

Peer Review

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

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Abstract

The abstract indicates that both qualitative and quantitative data were analysed but lacks sufficient detail about the specific methods employed. It also does not show how many students participated in the study, how they were selected, etc. Keywords are not included. Including keywords will help to align the study and allow the reader to see the main topics covered in the study.

Introduction

The introduction has a number of sections that are not referenced. The referencing style is not consistent, with notable errors in the references. For example, Street, 1984 is cited in-text but not listed in the reference list. There are grammar errors that need language editing. It is best to conclude the section with a paragraph outlining how the rest of the article will be structured.

Literature Review

The literature review repeats some of the information covered in the background. It is disintegrated, lacking cohesion and synthesis of the corpus. It provides global trends but no coverage of the South African or BCMM context. Furthermore, the review does not clearly identify gaps or limitations in the current literature that the study aims to address, which weakens the justification for the research.

Methods

The methods section claims to use a mixed-methods design but does not explain how the qualitative and quantitative components were integrated. Details on data collection procedures and systematic analysis

are insufficient. There is no clear explanation regarding the sampling strategy for the 274 students who participated in the study. Consider adding the data collection instrument as an addendum to help the reader understand the questions that were used.

Results

The results section needs to start with a detailed demographic profile of the respondents to provide context. The analysis heavily relies on individual student testimonies with limited triangulation from quantitative data. The results are presented as descriptive with limited analytical insight and connection to theoretical frameworks. There are grammar errors.

Discussion

The discussion centres on students as natural anchors of technological change due to their youth and digital familiarity but overlooks disparities in digital literacy and access, especially among disadvantaged students. This framing risks reinforcing existing digital divides rather than offering a nuanced understanding to address these inequities. The discussion could benefit from a more critical and inclusive approach to students' varied experiences.

Conclusion

The conclusion is very brief and too general. It does not adequately summarise the full scope of the study's findings, nor does it provide specific, actionable recommendations or strategies for HEIs to improve digital preparedness.

Overall Recommendation

The study addresses an important topic with the potential to contribute valuable insights into digital readiness in South African HEIs. However, it requires substantial revisions to improve methodological clarity, analytical depth, literature engagement, and practical utility. I recommend revision and resubmission with attention to the points outlined above.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.