

## **EXPLORATORY STUDY OF PERCEPTION OF THE USE OF MOODLE E-LEARNING PLATFORM AMONG E-TUTORS IN DISTANCE LEARNING CENTRE, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA**

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### **Abstract**

*The study explored the perception of Moodle e-learning platform among e-tutors in Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.. The objectives of the study were to; identify the lived experiences of e-tutors of Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in the use of Moodle e-learning platform and identify the sources of information that are available to e-tutors of Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria on the use of Moodle E-learning platform. Qualitative and phenomenology research design was adopted for the study using nine (9) e-tutors at the Distance Learning Centre. Data collected was analyzed using interpretive phenomenological data analysis. Findings revealed that the lived experiences of e-tutors in Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria are flexibility and convenience, overcoming barriers and enhancing learning; and experiences on easy teaching and assessment tool. In addition, the Sources of information available to e-tutors in Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria are through Digital Platforms; and Training and Support. It concluded that e-learning platforms have become a thriving and trending mode for learning and teaching in the present dispensation powered by technology innovations and advancement. Knowledge and the utilization of e-learning platform leverage the burden of jostling between physical learning spaces and accessing physical learning resources. The study recommended among others that the advocating for the utilization of the Moodle e-learning platform's flexibility to accommodate diverse teaching approaches, addressing barriers through robust support systems, encouraging ongoing professional development for e-tutors is a necessity.*

**Keywords:** E-Tutors, Moodle E-Learning Platform, Perception, Phenomenology, Use.

### **Introduction**

E-learning is a process of education delivered through an electronic format via the Internet network or the Internet with the use of a management system for education. E-learning platforms have fostered new paradigms in teaching and learning. These platforms such as Moodle, Microsoft teams and Zoom platforms have recently been used to compensate for educational activities that have been interrupted worldwide owing to the COVID -19 pandemic in 2020 (Erol. 2021). E-learning platforms are integrated set of interactive online services that provide trainers, learners, and others involved in education with information, tools, and resources

to support and enhance their educational delivery and management. E-learning platforms minimize access barriers, enhance student participation, and potentially improve students' course completion rates by providing instruction and instructional materials online, so that there is continuous learning even during crises and pandemics (Kanobana, 2020). As a result of the inherent benefits associated with e-learning platforms such as that it offers users the opportunity to engage in self-directed participation and independent studying, the interface has become the most preferred platform to learn during global pandemic periods like COVID-19 (Adeoye, Adanikin & Adanikin, 2020). One of the most popular e-learning platforms used by tertiary institutions in developed countries is the Moodle e-learning platform (MEP). Moodle (modular object-orientated dynamic learning environment) is an e-learning software program platform, advanced to allow educators to create online guides to inspire interplay and collaborative production of studying content material (Amandu, Muliira & Fronda, 2013).

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaped a new normal for all human endeavors, including the education sector. Consequently, the prevention protocol of COVID 19 forced 1.5 billion students and 63 million educators to move from the traditional mode of face-to-face education to a technologically oriented approach to education (Rodrigues, et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2020; Valverde-Berrocoso, et al., 2020).

Studies Venkatesh and Davis, (2000); Nagunwa and Lwoga, (2012) on the adoption of technology have shown that the most important factor for the adoption of any technology is knowledge and perception. Similarly, studies on e-learning platform adoption have shown that individual and personal factors that influence e-learning adoption by lecturers includes lack of knowledge, perception, literacy, and awareness of e-learning (Bukhari,2010; Njenga, 2011; Ngamau, 2013; Kisanga & Ireson, 2015.; Eze, Chinedu & Bello, 2018; Adeoye, Adanikin and Adanikin . 2020).

To enhance the use of e-learning platforms by faculty members in Nigerian Universities, there is a need to be aware of the Moodle interface and challenges associated with the technology. In order to do this effectively, it becomes imperative to explore the lived experiences of e-tutors about e-learning platforms. In other words, there is a critical need to understand the lived experiences of individuals who have used and still use the Moodle e-learning platform as a mode of teaching. Therefore, this study explored the lived experiences of the e-tutors at the Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

The lived experience approach is based on personal experiences. It depicts a person's experiences and decisions, as well as the knowledge gained from these experiences and choices. This experience is the most active kind of consciousness, which includes feelings and thoughts that provide a prism through which individuals interpret and understand the world. A lived experience provides an understanding of internal meanings or the most important features of a person's life experience by carefully describing and understanding the experience rather than providing a causal explanation of the experience. This approach to knowledge seeks to understand phenomena at the conscious level of its appearance and how things appear directly to us (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Tapping into an individual's lived experience unveils a solid base of pure knowledge by virtue of the fact that the individual's account of the phenomenon is a result of living through that experience (McIntosh & Wright, 2018). This

approach is situated in phenomenology, a form of qualitative inquiry that emphasizes the experiential aspect of a particular phenomenon.

Phenomenologists believe that behavior is determined by lived experience, whereas knowledge of a phenomenon is constructed in two ways: from personal experience and from the experiences of others (Prosek & Gibson, 2021). Therefore, data were obtained from the respondents to better understand them or to achieve the objectives of the study (Neubauer et al., 2019). These data, obtained from the experiences of the respondents, provide a new understanding of the phenomenon under study. Phenomenology is an approach to research that describes the basic structure or features of phenomena by exploring the knowledge of individuals who have experienced the phenomena in their daily lives (Saldaña, 2021; Qutoshi, 2018; Neubauer, Witkop, & Varplo, 2019). Phenomenological approaches/perspectives are rooted in seeking realities not pursuing truth' in the form of manifestation of phenomena as it is in subjective reality and lived experiences of individuals (Crotty, 1998 as cited by Armijos-Yambay, & Jordán Sierra 2020).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Universities in developed countries such as the United States of America (USA), China, South Korea, Europe, and France, among others, have adopted e-learning technologies to enable teaching and learning to become effective even before the COVID 19 pandemic. The seamless synchronization of these e-learning systems, Such as Moodle, Blackboard Learn, Canvas LMS, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams among others with the Internet has provided alternative options to face-to-face mode of education, because it enables the provision of information platforms tailored to students' academic needs in real time and remotely (Saleem, Al-Saqri, & Ahmad, 2016). Unfortunately, some universities such as Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Bayero University, Kano, University of Abuja among others in Nigeria shut down for a whole academic session during the global pandemic in the year 2020 (Jacob, Abigea, & Lydia, 2020).

The researchers observed that some Universities such as Alhikmah University in Ilorin, Kwara State, Crescent University, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Kaduna State University, Baze University, Abuja, and Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, immediately reverted to e-learning to meet the new normal. However, the researchers observed that most first-generation Universities such as Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Bayero University, Kano State, and University of Jos, Plateau State, did not revert to e-learning during this period, even as the Nigerian Government mandated that universities continue classes online. One of the issues the Academic Staff Union of Universities raised against the adoption and use of online learning is that of lack of technological knowledge on how to operate this platform (Ezema, Nworgu, Ehem & Echezona, 2021). Similarly, studies on the adoption and use of e-learning have stressed the critical need for e-learning knowledge in the intention to use these technologies (Eze, Chinedu-Eze and Bello 2018; Adeoye, Adanikin and Adanikin 2020). However, even with the importance attached to the adoption and use of e-learning platforms, especially in times of pandemics like that of COVID 19, most of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria are yet to adopt e-learning platforms such as the Moodle e-learning platform for teaching in their various institutions. Despite the shift towards online education and the adoption of MEP, it has been slow (O'Doherty *et al.*, 2018), despite the advantages of the adoption of the Moodle e-learning platform for online

education, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Academic institutions in some developing countries suffered a major setback; for example, in Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Education directed all educational institutions to lockdown in line with the pandemic prevention protocol (Jacob, Abigea & Lydia, 2020). This caused students in some institutions in the country to lose a whole academic session because physical lectures could not take place. Educational institutions were therefore forced to reevaluate and redefine all academic activities in line with the prevention protocols for the virus. The major factor attributed to the limited use of the e-learning platform at Ahmadu Bello University is the lack of knowledge of the platform (Mohammed & Quadir, 2020). However, the Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, did not lose a year, and the mode of teaching and learning was the Moodle platform. Therefore, in order for faculty members in other institutions of higher learning to adopt and effectively use Moodle learning platform, there is a need to explore the experiences of the e-tutors in Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria that have used and are still using module learning platform for teaching. In order to understand their experience, there is a critical need to explore the knowledge of e-tutors from the phenomenological perspectives.

Phenomenological perspectives seek knowledge from individuals with lived experience. These lived experiences have features that are commonly perceived by individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. These commonly perceived features or universal essences can be identified in order to develop a general description and understanding of the phenomenon under study (Neubauer *et al.* 2019).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following are the objectives of this study:

1. To identify the lived experiences of e-tutors of Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in the use of Moodle e-learning platform.
2. To identify the sources of information that are available to e-tutors of Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria on the use of Moodle E-learning platform.

### **Literature Review**

Soub, Alsarayreh, and Amarin (2021) examined the use of e-learning systems, specifically Moodle, in distance education during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study, which utilized descriptive analysis, found that faculty members benefited significantly from the Moodle system. However, they also encountered considerable challenges. To address these, faculty members recommended ongoing training in Moodle usage and regular updates to the system. Notably, the study revealed statistically significant differences in the evaluation of Moodle's effectiveness based on gender, teaching experience, and age group, favoring female faculty members and those with less teaching experience within the youth demographic.

Putri, Hamuddin, Nursafira, and Derin (2020) conducted a study on the effectiveness of Moodle in enhancing learning outcomes among EFL students at Universitas Lancang Kuning (Unilak) in Indonesia. This quasi-experimental research focused on the 2017/2018 fifth semester students who were early adopters of Moodle. By comparing pre-test and post-test scores between experimental and control groups, the study concluded that Moodle significantly improved

students' learning, with mean scores of 65.53 for the experimental class versus 63.25 for the control class, demonstrating Moodle's superiority over traditional lecture-based learning methods.

Ismael (2021) explored critical challenges affecting online learning in a study employing a phenomenological design. By analyzing the lived experiences of 14 experts, the research identified seven major issues faced by public universities: poor internet connectivity, technological illiteracy among teachers, student resistance, lack of devices, unreliable electricity, absence of suitable platforms, and non-conducive learning environments. This study primarily focused on the challenges associated with online learning rather than specific e-learning platforms.

Mohammed and Quadir (2020) investigated the factors influencing the use of the Moodle e-learning platform for teaching at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Using a qualitative case study approach, they employed purposive criterion-based sampling to select ten participants from the Faculty of Education. Through qualitative content analysis, the study identified lack of technical support and awareness as primary barriers to Moodle adoption among lecturers. This study differs from the present research as it focuses on a specific set of participants within Ahmadu Bello University and utilizes a different methodological approach.

### **Methodology**

Qualitative research Methodology and Phenomenological Research Design was adopted for this study. Qualitative research is a research enquiry method that is geared towards understanding, describing, and exploring the meaning of naturally occurring social phenomena (Van, 1979). The study equally used the interpretive paradigm for the exploration of the lived experiences of the subjects for the study. Population of this study consists of 665 e-tutors at the Distance learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Purposive sampling technique was used for selecting 9 sample size for this study upon attaining data saturation. A semi-structured interview was used for data collection and data collected was analyzed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA).

### **Data Presentation and Result**

This section consists of the data presentation and analysis of the data in alignment with the objectives of the study;

#### **Lived experiences of e-tutors in Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in the use of Moodle e-learning platform**

This objective sought to determine the lived experiences of e-tutors of distance learning centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria on the use of Moodle e-learning platform. Three themes emerged through the analysis of the data collected on the lived experiences of the participants in the study setting. These themes are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1- Lived experiences of e-tutors in distance learning centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in the use of Moodle e-learning platform**

Research Questions	Themes	Sub- Themes
<b>RQ1:</b> What are the lived experiences of e-tutors in distance learning centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in the use of Moodle e-learning platform?	1. Flexible and convenient for teaching and learning	1.1 Easy access 1.2 Flexible 1.3 Convenience 1.4 Access to a larger audience 1.5 Proximity 1.6 Opportunity to watch and re-watch online lectures
	2. Overcoming Barriers and Enhancing learning	2.1 Eliminates phobia and intimidation 2.2 Error identification
	3. Easy for Teaching and Assessment	3.1 Creation of quizzes and assignments 3.2 Online grading

**Source- Interview Analysis, 2023**

The emergent themes are discussed as follows starting with flexibility and convenience

**Theme one: Flexibility and Convenience**

This theme comprised of the narratives of the participants about the platform been flexible and convenient to use for teaching and learning. This theme is made up of six sub-themes: easy access, flexibility, convenience, access to a larger audience, proximity and opportunity to watch and re-watch online lectures. These sub-themes are explained as follows:

**Easy Access:** This sub-theme consists of the narratives of the participants about the Moodle e-learning platform creating easy access to resources and the learners. The researcher got informed by the participants’ in this study setting that using the Moodle e-learning platform made it easy to facilitate classes and resources. Narratives of participants in relation to this theme are reflected as follows;

*“..So far the best part of Moodle e-learning is that, students can access the resources at anytime and anywhere ... ” participant 1.*

*“...as far as I know you can be anywhere in the world and you can still have access to the class room...” participant 2.*

*“...using Moodle e-learning mobile app to access course materials and communicate on the go facilitates teaching and learning with less stress...” participant 9.*

**Flexibility:** This sub-theme encompasses the narratives of participants' experiences with the Moodle e-learning platform, particularly highlighting its flexibility. This flexibility enabled learners to independently access course materials, engage in discussions, and fulfill assignments according to their own schedules. It affords the learners the freedom to select when and where

they wish to study, accommodating a diverse range of schedules and learning preferences. The narratives of participants within this context are represented as follows:

*“...so far the use of the Moodle e-learning platform has been very flexible ...”*  
participant 1.

**Convenient:** Resources can be accessed at convenience and assignments can be submitted by students without the requirement of physical presence. This allowed doing things at ones' convenience by individuals with packed schedules, jobs, or other obligations. This sub-theme underscores the impact of technology in enhancing the convenience and accessibility of education. The narratives of participants in connection with this topic are depicted as follows:

*“...it is convenient you get to set time when you are comfortable with the agreement within the students without moving anywhere and the other component such as using the forum discussion ...”* participant 5.

*“...You can set time for the class interactions to take place and also set out your ending time for the interaction without going out of your convenience...”*  
participant 8.

**Access to larger Audience:** this sub-theme comprised of the narratives of participants regarding the Moodle e-learning platform and its capacity to reach a broader audience. Moodle e-learning breaks through geographical limitations, enabling educational institutions to connect with a more extensive and diverse audience. Individuals from various corners of the globe can enroll in courses and access educational resources. The narratives of participants related to this sub-theme are portrayed as follows:

*“...you can reach out to so many people at the same time, all you need is just to have an internet access...”* participant 8.

**Proximity:** The sub-theme arose from the accounts shared by the participants in this study setting concerning their real-life experiences with the Moodle e-learning platform. In the realm of e-learning, proximity denotes the nearness of educational resources to the learners. Moodle e-learning effectively shortens the gap between students and educational content; making it readily accessible. This notion of proximity holds significance as it streamlines the process of reaching educational materials, thereby enhancing the overall learning journey. The narratives of participants in connection with this sub-theme are depicted as follows:

*“...Furthermore, proximity allows individuals from diverse geographic locations to enroll in courses and engage in online learning, fostering inclusivity and diversity in the realm of education. ...”* participant 2.

*“...Moreover, proximity facilitates learners in interacting with course materials at their preferred speed and according to their personal timetable, offering particular advantages to those with hectic schedules, employment, or other obligations. ...”* participant 1.

**Opportunity to watch and re-watch missed classes:** The emergence of the sub-theme arose from the narratives provided by the e-tutors in relation to their experiences on the use of Moodle e-learning platform. This sub-theme underscores how technology plays a pivotal role in enriching the learning process by providing students the chance to solidify grasp of course materials. Notably, the presence of recorded lectures stands out as a valuable feature that permits students to both watch and re-watch these sessions. This sub-theme holds significant value, as it underscores the capacity to review and revisit course content, ultimately enhancing comprehension and retention. The narratives of the e-tutors and their experiences with this theme can be illustrated as follows:

*“...Students can have that Opportunity to even watch and re-watch a Lecture they missed ....” Participant 4.*

### **Theme two: Overcoming Barriers and enhancing Learning**

This theme comprised the narrative of the participants as lived experiences in the use of Moodle e-learning platform. This theme is made up of the two sub-themes. These are it eliminates phobia and intimidation; and error identification. The sub-themes are discussed as follows:

**Eliminates phobia and intimidation:** This sub-theme delves into the narratives of the participants that e-learning possess the interface to mitigate or eliminate apprehensions or intimidation that some learners may associate with traditional classroom environments. It focuses on how the flexibility and user-friendly interface of Moodle make learning less daunting, particularly for individuals who usually feel anxious in the conventional classroom settings. Through personalized, online interactions and the ability to progress at one's own pace, students may find it easier to engage with course materials, reducing the barriers related to intimidation or fear. Narratives of some of the participants are captured as expressed:

*“...Student ask questions freely without any fear or bias of mind without any form intimidation...” participant 2.*

*“..My students don't have any fear in asking their questions in using the module platform they are very free in asking their questions...” participant 4.*

*“.. With the platform introvert student express themselves freely without any intimidation or fear of other class mate...” participant 9*

**Error Identification:** This sub-theme emerged from the narratives of participants in relation to Lived experiences on the use of Moodle e-learning platform. Error Identification sub-theme centres on how Moodle assists in identifying and correcting errors or misconceptions in the learning process. This include aspects like automated assessment and feedback systems within Moodle, which help learners understand their mistakes and improve their understanding. Identifying errors and addressing them is an integral part of the learning process, and Moodle's tools and features may provide valuable assistance in this regard. The assertion of the participants on this goes thus:

*“...the more you teach them the more you are able to point out where there are errors or anything in the courses or in the materials and you can fix them and*



*then in the next semester you can effect that change immediately and everybody will have access to the new change that have been effected..” participant 1*

### **Theme three: Easy teaching and Assessment tools**

This theme originated through the personal narratives and real experiences shared by participants who have engaged with the Moodle e-learning platform. Within this theme, two sub-themes emerged, each playing a pivotal role in making teaching and assessment more efficient and accessible. The sub-themes are discussed as follows:

***Creation of quizzes and assignments:*** This sub-theme sheds light on the participants' experiences in using Moodle to simplify the process of crafting quizzes and assignments for learners. Through interviews and interactions with the study participants, it became evident that Moodle offers a user-friendly environment for creating diverse types of quizzes and assignments. This functionality is invaluable for educators as it streamlines the process of designing assessments that cater to various learning objectives and styles. The narration in relation to this sub-theme are reflected as expressed in the following sentences;

*“...I also use Moodle e-learning platform to create quizzes and assignments with various question types ...” Participant 9*

*“...with the use of Moodle e-learning platform I create series of quizzes and assignments through my question bank ...” Participant 7*

***Online grading:*** this sub-theme explained the lived experiences of the participant in the study settings about how the use of the Moodle e-learning platform had simplified Online grading for the e-tutors. The researcher got informed about these through the interview sessions held with the participants in this study session. The narration in relation to this sub-theme are reflected as expressed in the following sentences;

*“...I grade my student’s assignments with ease and students will be able to view the assignments that have been graded on the module immediately without moving around...” Participant 4.*

*“Using Moodle grading of assignments, forum, quizzes etc., is convenient, easy and comfortably done without having to move around with lots of sheets/books for marking...” Participant 8.*

### **Sources of Information available to E-Tutors in Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria on the use of Moodle E-Learning Platform**

This objective sought to determine the sources of information available to e-tutors in distance learning centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria on the use of Moodle E-learning platform. Two themes emerged through the analysis of the data collected on the lived experiences of the participant in the study setting. These themes are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** What are the sources of information that are available to e-tutors in distance learning centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria on the use of Moodle e-learning platform?

Research Questions	Themes	Sub- Themes
<b>RQ2:</b> What are the sources of information that are available to e-tutors in distance learning centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria on the use of Moodle e-learning platform?	<b>1. Digital Platforms</b>  <b>2. Training and Support</b>	1.1 SMS text message 1.2 WhatsApp 1.3 Via email 1.4 Direct phone call 1.5 Announcement page on the Moodle 2.1 Several trainings 2.2 visitation to the centre

**Source- Interview Analysis, 2023**

**Theme one: Digital Platforms**

This theme emerged as the sources of information available to e-tutors on the use of Moodle e-learning platform. Digital platform is a widely used learning management system that facilitates the creation and management of online courses. Digital platforms significantly influence the sources of information available to e-tutors in Distance Learning Centres. This theme consists of five sub-themes; these are: SMS text message, WhatsApp, email, direct phone call and announcement page on the Moodle. The sub-themes are further explained as follows:

**SMS text message:** this sub-theme stands for "Short Message Service." It is a text messaging service that allows the exchange of short text messages between mobile devices, such as cell phones and smartphones. SMS messages are typically limited in length, usually up to 160 characters, which makes it concise and suitable for quick communication. SMS text message emerged as a sub-theme through the narratives of the participants of this study related to sources of information available to e-tutors on the use of Moodle e-learning platform.

The narrations in relation to this sub-theme are reflected as expressed by participants in the following sentences;

*"...Some time very urgent information are sent via SMS text massages..."*

*Participant 3.*

*"...I get vital and urgent information via SMS text massages..." Participant 4*

*"...sometimes urgent messages are sent via SMS text massages..." Participant 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9*

**WhatsApp:** this sub-theme is a widely used messaging application for smartphones and other mobile devices. It offers a range of communication features beyond traditional SMS, making it a popular choice for personal and business messaging. Among the narratives of the study participants concerning the sources of information available to e-tutors within the Moodle learning platform, WhatsApp has surfaced as a prominent sub-theme. The depiction of this sub-theme is conveyed through the sentences that follow.

*"...we use mainly WhatsApp in terms of information sharing, we share links or send any suggestions relevant to our aims" participant 1 to 9.*

**Direct phone call:** also emerged as a Sub-theme from narratives of the participants of this study related to Sources of information available to e-tutors on the use of Moodle e-learning platform.

*"...sometimes through direct phone calls" participant 9.*

**Announcement page on the Moodle platform:** within the Moodle platform *this sub-theme* surfaced from the narratives provided by participants in this study. These narratives shed light on the relevance and significance of the Announcement Page as a source of information for e-tutors using the Moodle learning platform. The narratives of participants related to this theme are portrayed as follows:

*“...information is mostly passed through the Announcement page on the Moodle platform...” participant 1.*

*“I sometimes get my information through the information aspect on the LMS.....” participant 6.*

### **Theme two: Training and Support**

Training and support are critical sources of information and assistance for e-tutors in a distance learning center who are using the Moodle e-learning platform. Training sessions are often provided to e-tutors to help them become familiar with the Moodle platform. These sessions cover the basics of using the platform, including how to navigate, upload content, manage student interactions, and access various features. E-tutors receive information on the platform's interface and functionality, ensuring they can effectively utilize Moodle for their teaching. This is made up of two Sub-themes, namely; several trainings and visitation to the centre. This is further explained as follows:

**Several trainings:** emerged as a Sub-theme from narratives of the participants of this study related to sources of information available to e-tutors on the use of Moodle e-learning platform.

*“...We've being having several trainings and during this period all vital information is shared...” participant 1.*

*“...during training relevant information is shared among e-tutors...” participant 2.*

**Visitation to the centre:** emerged as a Sub-theme from narratives of the participants of this study related to sources of information available to e-tutors on the use of Moodle e-learning platform.

*“...We've being having several trainings and during this period all vital information is shared...” participant 2.*

*“in terms of available sources of information, he get all his needed information once he visit to the distance learning center...” participant 5,6 and 8.*

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **Lived experiences of e-tutors of Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in the use of Moodle E-learning platform**

The lived experiences of e-tutors in Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria are flexibility and convenience, overcoming barriers and enhancing learning; and experiences on easy teaching and assessment tool. The finding for this research objectives are discussed as follows starting with flexibility and convenience.

#### **Experiences on the Flexibility and convenience**

Flexibility and convenience facilitate access to larger audience, ability to play and replay, and access to resources at all time. Flexibility and convenience are becoming the buzz words of our present age driven by technological advancement. The use of online interface for learning have further simplify learning in the sense that individual/s can attend to issues at their own leisure time. Flexibility in online learning enhances both learners and tutors to customize how,

what, when and where they learn. In essence that means that students can study the course materials anytime they desire, at their own pace, and in a comfortable and quiet environment of their choice. The e-learning module's capacity to transcend geographical boundaries was particularly emphasized, creating a virtual space that fosters global collaboration. It offers bigger freedom and satisfaction to students who can balance their studies with their passions, interests and responsibilities.

Moreover, the responses gathered from the study participants further underscored the lived experiences associated with flexibility and convenience in the utilization of Moodle e-learning. The platform's features enable students to access resources seamlessly at any time and from anywhere, offering a personalized learning experience that aligns with individual schedules and preferences. Additionally, participants highlighted the capacity to effortlessly connect with a diverse audience without the need for physical mobility. This feature enhances global connectivity in education, emphasizing Moodle's role as a virtual hub that brings individuals from disparate parts of the world closer together.

Studies have repeatedly affirmed the experiences of tutors as doing things at convenient and of high flexibility. For instance, Ulanday, Centeno, Bayla, & Callanta (2021), who describe flexible learning as a blend of digital and non-digital technologies ensuring inclusive and accessible education through online, offline, or blended teaching modes. Likewise, utilizing Moodle allows students to actively engage in their education, offering learning opportunities irrespective of circumstances (Joaquin, Biana & Dacela, 2020). Likewise, *educations.com* (2022) observed that the platform enables personalized learning paces and flexible scheduling, fostering a balance between work and studies without sacrifices. Particularly beneficial for students in rural areas, those with health concerns, or frequent travelers, online learning enhances convenience (*CareerStep.com*, 2016). This aligns with the constructivism theory that states that Flexible learning environments, supported by platforms like Moodle, allow learners to actively engage with course materials at their own pace and convenience.

The finding implies that the firsthand experiences linked to the flexibility and convenience of using Moodle in e-learning. Notably, the platform's attributes, including unrestricted access at any time and from any location, global connectivity, on-demand learning opportunities, and the effective dissemination of knowledge, collectively contribute to cultivating a dynamic and adaptive educational environment. These experiences underscore the transformative potential inherent in e-learning platforms like Moodle, actively shaping the landscape of contemporary education.

According to Elsaid, *et al.*, (2023) opine that Online learning is a boon for students with convenience and flexibility. But having a lot of responsibilities at the same time can be challenging to manage. Nevertheless, a survey found that most students opt for online courses due to the flexibility and convenience they provide. Both online tutors and students can attend classes anywhere without any physical disturbances more flexibility results in a lack of capacity to use the given time. Time management is essential to balance school, work, and personal responsibilities and hence quite challenging for students (*hurix.com*, 2023).

### **Overcoming Barriers and Enhancing Learning**

“Overcoming barriers and enhancing learning” is a comprehensive approach that involves identifying, addressing, and removing obstacles to learning while simultaneously implementing strategies to improve and enrich the overall educational experience. It is also an act that prevents a learner from being fully engaged in the learning process which could be as a result of tight schedules, too much work, lack of available materials or technologies, emotional factors, or mindsets. This means idea of addressing challenges and obstacles that may impede the learning process while simultaneously implementing strategies to improve and optimize learning outcomes. It is also seen as an idea of addressing challenges and obstacles that may impede the learning process while simultaneously implementing strategies to improve and optimize learning outcomes. Overcoming barriers and enhancing learning can also be seen as the process of identifying, addressing, and transcending obstacles that impede effective education in order to create an enriched learning experience. By employing innovative strategies, leveraging technology, and fostering an inclusive and adaptive learning environment, educators can enhance the overall learning experience, ensuring that it is accessible, engaging, and effective for a diverse group of learners.

Likewise, the responses gathered from the study participants further highlighted the lived experiences associated with Overcoming Barriers and Enhancing learning in the utilization of Moodle e-learning. E-tutors in Distance Learning centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria initially experiences challenges in adapting to the technological aspects of Moodle. Navigating the platform, understanding its features, and troubleshooting technical issues were discouraging, but with time with time and experience the e-tutors developed technological competence by discovering innovative ways to use Moodle, exploiting its features to create engaging content, interactive assessments, and collaborative learning spaces. This in agreement with Croft (2013) who stated that barrier to learning is anything that stands in the way of a child being able to learn effectively. Studies have repeatedly admitted the experiences of tutors as doing things at Overcoming Barriers and Enhancing learning. For instance, Tomlinson (2000) added that learner may experience one or more barriers to learning throughout his or her education. Barriers to learning can manifest in various forms, such as socioeconomic factors, cultural differences, learning disabilities, lack of resources, and more. The integration of technology in education can help overcome geographical, economic, and accessibility barriers. Online learning platforms, educational apps, and digital resources can enhance learning experiences and provide flexibility for learners with different needs (Means, *at al.*, 2013). In order to Overcome Barriers and Enhance learning Gamage, Ayres and Behrend (2022) further added that e-tutors employed various communication tools within Moodle, such as forums, messaging, and real-time chat, to maintain regular feedback loops and enhance communication, fostering a sense of community among learners.

### **Experiences on easy Teaching and Assessment tool**

Easy teaching and assessment tool typically refers to a software or platform designed to simplify and enhance the process of teaching and evaluating students in an educational setting. Such tools aim to provide a user-friendly interface, streamline instructional tasks, and offer effective assessment capabilities. The term encompasses a range of features and functionalities geared towards facilitating both teaching and assessment activities for educators.

Moreover, the responses gathered from the study participants further underscored the lived experiences associated with easy Teaching and Assessment tool in the utilization of Moodle e-learning. The platform's features enable function as an accessible teaching and assessment tool, stands out for its user-friendly interface and a rich array of features for content creation and management. With the capability to effortlessly craft courses, educators can seamlessly organize diverse content, incorporating text, multimedia, and external links to develop compelling and interactive learning materials. Furthermore, participants of the study emphasized that Moodle enhances the assignment workflow, empowering educators to create tasks with precise instructions and deadlines. The electronic submission feature proves advantageous for students, and instructors can seamlessly offer constructive feedback and allocate grades directly within the Moodle platform. This contributes to the establishment of a more streamlined, efficient, and centralized grading system. The platform's quiz module enhances assessment versatility, empowering instructors to construct a diverse range of question types, including multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. This flexibility ensures that assessments align with various learning objectives, contributing to a well-rounded evaluation approach.

In addition to facilitating assessments, Moodle plays a pivotal role in nurturing timely and targeted feedback from educators to students. Complementing this, the platform integrates analytics tools, enabling instructors to monitor student progress comprehensively. This functionality allows educators to identify specific areas that may require additional attention, enhancing the overall learning experience.

Studies have repeatedly Costa, Alvelos & Teixeira (2012) The Moodle represents one of the most widely used open-source e-learning platforms that enables the creation of a course website ensuring their access only to enrolled students (Cole & Foster, 2008). This platform allows the exchange of information among users geographically dispersed, through mechanisms of synchronous (chats) and asynchronous communication (discussion forums). In a functional perspective, it has easily configurable features, allowing the creation of student assessment processes (quizzes, online tests and surveys), as well as managing their tasks with their timetable besides offering a wide variety of complementary tools to support the teaching and learning process (Mahmoud , 2008). Moodle LMS provides a range of assessment tools that can be used to evaluate learners' progress and understanding of course materials. These tools include quizzes, assignments, and interactive activities that can be customized to meet the needs of individual learners or groups (Goyal, Khaliq & Vaney, 2023).

The possible replacement system, Moodle, presents information in an easily accessible format that can be arranged by instructors to meet their specific needs. It includes discussion forums, quizzing functions and the use of MP3 files (Nedeva, 2005. As cited by Hontarenko, 2021).

### **Sources of information available to e-tutors in Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria on the use of Moodle e-Learning Platform**

Sources of information available to e-tutors in distance learning centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria are two (2). These are Digital Platforms and Training and Support.

## **Digital Platforms**

In the modern digital era, the concept of "digital platforms" encompasses online technologies or frameworks that enable the creation, delivery, and interaction with digital content, services, or products. These platforms play a crucial role in the digital economy, serving as virtual spaces where users connect, collaborate, and engage with diverse forms of digital information.

Digital platforms facilitate a range of activities, including communication, collaboration, and commerce. They provide a virtual environment for users to interact, access content, and engage in various pursuits. This interaction involves the delivery of different digital content types such as text, images, videos, and interactive applications, with platforms ranging from streaming services to news websites. These platforms offer users convenient access to services and information from almost anywhere with an internet connection, contributing to the widespread adoption of digital technologies. As a result, digital platforms continue to evolve, shaping how people connect, share information, and conduct activities in the digital landscape.

At the Distance Learning Centre of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Moodle serves as a powerful e-learning platform. Moodle is a digital platform specifically designed for education, offering a wide range of features that enhance the teaching and learning experience in a virtual environment.

Findings for the Participants of the study emphasized that digital platform serves as a source of information available to e-tutors in distance learning centre such as: SMS text message, WhatsApp, Email, direct phone call and Announcement page on the Moodle platform.

Digital platforms play a crucial role in the modern digital economy, and their applications are diverse across industries. In the field of education, these platforms, including Moodle, contribute significantly to creating interactive and collaborative learning environments (Noor, et al., 2022).

Moodle is a notable example of a digital platform tailored for education. It provides a virtual environment where e-tutors and students can interact, collaborate, and access various forms of digital content (Silvestre-López & Girón-García, 2023).

## **Training and Support**

Training and Support refers to the process of providing E-tutors with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies required to perform their duties effectively in the digital learning environment. The goal of training is to empower E-tutors with a deep understanding of the e-learning platform (such as Moodle) and the pedagogical approaches relevant to online education. This includes familiarizing them with the tools and features of the platform, instructional design principles, and strategies for facilitating online engagement. The goal of training is to empower E-tutors with a deep understanding of the e-learning platform (such as Moodle) and the pedagogical approaches relevant to online education. This includes familiarizing them with the tools and features of the platform, instructional design principles, and strategies for facilitating online engagement. E-tutors receive guidance on effective online teaching strategies, promoting student engagement, and fostering a collaborative learning

environment. The purpose of support is to address challenges, provide guidance, and ensure that E-tutors have the resources and assistance they need to deliver high-quality education in the distance learning context. Training and Support provides opportunities for continuous learning and professional development, keeping E-tutors informed about the latest trends and innovations in distance education.

Findings for the Participants of the study emphasized that Training and support serves as a source of information available to e-tutors in distance learning centre. Training and support are crucial components for e-tutors to effectively utilize Moodle, these platforms help tutors understand its features, functionalities, and best practices for creating engaging online learning experiences. Oliech & Calvince (2018) have described E-learning as the deliverance of education and training through distribution technologies and networked interactivity while others see it as simply communication and learning exercises across networks and computers or in other words the use of electronic sources.

Training and support cover various aspects of using the platform, including setting up courses, managing user roles, and utilizing different activities and resources (Jackson, 2018).

Moodle offers official training courses and certifications for educators. These courses are designed to help e-tutors understand the platform thoroughly and gain practical skills in creating effective online courses. Moodle often conducts webinars and provides online tutorials to support e-tutors. These sessions can cover a range of topics, from basic navigation to advanced features, ensuring that tutors have access to continuous learning opportunities. Jackson (2017) reported that Moodle is a technology that enables creativity among teachers and recommended that management incorporate training programs of LMSs for both teachers and students into their strategic plans. Moodle usually provides a support system, including help desks and support ticket systems, where e-tutors can reach out for assistance. This may include technical issues, troubleshooting, or questions related to the use of specific features (Kozlova & Tryasak, 2021).

These training and support resources empower e-tutors to make the most of Moodle, enhancing their ability to create engaging and effective online learning environments for students. Continuous learning and community engagement are key aspects of leveraging an LMS like Moodle to its full potential (Reddy, Syamala & Lakshmi, 2020).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on findings, study concluded that e-learning platforms have become a thriving and trending mode for learning and teaching in the present dispensation powered by technology innovations and advancement. Knowledge and the utilization of e-learning platform leverage the burden of jostling between physical learning spaces and accessing physical learning resources. The study recommend that the advocating for the utilization of the Moodle e-learning platform's flexibility to accommodate diverse teaching approaches, addressing barriers through robust support systems, encouraging ongoing professional development for e-tutors is a necessity. Also, those e-tutors at Ahmadu Bello University's Distance Learning Centre should enhance their use of the Moodle e-learning platform by leveraging digital platforms for collaborative knowledge exchange and embracing comprehensive training programs with multimedia resources and regular workshops, ensuring a self-motivated and well-supported learning environment.



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