

“The impact of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) on the
learning experience of the students at University of Wales
Trinity Saint David, London”

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Contents

Introduction.....	3
Rationale	3
Objectives.....	3
Literature Review.....	4
Methodology	5
Primary and Secondary Data Analysis	6
Conclusion	12
References	12
Appendix.....	14

Introduction

The new age of digital skills has emerged into a new learning environment in the educational sector which is known as the virtual learning environment (Mort, 2015). The virtual learning environment has brought drastic changes in the field of education where students can attend classes and learn things by staying at home (Keller, 2016). Both positive and negative impacts are being noticed in the learning process of students due to the high use of VLE in the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19. Now, it is a matter of concern whether the students are having good learning experiences or not through the use of VLE. Thus, this research will be focusing on the UWTSD students and how VLE is affecting their learning experiences. The whole research is based on the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, London campus students.

Rationale

The concept of virtual learning is not new in the educational sectors but the use of this has been increased during the pandemic crisis. The governmental regulations and the health and safety measures have made the use of virtual learning environment platform a worthy and timely one. But there are several positive and negatives sides of continuing to this virtual platform. In the UWTSD, London campus some of the students are new to this concept and thus this study will evaluate the impact that VLE is having on the current students of this university. This research study will be a significant one where students will be able to evaluate their virtual learning experiences and authority will be able to listen to the voices of students for further improvements in their online education system.

Objectives

This research paper has both primary and secondary objectives. The primary objective is to evaluate the effect of virtual learning environment among the London campus students of University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Along with the primary objective, the other objectives are:

- To know about the students VLE experiences so far
- To identify the problems or benefits they are having through VLE

- To measure the effectiveness of UWTSD's virtual learning environment

Literature Review

Virtual learning environment is an emerging and growing practice in the education system (Hay and Drago, 2017). The virtual learning environment has seen a very upward rise in the time of pandemic where the social distancing made mandatory by the governments for health and safety purposes (Chen and Kinshuk, 2020). The use of information technology in educational activities was first seen in the late 19th century where several universities in UK started to introduce a new form of learning environment in the educational institutions (Weiss and Trifonas, 2016). Previously, the VLE has been used in higher education mostly but now it is used for every class of students.

Keller (2016) defined virtual learning environment as an artificial space for learning which gives digital solutions for both students and teachers. Though, virtual learning environment is in practice for a long time the impact of this environment on student's learning experiences is a matter of research for several scholars and academicians (Dieker and Hardin, 2014). The students' learning experiences are the combination of several activities that are performed under any learning environment whether it's traditional, virtual or digital (Mort, 2015). Both positive and negative effect of virtual learning environment has been found out by several publications, journals, books and other materials.

Positive Impacts of Virtual Learning Environment in Learning Experience of Students

Virtual learning environment has been designed with the major objective of enabling digital education for both students and teachers over the online platform through the use of the internet (Hay and Drago, 2017). It has brought a number of positive impacts in the learning experiences of students like flexibility of participating in the class, increasing the communication and collaboration among teachers and students, providing dynamic resources of learning, efficient and effective time management, real-time learning and so on (Chen and Kinshuk, 2020). According to Dieker and Hardin (2014), students who are shy and introverted in nature, having the most positive impact on their learning experiences due to the mass use of virtual learning environment, are being more engaged in this learning environment compared to the face-to-face classes.

By the research of Kerimbayey (2016), it is found that virtual learning environment has made the students more confident and enthusiastic, are signing up for the virtual learning at an increasing rate. The easy access to the learning materials through VLE has another significant impact on the learning experiences of students (Annetta and Klesath, 2017). Students are saving costs and having comfort in their learning due to the use of virtual learning environment (Tobarra and Caminero, 2017). Fowler (2015) mentioned that immediate feedback and real time learning are some of the prime benefits of virtual learning which are enriching the students learning experiences positively.

Negative Impacts of Virtual Learning Environment in Learning Experience of Students

The virtual learning environment has negative impacts as well in the students learning experiences like students are not being on time for the classes and being inattentive to the lectures are the common ones (Weiss and Trifonas, 2016). By the research of Dyson and Campello (2018), it is found that 57% students are reading the provided material in the VLE, 52% are downloading it but only 14% of students are going through the links that have been attached as the resources for advanced learning. Some of the students are not being able to attend the classes due to the rigid schedules provided by the course teachers and poor network connection or lack of technical knowledge (Tobarra and Caminero, 2017). Less scope of interaction making the extrovert students leave the classes in the middle (Chen and Kinshuk, 2020). Students are also having negative learning experiences due to the no control over the learning atmosphere and expensive technological equipment required for effective learning (Fowler, 2015).

Methodology

The methodology part consists of the research philosophy, method, research design, data collection methods, ethical considerations and other aspects of the research for conducting a research study (Goddard and Melville, 2014). In this research study, the **positivism** has been chosen as the research philosophy which is helpful for getting the correct and realistic information regarding any topic while conducting a study. Positivism philosophy is mostly undertaken for conducting research in the social science aspects (Gomm, 2016). Next, the **exploratory** research design will be used in this study of VLE because this particular research design helps to have extensive and detailed information regarding any particular topic. It helps to

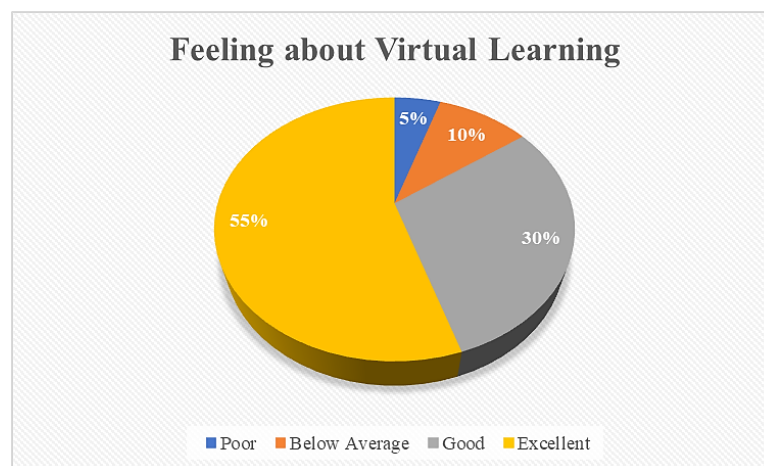
work on the research objectives for the fruitful conclusion of the study (Goddard and Melville, 2014). Here, the **deductive** reasoning will be used for coming to a logical conclusion regarding the impact of VLE in the learning experiences of students who are studying at the University of Trinity Saint David, London.

For the data collection purpose, **qualitative** and **quantitative** approaches will be used for having accurate analysis regarding the impact of VLE. The data will be collected from both primary and secondary sources as well. **Primary** data will be collected from the students of UWTSD students of London and **secondary** data will be collected from the previous learning materials that are highly recognized in the aspect. A Quantitative approach will be used for the primary data analysis and the qualitative approach will be used for the secondary data analysis which will make the research more logical and meaningful for all types of researchers.

Having more than a thousand students in the London campus of UWTSD, the sample size will be 20 which will be based on the non-probability sampling. From the previous researches conducted in this sector, 20 is a good sample size through the use of non-probability sampling. The ethical issues will be considered strictly for ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of the participants (Goddard and Melville, 2014). According to the Data Protection Act 1998, all the ethical issues will be maintained for the purpose of this research study and will not be shared with anyone else after the study (Gomm, 2016). So, along with quality, this research will maintain the ethical aspects too.

Primary and Data

Q1.



Secondary Analysis

Figure 1: Overall feeling regarding virtual learning

Analysis: In the primary data collection process, participants were firstly asked about their overall feelings regarding the current virtual learning environment. 55% of the participants has responded that they have excellent feeling regarding virtual learning and 30% responded as good. But 10% has replied that they had below average feeling where 5% had a poor feeling on VLE.

Q2.

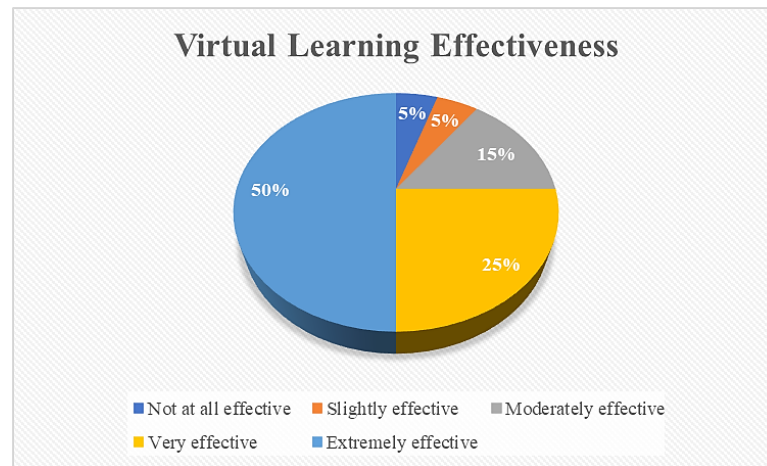


Figure 2: Effectiveness of Virtual Learning

Analysis: Participants were also asked about the effectiveness of virtual learning according to their opinion. Among 20 participants, 10 of them i.e., 50% has responded that it is extremely effective. 25% of the respondents mentioned that it is very effective and 15% as moderately effective. There is also 5% of the respondents who think that it is slightly effective and other 5% find it not effective at all.

Q3.

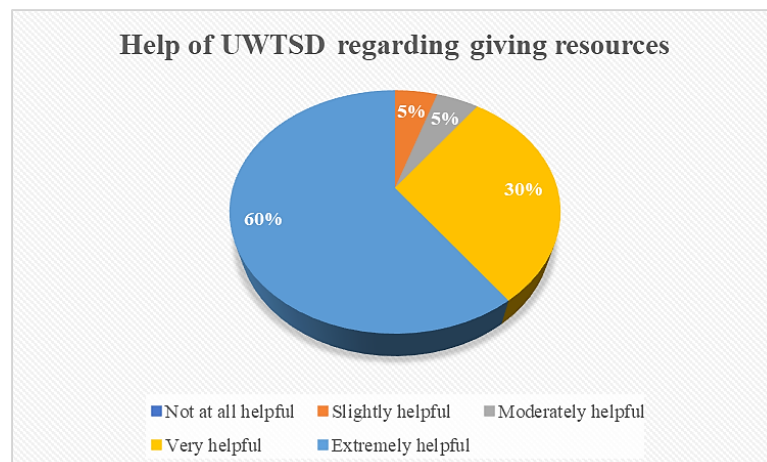


Figure 3: UWTSD help regarding giving resources to the students staying at home

Analysis: Regarding help of university in accessing the resources by staying at home, it is found that 60% of the respondents having it extremely helpful where 30% as very helpful and 5% moderately helpful. But there are also 5% of the participants who thinks that UWTSD is slightly helpful in this regard. However, there were no participants who did not find it any helpful at all.

Q4.

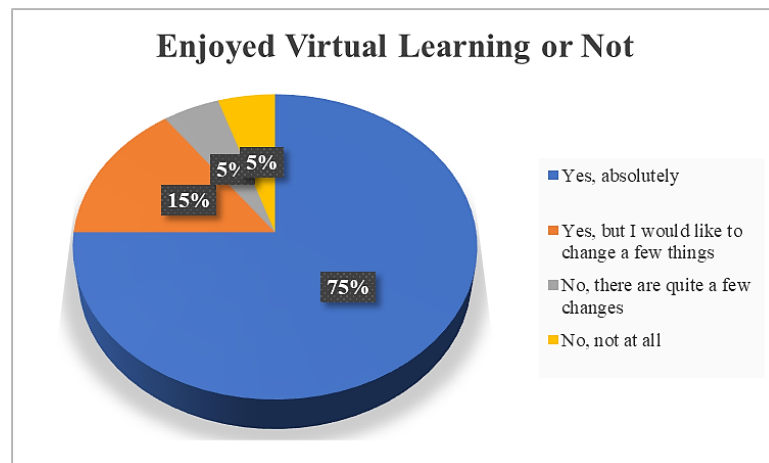


Figure 4: Regarding enjoying the virtual learning

Analysis: Participants were asked about their learning experiences whether they are enjoying the virtual learning platform and 75% has responded that yes, they are absolutely enjoying this. 15% responded that they are enjoying this but they would like to recommend a few changes in this context. Other 10% responded that they are not enjoying this learning where 5% said not at all and 5% said they need a quite number of changes in this learning.

Q5.

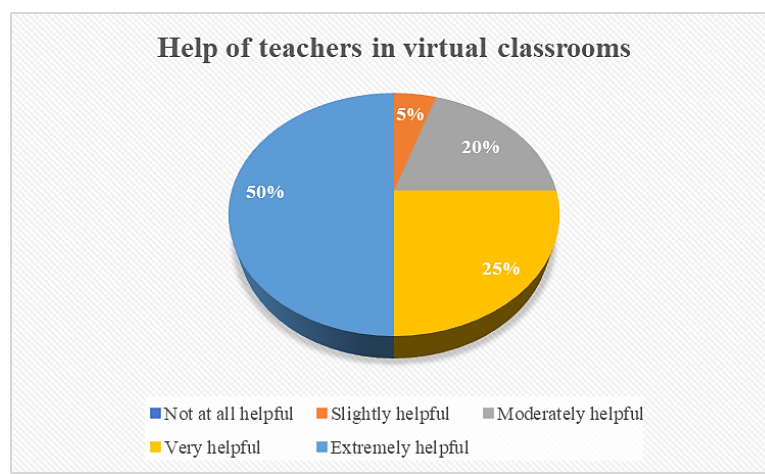


Figure 5: Regarding teachers help during the virtual classes

Analysis: This question was about whether they get the needed help in the virtual classes from their teachers. 50% of the participants has responded positively as they get extreme help from their teachers, 25% responded as very helpful and 20% of the participants responded as moderate helpful. Only 5% of the participants responded that, they get slight help from their teachers.

Q6.

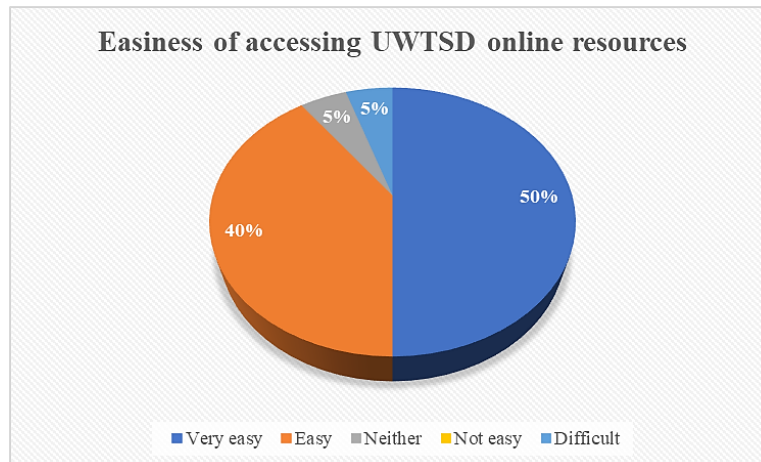


Figure 6: Regarding easiness of accessing resources like Moodle, Library and HWB app

Analysis: Regarding easiness to access Moodle, UWTSD Library, and HWB app, 50% of the participants responded that it is very easy to access and 40% responded as easy. But there were 10% respondents who said that it is not easy and difficult too.

Q7.

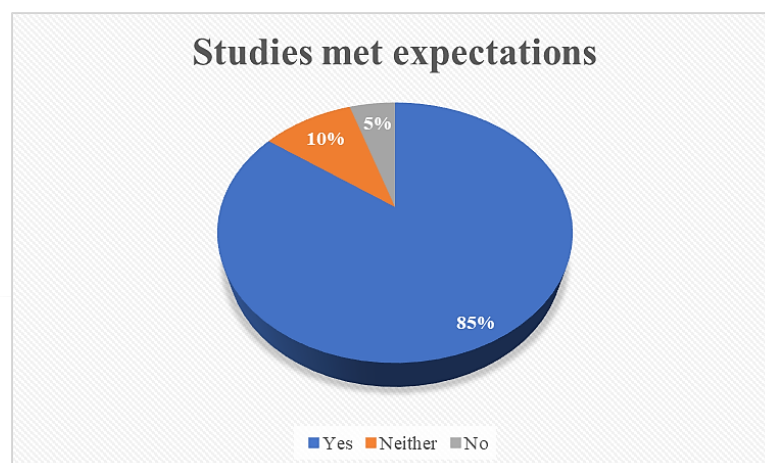


Figure 7: Did the studies met expectations

Analysis: About the question did the virtual learning studies met their expectations, 85% participants has responded affirmatively and 5% as negatively. But there were also 10% of the participants who remained in between of these two with no particular answer.

Q8.

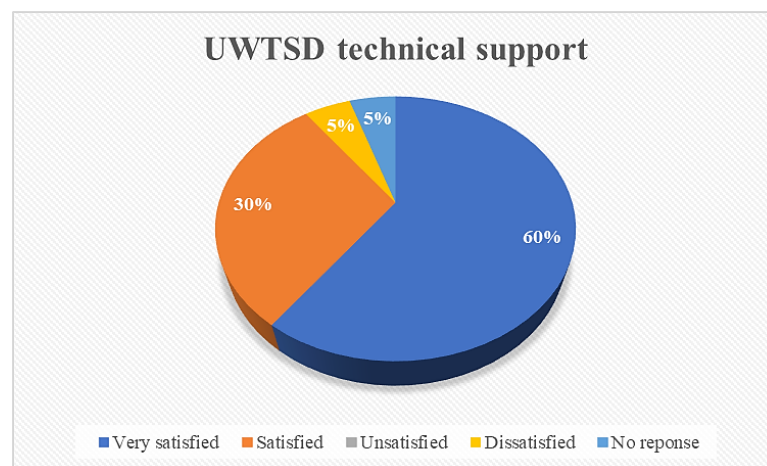


Figure 8: Technical support of UWTSD when needed

Analysis: About UWTSD technical support, 60% of the participants has been very satisfied with the support, 30% remained satisfied and 5% responded that they are dissatisfied with the technical support of UWTSD. 5% of the participants skipped this question with no response.

Q9.

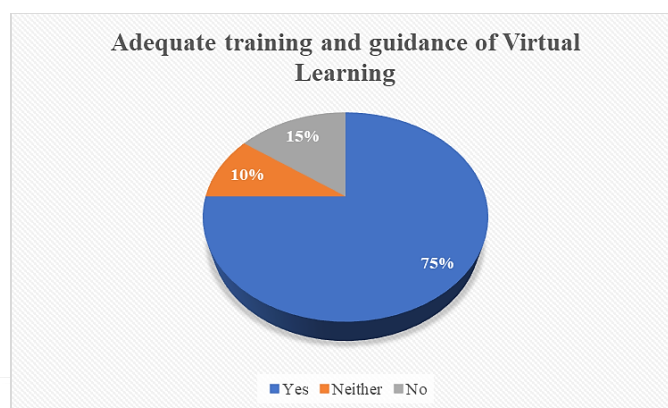


Figure 9: Adequate training and guidance related to the virtual learning

Analysis: Regarding training and guidance on VLE, 75% of the respondents has adequate training and guidance on virtual learning where 15% do not have any training, 10% of the respondents remained in between of yes or no with no specific response.

Q10.

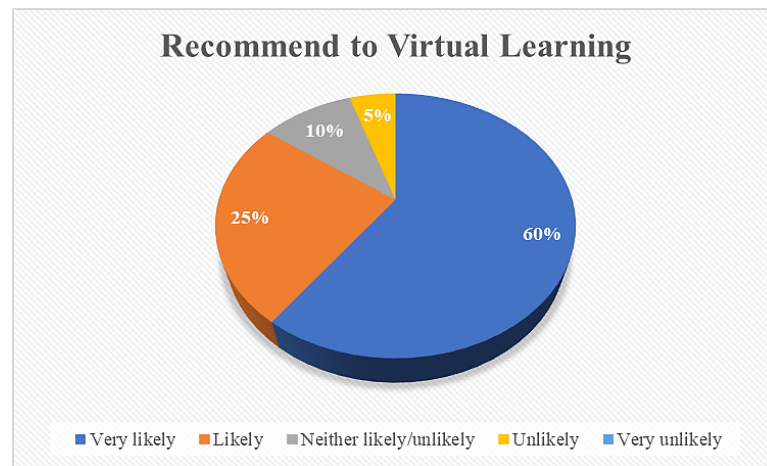


Figure 10: Recommend to virtual learning

Analysis: About recommending the virtual learning for future, 60% of the respondents said that they would very likely recommend this, 25% said they would likely recommend this and 10% remained in the middle. But 5% responded as unlikely to recommend this further.

Secondary Data Analysis

From numerous research journals and books, secondary information regarding the impact of virtual learning on students learning experiences were analysed where it is found that virtual learning has been mostly used in the distant learning and higher education where students also found it very much effective. Virtual learning empowers student with confidence and wider knowledge regarding any particular topics, they get the opportunity to surf on the internet to collect their desired information and students get acquired with the employability skills too. But it is also found that students face issues like lack of technical equipment and connection drop which affect their learning experiences negatively.

Conclusion

UWTSD students are well equipped with the technical equipment, training and guidance which is resulting into the positive impact in their learning experiences. It is also found from this study that students are enjoying this platform, getting required support from the university and easy to access to the Moodle, Library and other platforms which are enhancing their learning experiences positively. So, overall, VLE is having a positive impact on the learning experiences of UWTSD, London students.

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Appendix

Questionnaire- Primary Data Collection

1. How would you describe your overall feeling about virtual learning?
 - a) Poor
 - b) Below Average
 - c) Good
 - d) Excellent
2. How effective has virtual learning been for you?
 - a) Not at all effective
 - b) Slightly effective
 - c) Moderately effective
 - d) Very effective
 - e) Extremely effective
3. How helpful did University of Wales Trinity Saint David Campus has been with giving you the resources to learn from home?
 - a) Not at all helpful
 - b) Slightly helpful
 - c) Moderately helpful
 - d) Very helpful
 - e) Extremely helpful
4. Do you enjoy virtual learning?
 - a) Yes, absolutely
 - b) Yes, but I would like to change a few things
 - c) No, there are quite a few changes
 - d) No, not at all
5. How helpful are your teachers while studying virtually?
 - a) Not at all helpful
 - b) Slightly helpful
 - c) Moderately helpful
 - d) Very helpful

- e) Extremely helpful
6. How easy is it to access the University of Wales Trinity Saint David online resources, for example, Moodle, Library, UWTSD HWB app?
- a) Very easy
 - b) Easy
 - c) Neither
 - d) Not easy
 - e) Difficult
7. So far, has the studies met your expectation?
- a) Yes
 - b) Neither
 - c) No
8. Did University of Trinity Saint David provide you with technical support when needed?
- a) Very satisfied
 - b) Satisfied
 - c) Unsatisfied
 - d) Dissatisfied
 - e) No response
9. Did you feel you had adequate training and guidance about using Virtual Learning?
- a) Yes
 - b) Neither
 - c) No
10. How likely are you to recommend Virtual Learning?
- a) Very Likely
 - b) Likely
 - c) Neither Likely/Unlikely
 - d) Unlikely
 - e) Very Unlikely

Class Activity

Types of Data Collection Tool

- Data collection tool/instrument can be divided as:
 - Questionnaire
 - Checklist
 - Distribution
 - Interview
 - Observation
 - Records
 - Experimental
 - Survey

N.B.: Only **Questionnaire**, **Interview** and **Survey** will be discussed here.

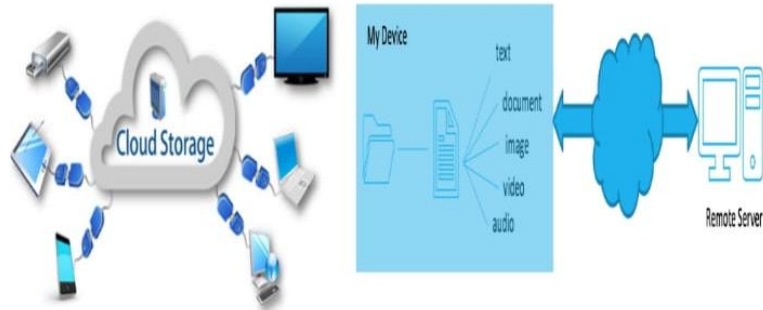
Source: Creswell
(2003)

Types of Data Collection Tool

- **Questionnaire:**
 - A series of questions designed to elicit information, which is filled in by all participants in the sample (Sample will be discussed in the later week)
 - Questionnaire can be gathered either by oral interview or by written questionnaire
 - Questionnaire is the Series of questions in written form and indirect interview. It is the most common type of research instrument to collect data.
 - It is a self report paper and pencil instrument that a researcher asked to complete

Source: Creswell
(2003)

Concepts of Cloud Storage



Components of Cloud Storage

Cloud storage has three component such as:

1. **Client Computers:** are the devices that the end users interact with Cloud
2. **Distributed Servers:** Often servers are in geographically different places, but server acts as if they are working next to each other
3. **Datacentre:** It is a collection of servers where application is placed and is accessed via Internet

Source: Wang et al.
(2019)

What is Research Ethics?

