

Nexus between Individual Learners Orientation and the Preferred Mode of Learning in the Public Service in Kenya: A Study of Kenya School of Government, Embu Campus

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Abstract

Learning institutions are faced with issues relating to Individual Learner's Orientation and its influence on the Preferred Mode of Learning for the public servants in Kenya. This can be attributed to differing levels of awareness on the availability of diverse learning opportunities, hindering cohesive and inclusive learning strategy. The objective of the study was to determine the influence of Individual Learner's Orientation on the Preferred Mode of Learning in the Public Service in Kenya, a case study of Kenya School of Government (KSG), Embu Campus. The study adopted a cross-sectional design and purposive sampling. A structured online questionnaire was used to collect data. The study was based on the self-

determination theory. A total of 37 Program participants filled out the online questionnaires. Course duration was established a key determinant to participants Preferred Mode of Learning with 43% of the respondents agreeing to that while another 14% strongly agreed. Furthermore, the study established that 76% of the respondents indicated that their choice of the mode of study was influenced by the mode of content delivery, while 24% were not influenced. Therefore, in selecting the mode of learning, the majority of the participants in KSG Embu were influenced by the mode of content delivery and course duration. However, family dynamics, the cost of study and technological know-how were not an influence to participants when selecting their preferred mode of learning. The study recommends that KSG should continue maintaining the high level of quality training in the programs they offer to maximize on more referrals, and also to consider revising the duration of the Online Mode of Learning.

Keywords: Individual Learner's Orientation, Mode of Learning, Course Duration, Family Dynamics, Technological Know-How, Mode of Content Delivery

Introduction

Reconfiguring the educational system is a target under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4, that envisions providing accessible education for everybody and opening up new avenues for lifelong education. Making education accessible to all students is a priority (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020). It is envisaged that high-quality education will contribute to the development of more stable and long-lasting communities by broadening access to opportunities and fostering greater tolerance within Society. However, by 2030, an estimated 300 million students will not possess the fundamental literacy and numeracy skills required for success in life, and an estimated 84 million children and young people will remain out of school (UN, 2024).

Over the last decade, there has been remarkable success in expanding educational opportunities and boosting enrolment across the board, especially among females. Despite these advancements, approximately 20% of the world's youth (or 260 Million) were not in school in 2018 (Elmassah, 2021) as cited in, (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020). Over half of the world's youth are underachieving at even the most basic level in reading and arithmetic. The United Nations is dedicated to guaranteeing a first-rate education to those who seek one. However, obstacles such as evolving technology and increased demand for specialized skills have slowed progress, (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020).

Due to increased digital transformation, online learning has become appealing to a range of learners and is becoming more commonplace in settings from elementary schools to high school and into post-secondary education (Bucăța & Tileagă, 2024; Mlambo *et al.*, 2021). The quality of education is considered the second dimension of the performance framework. Also, the quality of learning depends on the efforts made to ensure in-depth learning instead of surface learning. To succeed in higher education, a student must develop a higher level of motivation and develop appropriate strategies to achieve their individual goals, (Jiyed *et al.*, 2022; Lin, 2021).

Learning institutions must embrace new technologies, integrate them into their operations and teaching methods, and develop the necessary skills and knowledge to use them effectively, (Bucăța & Tileagă, 2024). Technological developments and digitization have been

transforming and impacting all industries and institutions more rapidly, especially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. These technological developments have propelled swift changes in higher learning and have led to new delivery methods, learning modes, and styles. These are physical, which is also referred to as face to face, blended, modular, and Online. Blended learning is described as learning activities that involve a combination of face-to-face interactions and technologically mediated interactions between teachers, students, and learning resources (Sharma & Shree, 2023).

In Africa, Butcher et al (2011) stated, as cited in Simiyu (2021), that there are expected benefits of Open and Distance Learning (ODL). These benefits include greater flexibility, a wider range of educational options, compensation, improved marketability, and opportunities for lifelong learning. The majority of the observable current trends in ODL, according to Mays (2005), are connected to the rapid advancements in information and communication technology. The ODL appears to be primarily being used in sub-Saharan Africa to increase access to basic education, preserve and enhance the quality of the system used in conventional education, and train service teachers (UNESCO, 2011). According to Letseka and Pitsoe (2014), the South Africa University (UNISA) is one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in Africa and has been providing correspondence courses since 1946. The ODL was founded on the African continent as a result of UNISA's success.

In Kenya, the introduction of a blended learning program is to ensure that higher education is stable and improve the academic performance and achievement of students during eventualities in learning circumstances. It has also developed adaptive and resilient teachers equipped for flexible, digital-age instruction by having a better institution and even community readiness for both long- and short-term learning interruptions (Simiyu, 2021). By 2030, equal access to vocational training and education at all levels should be available to all vulnerable populations, including indigenous peoples, those with disabilities, and children living in challenging circumstances. Regardless of their race, gender, color, language, age, religion, ideological or political opinion, property, national or social origin, or place of birth, young people and children should have equality of opportunity to partake in and benefit from high-quality education and training throughout their lives, (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020). Therefore, today's dynamic and fast-evolving public service environment, the effectiveness of training programs depends not only on the content offered but also on how well the delivery methods align with individual learner preferences. The importance of this topic lies in its potential to enhance the quality, relevance, and uptake of training in institutions like the Kenya School of Government (KSG), which plays a key role in capacity-building for public servants. By exploring how individual learner's orientation influences preferred learning modes, the study provides a critical lens through which institutions can adapt their training strategies to meet the diverse needs of adult learners, most of whom balance work, study, and personal responsibilities.

Statement of the Problem

The Sustainable Development Goal Number 4 seeks to ensure there is inclusive and equitable quality education and also promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. One of the Pillars of Kenya Vision 2030 is Science, Technology and Innovation (STI). Due to technological advancement, access to institutions of higher learning by learners has become easier. In fact learners are able to access these institutions for a variety of their educational needs such as

reskilling, upskilling and acquiring of new skills and knowledge via different modes of study. Despite the availability of the various mode of learning, the uptake of the various programs at KSG is still satisfactory. The Individual Learner's Orientation towards various mode of learning varies greatly, with some public servants exhibiting proactive attitudes while others are more resistant to change or less inclined to invest time and effort in professional development (Cunha, Bednarek & Smith, 2019). Further, the administrators are faced with the challenge of how individual orientation influences the preferred mode of learning for public servants.

The study therefore sought to address this gap between the ideal and the current scenario on Individual Learner's Orientation and the Preferred Mode of Learning in the Public Service in Kenya.

Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study was to determine the influence of Individual Learner's Orientation on the Preferred Mode of Learning among the Program participants at Kenya School of Government, Embu Campus.

Research Questions

What is the influence of Individual Learner's Orientation on the Preferred Mode of Learning among the Program participants at Kenya School of Government, Embu Campus?

Significance of the Study

Understanding the nexus between individual learner's orientation and preferred learning modes is crucial for enhancing training effectiveness, particularly within public service institutions such as the Kenya School of Government (KSG). This study contributes significantly to institutional knowledge by highlighting how course duration and content delivery methods shape learning preferences. These findings provide actionable insights that can inform curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and strategic decisions for training delivery, ensuring alignment with the learners' needs and motivations as outlined by the self-determination theory. In adult education, a one-size-fits-all method of delivering learning is becoming less and less effective, which makes this field of study crucial. Understanding the factors that influence people's decisions to use online, blended, or in-person learning methods is essential for creating inclusive, effective, and learner-centered training environments in light of emerging technologies, changing work demands, and diverse learner characteristics. The findings can help ensure that training investments in the public sector produce significant, long-lasting results by supporting evidence-based decisions in the design of training programs that are impactful and accessible

Conceptual Framework

The study conceptualized that Individual Learner's Orientation influences the Preferred Mode of Learning among Program participants.

The relationship is shown in Figure 1.

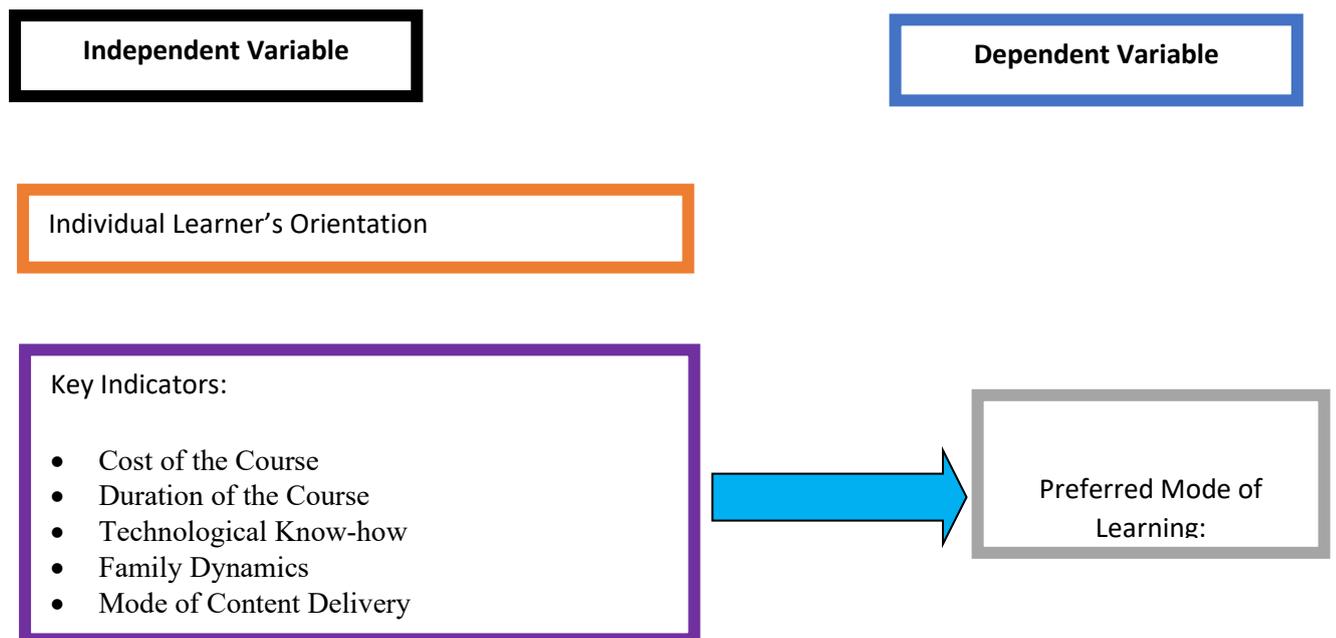


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source: Authors, 2024)

Empirical Review of Literature

Individual Learner's Orientation and the Preferred Mode of Learning

There has been recognition of the importance of individual differences in learning, with the idea that learning styles differ among individuals and that learning methods should be modified accordingly. Three different directions have been taken in the study of individual differences since then. The person's unique and customary approach to learning new information, abilities, or attitudes via education or experience. Coherent advancement in the subject has not been facilitated by the fragmented structure of learning styles research and its restriction to particular domains. The theory of learning styles has been reconceived to link learning styles and learning self-regulation, as evidenced by the resurgence of interest in learning styles in higher education (Jeffrey, 2009).

Self-paced learning environments enable individuals to complete online coursework at their own pace and on their own schedule, wherever they choose. The complexity of technology directly impacted how compatible new technologies were with existing learning practices. Hoang, Nguyen, and Nguyen (2021) determined that the compatibility of technology with existing work and learning practices positively influenced technology adoption since there is less complexity in configuring new technology to work with existing procedures. Since employees and some managers lacked essential skills, they were often more reluctant to use new technology. This also affected the transition to work-from-home. This illustrates the reluctance of employees to change traditional methods of operations and learning, (Nankoomar & Rosemary Quilling, 2023).

Learning institutions mostly focused on augmenting their investments in education and technology as the most notable alteration. This enabled numerous learning institutions to effectively utilize novel technologies. Complexity was discovered to have a major impact on the adoption of digital transformation within the technological setting. This issue is mostly caused by a deficiency in digital abilities, which is a significant problem in the institutional

learning setting. The involvement of governments has a significant role in the environmental context, particularly in terms of facilitating learning infrastructure development and implementing digital transformation packages,(Nankoomar & Rosemary Quilling, 2023). Given that the integration of digital technologies is a complex and continuous process that impacts different actors within the school ecosystem, there is a need to show how these impacts are interconnected and identify the factors that can encourage an effective and efficient change in the school environments,(Timotheou et al., 2023). Because their progress is tracked so that their accomplishments can be evaluated, this learning mode enables a learner who is more independent to advance autonomously at their own pace. Self-directed learning, which is a mode of learning that the learner controls, is crucial when discussing all forms of remote learning. The learners are in charge of their own education, and they frequently oversee and regulate the cognitive and contextual learning components. Additionally, self-directed learning can be understood as independent study that minimizes interactions between the learner and the teacher (Muchanji, 2017).

Gamage, Dehideniya Ekanayake (2021) looked into ways people's choice of learning approaches is influenced by their personal values and how that affects their academic performance. In order to produce graduates who will succeed in society, it is also paramount that students develop their personal values as part of their broader studies, matching these values with graduate attributes and striking a balance between knowledge and skills. The study determined through an empirical review that a number of factors, including the learning environment, subject matter, expectations, curriculum, teacher and teaching style, origin and cultural context, gender, and religion, likely cause students to modify their approaches to a particular learning strategy. Additionally, there was no discernible pattern in the choice of learning approaches at various levels of the learning context, such as deep, surface, or achieving, among others.

Theoretical Framework

Self-Determination Theory

The Self Determination theory was propounded by Deci and Ryan in 1985. It posits that there are two main types of motivation—intrinsic and extrinsic—and that both are powerful forces in shaping who we are and how we behave (Deci & Ryan, 1985).The theory stated that people have an innate desire to meet the needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness—the three fundamental psychological needs (Wulff, Mergenthaler-Canseco & Hertwig, 2018). Competence is the need to feel successful and capable in one's endeavors; relatedness is the need for meaningful relationships with other people; and autonomy is the desire to feel in control of one's actions and choices. According to the theory (Toftum, Kjeldsen, Wargocki, Menå, Hansen, & Clausen, 2015), when these needs are satisfied, people feel intrinsic motivation, which increases their engagement, persistence, and satisfaction in learning and other activities. The idea was that adult education should serve as a bridge for intercultural exchange and reconciliation by contributing to the study of the life and circumstances of other peoples, their history, literature, art and other cultural achievements, as well as promoting technical assistance in low-income countries, and supporting the efforts of international organization (Benavot et al., 2022).

The study can identify strategies to enhance intrinsic motivation and promote a culture of lifelong learning within public service organizations by looking at how public servants'

motivation to participate in training programs is influenced by awareness of learning opportunities, individual orientations towards learning, and support for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Sharma & Shree, 2023). The theory provides insights into the motivational factors that propel public servants' engagement in learning activities within the framework of a study on individual orientation and preferred modes of learning.

Research Gap

The studies reviewed revealed that the learners preferred mode of learning is influenced by factors such as awareness raising and institutional capacity. However, the researchers have focused mostly on mode of learning at institutions of higher learning and tertiary education, while there exists institutions such as Kenya School of Government mandated constitutionally to train the public service, hence build their capacity to enhance their skills and competences in offering quality service to Kenyans and also make progress in their career progression. Therefore, a gap exists in literature on the influence of Individual Learner's Orientation on selection of the Preferred Mode of Learning in the Public Service in Kenya. Therefore, the study proposes to address this gap

Scope of the Study

The study was carried out at Kenya School of Government, Embu Campus in Embu County. KSG is ISO 9001:2015 certified and its mandate is to offer Training, Research, Consultancy Services and Advisory Services to empower the public service in Kenya. Beyond the development of skills and competencies in the corresponding courses and areas of specialization, the institution aims to facilitate the acquisition of wider and deeper knowledge about social and economic issues of national, regional, and global concern.

Research Methodology

The cross-sectional study design was employed in the study, targeting course participants who had attended training at KSG, Embu Campus between the year 2022 and March 2024. The program participants were selected by purposive sampling method. This comprises the intentional, purposeful selection of people who are able to provide detailed, in-depth information on the subject under study. Further, snowballing technique was employed to get more referrals, so as to reach more respondents. The study used an online questionnaire for data collection, thus a link was sent to respondents through their email addresses or WhatsApp. A total of forty (40) respondents were identified and contacted. The data collected was analyzed using a spreadsheet namely Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS). The results were presented in form of charts, graphs and tables.

Study Findings

Gender Representation

As portrayed in Figure 1, 62% of the respondents were male while 38% were female. From the study, it can be concluded that there was gender parity, with both the genders represented.

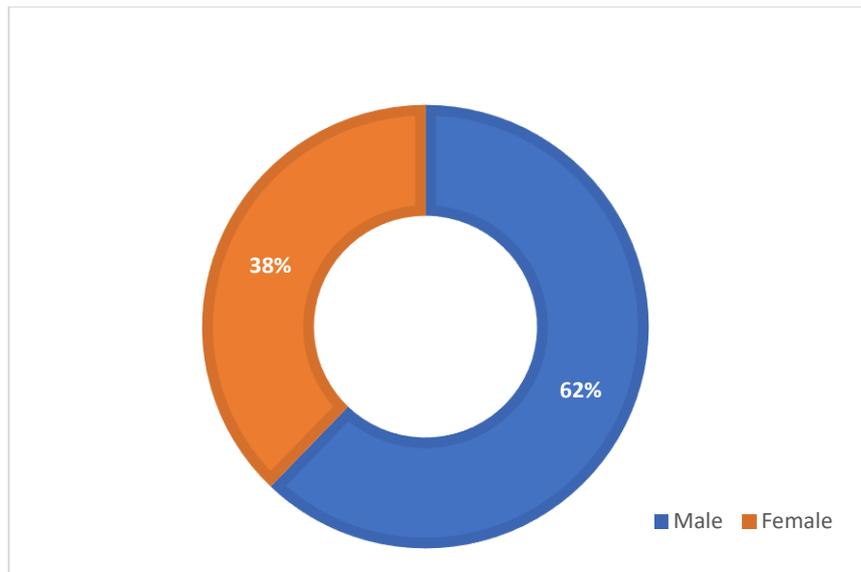


Figure 1: Representation of Gender

Age Information

Figure 2 shows that 30% of the respondents were aged between 28-37 years, another 30% were aged between 38-47 years, while 40% were aged 48 years and above. The results indicated that majority of the respondents aged 28 years and above. This implies that majority of the respondents were mature and understood the ethics of the research hence provided useful information for the study purposes.

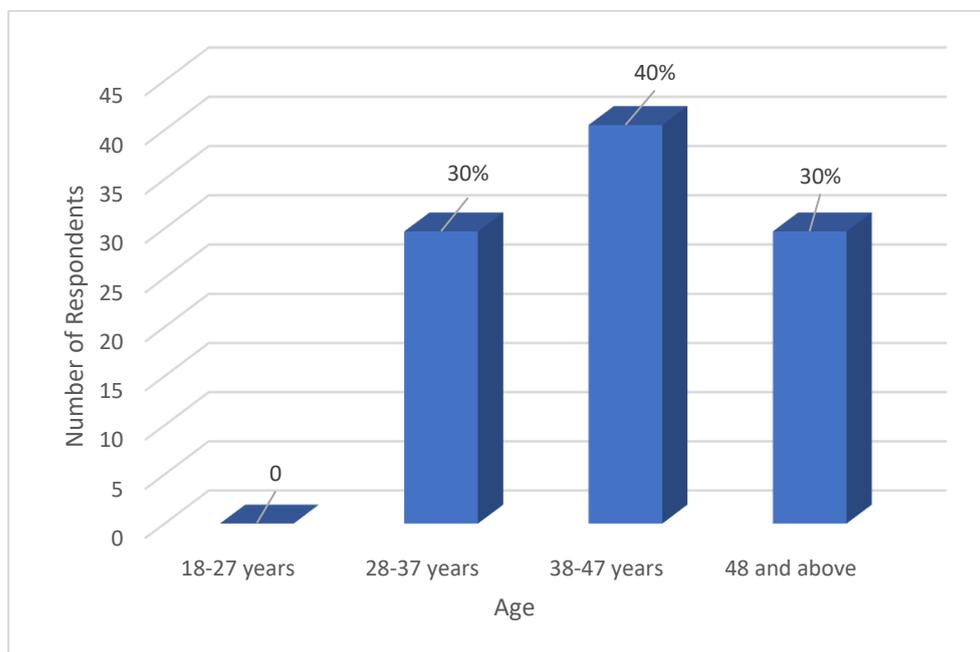


Figure 2: Age Representation

Marital Status

Figure 3 shows that 13.5% of the respondents were single while 86.5% were married. The study intended to establish how family dynamics such as marital status influenced the choice of Preferred Mode of Learning for Program Participants.

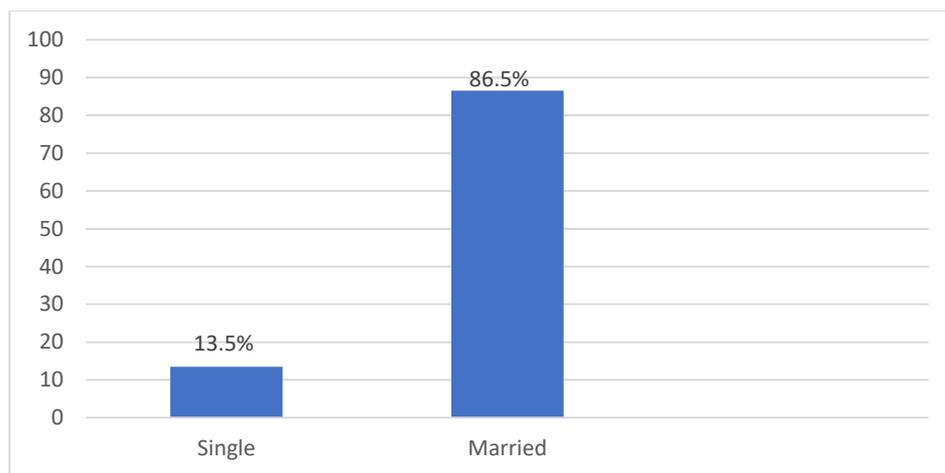


Figure 3: Respondents Marital Status

Descriptive Analysis of Individual Learner's Orientation and Preferred Mode of Learning *Individual Learner's Orientation*

The study sought to establish how the indicators of Individual Learner's Orientation were influencing the Preferred Mode of Learning selected by Program Participants. These indicators were cost of the course or program, duration of the course, family dynamics, technological know-how and mode of content delivery.

Cost of the Course or Program

The study sought to establish whether the cost of the program did strongly influence the participant's choice of the mode of study. 59.5% of the respondents indicated that the cost of training was not a determining factor to their preferred mode of learning while 40.5% of the respondents were in agreement that the cost was a determinant for their preferred mode of learning. These findings agree with the scholarly works of Kim Hoe Looi (2023) on Future Preferred Mode of Learning of Business students and its implication. He indicated that the cost of programs was influenced by cost and availability of ICT equipment (hardware such as desk top computer, laptop, tablet or smart phone and software) and good internet connection that were paramount pre-requisites for e-learning

Duration of the Program and Preferred Mode of Learning

The study sought to establish whether the duration of the Program did strongly influence the participant's choice of the mode of study. It was noted that choice of preference was determined by mode of delivery such as online, face to face, modular or a blended approach to learning. Majority of the respondents 43% agreed that the course duration was a determinant for their preferred mode of learning while 14% strongly agreed, another 8% were neutral while a further 8% disagreed and 27% strongly disagreed that the duration of the study did influence their preferred of mode of learning. The duration of any learning program is influenced by learners' Self-regulation which is learner-centric. (Zayapragassarazan, 2020; Zhou et al., 2020). This autonomous learning modality (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020; UNESCO, 2020c; Zhou et al., 2020) emphasizes learners' Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) ability (Mou, 2021). The SRL is the degree to which learners embrace their cognitive ability, are motivationally and behaviorally active in their learning processes (Zimmerman, 2013). This imply that learners master their own learning processes (Zimmerman, 2011). Prior study suggests that self-regulation is more difficult in e-learning than in conventional classroom

learning (Barnard-Brak, Paton, & Lan, 2010). Biber et al. (2021) identified four profiles of learners based on their learning adaptation strategies. The adapters valued the autonomy proffered by e-learning and self-regulate their e-learning. Thus, adapters were likely to prefer e-learning. Conversely, the overwhelmed and surrenderers were less able to regulate their effort, attention, and time and will be less motivated to use e-learning

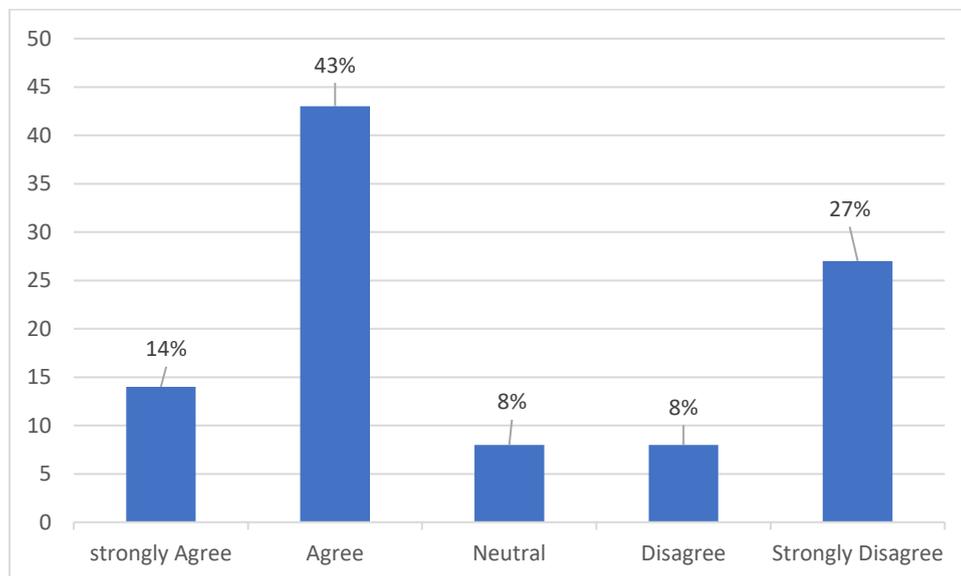


Figure 4: Duration of Course and Preferred Mode of Learning

Family Dynamics and Preferred Mode of Learning

The study sought to establish the influence of family dynamics on the participant's choice of the mode of study. 70% of the respondents indicated that family dynamics did not influence the choice of their preferred mode of learning, while 30% were influenced by the family dynamics when selecting their preferred mode of learning. Those influenced by the family dynamics was due to type of their job responsibilities, one needed a program which he or she could attend after working hours, the availability of an online option, self-driven and modular which enabled the participant to study at their own pace and manage work and family. In addition, some participants may not have a quiet space to study at home or may be distracted by family responsibilities. These program participants will likely suffer a higher risk of being left behind in e-learning (Choong, 2020)

Technological Know-How and Preferred Mode of Learning

The study sought to establish the influence of technological know-how on the participant's choice of the mode of study. 68% of the respondents indicated that technological know-how did not influence their choice of the preferred mode of learning, while 32% were influenced. Those influenced by the technological know-how gave an indication on how technological know-how influenced their preferred mode of learning. Technological awareness enabled them to successfully study at KSG since it made work easier, efficient, effective and flexible, with less room for distraction, being able to do research online and managing to understand the different topics better. Those with IT skills felt comfortable doing the course online, the use of ICT technologies is convenient as it makes one study from anywhere.

Content Delivery and Preferred Mode of Learning

The study sought to establish the influence of mode of content delivery on the participant's choice of the preferred mode of study. 76% of the respondents indicated that their choice of the mode of study was influenced by the mode of content delivery, while 24% were not influenced.

Discussion of Study Findings

The study sought to establish the connection between Individual Learner's Orientation and Preferred Mode of Learning for Program Participants. The independent variable had five indicators namely cost of the course or program, duration of the course, family dynamics, technological know-how and mode of content delivery. The study found that 59.5% of the respondents indicated that the cost of course or program was not a determining factor to their preferred mode of learning. Therefore, the choice of the preferred mode of study for majority of participants in KSG Embu was not influenced by the cost of the course or program.

Moreover, majority of the respondents 43% agreed that the course duration was a determinant to their preferred mode of learning, while another 14% strongly agreed. This implies that in selecting the preferred mode of learning at KSG Embu, most participants were influenced by the course duration. Further, 70% of the respondents indicated that family dynamics did not influence the choice of their preferred of mode of learning, while 30% were influenced by the family dynamics when selecting their preferred of mode of learning. Hence, in selecting the mode of learning, the majority of the participants in KSG Embu were not influenced by the family dynamics.

Further, 68 % of the respondents indicated that technological know-how did not influence their choice of the preferred mode of learning, while 32% were influenced. Hence, in selecting the mode of learning, the majority of the participants in KSG Embu were not influenced by the technological know-how. However, the study established that 76% of the respondents indicated that their choice of the mode of study was influenced by the mode of content delivery, while 24% were not influenced. Therefore, in selecting the mode of learning, the majority of the participants in KSG Embu were influenced by the mode of content delivery.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of the study was assess the nexus between Individual Learner's Orientation and Preferred Mode of Learning, among participants at KSG Embu Campus. Various indicators of Individual Orientation were examined. The choice of the preferred mode of learning for 59.5% of the respondents was not influenced by the cost of course or program. Further, technological know-how did not influence the choice of the preferred mode of learning for 68 % of the respondents. Moreover, 70% of the respondents indicated that family dynamics did not influence the choice of their preferred of mode of learning. However, 43% of the respondents agreed that the course duration was a determinant to their preferred mode of learning, while another 14% strongly agreed. This implies that in selecting the preferred mode of learning at KSG Embu, most participants were influenced by the course duration. Furthermore, the study established that 76% of the respondents indicated that their choice of the mode of study was influenced by the mode of content delivery, while 24% were not influenced. Therefore, in selecting the mode of learning, the majority of the participants in KSG Embu were influenced by the mode of content delivery.

Conclusion

The study established that the indicators of Individual Learner's Orientation had varied influence on the Preferred Mode of Learning for participants at KSG Embu Campus. Specifically, participant's choice of their preferred mode of learning was greatly influenced by the course duration and the mode of content delivery. Therefore, course duration and mode of delivery were established as critical factors that influenced participant's choice of the mode of learning at KSG Embu Campus. However, family dynamics, technological know-how and cost of the course had minimal influence on the participant's choice on the mode of learning. The authors make a theoretical contribution by establishing existence of a significant relationship between course duration and mode of content delivery; and selection of mode of study. Therefore, improvement on the course timelines and value proposition, as well as mode of delivery can influence uptake of the diverse programs offered at KSG.

Recommendations

The study established that course duration and mode of content delivery greatly influenced participant's decision on their mode of learning at KSG Embu Campus. Therefore, the study makes the following recommendations; there is the need for the National and County Governments, Development Partners and the Private Sector to work closely with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) such as Kenya School of Government to realize the following recommendations;

- (a) Kenya School of Government to continue to build capacity of faculty in the various modes of content delivery, so that any program they run can be delivered via diverse modes and hence attract more potential participants to enroll in these programs.
- (b) Kenya School of Government to seamlessly enrich online training programs by revising them in line with the current market needs and demands, as well as the dynamics in their timelines. With course duration being a factor influencing participant's choice of preferred mode of learning hence determining whether a participant enrolls for a program or not, course timelines is critical and the value proposition.

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