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Running title: Perceptions of online national education

Satisfaction and perceptions of an online national education program on National Security Law amongst university students in Hong Kong

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Abstract: Implementing the Hong Kong National Security Law (NSL) in 2020 has driven the development of law-related education (LRE) programs fostering law-abiding citizenship among university students. This study evaluated the online programs at one university in Hong Kong that integrated NSL with law abidance education. A total of 1,245 undergraduate, research postgraduate, and taught postgraduate students completed a survey to capture their perceptions and satisfaction with the program regarding course attributes, understanding of concepts, and self-paced learning. Results demonstrated predominantly positive views across all domains and student categories. Postgraduate students reported the highest satisfaction levels and exhibited the most robust correlations among the variables. Although undergraduate ratings were slightly lower, they still indicated an overall positive perception of the program. Furthermore, self-paced online learning received support from most participants. The findings shed light on the benefits and flexibility of delivering law-abidance education through online platforms in higher education institutions. This study underscores the significance of incorporating student feedback to enrich the curriculum and promote law-abiding behaviors among Hong Kong youth. The insights from this research contribute to the ongoing efforts to shape law abidance education programs and policies in response to the implementation of the National Security Law in Hong Kong.

Keywords: National Security Law, law abidance education, online learning, subjective outcome evaluation, Hong Kong

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Introduction

The massive vandalism triggered by “the 2019 Hong Kong Protests” brought public facilities to a standstill, with far-reaching consequences for the well-being of the people of Hong Kong. Since June 2019, protesters have held several demonstrations and vandalized and burned railways, streets, and stores; police and passersby were attacked, and even universities were not spared (1,2). According to statistics from the Hong Kong Police Force, there was an increase in the

number of students arrested at social events by June 2022 (with around 39% of 10,278 being students), especially university students (3). Moreover, the university students also demonstrated high participation in the past “social unrest” events in other regions (2). Previous research explained that the young generation disobeying laws may contribute to a lack of knowledge about laws and an insufficient understanding of the consequences of breaking the laws (4). To address these concerns and restore social stability, China’s National People’s Congress enacted the NSL, officially known as “The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region”, on June 30, 2020 (5). Article 10 of the law states that national security education should be promoted in schools and universities to raise students’ awareness of national security and the obligation to abide by the law (6). Besides, as a part of civic or citizenship education, law-related education (LRE) is recognized as playing an important role in developing students’ understanding of the rule of law and public issues. Higher education institutes, whose mission is to create and disseminate knowledge for the well-being of the individual and the surrounding community, play an even more critical role in reinforcing law-abiding behaviors among university students (7,8). Accordingly, universities in Hong Kong have established and carried out national education programs as a compulsory requirement for graduation to promote students’ legal consciousness and provide them with a true sense of the nature and need of the law, thereby equipping them with the skills of modern citizenship (9,10).

The present study focused on The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) and its integration of LRE and NSL education into a new program. Besides, as National Education (such as the Century of Humiliation) forms the context of national security, this component is also embedded in related education. This program requires students at the undergraduate level (4-year Undergraduate Program, and Senior Year & Articulation Degree Program) and the graduate level (Taught Postgraduate Program, and Research Postgraduate Program) to participate as a mandatory graduation component. All programs basically cover the following topics: 1) “The Modern Chinese History and the Restoration of Hong Kong to the People’s Republic of China in 1997”, 2) “The Constitution,” 3) “The Hong Kong Basic Law,” and 4) “The Hong Kong National Security Law.” The main difference between the national education programs for 4-year undergraduates and the programs for postgraduate and senior-year students lies in the instructional method. The 4-year undergraduate program adopts 3-hour face-to-face lecture embedded in the Leadership subjects and promotes teacher-student and peer interactions (plus seven hours of self-study), whereas the other programs are conducted online and prioritize self-paced learning. Additionally, when presenting the background of the NSL, the educational approach and underlying logic are customized for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The curriculum for undergraduate students is designed with a focus on law-abiding leadership and social responsibility in addition to modern Chinese history and related political changes. In contrast, the postgraduate curriculum includes a more comprehensive exploration of the history of China and Hong Kong, providing a deeper historical context surrounding the NSL.

The present study mainly explores students’ perceptions of national education programs adopting an online mode. Online modules, in contrast to the traditional face-to-face mode or the HyFlex learning mode (i.e., face-to-face lectures plus online learning), are educational strategies that use contemporary communication technology to give students information meant to enhance learning (11,12). Due to its flexible teaching approach, it requires students’ adequate learning experience and autonomy as well as time management skills, and the early learning experiences of students in these different programs provide exactly the prerequisites for them to carry out

self-directed learning online. In addition, as senior or high-degree students, their systematic study may be filled with a large amount of literature and experience, as well as a great deal of academic or future career pressure. Therefore, time management may be their primary concern (13). E-learning mode provides them with more extensive time flexibility in their learning process, which fosters the development of time management strategies in studying the program. Most importantly, students' learning experience can be enhanced by applying a more advanced approach to delivering and receiving the learning resources (14). In particular, due to some topics being politically related to the mainland and HKSAR, which is relatively sensitive, the anonymity of online learning can create a more comfortable and safer environment for students to study, protect their privacy, and reduce their stress (15).

It is noteworthy that there are controversies on the effectiveness of online learning, such as the relationship between the level of comfort of using the Internet and students' satisfaction with online courses. Online learning is hampered by poor internet connections and inadequate devices (16). Moreover, from the perspective of the implementation process, research from university students' viewpoints has suggested that less interactive lectures and an excessive number of assignments are disadvantages of online learning (17). It is also pointed out that the limited attention span of students and the resource-intensive nature of online learning pose challenges for both teaching and learning (18). In terms of learning outcomes, Patterson and McFadden (19) argued that online courses generally result in lower completion rates.

This current study aims to replicate and expand upon previous studies conducted by Shek and his colleagues (20-23) by examining the post-lecture evaluation of PolyU's online national education programs for senior-year and postgraduate students during the second semester and summer term of the 2022/23 academic year. Shek et al. (20) previously found high satisfaction among PolyU students with the national education program and improvements in their understanding of the NSL and law-abiding behaviors. Other evaluations on the same national education program across several academic years (e.g., the academic year 2022/23) and applying different approaches (e.g., focus group interviews) have demonstrated similar favorable outcomes in which students were found overall satisfied with this particular education experience (4, 10, 24). However, most earlier studies have focused on undergraduate programs and did not differentiate the results by program type. Furthermore, compared with the previous study on a HyFlex or face-to-face learning mode (4,10,20,24), this study specifically examines the potential impact of e-learning mode on both teaching and learning, as well as whether such mode was positively received without interaction or communication between students and instructors and between students and each other. Additionally, although recent research conducted by Shek et al. (4, 10, 20-24) has studied the perceptions of senior-year and postgraduate students, it is important to replicate the study to understand whether the results are robust and to reveal potential differences between the perceptions of students in different programs.

To promote law-abiding behaviors and NSL knowledge among the young generation in Hong Kong, understanding the satisfaction of university students is vital. Previous studies have suggested potential advantages of law abidance leadership education in enhancing students' well-being from multiple perspectives and shaping their life circumstances and health outcomes (10). Law-abiding citizens are more mentally healthy, as law compliance provides inner security (25). Thus, leadership education that emphasizes adherence to the law is significantly applicable to improving the quality of life for individuals (26). Moreover, the modifications will extend beyond the personal sphere of university students to the communal sphere of Hong Kong society by upholding social cohesion (10). Meanwhile, understanding student reactions and evaluations

of self-paced learning is also crucial for improving the quality of online modules and identifying opportunities for innovation in higher education. By exploring student perspectives, educators can address areas for improvement and provide necessary support and resources. Additionally, by replicating the previous study with different participants, this study also aims to generate more reliable and valid results, enabling the improvement of course content and teaching methods based on the findings.

Methods

In the second semester of the 2022/23 academic year, a total of 1,245 undergraduate and postgraduate students from various faculties and schools at the university participated in the study. The sample consisted of 562 (45.6%) male and 671 (54.4%) female students, with ages ranging from 18 to 59 years ($Mean_{age} = 24.96$; $SD = 4.50$). The participants were enrolled at different program levels, including 192 senior-year undergraduate students, 104 research postgraduate students, and 949 taught postgraduate students. The participating faculties and schools encompassed the Faculty of Science, Faculty of Business, Faculty of Construction and Environment, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, School of Design, School of Fashion and Textiles, and School of Hotel and Tourism Management. Further details are presented in table 1.

Table 1

Procedures

The data were collected during the second semester of the academic year 2022/23. After completing the online assessment of the e-learning module, students were invited to complete an online course evaluation questionnaire. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous, and students' consent was obtained before data collection. The data collected from the participants were treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for educational and research purposes. The course evaluation questionnaire was administered through an online survey platform, ensuring ease of access and efficient data collection while maintaining anonymity and data privacy.

Instruments

The present study utilized a modified version of the course evaluation questionnaire developed by Shek et al. (20) to assess the perceptions of 4-year university students regarding different aspects of the online program. As the instructional methods differed between the 4-year undergraduate program and other programs, the original items pertaining to instructors' characteristics and relationships with peers were substituted with items focusing on self-paced learning for senior-year and postgraduate students. Additionally, due to the slight differences in program content for senior-year and postgraduate students, three out of nine items addressing relevant course content were adjusted accordingly to reflect these variations. Previous studies have demonstrated good psychometric characteristics of the scales for senior-year (23) and postgraduate students (21). The modified instrument employed a six-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 6 = Strongly agree) and measured four domains: "Course attributes" (6 items), "Understanding of National Education and law-abiding behaviors" (8 items for the undergraduate program and 9 items for the postgraduate program), "Evaluation of self-paced learning mode" (4 items), and a general perception item regarding the e-learning course.

Data analysis

Data analyses were conducted using SPSS Statistics 28. First, descriptive analyses, including means, standard deviations, and response rates for positive and negative items, were performed to provide an overview of student satisfaction with the national education program. Then, bivariate correlations were conducted to examine the associations among the four domains.

Tables 2-4

Results

The descriptive results indicated that university students' perceptions of the online program were generally positive. The percentage of positive responses to different items (≥ 4 on a Likert scale of 1-6) ranged between 88.24% and 100% for research postgraduate students, between 88.58% and 98.72% for taught postgraduate students, and between 69.68% and 88.83% for senior-year undergraduate students (see tables 2-4).

For research postgraduate students, positive views were observed regarding attributes (items 1-6), including good course design (96.15%) and reflection opportunities (97.09%). Moreover, the online course effectively enhanced their knowledge of national security and the importance of law-abiding behaviors (items 7-15). Most students expressed satisfaction with the self-paced learning mode (items 16-19). Overall, a majority of research postgraduate students (98.08%) perceived the online program positively (item 20).

Taught postgraduate students also had positive views on course attributes, such as the improvement of critical thinking skills (92.93%) and personal development (93.28%). Similar to research postgraduates, they perceived the online course as effective in enhancing their knowledge of offenses and penalties related to the Hong Kong NSL and the importance of law-abiding behaviors (items 7-15). The self-paced learning mode received high satisfaction ratings from over 97% of taught postgraduate students (items 16-19). In total, 96.07% of taught postgraduate students perceived the online program positively (item 20).

Among senior-year undergraduate students, positive views were expressed regarding course attributes, including understanding the important components of successful leaders (70.53%) and reflection opportunities (73.54%). These students also reported increased knowledge of national security and the importance of law-abiding behaviors due to the online course (items 7-14). More than 85% of senior-year undergraduate students expressed satisfaction with the self-paced learning mode (items 15-18). Overall, 74.87% of senior-year undergraduate students (74.87%) had a positive perception of the online program (item 19).

Tables 5 and 6 display the results of the correlation analyses conducted among the variables. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between course attributes and overall satisfaction among both postgraduate students ($r = .79, p < .001$) and senior-year undergraduate students ($r = .84, p < .001$). In addition, self-paced learning and understanding of national security and law-abiding behaviors were positively correlated in both postgraduate students ($r = .79, p < .001$) and undergraduate students ($r = .74, p < .001$), respectively. Moreover, the self-paced learning mode expressed positive correlations with overall satisfaction for both postgraduate students ($r = .82, p < .001$) and undergraduate students ($r = .73, p < .001$). Lastly, understanding of national security and law-abiding behaviors also demonstrated positive

correlations with overall satisfaction among both postgraduate students ($r = .84, p < .001$) and undergraduate students ($r = .83, p < .001$).

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the perceptions of the online national education programs among senior-year undergraduate, taught postgraduate, and research graduate students. The ANOVA result was significant in the general perception regarding the e-learning course, $F(2, 281.09) = 85.75, p < .001$. Specifically, the ANOVA result was significant in the perception of course attributes, $F(2, 271.61) = 73.91, p < .001$, students' understanding of National Education and law-abiding behaviors, $F(2, 293.01) = 89.59, p < .001$, and the self-paced learning mode, $F(2, 279.53) = 100.40, p < .001$.

Post hoc Tukey's HSD test was used to make pairwise comparisons among the means of the three groups of students for its robustness to unequal sample sizes. Results showed that the general perception of senior-year undergraduate students ($M = 3.75, SD = 1.65$) was significantly lower than that of taught postgraduate students ($M = 5.11, SD = 1.25$) and research postgraduate students ($M = 5.39, SD = 0.86$). The perception of course attributes of senior-year undergraduate students ($M = 3.60, SD = 1.48$) was significantly lower than that of taught postgraduate students ($M = 4.78, SD = 1.25$) and research postgraduate students ($M = 4.97, SD = 0.97$). Senior-year undergraduate students' appreciation of National Education and law-abiding behavior ($M = 4.05, SD = 1.37$) was significantly lower than that of taught postgraduate students ($M = 5.19, SD = 1.10$) and research postgraduates ($M = 5.44, SD = 0.69$), with all $ps < .001$. Similarly, their evaluation of the self-paced learning mode ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.35$) was significantly lower than that of taught postgraduate students ($M = 4.98, SD = 1.20$) and research postgraduate students ($M = 4.89, SD = 0.87$). However, there was no significant difference between taught and research postgraduate students in the perception of the online national education program. However, it is noteworthy that the perceptions of the Senior Year students were generally positive in nature.

Discussion

By incorporating the perspectives of senior-year students, taught postgraduate students, and research postgraduate students, the study provides a comprehensive assessment of the feedback received after implementing the new program that combines law-related education (LRE) and national education. Additionally, the study sought to understand student satisfaction and the impact of e-learning on delivering national education across diverse academic groups. Moreover, this replication study consolidates the previous findings and identifies potential differences between the perceptions reported by various student groups to offer nuanced insights into their satisfaction and the effectiveness of the program.

The study revealed several noteworthy findings. Firstly, a significant number of PolyU students held a positive perception of the online national education program. The findings of this study align with previous research conducted by Shek et al (4,10,20-24), highlighting high levels of satisfaction among PolyU students with the national education program. Notably, the reported satisfaction extends to both undergraduate and postgraduate students, emphasizing the positive perception of the online program among students from different program types.

The positive correlation between course attributes and overall satisfaction among postgraduate students and senior-year undergraduates suggests that the use of e-learning to deliver and access learning resources enhances students' learning experience. These findings are consistent with previous studies (14,27) and highlight the advanced approach that e-learning represents in improving student satisfaction with the programs. It also protects the anonymity of the students and allows them to better engage in their studies.

Moreover, the study reveals that self-paced learning positively correlates with overall satisfaction among postgraduates and undergraduates. The flexible nature of the e-learning mode allows students to engage in critical thinking and reflection (28). Our results support this notion, as the majority of students indicated that the opportunities for reflection and critical thinking facilitated by online platforms contribute to their overall satisfaction with law-related study and national education. Heath et al (29) stated that creating accessible learning opportunities and experiences can achieve better learning outcomes by fully considering the topic's sensitive nature and its possible influence on students. Thus, the flexibility of self-paced learning kept them away from the feeling of being overwhelmed and made them relaxed and comfortable. In other words, rather than causing stress, it allows students to grasp the human aspect of the law. The self-paced learning will enable them to appreciate the significance and purpose of the law by considering its historical and practical aspects. Additionally, it helps them develop emotional intelligence and cultivate respect for the values of others by challenging biases and misunderstandings.

This study demonstrates a significant positive relationship between self-paced learning and the comprehension of national security and law-abiding behaviors. This finding suggests that actively engaging in self-paced learning contributes to a deeper understanding of these critical concepts, underscoring the potential effectiveness of online teaching and learning methods. It is worth noting that the strength of these correlations is slightly higher among postgraduate students, which can be attributed to the greater level of autonomy and self-directed learning typically associated with postgraduate education (30). In contrast, previous studies have noted that undergraduate students demonstrated fewer information literacy skills, i.e., the capacity to accurately evaluate and use the information (31), than postgraduate students (32), which may lead to less desirable learning outcomes.

The comprehension of national security and law-abiding behaviors also positively correlates with overall satisfaction levels among postgraduate and undergraduate students. This correlation underscores the impact of well-designed online courses on facilitating knowledge acquisition and understanding, leading to increased student satisfaction (33). Moreover, a deeper understanding of these concepts fosters the perceived value and practicality of their daily lives of online learning experiences, further contributing to overall satisfaction. Compared to their senior-year undergraduate counterparts, postgraduate students generally perceived a more positive attitude towards the lecture. Kennedy and Chow (34) stated that "older students were more positive about law and law-related issues than their younger counterparts". Postgraduate students exhibit less susceptibility to socialized thinking or biased beliefs due to their life experiences and increased maturity in their thinking. Their maturity allows them to perceive this intricate and sensitive issue from fresh perspectives. Comparatively, undergraduate students tend to engage less in analyzing complex problems and discussing national issues than postgraduates (35). However, although the perceptions of Senior Year students were relatively less favorable than did the postgraduate students, they were also very positive in nature.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge the limitations. Firstly, the higher proportion of taught postgraduates in the sample may have influenced the results, potentially compromising the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should aim for a more balanced representation of students across different academic levels and disciplines to improve the reliability and generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the study's correlational nature limits the investigation of specific components or aspects of self-paced learning that contribute to student satisfaction. To gain a more comprehensive understanding, future studies

should consider integrating qualitative methods, such as interviews, to gather detailed insights into the specific elements of self-paced learning that students find most advantageous and fulfilling. This approach would provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by students from different programs and identify areas for improvement in course content and teaching methods.

In conclusion, this study significantly enhances our understanding of student satisfaction and the impact of e-learning on the delivery of national education across diverse academic groups. The findings underscore the significance of recognizing student satisfaction for promoting law-abiding behaviors and deepening comprehension of the NSL among the youth in Hong Kong. The insights derived from this research can inform the enhancement of course content and teaching methods in self-directed online programs integrating LRE and national education. This replication study validates the robustness and reliability of previous findings. Further research should continue to explore these areas to further advance the field and improve the effectiveness of online national education programs.

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Table 1. Demographic information of the participants (n = 1,245)

Variables	Frequencies	Valid percent (%)
Gender		
Males	562	45.58
Females	671	54.42
Program		
Research postgraduate	104	8.35
Taught postgraduate	949	76.22
Senior-Year undergraduate	192	15.42
Faculty		
Faculty of Science	122	9.87
Faculty of Business	232	18.77
Faculty of Construction and Environment	167	13.51
Faculty of Engineering	281	22.73
Faculty of Health and Social Sciences	112	9.06
Faculty of Humanities	151	12.22
School of Design	72	5.83
School of Fashion and Textiles	53	4.29
School of Hotel and Tourism Management	46	3.72

Table 2. Descriptive results of research postgraduate students' perceptions of the course (n = 104)

Items	N	Mean	S.D.	1		2		3		4		5		6		Negative responses 1+2+3		Positive responses 4+5+6	
				N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. The design of this course was very good.	104	5.19	0.92	1	0.96	1	0.96	2	1.92	13	12.50	43	41.35	44	42.31	4	3.85	100	96.15
2. There were many opportunities for reflection in this course.	103	5.17	0.85	0	0	1	0.97	2	1.94	18	17.48	40	38.83	42	40.78	3	2.91	100	97.09
3. This course is helpful to my personal development.	103	5.23	0.88	0	0	1	0.97	3	2.91	15	14.56	36	34.95	48	46.60	4	3.88	99	96.12
4. This course has improved my problem-solving ability.	102	4.80	1.18	1	0.98	5	4.90	6	5.88	24	23.53	31	30.39	35	34.31	12	11.76	90	88.24
5. This course has improved my understanding of the importance of attributes of successful leaders (e.g., critical thinking, moral competence, law abidance etc.).	101	5.07	1.01	0	0	3	2.97	5	4.95	15	14.85	37	36.63	41	40.59	8	7.92	93	92.08
6. This course has improved my critical thinking.	104	5.04	1.04	0	0	4	3.85	4	3.85	18	17.31	36	34.62	42	40.38	8	7.69	96	92.31
7. This course helps me understand the knowledge of the history of Modern China.	104	5.53	0.62	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	6.7	35	33.7	62	59.6	0	0	104	100
8. This course helps me understand the knowledge of the history of Hong Kong.	103	5.49	0.66	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	8.74	35	33.98	59	57.28	0	0	103	100
9. This course has helped me understand the concepts of national security.	104	5.51	0.64	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	7.69	35	33.65	61	58.65	0	0	104	100
10. I understand that national security is important for the stability of a society.	103	5.57	0.64	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	7.77	28	27.18	67	65.05	0	0	103	100
11. This course has helped me understand the offenses and penalties surrounding the Hong Kong National Security Law.	103	5.54	0.61	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	5.83	35	33.98	62	60.19	0	0	103	100
12. This course has helped me understand the importance of implementing the Hong Kong National Security Law.	104	5.48	0.72	0	0	0	0	1	0.96	8	7.69	34	32.69	61	58.65	1	0.96	103	99.04
13. This course has helped me clarify some myths related to Hong Kong National Security Law.	103	5.44	0.78	0	0	0	0	3	2.91	9	8.74	31	30.10	60	58.25	3	2.91	100	97.09

14. I will try my best to serve as a law-abiding citizen.	104	5.65	0.59	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	5.77	24	23.08	74	71.15	0	0	104	100
15. I will try my best to serve as a socially responsible leader.	103	5.49	0.70	0	0	0	0	1	0.97	9	8.74	32	31.07	61	59.22	1	0.97	102	99.03
16. The self-paced online learning course enabled me to learn more efficiently about this course.	104	5.42	0.75	0	0	1	0.96	0	0	10	9.62	36	34.62	57	54.81	1	0.96	103	99.04
17. The self-paced online learning course allows me to learn the course materials according to my own situation.	104	5.53	0.62	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	6.73	35	33.65	62	59.62	0	0	104	100
18. Overall speaking, I like the self-paced online learning experience.	103	5.56	0.59	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	4.85	35	33.98	63	61.17	0	0	103	100
19. Generally speaking, there is sufficient support provided to help students pass assessments, such as sending reminder emails and organizing tutorial sessions.	63	5.32	0.90	0	0	1	1.59	2	3.17	6	9.52	21	33.33	33	52.38	3	4.76	60	95.24
20. Overall speaking, I have a very positive evaluation of this course.	104	5.47	0.71	0	0	0	0	2	1.92	7	6.73	35	33.65	60	57.69	2	1.92	102	98.08

Note. All items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale with 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree. Responses of 1–3 are considered negative. Responses of 4–6 are considered positive.

Table 3. Descriptive results of taught postgraduate students' perceptions of the course (n = 949)

Items	N	Mean	S.D.	1		2		3		4		5		6		Negative responses 1+2+3		Positive responses 4+5+6	
				N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. The design of this course was very good.	940	5.03	1.06	19	2.02	12	1.28	38	4.04	135	14.36	381	40.53	355	37.77	69	7.34	871	92.66
2. There were many opportunities for reflection in this course.	941	5.02	1.05	12	1.28	18	1.91	40	4.25	157	16.68	356	37.83	358	38.04	70	7.44	871	92.56
3. This course is helpful to my personal development.	937	5.03	1.06	18	1.92	12	1.28	33	3.52	163	17.40	345	36.82	366	39.06	63	6.72	874	93.28
4. This course has improved my problem-solving ability.	937	4.85	1.17	20	2.13	23	2.45	64	6.83	187	19.96	318	33.94	325	34.69	107	11.42	830	88.58
5. This course has improved my understanding of the importance of attributes of successful leaders (e.g., critical thinking, moral competence, law abidance etc.).	936	4.97	1.11	20	2.14	20	2.14	30	3.21	181	19.34	331	35.36	354	37.82	70	7.48	866	92.52
6. This course has improved my critical thinking.	933	4.98	1.10	19	2.04	20	2.14	27	2.89	178	19.08	339	36.33	350	37.51	66	7.07	867	92.93
7. This course helps me understand the knowledge of the history of Modern China.	938	5.36	0.86	7	0.75	4	0.43	14	1.49	102	10.87	302	32.20	509	54.26	25	2.67	913	97.33
8. This course helps me understand the knowledge of the history of Hong Kong.	935	5.32	0.89	8	0.86	6	0.64	18	1.93	100	10.70	318	34.01	485	51.87	32	3.42	903	96.58
9. This course has helped me understand the concepts of national security.	937	5.37	0.86	9	0.96	2	0.21	12	1.28	100	10.67	297	31.70	517	55.18	23	2.45	914	97.55
10. I understand that national security is important for the stability of a society.	936	5.42	0.84	6	0.64	3	0.32	15	1.60	96	10.26	268	28.63	548	58.55	24	2.56	912	97.44
11. This course has helped me understand the offenses and penalties surrounding the Hong Kong National Security Law.	937	5.40	0.81	7	0.75	2	0.21	7	0.75	93	9.93	313	33.40	515	54.96	16	1.71	921	98.29
12. This course has helped me understand the importance of implementing the Hong Kong National Security Law.	937	5.35	0.91	9	0.96	7	0.75	16	1.71	98	10.46	288	30.74	519	55.39	32	3.42	905	96.58
13. This course has helped me clarify some myths related to	941	5.30	0.91	8	0.85	12	1.28	11	1.17	107	11.37	319	33.90	484	51.43	31	3.29	910	96.71

Hong Kong National Security Law.

14. I will try my best to serve as a law-abiding citizen.	941	5.54	0.75	5	0.53	2	0.21	5	0.53	73	7.76	238	25.29	618	65.67	12	1.28	929	98.72
15. I will try my best to serve as a socially responsible leader.	942	5.42	0.82	6	0.64	4	0.42	8	0.85	97	10.30	284	30.15	543	57.64	18	1.91	924	98.09
16. The self-paced online learning course enabled me to learn more efficiently about this course.	936	5.38	0.88	8	0.85	5	0.53	13	1.39	100	10.68	279	29.81	531	56.73	26	2.78	910	97.22
17. The self-paced online learning course allows me to learn the course materials according to my own situation.	936	5.40	0.85	7	0.75	7	0.75	11	1.18	81	8.65	300	32.05	530	56.62	25	2.67	911	97.33
18. Overall speaking, I like the self-paced online learning experience.	937	5.38	0.85	6	0.64	6	0.64	11	1.17	96	10.25	304	32.44	514	54.86	23	2.45	914	97.55
19. Generally speaking, there is sufficient support provided to help students pass assessments, such as sending reminder emails and organizing tutorial sessions.	792	5.35	0.86	7	0.88	3	0.38	9	1.14	89	11.24	265	33.46	419	52.90	19	2.40	773	97.60
20. Overall speaking, I have a very positive evaluation of this course.	942	5.30	0.93	8	0.85	12	1.27	17	1.80	105	11.15	313	33.23	487	51.70	37	3.93	905	96.07

Note. All items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale with 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree. Responses of 1–3 are considered negative. Responses of 4–6 are considered positive.

Table 4. Descriptive results of Senior-Year students' perceptions of the course (n = 192)

Items	N	Mean	S.D.	1		2		3		4		5		6		Negative responses 1+2+3		Positive responses 4+5+6	
				N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. The design of this course was very good.	188	3.97	1.26	9	4.79	17	9.04	30	15.96	61	32.45	56	29.79	15	7.98	56	29.79	132	70.21
2. There were many opportunities for reflection in this course.	189	4.05	1.26	11	5.82	11	5.82	28	14.81	63	33.33	59	31.22	17	8.99	50	26.46	139	73.54
3. This course is helpful to my personal development.	190	3.89	1.33	15	7.89	16	8.42	25	13.16	67	35.26	52	27.37	15	7.89	56	29.47	134	70.53
4. This course has improved my problem-solving ability.	189	3.88	1.33	15	7.94	16	8.47	25	13.23	69	36.51	48	25.40	16	8.47	56	29.63	133	70.37
5. This course has improved my understanding of the importance of attributes of successful leaders (e.g., critical thinking, moral competence, law abidance, etc.).	190	3.91	1.30	13	6.84	17	8.95	26	13.68	66	34.74	54	28.42	14	7.37	56	29.47	134	70.53
6. This course has improved my critical thinking.	188	3.92	1.31	14	7.45	13	6.91	30	15.96	64	34.04	51	27.13	16	8.51	57	30.32	131	69.68
7. This course has helped me understand the importance of law abidance in leadership.	189	4.10	1.26	12	6.35	12	6.35	15	7.94	75	39.68	57	30.16	18	9.52	39	20.63	150	79.37
8. I understand that law abidance is important for the stability of a society.	189	4.34	1.15	7	3.70	7	3.70	15	7.94	72	38.10	62	32.80	26	13.76	29	15.34	160	84.66
9. This course has helped me understand the concepts of national security.	188	4.37	1.13	6	3.19	8	4.26	12	6.38	71	37.77	66	35.11	25	13.30	26	13.83	162	86.17
10. This course has helped me understand the offenses and penalties surrounding the Hong Kong National Security Law.	186	4.41	1.15	7	3.76	5	2.69	14	7.53	67	36.02	64	34.41	29	15.59	26	13.98	160	86.02
11. This course has helped me understand the importance of implementing the Hong Kong National Security Law.	185	4.28	1.22	7	3.78	10	5.41	18	9.73	68	36.76	54	29.19	28	15.14	35	18.92	150	81.08
12. This course has helped me clarify some myths related to Hong Kong National Security Law.	189	4.27	1.24	9	4.76	8	4.23	20	10.58	67	35.45	56	29.63	29	15.34	37	19.58	152	80.42
13. I will try my best to serve as a law-abiding citizen.	187	4.60	1.21	6	3.21	7	3.74	14	7.49	45	24.06	72	38.50	43	22.99	27	14.44	160	85.56
14. I will try my best to serve as a	188	4.52	1.16	8	4.26	4	2.13	9	4.79	62	32.98	72	38.30	33	17.55	21	11.17	167	88.83

socially responsible leader.

15. The self-paced online learning course enabled me to learn more efficiently about this course.	186	4.49	1.11	5	2.69	6	3.23	13	6.99	61	32.80	71	38.17	30	16.13	24	12.90	162	87.10
16. The self-paced online learning course allows me to learn the course materials according to my own situation.	190	4.48	1.13	6	3.16	6	3.16	11	5.79	67	35.26	67	35.26	33	17.37	23	12.11	167	87.89
17. Overall speaking, I like the self-paced online learning experience.	187	4.47	1.18	7	3.74	8	4.28	10	5.35	58	31.02	73	39.04	31	16.58	25	13.37	162	86.63
18. Generally speaking, there is sufficient support provided to help students pass assessments, such as sending reminder emails and organizing tutorial sessions.	100	4.27	1.32	8	8.00	2	2.00	8	8.00	34	34.00	33	33.00	15	15.00	18	18.00	82	82.00
19. Overall speaking, I have a very positive evaluation of this course.	187	4.10	1.34	14	7.49	10	5.35	23	12.30	58	31.02	61	32.62	21	11.23	47	25.13	140	74.87

Note. All items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale with 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree. Responses of 1–3 are considered negative. Responses of 4–6 are considered positive.

Table 5. Correlations among variables in the course evaluation questionnaire for postgraduate students

Variables	Cronbach's α	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Perception of course attributes	.96	4.99	.98			
2. Understanding of National Education and law-abiding behavior	.97	5.40	.75	.81***		
3. Evaluation of self-paced learning mode	.95	5.39	.78	.66***	.79***	
4. Overall evaluation		5.31	.91	.79***	.84***	.82***

Note. *** $p < 0.001$

Table 6.

Correlations among variables in the course evaluation questionnaire for undergraduate students.

Variables	Cronbach's α	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Perception of course attributes	.97	3.94	1.21			
2. Understanding of National Education and law-abiding behavior	.96	4.36	1.05	.84***		
3. Evaluation of self-paced learning mode	.92	4.46	1.03	.68***	.74***	
4. Overall evaluation		4.10	1.34	.84***	.80***	.73***

Note. *** $p < 0.001$