by three independent variables; student motivation, Information Technology and student collaboration in the online setting.

**Independent Variables**

**Student Motivation**

**Dependent Variable**

**Online learning**

**Information Technology**

**Student Collaboration**

**Fig 1: Conceptual Framework of critical success factors in online learning.**

**Source: Volery (2001) and Selim (2007).**

# CHAPTER THREE; METHODOLOGY

## 3.0 Overview

This chapter presents the research design, area of study, study population, sample size and selection procedure, data collection methods and instruments and methods of data analysis that were used.

## 3.1 Study Design

In this research, a correlational design was employed to identify not only the important factors associated with the problem but also to what degree a relationship exists between two or more variables (Amin, 2005; Sekaran, 2003). The study was predominantly quantitative which is appropriate to answer the research questions.

## 3.2 Study Site

The research was conducted online with students pursuing online courses in monitoring and evaluation at Strategia Netherlands.

## 3.3 Study population and Sampling

The study population comprised of all students who were purposively selected on the basis of pursuing the online course in monitoring and evaluation irrespective of whether it is a diploma or postgraduate diploma.

## 3.4 Data needs, types and sources.

The instruments that are detailed below were used.

### 3.4.1 Questionnaires

A self-administered questionnaire was sent electronically to 11 students through the mailing list. 5 questionnaires were returned; therefore the response rate was 45% which is acceptable because Hinds (2000) cites a response rate of 30% in a well-conducted research. Closed ended questions were used. Questionnaires were appropriate in collecting data required to answer the research questions and achieve research objectives (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 1997).

## 3.5 Data Analysis

The filled in questionnaires were edited in order to detect errors or omissions. They were corrected, coded and tabulated in a computer analysis package (SPSS). The characteristics of the population were described; frequency distributions were obtained for all personal data variables. Mean scores were used to describe items under each variable. These were generated from statements under which respondents were requested to tick a long a continuum of strongly disagree to strongly agree. The variables were analysed using Pearson correlation coefficient.

## 3.6 Data Presentation

The format for analysis included frequency distribution for gender and Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient, a statistic technique which gives a measure of strength of association between two variables was used in this study (Collis & Hussey, 2003). Sekaran (2003) affirms that the Pearson correlation coefficient is appropriate for interval- and ratio- scaled variables. Collis and Hussey further assert that if you find that an association between variables exists, you may then express it in mathematical terms (regression). Since there were insignificant relationships between study variables, the data was not further analysed using multiple regression.

## 3.7 Validity and Reliability

The questions in the instrument for this study were adopted from tested instruments which were used in similar but published studies therefore they will not be tested again for instrument validity.

## 3.8 Ethics

This research project is original. All sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged and this document has not previously in its entirety, or in part, been submitted at any university, in order to obtain an academic qualification.

No information was collected from respondents without informed consent. The confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents was respected and their participation in this study was voluntary.

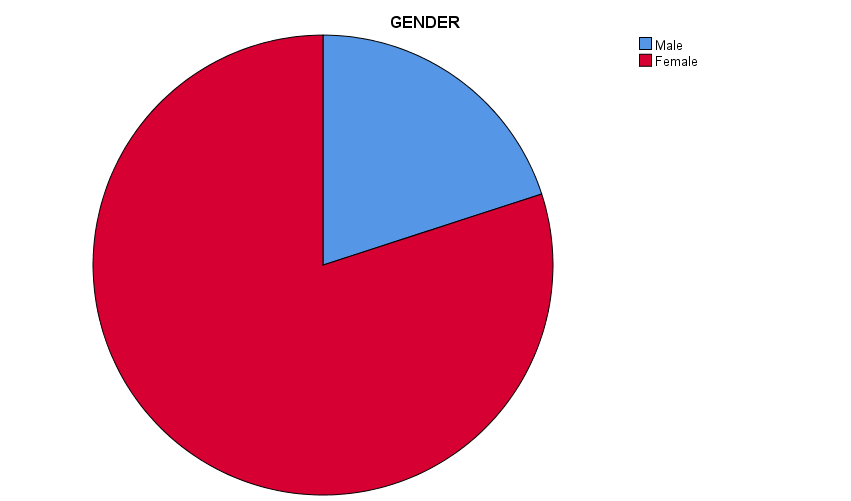
# CHAPTER FOUR; PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of quantitative data. It begins with a brief description of the respondents of the study. The results of reliability, correlation and multiple regression analysis are presented and study results interpreted.

## 4.2 Demographic Features of Respondents

The 5 online students of Strategia Netherlands who took part in the study offer the following profile. 20% of the respondents were male while 80% of the respondents were female as shown in Figure 2 below.



**Fig 2: Gender of the respondents of the study**

## 4.4 Correlation Analysis Results

**Table 1**

**Correlations between student motivation, information technology, student collaboration and online learning, n=5**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| VARIABLES | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. Student Motivation | 1 |  |  |  |
| 1. Information Technology | -.196 | 1 |  |  |
| 1. Student collaboration | .000 | .310\* | 1 |  |
| 1. Online Learning | .250 | .686 | .000 | 1 |

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As indicated in the conceptual framework (Fig 1), relationships between the variables of Student Motivation, Information Technology, Student Collaboration and Online Learning were investigated. Table 1 shows the correlations between these variables. A score of 0.0 to 0.3 implies a positive but weak correlation coefficient, while scores ranging from 0.3 to 0.7 are moderate correlation coefficient (Saunders et al, 1997). The relationships between Student Motivation, Student collaboration and online learning are positively, weakly and insignificantly correlated. Only IT moderately but insignificantly correlated with online learning**.**

## 4.5 Student motivation and Online Learning

Student motivation was positively but not significantly related to Online Learning and is unlikely to cause any significant effect on Online Learning.

## 4.6 Information Technology and Online Learning

Information Technology had a positive, moderate but not significant effect on Online Learning. This finding implies that although Information Technology is associated with Online Learning, its effect is unlikely to cause any increase in Online Learning.

## 4.7 Student collaboration and Online Learning.

Findings showed that Student Collaboration had a positive but not significant effect on Online Learning. This finding implies that though Student Collaboration is associated with Online Learning, its effect is unlikely to cause any increase in Online Learning.

# CHAPTER FIVE; DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

## 5.1 Discussion of Study Findings

### 5.1.1 Student Motivation and Online Learning

The first objective to establish whether student motivation affects online learning of monitoring and evaluation. The findings from this study are inconsistent with Nelson (2008) whose study showed empirical support for linkage between student motivation and Online Learning.

### 5.1.2 Information Technology and Online Learning

The second objective was to investigate the influence of Information Technology on online learning of monitoring and evaluation. This study findings are inconsistent with Nelson (2008) who states that online students will be successful if they are familiar with technology. However, this study is in line with Fleischmann (2018) who cautions that using technology does not translate to better learning outcome in a technology-enhanced classroom.

### 5.1.3 Student Collaboration and Online Learning

The third objective was to determine whether student collaboration affects online learning of monitoring and evaluation. This study findings are inconsistent with Peltier et al. (2003) who claimed that through online education, students and their peers and learn from one another by exchanging information content. Furthermore, this study results are inconsistent with Hurtubise et al. (2015) who opine that online education “promotes mentorship across the continuum where it may not have been otherwise possible.”

## 5.2 Limitation of the Study

The study population was very small and only 45% of the students responded to the questionnaire even after two reminders. This may have affected the quality of the research especially in the reporting of insignificant effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

## 5.3 Conclusion

Online Learning is here to stay. However, few studies have investigated critical success factors in Online Learning of Monitoring and Evaluation setting. This study therefore examined the critical success factors in online monitoring and evaluation learning in order to enhance the online learning experience of students. The major concepts for this research were developed from studies that are reasonably close to this research topic.

Study results revealed that Student motivation, Information Technology and Student Collaboration did not significantly affect Online Learning.

This study is vital because it not only contributes to the current discussion on the subject of Online Learning but also reinforces study results in previous studies. The study results were similar to findings from previous studies; Information Technology had no significant effect on Online Learning. The work of Fleischmann (2018) in highlighting the insignificance of Information technology in online learning is reinforced in this study.

The first contribution emanates from our research model that combined variables from Volery (2001) and Selim (2007) models. This model was applied at Strategia Netherland which offers courses that differ from the institutions where the previous studies were conducted and reported critical success factors in online learning of monitoring and evaluation.

## 5.4 Recommendations for further study

This study has focused on three critical success factors in online learning. The fact that the independent variables did not significantly the dependent variables considered in this study means, there are other additional variables that are important in explaining Online Learning that have not been considered in this study. Further research might be necessary to determine other variables that may significantly influence Online Learning. Furthermore, widening the research to public universities could greatly enrich our understanding of the critical success factors in online learning of monitoring and evaluation.

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# APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

***TOPIC:*** CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS IN ONLINE LEARNING OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

***Dear Respondent, the purpose of this study is to examine critical success factors (Student collaboration, Information Technology and Student motivation) that affect online learning of monitoring and evaluation students. This is to kindly request you to answer the questions asked in this questionnaire. There will be no direct benefit to you for your participation in this study. Participant data will be kept confidential. Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. Thank you for your participation.***

**SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Your Gender. **(Please circle one**)

1. Male b) Female

**SECTION B: STUDENT MOTIVATION**

2. For the statements below, **please check the response** applicable to you.

**Response set: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree**.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **During this current school year, at this institution** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have enjoyed taking this course |  |  |  |  |  |
| I would recommend this course to friends/colleagues |  |  |  |  |  |
| I felt more motivated to learn |  |  |  |  |  |
| I have felt appreciated |  |  |  |  |  |
| I looked forward to attending the webex seminars |  |  |  |  |  |
| The Instructor’s style of presentation held my interest |  |  |  |  |  |
| The Instructor was friendly toward students |  |  |  |  |  |
| I felt welcome in seeking help or advice |  |  |  |  |  |
| The Instructor was enthusiastic about teaching the class |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

**SECTION C: THE USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

3. For the statements below, **please check the response** applicable to you.

**Response set: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **During this current school year, at this institution** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Information in the Learning portal for this course was effectively communicated. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The Learning portal contained information not covered in the modules. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The content of the Learning portal for this course contributed toward learning. |  |  |  |  |  |
| I found the Learning portal easy to access |  |  |  |  |  |
| The Learning portal was easy to navigate |  |  |  |  |  |
| The Learning portal gave me direct/timely feedback |  |  |  |  |  |
| The e-learning components were available all the time |  |  |  |  |  |
| The course materials were placed online in a timely manner |  |  |  |  |  |
| I perceive the design of the Learning portal to be good |  |  |  |  |  |

4. **SECTION D: STUDENT COLLABORATION**

For the statements below, **please check the response** applicable to you.

**Response set: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **During this current school year, at this institution** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The group size was appropriate for course purposes |  |  |  |  |  |
| Student interaction was an important learning component of this course |  |  |  |  |  |
| This course provided an opportunity to learn from other students |  |  |  |  |  |
| I had sufficient opportunity to interact with other students in this course |  |  |  |  |  |
| I had the opportunity to contribute to the learning of others |  |  |  |  |  |
| I experienced more constant and positive interactions with peers |  |  |  |  |  |
| Interaction between students was encouraged |  |  |  |  |  |
| Interaction with others was appropriate |  |  |  |  |  |
| Interaction with others was timely |  |  |  |  |  |
| I work with students on Assignments |  |  |  |  |  |
| I prepare for exams by working with others |  |  |  |  |  |
| I ask another student to help me understand course material |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

**SECTION E: ONLINE LEARNING**

5. For the statements below, **please check the response** applicable to you.

**Response set: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree**.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **How well do the following descriptions match what you experienced during your Online Learning?** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I learned to collect qualitative data |  |  |  |  |  |
| I learned to analyze and interpret qualitative data |  |  |  |  |  |
| I learned to collect quantitative data. |  |  |  |  |  |
| I learned to analyze and interpret quantitative data |  |  |  |  |  |
| I learned to write questions for questionnaire |  |  |  |  |  |
| I have learned a lot in this course. |  |  |  |  |  |
| I learned to use data to make program decisions |  |  |  |  |  |
| I can write a summary of findings from a data analysis |  |  |  |  |  |
| Learning methods promoted understanding & application of key concepts |  |  |  |  |  |
| I believe that the knowledge and skills developed will be relevant for me in the future |  |  |  |  |  |
| The tasks required of me were valuable to my learning |  |  |  |  |  |
| I remember course concepts |  |  |  |  |  |
| I developed problem-solving skills |  |  |  |  |  |
| I improved my communication skills |  |  |  |  |  |
| This course helped me to appreciate and respect diversity among students |  |  |  |  |  |
| I understand course concepts |  |  |  |  |  |
| The topics and content are relevant |  |  |  |  |  |
| The course offered value for my money |  |  |  |  |  |
| I applied what I learned in this course to my work |  |  |  |  |  |
| I solved complex real-world problems |  |  |  |  |  |

Items to measure the Student motivation concept in Question 2 were adapted from Peltier et al. (2003 ), Reddan et al. (2016 ) and Volery (2001).

Items to measure the Use of Information Technology concept in Question 3 were adapted from Peltier et al. (2003 ), Selim (2007 ) and Volery (2001).

Items to measure the Student Collaboration concept in Question 4 were adapted from Peltier et al. ( ), Reddan et al. (2016 ), Burke and Fedorek (2017) and Pullen (2005)

Items to measure the Online Learning concept in Question 5 were adapted from Farel & Umble (2001), Reddan et al. (2016 ) , Burke and Fedorek (2017) and Pullen (2005).