"Teachers and Students Attitudes towards Using Distance Learning among Al-Qalam University as Sample"

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Abstract- Distance learning is a method of teaching which the instructor and the students are not in the same place and they are studying far from each other such as online learning and other University Platforms. The aim of this study is to investigate students' and teachers' attitudes towards distance learning in Al-Qalam University. The research tool was a survey which was conducted among teachers and students of Al-Qalam University in different fields by preparing two questionnaires, one for students and the other for teachers, which asked several different questions about distance learning. The data was analyzed by using SPSS version 21. The study found that students and teachers were somewhat satisfied with the university's support performance in terms of providing distance learning resources, providing an appropriate platform, and asking questions and sharing information among teachers and students. However, the participants disagreed with other issues such as distance learning takes longer study time compared to on-campus study, lack of high-speed internet access and declining students' academic performance. In conclusion, the findings show that although distance learning is useful but there are still some issues especially for the pure science departments.

Key words: Learning, Distance Learning, Students' attitudes, Teachers' Attitudes,

1. Introduction

Distance learning has other names such as distance education, online learning, e-learning, is an education which encompasses the essential elements of physical separation of the instructor and the learners during the process of education and it also includes different types of technological gadgets that ease the communication between the learner-the instructor and the learner –learner (Gunawardena et al., 2003). Within distance learning, all forms of learning and teaching are found which include the teachers and the learners in different places most of the time. This educational system is always activated and encouraged by policymakers, faculty members, or administrators especially at hard times.

Distance learning is defined as a teaching method in which the instructor and the learner are distant physically. And this form of education encompasses various uses of technological instruments such as audios, videos, computers and the Internet (Roffe, 2004)

In this form of educational study, the role of the instructor is a facilitator of process of education and paves the way to his/ her learners. The instructor ought to have a firm commitment to the process of training. The role of the learner is to be encouraged to be autonomous. (Akkoyunlu and Soylu, 2008).

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Researchers from a wide range of disciplines have used the phrases "distance education" and "distance learning" interchangeably to refer to a wide range of initiatives, providers, participants, and media. Its distinguishing characteristics include the separation of teacher and student in time and/or space (Simonson et al., 1999), the student's voluntary control of their learning rather than a distant instructor (Jonassen, 1992). And noncontiguous communication between the student and teacher, mediated by print or some other form of technology(Keegan, 2013).

Online education, which uses computers and the Internet as the delivery method and delivers at least 80% of the course content online, is the modern equivalent of distance learning (Allen and Seaman, 2011).

Elliott Maisie first used the term "e-Learning" in 1998 (Sari, 2020). To make education more communicative, online learning uses a variety of technologies, including the World Wide Web, emailing, chatting, the new groups, and texting. Online learning has reportedly received significant consideration in higher education, according to (Kim and Bonk, 2006). Institutions are working to make online learning influential and engaging for students. (Orlando and Attard, 2016) noted that using technology to teach students is not a one-size-fits-all strategy because it depends on the technology being utilized and the subject matter of the curriculum being taught

2. Literature review

Online learning is no longer considered as a trend but a mainstream. 6.7 million of the 20.6 million students enrolled in higher education in the autumn of 2012 were taking an online course, according to the 69 percent of top academic executives who said online learning was essential to their long-term strategy (Allen and Seaman, 2013). The methods by which we impart knowledge and receive it in both traditional and online classrooms will advance as educational technology advances.

Furthermore, according to (Anderson, 2008), the phrase "online learning" denotes a situation in which the students and the instructors are separated by a great distance and where the students access the course materials via technology, which is almost often done via the internet. Online learning is a process that students engage in over the internet, to put it simply. (cited in IGI Global).(Singh and Thurman, 2019), who define online learning as "learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments using various technological tools such as mobile phones, laptops, computers, and so forth with internet access," further argue that it is a method that makes the learning process more student-centered, innovative, and flexible. In these settings, learners can communicate with their own tutors or instructors, other learners, and both from anywhere.

Technologies for distance learning are evolving quite quickly. Too frequently, curriculum developers and instructional designers have become enamored with the newest technologies without addressing the fundamental concerns of learner characteristics and needs, the impact of media on the instructional process, equity of access to interactive delivery systems, and the new roles of teacher, site facilitator, and student in the distance learning process (Sherry, 1995).

One of the characteristics of distance learning is the flexibility of schedules, which helps the learners to organize their study times and this is considered as a degree of self-discipline. Sometimes, certain

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courses which require online participation at specific ours or spaces, limit the flexibility of schedules.(Aladwan et al., 2018)

The employment of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is considered as another characteristic of distance learning in which through these online gadgets, learners have the chance to interact with one another and improving the process of education through social networks, discussion forums and virtual platforms, to tackle on different issues and attaining knowledge(Aladwan et al., 2018).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

In this study, online questionnaires were used to gather data on teachers' and learners' attitudes about distance learning at Al-Qalam University. A draft of the questionnaire was given to experts for feedback on how to make the style and nature of the issues being studied better as part of the testing process. The questionnaires' final version was created in two semesters for the academic year 2020–2021 at the university under consideration, Al-Qalam, following the completion of the necessary adjustments. A link to the survey form was sent through various official social media groups, including Messenger, Viber, and WhatsApp, or the poll was administered exclusively by email. 445 participants participated in the student surveys, while 121 participants were chosen to participate in the teacher questionnaires, which made up the study sample. Using an Excel sheet and a Google sheet, the replies from the online Google Forms were compiled and arranged. Based on the organization, qualification, and field of study, the surveys' responses were compiled.

3.2. Data analysis

The SPSS application was used to conduct the statistical analysis (Version 21). A Chi-square test was used to compare the row data, and the P % values from the row data were shown as tables. The University, respondent qualifications, and the type of subject in which the study samples are specialized were the variables taken into account for categorizing study data.

4. Result and discussion

4.1. Students' attitudes

According to the results of this study conducted on students' attitudes towards distance learning, the highest participation rate was 74.2% in administrative departments, while only 24.8% participated in scientific departments. The results show that distance learning is more suitable for vocational departments that do not have practical lessons. These students also used smartphones frequently for their studies 62.2% (see Table 1).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristic of the study sample (n=445)

	Variables		No.	%
Q1	Field of Study	Science	115	25.8
		Administration	330	74.2
Q2	Gender	Male	280	62.9
		Female	165	37.1
Q3	What device do you use for distance learning?	Laptop	128	28.8
		Desktop	16	3.6
		Tablet	24	5.4
		Smartphone	277	62.2

Regarding table 2, exactly 61.1% of the students answered "no" to whether they had high-speed internet during distance learning. This means that students did not have good internet access while studying off campus. Also there is a difference significant (p=0.000) between Science and administration departments regarding faster internet, 85.5% students in administration answered with "yes" meanwhile only 14.5% of the answers were "No" (see table 2). However, about 64.3% of students spent 1-3 hours of their time daily with practicality in distance learning. In one of the questions asked how they feel about distance learning in general, a large proportion of the 132 students chose the average answer, which is 29.9%, while only 18% gave excellent answers (see table 2).

Table 2. the study sample (n=445)

	Variables		No.	%
Q1	Do you have high -speed internet?	Yes	173	38.9
		No	272	61.1
Q3	How much time do you practically spend each day on an average on distance Learning?	1-3 hours	286	64.3
		3-5 hours	107	24.0
		5-7 hours	30	6.7
		7 and more	22	4.9
Q4	How do you feel overall about Distance Learning?	Very Poor	90	20.2
		Below Average	35	7.9
		Average	132	29.7
		Above Average	105	23.6
		Excellent	83	18.7
Q5	How helpful your University has been in offering you the resources to teach from home?	Not at all helpful	41	9.2
		Slightly helpful	35	7.9
		Somewhat helpful	170	38.2
		Very helpful	140	31.5
		Extremely helpful	59	13.3
Q6	How stressful is distance learning for you during the COVID-19 pandemic?	no stress	126	28.3
		low stress	122	27.4
		moderate stress	123	27.6
		high stress	74	16.6
Q7	The learning platform provided active incretion.	strongly disagree	38	8.5
		Disagree	51	11.5
		Neutral	129	29.0
		Agree	158	35.5
		strongly agree	69	15.5
Q8	All content on the module outline was well covered.	strongly disagree	27	6.1
		Disagree	49	11.0
		Neutral	151	33.9
		Agree	177	39.8
		strongly agree	41	9.2
Q9	I could ask questions to my lecturer where I did not understand	strongly disagree	10	2.2
		Disagree	29	6.5
		Neutral	55	12.4
		Agree	249	56.0
		strongly agree	102	22.9
Q13	Did you receive full answers to my questions during the lecture?	strongly disagree	14	3.1
		Disagree	36	8.1
		Neutral	82	18.4
		Agree	219	49.2
		strongly agree	94	21.1
Q14	I could complete all the assigned classwork in the expected time	strongly disagree	33	7.4
		Disagree	77	17.3
		Neutral	85	19.1
		Agree	197	44.3
		strongly agree	53	11.9
Q16	Distance education provides an opportunity to share information with	strongly disagree	44	9.9
		Disagree	50	11.2
		Neutral	96	21.6
		Agree	176	39.6

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	colleagues?	strongly agree	79	17.8
Q17	I need face to face interactions to clarify some module content and help me revise and prepare for examination.	strongly disagree	24	5.4
		Disagree	44	9.9
		Neutral	102	22.9
		Agree	153	34.4
		strongly agree	122	27.4

Moreover, the university (Al-Qalam) has helped to have home teaching offers and resources that were "Somewhat helpful", the highest number of students responded (38.2%) and the lowest was 7.9%, which was "slightly helpful". This means that the university has not adequately assisted students in identifying and providing resources for teaching and learning purposes. Also, the majority of students answered "No stress" 28.3% to the question "Was COVID-19 stressful during distance learning" while, only 16.6% of the participants believe that COVID-19 was "high stress" during distance learning (See table 2).

Regarding the learning platform of the university was active and available for students, 35.5% of the participants responded "agree", however 8.5% answered with "strongly disagree". According to the results of this study, concerning whether the content modules outline was well covered? (39.8%) of the learners indicated that they chose "agree", meanwhile a small number of students (6.1%) chose "Strongly disagreed". There is a difference significant (p=0.000), in Science department all content on modules outline have been covered better than administration departments (see table 3). Several studies have shown that universities administered a platform for distance learning that covered contents and modules (Bauer et al., 2021)

Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between student's science and administration departments which was (P= 0.003) regarding received full answer for your questions during lectures, 50% of the learners in both departments chose "strongly disagree". On other hand, mostly students can ask their lecturer during distance learning when they did not understand of their lectures. The data showed that 56% of the answers were "agree" and only 2.2% were "strongly disagree". However, the majority of the students have received full answers to their questions from the lecturers during lecture, 49% of the participants responded with "agree" and 3.1% responded with "strongly disagree". The result of the study reported there is a significant difference (P< 0.05) to both science and administration departments regarding the students can ask question to lecturers when they do not understand of the lectures, the students in the science departments asked more than the students of administration departments (see table 3).

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Table 3. Association between field of study and demographic characteristics among study sample (n=445)

Variables		Field of study		Chi-square (p-value)
		Science	Administration	
Gender				
Male	%	24.3	75.7	0.955
Female	%	28.5	71.5	(0.370)
What device do you use for distance learning?				
Laptop	%	17.2	82.8	
Desktop	%	25.0	75.0	9.181**
Tablet	%	41.7	58.3	(0.027)
Smartphone	%	28.5	71.5	
Do you have high -speed internet?				
Yes	%	14.5	85.5	19.166***
No	%	33.1	66.9	(0.000)
How much time do you practically spend each day on an average on distance Learning?				
1-3 hours	%	23.4	76.6	
3-5 hours	%	29.9	70.1	5.605**
5-7 hours	%	40.0	60.0	(0.133)
7 and more	%	18.2	81.8	
How do you feel overall about Distance Learning?				
Very Poor	%	37.8	62.2	
Below Average	%	48.6	51.4	
Average	%	25.0	75.0	24.808***
Above Average	%	17.1	82.9	(0.000)
Excellent	%	15.7	84.3	
How helpful your University has been in offering you the resources to teach from home?				
Not at all helpful	%	51.2	48.8	
Slightly helpful	%	48.6	51.4	
Somewhat helpful	%	26.5	73.5	33.421***
Very helpful	%	17.1	82.9	(0.000)
Extremely helpful	%	13.6	86.4	
How stressful is distance learning for you during the COVID-19 pandemic?				
no stress	%	18.3	81.7	
low stress	%	25.4	74.6	10.678**
moderate stress	%	26.0	74.0	(0.014)
high stress	%	39.2	60.8	

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The learning platform provided active incretion.				
strongly disagree	%	50.0	50.0	23.604*** (0.000)
Disagree	%	41.2	58.8	
Neutral	%	24.0	76.0	
Agree	%	20.9	79.1	
strongly agree	%	15.9	84.1	
All content on the module outline was well covered.				
strongly disagree	%	66.7	33.3	34.596*** (0.000)
Disagree	%	36.7	63.3	
Neutral	%	26.5	73.5	
Agree	%	19.2	80.8	
strongly agree	%	12.2	87.8	
I could ask questions to my lecturer where I did not understand				
strongly disagree	%	60.0	40.0	16.594*** (0.002)
Disagree	%	48.3	51.7	
Neutral	%	25.5	74.5	
Agree	%	24.9	75.1	
strongly agree	%	18.6	81.4	
Did you receive full answers to my questions during the lecture?				
strongly disagree	%	50.0	50.0	15.675*** (0.003)
Disagree	%	44.4	55.6	
Neutral	%	30.5	69.5	
Agree	%	22.8	77.2	
strongly agree	%	18.1	81.9	
I could complete all the assigned classwork in the expected time				
strongly disagree	%	57.6	42.4	43.149*** (0.000)
Disagree	%	41.6	58.4	
Neutral	%	30.6	69.4	
Agree	%	14.7	85.3	
strongly agree	%	17.0	83.0	
Feedback from the lectures was given.				
strongly disagree	%	61.5	38.5	26.461*** (0.000)
Disagree	%	38.9	61.1	
Neutral	%	38.0	62.0	
Agree	%	25.1	74.9	
strongly agree	%	12.9	87.1	
Distance education provides an opportunity to share information with colleagues?				
strongly disagree	%	45.5	54.5	13.350***

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Disagree	%	30.0	70.0	(0.010)
Neutral	%	22.9	77.1	
Agree	%	25.6	74.4	
strongly agree	%	16.5	83.5	
I need face to face interactions to clarify some module content and help me revise and prepare for examination.				
strongly disagree	%	29.2	70.8	
Disagree	%	20.5	79.5	
Neutral	%	20.6	79.4	6.332*** (0.176)
Agree	%	24.2	75.8	
strongly agree	%	33.6	66.4	

In general, the students have completed assignments at lecture time which they answered 44.3% with "agree" and only 7.4% responded with "strongly disagree". Likewise, the results show that there is a significant difference (P < 0.05) between two departments regarding students in science department completed their assignments on time, however the students in administration department completed less than them (see table 3).

Besides, the students believed that "Distance education provides an opportunity to share information with colleagues" which showed that 39.6% chose "agree" and % 21.6 chose "neutral". There was a significant difference (P< 0.05) between administration and pure science departments regarding distance education given opportunity to share instruction among colleagues (see table 3). The priority was given to administration departments as the students shared their information while science departments shared less than the others. Several studies used distance learning to distribute instruction among students and students to teachers (Vlasenko and Bozhok, 2014). Hence, the study illustrated that the large number of students need face to face interaction to clarify module contents and help them revise to prepare for examinations.

4.2. Teachers' attitudes

This study indicates that most of the teachers who participated in this research to be exact 83.5% were in the field of administration while only 16.5% were teachers in the science departments. Around 50.4% of the teachers were females whilst 49.6% were males. However, the largest number of teachers participating in this study had a bachelor's degree, in practical subjects, followed by a master's degree and a PhD degree (76.9%, 12.4% and 10.7%) respectively. The data showed that there was no relationship between field of teaching, gender and level of education. It means there is no significant difference among them. (See table 4)

Table 4. Socio-demographic characteristic of the study sample (n=121)

	Variables		No.	%
Q1	Filed of teaching	Science	20	16.5
		Administration	101	83.5
Q2	Gender	Male	61	50.4
		Female	60	49.6
Q3	Level of education	Ph.D.	13	10.7
		Master	15	12.4
		Bachelors	93	76.9

The result of the study showed that teachers have different opinions about attitudes towards distance learning. Regarding the question "are you satisfied with the

technology and software you are using for distance" that were recorded (43% answered with "yes", 36.4% answered with "No" and 20.7% were neutral). However, there is no significant difference.

Additionally, the question asked to teachers was "How much the university had helped in providing resources for home teaching?" The results showed that the university had helped them "somewhat helpful", with 53.7% also 6.6% answered that the university had not helped in providing resources for home teaching" (See table 5) Most of the teachers believe that the COVID-19 had "moderate stress" to themselves 33.1% during distance learning" while 19% believe that COVID-19 was "no stress" during distance learning and there appears no significant difference.

Approximately 76% of teachers in the university reported that teaching students with distance learning were totally different when compared to teaching on campus. A large number of teachers were able to balance their lives while teaching distance learning, with more than 60% answering to "somewhat". And also, more than 50% of teachers enjoy being away from students during distance learning but 15.7% of teachers do not like this type of distance learning. However, only a quarter of the students per class attended lectures during the semester (see Table 5

Table 5. the study sample (n=445)

	Variables		No.	%
Q1	Are you satisfied with the technology and software you are using for distance teaching?	Yes	52	43.0
		No	44	36.4
		Neutral	25	20.7
Q2	How helpful your University has been in offering you the resources to teach from home?	Not at all helpful	8	6.6
		Slightly helpful	15	12.4
		Somewhat helpful	65	53.7
		Very helpful	25	20.7
		Extremely helpful	8	6.6
Q4	How stressful is distance learning for you during the COVID-19 pandemic?	No Stress	23	19.0
		Low Stress	32	26.4
		Moderate Stress	40	33.1
		High Stress	26	21.5
Q5	How stressful is distance learning for student during the COVID-19 pandemic?	No Stress	24	19.8
		Low Stress	33	27.3
		Moderate Stress	38	31.4
		High Stress	26	21.5
Q6	How was your experience teaching students from as compared to teaching at campus?	No difference	5	4.1
		A little difference	17	14.0
		Totally difference (online is better)	9	7.4
		Totally difference (Campos is better)	90	74.4
Q7	How well could you maintain a work-life balance while teaching remotely?	Not at All	12	9.9
		Very Little	19	15.7
		Somewhat	73	60.3
		To a Great Extent	17	14.0
Q8	Are you enjoying your students remotely?	Yes	64	52.9
		No	19	15.7
		Neutral	38	31.4
Q9	How many students (ratio)	All	10	8.3
		More than	41	33.9

	participated per class during semester?	half a quarter	43	35.5
		less than a quarter	27	22.3
Q10	Do you better in class of online examination?	Yes	40	33.1
		No	64	52.9
		Neutral	17	14.0
Q11	The learning platform provided active incretion.	strongly disagree	13	10.7
		Disagree	21	17.4
		Neutral	38	31.4
		Agree	45	37.2
		strongly agree	4	3.3
Q12	All content on the module outline was well covered.	strongly disagree	9	7.4
		Disagree	13	10.7
		Neutral	38	31.4
		Agree	53	43.8
		strongly agree	8	6.6
Q13	I could ask questions to my lecturer where I did not understand	strongly disagree	8	6.6
		Disagree	16	13.2
		Neutral	29	24.0
		Agree	56	46.3
		strongly agree	12	9.9
Q14	Distance learning takes more time than on-campus learning.	strongly disagree	5	4.1
		Disagree	28	23.1
		Neutral	24	19.8
		Agree	45	37.2
		strongly agree	19	15.7
Q15	Distance education leads to lowering the academic level of students	strongly disagree	2	1.7
		Disagree	11	9.1
		Neutral	16	13.2
		Agree	39	32.2
		strongly agree	53	43.8

The finding of the study illustrates the teachers 37.2% agreed the distance learning takes more time than on-campus learning while 4.1% answered with "strongly disagree". One of the most important questions asked to teachers was whether distance education system would lower students' academic performance. Most teachers believed it would and 43.8% responded with "strongly agreed" meanwhile 1.7% responded with "Strongly disagree". This type of education had an impact on students' scientific performance. And there is no significant difference among them. (See Table 5).

4.3. Teachers' and students' attitudes

According to the study both teachers and students attitudes towards distance learning regarding field of study. There is a significant difference ($P < 0.05$) for both teachers and students considering that university was extremely helpful to offer resources to teach at home for administration departments were 86.6% while for scientific departments were13.4% (see Table 6). One of the barriers to learning that cannot be provided for resources for scientific departments is the practical aspects such as surgical practice and is actually necessary for them when compared to administrative departments(Mirkholikovna, 2020).

In addition, the results revealed that there is a significant difference between administration departments and scientific departments for all students and teachers.

The results showed that (P=0.003) regarding providing platform learning, administration department recorded 83.6% "strongly agree" and scientific departments recorded 16.3%.

Table 6. Association between field of study and demographic characteristics among study sample (n=566)

Variables		Field of study		Chi-square (p-value)
		Science	Administration	
How helpful your University has been in offering you the resources to teach from home?				
Not at all helpful	%	44.9%	55.1%	27.436*** (0.000)
Slightly helpful	%	40.0%	60.0%	
Somewhat helpful	%	23.8%	76.2%	
Very helpful	%	17.0%	83.0%	
Extremely helpful	%	13.4%	86.6%	
The learning platform provided active incretion.				
strongly disagree	%	41.2%	58.8%	15.852*** (0.003)
Disagree	%	33.3%	66.7%	
Neutral	%	20.4%	79.6%	
Agree	%	21.7%	78.3%	
strongly agree	%	16.4%	83.6%	
All content on the module outline was well covered.				
strongly disagree	%	55.6%	44.4%	26.811*** (0.000)
Disagree	%	32.3%	67.7%	
Neutral	%	22.8%	77.2%	
Agree	%	19.1%	80.9%	
strongly agree	%	16.3%	83.7%	

5. Conclusion

This study concluded that although to a great extend the students and teachers were satisfied with distance learning but despite that they disagree with the study time from distance learning when it is compared with on-campus learning. The participants also had some issues such as lack of high-speed of the internet. It can be stated that most of the students in administrative departments have only some minor issues while the students of the pure science departments have more issues since they believe that they can be taught better inside the labs and they feel that they understand the subjects more easily when they are taught on-campus.

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