

Peer Review

Review of: "Higher Education Institutions' Preparedness for the Digital Era: Lessons from COVID-19 in South Africa"

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Title

It is suggested that the title be changed to show that the study focused on experiences of students in higher education as they used technology during the COVID-19. The *higher education preparedness* as used in the title is quite vague, as no management of the selected institutions was part of this study. Students' views alone cannot be used to measure the level of preparedness.

Abstract

Though the title showed that the study was conducted in a higher education institution, the abstract mentioned youth and students. However, these two terms may connote different meanings in everyday parlance. The abstract must have brief notes on the population/sample, design, data collection/instruments, findings, and recommendations in a clear and logical manner. The information must be revised to remove other information and use those suggested as required in most scholarly papers.

Introduction

The introductory part of the study is not succinct enough to get the reader to grasp the focus and direction of the study. What is the study trying to look at? The variables cannot be deduced from reading the text. The title was preparedness of higher institutions. What are the forms of this preparedness as operationalised by this study? The background focused on general issues such as digital tools, digital literacy, digital learning, traditional literacy, and many others. Are these the conditions for institutional preparedness? It is suggested that the background be reviewed to align with the focus of the study as

depicted in the results section of this paper. There seems to be a lot of digression and inconsistencies in the flow of ideas within and between the paragraphs. More importantly, the study did not have research objectives to guide the flow of ideas in the introduction, literature review, or the results.

Literature review

As already indicated, the study did not provide a research guide in the form of research objectives or hypotheses to ensure a good flow of ideas. The review must be revised to focus on the issues raised under the results of the study. There is a mismatch between most of the ideas shared in the introduction, the literature review, and the results. It is recommended that the section be revised to ensure a line of consistency throughout the whole write-up. Sometimes sentences do not flow logically into one another and make reading a little cumbersome. The researcher must focus on the audience and simplify the language to make reading easier.

Methods and Approach

1. The researcher must be specific about the type of mixed method approach that was used and support the discussion with citations of design, Creswell (2014), and other experts of this design.
2. There is a need to give the justification and suitability of this approach in line with the aims of the study and population.
3. The section must be described in a logical and scientific manner in these areas: Design, research approach, population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection, and analysis procedures.
4. The total sample of 274 from all the universities as indicated in the work must be given a breakdown to reflect how they were selected.
5. There was no total population for the students selected from various institutions used in the study.
6. What are the sub-totals of the population for each of the universities used in the study? How many were private or public?
7. What sampling procedure was used to select the 247 respondents? How many were respondents from each of the universities? What category of students were used? First year, second year, or final year? What were the inclusion and exclusion criteria? A table must be generated to show this important aspect of the paper.
8. The study indicated case studies were created. How were they created?
9. One is not sure how the interviews were conducted for all the 247 participants.
10. This section needs to be reviewed to give justifications and make it more scientific for replication purposes.

Case Studies:

1. Is it the same as the presentation of results? The section did not include the demographic information of the respondents.
2. The whole result needs to be reviewed in line with some research objectives. As it stands now, the introduction section, the literature review, and the results contain different information. The paper lacks some level of cohesion. There is so much information in the results section, making it look like another review.
3. The results have graphs on some items, and one is not sure if that is the quantitative aspect of the paper.
4. Most headings have just one verbatim response, which is quite inadequate looking at the quantum of participants/respondents.
5. The results section should have been presented in line with a set of research questions to enable a reader to assess if the goals were being achieved.
6. The researcher must revise this section and indicate the degree to which the data was mixed. Quantitative with supporting qualitative and vice versa.

General Observation

Though the study leans on a contemporary phenomenon, there is a need to ensure some amount of logic, consistency, and scientific processes.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.