

## **Title Page**

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## Introduction

Within this research report I will detail my findings on the impact of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) – Moodle on students' learning experience at the university of Wales Trinity Saint David London Campus. I have put together a questionnaire which I have based my primary data findings in this report. Through this questionnaire I have been able to gather information from students and this primary data which I have been able to use in this report highlights the findings on the impact of a VLE on students. Other than the primary data I have also collected secondary data as part of the research which is also detailed in this report. As an online student I have found this particularly interesting as I was keen to find out what students other than myself think of when it comes to learning online and using a virtual learning platform to do so.

## What is a VLE?

To begin with I would like to first detail within my report what a VLE actually is and what the use of this tool is in educational technology. To understand what the VLE is an academic understanding I have done some research into this.

According to an online article, It's learning - A virtual learning environment (VLE) is a web-based platform for all digital activities of a course which can be studied – in other words, all aspects of a course which are digital can be studied online via the VLE. Through VLE's particularly within an academic environment, students can benefit from resources which can enhance their learning and support their understanding on a particular topic. Through VLE's participation can be reported as well, this can also be a tool which is used to submit academic writing for reviewing.

Within this report I will go into a range of other topics of a VLE and this will form part of the secondary data which I have gathered for this report. But firstly I will detail and explain my primary data findings.

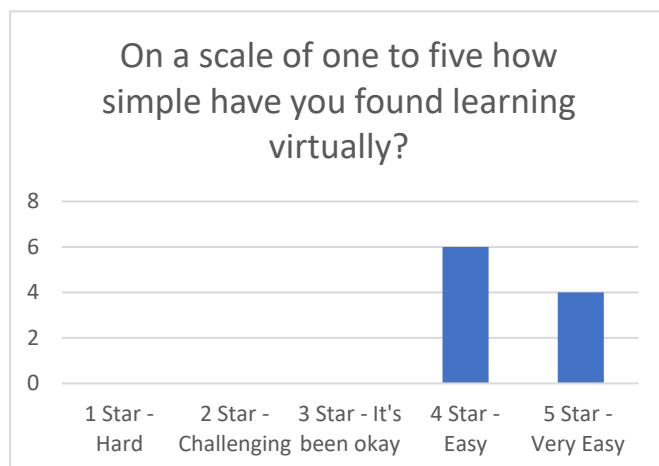
## Primary Data Findings

The first question which I had from my questionnaire was designed to understand how many of the online students I am in class with have actually used a VLE before – this was a question which I felt was a great starting point as it supported me in understanding what experience students have with using the virtual learning environment.

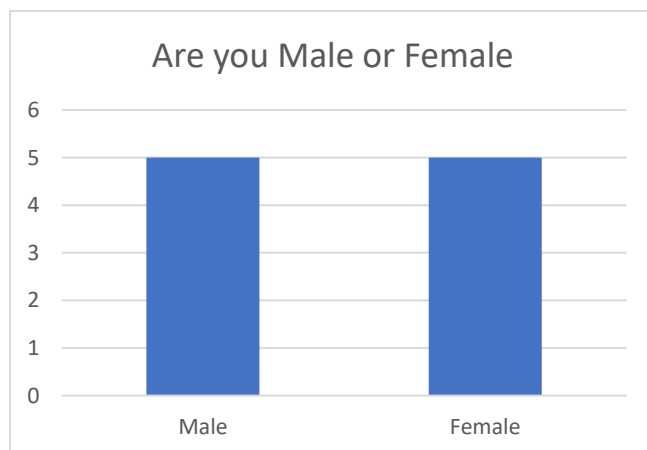


As can be seen on the bar graph the findings show that the 10 students which have completed my survey there is a split of 6 answering they have not used a VLE before with 4 answering that they have indeed used a VLE before. This may suggest that the students which have used a VLE have found it easier to use this tool and may even have a comparison between one which they have previously used. The students which have not used a VLE before may in that case find it a bit more of a challenge to begin using the VLE.

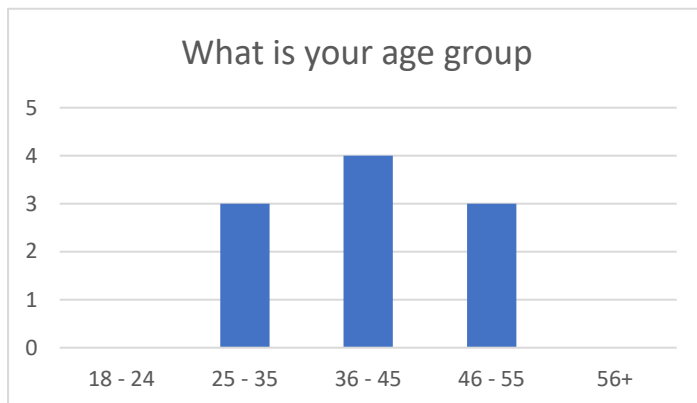
The next question which I felt was important to ask was to therefore find out from students how easy they have found it to use a VLE. The response I received was very positive. As you can see below students have responded with either a 4 Star – Easy or 5 Star – Very easy. This goes to show that all students using a VLE despite some using it for the first time ever found it easy to use the platform.



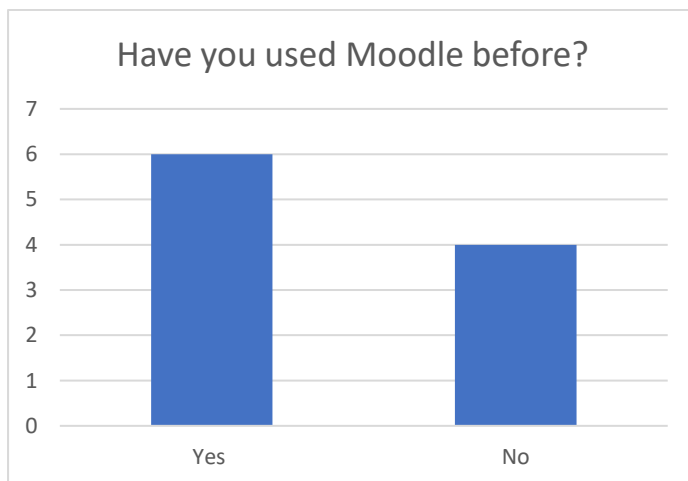
The next few questions were designed to support with the statistics and understand what the split is between male and female students as well as age groups. With the first question on gender there was an even split as can be seen below:



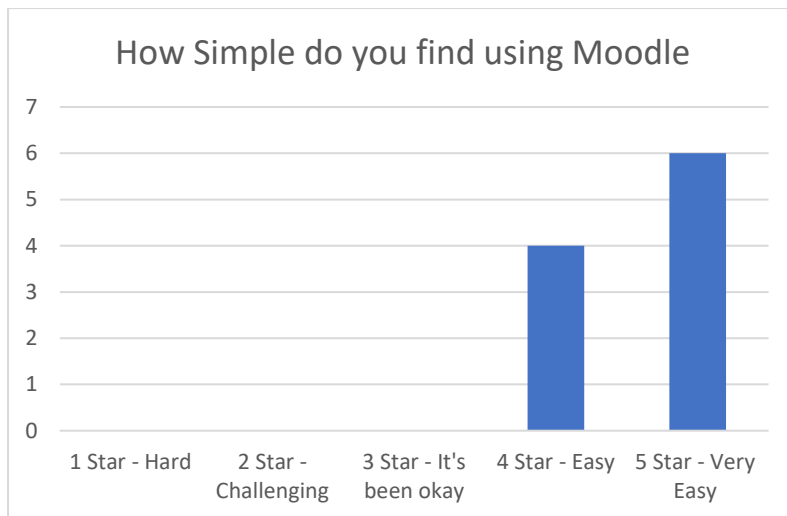
I then asked the students to let me know what age group they belong to, and the results can be seen below. The majority of students are between age of 36 and 45, but there is still a decent split from the other age groups.



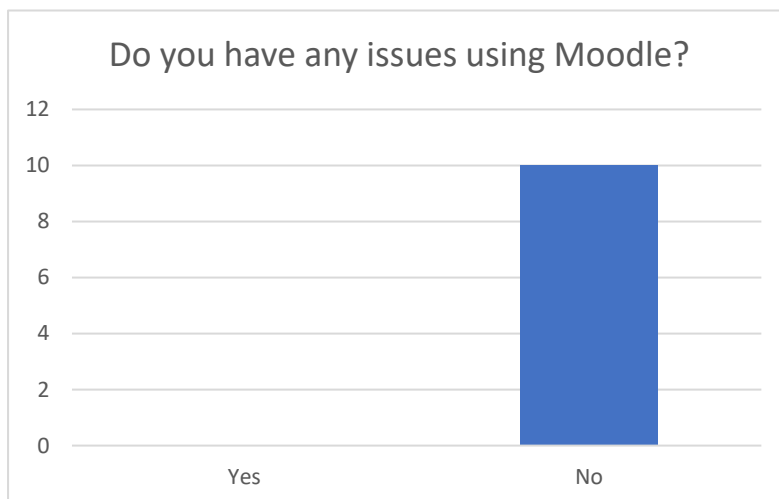
The next question was to then find out from the students whether or not they have used Moodle before. From the chart below it is evident that more students have used Moodle which is great as they are in a position which they can benefit from having already having used a learning system. For those that have not used Moodle before it means they can start to learn about this platform and what the benefits are of this.



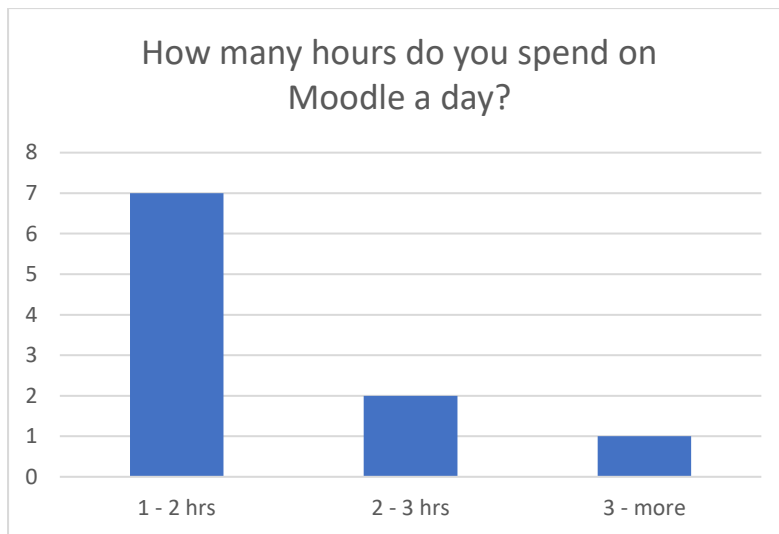
I then asked the students if they find using Moodle simple or difficult and the results can be seen below. Most students find using Moodle – very easy and the remaining of students mentioned that it is easy for them to use. These are both really positive results, it shows that students are comfortable in using the learning platform and that is easy to navigate and use.



My next question was to find out if students have any issues whilst they are using Moodle, for example to find out if they are facing any issues when they use the tool. From the results below it is clear to see that most students don't seem to have any problems using Moodle which is again a great result for the learning platform. In my case it shows that all 10 students answered that they have no issues using Moodle.

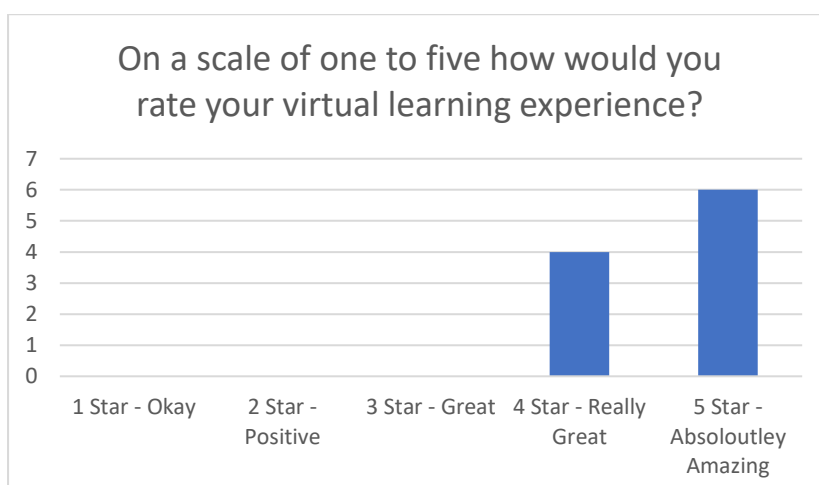


I was then curious to find out how much time students spend on Moodle as this will indicate how beneficial it is for students to use in their studies and development. Most students have replied to show that they use Moodle at least 1 to 2 hours a day. Again this result shows that the tool is being used well with some students replying to the survey that they use Moodle even more.



The next question asked to students was to find out if they have suggestions of bettering the platform. Most students did not have any suggestions to add, one student replied that it may be a good idea to have some form of videos on the platform to display how to perform certain activities, for example when uploading work there could be a how to video to show students how this is done. Particularly for some students it may be difficult to go through this for the first time themselves.

My last question to students was to find out overall how they would rate their experience using a learning platform. It's great to see that most students have responded extremely positively regarding their experience using the learning platform. All of the students which I surveyed have responded with either 4 or 5 stars as a great experience reflecting on their virtual learning.



To conclude the primary data which I have collected from students has resulted that students have had an overall really positive experience with regards to their online learning. To me at least it does seem as though we are now living in a world of digital era. It does appear as though more and more things can now be done online. It will exciting to see where else technology leads us with regards to learning online. Overall I feel it has been a fantastic experience to see that students have had a first class journey with their online learning I am also feeling that online learning for me with the University of Wales has been both enjoyable and interesting.

## Secondary Data Findings

### **Background of a VLE**

According to an online article from fireflylearning “A Virtual Learning Environment or VLE is a design space for teaching and learning.”

“For some, “virtual” conjures up an artificial world that replaces real life. But virtual learning environments neither replace classrooms nor existing educational practices. They enhance them. They add value as they extend the space of the physical learning environment. They provide opportunities to stretch the imaginations of teachers and students alike.”

To me this is a statement I very much agree with as I feel that is exactly that! A tool which will not replace learning in a physical environment but instead enhance a students experience with an online environment – an area for a student to use for their educational development as well as communicate with their peers and teachers. Also vice versa it is an area to enable a teacher to utilise for the development of a students educational experience. So this is my opinion with the support of some online articles which I have gone through but it is also important to understand what other sources of data are saying with regards to the impact of a VLE on a student.

Having looked online to see what research there is on the impact of a VLE on a student I have come across various articles which detail what the impact of a VLE is on a student, it has been interesting to see what the research suggests before the pandemic and also during the pandemic in recent times.

The first article I came across was from 2019 and according to the National Library of Medicine, “Virtual learning seemed to significantly improve students' satisfaction/engagement and recall. A total of 40 students attended the teaching sessions. The student group taught using the VLE had higher mean scores for retention than the didactic group; however, this was not statistically significant. Use of VLEs was associated with greater satisfaction/engagement”

The findings suggest the impact on a student with regards to a VLE is that students definitely find this a useful tool in enhancing their experience it may not necessarily improve a students ability to learn particularly if they are based in class but it has definitely improved their experience. For those students that are online based such as myself a VLE is a tool which can be relied on to support with my learning.

Another article which I have gone through online is from Brookings – this article “How does virtual learning impact students in higher education?” is from August 2021 so it was interesting to find out what the opinions and research had shown in recent times with the impact of the coronavirus.

From the article the writer details how the pandemic has pushed millions of students around the globe into virtual learning and as a large amount of students would like to get back to full time education in person although we are moving out of the pandemic a large amount of uncertainty still remains. Many institutions will undoubtedly continue to offer online or hybrid classes. The article is quite negative with regards to online learning in comparison to in class learning.

According to the writer “New evidence from 2020 also suggests that the switch to online course-taking in the pandemic led to declines in course completion. However, a few new studies point to some positive effects of online learning” such as being able to communicate with peers and sharing information. Reading this article I felt split between what the writer mentions and what I feel from personal experience with a VLE. I feel it is down to how a student values their learning regardless of whether they are attending a class in person or virtually.

To conclude my secondary data – I feel there is plenty of research online regarding the impact of VLE some find that the platform is very positive where as others feel that in person learning is something that is much better. In my opinion both work it just depends on the individual and what they are looking to achieve. What their drive is to do so. Some students may have a limited amount of time and traveling to and from a campus to study might be quite time consuming but doing it from the comfort of their home might be something that they can do a lot easier.

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