Post Covid19 Challenges Encountered by The Omani GFP Students: Teachers' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT: *Every element of life has been influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both during and after the pandemic, students, in the different levels of the educational system, encountered numerous difficulties. This study aims to identify some of the most pressing difficulties encountered by A'Sharqiyah University's GFP students as they reintegrated into the normal educational mode. In addition, the study tries to understand the effects of these problems and to discover their potential solutions. The findings revealed that returning to a traditional classroom setting presented students with a variety of academic, psychological, and social obstacles. For instance, pupils lost their motivation and their general academic performance declined. Students also developed the habit of reaching for their technological devices when performing even the simplest tasks. Additionally, social interaction among students became increasingly constrained. To accommodate teachers and students and boost students' participation, it is suggested that higher education institutions (HEIs) perform greater capacity-building tasks for learning online.*

KEYWORDS: COVID-19 pandemic, educational system, difficulties, A'Sharqiyah University's GFP, HEIs, learning online.

INTRODUCTION

As the Covid19 pandemic spread quickly over the world, educational institutions were forced to switch from in-person instruction to online instruction. Millions of students around the world have stayed at home when schools and colleges closed due to the pandemic (Affouneh etal 2020). Therefore, since students can attend their lessons from home using a variety of devices such as mobile phones or personal computers, online education became an essential necessity to assure education while maintaining safeguarding of students as well as educators. Using various platforms like Google Meets, MS Teams, Moodle and Zoom, they are utilized to, virtually, connect with their peers and teachers. Distance learning is not a new delivery method. Many HEIs had held back for a

variety of factors, such as a lack of resources and facilities, lecturers' inability to handle the internet-based method of classroom instruction, and learners and their unfamiliarity with online platforms and programs because of staff and student training and experience. For all parties involved—including students, parents, staff members, and institutional leaders—this abrupt change was unexpected and distressing. Distance learning involves additional work, planning, infrastructure, and quality digital materials. The Covid19 pandemic was reportedly fraught with difficulties.

This study attempts to investigate the difficulties GFP students at A'Sharqiyah University, Oman, faced when they returned to traditional classroom learning in the spring of 2021. It, specifically, aims to investigate the difficulties from the teachers' perspectives. This may enable the identification of the areas in need of immediate evaluation and assistance in the event of a pandemic.

Statement of the problem
During the Covid19 pandemic, all educational institutions were closed, and instruction took place via distance learning. Both professors and students faced challenges to cope with the situation created by the pandemic and numerous research documented the drawbacks of online education during the COVID19 pandemic (Affouneh etal 2020). The same difficulties reappeared after students came back to their traditional classroom settings. Teachers of GFP at the University of A'Sharqiyah noted that students had difficulties, which they classified as academic, social, and psychological. This study aims to analyze these difficulties and how they affect students' learning while also offering solutions to the challenges.

Research objectives
The study intends to:
1. investigate the challenges that A'Sharqiyah GFP students encountered once they resumed their regular learning style?
2. understand the GFP teachers' perceptions about the effects of Covid19 challenges.
3. find out about the techniques that GFP teachers adopted to overcome these problems.
4. understand how the institutional policy handled these difficulties.

Research questions
The following are the research questions that the current research seeks to answer:
1. What challenges did A'Sharqiyah GFP students face once classes resumed as usual?
2. How do GFP teachers at A'Sharqiyah University perceive the effects of these challenges?
3. What techniques can GFP instructors use to address these challenges?
4. How were these social, psychological, and academic issues addressed by the institutional policy?

Hypothesis

1. Students encountered difficulties once they resumed their physical classroom learning, including low academic achievement, poor social interaction, and a dependency on online resources.
2. The effects of these difficulties are viewed as terrible by GFP teachers.
3. GFP instructors should keep using both the normal and online modes to, progressively, get beyond the difficulties.
4. To prevent any upcoming academic, social, or psychological issues, the institutional policy should be evaluated, and training sessions should be held on a regular basis.

Limitations of the study

This study's participants are GFP instructors at A'Sharqiyah University, Oman. As a result, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the entire GFP population in the country. However, GFP teachers can use the study's findings to, further, adjust and enhance their teaching methods to fit the current circumstances brought on by the COVID19 pandemic. Additionally, taking the instructors views only might not reveal strong conclusions; but involving students and other stakeholders may contribute to reliable findings.

Significance of the study

It is well established that the effectiveness of the teaching and learning methodologies affects student performance, satisfaction, and course outcomes. The Covid-19 circumstance has significantly changed the styles of instruction, requiring the instructor to adapt their approaches. This study has focused emphasis on online education and offered solutions to the educational losses brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Even while several (qualitative and quantitative) research have been carried out in the past, very few have investigated the difficulties that students encountered once they resumed their normal mode of study. This study is significant since it identifies the difficulties that GFP students at A'Sharqiyah University had with their academic, social, and psychological development. Although the study has several limitations, it is hoped that students, teachers, and other stakeholders who place a high value on e-learning will find it to be extremely helpful.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews pertinent literature on e-learning and the Covid 19 challenges.

Views on e-learning

These days, technology aids students who are learning the English language online. Due to the convenience of learning, some learners now favor the virtual experience to the traditional one (Sari & Wahyudin, 2019). E-learning, as defined by Li, Lau, and Dharmendran (2009), is simply training or instruction delivered online. Learning

management systems (LMS) such as Blackboard and Moodle are instances of how any accepted technological innovation can be used to enhance the education of learners (Ellis etal 2009). Additionally, it can incorporate mobile programs as well as video conferencing technologies like Skype and Zoom. To provide education, these technologies incorporate both synchronous and asynchronous ways of communication (Layali & Al Shlowiy, 2020). Although they also exist in in-person learning contexts, the terms "synchronous" and "asynchronous" learning have become widely used to describe online learning. Synchronous is when teachers and students come together at the same time and location (physical or virtual). They are said to be engaged in "real-time" interaction. Asynchronous learning is when students communicate with each other and access resources at their own pace over a longer period.

Due to the widespread adoption of technology, the deployment of e-learning in Oman is a unique and forward-thinking strategy. However, many places lack a basic technology requirement like an internet connection. According to Almaiah (2020), some students—even teachers—face a lack of resources and understanding regarding the use of instructional applications or methodologies. English language teachers should therefore receive ongoing professional training in using online pedagogies to ensure the smooth operation of online education (Hulon 2020). Likewise, Yarrow (2020) stated that studying online could help to lessen the influence of the pandemic on education. While online English learning is a barrier for EFL learners in general and Omani students, in particular, it is critical to understand the key concerns that can be a barrier. Prior research has primarily concentrated on the online difficulties students encountered during the COVID19 epidemic, and there have been relatively few studies devoted to the difficulties students faced once they resumed their normal mode of study.

Challenges during Covid19 pandemic.
Online education presents a variety of difficulties, including educational, technical, psychological, and domestic problems. According to numerous studies from around the world, the main technical difficulties are slow internet connections that prevent students from using virtual platforms to attend their classes (Baticulon et al., 2020) and (Huang et al., 2020). Similarly, Mahdy (2020), found that many students were unable to access their online courses because of poor internet connectivity. In addition to this, students in Saudi Arabia indicated that poor internet connection had a negative impact on their ability to learn throughout the pandemic (Khalil et al., 2020). Furthermore, Lassoued (2020) investigated the challenges that students in Iraq, Algeria, and Palestine had to deal with during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another technological problem students have during the pandemic is the lack of necessary equipment for online classes. For instance, Kim et al. (2020) observed that just 11% of

students in their survey in the USA said that they have the tools necessary for remote learning, such as laptops. Additionally, according to other research (Baticulon et al., 2020; Abbasi et al., 2020; Lassoued et al., 2020), some students lacked technology because they shared their devices with their siblings who were enrolled in online courses at the time of the pandemic.

According to the findings mentioned above, the virtual learning paradigm would not be able to address advanced learning techniques including group projects, discussions, and contact between students and teachers. This may influence learners' acquisition of 21st-century soft skills (World Bank, 2020).

The psychological difficulties that students face might also have an impact on their online experience. Students have expressed feelings of discomfort, stress, loneliness, sadness, and depression. They are concerned about their studies, workload, online tests, goals, potential graduation delays, and the safety of their loved ones and themselves. According to Baticulon et al. (2020), students who had to adjust to new routines and customs during the lockdown faced mental health issues like stress and anxiety. Similarly, Kim et al. (2020) discovered that 75% of students suffered from anxiety and despair because of the crisis. Duraku and Hoxha (2020) discovered that 26% of individuals had extremely high levels of stress and anxiety, compared to 65% who had moderate anxiety levels.

In addition, students faced problems with their living situation. For instance, students must make sure there is room for them to participate in online learning. Allily et al. (2020), discovered that students in Saudi Arabia often struggle with distraction and lack of focus at home when they want to communicate with teachers. They explained this by pointing out how many children and extended families are typically housed in an Arab home. According to Lassoued (2020), research participants believed that home environments were inappropriate for online learning. Moreover, Means (2020) found that 50% of participants viewed finding a peaceful area to study online as a problem. According to Baticulon et al. (2020), their participants in the Philippines faced a variety of domestic difficulties, such as a lack of study space and the necessity to take care of household duties during the pandemic.

Post-Covid 19 challenges
According to several studies, students continued to rely on their cellphones during in-person classes, which prevents them from following up with teachers (Khalil et al., 2020; Mahdy, 2020). Their experience during the pandemic has caused them to develop a dependence on their smartphones. Students faced psychological and social difficulties because of the abrupt switch to a physical classroom mode of learning. They were initially instructed to continue wearing their masks and maintaining a safe distance from their

partners. As a result, a lot of students have expressed uneasiness, tension, loneliness, discontentment, and sadness.

In addition to the difficulties listed above, studies investigating students' opinions of online education during COVID-19 emphasized the issue of instructional difficulties caused by a lack of engagement with peers and classmates. For instance, Means and Neisler (2020) stated that their participants missed discussing in pairs and groups and other forms of collaborative work due to the restriction of maintaining a remote distance and wearing masks.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, research shows that HEIs quickly turned to online education to continue providing educational programs despite the constrained time for preparation. For HEIs and their students, this has created numerous difficulties. Similarly, when students returned to the regular way of learning, they faced new problems. Therefore, this study fills a research gap by addressing the difficulties that students had in the period after Covid19.

METHODOLOGY

Tool
This study used an open-ended survey and semi-structured interviews to gather respondents' perceptions on the difficulties GFP students at A'Sharqiyah University, Oman, faced after COVID19. The study used a qualitative technique since it allows for multiple sources of data collecting and, as a result, provides a chance to learn in-depth information about real-life situations, which in turn strengthens the study's credibility (Denscombe, 2010). Additionally, (Foddy, 1993: 127) explains that open-ended questions allow participants in qualitative studies to express their opinion without the researcher's direction. He continues by saying that open-ended questions provide for the opportunity of discovering the spontaneous responses provided by people, avoiding the prejudice that can emerge from giving answers to them. In this study, there are three components to the open-ended question survey. The first portion includes participant background information. The second section focuses on the challenges faced by GFP students when they return to their regular way of learning. The third section explores the impact of these issues and the techniques that GFP teachers can use to solve them. The open-ended survey served as the primary tool for gathering data, and some semi-structured interviews with chosen participants were utilized to synthesize some of the key findings from the open-ended survey.

Subjects

The study included 12 GFP instructors from A'Sharqiyah University. They had been chosen, based on the number of teachers for each subject. In other words, only three of the total number of IT instructors and an equal number of Math professors were chosen. English language teachers made up the largest group of participants, at six. The participants come from a variety of countries and have more than three years of teaching experience amongst them.

Procedure

The survey's open-ended questions were given to the participants, who were then asked for their responses. Instead of conducting the study online, the researcher decided to employ a paper survey. The justification for employing a paper survey is that they have a substantially greater response rate than online surveys (Dommeyer, C.J. et al 2002). In addition, most respondents believe that paper surveys are more anonymous than internet surveys, which gives the impression that people will be more honest when responding to printed surveys. Furthermore, paper surveys require less technology funding because they can be completed without tablets or mobile devices.

Data analysis

As for the method of data analysis, descriptive analytical methodology was chosen since it is adaptable and useful for both exploratory and descriptive investigations (Burn & Clarke, 2006). To fully comprehend the contributors' perspectives on the issues presented in the study, the data from the open-ended survey and the interviews were rigorously reviewed and reported. The results from the samples cannot be assumed to apply to the total GFP population. However, they might be used in several other contexts that are similar.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Discussion of the findings and results is done in relation to the research questions.
Research question 1: What difficulties did A'Sharqiyah GFP students encounter when they resumed their regular mode of learning?

The following information was disclosed by the participants:
- Learners' interactions with one another has decreased as it did with their families. And, in the class, they are completely reliant on gadgets while accomplishing any simple activity.
- They frequently perform poorly (academically).
- Their online exam scores are higher than their on-campus exam scores. They insisted on having all tests electronically; they lost motivation; they found it difficult to engage in pair/group work; they now prefer giving presentations in very small teams.
- Covid19 created a knowledge gap.

- They are totally reliant on the instructor.
- They were able to cheat while they were online mode of learning. After switching back to their regular studying methods, they desired to follow suit. Due to the teachers' strictness and adherence to the academic integrity code, this has caused a gap between the students and their instructors.
- Although they were used to studying online, most students find it challenging to adjust to the new environment, especially when they are required to arrive on time for class. Additionally, they are experiencing both living in a dormitory and studying alongside boys for the first time. This could lead to some stress.
- Students in the distance-learning education system relied on assistance from others. They are now having difficulty, even with a simple activity.
-For some students, locating acceptable housing and catering for their needs has proven difficult.

Research Question 2: How do GFP instructors at A'Sharqiyah University view the effects of these difficulties?

The information that follows was disclosed by participants:
- Students developed dependencies and irresponsibility.
- Students strive to use both legal and illegal methods to obtain an A grade since they are only concerned with their grades and always worry about their GPA.
- They didn't learn well during the online period, so when they returned to normal mode, they somehow ran into conflicts with teachers (especially about assessment), which made them feel uneasy.
 - I think it has a negative as well as a positive effect on students' learning experiences, for example, it gave students the opportunity to be autonomous.
- Some students finish their coursework by themselves, while others depend on others.
- Some students will likely continue to struggle since they find it difficult to adjust to the new environment. They might learn a little less because of this.

Third Research Question: What methods can GFP instructors use to solve these issues?

The following was disclosed by respondents:
- Teach students how to apply effective learning techniques.
- Encourage students to be more self-reliant.
- Initiate student competitions.
- Encourage learning through games, group discussions, and independent study.
- Giving research-related assignments, such as connecting pupils with online learning resources.
- Teachers assist students with their social, psychological, and academic development by offering guidance.
- Teachers engage in open dialogue with students about the challenges they are encountering and offer potential solutions.

- Teachers involve every student in class activities and promote pair and group work to increase social contact.
- Teachers should remind students that they are in face-to-face mode of learning; create an online-like atmosphere; create a remedial plan; give diagnostic exams; use a combination of teaching methods, such as online and in-person methods.
- To reduce students' reliance on mobile devices, teachers administer paper tests rather than online exams.

Research question 4: How does the institutional policy handle these academic, psychological, and social challenges?

The following information was disclosed by respondents:
- Research was done to identify the difficulties, and in response to the results, seminars for instructors and students were held.
- Institutional policy encourages the use of e-learning. For instance, all exams are taken online, and some courses are offered online.

DISCUSSION

The researcher investigated GFP teachers' perceptions on post-COVID19 difficulties and how they affected students' learning in this study. The study also looks for appropriate solutions to the issues brought on by the pandemic. Through the participation of 12 GFP teachers, the researcher examined teachers' opinions of the difficulties encountered by students as they returned to their regular modes of learning in the spring of 2021 at A'Sharqiyah University in Oman. Findings showed that students struggled academically and performed poorly since they were totally reliant on technology when participating in any class activity. The findings also show that students experience social barriers such as the cessation of social connections in reaction to the constraints placed on them by the institution, such as masks and distance. In terms of the psychological issues, the results indicated that students experience loneliness, despair, and anxiety. Considering this, the participants offered a few solutions to the problems. E-learning should complement traditional classroom instruction, for instance, and should promote collaborative learning and student rivalry.

In conclusion, the results of this study largely support those of the earlier investigations that were the subject of the literature section.

Implications to Research and Practice
This study examined the difficulties that followed COVID 19, how they affected students' learning, and potential measures taken to deal with the challenges. The theoretical implications of this research can be understood as identifying these difficulties and outlining the suitable approaches that can be used to teach and learn English during the

COVID-19 era and moving beyond. Additionally, it demonstrated the value of blended learning and online learning that were used when face-to-face instruction was not available. As a result, this study added to the body of knowledge on COVID-19-era, teacher techniques and English language learning and teaching. It is challenging for both teachers and students to complete their education during pandemics when schools are closed.

In order to help teachers and students achieve excellence in English teaching and learning, this research has focused its attention on many methodologies. This research has a relatively small sample size and is extremely constrained as compared to other studies. As a result, the findings cannot be applied to the entire population. The research used a qualitative descriptive methodology to collect the data and analyze it, which makes a methodological contribution. As a result, other researchers may use the findings emphasized in this study to support their own empirical research. Additionally, the results of this study can assist institutional administrators, educational officials, and academics in creating efficient plans for pandemics or epidemics.

CONCLUSION

E-learning and blended learning are now a need, and educational institutions should continue to use them in conjunction with in-person instruction. Additionally, suggestions for effective future e-learning implementation should come from all stakeholders. Teachers should also receive ongoing training. Finally, e-learning policy of A'Sharqiyah University needs to be amended to address any unforeseen difficulties.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study collected and analyzed data using a qualitative descriptive approach. Open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, which carry a significant risk of research bias, were employed by the researcher. As a result, the study may be utilized in the future by other researchers using a different tool (quantitative), which could produce some reliable findings. Additionally, only 12 participants from one institute participated in the study, which could restrict the findings to a small demographic. A larger study with participants (both students and teachers) from various colleges would produce more accurate findings.

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