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The Influence of Online Learning on the Academic and Social Behaviors of College Students

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Abstract. This study explored how online learning affects students' academic behaviors—specifically integrity and competence—and social behaviors, such as teamwork and transcendence. Using a quantitative descriptive design, the study surveyed 374 students enrolled in an Ethics course during the first semester of the 2021–2022 academic year. A structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms collected data on students' experiences with online learning platforms. Results showed that Google Classroom, Google Meet, and UCU-iKonek were the most used platforms, supporting structured lessons and interaction. Students agreed that online learning positively influenced their academic integrity (mean = 3.13), competence (3.0), teamwork (3.08), and transcendence or personal growth (3.02). However, issues remained with honesty in assessments, particularly in preventing unauthorized resource use and cheating. Socially, limited interaction made peer collaboration more difficult. The study recommends using tools like plagiarism detectors, random question sets, and live proctoring to ensure fairness. It also suggests incorporating group projects, breakout sessions, and discussion-based tasks to improve teamwork and engagement. Faculty training in digital teaching strategies is also advised to maintain student motivation and support ethical behavior in online settings.

Keywords: Online learning; College students; Academic behavior, Social behavior.

1.0 Introduction

Education plays a key role in every nation's development. In recent years, digital learning has changed how students learn, especially with the growing use of online platforms. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and universities already used e-learning to support traditional classroom teaching (Kopp et al., 2019). However, the pandemic forced institutions to shift entirely to online learning, creating opportunities and challenges for students and educators.

This sudden transition disrupted learning experiences, academic performance, and the development of students' values (Lindzon, 2020). While online learning offers benefits such as flexibility, self-paced learning, and greater access to educational materials (Li, 2020; Gopal et al., 2021), it also raises concerns about academic honesty, student engagement, and social interaction (Peterson, 2019; Wolverton, 2016). Scholars have found that the absence of face-to-face supervision may lead to more academic dishonesty (Watson & Sottile, 2010) and less collaboration and teamwork (Miller & Young-Jones, 2012; Gamage et al., 2020).

In the Philippines, many universities adjusted quickly by introducing platforms like UCU iKonek to keep learning going during lockdowns (Malipot, 2020). Despite these efforts, many wonder whether online education can support important values such as academic integrity, competence, teamwork, and personal growth. Academic integrity involves honesty and responsibility in schoolwork (Fishman, 2014); competence is the ability to use knowledge and skills effectively (Spencer & Spencer, 1993), teamwork involves collaboration and shared goals (Salas, Sims, & Burke, 2005), and transcendence is about rising beyond limitations and finding greater purpose (Maslow, 1971).

Some researchers have explored how digital learning affects student behavior and outcomes, but few have focused on how it shapes students' values and character. There is still limited research on how online learning influences students' ethical behavior, academic ability, social cooperation, and self-growth in the long run. This study examines how often students engage in online learning and how it affects their academic and social behaviors. Specifically, it will look at how online learning impacts students' integrity and competence in their academic life, teamwork, and transcendence in their social experiences. The goal is to understand how digital education helps or hinders the development of responsible, ethical, and socially aware individuals. Findings from this study will offer valuable insights for schools and educators seeking to improve online education and promote holistic student development.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design using a descriptive method to analyze and interpret data. The descriptive method was used to answer fundamental questions regarding the state of affairs by describing the characteristics of selected variables. As David (2002) described, the descriptive method provides insights into the "what, when, who, where, and how" aspects of a study. The study utilized convenience random sampling to ensure accessibility and feasibility in gathering responses.

2.2 Research Locale

The research was conducted at Urdaneta City University (UCU), with student participants currently enrolled in the ethics subject during the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022. The study focused on students who had already completed the Noble subject, which discusses UCU's Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives (VMGO) and core values. Given the restrictions due to ongoing health protocols, the data collection was conducted online.

2.3 Research Participants

The participants of this study were students from various courses at Urdaneta City University who were currently taking the subject Ethics and had completed the Nobility subject. The study utilized convenience random sampling, where students who received the survey link from their instructors could participate. However, those whose instructors did not share the link could not participate in the survey. 374 students participated in the study, consisting of 174 males, 195 females, and 3 respondents who did not disclose their gender identity. The selection process ensured that only those willing to respond participated, increasing the credibility of the collected data.

2.4 Research Instrument

The primary instrument used for data collection was a survey questionnaire, which was converted into a Google Form for ease of distribution and compliance with health protocols. The research questionnaire was designed to assess the impact of online learning on students' academic behaviors (integrity and competence) and social behaviors (teamwork and transcendence). Experts in education and psychology were consulted to identify relevant behavioral indicators for each core value, ensuring measurement accuracy. Following expert input, the questionnaire underwent validation to confirm its relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness. The university statistician then conducted a reliability test to ensure consistency in measuring students' behavioral responses. The finalized questionnaire collected data on students' experiences with online learning platforms, academic integrity, competence, teamwork, and transcendence. Expert validation and statistical reliability testing ensured that the questionnaire was a credible and effective tool for evaluating the influence of online learning on students' academic and social behaviors. The questionnaire comprised two sections: Selected Profile Variables and Level of Academic and Social Behaviors. The assessment of academic behavior (integrity and competence) and social behavior (teamwork and transcendence) was conducted using a four-point Likert scale.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process followed a structured approach. Initially, the researchers analyzed relevant documents and literature. A communication letter and the survey questionnaire were prepared and converted into a Google Form for research experts to validate. After incorporating the necessary corrections and suggestions, the final version of the Google Form was distributed to the respondents through email, Facebook Messenger, and other social media platforms. The survey responses were submitted online, ensuring convenience and accessibility. The data collected was immediately checked for completeness, tallied, summarized, analyzed, and interpreted with the assistance of a statistician. Finally, the results were discussed, and conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were strictly observed in conducting this study. Since student participation was essential, necessary adjustments were made to comply with ethical standards, health protocols, and data privacy regulations. Due to ongoing national or local lockdowns, the survey was conducted online to ensure safety. The researchers contacted students through Facebook Messenger and instructors, who distributed the survey link via FB group chats instead of administering the questionnaire in person. Participation was voluntary, and all respondents were assured that their data would be handled with confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the ranking of the most commonly used online learning platforms among UCU students. The findings indicate that Google Classroom (375 responses) is the most frequently utilized platform, followed by Google Meet (356 responses) and UCU-iKonek (319 responses). These platforms facilitate virtual classrooms, enable real-time interactions, and support educational content delivery. Conversely, the least frequently used platforms include YouTube (269 responses), Facebook Messenger (267 responses), and Emails (255 responses), suggesting that students rely more on structured learning management systems (LMS) than informal or asynchronous communication tools.

Table 1. *Ranking on the Common Usage of Online Learning Platforms*

Indicators	Frequency	Rank
1. Google Classroom	375	1
2. Google Meet	356	2
3. UCU-Ikonek	319	3
4. Youtube	269	4
5. Facebook Messenger	267	5
6. Emails	255	6

The data highlights the centrality of Google Classroom and Google Meet in facilitating online learning at UCU. Google Classroom is a Learning Management System (LMS) that streamlines class activities, assignments, and file-sharing, promoting efficient learning management (Phoenix, 2020). Google Meet, on the other hand, enhances synchronous learning through video conferencing, ensuring direct engagement between teachers and students (Soltero, 2020). UCU-iKonek, as an institutional LMS, plays a crucial role in offering a structured platform for content dissemination, assignments, and assessments (Canlas, 2020). The relatively lower ranking of social media-based platforms like Facebook Messenger and YouTube suggests that while these tools are valuable, they are supplementary to online learning rather than a primary instructional function.

The reliance on formal LMS platforms indicates a shift toward structured e-learning environments. This finding aligns with previous studies, which emphasize the role of LMS in improving student engagement, collaboration, and assessment management in digital learning environments (Bower, 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2020). Furthermore, it corroborates the argument that online learning fosters independent learning and self-regulated study habits, as observed in past research (Ku et al., 2013; Petronzi & Petronzi, 2020).

Several studies have explored the effectiveness of online learning platforms in educational settings. For instance, Gonzalez et al. (2020) found that LMS adoption positively impacts students' academic performance by enhancing their ability to manage learning materials efficiently. Similarly, Bower (2019) demonstrated that digital learning

tools facilitate knowledge acquisition, communication, and collaboration in virtual classrooms. These findings align with the present study's results, reinforcing the significance of LMS-based learning.

However, contrasting studies suggest variations in platform preference based on regional and institutional contexts. For example, a study by Dogan et al. (2021) reported that students in some universities preferred social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp for learning due to their accessibility and ease of communication. This contrasts with the present study, where Facebook Messenger ranks low in usage, indicating that UCU students prioritize formal LMS and video conferencing tools over informal social media platforms. Similarly, Tang and Hew (2022) found that YouTube plays a critical role in self-paced learning by providing students with on-demand instructional videos. This finding differs from the present study's relatively lower ranking of YouTube.

The findings of this study align with the Connectivism Theory, which emphasizes learning through digital networks and technological interactions (Siemens, 2004). As per this theory, online learning platforms act as nodes in a knowledge network, enabling students to engage with digital content, collaborate with peers, and interact with educators in virtual environments. The study also supports Online Collaborative Learning Theory (Harasim, 2012), highlighting digital platforms' significance in fostering collaborative knowledge-building experiences. Constructivist Learning Theory (Bransford et al., 1999) applies to this study, as students construct knowledge through digital experiences. LMS, video conferencing tools, and communication platforms enable learners to assimilate and accommodate new information, enhancing their overall learning outcomes.

Table 2 presents the level of academic integrity among students engaged in online learning. The general weighted mean of 3.13 suggests that students exhibit high academic integrity. The highest-rated indicator is "Show respect to everyone in class despite differences," with a mean of 3.23, followed closely by "Pass class requirements during deadlines" at 3.20. Conversely, the lowest-rated indicator is "Answer examinations honestly," which received a mean score of 2.97, followed by "Relay correct information to classmates in a group chat" at 3.08.

Table 2. *Level of Academic Integrity*

Indicators	Mean	Transmuted Rating
Show respect to everyone in class despite differences.	3.23	High Academic Integrity
Pass class requirements during deadlines.	3.20	High Academic Integrity
Follow the rules during asynchronous activities.	3.19	High Academic Integrity
Use decent words in class group chat.	3.17	High Academic Integrity
Observe strictly online good manners.	3.16	High Academic Integrity
Learn from lectures even with a camera off.	3.12	High Academic Integrity
Participate readily in all class activities.	3.09	High Academic Integrity
Listen attentively to instructions during lectures.	3.09	High Academic Integrity
Relay correct information to classmates in group chat.	3.08	High Academic Integrity
Answer examinations honestly.	2.97	High Academic Integrity
General Weighted Mean	**3.13**	**High Academic Integrity**

The findings indicate that students generally uphold academic integrity in online learning, particularly in interpersonal respect and deadline adherence. However, the relatively lower score on answering examinations honestly suggests potential challenges in maintaining integrity in assessments. This aligns with concerns raised during the shift to online learning, where issues such as plagiarism, use of unauthorized resources, and proxy test-taking have become more prevalent (San Jose, 2021). The importance of academic integrity in online learning has been widely studied. A study by Eaton (2021) highlighted that while students value integrity, online environments pose unique challenges, including reduced instructor oversight and increased access to digital resources that may facilitate dishonest practices. Similarly, research by Lancaster and Cotarlan (2021) found that contract cheating incidents increased during the pandemic, emphasizing the need for stronger institutional policies. Conversely, a study by Amigud and Lancaster (2019) suggested that academic integrity violations are not necessarily more frequent online but take different forms compared to face-to-face settings.

The Transactional Distance Theory (Moore, 1997) provides a framework for understanding these trends. The theory suggests that increased psychological and communicative distance in online education can lead to misunderstandings between students and instructors, potentially contributing to academic dishonesty. However,

studies by Martin et al. (2020) and Kent et al. (2022) indicate that synchronous interaction, such as live discussions and instructor feedback, can mitigate these challenges by fostering student engagement and accountability.

Table 3 presents the level of academic competence among students in an online learning environment. The general weighted mean of 3.00 suggests that students demonstrate high academic competence in virtual settings. The highest-rated indicators, "Use effective gadgets for learning" and "Do my assignments properly" (both with a mean of 3.13), highlight the critical role of digital literacy and task management in online education. Conversely, the lowest-rated indicators, "Express me confidently in class" (2.85) and "Understand easily assigned readings posted online" (2.86), suggest that students encounter difficulties in verbal participation and independent comprehension in a digital format.

Table 3. *Level of Academic Competence*

Indicators	Mean	Transmuted Rating
Use effective gadgets for learning.	3.13	High Academic Competence
Do my assignments properly.	3.13	High Academic Competence
Submit quality outputs.	3.12	High Academic Competence
Manage my time wisely when meeting class requirements.	3.03	High Academic Competence
Explain clearly my ideas during asynchronous activities.	3.00	High Academic Competence
Participate actively in all class activities.	2.98	High Academic Competence
Think critically in answering questions.	2.97	High Academic Competence
Discuss my ideas during recitations.	2.91	High Academic Competence
Understand easily assigned readings posted online.	2.86	High Academic Competence
Express me confidently in class.	2.85	High Academic Competence
General Weighted Mean	**3.00**	**High Academic Competence**

These findings align with research emphasizing the importance of digital proficiency in academic success in online settings. Rapanta et al. (2020) found that digital literacy skills influenced students' academic performance in virtual environments. Similarly, Martin et al. (2021) reported that engagement and comprehension were significant challenges for online learners, which may explain students' struggles in self-expression and processing reading materials in digital learning settings. Further, Bao (2020) identified self-regulated learning skills as crucial for students' adaptation to online education, reinforcing that effective time management and independent learning contribute to academic success. Pelikan et al. (2021) also found that students with stronger self-regulation skills performed better academically in virtual classrooms, supporting that competence in time management fosters success. In contrast, Hodges et al. (2020) argued that external support structures, such as instructor guidance and peer collaboration, significantly impact students' academic performance, suggesting that self-regulated learning alone may not be sufficient for success in online learning environments.

Moreover, Sun and Rueda (2022) highlighted that students who participated in structured collaborative learning environments exhibited higher engagement and comprehension levels than those relying solely on self-regulated learning. Similarly, Bond et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of interactive learning strategies in fostering critical thinking and academic competence. These studies suggest that while self-directed learning is vital, a well-structured online environment that promotes interaction and instructor support enhances student outcomes. However, unlike Rapanta et al. (2020), who stressed the importance of digital literacy, Lynch and Dembo (2020) found that motivation and self-efficacy played an even greater role in determining academic success in online learning. These mixed findings indicate that while self-directed learning skills are fundamental, external factors must also be considered, including institutional support, collaborative learning opportunities, and interactive engagement. This implies that online learning environments should incorporate self-regulated learning strategies and structured support mechanisms to effectively enhance students' academic competence.

Table 4 demonstrates that students exhibit a high level of teamwork in an online learning environment, with a general weighted mean of 3.08. The highest-rated statement, "Respect individual differences" (3.31), underscores the importance of inclusivity and diversity within online interactions. This is closely followed by "Assist classmates needing help" (3.18), reflecting a strong inclination toward peer support. On the other hand, "Promote harmonious relationship in class" received the lowest mean (2.97), suggesting that building rapport and cohesion remains a challenge in a virtual setting.

Table 4. *Level of Teamwork*

Indicators	Mean	Transmuted Rating
Respect individual differences.	3.31	Very High Teamwork
Assist classmates needing help.	3.18	High Teamwork
Participate in group chat discussions.	3.12	High Teamwork
Help my groupmates finish assigned activities.	3.09	High Teamwork
Join group activities willingly.	3.08	High Teamwork
Accept the comments of others constructively.	3.06	High Teamwork
Cooperate with others.	3.03	High Teamwork
Encourage class collaborations.	3.02	High Teamwork
Maintain healthy communication with classmates.	2.99	High Teamwork
Promote harmonious relationships in class.	2.97	High Teamwork
General Weighted Mean	**3.08**	**High Teamwork**

The findings align with the virtue ethics framework, which emphasizes the development of moral character through practice (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018). Students' recognition of teamwork virtues mirrors their acknowledgment of collective responsibility in learning. Similar studies have highlighted the importance of collaboration in online education. For instance, Zhang et al. (2021) found that students who actively engage in group discussions and peer-assisted learning tend to perform better academically. Likewise, Dhawan (2020) noted that effective teamwork in online learning enhances motivation and knowledge retention.

However, the struggle to promote harmonious relationships is consistent with findings by Gamage et al. (2020), who reported that the absence of face-to-face interactions in virtual learning environments hinders social bonding and peer connection. The contrast between high teamwork indicators and difficulties in fostering harmonious relationships aligns with the perspectives of Edge and Loegering (2000), who emphasized that online learning spaces can feel isolating, impacting students' ability to form strong interpersonal bonds. While some students thrive in an independent learning environment (Lynch & Bishop, 1998), others require structured social interactions to succeed (Lynch, 1999). These results suggest that while students are willing to support one another academically, fostering deep social connections remains a challenge in virtual learning.

Table 5 presents the level of transcendence among students in an online learning environment, revealing an overall agreement with a general weighted mean of 3.02, indicating high transcendence. The highest-rated indicator, "Help classmates willingly without any reward" (3.21), suggests a strong inclination toward altruism and peer support. Similarly, the second-highest indicators, "Listen to what others have to say during classes" and "Take full responsibility for my actions" (both with a mean of 3.19), highlight the importance of active engagement and accountability in online learning. On the other hand, "Spend more time studying lessons" (2.85) received the lowest mean, suggesting a challenge in maintaining focus and self-discipline in an independent learning environment.

Table 5. *Level of Transcendence*

Indicators	Mean	Transmuted Rating
Help classmates willingly without any reward.	3.21	High Transcendence
Listen to what others have to say during classes.	3.19	High Transcendence
I take full responsibility for my actions.	3.19	High Transcendence
Improve my online learning skills.	3.05	High Transcendence
Support flexible learning by using online platforms.	3.04	High Transcendence
Give my best in all subjects.	3.01	High Transcendence
Get high scores in most subjects.	2.93	High Transcendence
Perform activities beyond expectation.	2.92	High Transcendence
Read ebooks in advance.	2.86	High Transcendence
Spend more time in studying lessons.	2.85	High Transcendence
General Weighted Mean	**3.02**	**High Transcendence**

These findings align with Active Learning Theory, which posits that students learn best when actively engaged in the learning process (Sengupta, 2020). The strong emphasis on helping others and taking responsibility suggests that students are applying self-directed learning strategies, reinforcing the ideas of Zimmerman and Schunk (2019) regarding the importance of self-regulation. Moreover, the results support the Relationships Motivation Theory (RMT), which suggests that social interactions contribute to student motivation and well-being (Ryan & Deci,

2017). The high transcendence ratings suggest that students value collaborative efforts despite the challenges posed by online learning environments.

Studies by Bao (2020) and Pelikan et al. (2021) emphasized that self-regulation and peer collaboration significantly impact academic success in digital learning contexts. However, Mihhailova (2006) argued that e-learning requires greater self-discipline, which can be a barrier to academic engagement. This perspective is further supported by Churchili (2005), who noted that students benefit from e-learning environments when they develop autonomy and intrinsic motivation. Meanwhile, Tunison (2001) observed that although students recognize instructors as authoritative figures, they appreciate the freedom to explore concepts independently, which aligns with the findings on students' inclination toward taking responsibility for their own learning.

Despite the overall high transcendence, the challenge of spending more time studying aligns with the findings of Lynch and Bishop (1998), who noted that self-paced learning can lead to procrastination if students lack structured guidance. Hodges et al. (2020) further emphasized that online learners benefit from external support structures, such as teacher guidance and peer networks, to maintain engagement and time management. Therefore, while students exhibit strong virtues of transcendence, fostering better study habits and time management remains a crucial area for improvement.

4.0 Conclusion

Dedicated online learning platforms played a central role in structured academic engagement, while social media served as supplementary tools for communication and resource sharing. Online learning effectively supported the development of academic integrity, competence, teamwork, and transcendence, but challenges persisted in maintaining ethical conduct in assessments and fostering meaningful social interactions. The findings underscored the need for well-structured digital learning environments with integrated support mechanisms to enhance academic and social behaviors. Institutions should implement policies promoting digital literacy, self-regulation, and collaborative learning while refining assessment strategies to uphold academic integrity and incorporating interactive, student-centered instructional designs. Addressing digital literacy, self-expression, and comprehension challenges is crucial for optimizing virtual learning experiences. Future research should explore long-term strategies to balance independent learning with structured support, ensuring academic success and social development in digital education.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

This research contributes to UCU and the broader academic community by providing insights into the effectiveness of online learning tools and the behavioral patterns of students in digital education. The findings serve as a basis for improving institutional policies, refining pedagogical strategies, and fostering student engagement in virtual environments. More broadly, the study adds to the growing discourse on e-learning, helping educators and policymakers design interventions that enhance learning experiences in digital settings. The first author was the lead researcher, conceptualizing the study, inspiring its direction, and guiding the overall research process. The second author was responsible for designing the study framework and contributed significantly to the data analysis. The third author enriched the literature review and was key in revising the manuscript. Each author's contributions were instrumental in ensuring the rigor and depth of the study.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

There are no conflicts of interest to declare, as the research was conducted impartially, aiming to analyze online learning dynamics at UCU. The findings and interpretations were based on objective analysis, ensuring that no personal, financial, or institutional biases influenced the results.

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