

Digital Skills and Research Method (BMSW 4003)

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INTRODUCTION

The topic of the research is impact of virtual learning environment (VLE) on students learning experience at the university of Wales trinity saint David London campus specifically and reviews the literature on the same topic generally. "A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is a web-based software system designed to facilitate learning and teaching with the use of tools and activities." (JISC, 2009a) We are conducting this research to know the impact of virtual learning environment and take students input at the university. We have designed questionnaire to collect the primary data at the university and know the students' thoughts about the new environment that they are learning in which is quite opposite to the conventional. We have designed 10 questionnaires to gather the information and after collecting the information. We are going to systematically make graphs of the inputs that we gathered and interpret and analyze the results of the study.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Students are taking classes in a totally different way and the way academic institutions work has completely changed since the start of the Covid-19. Students are taking classes virtually, doing their assignments, quizzes, reports, presentations and other academic work virtually. There is a complete shift in the way students used to take classes and do other relevant activities to get through college or university. Now everything is virtual, students are taking classes from the comforts of their homes and submit assignments, quizzes virtually. So, the rationale of the study is to know the thoughts of the students regarding the virtual learning experience in our university and compare it with the similar studies that are done before. We want to know whether students like the new ways of learning virtually or they prefer conventional classroom method and other related questions which gives us the idea about the student's preferences about the new learning setup. This research is important because virtual learning is the new normal and it is followed by schools, colleges and universities around the globe, so it is very crucial to take the students inputs and know about their thoughts about this new way of learning and try to improve the things in virtual learning setup which students are having trouble with. In addition to that, it is also important to improve the overall virtual experience of the students and try to find out any problems in virtual learning and give recommendations to the policy makers so that they can make decision and improve the virtual learning experience for the students.

Literature Review

IMPACT OF VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (VLE) ON STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Research has been done on the same topic. Literature is available related to impact of the virtual learning environment on student's learning's experience. In one study conducted on virtual learning environment (VLE), 248 second year students at an English Sixth Form College (SFC). This research was "based on three research questions which investigated: whether the use of a VLE has a positive impact on student learning; whether the use of a VLE in teaching and learning helps develop independent learning; and whether the use of a VLE increases students' motivation to learn.

The Empirical evidence suggests that the use of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has an impact on student achievement, encourages independent learning and increases students' motivation to learn (**JISC, 2008**).

Positive Impact of Virtual learning Environment (VLE)

"Positive impacts of the use of VLEs on student learning are supported by a study (**Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1996**) in West Virginia, USA. Upper-grade elementary students used a software collaboration tool that enables students and teachers to communicate online to develop their understanding and analytical skills. Students performed significantly better on standardised tests in reading, language and vocabulary and on measures of depth of understanding, multiple perspectives and independent thought than students who did not use the software. The study concluded that VLEs maximise student reflection and encourage progressive thought, and independent thinking. This research was one of seven empirical research studies across West Virginia which concluded that students with access to one or more of the following: computer assisted instruction, integrated learning systems, simulation software, collaborative networked technologies and design and programming technologies all showed positive gains in achievement on researcher constructed tests, standardised tests, and national tests (**Schacter, 1999**)."

Negative Impact of Virtual learning Environment (VLE)

All express the view that web-based instruction does not allow for the social and emotional interaction that takes place in traditional classrooms. In 2001 **Piccoli, Ahmad, & Ives** compared, using a longitudinal experimental design, classes taught using VLEs with traditional teacher-led classes. They found no significant differences in learning performance between the environments. However, the participants in the VLE group reported being less satisfied with the learning process. **Robertson and Klotz (2002)** agree and assert that students in an online learning environment lack the opportunity and benefits of structured dialogue and the sense of community created in a traditional on-site classroom environment."

There has been a lot of research on the topic of Virtual learning environment (VLE). It has both positives and negatives. Above empirical studies shows that students are adapting virtual learning environment and it has become part of their life and it is the future of the learning. Further, it has been proved that virtual learning environment improves students thinking and encourages progressive thought. Conversely, it doesn't not allow social and emotional interaction which is negative virtual learning experience When students goes into the real world then they will be struggling to interact with people, colleague's because they have been taught in virtual setting and these elements were missing.

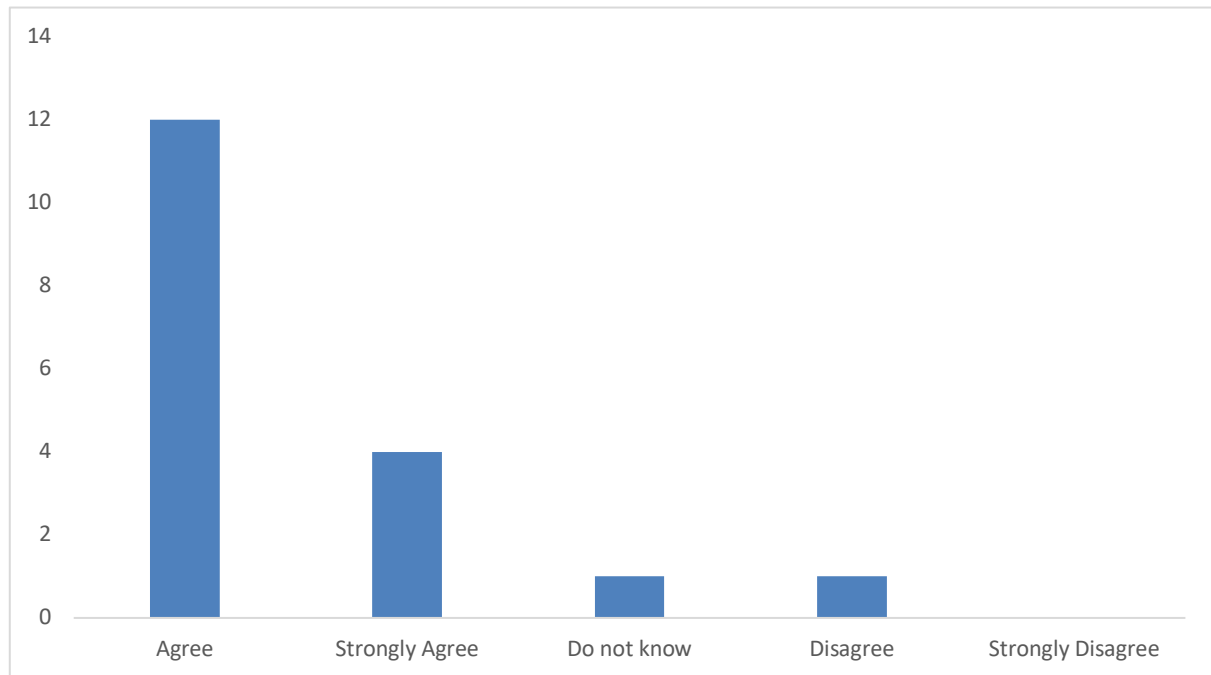
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

IMPACT OF VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (VLE) – MOODLE ON STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID LONDON CAMPUS

I have designed the questionnaire to know about the virtual learning experience (VLE) from my group in class of at University students. Following are the 10 questions that I asked and the responses that I received from the students. There were 18 participants who took part in this questionnaire.

Q1. I received clear instruction from the UWTSD on how to login to the University portal

Agree	Strongly Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12	4	1	1	0

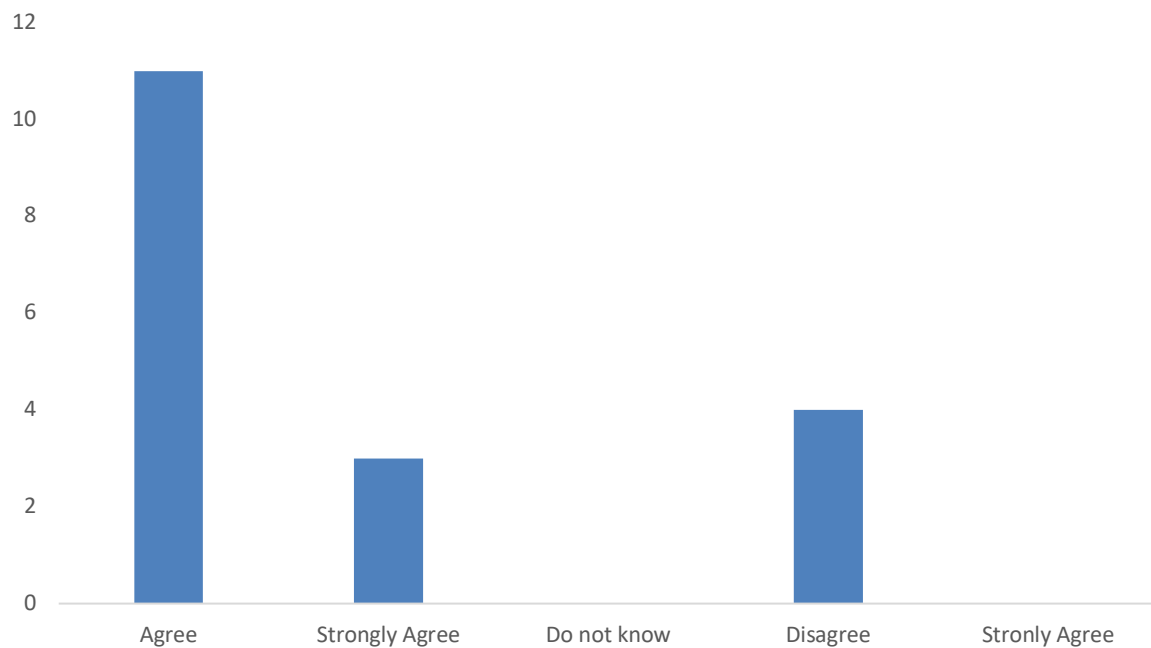


Analysis & Discussion

Question 1 is asking about the instructions of login to the university portal. Out of 18, 16 have said agreed that they were given proper instructions to login to the university portal. 13 of them agreed and 4 of them strongly agreed that they were provided with proper instructions. On the other hand, only 2 participants answered otherwise as one disagreed and other one chose “don’t know” option.

Q2. Accessing my online school portal was so easy

Agree	Strongly Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11	3	0	4	0

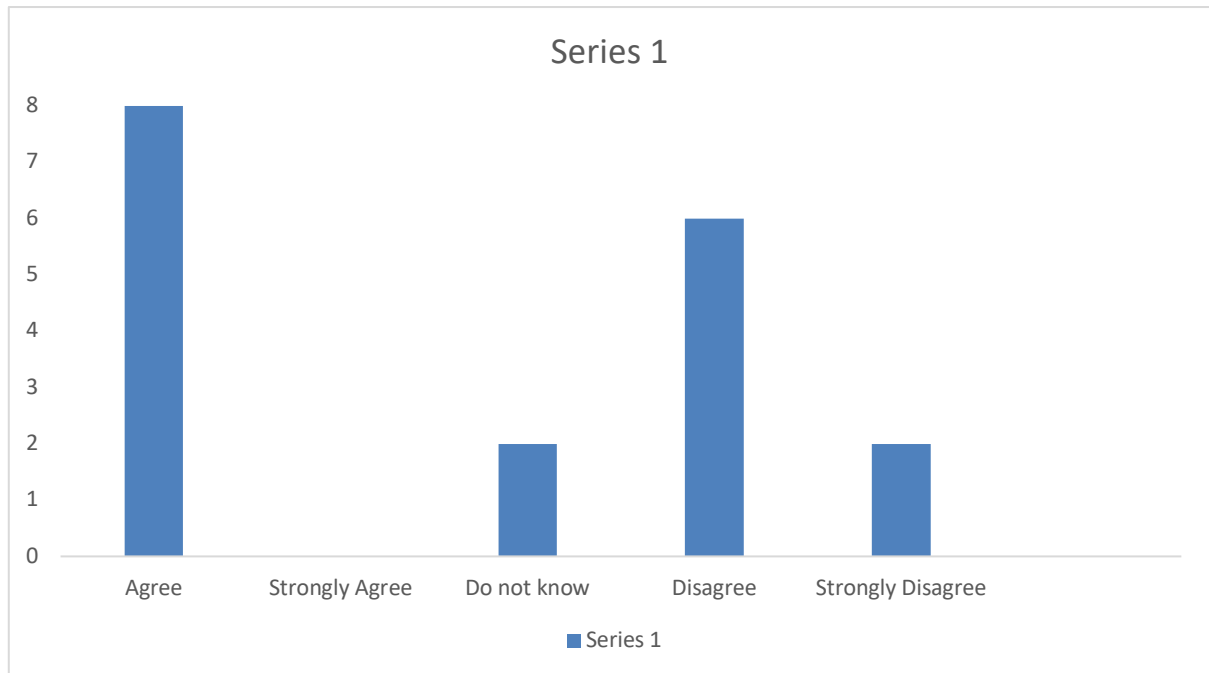


Analysis & Discussion

Question 2 is about the accessibility of the school portal, was it easy or not? 11 out of 18 agrees that accessibility was easy, other 3 strongly agrees with it while 4 out of 18 disagrees with it and they didn't find it easy to access the school portal.

Q3. I feel I am engaged in other activities during online lectures

Agree	Strongly Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8	0	2	6	2

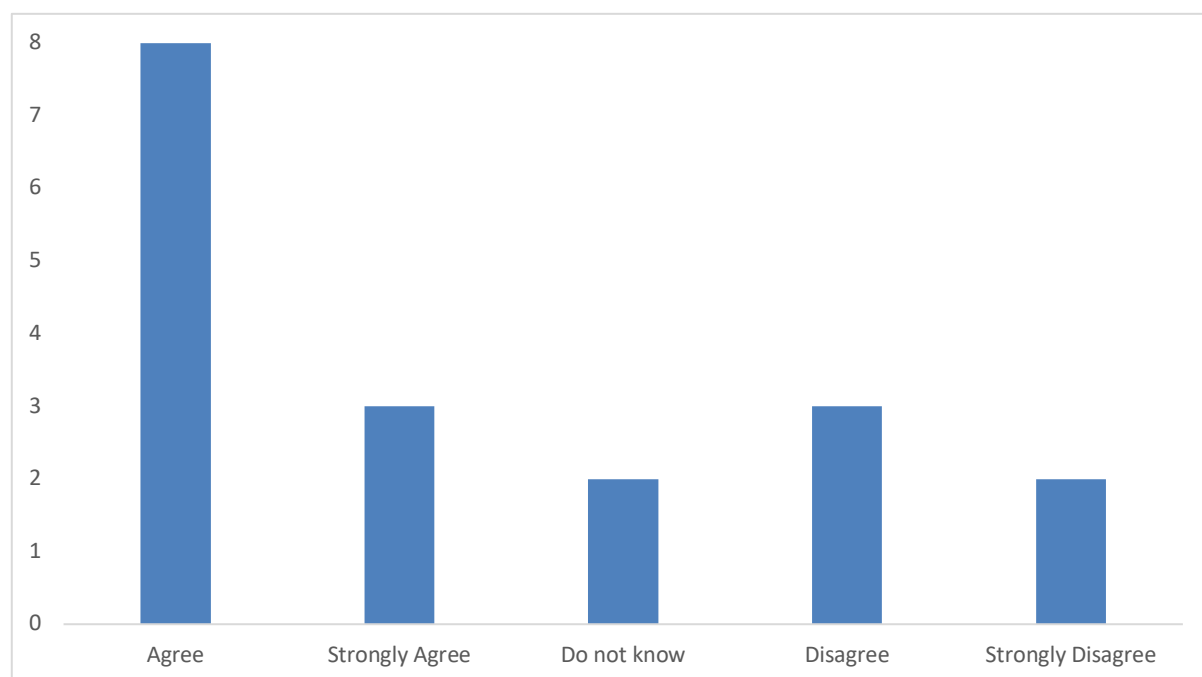


Analysis & Discussion

Question 3 is asking "I feel I am engaged in other activities during online lectures?" 8 Students who agreed that they felt like they were engaged in other activities while lecture was going on, 2 students chose "don't know" while 6 students disagreed, and 2 students strongly disagreed with the statement it means that they were not engaged in other activities during lecture, and they believed that they were purely focused on the lecture.

Q4. During online lectures I feel happy with the response I received from teachers each time I asked questions

Agree	Strongly Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8	3	2	3	2

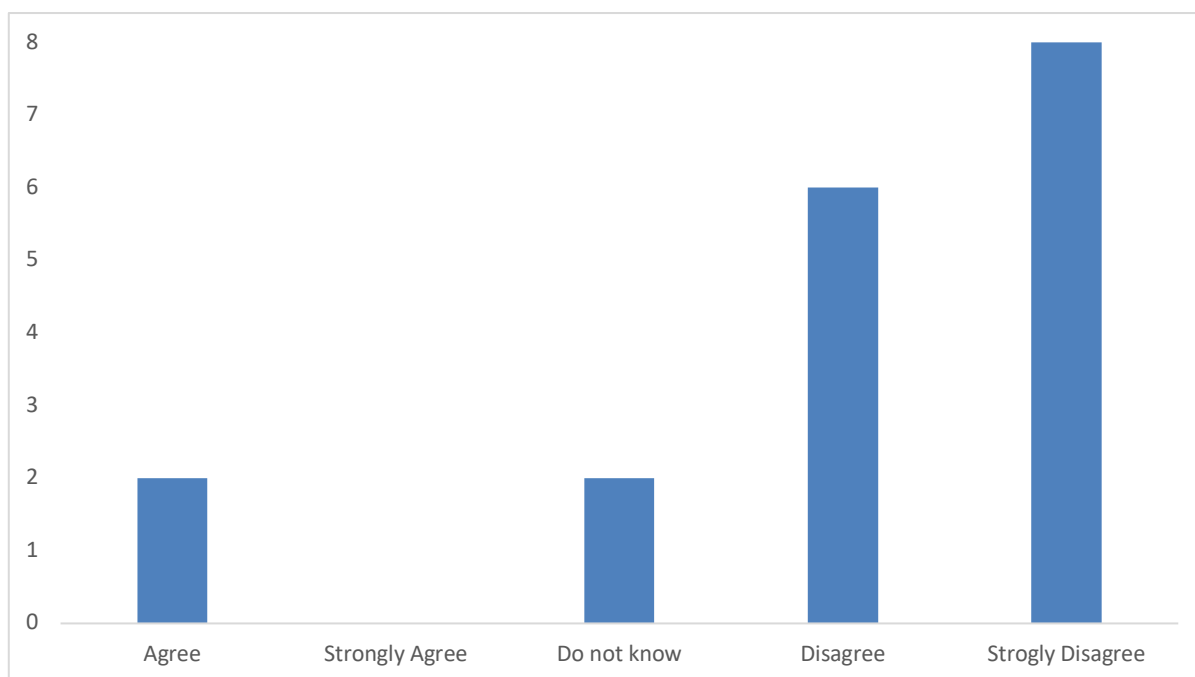


Analysis & Discussion

Question 4 is asking “During online lectures I feel happy with the response I received from teachers each time I asked questions?” 3 students strongly agreed while 8 students agreed which means that they felt happy with the teacher’s response when they asked questions. 2 students chose “don’t know” while 2 disagreed, and 2 strongly disagreed that they didn’t feel happy with the teacher’s response when they asked questions.

Q5. I feel ignored each time I tried to ask questions during online classes

Agree	Strongly Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2	0	2	6	8

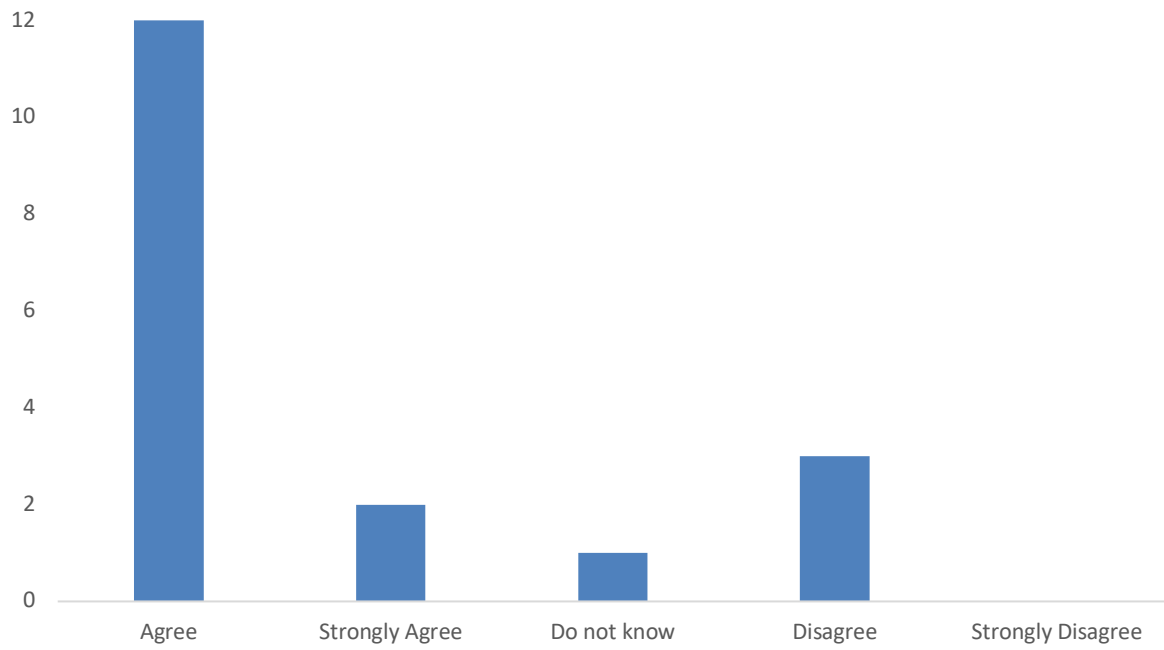


Analysis & Discussion

This question is asking “I feel ignored each time I tried to ask questions during online classes?” 2 students agreed that they feel ignored when they ask question during online classes while no one strongly agreed with the above question. 6 students disagreed and 8 students strongly disagreed which means that they didn’t feel ignored when they asked question during online classes, according to them teacher responded to their question. Out of 18 students chose “don’t know” option, they are not sure whether to agree or disagree with the question, so they remain neutral.

Q6. I do get the necessary help from lecturers during online classes

Agree	Strongly Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12	2	1	3	0

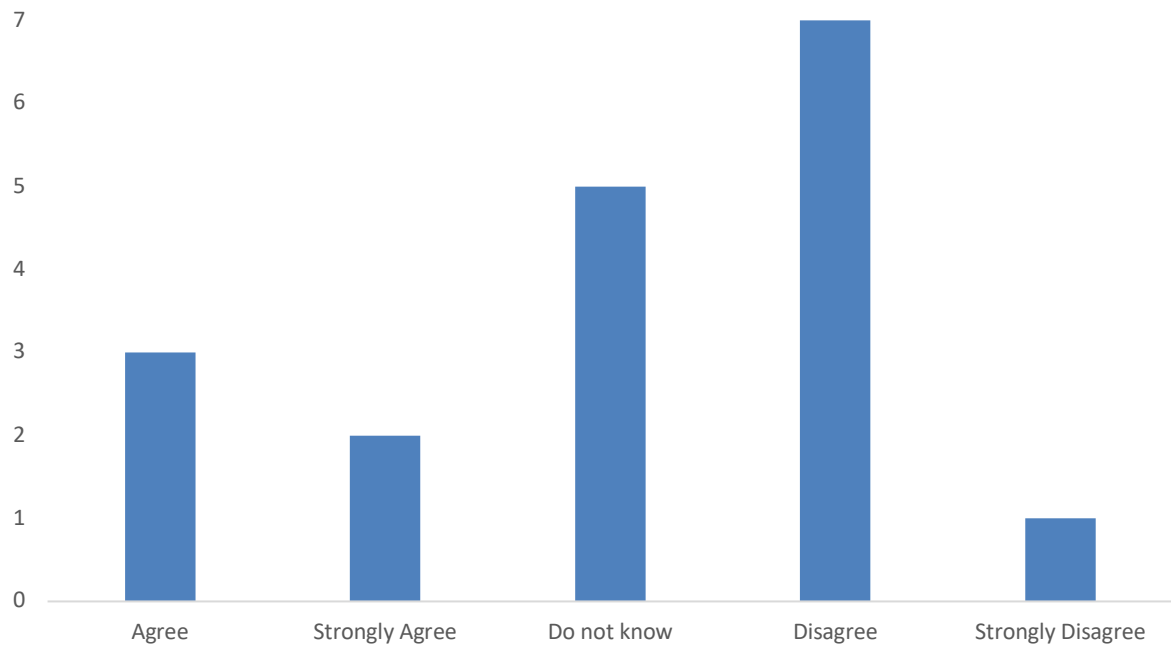


Analysis & Discussion

“I do get necessary help from lecturers during online classes?” 12 participants agreed while 2 participants strongly agreed that they do get necessary help from the lecturers during online classes. 3 participants disagreed which means that they didn’t get necessary help from lecturers during the lecture while 1 participant remain neutral by selection option “don’t know”

Q7. Overall, I prefer online lectures than in class lectures.

Agree	Strongly Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3	2	5	7	1

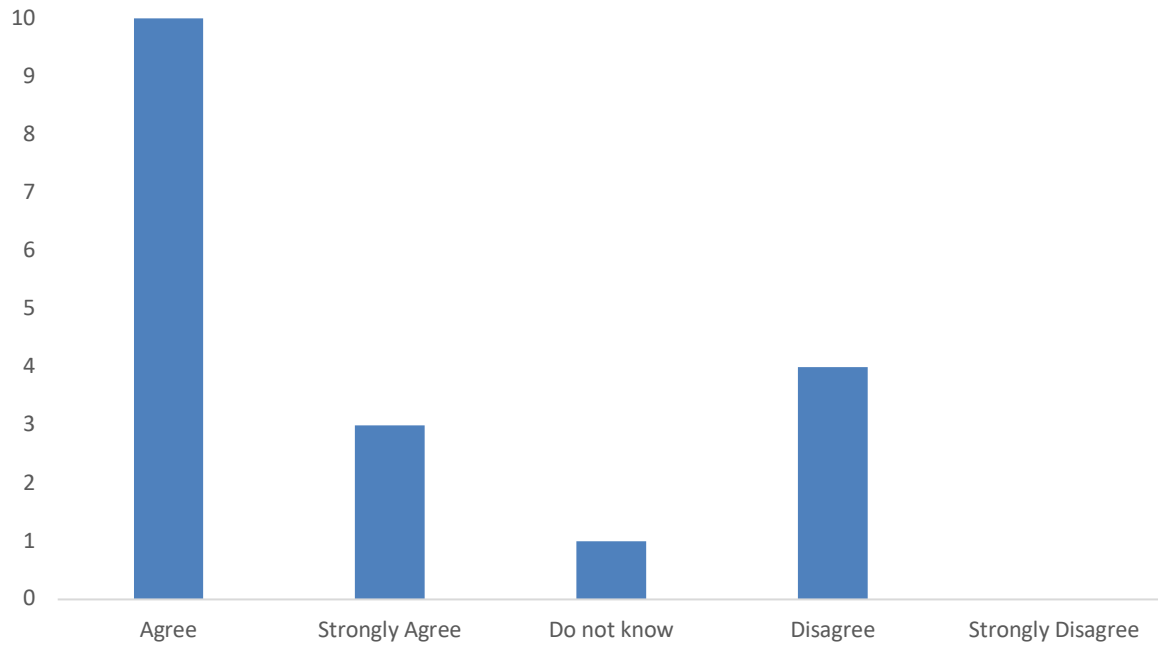


Analysis & Discussion

“Overall I prefer online lectures than in class lectures?” 3 participants agreed while 2 strongly agreed that they prefer online lectures than class lectures. 7 participants disagreed while 1 participant strongly disagreed which means that they don’t prefer online lectures, they favour class lectures more. 5 participants response was neutral.

Q8. I have all the required materials at home to access my online classes.

Agree	Strongly Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10	3	1	4	0

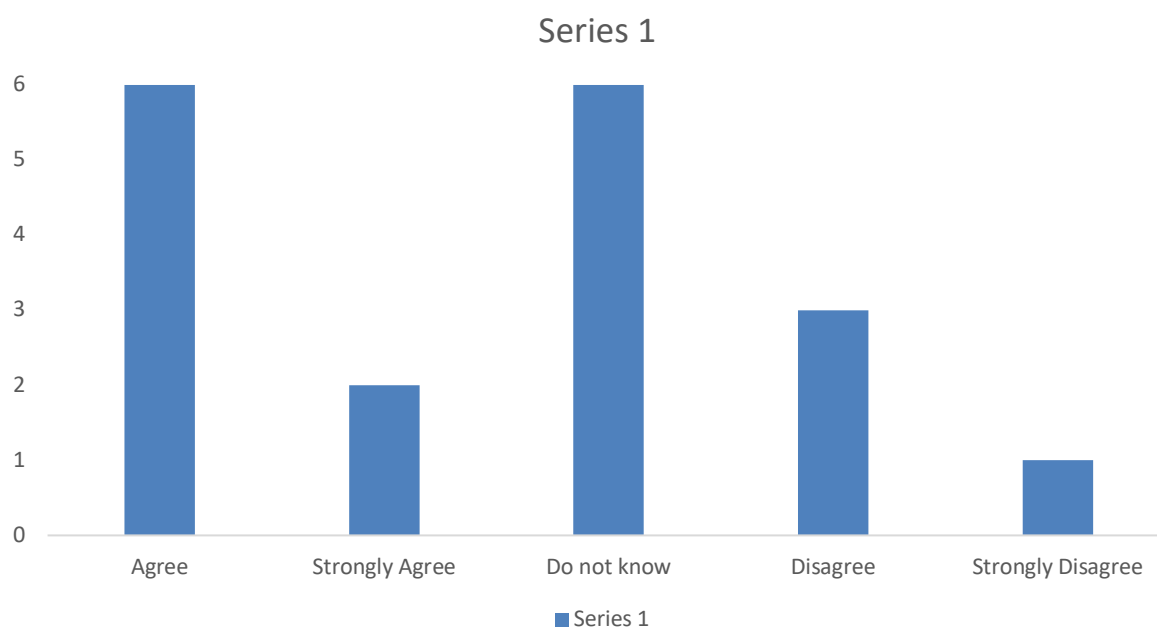


Analysis & Discussion

Question 8 is asking “I have all the required materials at home to access my online classes?” 3 students strongly agreed with the statement while 10 students agreed that I have all the required materials at home to access my online classes. 4 out of 18 students disagreed which means that they didn’t have all the required materials at home to access my online classes. 1 student remains neutral.

Q9. With Virtual Learning Environment I can easy make friends at the UWTSD

Agree	Strongly Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6	2	6	3	1

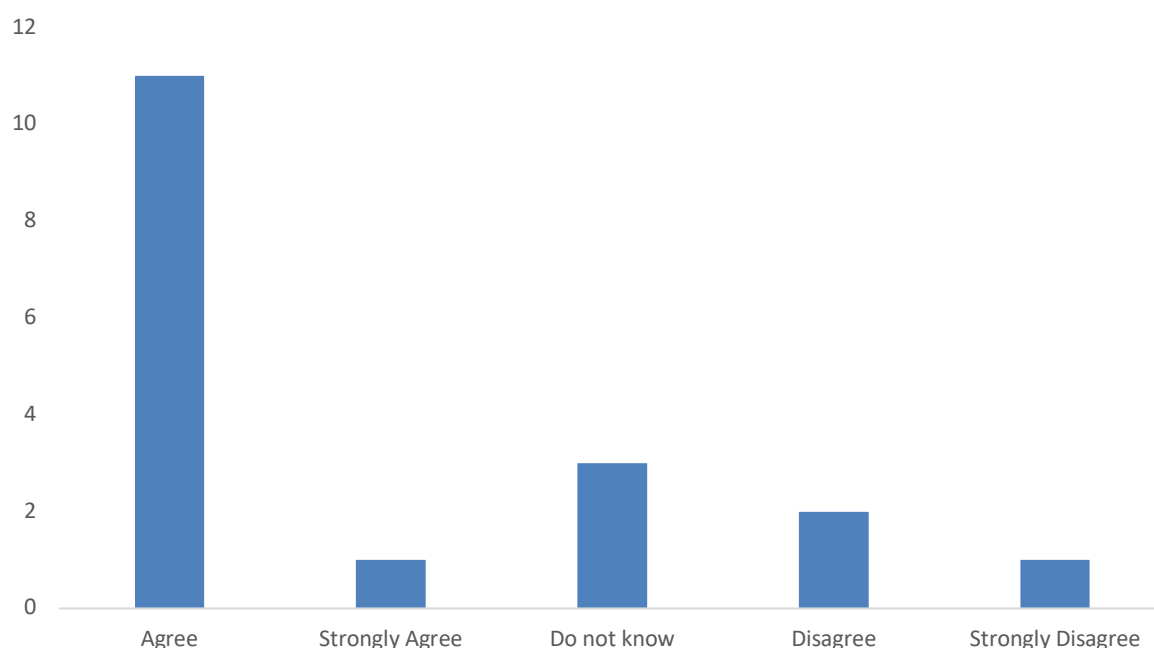


Analysis & Discussion

Question 9 is asking “With Virtual learning environment I can easy make friends at the UWTSD?” 8 students agreed that they can easily make friends at the university with virtual learning environment. 6 out of 8 agreed while 2 strongly agreed. Further, 3 students disagreed, and 1 student strongly disagreed that they cannot easily make friends with virtual learning environment. 6 students remain neutral.

Q10. With virtual learning environment I can easily participate with the student union activities.

Agree	Strongly Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11	1	3	2	1



Analysis & Discussion

Question 10 is asking “With Virtual learning environment I can easily participate with the Student Union Activities?” 11 students agreed while 1 student strongly agreed that they can easily participate with the students’ union activities. 2 students disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed while 2 students remain neutral.

Overall Survey Question: The overall response of the students related to the questions that we designed were positive and majority of them either agreed or strongly agreed with the questions. Students were familiar with the login process, they were provided with relevant material to study from home, and majority of students get proper response from the teachers during lectures. They are some students who prefer physical class environment, and some felt that teacher didn’t respond properly to their questions and they have inadequate material at home to study. The response was mix but majority of the students agreed with the above 10 questions and they were satisfied with the virtual learning environment.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations of this study were that we didn't able to communicate with the participant face to face. Physical interaction would have given us more insights. We could have done interviews and more participants will be part of our study because of Covid-19 we didn't do any interviews and face to face interaction with our participants. It is possible that study lacks the depth because of the limited number of participants and time was the constraint as well.

CONCLUSION

Virtual learning environment (VLE) is very new area to the research field and there are lot of research left in this area. Virtual learning environment (VLE) gives students and teachers platform to communicate with each other from the comfort of their homes and offices. It is the future of learning and distance learning is encouraged. Covid-19 has put everything on hold and if it wasn't for the virtual learning and technology then there is no way that student can take classes, do their assignments and submit their quizzes online. Students around the globe would have lost 1 year or 2 year of their studies if there was no virtual learning. So, it is very good initiate taken by the school, colleges and universities to make them compatible with technology, and make students used to virtual environment as well. Students were used to virtual learning and that is the reason why they adapted it very quickly. There are more positive of Virtual learning environment than negatives.

RECOMMEDATIONS

There are certain recommendations that can make Virtual learning experience (VLE) more effective and beneficial for each student. Before starting the virtual classes, teachers need to make sure that everyone has adequate resources to take classes online and send them form to fill and if some students have problem, then teacher would solve it on time. In addition to that, teachers should create form based on their previous experience with students and ask the following questions

- Whether it is easy for them to access school portal or do they need help?
- How to create interactive content of the syllabus so that students don't get distracted during lectures. Student's input is a must.
- If the students are not happy with the teacher's response during lecture. Should they arrange separate session for these students or not?
- Take students inputs how to participate in different activities and build network in university? Should assignment be designed in a way that will increase students' interaction with each other virtually so that they get to know each other

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