

# Online Education and Academic Performance: The Case of Online Tertiary Students in the Caribbean

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*Online education in the Caribbean provides increased access to education by leveraging the opportunities offered by the Internet. However, high failure rates among online tertiary institutions result in unacceptable levels of attrition, reduced graduate throughput, and increased cost of training for a nation's labour force. Against this backdrop, this study analysed the perceptions of students' online learning experiences within the Caribbean in order to ascertain the major factors influencing their academic performance, with a view of instituting corrective measures to improve retention and academic performance. Data were gathered via an online survey, focus group discussion, and a learning style assessment. Analysis of the online survey administered to online tertiary students in the Caribbean indicated self-reported perceptions that work and family responsibilities, the pace of courses, quality of online course materials, and timeliness of tutors' feedback to assignments were some of the major factors impeding learning and academic performance. Other results revealed students' perceptions of tutors' effective use of online learning tools and students' perceived online learning tools that are best suited for improving their academic performance according to their respective learning styles and preferences.*

*Keywords: online education, academic performance, online learning tools, learning styles*

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