Assessing the Adaptability of Students and Teachers in the Faculty of Arts at Alasmarya Islamic University to the Sudden Transition to Online Teaching and Learning Processes during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: This study investigates the adaptability of students and the Faculty of Arts at Alasmarya Islamic University in response to the COVID-19 pandemic-induced shift to online teaching and learning. The sudden transition necessitated the use of video chat applications such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Google Meet and other social media for remote lectures and communication. However, challenges such as poor internet connectivity, technological proficiency gaps, and limited resource access emerged. The research aims to assess the readiness of the faculty and understand students' perceptions and concerns regarding online learning. By adopting a quantitative approach and utilizing a questionnaire as the data collection method, the study examines the challenges faced by students and faculty members and provides recommendations for effective online teaching. The literature review explores the impact of the pandemic on students' stress levels, the specific challenges of online learning, and the importance of integrating technology into education. The findings emphasize the need for support from university management, including instructional plans and training on online platforms, to overcome barriers and facilitate a successful transition to online education. The study concludes by highlighting the potential of online technologies and distance learning platforms to navigate future challenges in the field of education.

Introduction:

Technology has become an essential part of our daily lives, merging with all areas, including medicine, justice, and education. The education sector has been greatly impacted by technology, facilitating access to information and communication between students, teachers, and researchers.

However, in Libya, technology integration in education has been slow until 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in China and quickly spread globally. In response, schools and universities in Libya were closed in the middle of the academic year to minimize social contact and adhere to the guidelines of the Libyan Center for Disease Control.

The extended period of closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic has made the use of technology essential for the continuation of the learning process. In response, the Ministry of Higher Education in Libya made the decision to adopt technology, including the Internet, as a means to continue educational process. As a result, universities were forced to adapt to the pandemic by transitioning from traditional face-to-face education to online teaching and learning.

This sudden shift to online education has required both university professors and students to adapt to the use of technology in learning, teaching, and communication, replacing the traditional methods of social interaction that were used in the past.

The idea for this research study emerged from this context, The Faculty of Arts at Alasmarya Islamic University was no exception and had to adapt to this new mode of teaching and learning (education).

In this study, we aim to assess the adaptability of both students and the Faculty of Arts at Alasmarya Islamic University to the sudden transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the use of the internet in education dates back to before the year 2000, today, most universities use what is commonly known as "Learning Management Systems" (Wikipedia:2020). However, in light of the global COVID-19 pandemic, many educational institutions have shifted towards e-learning as a more suitable alternative to ensure the continuation of the educational process.

Consequently, there has been a significant increase in the use of online video chat applications such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google meet, and others. These tools have enabled universities to conduct remote lectures and facilitate communication between professors and students, making e-learning a viable solution during the pandemic.

Statement of Problem

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most universities and educational institutions around the world had to shift to online learning pedagogies. Thus, the Faculty of Arts/Alasmarya University has been required to transition to online learning to meet students' needs and ensure the continuity of curriculum and learning (educational) processes, but the sudden transition itself would be a problem (problematic).

The sudden shift to virtual learning could pose challenges and difficulties for universities due to several factors. These include poor internet connectivity, lack of technological proficiency among both teachers and students, and limited access to necessary technology resources.

Aims of the Study

This research aims to shed light on the importance of establishing a modern technology system in the Faculty of Arts/Alasmarya University and make it a pioneer in the field of remote study.

As it is possible to prepare lessons and homework and control the dates of delivery of duties during a specified period and also the teacher can evaluate the students and communicate with them in case of any obstacles, i.e., it is considered the class of the teacher. The teacher could make a recorded lessons and upload them in case of travel, sickness...etc.

Significance of the Study

The development of electronic learning is related to the improvement of information communication technology (Radiskhlebova, Vavrenyuk, Rusakova, & Makarov, 2019). The significance of this research lies in establishing a future foundation that integrates technology with traditional teaching and learning processes. Some existing technologies serve as complementary additions to traditional education,

while others have the potential to entirely substitute them. The aim of this study is to make technology a fundamental and user-friendly tool in education. This is particularly important during periods of serious difficulties, which necessitate the development of alternative solutions to facilitate students' learning and enable continuous communication through these alternative tools.

The study objectives

According to (Hofmann, 2002), online learning has gained increased importance due to the availability and accessibility of Internet technologies. Thus, this study aims to:

1- Investigate the adaptability of Faculty of Arts/Alasmarya University toward integrating the traditional classroom learning with online learning and teaching through COVID19 pandemic and later.

2- Understand students' perceptions and concerns who are accustomed to traditional face-to-face learning, towards the sudden transition to online learning due to the pandemic as well as the impact of this transition on their learning.

Hypothesis

The researcher hypothesized that:

1-The Faculty of Arts/Alasmarya doesn't equip to transition to online learning and teaching.

2- Students at the Faculty of Arts at Alasmarya University lack technological knowledge and have not received sufficient training to effectively navigate technology requirements.

Research questions

The researcher has addressed the following research questions:

1-   Is the Faculty of Arts/Alasmarya University equipped to transition to online learning?

2-   What are the challenges that students and teaching staff members at English Dept faced while the transition to online learning process?

3-   What are the recommendations that can help students, teaching staff members, and faculty to facilitate the teaching process via the internet?

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative approach to understanding how students deal with the situation. Hence, it focuses on the expectations or opinions of students in the transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, a questionnaire is chosen as a method to collect the required data for this study.

Settings and Participants

This study is carried out at the Faculty of Arts/Alasmarya University. About 25 Participants are chosen randomly to participate in this investigation. The participants are from different departments and different ages.

Literature review

The COVID-19 pandemic has many elements that make it exceptionally stressful for students. Safety concerns prevail due to the potential risk to health and well-being for individual students but also for their family members, friends, and colleagues. Many students have also had to deal with the sense of isolation and loneliness that accompanies adherence to guidelines to engage in physical isolation or social distancing. Stress and anxiety are also elicited by circumstances that have resulted in complete disruptions of daily routines.

Students at Faculty of Arts/Alasmarya University, as their peers around the world have some challenges that are specific to them. They must try to maintain their concentration on learning despite it being difficult through this critical situation.

One of the significant challenges for students is that because they must now engage in online distance learning, the daily routines of student life have now been entirely changed.

Currently, there is a growing body of research focused on the transition to online and digital learning platforms prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some studies emphasize the impact on schools (Reich, et al., 2020), while others explore the utilization of online learning as a complement to traditional modes of education (Barboni, 2019). Therefore, number of educators in developing countries are faced with the necessity to transition to online teaching with minimal or no training. Furthermore, classroom sizes in developing countries are generally larger than in developed countries, and online learning environment make classroom monitoring and communication with all learners challenging.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the crucial role of technology in education. Virtual learning environments, such as distance learning, e-learning, and online learning, have become increasingly important due to the availability and accessibility of internet technologies, as noted by Hofmann (2002). These learning environments offer learners the opportunity to participate in courses and programs from remote locations, using internet technology as an instructional delivery system.

Distance learning, in particular, has been a popular form of virtual learning, with many universities and educational institutions offering degree programs and individual courses through distance learning platforms (Keegan, 2013; King, Young, Drivere-Richmond, & Schrader, 2001; Mugridge, 1992). E-learning, which refers to the use of electronic technologies to facilitate learning, has also gained traction in recent years (Nichols, 2003; Tavangarian et al., 2004; Triacca et al., 2004). Furthermore, online learning, which refers to the use of the Internet to facilitate learning, has become increasingly popular (Carliner, 2004; Lowenthal et al., 2009; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005).

Virtual learning environments have transformed traditional beliefs about learning and teaching, as reported by Zapalska & Brozik (2006). These environments offer greater flexibility and convenience as learning can occur at any time and from anywhere, making education and knowledge more accessible to a wider range of individuals. Nevertheless, the shift towards virtual learning also poses challenges, such as technical difficulties, adapting pedagogy, and ensuring adequate student support. To guarantee the effectiveness of virtual learning, it is critical for educators and educational institutions to overcome these challenges by addressing and resolving them.

The educational transition from traditional method (face-to-face) to online learning environments has five aspects as indicated by (Kamble et al. 2021) which are accessibility and convenience, internet connectivity, OLE effectiveness, course content, and interactions between students and teachers. These aspects are considered the dimensions of online education, and any failure in one of these aspects will give a negative impression to the learners

Not all online education has advantages only, but there are also negatives that affect the quality of learning as well as the students themselves. Among these effects that contribute to reducing the quality of education via the Internet is the connection to the Internet, where (Ramírez et al. 2021) indicated that one of the obstacles that hindered the educational process via the Internet is the quality of Internet connection (wifi), which negatively affects the quality of education, as well as the same The study found that online education negatively affects the students themselves, due to the lack of interaction between students and professors, as well as staying at home for a long time, which has a negative impact on the general health of students.

It was also pointed out by (Blizak et al. 2020) in his study on the sudden transition to online education that university students have a negative perception of online learning and are hesitant about this new digital education and prefer the traditional method of teaching over online teaching during the Coronavirus pandemic.

In Libya the situation is particularly difficult due to the insufficient technological and communication substructure. The prevalence of the Internet in Libya has grown over the years, but Internet speed and connectivity remain unreliable at all places with variations occurring depending on the area and region.

Methodology

The method used for gathering and analyzing data is determined by the type of data that needs to be addressed. In this study, the researcher aims to use a questionnaire as a method of data collection from both the students and teachers of the Faculty of Arts at Alasmarya University. The questionnaire will be utilized to achieve the objectives of the study.

-Participants

The participants of the study are 40 students and 20 teachers from different departments of the faculty of arts /Alasmarya University.

- Sitting

The participants in this study will consist of students who are currently enrolled in the Faculty of Arts at Alasmarya University, as well as teachers who are currently instructing at the college. The Faculty of Arts/Alasmarya University is situated in Zliten, a city located in northern Libya. It's important to note that both the teachers and students come from diverse departments within the faculty.

-Instrument

The data collection tool used in this study is questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed according to the purpose of the study.

-The questionnaire

The questions consist of Likert scale with the following criteria:
1-Explain   2-Yes/No
3-Choose Questions   4- Write/add any notes

-**Procedure**

The questionnaire was distributed to a total of 20 teachers and 40 students, all of whom were from the Faculty of Arts at Alasmarya University.

The participants are asked about the adaptability to a sudden transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic at faculty of Arts /Alasmarya University.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves calculation of frequencies of the participants' responses. frequency of the answers in all questionnaires will provide answers to the main research questions of the study.

Data for this study were collected by using a questionnaire for Faculty of Arts/Alasmarya University teachers and students. They are all teachers and students of different departments in the Faculty of Arts/Alasmarya University. The survey consisted of 16 questions for the teachers and 10 questions for the students that measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The aim was to conduct the survey with 20 teachers and 40 students of the Faculty of Arts/Alasmarya University in Zliten. Participants were given unlimited time to fill in the survey anonymously.

Research design

This research makes use of quantitative research strategy in the sense that there will be numeric data and quantitative data was produced. A quantitative research strategy is particularly applicable for the purpose of this research. The type of the questionnaire used in collecting data was experimental questions.

Teacher's Questionnaire.

The questionnaire was distributed to 20 different teachers in the beginning of September in the academic year 2021. The purpose of the survey was to collect as much information as possible about the difficulties that teachers are facing during a sudden transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic at faculty of Arts /Alasmarya University.

Student's Questionnaire.

The questionnaire was distributed to 40 students in early September 2021. The purpose of the survey was to collect as much information as possible about the difficulties students are facing during a sudden transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic at faculty of Arts /Alasmarya University.

Design of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions for teachers and 7 for students. All the questions were prepared depending on the researcher's own experience and also with the help of the supervisor.

Analysis and Evaluation of the questionnaire of the teachers

In question 1, out of the total number of teachers surveyed, twelve (60%) reported having good internet, while eight (40%) indicated otherwise.

Table 1

Question No	Question	Options	No. of teachers	Percentage
1	Do you have good internet?	Yes No	12 8	60% 40%

In question 2, when asked if they have skills to use online platforms, eight teachers (40%) responded affirmatively, while twelve teachers (60%) reported not having the necessary skills.

Table 2

Question No.	Question	Options	No. of teachers	Percentage
2	Do you have skills to use online platforms?	Yes	8	40%
		No	12	60%

In question 3, when asked about the apps they use, the teachers' responses were as follows: four teachers (20%) mentioned using Viber, four teachers (20%) mentioned using Zoom, nine teachers (45%) mentioned using Facebook, and three teachers (15%) mentioned using other apps.

Table 3

Question No.	Question	Options	No. of teachers	Percentage
3	What are the apps that you are use?	Viber	4	20%
		Zoom	4	20%
		Facebook	9	45%
		Others	3	15%

In question 4, when asked about the main obstacles they face in online studying, eight teachers (40%) identified Internet availability as a challenge. Another eight teachers (40%) mentioned a lack of proficiency in using technology. Additionally, four teachers (20%) reported other obstacles.

Table 4

Question No.	Question	Options	No. of teachers	Percentage
4	What are the main obstacles you face in online studying?	Internet Availability	8	40%
		Time Availability	0	0%
		Lack of using technology	8	40%
		Others	4	20%

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In question 5, when asked if they would attend all the lectures online if the college started using online studying, twelve teachers (60% of the respondents) answered "Yes," while eight teachers (40% of the participants) responded with "No."

Table 5

Question No.	Question	Options	No. of teachers	Percentage
5	If the college started to use online studying, would you attend all the lectures online?	Yes No	12 8	60% 40%

In question 6, when asked if they have taken any training courses on how to teach online, twelve teachers (60%) responded affirmatively, while eight teachers (40%) indicated that they have not taken any such courses.

Table 6

Question No.	Question	Options	No. of teachers	Percentage
6	Have you taken any training courses on how to teach online?	Yes No	12 8	60% 40%

In question 7, when asked about the effectiveness of online teaching, twelve teachers (60%) described it as slightly effective, six teachers (30%) considered it to be a little bit effective, and four teachers (10%) deemed it not effective.

Table 7

Question No.	Question	Options	No. of teachers	Percentage
7	How effective is online teaching?	Very effective Slightly effective A little bit Not effective	0 12 6 2	0% %60 30% 10%

In question 8, when asked about how their classes would be delivered, fourteen teachers (70%) opted for recorded sessions, while six teachers (30%) preferred live sessions.

Table 8

Question No.	Question	Options	No. of teachers	Percentage
8	How would your classes be delivered?	Recorded sessions	14	70%
		Live sessions	6	30%

In question 9, all twenty teachers (100%) responded "No" when asked if they think online teaching is more effective than traditional teaching. They provided reasons for their response, which can be explained further.

Table 9

Question No	Question	Options	No of teachers	Percentage
9	Do you think that online teaching is more effective than traditional teaching?	Yes No	0 20	0% 100%

In question 10, when asked if they have any reasons that encourage them to take online lectures, four teachers (20%) mentioned reasons such as facilities, electricity, training courses, and internet availability. On the other hand, sixteen teachers (80%) stated that they had no specific reasons to encourage them to take online lectures.

Table 10

Question No	Question	Options	No. of question	Percentage
10	Do have any reasons that encourage you in taking online lectures?	Facilities, Electricity, Training courses and internet availability	2	20%
		No reasons	8	80%

Analysis and Evaluation of the questionnaire of the students

In question 1, students were asked about the year they are currently in. The responses were as follows: twenty students (50%) reported being in the fourth year, fourteen students (35%) reported being in the second year, two students (5%) reported being in the first year, and four students (10%) reported being in the third year.

Table 1

Question No.	Question	Options	No. of Students	Percentage
1	The year?	Fourth Third Second First	20 4 14 2	50% 10% 35% 5%

In question 2 students were asked if they have good internet, Forty students (100%) said yes.

Table 2

Question No.	Question	Options	No. of Students	Percentage
2	Do you have good internet?	Yes No	40 0	100% 0%

In question 3, when asked if they have skills to use online platforms, twenty-four students (60%) responded positively, indicating that they have the necessary skills. On the other hand, sixteen students (40%) responded negatively, stating that they do not have the required skills.

Table 3

Question No.	Question	Options	No. of Students	Percentage
3	Do you have skills to use online platforms?	Yes No	24 16	60% 40%

In question 4 students were questioned about the apps that they use and their answering was as following: twenty-four students 60% said WhatsApp and twelve students 30% said Facebook, four student 10% said Others.

Table 4

Question No.	Question	Options	No. of students	Percentage
4	What are the apps that you are use?	WhatsApp Facebook Others	24 12 4	60% 30% 10%

In question 5 students were asked about the main obstacles that they face in online studying:

Thirty - two students 80% said Time Availability. four students 10% said that Lack of using technology. four students 10% said Lack of using technology.

Table 5

Question No	Question	Options	No. of students	Percentage
5	What are the main obstacles you face in online studying?	Time Availability	32	80%
		Internet Availability	4	10%
		Lack of using technology	4	10%

In question 6 students were asked if the college started to use online studying, would you attend all the lectures online and were answered as following:
Thirty-six students 90 % said yes, four of them 10% said no.
Table 6

Question No	Question	Options	No. of students	Percentage
6	If the college started to use online studying, would you attend all the lectures online?	Yes	36	90%
		No	4	10%

In question 7 students were asked if they have any additional notes about the transition in taking online lectures and they answered:
forty students 100% said don't have any additional notes.
Table 7

Question No.	Question	Options	No. of students	Percentage
7	Do you have any additional notes about the transition in taking online lectures?	Yes	0	0%
		No	40	100%

Interpretation of data obtained from the teacher's questionnaire can be summarized in following points:
1. Internet Connectivity: 60% of teachers reported having good internet, while the remaining teachers faced connectivity issues. This hinders the delivery of clear and uninterrupted online lectures, emphasizing the need for reliable internet connections for all teachers.
2. Skills in Using Online Platforms: Only 40% of teachers indicated having skills to use online platforms, highlighting the importance of providing training courses to equip all teachers with the necessary expertise for effective online teaching.
3. App Usage: Among the apps mentioned, Facebook was the most commonly used by 45% of teachers. However, it may not be the most suitable choice for online teaching. Platforms like Google Classroom, Moodle, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom are designed specifically for educational purposes and should be considered for a better online learning experience.
4. Obstacles Faced: The majority of teachers (80%) encountered obstacles such as internet availability and lack of technology proficiency. Ensuring stable internet connections and providing training on technology usage should be prioritized to overcome these challenges.
5. Attitude towards Online Learning: 60% of teachers expressed their willingness to attend all lectures online if the college adopted online platforms, indicating a positive attitude towards the transition.
6. Training Courses: 60% of teachers had already taken training courses on how to teach online, which suggests a proactive approach in acquiring the necessary skills for online instruction.
7. Perception of Effectiveness: 60% of teachers considered online teaching to be slightly effective. However, with time, proper planning, training, and the availability of

necessary facilities, this percentage is expected to increase, making the transition more effective.

8. Preference for Recorded Lectures: The majority of teachers (70%) preferred delivering recorded lectures instead of live sessions due to logistical and technical issues, such as electricity cuts and unstable internet connections.

9. Perception of Traditional Teaching: All teachers (100%) believed that traditional teaching is more effective than online teaching, highlighting a preference for face-to-face instruction.

10. Encouragement for Transition: 80% of teachers expressed their willingness to transition to online teaching given certain conditions such as access to facilities, training courses, stable internet connection, and electricity. Others may require further support and resources to be convinced of the benefits of online teaching.

Interpretation of data obtained from the student's questionnaire can be summarized in following points:

1 .Academic Year Distribution: Half of the students (50%) who participated in the questionnaire were in their fourth year, indicating a significant representation from this academic level.

2 .Internet Connectivity: All students (100%) reported having a good internet connection, which implies that the majority have access to the necessary online resources for effective learning.

3 .Skills in Using Online Platforms: 60% of students reported having skills to use online platforms, suggesting that additional training courses should be provided to equip all students with the necessary competence for online learning.

4 .App Usage: Among the apps mentioned, WhatsApp was the most commonly used by students (60%). However, other apps specifically designed for educational purposes, such as Google Classroom, Moodle, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom, should be considered for a more comprehensive and effective online learning experience.

5 .Obstacles Faced: The majority of students (80%) identified obstacles related to time availability and a lack of technology proficiency. Scheduling online lectures to accommodate students' availability and providing support for technology usage can help mitigate these challenges.

6 .Willingness to Attend Online Lectures: A significant proportion of students (90%) expressed their willingness to attend all online lectures if the college started using online platforms, indicating a positive attitude towards the transition.

7 .Satisfaction with Online Teaching: All students (100%) stated that they do not have any additional notes, suggesting that they would be satisfied if the college transitioned to online teaching.

Conclusion

The research concluded that the adaptive ability of both students and professors to switch to online education has aspects that we have previously mentioned in previous studies, including Internet connectivity, distance learning effectiveness, communication between students and professors, and the content of academic subjects. It was also concluded that there is a negative aspect, which is the inability of the university to provide the requirements for online education at the time of the Covid 19 pandemic, among these requirements is the provision of the required equipment, the provision of

courses for teachers, and the enactment of regulations and rules to organize this type of education.

Online education has been used for a long time. The COVID 19 pandemic has made it traditional. We conducted a survey to hear from students and teachers of the Faculty of Arts / Alasmarya University about various aspects of online education during the COVID19 pandemic. Students see online education as a viable alternative. However, we believe there are barriers to the sudden transition. However, these obstacles can be overcome with the help of the Faculty of Arts/Alasmarya university management by making instructional plan and give courses on how to use online platforms and new technologies in the case of such pandemic, both students and teachers should be introduced by the online technologies and distance platforms such as Google Classroom, Moodle, Microsoft Team and other school platforms and explore their effects.

So, this may be a solution, but on the other side consider that teachers and students are not equally challenged, so development is still needed when using learning platforms and other newly introduced online learning platforms. Must be put in.

Mention the problems of electricity outages for long hours and the lack of permanent internet access, so most of the teachers had to choose recorded sessions solutions, that is, to record lectures and remain uploaded on the platforms until these services are available.

It was also crucial for the Faculty of Arts/Alasmarya University to emphasize the establishment of online and distance learning platforms in a suitable manner for both students and teachers. This approach aimed to prepare learners and educators for such transitions, providing them with the necessary skills to enhance the learning experience and ensure the continuity of education.

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