



Hebron University

College of Graduate Studies

**Attitudes of EFL University Students and Professors at Palestinian
Universities Toward Using Online Learning Applications During
Corona Pandemic**

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toward Using Online Learning Applications during Corona Pandemic**

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The image shows three handwritten signatures in blue ink, arranged vertically. The top signature is for Dr. Mohammed Farrah, the middle one for Dr. Mahmoud Itmeizeh, and the bottom one for Dr. Riyad Zahida. Each signature is written in a cursive style.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parent, my husband Fouad, and to my children Muhib, Mohammad, Kinan, and Mariam for inspiring me.

Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to thank God for every blessing in this world and especially for completing my thesis with success.

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected students all over the world. Unfortunately, Palestinian students feel the compounding effects of an ongoing occupation paired with a global pandemic. The pandemic has disrupted the Palestinian educational system and caused online learning to become a necessity. Thus, this study observes Palestinian university student and instructor perceptions toward using online learning applications and the extent to which these applications meet Institute of Higher Education Policy (IHEP) benchmarks during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher uses quantitative and qualitative tools to collect data from students and instructors from 12 Palestinian universities. For data collection, 2 online questionnaires were distributed and 32 semi-structured interviews were conducted. The sample of this study consisted of 375 students and instructors from different Palestinian universities. The results show that instructors agree that online learning meets most IHEP benchmarks. Whereas, students don't agree that online learning meets IHEP benchmarks. Besides, both students and instructors agree that online learning has advantages such as facilitating learning at any time and place. Still, online learning has more disadvantages such as internet interruption, poor interaction, and more. Instructors and students both harbor negative attitudes toward using online applications. Finally, the study concluded with recommendations to improve online learning in the future. To facilitate higher quality online learning, instructors and students need support, training and a well-developed infrastructure.

ملخص البحث

كان لكوفيد 19 أثرٌ على الطلاب في مختلف أنحاء العالم. ولسوء الحظ يعيش الطلاب الفلسطينيون معاناة مضاعفة؛ فمن جهة ممارسات الاحتلال المستمرة، ومن جهة أخرى الضرر الناتج عن هذه الجائحة العالمية. حيث عطّلت الجائحة نظام التعليم الوجيه الفلسطيني وفرضت نظام التعليم الإلكتروني. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة آراء الطلاب والأساتذة في الجامعات الفلسطينية في استخدام تطبيقات التعليم الإلكتروني، كما وتهدف إلى معرفة مدى توافقها مع معايير مؤسسة سياسة التعليم العالي في ظل الجائحة. اعتمدت الباحثة في جمع معلوماتها آراء طلابٍ وأساتذةٍ من اثنتي عشرة جامعة فلسطينية مختلفة معتمدةً على المنهج الكمي و المنهج النوعي. حيث ورّعت الباحثة استبانتيين معتمدةً على المنهج الكمي. وأجرت الباحثة 32 مقابلة شبه منظمة مع طلاب و أساتذة الجامعات. وتتكون عينة الدراسة من 375 طالبا و أستاذا من عدة جامعات فلسطينية. وأظهرت النتائج أن أساتذة الجامعات الفلسطينية متفقون على أن التعليم الإلكتروني يتوافق مع معظم معايير مؤسسة سياسة التعليم العالي. بينما لم يتفق طلاب الجامعات على أن التعليم الإلكتروني يتوافق مع معايير مؤسسة سياسة التعليم العالي. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، بينت النتائج وجود إيجابيات للتعليم الإلكتروني من وجهة نظر طلاب وأساتذة الجامعات مثل: سهولة التعليم في أي وقت ومن أي مكان. لكن سلبيات التعليم الإلكتروني طغت على إيجابياته مثل: انقطاع الانترنت. ومن أهم النتائج التي توصلت لها الباحثة أن الطلاب وأساتذة الجامعات الفلسطينية يتفقون على سلبية التعليم الإلكتروني.

وأخيرا، قدّمت الدراسة توصياتٍ من أجل الارتقاء بالتعليم الإلكتروني مستقبلا. ومن أجل خلق قدرات عالية في مجال التعليم الإلكتروني لكل من الطلاب والأساتذة يجب الحصول على الدعم و التدريب المناسبين، وتوفير بنية متطورة لمثل هذه الأزمات.

Chapter One

Introduction

Chapter One

1.0 Introduction

The world is vast, but no matter how far humans and countries are from each other, technology serves to make them closer. As a result, the distance between teachers and their students becomes smaller. Technology becomes the easiest way to retrieve knowledge and becomes the guide for the learning process that facilitates and develops it. Technology allows educators to relay information and broadcast it.

This tool, technology, transforms traditional ways of teaching. Distance learning in this special period, the COVID-19 pandemic, makes the use of technology more critical than ever. Learners can record, download, and retain any educational lectures and meetings they participated in. According to Hamiti and Reka (2012), technology can enhance the educational process in many ways. It contributes to the process through research, presentation, communication, collaboration, problem-solving and creativity.

Furthermore, technology can encourage students to enjoy learning. As Raja and Nagasubramani (2018) explained, the use of technology has made the process of teaching and learning all the more enjoyable. We shouldn't ignore this valuable advantage of technology because the effectiveness of distance teaching comes from enabling students to assimilate with the technology perfectly.

Moreover, the use of technology in education stimulates new skills and activities for students. According to Stosic (2015), the application of educational technology enhances skills and cognitive characteristics. Educational technology allows students to improve their thinking and attitudes. They transit to a new world with its own digital issues.

To conclude, using technology in learning and teaching represents a new revolution in education. Teachers and students should join this revolution. This new digital age of education is one that is crucial to teachers, students, and the advancement of education. This research will examine Palestinian EFL university students and instructors' perceptions towards using online applications.

1.1 Background of the Study

This study was conducted on EFL Palestinian university students and instructors in order to understand their perceptions toward using online applications in learning. The COVID-19 outbreak caused learning to transit from traditional face-to-face interactions to an online platform. Universities across the world were forced to teach online to continue the educational process for students and instructors.

In this study, the researcher wants to reveal EFL Palestinian universities students' and instructors' attitudes toward the sudden and quick transition to online learning. This may help uncover the opinions of this transition, the advantages, and the challenges that online learning has posed.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge there are few previous studies that examined online learning in Palestine. This research is considered to be the first that introduces students' and instructors' views toward the transition to online learning across Palestinian universities. Thus, it will add new information to the Ministry of Education in Palestine and help improve and challenge previous ideas about education.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Face-to-face learning is an age-old tradition common in our societies. It has always been an effective way to learn knowledge and skills. The most important benefit of face-to-face learning is the ability to discuss, collaborate, and practice live. Nevertheless, due to the outbreak of Coronavirus, using online applications for education has become necessary.

Palestinian school teachers and university instructors started to use such applications to continue and enhance the educational process after being quarantined away from universities in their homes. The researcher notices that Palestinian universities began to teach through Google Meet, Blackboard, Zoom, and Moodle etc. These are all applications that assist with distance learning.

This research presents university students and instructors' experiences in using online applications. Additionally, it studies the advantages of using online learning applications. Further, it explores the challenges these applications pose.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. examine EFL university students and instructors' perceptions towards using online applications and the extent to which online learning meets IHEP benchmarks.
2. explore the advantages of using online applications for education.
3. examine the challenges that face EFL university students and instructors while using online applications.
4. suggest solutions for the challenges students and instructors face with education through online applications.

1.4 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer these questions:

1. What are EFL university students and instructors' perceptions toward using online applications and to what extent online learning meets IHEP benchmarks?

Specific question pertaining to meeting IHEP benchmarks:

To what extent does the online learning experience meet *institutional support benchmarks, course development benchmarks, teaching and learning benchmarks, course structure benchmarks, student support benchmarks, faculty support benchmarks, and finally evaluation and assessment benchmarks?*

2. What are the major advantages of using online applications for learning?
3. What are the challenges that face EFL university students and instructors while using online applications?
4. What can be done to overcome some of the challenges?

1.5 Significance of the Study

In current times, the whole world is facing a terrible spread of Coronavirus and many educational institutions are attempting to face the challenges that the pandemic caused. Palestinian universities are also using these applications for distance learning. This study may improve our awareness about the usage of online applications for distance learning. The results of this study may help EFL university students and instructors to have a better idea about the use of online applications. Also, it will help The Palestinian Ministry of High Education deal with similar emergent situations by the use of online applications. Further, it may help society as a whole in recognizing

the experiences of students and educators in the use of these applications. This study may uncover the challenges of using these applications and find solutions and recommendations that may be applicable to many parts of our society.

1.6 Organization of the Chapters

This thesis consists of five chapters that are described below concisely.

Chapter one includes an introduction, background of the study, the statement of the problem, objectives and research questions, and significance of the study.

Chapter two is composed of a theoretical framework, literature review, and related studies of online learning.

Chapter three provides the methods, participants, and instrumentations. Besides, the researcher will present the questionnaires and interviews that are used to collect data.

Chapter four presents the data analysis and the results of this study. Every IHEP benchmark for both instructors and students' questionnaires is discussed in detail. Moreover, the researcher introduces the challenges and the advantages of online learning. The interviews were also included in this chapter in more details.

Chapter five presents the findings of the study. Thus, it has four sections. The first section introduces the extent to which each benchmark has been met. The second section addresses the advantages of online learning. The third one presents the challenges of online learning. Finally, the last section suggests some recommendations for future studies.

Chapter Two
Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will introduce a theoretical framework, literature review, and related studies of online learning. In the theoretical framework, the researcher will elaborate online learning history and theories, the necessity of online learning within the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning in Palestine during the pandemic, internet and education, online learning and its applications, advantages and limitations of online learning.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

In this section, the researcher will talk about different aspects of online learning. Also, she will talk about the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on online learning.

2.1.1 Online Learning History and Theories

Online learning involves the use of computers therefore it refers back to early spreading of computers. According to Hubackova (2014), in the late eighties and nineties of the last century the first form of electronic education Computer-Based Training (CBT) was born. This form depends on other multimedia such as, CD-ROM. It first appeared in the United States. Later, the World Wide Web improved. Next, Web-Based Training (WBT) was formed which depended on online teaching and communication between teachers and students. In 2002, Blended Learning came out as a model which combines face-to-face learning with distance learning. These facts give background to the history of online learning.

We can't talk about online learning without talking about Computer-Assisted Language Learning theory (CALL). According to Hubbard (2009), CALL theory is a

set of claims about the meaningful elements and processes within some domain of CALL, their interrelationships, and the impact that they have on language learning development and outcomes (as cited in Hubbard 2009). Here, we reference CALL theory as a set of statements related to computer use in education.

However, when introducing CALL theory, one should know that there is no clear published theory. According to Hubbard (2009), CALL does not have a dedicated theory yet (as cited in Hubbard 2009). So, it depends on other theories, such as SLA theory (Second Language Acquisition) and doesn't stand by itself. This creates a gap that affects introducing online learning as a separate theory.

Furthermore, according to Picciano (2017), no clear theory has emerged for online learning as it depends on other theories, such as, learning theory (Behaviorism, Cognitivism, and Social Constructivism). These learning theories lead to the appearance of online theories, such as, Community of Inquiry (COI), Connectivism, and Online Collaborative Learning (OCL). Therefore, it's clear that online learning was built upon other learning theories.

In the same context, according to Anderson (2011) "Our challenge as theory builders and online practitioners, therefore, is to delineate which modes, methods, activities, and actors are most cost- and learning-effective in creating and distributing quality e-learning programs." From this quotation, we notice that to establish a theory for online learning there is a need to define its models, approaches, and activities. This is challenging and the reason there is no pure theory for online learning.

To sum up, online learning history is tied to the origins of computers. Online learning has no pure theory, but is built on other learning theories. To have online theory one should define modes, methods, and models. This represents an obstacle for developing online learning.

2.1.2 Coronavirus and Forced Transition to Online Learning

Many educational institutions started to teach by using different online applications due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Some used a mixture of online applications and others depended on one application. This of course can confuse the students. According to Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020), the transition to online learning was quick. This sudden change did not allow for standardization and schools in Georgia tended to use different online applications in teaching and learning such as; online portal, TV School, Microsoft teams, Zoom, Slack, Google Meet, and EduPage. The transition to online learning allowed educators to continue to teach remotely.

Additionally, according to Almarzooq, Lopes, and Kochar (2020) the need to social distance because of the pandemic forced the US education system to transit to fully virtual learning. Zoom and Microsoft Teams were the chosen appropriate platforms for education. Using such platforms would allow the educational process to continue.

Moawad (2020) stated that because of the closure of the educational institutions in Saudi Arabia during the pandemic, a sudden shift to online learning occurred. Online platforms were used in order to resume the educational process. Students had concerns about final tests and assessments. So, using online learning needs a lot of preparation and training.

Agarwal and Kaushik (2020) said that face-to-face education was suspended because of the Coronavirus pandemic. This meant that virtual learning became a necessity. Indian postgraduate students used Zoom as an online platform in learning. Educational institutions all around the world continue to use online learning during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. These institutions made a quick and a sudden transition forcing some students and teachers to respond quickly and efficiently. Still, others have some concerns and fears.

2.1.3 Coronavirus and Online Learning in Palestine

Palestine is one of the many countries exposed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Quarantine is the most beneficial and effective way to protect individuals from being infected resulting in online learning as a solution to face the dangerous virus. All universities in Palestine transitioned to e-learning in order to continue the educational process.

Al-Quds Open University represents one of the universities that taught through e-learning before the pandemic. According to Osaily (2012), e-Learning is a key part of QOU's development strategy. This university has a mixture of face-to-face learning and online learning. The online learning part is vital to their curriculum as most students and teachers communicate virtually.

Recently, other Palestinian universities also transitioned to e-learning because of the Coronavirus pandemic. Affouneh, Salha, and Khlaif (2020) said that many countries have long used e-learning in emergency situations, including Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan, and South Africa. The transition of e-learning is a response to an emergent situation. Also, in their research they added that one cannot talk about the advantages of online learning without talking about the quality of virtual courses. By this they mean researchers should discuss the quality of online courses and how it affects learning.

The vital transition to online learning in Palestine during the pandemic helps to continue the educational process. Universities' students and teachers in Palestine had a speedy response to this transition.

2.1.4 Internet and Education

The Internet facilitates communities' social lives because it presents many services that help people and institutions. It also presents improvements in technology tools,

communication, and entertainment. Recently, the internet has become increasingly vital, especially in education.

Students and teachers use the internet to get information and to communicate with each other. Many modern countries make access to the Internet free. This helps students and teachers in the educational process. The internet is one of the latest tools in learning and teaching. Also, it is a way of spreading information quickly and easily. According to Geladze (2015), using computers and the internet makes the learning process more interesting and diverse and leads to an increase in cognitive activity. So, using technology in learning motivates students to depend on themselves and to transition to a nice new experience in learning.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, e-learning has replaced face-to-face learning. According to Li and Lalani (2020), more than 1.2 billion children in 186 countries were affected by school closures because of the COVID-19 pandemic. These affected schools transitioned to online learning with different applications to address the closures.

2.1.5 Online learning and its applications

The aim of this study is to discuss EFL university students and instructors' perceptions toward using online applications. Now we will present definitions of online learning and its applications as the following:

According to Nguyen (2015), online learning is distance education or distance learning. So, it depends on using the internet for learning.

According to Stern (n.d) online learning is learning by using the internet. So, it is a distance learning that replaces face-to-face learning.

Many different terms are used to express online learning, such as, E-learning, Web-Based Learning, Distance learning, Virtual Learning, Computer Assisted Learning, and others.

According to Tsai and Machado (2002), **E-learning** is mostly associated with activities involving computers and interactive networks simultaneously.

According to Tsai, and Machado (2002) **Web-Based Learning**, is associated with learning materials delivered in a Web browser, including when the materials are packaged on CD-ROM or other media.

Buselic (2012) asserts that **Distance learning** represents approaches that focus on opening access to education and training, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place.

According to Trafford and Shirota (2011) **Virtual Learning** is a collection of software tools supporting academic administration, teaching and research using the Internet, particularly the World Wide Web.

according to Farooq, Kawoosa, and Muttoo (2017) **Computer Assisted Learning** is a technology that has been integrated into an environment of education where different computer programs are used to assist any user in learning a particular field of interest.

Collectively, online learning and other terms are used to describe the use of the internet and technology in learning. These terms can overlap but all refer to the use of the internet for education.

2.1.6 Online Learning Applications

Many applications are used to facilitate learning via internet, such as:

Google Classroom: According to Iftakhar (2016) “Google Classroom is considered as one of the best platforms out there for enhancing teachers' workflow.”(p.12). So,

this application represents a powerful tool that helps teachers in improving their skills in distance learning.

Blackboard: is a learning management system, which is also a platform created with a third generation technology in order to handle courses and educational content. (Socrates Centre for Learning, 2012 as cited in Boshielo, 2014)

Moodle: Christensson (2018) says that, "Moodle is an acronym for Modular Object Oriented term Developmental Learning Environment. It is an online educational platform that provides custom learning environments for students. Educators can use Moodle to create lessons, manage courses, and interact with teachers and students. Students can use Moodle to review the class calendar, submit assignments, take quizzes, and interact with their classmates." (p.1).

Zoom is a free video conferencing tool. It allows recording for students who are absent. (as cited in Sutterlin, 2018).

According to Keeley (2020) **Google Meet** is a video conferencing service from Google. It's good for both individuals and companies to meet on audio and video calls. It was born from Google Hangouts, but has some distinctive characteristics.

Web Applications: According to Aljraiwi (2017), "Programs that allow you to create documents, edit photos, organize diaries and other functions of desktop applications but via web browsers, such as: Google Document, PHProjekt, management of document or web content, e.g., Word Press." (p.135).

Google Forms: According to Roberts (2016) is one of the simplest tools that is used to gather data but as it is connected to a spreadsheet (Google Sheet) and it can be efficient in terms of data analysis. It is effective for collecting data as questionnaires to understand people' opinions.

Facebook: According to Cronin (2009) "is a social networking website where people can create an online profile with information about themselves." (p.3). So, it helps people all around the world to communicate with each other easily and to recognize new friends from different countries.

Skype: According to Sivakumar (2015) "is a software program using voice over internet protocol technology." (p.1). So, students and teachers can communicate with each other by chatting, video calls, writing, and more.

YouTube: Martinho, Pinto, and Kuznetsova (2012) assert that YouTube "is a Web 2.0 platform of distributed video sharing, widely used by students, universities and scholars."(p.76). It facilitates communication in education.

From these definitions it's clear that these online applications ease communication between teachers and students when used for distance learning. These applications are considered to be platforms that teach by using networks. Also, some of them represent social network tools that facilitate the educational process.

2.1.7 Advantages of Online Learning

Any learning tool has advantages and disadvantages and online learning is one of these tools. In this section we will introduce some of the advantages. According to Bazan (2016), online learning has many benefits; it develops computer skills, it doesn't need time in transportation, students can work while learning, and it is student centered, so it builds student self-confidence.

According to Gilbert (2015), online learning opens the way to learn without being restricted by place or time. Learners will be more motivated and responsible. Also, instructors and course designers benefit from understanding any course's aspects, increasing student understanding and participation.

Additionally, Gupta (2017) asserts that online learning suits anyone anywhere, as learners can update content anytime, they want, reduces time, learners will receive the same training mode, it reduces costs, is considered to be an efficient way of learning, and environmentally friendly.

Further, Arkorful, and Abaidoo state that (2014) e-learning is flexible to learners in terms of time and place, it helps in having a huge amount of knowledge, it eases communication between learners and teachers, it reduces traveling from one place to another, it depends on individual students' differences, and is student-centered. To sum up, the previous studies talked about many benefits of using online learning. The benefits include reducing time, reducing traveling from one place to another, and student-centered learning.

2.1.8 Limitations of Online Learning

Online learning is a strategy that has limitations as well as advantages. This section will discuss the limitations of online learning in detail. It has technical problems such as slow servers, training and developmental issues, lack of Web materials, and lack of facilities and high cost.

2.1.8.1 Slow Servers

Alla (2013) stated that system quality is the main aspect that increases or decreases the proficiency of an e-learning system. Appanna (2008) observed technical problems such as sound and video quality that appeared while using online classes. Also, she talked about it as time consuming because beginner online instructors required extra time and training. Sadeghi (2019) examined some limitations of online learning such as complicated technology. In case of any software or hardware breakdown, the class meeting abruptly ends. Besides, Al-Jarrah, Talafhah, and Al-Jarrah (2018) observed some obstacles of using online classes such as lack of technical support. Another

disadvantage of using online lectures is poor connection. This is clear in Mishra, Gupta, and Shree's (2020) study. They observed that internet interruption is a challenge in virtual learning.

2.1.8.2 Training and development

Another disadvantage of online learning is the instructor and learner's lack of experience. Appanna (2008) pointed out that the instructor's experience and knowledge is the major limitation of developing online courses. Also, he pointed out that educators with language skills limitations may face challenges in communicating with their students. Moreover, Jose (2015) observed that new learners who lack computer skills don't prefer to use Moodle e-learning because physically the teachers are absent while using this technique. Altunay (2019) pointed out that students should participate in orientation programs at the beginning of the semester. Also, face-to-face language learning speaking activities should be provided for better student-teacher interaction. This is in order to better integrate online learning.

2.1.8.3 Lack of Web material

Johansson (2006) asserted that using course books offer a handy material for teachers, which make planning less time-consuming as they have already chosen materials. However, Swan (2017) pointed out that using technology differs from face to face learning because the former has extra features to take into consideration in terms of teaching pedagogy and construction of learning skills. Also, Albirini (2006) observed that there was a major interruption of integrating technology in learning which was the difference between technological demands and the existing curricula. Further, Huang et al. (2020) explained that some instructors could not find online resources that are suitable in their teaching contexts because thousands of them were published online.

2.1.8.4 Lack of Facilities and High Cost

Aboderin (2015) explained that there is a lack in e-learning facilities and equipment such as computers and laptops, Internet facilities, and others. Siddiquah and Salim (2017) revealed in their study that students have some simple internet facilities such as PowerPoint. But, they don't have other facilities and skills such as digital library. Dhull and Arora (2019) revealed that online learning had barriers with high costs, so this affected its usage at institutions.

2.2 Previous Studies

This section presents the previous studies that talked about online learning. Many studies have been examining the use of online applications in learning at schools and universities in general.

Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020) studied the transition to online education at schools in Georgia. They studied the educational situation for the first week of using online applications such as, Zoom, Slack, and Google Meet. They made a case study, where the Google Meet platform was applied for online education in a private school with 950 students. They used related statistics. The results showed that the quick transition to the online educational system was successful. Also, they gained an experience that can be utilized in the future.

Further, Bao (2020) investigated a study of online teaching during Covid-19 in higher education. This study was done at Peking University in China. The researcher concluded to six classifications of instructional strategies in order to change students' negative attitudes toward shifting to online learning. The first classification is to be ready for any emergent situation and to have more than one plane. The second classification is to divide the online teaching content into several small units in order to let students focus. Third, faculty should slow down their voices in order to allow

students to understand every concept of their materials. Fourth, teaching assistance is vital in order to train and support faculty members. Fifth, faculty should use different methods outside the class in order to strengthen students' active learning. Finally, there is a need to combine online learning and offline self-learning.

Biswas, Roy, and Roy (2020) examined Bangladesh universities students' attitudes toward the use of Mobile Phones as a learning system during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers used surveys in collecting the data. In developing the survey's items, the researchers depended on some particular previous studies. The survey consisted of three parts: the first was about collecting basic information of students and assembling information of students' mobile phones. The second one was about recognizing students' preferences about social network sites. The third part was about students' perceptions and views about using mobile phones in learning. The participants were 416 students from different universities of Bangladesh. The results expressed that student had good attitudes toward using mobile learning especially during the pandemic. Also, students benefited from using social media for communicating with their teachers. At the end, the researchers recommended policymakers and educational institutions depend on mobile system learning since it enhanced learning and teaching.

Meanwhile, Abid Azhar and Iqbal (2018) studied the effects of Google classroom on teaching methods from the teachers' point of view. Twelve semi-structured interviews were done with a set of questions that were devised from the literature review and past studies. All of them were recorded on a mobile application Voice Recorder Pro. There were eight teachers chosen from three different universities that participated. The findings showed that the teachers see it as only a facilitation tool that can be used

for document and basic classroom management, without having a major influence on teaching methods.

Aljraiwi (2017) investigated the effect of using classroom web applications on teaching and learning academically. The researcher adopted the experimental approach by Alassaf (2000) to study attitudes toward using web applications. She used a questionnaire and interviews. Forty female students from the College of Education were selected randomly. The results revealed that these applications facilitated teaching and learning processes. The participants enjoyed this experience and it provided teachers and learners with real support in organizing and guiding the educational activities inside and outside the classroom.

In addition, Alaofi (2016) examined the value of using blackboard as a distance learning tool from students and teachers' perceptions. Two questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used during this research for the students and teachers of Taibah University. The results revealed that the application Blackboard is seen as a helpful tool for distance learning, and students view it as an opportunity to avoid old-fashioned classroom learning activities. Also, the research exposed that teacher usually have a positive view about online learning applications, and believe they make teaching easier.

Beverley, Beth, Greg, Kimberley, and Margaret (2009) examined the effective instructor feedback from graduate students' point of views. The participants were graduate students completing health-related courses by using an online application. Data was collected by distributing a survey of open-ended questions. They observed five major themes: student involvement/individualization, gentle guidance, being positively constructive, timeliness and future orientation. They conclude that effective instructor feedback has positive effects on the students.

Young (2008) studied the effects of using computer technology on students' motivation and attitudes at Kaiserslautern School District in Germany. This study aimed to prove the importance of using technology tools in teachers' classrooms. The researcher used surveys for students and teachers in order to collect data. Young created a pre and a post-test to examine the students' attitudes toward using technology in the classroom during science lessons. The participants were 150 eight grade students. The results of this study showed that students had positive attitudes toward using technology, but it did not affect their grades positively. Also, a low number of teachers used technology in teaching their students. As a result, the researcher suggested that schools should be prepared enough to use technology as an effective educational tool. This could be done by training the staff and giving them adequate time to communicate and share with peers their preferred applications.

Onsoy (2004) examined the students and teachers' attitudes toward the use of computer assisted language learning at Preparatory School of Celal Bayar University. The study was conducted in the spring semester of 2004. Questionnaires and interviews were used in order to collect the data. Two questionnaires were distributed for both teachers and students. They contained a list of scale items, open –ended questions, and multiple-choice items composed of five parts. The first part consisted of background data, the second part consisted of general views about using computers, the third presented opinions about the content of the computer program, the fourth section was taken up the attitudes of the application of computer program, and the last part dealt with the factors that affected students and teachers during the use of computer programs. The study aimed to investigate students' and teachers' views toward using computers as an online material, to understand the similarities and differences between students' and teacher' views, and in the manners that students'

attitudes differed. 191 students participated in the students' questionnaire and 22 teachers participated in the teachers' questionnaire. Structured interviews were done for four teachers. The results showed that there were no differences between students and teachers' attitudes toward using computer language. Also, training for both students and teachers in using technology in teaching and learning is highly required. However, Johnson, Aragon, Shaik, and Rivas (2000) examined a study of comparing learners' satisfaction of face-to-face learning to online learning. The participants were 19 graduate students who attended face-to-face lectures and 19 graduate students who joined online classes. Three instruments were used to collect the data; the university's Instructor and Course Evaluation System (ICES), Distance and Open Learning Scale (DOLES), and Dimensions of Distance Education (DDE). The researchers built their comparison upon different scales which were students' satisfaction perception of online learning and face-to-face learning, course structure, and course interaction and support. The results revealed that students have somewhat positive attitudes toward face-to-face learning. Some prefer traditional learning over online learning.

2.3 Particular English Studies of Online Learning

Al-Jarrah, Talafhah, and Al-Jarrah (2018) examined how teachers, students, and parents choose the suitable applications for ESL instruction and the barriers that might face them. The research depends on the qualitative design method. They used a case study design that involves the use of in-depth interviews. They interviewed eight participants from each group. The participants were selected based on two criteria: agreeing to volunteer by completing the agreement form, and completing and submission of the questionnaire. The findings showed that the participants had certain obstacles to using such applications. These include a lack of technical support, insufficient professional development, and negative attitudes. At the end, the study

offered some recommendations for the successful integration of technology in English learning and teaching for overcoming such barriers.

Additionally, Anandita, Pipu, Aman, Haque, and Karmaker (2017) studied the possibility of maintaining a Google Classroom in the English department at Jahangirnagar University. The study was done by using two interviews from two prominent teachers. A questionnaire was also filled out by 30 students ranging from first to fourth year of the department of English randomly. The findings revealed that both the teachers and students are ready to use this application because it saves time and paper. But, unfortunately they were not sure if it suits the English department or not as not all students have the ability to access the internet, causing a possible challenge.

Jamalifar, and Chalak (2014) investigated the use and practice of the internet in English language learning. Also, it studied the students' attitudes toward using the internet, and the problems they may face while using their private internet in an educational and instructional setting. The researchers used a questionnaire to gather their data. The study contained 100 participants from Esfahan University of Technology from different majors. The results indicated that the use of the internet in classrooms is still limited. Students were motivated to use the internet, but teachers did not encourage them. Also, despite the fact that the internet is a good English language learning tool; students still need proof for educationalists, and teachers. Additionally, the use of the internet needs a strong infrastructure, and suitable equipment.

Suppasetsee and Dennis (2010) observed the usage of Moodle in teaching and learning English. The participants were 18 full-time English language teachers and 213 undergraduate students from the School of English at Suranaree University. The

researchers used questionnaires and interviews in order to inquire about the use of Moodle. The results showed that teachers used the uploading and sharing documents feature to assign students homework. The teachers encouraged students to download learning material outside the class to practice their English learning skills. Researchers also found that Moodle facilitates student-centered learning at any time with reduced time. Additionally, the results revealed that students have positive attitudes toward learning English with using such applications. But, they still have some disadvantages.

Moreover, Başal and Aytan (n.d) introduced the most useful web tools for teaching English as a foreign language based on practical experiment and experience. Language teachers started to recognize the opportunities that web 2.0 tools provide to develop and support their students' learning. So, by using them teaching became more student-centered. List of Web 2.0 Tools for Language Teaching were: www.blendspace.com, www.padlet.com, scoop.it, www.livebinders.com, Google drive (forms, documents), vialogues.com, www.voxopop.com, and www.lessonwriter.com. Teachers who were using Web 2.0 in teaching language should first decide whether these tools help to achieve the goals of the language lesson. Also, they should notice if these tools meet the pedagogical needs of the teaching situation. However, this paper aimed at giving innovative and real ideas to language teachers on the use of these tools while teaching English.

2.4 Related Studies of EFL Online Learning

Now the researcher will review some previous studies which are related to this study. Itmeizeh, and Farrah (2021) investigated a study of Palestinian EFL instructors and students' attitudes toward the use of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic at Palestine Ahliya University and Hebron University. The participants were 139

students and 32 instructors from both genders. Data was collected by distributing two online questionnaires one of them was for instructors and the other was for students. The findings showed that instructors and students had somewhat negative perceptions toward using online learning applications. Also, instructors had high ratings of the extent online learning meets certain benchmarks. In contrast, students had low scores towards meeting these benchmarks.

Additionally, Zboun, and Farrah (2021) examined EFL Palestinian university students' perceptions toward using online learning. The participants were 82 first year students from two intensive English courses which were English Intensive 2 and English Intensive 1 at Hebron University. The data was collected by using a questionnaire and interviews. The findings revealed that students had an overall negative perception toward using online learning. Also, the results showed that online learning had some advantages such as it had easy access, it was more convenient and others. But, the challenges of online learning outweighed them such as, poor interaction, interruption of the internet, less understanding, and more.

In the same vein, Farrah, and Al-Bakry (2020) studied EFL Palestinian university students' perceptions toward using online learning. The participants were 191 students from different six Palestinian universities and they were from different levels from the first year to MA level. The researchers used a quantitative research method as a questionnaire in order to collect the data. This questionnaire had forty-five close-ended questions and in the form of a five-point Likert-scale. It was distributed online for all students. The results showed that students had positive attitudes toward using online learning applications. Also, this research introduced advantages of online learning such as designating students as researchers. This way enabled students to depend more on themselves allowing them to become more confident and improve

their technological skills. Further, the researchers presented some challenges of online learning such as, students had poor technical support, their instructors should be trained more in using online learning applications, the evaluation system was not fair, and the whole technological infrastructure was poor. At the end the researchers suggest some recommendations in order to improve online learning in Palestine in future.

Fanous (2020) tested the impact of synchronous and asynchronous e-feedback on EFL students' writing skills at a private university in Lebanese. The data was collected by using quantitative and qualitative instruments. The researcher used pre and post-tests, a questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. The sample consisted of 34 learners; 14 females, and 20 males all chosen randomly. The results showed that both asynchronous and synchronous e-feedback approaches were preferable by learners compared to teacher centered forms of feedback. Also, students who received asynchronous e-feedback had better writing outcomes compared to those who received synchronous e-feedback.

Further, Ulla, Perales, and Tarrayo (2020) studied different Internet-based applications that integrated in English language teaching as an EFL classroom at a university in Thailand. This study depended on classroom observations and individual interviews. The participants were 27 English language teachers who were teaching at Walailak University's Language Institute. There were seven teachers; 3 females, 4 males who were volunteering to participate in this study. The findings showed that Kahoot, Socrative, Google Form, QR code, Facebook, YouTube, Quizizz and Quizlet were the most common applications that teachers used in EFL classes. Teachers had positive attitudes toward using these applications with their

students because internet-based applications provided an exciting, appropriate and easy process for students.

Layali and AlShlowiy (2020) conducted a study about ESL/EFL students' perceptions and implications toward using e-learning during the CoronaVirus Pandemic as a literature review. This study was done at Saudi universities. The researchers used Google Scholar and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) for getting data. This study aimed at recognizing students' perceptions toward using e-learning in Saudi universities, defining the advantages of using e-learning tools, and understanding the challenges of these tools. They depended on four studies; the first was about EFL students' perceptions toward using Google Docs as an e-learning tool and how they improved their writing quality in Imam Abdulrahman University. The second was about EFL students' views toward using the Telegram app as an e-learning tool in Taibah University. The third was done in King Abdulaziz and King Khalid universities and it presented students and teachers' point of view toward using Mobile technologies as e-learning tool. The last study talked about students' perceptions toward using Nearpod as an e-learning tool at Najran University. The findings showed that students had positive attitudes toward using e-learning tools because using Google Docs improved their writing quality and the Telegram app improved their vocabulary learning, Nearpod led to their collaboration, and Mobile technologies which improved student-teacher communication. But the slow internet was considered a challenge.

Similarly, Allo (2020) studied EFL learners' perceptions toward using online learning in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study used a qualitative method with researchers conducting semi-structured interviews with learners of English study program of UKI Toraja by using WhatsApp application. The researcher depended on

ethnographic variation case study. Also, to analyze the data the researcher depended on a thematic analysis that was found by Braun and Clarke (2006). The results revealed that learners had positive views while using online learning in the middle of Corona pandemic. Additionally, this study spotted the light on internet breakdown financial problems, and selecting the appropriate and the effective online application while learning virtually. So, the learners recommended taking into consideration these issues in order to improve their online learning in the future.

Further, Sakkir, Dollah, and Ahmad (2020) investigated students' perceptions toward the use of YouTube as an online application in EFL classrooms at Universitas Negeri Makassar Indonesia. A quantitative method was used in this research. A questionnaire was administered to undergraduate students which consisted of two parts: the first one included demographic information of the students. The second part included 20 questions to diagnose students' perceptions toward using YouTube as a learning tool. The data of the questionnaire was analyzed by using Likert scale. The participants were 76 students from Universitas Negeri Makassar Indonesia EFL classroom. The findings showed that students had positive attitudes towards using YouTube in EFL classrooms because it helped them in enhancing their English language proficiency.

Additionally, Octaberlina, and Muslimin (2020) observed EFL students' perceptions toward using online learning during COVID-19 pandemic. The participants were 25 students from the English department from Tadris Bahasa Inggris EFL learners in Indonesia. The researchers used a questionnaire and interviews to gather the data. The findings showed that students faced three major challenges while studying virtually; lack of interaction and personal touch, lack of technology and internet connectivity, and physical problems such as eye strain. However, the researchers gave solutions to overcome these challenges.

Nugroho, Ilmiani, and Rekha (2020) investigated EFL teachers' practices of online learning and the challenges that faced them during the pandemic. The researchers used semi-structured interviews. The researchers depended on data coding to validate their data. Participants were 16 EFL teachers (12 females and 4 males) from different schools in Indonesia. All of them were teaching English as a foreign language and all of them had experience in teaching that ranged from one to eighteen years. Teachers were asked to write reflections about using online learning. They carried out online learning by depending on a number of applications. Also, they used different online platforms and applications. The results showed that many problems appeared with online learning: it took more time than face-to-face so it needed more preparation and planning, it required more training, students should be familiarized with online platforms, and more. As a result, online learning was not efficient enough to be used instead of face-to-face learning.

In addition, Gao, and Zhang (2020) examined EFL teachers' opinions about online teaching in response to the disruption of normal teaching plans. The participants were three teachers of English from a university in a Northern Chinese city and they were chosen through convenience sampling. The data was collected by doing in depth interviews. After doing thematic analysis the results revealed that teachers had clear cognitions about features, advantages, and challenges of online teaching. However, teachers need to be more flexible, and ready to learn any new skills to overcome unexpected challenges such as COVID-19.

However, Tseng and Yeh (2019) examined the differences in students' perceptions toward written and video feedback in improving their English performance. The participants were 43 third-year EFL college students who studied Applied Foreign Languages at a national university in central Taiwan. The data was collected by

producing a video clip from students and their peers responded with written or video feedback. Three tools were used to collect the data; students' video clips before and after receiving peer feedback, the video or written feedback they received, and a survey to those students in order to know their own English-speaking performance in terms of pronunciation, intonation, fluency, grammar, and word usage. The results showed that students have positive perceptions toward using written and video feedback in improving their English-speaking skill. Using written feedback helped the students in writing by following grammar rules and word usage to have accurate linguistic performance. The video feedback helped the students in developing their intonation. Another result was that students preferred using written feedback because of its effectiveness and clearness. However, both written and video feedback couldn't improve students' pronunciation and fluency.

Furthermore, Fithriani, Dewi, Daulay, Salmiah, and Fransiska (2019) investigated the effectiveness of Facebook as a learning tool for EFL university learners in Indonesia. The data was collected by depending on three methods which are a questionnaire, interviews and observations of students' discussions by using Facebook. The participants of this study were 53 students: 40 females and 13 males. All of them were taking an Advanced Writing class in a state university in Medan. The findings revealed that using Facebook in writing class is effective for most students. Because it enhanced their confidence in using English, it motivated them in communicating with each other, and it enriched their English language skills. This study ultimately highlighted the positive effects of using Facebook in learning.

Additionally, Ayoub (2019) studied the effective use of Zoom sessions for EFL students in Bekaa. In this study the researcher used a mixed approach including experimentally based instruments. She used quantitative data by handing out pre and

post tests for English language students before and after using zoom sessions. Also, she used qualitative data by using a questionnaire. The participants were 60 randomly chosen students from the Lebanese University-Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences Branch IV. The sample was divided into two groups of 30 students. The results showed that using zoom sessions was beneficial for enhancing the quality of learning, motivation and communication among EFL students.

Jaddoa (2019) reviewed a study about the tools for integrating new digital technology into second or foreign language instruction. This study suggested three main ways that can be used to support language learning through the integration and application of technology. First, is the use of specific objectives in learning. Secondly, fluency was highly recommended because it emphasizes the quality and the content of any message. Finally, the general concern of language instructors should be with improving the student's understanding and application of language by implementing new platforms.

Satar and Akcan (2018) studied pre-service EFL teachers' online participation, interaction, social presence, and social network analysis. The study was done at the foreign language education department of a university in Turkey. The data was collected by using a case study methodology that used multiple methods of analysis. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis were used to collect the data. In this study the researchers introduced blended learning courses by using face to face and online learning during Fall and Spring semesters in 2012-2013. The participants were 55 teachers and 6 instructors total in both semesters. Most of the participants had little experience in online classes. The results showed that taking an online course improved pre-service EFL teachers' participation skills and increased their interaction.

Also, the researchers observed that social network analysis (SNA) had a relation with social presence (SP). So, SNA emerged as a research method that investigated SP.

Idir, Iskounen, and Mammeri (2018) investigated a study about the impact of using mobile technology on improving EFL students' learning achievement at the University of Bejaia. The researchers used mixed methods in collecting data; qualitative and quantitative methods. The questionnaire was distributed to MA students and it consisted of three sections; the first section was about background information which was done by multiple choices-questions, the second section was introduced as form of five items about using Mobile technology in learning, and the last section was about understanding students' attitudes toward using Mobile technology in education and they were done by using open-questions. The teachers' interviews consisted of 13 questions that had been divided into two sections. The first section was about background information. The second part was done by asking the teachers questions about using Mobile technology to improve EFL students' learning. The participants were 32 Master students majoring in linguistics and 7 EFL linguistics teachers. The findings revealed that students and teachers had positive attitudes toward using mobile technology. Also, using mobile technology had a positive effect on the students' learning achievements.

Additionally, Khalil (2018) examined EFL students' views toward using Google docs and Google classroom. In her study she had chosen six EFL students from Palestine Ahliya University. She did pre and post questionnaires during the semester as well as semi-structured interviews for more elaborate answers. The results showed that the usage of such applications helped to create a cooperative learning environment between teachers and their students. Also, these applications ease the access to the course materials.

Moreover, Rekola, and Savo (2018) studied EFL students' opinions toward the motivational aspects of e-materials. The participants of this study were 53 students from 8th grade. The data was collected by handing out a questionnaire that was answered anonymously. The findings showed that students enjoy using e-materials and their motivation is influenced positively by using electronic teaching materials.

Moreover, Jose (2015) tested the possibilities of using Moodle application for EFL/ESL students in Oman. The researcher's own experience with the Moodle e-Learning system and relevant literature review was used to contribute to this research. He talked about the advantages and the disadvantages of it. The results showed that this application couldn't replace face to face lectures. But, it could be a supplement for them.

Farrah (2006) conducted a study that evaluated online English for academic International Islamic University Malaysia during the second semester of the 2003-2004 school year. Quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to establish this study. Questionnaires and interviews were done for students and instructors. The participants for both questionnaires were 28 instructors and 900 students. Also, 30 students and 15 instructors were interviewed. The benchmarks that were used in the instructors' questionnaire were: Institutional support; Course development; Teaching and Learning; Course structure; Student support; Faculty support; and Evaluation and Assessment. The same benchmarks were used in the students' questionnaire with exclusion of two of the IHEP benchmarks, namely, Faculty Support and Evaluation and Assessment because they were not actually related to the students. The researcher added one category to the students' questionnaire which was Value and Flexibility and Convenience. The results showed that the program met and achieved some of the benchmarks in both of the questionnaires and interviews. Additionally, this research

showed the efficacy of using IHEP benchmarks as a tool of measuring the quality of online programs. At the end, the researcher presented recommendations for improving benchmarks in future research.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher introduces many online learning issues. The researcher presents the history and theories of online learning. Also, there is no particular theory that specializes in examining online learning. Further, in this chapter the researcher presents CoronaVirus as the reason behind the sudden transition to fully online learning especially in Palestine. Additionally, in this chapter it's clear that the internet is very vital in education especially in emergent situations. Many terms and applications were used when talking about online learning such as, distance learning and others. These terms defined online learning as a way of using the internet in education. Applications were also used such as Zoom and others and these applications facilitate the communicational and the educational processes during the pandemic. In addition, the researcher presented some advantages of online learning such as, saving time and effort as well as she presents some obstacles such as, slow servers, and lack of training.

In the second part of this chapter the researcher introduces previous studies that mentioned online learning in schools and universities. So, many studies talked about this phenomenon generally. Some of them talked about the effects of using online applications in learning. Other studies talked about the attitudes of students and teachers toward using online learning applications. The last section of this chapter talked about related studies of EFL online learning. Most of these studies talked about EFL students and teachers' perceptions toward using online learning. However, some of these studies examined the advantages of using online learning. Others presented

advantages as well as challenges of using online learning applications. The observable issue in most of these studies is that students and teachers had positive attitudes toward using online learning applications.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter will describe how the researcher collects the data of Palestinian EFL university students and instructors' perceptions toward the use of online applications. Thus, this chapter will introduce the methods, participants, and instruments that are used in gathering data. Also, the researcher will present how she developed the questionnaires and conducted the interviews.

3.1 Methods, Participants, and Instruments

3.1.1 Methods

The present study employs a mixed method design to collect data qualitatively and quantitatively. According to Moore (2016), researchers develop their studies based on a theoretical framework and this includes qualitative and quantitative methods. In the qualitative part, the researcher provides questions in order to add new information and knowledge. While, in the quantitative part he/she uses measured models and statistics for analysis and provides statistical results for more objective results. According to Elkatawneh (2016), the aim of qualitative research is to discover the meaning of people's experience and culture. Also, it aims at understanding how people see a specific phenomenon. On the other hand, quantitative research aims at finding the relationship between variables.

3.1.2 Participants

The sample of this study consists of 301 EFL university male and female students and 74 male and female instructors from different Palestinian universities as a total of 375 students and instructors. All of the participants have been teaching or studying

online courses of English. It also consists of 21 interviews with students and 11 interviews with instructors from different universities as a total of 32 interviews with students and instructors. The data was collected by the end of the second semester of the academic year 2019/2020.

3.1.3 Instruments

Two questionnaires for both EFL university students and instructors (see Appendix A and B) were developed based on the literature review conducted by the researcher. The researcher developed two appropriate online questionnaires that were suitable for investigating perceptions toward using online applications. The 74 item students' questionnaire and 82 item instructors' questionnaire were distributed by the summer semester of 2019/2020 and the first semester of the academic year 2020/2021. Quantitative data was analyzed statistically by using the SPSS program.

Thirty-two interviews (see Appendix C and D) were conducted during the same semesters with students and instructors from different universities.

3.2 Developing of Questionnaires

McLeod (2018) stated that a questionnaire is considered to be a quick, cheap, and effective research instrument. So, the researcher will be able to obtain more information from a large number of people quickly and in short time. In addition, the researcher used closed-ended questions in her questionnaire which was represented by the Likert scale. This psychometric scale is generally used to gather social attitudes as mentioned by Roopa and Rani (2017). However, the researcher was inspired by particular related studies in developing the questionnaires, such as, (Onsoy 2004, Idir and Iskounen 2018, and Farrah 2006).

Both questionnaires were developed based on the IHEP benchmarks (2000) "The Institute of Higher Policy". This institution came up with the benchmarks for distance

teaching and learning. According to Hong (2008) these benchmarks will be helpful for those who are interested in distance learning; especially those who want to increase the quality of online learning.

According to Farrah (2006) there were seven major domains that all benchmarks came from; (1) institutional support, (2) course development, (3) teaching and learning, (4) course structure, (5) student support, (6) faculty support, and (7) evaluation and assessment. The researcher adapted these domains in developing the questionnaires. So, all of the above benchmarks have been used in both questionnaires. But, in the students' questionnaire "Faculty Support" was dropped because it didn't apply to students.

The two questionnaires consist of two parts. The first part includes background information for both students and instructors.

3.2.1 Student Questionnaire

In the second part of the students' questionnaire three sub headings were provided. The first one is **Benchmarks** which consist of six domains. The items of each domain are ranged between six to eight. This part uses a 5-point Likert-type scale, including (1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree. The domains were: **University Support** (consists of 6 items), **Course Development** (7 items), **Course Structure** (6 items), **Teaching/Learning Process** (7 items), **Student Support** (7 items), and **Evaluation and Assessment** (7 items). These domains come together for a total of 40 items. The aim of introducing these domains is to get a general idea about online learning in Palestinian universities. The second sub heading addresses students' perceptions toward using online applications. This part explains the advantages, flexibility, and convenience of using online applications. It includes fourteen items. The aim of this part is to answer the first and second research

questions. This part uses a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree.

The purpose of the last sub heading is to answer the third research question about the challenges of online learning. This part includes twenty items. Also, it includes a 5-point, Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree. There was a total of 74 items from the benchmarks.

3.2.1.1 Validity of the Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire was presented to four PhD English language instructors from different Palestinian universities (Hebron University, Palestine Ahliya University, and Arab American University). They approved both of the questionnaires with some notes. The researcher took the juries' notes and recommendations into consideration by making the suitable changes.

Examples of items' changes are below:

Table 3.1

Simplifying and shortening some items that the researcher did according to the juries' notes:

Changes to item	Original item	Benchmarks
Students are instructed in the proper methods of research.	Students are instructed in the proper methods of effective research, including assessment of resource validity.	Teaching/ Learning Process
Students have electronic assistance that help them access data successfully.	Students can obtain assistance to help them use electronically accessed data successfully.	Student Support

Changes to item	Original item	Benchmarks
Students are provided with practical training to use online applications.	Students are provided with hands-on training to use the online applications.	
A help office is in place to address students' complaints.	A structured system is in place to address students' complaints.	
I am unfamiliar with online learning.	I am unfamiliar with effective online learning.	
I have concerns about software breakdown during my online classes.	I have concerns about software and hardware breakdown during my online classes.	
Lack of knowledge in technology has a negative effect on instructors' performance.	Weaknesses in the use of technology have a negative effect on instructors' performance.	

Table 3.2

The omission of some items that the researcher did according to the juries' notes:

Replacing them by	The original items before deletion	Challenges of online learning
Lack of resources and web materials for online learning had a negative impact on my performance.	I couldn't find online resources that are suitable in online teaching contexts.	
	I have concerns about the availability of web materials.	

Table 3.3

Adding important items that the researcher did according to the juries' notes:

Added items	Students' Perceptions : Advantages (flexibility and convenience)
Online learning promotes my higher critical thinking (such as acquiring new vocabularies and idioms).	
Online learning supports student-centered learning.	
I have concerns about the high costs of internet when using online learning.	Challenges of online learning
Lack of knowledge in technology has a negative effect on instructors' performance.	

3.2.1.2 Reliability of Students' questionnaire

Students' questionnaire is reliable as seen in table 3.6 below.

Table 3.4

Reliability of Students' questionnaire

#	Students	Cronbach alpha	Sample
1	University Support	0.79	301
2	Course Development	0.79	301
4	Teaching/Learning Process	0.84	301
3	Course Structure	0.87	301
5	Student Support	0.85	301
7	Evaluation and Assessment	0.87	301
Total		0.75	301

All of the benchmark's items have relatively high internal consistency with a total of 0.75. This proves that the students' questionnaire is reliable.

3.2.2 Instructors' Questionnaire:

In the second part of the instructor questionnaire, three sub headings were provided. The first one is **benchmarks** which consist of seven domains. The items of each domain ranged from six to eight. This part used the 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree. The domains are: **University Support** (consists of 6 items), **Course Development** (7 items), **Course Structure**(6 items), **Teaching/Learning Process**(7 items), **Student Support**(7 items), **Faculty Support** (7 items), and **Evaluation and Assessment** (8 items). In total there are 48 items. The aim of introducing these domains is to get a general idea about online learning in Palestinian universities. The second sub heading addresses instructor perceptions toward using online applications. This part explains the advantages, flexibility, and convenience of using online applications. It includes fourteen items. The aim of this part is to answer the first and second research questions. It uses the 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree.

The purpose of the last sub heading is to answer the third research question about the challenges of online learning. This last part includes twenty items and a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree. So, there were 82 items as a gross of the whole benchmarks.

3.2.2.1. Validity of the instructors' questionnaire

After the approval of the supervisor, the questionnaire was presented to four PhD English language instructors from different Palestinian universities (Hebron University, Palestine Ahliya University, and Arab American University). They

approved both of the questionnaires with some notes. In the instructors' questionnaire the researcher omitted some repeated items and added some ones.

Changes of items in instructor questionnaire:

Table 3.5

The omission of some items that the researcher did according to the juries' notes

Replacing them with	The original items before deletion	Challenges of online learning
Lack of resources and web materials for online learning had a negative impact on my performance.	I couldn't find online resources that are suitable in online teaching contexts.	
	I have concerns about the availability of web materials.	

Table 3.6

Adding some items that the researcher did according to the juries' notes:

Added items	Students' Perceptions : Advantages (flexibility and convenience)
Online learning promotes my higher critical thinking (such as acquiring new vocabularies and idioms).	
Online learning supports student-centered learning.	
I have concerns about the high costs of internet when using online learning.	Challenges of online learning
Lack of knowledge in technology has a negative effect on instructors' performance.	

3.2. 2.2 Reliability of Instructors' Questionnaire

Instructors' questionnaire is reliable as seen in table 3.7 below.

Table 3.7

Reliability of Instructors' Questionnaire

Instructors	Cronbach alpha	Sample
University Support	0.85	74
Course Development	0.87	74
Course Structure	0.82	74
Teaching/Learning Process	0.91	74
Student Support	0.81	74
Faculty Support	0.83	74
Evaluation and Assessment	0.89	74
Total	0.89	74

All of the benchmarks items have relatively high internal consistency with a total of 0.89. This proves that the questionnaire is reliable.

3.3 Interviews

For more precise results the researcher interviewed English students and instructors from different universities. These interviews were developed based on extensive reading of previous related studies. Semi-structured interviews were carried out through the participants. The researcher wrote down notes in order to properly document the findings and record them on her smartphone after taking permission from participants.

According to Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008), the purpose of the research interview is to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations of

individuals on specific matters. So, researchers do interviews to understand others' perceptions and experiences on particular issues.

The researcher uses semi-structured interviews. According to Adhabi and Anozie (2017) it is significant to acknowledge semi-structured interviews as the ideal data collection mechanism for qualitative studies. It seems that using semi-structured interviews presents the perfect way to collect quality information.

3.3.1 Conducting the Interviews

The researcher conducted interviews with 9 instructors from 12 different universities and 19 students. The researcher used open-ended questions to uncover instructors' and students' views about online learning. Six questions were asked to the instructors and students. The researcher formulated them based on the questionnaire items. The researcher depended particularly on a related study of (Farrah, 2006).

All of the questions are about using Online Learning. The questions introduced the attitudes of students and instructors about some of IHEP benchmarks, such as, university support, student support, faculty support, evaluation and assessment. Others presented the advantages as well as the challenges of online learning. The last question was about giving suggestions in order to overcome online learning challenges.

3.3.2 Instructors' Interviews

The researcher used semi-structured interviews with the instructors to get more reliable information. The instructors gave their own views and answered the questions freely. By doing such interviews the researcher got more detailed information about online learning.

The interviews were done in the first semester of the year 2019/2020 in the middle of September and October. First, the researcher took the permission to do these

interviews from her supervisor. From the 12th universities one instructor was interviewed on behalf of his/her university. First the researcher calls each one of the instructors and tells them about the interview and nature of the questions. Then the instructors choose the appropriate application for contact. One of the instructors asked the researcher to write the questions one by one on WhatsApp and he replied with voice messages for each question. This interview took thirty-four minutes. Some of the instructors were comfortable with text messages on WhatsApp and Messenger. Others were more comfortable with email chatting. These interviews took 35 minutes. Choosing the time for contact depended on the instructors.

3.3.3 Students' Interviews

The interviews with the students were very sufficient and helpful. The researcher also used semi-structured interviews with the students. These interviews helped the researcher to collect accurate information. Also, these interviews were conducted in the first semester of the year 2019/2020 in the middle of September and October. The researcher did interviews with 2 students for each of the 12 universities. A total of 21 interviews were done with university students. First, the researcher asked for the students' permission before doing these interviews. Then, she used Messenger and WhatsApp applications to communicate with those students. These interviews took 20-30 minutes. Furthermore, these interviews took from one day to more than two weeks. So, in doing these interviews the researcher waited for the suitable time that the interviewees' chose. Some of them had exams, others had business, and others had other activities.

3.4 Conclusion

To sum up this chapter presented the methods, participants, instruments that were used in collecting data. In collecting data, the researcher used the mixed methods

design. The researcher used two online questionnaires for both students and instructors. 301 students and 74 instructors filled in the online questionnaires during summer 2019/2020 and first semester of 2020/2021. Interviews were also done in order to get more accurate data about certain issues. The researcher did interviews with 21 students and 11 instructors from different Palestinian universities. Thus, a total of 33 interviews had been done during the same time of summer 2019/2020 and the first year of 2020/2021. Before distributing the questionnaires, the researcher depended on certain steps in developing them by referring back to her supervisor and other English language instructors from different universities. These steps were making certain changes on some items by adding, simplifying, omitting, and shortening. Further, before doing the interviews, the researcher tried to take the students' and the instructors' permission to choose the suitable time and applications.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Results

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Results

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and the results of this study. Every IHEP benchmarks for both instructors and students' questionnaires is discussed in detail. Then the researcher presents the challenges and the advantages of online learning for both questionnaires. SPSS program was used to analyze the results of the study that have been presented and analyzed in this chapter. Interviews had been done for both students and instructors to have more accurate results.

4.1 Sample of the Study

This research covers the major universities in Palestine. So, questionnaires were distributed to twelve Palestinian universities in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza. English major students and instructors are the ones who filled in the questionnaires. A total of 400 online questionnaires were distributed to both students and instructors. 301 student questionnaires and 74 of instructor questionnaires were completed. A total of 375 questionnaires had been submitted to the researcher.

4.2 Questionnaire Analysis and Discussion

4.2.1 Part one: Demographic Data of Instructor and Student Questionnaires

Through the questionnaire results, the researcher observed certain socio-demographic characteristics of instructors and students that included variables as shown in Table 4.3 for instructors and Table 4.4 for students which contain the frequency and percentage of each variable listed according to the survey categories.

Table 4.1

The distribution of the instructors' demographic data:

Variable	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	50	67.6
	Female	24	32.4
	Total	74	100.0
Age group	25-34	14	18.9
	35-44	10	13.5
	45-55	29	39.2
	55+	21	28.4
	Total	74	100.0
Years of experience	1-5	10	13.5
	6-10	10	13.5
	11-16	11	14.9
	17-21	14	18.9
	22+	29	39.2
	Total	74	100.0
University	Al- Quds Open University	8	10.8
	Al-Aqsa University	6	8.1
	Al-Azhar University	8	10.8
	Al-Quds University	4	5.4
	An-Najah National University	4	5.4
	Arab American University	4	5.4
	Bethlehem University	7	9.5
	Birzeit University	5	6.8
	Gaza University	5	6.8
	Hebron University	8	10.8
	Palestine Ahliya University	8	10.8
	The Islamic University of Gaza(IUG)	7	9.5
Total	74	100.0	
Have you taken any online training sessions before?	Yes	59	79.7
	No	15	20.3
	Total	74	100.0
Have you received adequate technical support for delivering your online courses at your university?	Yes	61	82.4
	No	13	17.6
	Total	74	100.0

Table 4.1 shows that the majority of the instructors are males constituting the total of 67.6%. In terms of age, instructors from 45 to 55 represent the highest percentage with a total of 39.2%. Four out of the twelve universities have the same constituting total of 10.8%. Regarding answering the two questions about taking online training

sessions and receiving adequate technical support the majority responded with yes for a total of 79.7% for the first question “Have you taken any online training sessions before?”. The same resulting percentage occurred in the second question “Have you received adequate technical support for delivering your online courses at your university?”. The majority of instructors responded with yes with a total of 82.4%.

Table 4.2

The distribution of student demographic data:

Variable	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	242	80.4
	Male	59	19.6
	Total	301	100.0
Years of Study	First	11	3.7
	Fourth	127	42.2
	MA Student	38	12.6
	Second	54	17.9
	Third	71	23.6
	Total	301	100.0
	University	Al-Aqsa University	28
Al-Azhar University		10	3.3
Al-Quds Open University		40	13.3
Al-Quds University		20	6.6
An-Najah National University		28	9.3
Arab American University		19	6.3
Bethlehem University		39	13.0
Birzeit University		31	10.3
Gaza University		8	2.7
Hebron University		37	12.3
Palestine Ahliya University		13	4.3
The Islamic University of Gaza (IUG)		28	9.3
Total		301	100.0
My major is one of the following (English Literature, Teaching methods, applied linguistics, translation, English/ Minor French)	No	0	0.0
	Yes	301	100.0
	Total	301	100.0

Table 4.2 shows that females represent the majority with a total of 80.4%. Fourth year students scored the highest percentage with a total of 42.2%. Al-Quds Open University has the highest percentage with a total of 13.3% and Bethlehem University has a close total 13.0%. All of the students respond yes to “Is your major English” with a total of 100.0%.

4.2.2 Part two: Instructor and Student Questionnaires

To answer the research question “What are EFL university students and instructors' perceptions toward using online applications and to what extent online learning meets IHEP benchmarks?", means and standard deviations are calculated.

Table 4.3

Instructors' experience of online learning and IHEP benchmarks

#	Domain	Mean	Std.	Agreement
1	University Support	3.79	1.00	Agree
2	Course Development	3.70	0.87	Agree
4	Teaching/Learning Process	3.60	0.90	Agree
3	Course Structure	3.59	0.90	Agree
5	Student Support	3.55	0.92	Agree
7	Evaluation and Assessment	3.38	0.91	Neutral
6	Faculty Support	3.31	0.82	Neutral
Total		3.56	0.80	Agree

Table 4.3 shows that instructors agree that the online experience met the IHEP benchmarks. So, the total is good with a mean of 3.56 and the highest agreed domain is **University Support** with a mean of 3.79. The second highest domain is **Course Development** that has the mean of 3.70. The lowest agreed domain is **Faculty Support** with a mean of 3.31.

Table 4.4

Students' experience of online learning and IHEP benchmarks

#	Domain	Mean	Std.	Agreement
1	University Support	3.25	0.68	Neutral
2	Course Development	3.08	0.87	Neutral
4	Teaching/Learning Process	2.99	0.97	Neutral
3	Course Structure	2.98	0.88	Neutral
5	Student Support	2.89	0.85	Neutral
6	Evaluation and Assessment	2.89	0.89	Neutral
Total		3.02	0.73	Neutral

Table 4.4 shows that students' responses agree that the **total** is Neutral with a mean of 3.02 and the domain that scores the highest is **University Support** with a mean of 3.25. The second domain that scores the highest mean is **Course Development** with a mean of 3.08. The domain that has the lowest mean is **Evaluation and Assessment** with a mean of 2.89.

From both tables, the researcher notices that the instructors agree that online learning met IHEP benchmarks while the students are neutral regarding this position. This is could be because the instructors are more conscious and more serious than students. However, both instructors and students agree that University Support scores the highest mean. On the other side, Faculty Support and Evaluation and Assessment in response to the instructors present the lowest mean. While Evaluation and Assessment and Student support score the lowest mean in the students' questionnaire. So, it's clear that students and instructors agree that they have little support from their colleagues and they have certain reservations toward the evaluation system.

There are no differences in EFL university students and instructors' perceptions toward using online applications and in the extent of online experience that met the IHEP benchmarks with respect to universities.

One way ANOVA test was used to examine the differences in perceptions toward using online applications and to examine the extent the online experience met the IHEP benchmarks with respect to universities.

Also, means and standard deviations were used to examine EFL university students and instructors' perceptions toward using online applications and to examine the extent to which online experience met the IHEP benchmarks.

Table 4.5

Differences between Palestinian universities in relating to online learning

	University	mean	Std.
Total	Al-Aqsa University	2.8225	.80333
	Al-Azhar University	3.0051	1.06386
	Al-Quds Open University	3.2153	.89675
	Al-Quds University	2.8052	.77647
	An-Najah National University	3.0928	.68827
	Arab American University	3.2996	.72653
	Bethlehem University	3.2776	.70077
	Birzeit University	3.0065	.65433
	Gaza University	3.4112	.75186
	Hebron University	3.1225	.72286
	Palestine Ahliya University	3.2078	.73208
	The Islamic University of Gaza (IUG)	3.2472	.74602

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
University	10.261	11	.933	1.575	.104
Error	214.998	363	.592		
Total	225.259	374			
a. R Squared = .046 (Adjusted R Squared = .017)					

Table 4.5 shows that there are no statistical differences in EFL university students and instructors' perceptions toward using online applications. Besides, there are no statistical differences in the extent of online experience that met the IHEP benchmarks with respect to universities.

As mentioned previously in chapter three, the questionnaires consisted of two parts. The first part includes demographic data for both instructors and students. The second part consists of three subheadings. The researcher will introduce each part in detail.

In this part, the researcher presents the three subheadings for both questionnaires, IHEP Benchmark in detail, exploring the advantages, and examining the challenges of online learning.

4.2.3 IHEP Benchmarks

In this section, the researcher introduces the percentage of answering the research questions that are related to IHEP benchmarks.

To answer the questions means and standard deviations are calculated for items of EFL university instructors and students' perceptions toward using online applications and to uncover the extent to which online experience met the IHEP benchmarks.

For interpreting the results key means are used in the following manner:

1-1.8 strongly disagree

1.81-2.6 disagree

2.61-3.4 Neutral

3.41-4.20 agree

4.21-5 strongly agree

Q.1. To what extent does the online learning experience meet institutional support benchmarks?

Table 4.6

Instructors' responses regarding institutional support benchmarks

#	Item	mean	Std.	Agreement
2	Our university made the necessary educational tools (Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, Moodle, Blackboard, etc..) accessible to students and instructors	4.00	1.09	Agree
1	Our university responded quickly and in an organized way to the online learning transition	3.97	1.06	Agree
3	Our university has electronic security measures to ensure the integrity and validity of information.	3.84	1.12	Agree
4	Our university provided us with adequate technical support for online courses.	3.81	1.14	Agree
5	Our university has a highly reliable online delivery system.	3.72	1.15	Agree
6	Our university has policies that protect faculty members' intellectual property rights for digital work.	3.38	1.12	Neutral
University Support		3.79	1.00	Agree

Table 4.6 shows that instructors agree that **University Support** is good with a mean of 3.79 and the item that scores the highest mean is “Our university made the necessary educational tools (Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, Moodle, Blackboard, etc..) accessible to students and instructors” with a mean of 4.00. The second item that has a high mean is “Our university responded quickly and in an organized way to the online learning transition” with a mean of 3.97. The less agreed

on statement is “Our university has policies that protect faculty members' intellectual property rights for digital work” with a mean of 3.38.

Table 4.7

Students' responses regarding the institutional support benchmarks

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
6	Our university has policies that protect students' intellectual property rights for digital work.	3.38	1.05	Neutral
2	Our university made the necessary educational tools (Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, Moodle, Blackboard, etc...) accessible to students and instructors.	3.36	1.17	Neutral
5	Our university has a highly reliable online delivery system.	3.36	1.06	Neutral
4	Our university provided us with adequate technical support for online courses.	3.34	1.09	Neutral
1	Our university responded quickly and in an organized way to the online learning transition.	3.09	1.08	Neutral
3	Our university has electronic security measures to ensure the integrity and validity of information.	2.98	1.08	Neutral
University Support		3.25	0.68	Neutral

Table 4.7 shows that students agree that **University Support** is neutral with a mean of 3.25 and the item that has the highest mean is “Our university has policies that protect students' intellectual property rights for digital work” with a mean of 3.38. The second highest item is “Our University made the necessary educational tools (Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, Moodle, Blackboard, etc...) accessible to students and instructors” with a mean of 3.36. The item that has the lowest mean is “Our university has electronic security measures to ensure the integrity and validity of information” with a mean of 2.98.

Q.2. To what extent does the online learning experience meet course development benchmarks?

Table 4.8

Instructors' responses regarding the course development benchmarks

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
1	The course content was delivered with appropriate media.	3.86	1.00	Agree
7	There was guidance for students on how to access online resources throughout the course.	3.77	1.05	Agree
2	The level of course content difficulty was appropriate to my students.	3.76	0.96	Agree
4	The content of the course helped me to fulfill the objectives of the course.	3.76	1.06	Agree
3	The technology being used to deliver course content is based on learning outcomes.	3.68	0.95	Agree
6	The students are required to engage themselves in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as part of their course requirements.	3.54	1.04	Agree
5	The assessment activities (tests, quizzes, essays, presentations, etc.) contributed to my students' confidence in in the course.	3.51	1.08	Agree
Course Development		3.70	0.87	Agree

Table 4.8 shows that instructors agree that **Course Development** is good with a mean of 3.70 and the item that has the highest mean is “The course content was delivered with appropriate media” with a mean of 3.86. The second highest item is “There was guidance for students on how to access online resources throughout the course” with a mean of 3.77. The lowest mean is found in “The assessment activities (tests, quizzes, essays, presentations, etc.) contributed to my students' confidence in the course” with a mean of 3.51.

Table 4.9

Students' responses regarding the course development benchmarks

#	Item	mean	Std.	Agreement
6	The students are required to engage themselves in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as part of their course requirements.	3.32	1.17	Neutral
7	There was guidance on how to access online resources throughout the course.	3.15	1.14	Neutral
2	The course content was delivered with appropriate media.	3.05	1.08	Neutral
5	The assessment activities (tests, quizzes, essays, presentations, etc.) contributed to my confidence in in the course	3.04	1.20	Neutral
3	The technology being used to deliver course content is based on learning outcomes.	3.01	1.04	Neutral
4	The content of the course helped me to fulfill the objectives of the course.	3.01	1.14	Neutral
1	The level of course content difficulty was appropriate to me.	3.00	1.09	Neutral
Course Development		3.08	0.87	Neutral

Table 4.9 shows that students agree that **Course Development** is neutral with a mean of 3.08 and the item that has the highest mean is “The students are required to engage themselves in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as part of their course requirements” with a mean of 3.32. The second item that has the highest mean is “There was guidance on how to access online resources throughout the course” with a mean of 3.15. The item that has the least agreement is “The level of course content difficulty was appropriate to me” with a mean of 3.00.

Q.3 To what extent does the online learning experience meet course structure benchmarks?

Table 4.10

Instructors' responses regarding the course structure benchmarks

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
2	Learning outcomes for each course are summarized in a clearly written, straightforward statement.	3.88	1.15	Agree
1	Students are provided with supplemental course information that outlines course objectives, concepts and ideas.	3.78	1.10	Agree
4	Instructors are required to grade and return all assignments within a certain time period.	3.69	1.07	Agree
3	Instructors and students agree upon expectations regarding times for student assignment completion and faculty response.	3.58	1.13	Agree
6	Before starting the course, students are advised about the course to determine if they have the self-motivation and commitment to learn online.	3.32	0.99	Neutral
5	Sufficient library resources including a "virtual library" are made available to students.	3.31	1.13	Neutral
Course Structure		3.59	0.90	Agree

Table 4.10 shows that instructors agree that **Course Structure** is good with a mean of 3.59. The highest mean was found in “Learning outcomes for each course are summarized in a clearly written, straightforward statement” with a mean of 3.88. The second highest item is “Students are provided with supplemental course information that outlines course objectives, concepts and ideas” with a mean of 3.78. The lowest mean was found in “Sufficient library resources including a ‘virtual library’ are made available to students” with a mean of 3.31.

Table 4.11

Students' responses regarding the course structure benchmarks

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
4	Instructors are required to grade and return all assignments within a certain time period.	3.12	1.15	Neutral
3	Instructors and students agree upon expectations regarding times for student assignment completion and faculty response.	3.08	1.11	Neutral
1	Students are provided with supplemental course information that outlines course objectives, concepts and ideas.	3.07	1.14	Neutral
2	Learning outcomes for each course are summarized in a clearly written, straightforward statement.	3.06	1.10	Neutral
6	Before starting the course, students are advised about the course to determine if they have the self-motivation and commitment to learn online.	2.90	1.13	Neutral
5	Sufficient library resources including a "virtual library" are made available to students.	2.69	1.18	Neutral
Course Structure		2.98	0.88	Neutral

Table 4.11 shows that students agree that **Course Structure** is neutral with a mean of 2.98. The item with the highest mean is “Instructors are required to grade and return all assignments within a certain time period” with a mean of 3.12. The second highest item is “Instructors and students agree upon expectations regarding times for student assignment completion and faculty response” with a mean of 3.08. The item that has the lowest mean is “Sufficient library resources including a ‘virtual library’ are made available to students” with a mean of 2.69.

Q.4 To what extent does the online learning experience meet teaching and learning benchmarks?

Table 4. 12

Instructors' responses regarding the teaching and learning benchmarks

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
7	The instructor provided enough examples to allow students to better understand the subject matter.	4.00		Agree
1	Student interaction with faculty is facilitated through a variety of ways.	3.68	.128	Agree
3	The instructor's feedback to my assignments/questions is provided in a timely manner.	3.66	.122	Agree
4	The instructor's feedback is offered in constructive non-threatening manner.	3.65	.131	Agree
6	Students are instructed in the proper methods of effective research, including assessment of resource validity.	3.58	.120	Agree
5	Courses are designed to promote collaborative and problem-solving activities.	3.57	.114	Agree
2	Student interaction with other students is facilitated through a variety of ways.	3.50	.131	Agree
Teaching/Learning Process		3.60	.104	Agree

Table 4.12 shows that instructors agree that **Teaching/Learning Process** is good with a mean of 3.60. The highest mean was found in “The instructor provided enough examples to allow students to better understand the subject matter” with a mean of 4.00. The second highest mean is found in “Student interaction with faculty is facilitated through a variety of ways” at 3.68. The lowest mean appears in “Student interaction with other students is facilitated through a variety of ways” with a mean of 3.50.

Table 4.13

Students' responses regarding the teaching and learning benchmarks

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
2	Student interaction with other students is facilitated through a variety of ways.	3.14	1.14	Neutral
7	The instructor provided enough examples to	3.13	1.24	Neutral

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
	allow me to better understand the subject matter.			
4	The instructor's feedback is offered in constructive non-threatening manner.	3.04	1.13	Neutral
6	Students are instructed in the proper methods of research.	2.98	1.18	Neutral
5	Courses are designed to promote collaborative and problem-solving activities.	2.96	1.14	Neutral
3	The instructor's feedback to my assignments/questions is provided in a timely manner.	2.88	1.16	Neutral
1	Student interaction with faculty is facilitated through a variety of ways.	2.86	1.14	Neutral
Teaching/Learning Process		2.99	0.97	Neutral

Table 4.13 shows that students agree that **Teaching/Learning Process** is neutral with a mean of 2.99 and the item that has the highest mean is “Student interaction with other students is facilitated through a variety of ways ” with a mean of 3.14. The second highest item is “The instructor provided enough examples to allow me to better understand the subject matter” which has the mean of 3.13. The item that has the lowest mean is “Student interaction with faculty is facilitated through a variety of ways” with a mean of 2.86.

Q.5 To what extent does the online learning experience meet student support benchmarks?

Table 4.14

Instructors' responses regarding the student support benchmarks

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
7	Emails, Facebook pages and WhatsApp are provided to encourage students to work with each other and with their instructors.	3.82	1.08	Agree
2	Students can obtain assistance to help them use electronically accessed data successfully.	3.70	1.14	Agree
5	Easily accessible technical assistance is available to all students throughout the semester.	3.53	1.11	Agree
1	Students' complaints to the online instructors were addressed adequately.	3.51	1.11	Agree
4	Written information is supplied to students about the online applications.	3.51	1.14	Agree

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
6	A structured system is in place to address students' complaints.	3.46	1.09	Agree
3	Students are provided with hands-on training to use the online applications.	3.34	1.04	Neutral
Student Support		3.55	0.92	Agree

Table 4.14 shows that instructors agree that **Student Support** is good with a mean of 3.55. The highest mean appeared in this item “Emails, Facebook pages and WhatsApp are provided to encourage students to work with each other and with their instructors” with a mean of 3.82. The second highest item is “Students can obtain assistance to help them use electronically accessed data successfully” with a mean of 3.70. The lowest mean appears in the item “Students are provided with hands-on training to use the online applications” with a mean of 3.34.

Table 4.15

Students' responses regarding the student support benchmarks

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
7	Emails, Facebook pages and WhatsApp are provided to encourage students to work with each other and with their instructors.	3.36	1.23	Neutral
4	Written information is supplied to students about the online applications.	2.97	1.09	Neutral
5	Easily accessible technical assistance is available to all students throughout the semester.	2.83	1.11	Neutral
6	A help office is in place to address students' complaints.	2.83	1.13	Neutral
2	Students have electronic assistance that helps them access data successfully.	2.82	1.05	Neutral
1	My complaints to the online instructors were addressed adequately.	2.76	1.01	Neutral
3	Students are provided with practical training to use online applications.	2.67	1.11	Neutral
Student Support		2.89	0.85	Neutral

Table 4.15 shows that students agree that **Student Support** is neutral with a mean of 2.89. The item with the highest mean is “Emails, Facebook pages and WhatsApp are provided to encourage students to work with each other and with their instructors” with a mean of 3.36. The second highest mean is related to “Written information is

supplied to students about the online applications” with a mean of 2.97. The item that has the lowest mean is “Students are provided with practical training to use online applications” with a mean of 2.67.

Q.6 To what extent does the online learning experience meet faculty support benchmarks?

Table 4.16

Instructors' responses regarding the faculty support benchmarks

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
2	Faculty members are assisted in the transition from classroom teaching to online teaching.	3.70	1.12	Agree
1	Adequate technical assistance is available to faculty.	3.68	1.17	Agree
4	Online training continues throughout the progression of the online class.	3.53	1.13	Agree
5	Faculty members are provided with written resources to deal with issues arising from students' use of online applications.	3.53	1.01	Agree
3	There are peer mentoring resources available to faculty members teaching online.	3.34	1.11	Neutral
6	The web applications involved in online teaching are confusing.	2.95	1.03	Neutral
7	Faculty members are provided with financial incentives for online transition.	2.46	1.20	Disagree
Faculty Support		3.31	0.82	Neutral

Table 4.16 shows that instructors agree that **Faculty Support** is neutral with a mean of 3.31 and the highest mean appears in “Faculty members are assisted in the transition from classroom teaching to online teaching” with a mean of 3.70. The second highest item is “Adequate technical assistance is available to faculty” with a

mean of 3.68. The lowest mean is found in “Faculty members are provided with financial incentives for online transition” with a mean of 2.46.

Q.7 To what extent does the online learning experience meet evaluation and assessment benchmarks?

Table 4.17

Instructors' responses regarding the evaluation and assessment benchmarks

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
1	An evaluation process is used to improve the teaching/learning process.	3.47	1.050	Agree
5	Means of evaluation used in online learning enabled us to examine the theoretical knowledge of the students.	3.46	1.036	Agree
6	The evaluation process in online learning happened in a professional and subjective way.	3.43	.994	Agree
3	Intended learning outcomes are regularly reviewed to ensure clarity and appropriateness.	3.36	1.080	Neutral
7	The evaluation tools used in online learning were varied and fair.	3.36	1.165	Neutral
2	Specific standards are in place to compare and improve learning outcomes.	3.34	1.037	Neutral
4	The evaluation tools used in online learning enabled us to measure the objectives of the course accurately.	3.34	1.037	Neutral
8	Data on the best technological practices are used to evaluate the course effectiveness	3.30	1.069	Neutral
Evaluation and Assessment		3.38	0.91	Neutral

Table 4.17 shows that instructors agree that **Evaluation and Assessment** is neutral with a mean of 3.38 and the highest mean is found in “An evaluation process is used to improve the teaching/learning process” with a mean of 3.47. The second highest item is “Means of evaluation used in online learning enabled us to examine the theoretical knowledge of the students” with a mean of 3.46. The lowest agreed

statement is “Data on the best technological practices are used to evaluate the course effectiveness” with a mean of 3.30.

Table 4.18

Students' responses regarding the evaluation and assessment benchmarks

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
3	Intended learning outcomes are regularly reviewed to ensure clarity and appropriateness.	2.97	1.04	Neutral
5	Means of evaluation used in online learning examined our theoretical knowledge.	2.96	1.11	Neutral
2	Specific standards are in place to compare and improve learning outcomes.	2.95	1.06	Neutral
4	The evaluation tools used in online learning enabled us to achieve the objectives of the course accurately.	2.95	1.09	Neutral
1	An evaluation process is used to improve the learning process.	2.93	1.13	Neutral
6	The evaluation process in online learning happened in a professional and subjective way.	2.78	1.13	Neutral
7	The evaluation tools used in online learning were varied and fair.	2.74	1.11	Neutral
Evaluation and Assessment		2.89	0.89	Neutral

Table 4.18 shows that students agree that **Evaluation and Assessment** is neutral with a mean of 2.89 and the highest scored item is “Intended learning outcomes are regularly reviewed to ensure clarity and appropriateness” with a mean of 2.97. The second highest item is “Means of evaluation used in online learning examined our theoretical knowledge” that has the mean of 2.96. The less agreed on statement is “The evaluation tools used in online learning were varied and fair” with a mean of 2.74.

After introducing instructor and student responses to the question “To what extent does online learning experience meet IHEP benchmarks?” It is clear that the instructors agree that their online learning experience meets IHEP benchmarks with a high average of responses except for the item “Faculty Support and Evaluation and Assessment” which had low means. Regarding the students, they don’t agree that

online learning experience meet all of the benchmarks. That's because this is their first experience with online learning. Also, they have less responsibility than instructors. Instructors also try to fulfill the teaching transition with care. Students have less care toward continuing their learning in such emergent situations. However, both students and instructors are forced to learn and teach online in order to continue the educational process. Instructors want to continue the educational process though they face certain limitations. Students also try to adapt to this emergent situation despite their lack of online knowledge.

4.2.4 Exploring the Advantages of Using Online Applications

Instructors and students have seen certain advantages of using online learning. Here the researcher introduces them with mean and standard deviations.

Table 4.19

Online learning advantages as perceived by the instructors.

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
6	Online learning offered me the opportunity to follow my study at any place and time.	3.39	.991	Neutral
10	The online education provided a valuable teaching experience.	3.39	1.096	Neutral
11	Online learning promotes higher critical thinking (such as acquiring new vocabularies and idioms).	3.36	1.015	Neutral
4	The web applications involved in online teaching are easy.	3.35	1.103	Neutral
13	Online learning offers effective communication tools.	3.35	1.221	Neutral
14	Online learning offers accessibility for instructors and students.	3.35	1.065	Neutral
2	I found online sessions convenient and interesting.	3.27	1.174	Neutral
5	Online classes were effective in helping me achieve the learning objectives of the course.	3.19	1.029	Neutral
1	The online education was flexible enough to meet my needs.	3.18	1.186	Neutral
12	I recommend online courses to other instructors.	3.16	1.123	Neutral
9	Online learning supports student-centered learning.	3.11	1.015	Neutral
7	I liked online learning because there is no need to go to university.	2.82	1.209	Neutral

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
8	Completely online teaching is an advantage.	2.78	1.114	Neutral
3	I could deal with the online course more easily than face-to-face courses.	2.64	1.117	Neutral

Table 4.19 shows that the instructors' best advantage is "Online learning offered me the opportunity to follow my study at any place and time" with a mean of 3.39. The second best advantage is "The online education provided a valuable teaching experience" that has the mean of 3.39. The item that has less agreement "I could deal with the online course more easily than face-to-face courses" with a mean of 2.64.

Table 4.20

Online learning advantages as perceived by the students.

#	Item	Mean	Std.	Agreement
6	Online learning offered me the opportunity to follow my study at any place and time.	3.06	1.262	Neutral
14	Online learning offers accessibility for instructors and students.	2.92	1.220	Neutral
11	Online learning promotes my higher critical thinking (such as acquiring new vocabularies and idioms).	2.89	1.250	Neutral
4	The web applications involved in online teaching are easy.	2.88	1.197	Neutral
9	Online learning supports student-centered learning.	2.82	1.264	Neutral
13	Online learning offers effective communication tools.	2.82	1.202	Neutral
10	The online education provided a valuable teaching experience.	2.81	1.232	Neutral
2	I found online sessions convenient and interesting.	2.71	1.145	Neutral
5	Online classes were effective in helping me achieve the learning objectives of the course.	2.68	1.201	Neutral
1	The online education was flexible enough to meet my needs.	2.67	1.164	Neutral
12	I recommend online courses to other students.	2.64	1.253	Neutral
8	Completely online teaching is an advantage.	2.58	1.266	Neutral
3	I could deal with the online course more easily than face-to-face courses.	2.53	1.273	Neutral
7	I liked online learning because there is no need to go to university	2.52	1.298	Neutral

Table 4.20 shows that the student's best advantage is "Online learning offered me the opportunity to follow my study at any place and time" with a mean of 3.06 that is

significant at the level 0.05. The second advantage is “Online learning offers accessibility for instructors and students” that has the mean of 2.92. The advantage that has the lowest mean is “I liked online learning because there is no need to go to university” with a mean of 2.52.

From both of the tables it's noticeable that instructors and students have the same best rated advantage, “Online learning offered me the opportunity to follow my study at any place and time”. This is because online learning is done from the convenience of one’s home. Online applications have the tool to record every class, so students and instructors can follow up on their work at any time and place. Besides, both of them highlight the advantage “Online learning promotes my higher critical thinking (such as acquiring new vocabularies and idioms)” that comes as the third highest rated position. They also share the same opinion on the statement “I could deal with the online course more easily than face-to-face courses”. It has the lowest mean in the instructors' questionnaire and the first lowest mean in the students' questionnaire after “I liked online learning because there is no need to go to university”.

4.2.5 Exploring the Challenges that Face EFL University Instructors and Students While Using Online Applications

To explore the challenges that face EFL university instructors and students, means and standard deviations are calculated. Below are the tables that show these challenges and they are organized from the most challengeable item to the lowest.

Table 4.21

Online learning challenges as perceived by the instructors

#	Item	mean	Std.	Agreement
10	I have concerns about interruption of internet or slow connectivity.	4.04	.943	Agree
11	I have concerns about software breakdown during my online classes	4.03	.921	Agree
9	Online teaching takes more time than face-to-face teaching.	4.00	1.123	Agree
8	The online transition increased my workload and working hours.	3.95	1.058	Agree
1	I have concerns about the absence of face-to-face interaction with students.	3.88	1.020	Agree
2	Online instruction may isolate students and faculty.	3.84	.980	Agree
12	I have concerns about the quality of the voice and picture in my online classes.	3.82	.942	Agree
15	I have concerns about evaluation and assessment in the online environment.	3.80	1.085	Agree
6	Lack of knowledge in technology has a negative effect on students' performance.	3.73	1.076	Agree
13	I have concerns regarding sending and receiving assignments and materials.	3.70	1.043	Agree
7	I have concerns regarding large class number.	3.68	1.061	Agree
17	I have concerns regarding conducting exams using Google form.	3.68	1.087	Agree
5	Lack of knowledge in technology has a negative effect on instructors' performance.	3.66	1.050	Agree
16	The online environment made it difficult for me to evaluate my students.	3.59	1.059	Agree
14	Lack of resources and web materials of online teaching had a negative impact on students' learning.	3.55	.953	Agree
18	I have concerns about the availability and effectiveness of my laptop and smartphone for online learning.	3.38	1.069	Neutral
20	I have concerns about the availability of a calm room for online learning.	3.35	1.199	Neutral
4	Lack of technical help for students and instructors hinders the educational performance and progress.	3.24	1.070	Neutral
19	I have concerns about the high costs of internet when using online learning.	3.07	1.317	Neutral
3	I am unfamiliar with online learning.	2.55	1.218	Neutral

Table 4.21 shows that the instructors' most challenging item is "I have concerns about interruption of internet or slow connectivity" with a mean of 4.04. The second challenging item is "I have concerns about software breakdown during my online classes" which has the mean of 4.03. The item that has less agreement is "I am unfamiliar with online learning" with a mean of 2.55.

Table 4.22

Online learning challenges as perceived by the students.

#	Item	mean	Std.	Agreement
5	Lack of knowledge in technology has a negative effect on instructors' performance.	3.55	1.179	Agree
10	I have concerns about interruption of internet or slow connectivity.	3.55	1.338	Agree
12	I have concerns about the quality of the voice and picture in my online classes.	3.51	1.277	Agree
6	Lack of knowledge in technology has a negative effect on students' performance	3.49	1.231	Agree
11	I have concerns about software breakdown during my online classes.	3.47	1.311	Agree
8	The online transition increased the size of my assignments and studying hours.	3.44	1.230	Agree
15	I have concerns about evaluation and assessment in the online environment.	3.40	1.183	Agree
4	Lack of technical help for students and instructors hinders the educational performance and progress.	3.36	1.187	Neutral
13	I have concerns regarding sending and receiving assignments and materials.	3.36	1.298	Neutral
18	I have concerns about the availability and effectiveness of my laptop and smartphone for online learning	3.35	1.221	Neutral
20	I have concerns about the availability of a calm room for online learning.	3.31	1.241	Neutral
1	I have concerns about the absence of face-to-face interaction with students and instructors.	3.30	1.257	Neutral
9	Online learning takes more time than face-to-face learning.	3.27	1.277	Neutral
14	Lack of resources and web materials for online learning had a negative impact on my performance.	3.27	1.254	Neutral
2	Online instruction may isolate students and faculty.	3.22	1.184	Neutral
17	I have concerns regarding sitting for exams using Google forms.	3.22	1.228	Neutral
19	I have concerns about the high costs of internet when using online learning.	3.12	1.232	Neutral

#	Item	mean	Std.	Agreement
7	I have concerns regarding large class numbers.	3.11	1.242	Neutral
16	The online environment made it difficult for me to follow up my exams with my instructors.	3.11	1.198	Neutral
3	I am unfamiliar with online learning.	2.85	1.264	Neutral

Table 4.22 shows that the most challenging aspect is “Lack of knowledge in technology has a negative effect on instructors' performance” with a mean of 3.55. The second challenging aspect is “I have concerns about interruption of internet or slow connectivity” that has a mean of 3.55. The less challenging aspect is “I am unfamiliar with online learning” with a mean of 2.85.

From both of these tables it's clear that both instructors and students agree that this statement “I have concerns about interruption of internet or slow connectivity” has the highest mean in the instructors' questionnaire and the second highest mean in the students' questionnaire. Also, both of them agree upon “I am unfamiliar with online learning” that has the lowest mean in both questionnaires.

4.3 Interview Analysis and Discussion

In this section, instructor and student interviews are analyzed and presented in detail. The interviews were conducted with 11 instructors and 21 students from 12 different Palestinian universities. All of the interviewees accepted to participate in this research. The major aim of these interviews is to gain more accurate details about using online learning applications during the Coronavirus pandemic. In these interviews 6 related questions were been asked to different instructors and students. The questions relate to university support, faculty support for instructors and students, support for students, evaluation and assessment, advantages of online learning, challenges and obstacles of online learning, and finally what can be done to overcome some of these challenges.

4.3.1 Questions of online learning experience

The researcher asked the same questions to both instructors and students with one question restate. She asked the instructors about faculty support and the students about student support. The rest of the questions are the same for both instructors and the students.

4.3.2 Instructors and Students as Interviewees

Q.1 What type of support did the university present for online learning integration in the learning process? Describe the training you got?

Instructors' Responses:

All of the eleventh instructors agreed that their universities provided them with the needed support, for example:

Instructor 05: From the beginning, the university put teaching the staff and the students on how to use different software as a priority. They started with the staff by conducting intensive workshops lead by expert in the field of E-Learning. After that, they sent videos on emails to follow up the process of learning how to use technology in teaching. Also, the young members of staff helped the old ones who are not familiar with technology. WhatsApp groups were created for each department to help each other in any technical difficulties we faced during the process. Regarding the students, they are smart in using technology; therefore, they did not face any difficulties in dealing with the social media platforms where we used to upload the lectures. In addition, the use of the Moodle is not that difficult.

Instructor 07: The Islamic University has launched intensive training sessions to all the academics from day one of the crisis. Part of the training was face to face, and the

other part was through webinars. I attended both sessions and I learned how to post material and make exams using Moodle.

Instructor 08: Providing the students as well as the instructors with support is very critical to the success of the e-learning environment, especially at the technical level. As for Al-Quds Open University, training for the faculty and the staff is an ongoing process to cope with the challenges especially the one we have been experiencing these days.

From these responses it's clear that the instructors agree that their universities provide them with the necessary training and support to face this crisis.

Students' Responses:

Almost all of the students agree that their universities provided them with none or little support during online learning. Thus, I found that 15 students out of 21 agree that they didn't have that much of support from their universities.

Student 05: The University provided us with videos about how to use online applications. We did not get any training or workshops. I think the University doesn't give that much support for us as students.

Student 06: The University just provided us with a video about how to use Moodle. But, it stipulates providing this video with paying the fees, so students who pay their fees can see this video but those who don't pay can't see it. I think the university support is not perfect and is not suitable.

Student 08: The University doesn't present any support or training to me as a first year student. I don't know how to deal with the electronic system.

From these responses it's clear that students are not satisfied with their university support. According to those students, their universities just provide them with videos about how to use online applications with no training.

From the responses for the first question, it is clear that instructors are more satisfied and pleased about their universities support and training. The students are less satisfied because they are smarter in using online learning. So, universities think they don't need such help or training.

Q2. How do you describe the evaluation process/examinations? Do you have any concerns?

Instructors' Responses:

Instructors used different types of activities in order to evaluate their students. Eight instructors out of 11 said that the evaluation process is somewhat fair. Further, 6 out of 11 instructors said that online learning gives the chance for cheating.

Instructor 02: I can say that the assessment criteria are good. Students are given a number of online quizzes and tests. However, the problem is related to the culture of the students' learning via online. Students tend to seek help from colleagues and this cannot 100 % be controlled. On the other hand, the students always try all possible techniques to help them proceed in the academic process. We also have a number of online evaluation tools that help teachers evaluate their students objectively.

Instructor 04: The evaluation system here has many types: Worksheets, assignments, the in-class involvement, in addition to the typical exams. It is sometimes exhausting for teachers, but this way you may have a fair evaluation.

Instructor 06: As you know, evaluation is not only making tests or quizzes. Mostly I apply the formative assessment and give proper chances to every student to participate and express themselves. This enables me to actually assess their listening and speaking skills. The reading skill is also tested in this way, adding to homework tasks mostly (the after reading stage) . Writing skills are tested through assigning students tasks similar to those they read about. However, the evaluation via internet is susceptible to cheating. Students in our country and all over the world tend to cheat without realizing that it is a harmful behavior.

It's clear from the previous responses that instructors try to do their best in order to evaluate their students in a proper way. Also, it's clear that cheating from students is something annoying for instructors and online learning is susceptible to this harmful behavior.

Students' Responses:

Most of the students believe that the evaluation system in online learning is not fair. Thus, 15 students out of 21 agree that the evaluation system in online learning is not fair enough. Also, some of them 4 out of 21 said that they are shocked about their grades.

Student 03: It is not fair because in face-to-face learning I got 3.09 GPA but in online learning it decreased to 2.7. In online learning, I was sure of my answers in the exams but when I received them I was really shocked. I think face-to-face learning is more perfect and fair.

Student 08: The evaluation system is not fair because instructors don't know students very well and I have a problem with the internet. So, most of the time I can't attend classes and quizzes.

Student 12: I think my grades were not real; some of them were unfair and didn't align with my efforts, so I was really shocked. Our instructors didn't give us any feedback or even showed us our mistakes. There are no office hours as in face-to-face learning and that makes us feel bad. Also, some of them evaluate our efforts less than what we deserved due to our problems with internet connection.

In relation to the second question, it's clear that instructors and students have certain reservations about the evaluation process. Instructors have concerns about cheating. Students agree that face-to-face is better than online learning.

Q3. What about Faculty Support? Describe the support and training that you got from your faculty staff.

This question was asked to the instructors only. Most of them 7 out of 11 agree that they cooperative with each other and that their faculties support them when they need. They help each other in different ways such as directing each other about how to use online applications.

Instructor 07: Yes, one of my peers organized a workshop for the English department about the use of the Moodle, especially for quizzes and final exams. Mostly, training was carried out by IT training staff.

Instructor 10: During the pandemic period lots of support and help was offered from staff that have more experience to other staff who know nothing. As the dean of the

faculty, I used to sit with those whose knowledge is limited and provide them with the help they need.

Instructor 11: I did cooperate with my faculty staff. I asked some for help and they gave me directions. We also had some training sessions and practice.

Q.3 What about Student Support? Describe the support and training that you got from your colleagues.

This question was only asked to students. Almost half of the of them 9 out of 21 agree that they have harmful support from their colleagues especially because they have the chance for cheating. Some of the students agree that they have a positive support especially the groups that they joined in order to transfer information and assignments between each other.

Student 06: There is no support or cooperation between students at all. Once I posted something on the group and no one responded to me.

Student 09: As students we cooperate with each other in answering many questions and activities but sometimes this cooperation makes some students depend on others in every detail so this affects them negatively.

Student11: There is so much cooperation between students and sometimes it tends to be negative especially in exams. There are WhatsApp and Messenger groups that help every student.

As a consequence of the question about colleagues' cooperation for both instructors and students it's clear that instructors have a positive support while students have a negative cooperation. This is because instructors care more about the educational

process and they have the same interest in succeeding the educational process. Meanwhile students have a personal interest and they don't have much control.

Q.4 What are the advantages of online learning?

Instructors' Responses:

Instructors agree that online learning has the advantage of saving time. Some of them 4 out of 11 instructors talked about the negative sides of depending on online learning. But, most of them 8 out of 11 agree that online learning has a big advantage in saving time and effort.

Instructor 02: There are many. Online learning is comfortable for both teachers and students. There is no time consumed when moving from house to school. It enables teachers to use the online resources efficiently and effectively. Technology has paved the way to a new approach in teaching that helps in making university study more revealing and enjoyable.

Instructor 04: Online learning has some advantages for both learners and instructors. For learners, it saves them time and effort they spend in transport and other aspects. They may need the time they save in work or other useful jobs. It also saves them money, in addition to holding responsibility by being punctual in attending classes. Learners do not feel embarrassed to take part in lectures. As for instructors, it is nearly the same, but there is another advantage. Time can sometimes be flexible, that is, if the instructor is unable to lecture for any reason, he or she can move the class time for another date of the day, whether in the morning, evening or even at night.

Instructor 10: Online learning is something new in our community, of course you can teach or learn at any time of the day, but unfortunately the infrastructure in Gaza Strip

is too poor and it is a big obstacle, but the best advantages to instructors are free-lance and no fixed schedule and saves a lot of time. Also, you can handle courses more easily than face to face and can fix your suitable time for lectures.

Students' Responses:

Most of the students 17 out of 21 believe that online learning saves time and effort. Also, some of them 6 out of 21 agree that online learning makes them depend on themselves more.

Student 09: The best advantage of online learning is its flexibility and it doesn't restrict us as students in one place. Yes, online learning eases my life. I can follow up my lectures at any time and place.

Student12: For me, I think E-learning was a great experience. It had many weak points, yet I found some lessons are more enjoyable and useful than face to face ones. Also, it gave me the chance to learn from any place and at any time. It taught me to depend more on myself. Moreover, it helped me to think more critically in the exams that depended on critical questions rather than theoretical ones.

Student 14: In online learning I totally depend on myself. It saves time and effort. Also, I have the chance to know how to use references for my researchers. It also makes learning easier anytime and at any place.

From the responses of both instructors and students toward the fourth question, it's noticeable that both of them believe that online learning saves time and effort.

Q.5 What are the challenges and obstacles that you face during online learning?

Instructors' Responses:

Almost all of the instructors 10 out of 11 talked about the unstable internet connection. Also, some of them 4 out of 11 talked about poor interaction. Further, 2 instructors out of 11 talked about the large number of students in one online session. Instructor 03: Interaction is very bad. Students don't hold real responsibility for their own learning. Cheating is all over the place. Constant technical failure: no internet, electricity, no communication tools offered by university.

Instructor 06: The problem is mostly related to technology (technology phobia). Internet interruption is a recurrent problem which leads to a great loss.

Instructor 10: There are lots of challenges, most of all electricity supply, the network infrastructure is too weak in Gaza Strip, and poverty is also a big challenge many students do not have internet at their homes.

Students' Responses:

Most of the students 18 out of 21 talked about internet interruptions. Also, some of them 8 out of 21 talked about the distraction from others. Others, 5 out of 21 students talked about poor interaction with their colleagues and instructors.

Student 02: In online learning there is no participation or interaction between students and their instructors. I didn't get anything or information from this system. The Internet is a big problem.

Student 04: Technical problems such as internet interruption. Also, distraction from my family is another obstacle.

Student 06: There is little interaction between students and instructors. There are a lot of distractions from other students and our families. Internet interruption is another problem.

In relation to question 5 about online challenges it's clear that both instructors and

students agree that internet interruption is the biggest obstacle. So, both of them talked about internet interruption and the outage of electricity.

Q.6 What can be done to overcome some of the challenges?

Instructors' Responses:

Some of the instructors 3 out of 11 think that workshops are highly recommended in order to accommodate using technology. Others, 5 out of 11 instructors talked about fixing the whole infrastructure and minimizing the numbers of students in one session.

Instructor 01: I think that we should hold more workshops for both students and teachers. Further, we should study the feedback from both students and teachers and work on it.

Instructor 05: Raising the awareness towards the benefits of E-Learning. Giving more workshops on using new technologies. Use of satellite channels to broadcast lectures which needs less internet. Helping poor students to be able to access technological items.

Instructor 07: Teachers should get more training to be able to use more advanced online applications. Universities should pay to some excellent online teaching applications such as ZOOM, as many teachers use the free versions, which have a very limited time and number of students. The session lasts only 40 minutes. Instructors should be provided with high-speed internet connections and more technical support from universities. There should be fewer students in each section as some sections have more than 80 students, and it is not easy to deal with such a huge number of students online.

Students' Responses:

Some students 5 out of 21 talked about blended learning. Others, 9 out of 21 students talked about supporting them with the appropriate internet connection.

Student 04: We should have blending between face to face and online learning.

Student 11: To provide us with the appropriate networks, and to have technical solutions such as downloading the recording lessons when the internet is off so students could open them without the internet.

Student 16: To depend on blended learning, thus we can join online learning and attend face to face learning.

Instructors and students believe that online learning is a new situation that should be accommodated with in order to be in line with the educational process. Both of them suggest many ideas in order to improve this type of learning especially during this pandemic.

4.4 Conclusion

This study shows that instructors stated that their universities provide them with the needed support and this is clear in both of their questionnaires and interviews. As for the students they also have little or even no support from their universities and this is clear in their questionnaire and the interviews. For the evaluation process it's clear that both instructors and students have some reservations and somewhat agree that this process is not fair. As for faculty support it's clear that in the questionnaire more details were given that's why it differs from their responses in the interview. So, in the questionnaire they were neutral about this benchmark but in the interview they agree that they have much support and cooperation. For students they cite the same internet

interruption in both the questionnaire and the interview. They also believe that they have little to no support from their colleagues. As for the advantages of online learning: both the instructors and the students agree that it saves time and effort. This is clear in both the questionnaires and the interviews. Besides, both of the instructors and students agree that internet interruption is the biggest obstacle that they face. Finally, both of them give certain ideas and suggestions in order to deal with online learning in a better way.

4.5 Discussion

After analyzing the data, instructors agree that online learning meets most of IHEP benchmarks. This is clear in their responses to the questionnaires and this conforms to the results of other studies such as Itmeizeh and Farrah (2021) which was done in Palestine Ahliya University and Hebron University in Palestine. For example, instructors believe that their universities provided them with the necessary educational tools during the COVID-19 pandemic and this is evident in their questionnaire and interviews. In their questionnaires, they gave a high average for the items of university support especially in relation to providing them with the appropriate educational tools and how their universities responded quickly and systematically to the transition. In their interviews, instructors also agree that their universities provided them with adequate support. Most of them talked about how their universities held workshops in order to support them with this crisis and most of them talked about the training they got from their universities during this emergent situation. Farrah's 2006 study found that institutional support was low and this differs from this study's results because Farrah's study is older when online learning was not as common. But, in the previous study the research found that online learning met some of IHEP benchmarks generally and this aligns with the results of this study.

Regarding students, they don't agree that online learning meet IHEP benchmarks, so they were neutral towards the extent online learning meets IHEP benchmarks and this generally resembles what Itmeizeh and Farrah (2021) concluded in their study. To be more specific, students agree that their universities didn't deliver the suitable technical support. This resembles what Al-Bakry and Farrah (2020) and Al-Jarrah, Talafhah, and Al-Jarrah (2018) concluded in their studies. They consider technical support a challenge that faces online learning. However, it is clear from their responses to the questionnaire and the interviews that they didn't have any support from their universities. In the questionnaire, they agree that their universities didn't provide them with the adequate support, security measures, and tools. In the interviews, they were also dissatisfied with their university support and most of them said that their universities just provided them with videos about how to use online applications and they had no sessions or training workshops.

In this study, student and faculty support had low ratings. Students didn't get the support that they desired and this is clear in their responses to both of the questionnaires and the interviews. They agree that their colleagues and instructors don't provide them with the needed support. Though they did have social media groups they didn't have the real support that they desired. This is clear in the questionnaire and the interview. So, in the questionnaire they were neutral on all items of student support and in the interview most of them said that they had negative support from their colleagues especially because of the chance of cheating. In Johnson's 2000 study, they concluded that in face-to-face learning students have more support from their colleagues and instructors which resembles conclusions of this study. For faculty support in online learning more support is needed. In this study it's clear that instructors have different perceptions toward the support from their peers

and the technical assistance. In the questionnaire, they respond with neutral to most of the items but in the interviews they agree that they have some level of support and cooperation for each other. This is because in the interviews the researcher allows interviewees to give more details and express more ideas. Since this is our first time in a fully online learning system, instructors need more training and support than they needed in face-to-face learning. In Bao and Wei's (2020) study, it's clear that instructors need more support and training in order to make their students more satisfied with online learning. However, online learning needs adequate support of many different aspects. So, all hands should come together in order to achieve a perfect learning outcome.

Further, in this study instructors and students agree that evaluation and assessment has some weak points that should be solved which matches Al-Bakry and Farrah's (2020) study. In their study, they found that the evaluation system is not fair. Online learning doesn't help instructors in evaluating their students in an accurate way like in face-to-face learning. This is similar to what Johnson (2000) discussed in their study that compares online learning with face-to-face learning. In online learning, participation depends on just student voices instead of their pictures, sounds, and movements. Also, the evaluation system depends on the assignments and activities that in most cases don't represent student effort nor thoughts because they use the internet as a resource in most cases. This is clear in being neutral in both questionnaires of students and instructors. While, in the instructors' responses to the interview most of them agree that the evaluation system is somewhat fair though cheating is everywhere. In Itmeizeh and Farrah's (2021) study they agree with the researcher about student dissatisfaction with the evaluation system, but they don't have the same response from instructors because in this study the sample of the instructors is higher so the

results are more accurate. In the student interviews most of the students agree that the evaluation system in online learning is not fair and some were surprised about their grades. As a result, it is clear that students don't prefer online learning.

Concerning the advantages of online learning, both instructors and students have negative attitudes toward the transition to online learning. Still, both groups agree that online learning saves time and effort and this is clear in the high average of this item in both questionnaires. Also, it is clear in their interviews and this resembles the findings of these studies (Haque, Aman, and Karmaker, 2017) at Jahangirnagar University and (Khalil, 2018) at Palestine Ahliya University. Online learning allows instructors and students to hold their lectures at any time and place. This helps to continue the educational process in urgent situations that prevent face-to-face learning. In the instructor interviews most talked about another advantage which is developing technology skills similar to what Al-Bakry and Farrah (2020) conclude in their study. Also, students have the ability to re watch the lectures at any time because of the privilege of recording all the educational sessions. In the student interviews some of them agree that online learning makes them depend more on themselves which is highlighted in other studies such as Al-Bakry and Farrah 2020 and Fithriani, Dewi, Daulay, and Salmiah 2019. Online learning eases the way for instructors and students to study anywhere and anytime.

As to negative attitudes toward using online learning, this research is similar to what the following studies also conclude: Zboun and Farrah (2021) and Nugroho, Ilmiani, and Rekha (2020). This research concludes that instructors and students agree that online learning has more challenges and they have negative perceptions towards using online learning. The most challenging characteristic of online learning is internet interruption or slow connectivity and this is clear in the high mean of this item in both

questionnaires and in interview responses. This conforms to what other studies conclude such as Allo (2020), Zboun and Farrah (2021), Layali and AlShlowiy (2020), and Mishra, Gupta, and Shree (2020). These studies agree that internet interruption is the most common obstacle because it is related to problems and difficulties from both instructor and student attitudes. The internet infrastructure in Palestine is poor and this resembles what Al-Bakry and Farrah (2020) concluded in their study. In some cases, students have poor connection to the internet and this affects the educational process negatively. In others, instructors have problems connecting to the internet which has a huge effect on the completion of their educational mission.

Besides, another obstacle in connecting to the internet is the breakdown of electricity especially in winter because of wind and heavy rain. In the instructor interviews another obstacle they highlighted is poor interaction and communication and large number of students in one online session. To combat this complication, instructors suggested reducing the numbers of students in order to make things simpler. In the student interviews some of them talked about poor interaction and communication between each other and this aligned with findings from other studies such as Octaberlina and Muslimin (2020) and Zboun and Farrah (2021).

Instructors and students suggest certain ideas in order to improve online learning in future. Some of the instructors suggest to do more workshops in order to have better online learning skills and this is what other researchers concluded in their studies such as Gao and Zhang (2020), Rasmitadila et al. (2020), Bailey and Lee (2020), and Al-Bakry and Farrah (2020). To improve online learning, training sessions should be held. With these, instructors and students will be more aware about using technology in the appropriate way. Students suggest blended learning meaning they will attend

face-to-face lectures as well as online sessions. They need to have face-to-face lectures from time to time in order to improve the quality of their education. Also, other students and instructors talked about developing the internet infrastructure in their country in order to achieve better connection.

4.6 Conclusion

The results of this study are comparable to other similar studies. Instructors and students agree on some ideas and don't agree on others. This is because of the nature of human beings that creates differences in perceptions toward experiences. Instructors have more responsibilities and duties to improve the educational process and therefore they rate items highly. Students have fewer responsibilities and they only concentrate on getting high grades. However, most of the ideas that the researcher concludes to be similar and shared with others.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction

This chapter has an overall view about the findings of this study. So, it has four sections. The first section introduces the extent to which each benchmark has been met. The second section presents the advantages of online learning. The third one introduces the challenges of online learning. The fourth section suggests some recommendations for future studies.

5.1 The Extent to Which the Benchmarks Are Met

This study investigated EFL Palestinian university student and instructor attitudes toward using online learning applications during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students and instructors have different perceptions toward the extent of meeting IHEP benchmarks. The instructors agree that online learning meets most of IHEP benchmarks which are University Support, Course Development, Teaching/Learning Process, Course Structure, and Student Support but Faculty Support and Evaluation and Assessment didn't meet IHEP benchmarks. The students agree that online learning didn't meet six IHEP benchmarks which include University Support, Course Development, Teaching/Learning Process, Course Structure, and Student Support, and Evaluation and Assessment.

The following subdivisions finalize the results of these benchmarks; University Support, Course Development, Teaching/Learning Process, Course Structure, Student Support, Faculty Support and Evaluation and Assessment.

5.1.1 University Support

Instructors agree that University Support met IHEP benchmarks and it has the highest mean among others. This is clear from their responses to questionnaires and interviews. The instructors agree that their universities provided them with the adequate educational tools, their universities responded quickly and systematically to the transition of online learning, and they did training sessions and workshops in order to be in line with this crisis. Also, the instructors felt that their universities had electronic security measures, they provided them with the appropriate technical support, and they had a reliable online system. But, they didn't agree that their universities had policies to protect their rights for digital work. While, the students didn't agree that their universities provided them with the appropriate support and training which is made clear in their questionnaires and interviews.

5.1.2 Course Development

Instructors agree that Course Development met IHEP benchmarks. They agree that course content was carried out with appropriate media, the students had online guiding resources to access the course, the level of course content was adequate to students, the content of the course helped them to achieve the course objectives, online applications delivered course content based on learning outcomes, students were engaged in every part of the course requirements, and students were satisfied about the assessment activities. On the other hand, the students didn't agree that course development met IHEP benchmarks.

5.1.3 Teaching/Learning Process

Based on the instructor perceptions, the Teaching/Learning Process met IHEP benchmarks. Instructors agreed that they provided enough examples for their students

to understand the material in a better way, the interaction was easy and appropriate for both instructors and students, feedback was provided in an appropriate non-threatening way, students were instructed with the proper methods, and there were collaborative and problem-solving activities course design. Whereas, students didn't agree that online learning met IHEP benchmarks.

5.1.4 Course Structure

Instructors agree that Course Structure met IHEP benchmarks. They agree that the learning outcomes for each course were summarized in a clear way, their students were provided with adequate course information, they graded their students within a certain period of time, and they agreed upon times for finalizing assignments in relation to their faculty response. However, they didn't agree that their students were advised about the course before starting it and they didn't agree that there was an available sufficient virtual library for students. For students, they didn't agree that online learning met IHEP benchmarks.

5.1.5 Student Support

In relation to the instructors, they agreed that Student Support met IHEP benchmarks. They also agreed that social media applications encourage students to work with each other, students can have assistance to help them electronically, there were easy accessible technical assistance during the semester, student complaints were addressed appropriately and in a structured system, and written information was delivered to students. But, they didn't agree that students were provided with active training to use online applications. On the other hand, students agree that online learning didn't meet IHEP benchmarks and this is clear in both their questionnaire

and interviews. Students further agree that they didn't have any positive support from their colleagues and instructors.

5.1.6 Faculty Support

This benchmark was only asked to the instructors. In the questionnaire instructors agree that overall, online learning didn't meet IHEP benchmarks. More specifically, they agree about certain items of this benchmark, such as that faculty members were assisted in the transition to online learning, there were appropriate technical assistance, training is a continual process, and there were written resources to deal with emergent issues. These items were also supported by the interviews because they talked about the real support they received from their colleagues. Instructors didn't agree that peer mentoring resources were available, web applications were confusing, and they didn't provide financial incentives. However, the instructors had different perceptions toward this benchmark. In the questionnaire they agree that online learning didn't meet IHEP benchmarks while in the interviews they agree that they had peer mentoring and they had real support from their faculties. This is because in the interviews the researcher was more specific and she asked for more details.

5.1.7 Evaluation and Assessment

Both students and instructors agree that online learning didn't meet IHEP benchmarks. This is clear in their questionnaires. They agree that there were no regularly reviewed learning outcomes, no appropriate evaluation tools, no specific standards to improve learning outcome, no accurate measures tools, and no appropriate technological tools that were used. However, in the interviews most of the instructors agree that the evaluation process in online learning is somewhat appropriate and fair. While, most of the students agree that the evaluation system is not fair at all.

5.2 Advantages of Online Learning

Regarding the advantages, students and instructors agree that online learning has some advantages such as saving time and effort. This is because online learning depends on the internet without the need to take transportation and go to the university. Also, online learning had the privilege of recording lectures, so any student could watch any lecture at any time. Further, both of the students and the instructors highlighted the advantage of promoting their higher critical thinking in using technology. However, students and instructors agree that online learning facilitates their learning and this is clear in their questionnaires and interviews.

5.3 Challenges of Online Learning

For the challenges of online learning, students and instructors have negative attitudes toward using online learning and this is clear in raising more challenges than advantages. Most of the students and instructors highlighted the challenge of the internet interruption and bad or slow connectivity. This obstacle was clear in both the questionnaires and interviews. In the interviews most of the instructors talked about the challenge of poor interaction and having too many students in one online session. Some of the students talked about other distractions and poor interaction. However, both instructors and students agree that online learning has more disadvantages and challenges than advantages. In conclusion, instructors and students largely have negative attitudes toward the transition from face-to-face learning to online learning.

5.4 Recommendations

In this study the researcher found that online learning needs more attention in order to make it more efficient. She suggests several ideas in order to create a better online learning experience in the future. First of all, educational institutions should hold workshops and sessions to train both students and instructors about how to use online

learning applications. These workshops and sessions should be done both virtually and in-person in order to make things clearer. Second, our government, officials, and educationalists should draw a clear picture about mending the whole educational infrastructure in our country. For example, technology needs to be updated by providing the internet for all people in order to make poor students receive their due rights to quality education. Also, lectures should be recorded using satellite channels because it requires less internet. Third, the number of students in one session should be reduced to allow all students to understand and participate actively. Fourth, blended learning is vital because instructors and students need to have face-to-face lectures from time to time in order to make things clearer especially during exam periods. With these solutions to the sophisticated issues highlighted, the online learning experience will improve for both instructors and students.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire for Students

Dear students,

The researcher is going to conduct a research entitled " **Attitudes of EFL Students and Professors at Palestinian Universities toward Using Online Learning Applications during Corona Pandemic**". This research aims to identify the extent to which the web applications used at Palestinian universities meet the universal benchmarks of online education. Moreover , it aims to examine the benefits and challenges of online learning. *You are kindly* requested to provide sincere opinion *or response to the questions. Your answers will be treated with confidentiality.*

PART I

Please, tick () the appropriate box.

<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	A. Gender:
B- Year of study: <input type="checkbox"/> First <input type="checkbox"/> Second <input type="checkbox"/> Third <input type="checkbox"/> Fourth <input type="checkbox"/> (MA Student)		
D. University <input type="checkbox"/> Birzet University <input type="checkbox"/> Palestine Ahily University <input type="checkbox"/> Hebron University <input type="checkbox"/> Bethlehem University <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Najah National University <input type="checkbox"/> Islamic University Gaza <input type="checkbox"/> Aqsa University <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Quds University <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Azhar University <input type="checkbox"/> Gaza University <input type="checkbox"/> Arab American University. <input type="checkbox"/> Quds Open University		
E- Choose the technological Apps you used in online leaning		
Google Meet <input type="checkbox"/>		
Google Classroom <input type="checkbox"/>		
Google Form <input type="checkbox"/>		
Zoom <input type="checkbox"/>		
Moodle <input type="checkbox"/>		
Facebook <input type="checkbox"/>		
Skype <input type="checkbox"/>		
YouTube <input type="checkbox"/>		
WhatsApp <input type="checkbox"/>		
Other: <input type="text"/>		
My major is one of the following (English Literature, Teaching methods, applied linguistics, translation, French, Minor French)		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	

PART II

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of these statements:

A: Benchmarks:						
Domain Number One: University support						
No.	Items	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Our university responded quickly and in an organized way to the online learning transition.					
2.	Our university made the necessary educational tools (Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, Moodle, Blackboard, etc.. .) accessible to students and instructors.					
3.	Our university has electronic security measures to ensure the integrity and validity of information.					
4.	Our university provided us with adequate technical support for online courses.					
5.	Our university has a highly reliable online delivery system.					
6.	Our university has policies that protect students' intellectual property rights for digital work.					
Domain Number Two: Course Development						
1.	The level of course content difficulty was appropriate to me.					
2.	The course content was delivered with appropriate media.					
3.	The technology being used to deliver course content is based on learning outcomes.					
4.	The content of the course helped me to fulfill the objectives of the course.					
5.	The assessment activities (tests, quizzes, essays, presentations, etc.) contributed to my confidence in in the course					
6.	The students are required to engage themselves in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as part of their course requirements.					
7.	There was guidance on how to access online resources throughout the course.					
Domain Number Three: Course Structure						
1.	Students are provided with supplemental course information that outlines course objectives, concepts and ideas.					
2.	Learning outcomes for each course are summarized in a clearly written, straightforward statement.					
3.	Instructors and students agree upon expectations regarding times for student assignment completion and faculty response.					

4.	Instructors are required to grade and return all assignments within a certain time period.					
5.	Sufficient library resources including a "virtual library" are made available to students.					
6.	Before starting the course, students are advised about the course to determine if they have the self-motivation and commitment to learn online.					
Domain Number Four: Teaching/Learning Process						
1.	Student interaction with faculty is facilitated through a variety of ways.					
2.	Student interaction with other students is facilitated through a variety of ways.					
3.	The instructor's feedback to my assignments/questions is provided in a timely manner.					
4.	The instructor's feedback is offered in constructive non-threatening manner.					
5.	Courses are designed to promote collaborative and problem-solving activities.					
6.	Students are instructed in the proper methods of research.					
7.	The instructor provided enough examples to allow me to better understanding of the subject matter.					
Domain Number Five: Student Support						
1.	My complaints to the online instructors were addressed adequately.					
2.	Students have electronic assistance that help them accessed data successfully.					
3.	Students are provided with practical training to use online applications.					
4.	Written information is supplied to students about the online applications.					
5.	Easily accessible technical assistance is available to all students throughout the semester.					
6.	A help office is in place to address students' complaints.					
7.	Emails, Facebook pages and WhatsApp are provided to encourage students to work with each other and with their instructors.					
Domain Number Six: Evaluation and Assessment						
1.	An evaluation process is used to improve the learning process.					
2.	Specific standards are in place to compare and improve learning outcomes.					
3.	Intended learning outcomes are regularly reviewed to ensure clarity and appropriateness.					

4.	The evaluation tools used in online learning enabled us to achieve the objectives of the course accurately.					
5.	Means of evaluation used in online learning examined our theoretical knowledge.					
6.	The evaluation process in online learning happened in a professional and subjective way.					
7.	The evaluation tools used in online learning were varied and fair.					
B: Students' Perceptions : Advantages (flexibility and convenience)						
1.	The online education was flexible enough to meet my needs.					
2.	I found online sessions convenient and interesting.					
3.	I could deal with the online course more easily than face-to-face courses.					
4.	The web applications involved in online teaching are easy.					
5.	Online classes were effective in helping me achieve the learning objectives of the course.					
6.	Online learning offered me the opportunity to follow my study at any place and time.					
7.	I liked online learning because there is no need to go to university					
8.	Completely online teaching is an advantage.					
9.	Online learning supports student-centered learning.					
10.	The online education provided a valuable teaching experience.					
11.	Online learning promotes my higher critical thinking (such as acquiring new vocabularies and idioms).					
12.	I recommend online courses to other students.					
13.	Online learning offers effective communication tools.					
14.	Online learning offers accessibility for instructors and students.					
C: Challenges of Online Learning						
1.	I have concerns about the absence of face-to-face interaction with students and instructors.					
2.	Online instruction may isolate students and faculty.					
3.	I am unfamiliar with online learning.					

4.	Lack of technical help for students and instructors hinders the educational performance and progress.					
5.	Lack of knowledge in technology has a negative effect on instructors' performance.					
6.	Lack of knowledge in technology has a negative effect on students' performance					
7.	I have concerns regarding large class numbers.					
8.	The online transition increased the size of my assignments and studying hours.					
9.	Online learning takes more time than face-to-face learning.					
10.	I have concerns about interruption of internet or slow connectivity.					
11.	I have concerns about software breakdown during my online classes.					
12.	I have concerns about the quality of the voice and picture in my online classes.					
13.	I have concerns regarding sending and receiving assignments and materials.					
14.	Lack of resources and web materials for online learning had a negative impact on my performance.					
15.	I have concerns about evaluation and assessment in the online environment.					
16.	The online environment made it difficult for me to follow up my exams with my instructors.					
17.	I have concerns regarding sitting for exams using Google forms.					
18.	I have concerns about the availability and effectiveness of my laptop and smartphone for online learning					
19.	I have concerns about the high costs of internet when using online learning.					
20.	I have concerns about the availability of a calm room for online learning.					

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Instructors

Dear instructors,

The researcher is going to conduct a research entitled "**Attitudes of EFL Students and Professors at Palestinian Universities toward Using Online Learning Applications during Corona Pandemic**". This research aims to identify the extent to which the web applications used at Palestinian universities meet the universal benchmarks of online education. Moreover , it aims to examine the benefits and challenges of online learning. You are kindly requested to provide sincere opinion or response to the questions. Your answers will be treated with confidentiality.

PART I

Please, tick (✓) the appropriate box.

• Female	• Male	A. Gender:
B-Age:	• 25-34 • 35-44 • 45-54 • 55+	
C-Years of experience:	• 1-5 • 6-10 • 11-16 • 17-21 • 22+	
E- University: Birzeit University <input type="checkbox"/> Palestine Ahliya University <input type="checkbox"/> Hebron University <input type="checkbox"/> Bethlehem University <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Najah National University <input type="checkbox"/> The Islamic University of Gaza(IUG) <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Aqsa University <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Quds University <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Azhar University <input type="checkbox"/> Gaza University <input type="checkbox"/> Arab American University. <input type="checkbox"/> . Al- Quds Open University		
F- Have you taken any online training sessions before • Yes • No		
G- Have you received adequate technical support for delivering your online courses at your university? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Choose the technological Apps you used in online leaning		
Google Meet <input type="checkbox"/>		
Google Classroom <input type="checkbox"/>		
Google Form <input type="checkbox"/>		
Zoom <input type="checkbox"/>		
Moodle <input type="checkbox"/>		
Facebook <input type="checkbox"/>		
Skype <input type="checkbox"/>		

YouTube
 WhatsApp
 Other:

I teach English (Literature, Teaching methods, applied linguistics, translation, French, minor French)

Yes No

A: Benchmarks:						
Domain Number One: University Support						
No.	Items	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Our university responded quickly and in an organized way to the online learning transition					
8.	Our university made the necessary educational tools (Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, Moodle, Blackboard, etc..) accessible to students and instructors					
9.	Our university has electronic security measures to ensure the integrity and validity of information.					
10.	Our university provided us with adequate technical support for online courses.					
11.	Our university has a highly reliable online delivery system.					
12.	Our university has policies that protect faculty members' intellectual property rights for digital work					
Domain Number Two: Course Development						
1.	The level of course content difficulty was appropriate to my students.					
2.	The course content was delivered with appropriate media.					
3.	The technology being used to deliver course content is based on learning outcomes.					
4.	The content of the course helped me to fulfill the objectives of the course.					
5.	The assessment activities (tests, quizzes, essays, presentations, etc.) contributed to my students' confidence in in the course.					
6.	The students are required to engage themselves in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as part of their course requirements.					
7.	There was guidance for students on how to access online resources throughout the course.					
Domain Number Three: Course Structure						
1.	Students are provided with supplemental course information that outlines course objectives, concepts and ideas.					

2.	Learning outcomes for each course are summarized in a clearly written, straightforward statement.					
3.	Instructors and students agree upon expectations regarding times for student assignment completion and faculty response.					
4.	Instructors are required to grade and return all assignments within a certain time period.					
5.	Sufficient library resources including a "virtual library" are made available to students.					
6.	Before starting the course, students are advised about the course to determine if they have the self-motivation and commitment to learn online.					
Domain Number Four: Teaching/Learning Process						
1.	Student interaction with faculty is facilitated through a variety of ways.					
2.	Student interaction with other students is facilitated through a variety of ways.					
3.	The instructor's feedback to my assignments/questions is provided in a timely manner.					
4.	The instructor's feedback is offered in constructive non-threatening manner.					
5.	Courses are designed to promote collaborative and problem-solving activities.					
6.	Students are instructed in the proper methods of effective research, including assessment of resource validity.					
7.	The instructor provided enough examples to allow students to better understand the subject matter.					
Domain Number Five: Student Support						
8.	Students' complaints to the online instructors were addressed adequately.					
9.	Students can obtain assistance to help them use electronically accessed data successfully.					
10.	Students are provided with hands-on training to use the online applications.					
11.	Written information is supplied to students about the online applications.					
12.	Easily accessible technical assistance is available to all students throughout the semester.					
13.	A structured system is in place to address students' complaints.					
14.	Emails, Facebook pages and WhatsApp are provided to encourage students to work with each other and with their instructors.					
Domain Number Six: Faculty Support						

1.	Adequate technical assistance is available to faculty.					
2.	Faculty members are assisted in the transition from classroom teaching to online teaching.					
3.	There are peer mentoring resources available to faculty members teaching online.					
4.	Online training continues throughout the progression of the online class.					
5.	Faculty members are provided with written resources to deal with issues arising from students' use of online applications.					
6.	The web applications involved in online teaching are confusing.					
7.	Faculty members are provided with financial incentives for online transition.					
Domain Number Seven: Evaluation and Assessment						
8.	An evaluation process is used to improve the teaching/learning process.					
9.	Specific standards are in place to compare and improve learning outcomes.					
10.	Intended learning outcomes are regularly reviewed to ensure clarity and appropriateness.					
11.	The evaluation tools used in online learning enabled us to measure the objectives of the course accurately.					
12.	Means of evaluation used in online learning enabled us to examine the theoretical knowledge of the students.					
13.	The evaluation process in online learning happened in a professional and subjective way.					
14.	The evaluation tools used in online learning were varied and fair.					
15.	Data on the best technological practices are used to evaluate the course effectiveness.					
B: instructors' Perceptions : Advantages (flexibility and convenience)						
15.	The online education was flexible enough to meet my needs.					
16.	I found online sessions convenient and interesting.					
17.	I could deal with the online course more easily than face-to-face courses.					
18.	The web applications involved in online teaching are easy.					
19.	Online classes were effective in helping me achieve the learning objectives of the course.					
20.	Online learning offered me the opportunity to follow my study at any place and time.					

21.	I liked online learning because there is no need to go to university.					
22.	Completely online teaching is an advantage.					
23.	Online learning supports student-centered learning.					
24.	The online education provided a valuable teaching experience.					
25.	Online learning promotes higher critical thinking (such as acquiring new vocabularies and idioms).					
26.	I recommend online courses to other instructors.					
27.	Online learning offers effective communication tools.					
28.	Online learning offers accessibility for instructors and students.					

C: Challenges of Online Learning

21.	I have concerns about the absence of face-to-face interaction with students.					
22.	Online instruction may isolate students and faculty.					
23.	I am unfamiliar with online learning.					
24.	Lack of technical help for students and instructors hinders the educational performance and progress.					
25.	Lack of knowledge in technology has a negative effect on instructors' performance.					
26.	Lack of knowledge in technology has a negative effect on students' performance.					
27.	I have concerns regarding large class number.					
28.	The online transition increased my workload and working hours.					
29.	Online teaching takes more time than face-to-face teaching.					
30.	I have concerns about interruption of internet or slow connectivity.					
31.	I have concerns about software breakdown during my online classes					
32.	I have concerns about the quality of the voice and picture in my online classes.					
33.	I have concerns regarding sending and receiving assignments and materials.					
34.	Lack of resources and web materials of online teaching had a negative impact on students' learning.					
35.	I have concerns about evaluation and assessment in the online environment.					
36.	The online environment made it difficult for me to evaluate my students.					
37.	I have concerns regarding conducting exams using Google form.					
38.	I have concerns about the availability and effectiveness of my laptop and smartphone for online learning.					

39.	I have concerns about the high costs of internet when using online learning.					
40.	I have concerns about the availability of a calm room for online learning.					

Appendix C: Students' Interviews

1. In relating to University Support, What type of support University presented to you as a student ? Describe the training you got?

Student 01: (Gaza Un.). Our university didn't support us at all. They didn't provide us with any things or videos.

Student 02: (Gaza Un.) We as students learn how to use internet applications without any help from our university. Our university didn't cooperate with us.

Student 03: (Palestine Ahliya Un.). The students downloaded a video about how to use Zoom and by this video I learnt how to access to this application. Also, one of the instructors posted on Facebook about how to use this application. I think that the university didn't provide us with suitable support or training.

Student 04: (Palestine Ahliya Un.) . Our university provided us with a detailed explanation on Facebook about how to use Zoom.

Student 05: (IUG). The university provided us with videos about how to use online applications. We did not get any training or workshops. I think the university don't give that much support for us as students.

Student 06: (IUG). The university just provided us with a video about how to use Moodle. But, it stipulates providing this video with paying the fees, so students who pay their fees they can see this video but those who don't pay can't see it. I think the university support is not perfect and is not suitable.

Student 07: (Al Aqsa un.) unfortunately the university did not give us any support. But, there were some instructors who explained to us how to use Moodle.

Student 08: (AL Aqsa un.) the university doesn't present any support or training to me as a first year student. I don't know how to use the electronic system.

Student 09: (QOU). The university supports us by presenting explicative materials about using technology in learning by presenting videos, PowerPoint slides, and files.

Student 10: (QOU). Yes our university provides us with videos on the academic portal about how to use technology in learning and how to deal with applications as Moodle, and Zoom.

Student 11: (HU). In our university they did not give us enough training but if any student want a help or ask a question the electronic center gives him/her the help. Also, when there is a sudden cut of internet during exams the university's administration take this into its consideration. But, recently our university this semester makes lectures for first year students about e-learning.

Student 12: (HU). We didn't have any online learning training during Corona pandemic. But, our university provided us with videos on how to use the new apps - e.g.: Google Meet- that we are going to depend on while learning and these videos ease our learning process. So, there wasn't any training programs for us except the videos that guided us on how to use these apps step by step.

Student 13: (Bethlehem Un.) I am at Bethlehem University. The support system we had during online learning is fairly well. They directed us how to attend classes online and how to contact our instructors by making us tutorial videos or send us detailed emails with the needed steps. They helped us if technical problems happened during doing our exams.

Student 14: (AlAzhar Un.) The university support us by providing us with videos about how to use Moodle, Zoom and other applications. There was no training sessions just they sent us those videos.

Student 15: (AAU). I did not take any training about how to use internet applications. Honestly speaking I asked some of my expert colleagues in using such applications.

Student 16: (AAU). The university provided us with videos that explain how to use internet applications but some of students don't watch them because it's easiness. So, anyone can use these applications without having any experience.

Student 17: (Birzeit Un.) . The university sent a video about how to use Zoom. But, otherwise we don't see any help or support.

Student 18: (Birzeit Un.) The university did not train us about how to use Zoom. We were obligated to acclimate using online applications when Corona virus was spread.

Student 19: (Al-Quds Un.). We know how to use Zoom without a need for training. The university did not provide us with any training or support.

Student 21: (Al-Quds Un.) . The university provided us with videos about how to deal with online applications and how to access to classes virtually.

Student 21: (Al-Najah Un.). The university didn't provide us with any training or workshops.

2. How can you describe evaluation and assessment process / examinations? Do you have any concerns?

Student 01: Online learning system didn't encourage me to care about grades because there are no grades it is just pass or fail. In this system I was handing out my assignments at the end of the semester.

Student 02: The system was pass or fail so there were no grades because of that I didn't have the chance to raise my GPA. I prefer face to face learning than online one.

Student 03: It is not fair because in face to face learning I got 3.09 GPA but in online learning it decreased to 2.7. In online learning I was assured about my answers in the exams but when we received them I was really shocked. I think that face to face learning is more perfect and fair.

Student 04: I was shocked about my grades though I know well what I had done well in the exams. Most of the questions are multiple choice and this is not fair. So, I think the evaluation is not fair at all in some courses. I think face to face learning is more better.

Student 05: I think the evaluation is fair in general. I got low grades because I faced technical and time problems.

Student 06: Sometimes it's fair and I didn't face any problems with evaluation.

Student 07: The evaluation depends on the marks that I got so it's almost fair.

Student 08: The evaluation system is not fair because instructors don't know the students very well and I have a problem with internet. So, most of the time I can't attend classes and quizzes as a result instructors have bad ideas about me.

Student 09: I think the evaluation system is not fair because as a student I was shocked about my marks in general. I know the answers very well and I'm sure about them but I was shocked in the end about the grades. There were an exam and to activities for each course.

Student 10: The evaluation system is fair and appropriate for all of students.

Student 11: Students don't know instructors' procedures in evaluating them. There was a shock about my grades in general. This system is not fair at all because most of the students have a big chance for cheating. There was no clear idea about the feedback for my assignments. Also, instructors assume that students cheat so they put low marks not what they deserve.

Student 12: I think my grades were not real, some of them were unfair and didn't accordant to my efforts so I was really shocked. Our instructors didn't give us any feedback or even showed us our mistakes. There is no office hour as in face to face learning and that makes us not pleased and felt bad. Also, some of them evaluate our efforts less than what we deserved due to our problems with internet connection.

Student 13: The evaluation process, at least for me, was not fair and was not credible for certain courses. Personally, one of my instructors did not give did not give us any feedback, so I did not know my grades and I finally I got a really low grade in the course though I deserved a much higher grade this dropped my GPA.

Student 14: The evaluation is not fair in face to face learning we got much higher marks. In online learning the exams are much difficult and we have less grades.

Student 15: I didn't face any problems in evaluation I'm really satisfied about my grades. The evaluation was very fair and good.

Student 16: It's fair enough the instructors know every student from face to face learning so they know our levels. We took the marks that we are deserving.

Student 17: The evaluation system sometime is not fair because the material is not given as clear as it should be like in face to face learning. Because we have bad internet, the distraction, the electricity going off and on etc... when instructors give us ten minutes to answer 30 questions how could we respond quickly and accurately. So, in general grading system is unfair for the students and it needs to be studied in depth.

Student 18: The evaluation is not fair especially in the first semester of this crisis. The university did a system of pass or fail so students were wronged by this system and the one who needs to increase his/her GPA doesn't benefit.

Student 19: The evaluation is not fair enough especially in this semester because they want us to attend exams face to face though we are studying online.

Student 20: I think that the succeeding percentage in online learning is more than face to face. Also, I think that the evaluation system in online learning is not fair for some of clever students whom they deserve much grades. I prefer face to face evaluation.

Student 21: The evaluation is not good nor bad because it depends on the course itself. There are courses we can't study them electronically we need to study them face to face. However, I'm satisfied with my grades and marks.

3. What about Student Support? Describe the support and training that you got from your colleagues?

Student 01: Students' support during this pandemic is more than face to face learning. We depend on each other in many things. I think this cooperation is negative because we totally depend on others and on internet in doing our homework and assignments.

Student 02: I liked the idea of group working in doing our assignments and activities. This eases things and I think this cooperation affects us positively.

Student 03: I give it 50% because sometimes students cooperate with each other but sometimes not.

Student 04: We have some students who are very cooperative and others are not. So, sometimes they cooperate in doing assignments and explaining some tough issues and lessons. But, I noticed that during exams there were a large percentage of cheating.

Student 05: We have students' groups but we don't cooperate with each other at all. Some students are very selfish and they want just their personal interest.

Student 06: There is no support or cooperation between students at all. Once I posted something on the group and no one responded to me.

Student 07: Students help each other in different manners, so there were groups on WhatsApp and Telegram to help each other and to summarize the course material. For the second part of the question, no it's contrarily students help each other so the one who summarize what the instructor said in the lecture sent his/her summary to the other colleagues.

Student 08: As first year students there is no cooperation between us at all. The things are strange ,we don't know each another, and we don't know how to use the electronic system.

Student 09: As students we cooperate with each other in answering many questions and activities but sometimes this cooperation makes some students depend on others in every detail so this affects them negatively.

Student 10: The cooperation between students and instructors is good because any inquiry has a quick response.

Student 11: There is so much cooperation between students and sometimes it tends to be negative especially in exams. There are whtasApp and messenger groups that help every student.

Student 12: The cooperation between students had two sides, the first one, the positive side in which students were helping each other if any technical problem happened. Also, students tried to help each other whenever they didn't understand lessons and assignments. For the negative cooperation, some of the students create private groups before exams to have the chance of cheating during exams.

Student 13: There is a little support between us as students because sometimes we need to explain sophisticated ideas and lessons to each other. But, once I needed those students who were on my WhatsApp group to fill in a questionnaire and no one cooperate with me though they saw my messages.

Student 14: I have a lot of cooperation from my colleagues in explaining the assignments and reports to each other. Also, we always explain to each other the courses and the required materials.

Student 15: As students we made a group on messenger by taking the permission from our instructor. So, we used this group as a supplement to Zoom because it had a

real destruction in the last month of the semester. This support was positive because if any student needed a help he/she can ask the group without hesitating.

Student 16: The support was really excellent we appreciate this support because it was helpful.

Student 17: Our classmates played a big role in the online classes. Creating groups is one of the ways that keeps us stay connected to what's going on in our online class. They help us with their notes because teachers go through materials quickly and by students' notes and summaries we keep up with our courses and materials. During this crisis we rely on our friends nothing is in our hands so classmates are the solution. The students groups are very cooperative, beneficial and organized. We create such groups before we start the semester so we help each other with assignments, exams and etc... .

Student 18: Because we face such hard situations the student are very cooperative with each other. Students groups were been done to help each other in solving sophisticated things. Our cooperation is positive and satisfaction.

Student 19: There is a good support from other colleagues. So, the student who needs a help he/she can ask his/her classmates. The students' groups are very supportive and cooperative.

Student 20: I think as students we have a positive cooperation with each other. We always help each other by posting on our groups on WhatsApp and messenger.

Student 21: There are a big support from other students especially when we do groups on messenger. Some students are volunteering to explain difficult issues and lessons to others by make presentations. Also, some students record classes and by so other students will have the missing ideas and information.

4. **What are the advantages of online learning?**

Student 01: Online learning doesn't restrict you with time or place and it is more easier and more flexible than face to face learning.

Student 02: The only advantage of online learning I don't have to go to the university.

Student 03: The best advantage of online learning is staying at home, not going to university and not taking transportation.

Student 04: Online learning saves money and time.

Student 05: I liked that I don't have to go to the university every day. Also, I can follow my study at any time and place.

Student 06: There are no advantages for online learning because we have too many classes that we should attend once after another.

Student 07: The best advantage is online learning offers me the chance to have more time in doing my assignments. Yes, Online learning offered me the opportunity to follow my study at any place and time because the materials are very limited and most of exams' questions are explained before.

Student 08: The only advantage of online learning is the recording system of each class so we can see the recordings any time we want.

Student 09: The best advantage of online learning its flexibility and it doesn't restrict us as students in one place. Yes, online learning eases my life I can follow up my lectures at any time and place.

Student 10: There are many advantages of online learning such as; it's easiness, it saves time and effort, it's appropriate for all students, it doesn't need to go to university, its clearness, and you log in to classes any place you want.

Student 11: I think that e-learning reduces the costs and serveries of the universities. I can work while studying that's the most beneficial advantage. Yes, because we use our smart phones at anywhere and anytime. There are a recording system for every class this eases the educational process.

Student 12: For me, I think E-learning was a great experience it had many weak points, yet I found some lessons are more enjoyable and useful than face to face ones. Also, it gave me the chance to learn from any place and at any time. It taught me to depend more on myself. Moreover, it helped me to think more critically in the exams that depended on critical questions rather than theoretical ones.

Student 13: Well, online learning makes it easier to attend classes anywhere and anytime. It is easy to have my laptop, my smart phone and attend my online class.

Student 14: In online learning I totally depends on myself. It saves time and effort. Also, I have the chance to know how to use references for my researchers. It also makes the learning more easily anytime and at anyplace.

Student 15: As a students who studies translation I need to take online courses to improve myself in this side. So, I need to browse a lot of electronic websites because I need to practice English in order to improve my pronunciation and writing skills. Also, online learning eases my learning in any time and place.

Student 16: The attendance is not obligatory. We can apply this kind of learning any time and place.

Student 17: In my opinion, online classes have advantages just as it has disadvantages. For instance, we can get higher grades than face to face learning but not always, if a student has assignments to do they so he/she will have more time to search and study in depth. Also, some students got high marks in their quizzes

because they have the chance to open their books or use any internet source. Also, online learning eases our study in any place and time.

Student 18: For me I don't recognize any advantage because we don't understand anything while our instructors are explaining things. I think that face to face is more better.

Student 19: Online learning offers me the chance to have high grades. Also, it gives me the chance to learn anytime and anywhere.

Student 20: The best advantage is online learning is more easier.

Student 21: Online learning makes the relations between students more stronger. I recognized more issues about using technology. Also, I depend more on myself.

5. What are the challenges and obstacles that face you during online learning?

Student 01: Many students don't have electronic devices and can't access to internet.

Student 02: In online learning there is no participation or interaction between students and their instructors. I didn't get anything or information from this system. Internet is a big problem.

Student 03: The distraction from others is an obstacle of online learning. The interruption of internet and electricity is another challenge.

Student 04: Technical problems such as internet interruption. Also, distraction from my family is another obstacle.

Student 05: I live in Gaza and we face the problem of outage of electricity all the time.

Student 06: There is a little interaction between students and instructors. There are a lot of distractions from other students and our families. Internet interruption is another problem.

Student 07: I have a lot of confusing and pressure because we have many online lectures all the time so I can't follow up all the materials. Yes, I have concerns about internet interruption during my exams though I have a strong wireless net.

Student 08: We can't contact with instructors to know the required things and all the time we feel confused about the things that are included in exams. Also, the students' groups on messenger and WhatsApp are something annoying because students talk irrelevant things. Additionally, these groups have both sexes and females are exposed to bother from males and males try to contact females individually and this is something very annoying. Also, in Gaza we have the frequent cutout of electricity and this is the most bad challenge we face.

Student 09: The challenge that I faced is instructors don't make sure about students' understanding about some issues that are related to the course. Yes, We face a problem in shutting down of the electricity the interruptions of internet.

Student 10: The challenge that I face is the slow connection of internet.

Student 11: Destruction of our social life. Online learning has a low validity in relating to exams because students depend on cheating most of the time. We have no responsibility toward studying in online courses. As a student I prefer being in a class that I'm forced to participate and my instructor watch me all the time. But, in the virtual learning I don't have the same issues because I can eat, watch my phone, play, work, and other things that distrust my attention and of course the instructor will not notice these things. Another challenge is our educational system is not perfect because in face to face lectures students memorize everything in the material and fill in what

they have been memorized. But, in e- learning we do copy the answers and paste them and this eases things because we don't have to memorize anything.

Student 12: I think that there are many negative points for E-learning one of them is homework pressure. I think E-learning will have such negative points unless the academic institutions prepared well with the technical side, by using all the tools that are needed to have a successful learning process.

Student 13: If I want to talk in detail about the above statement, I would not finish till tomorrow!! The technical problems whether it is the internet interruption, the electricity, or the smart devices are the main challenges in online learning methods. Undoubtedly, it is because we lack the strong infrastructure that is needed for this method of learning. Even our 3G cannot load one of the online sessions! The electricity goes off a lot and causes us to lose connection.

Student 14: The courses just depend on the theoretical issues and ignore the practical ones. It needs more time and effort from students. Also, sometimes we have problems internet connection and outage of electricity.

Student 15: The outage of electricity and internet destruction is a big challenge of online learning. I don't have an appropriate place for taking my classes.

Student 16: Online learning reduces interaction between students so I can earn education but I can't learn how to communicate with others. Also, the destruction of internet is another obstacle especially in exams.

Student 17: Distraction from our families. If we are more than one student in the house so we need more devices and strong wireless net. Internet interruption is a major problem personally I faced many internet disconnection problems.

Student 18: There are a lot of obstacles of online learning, such as the outage of internet, the bad quality of sound and video on Zoom, the time of quizzes and exams is very short, and the unfair evaluation.

Student 19: I can't get the information that the instructors want. There are a lot of distractions from other students because they always open their mikes. Also, we face problems with internet connections and sometimes we face cut off electricity.

Student 20: There is little interaction and participation in our online classes. Also, the interruption of internet and electricity is another obstacle especially during exams.

Student 21: Some courses need to be discussed face to face and not online. I have a problem in acclimating with online learning in the beginning. There are families that have a number of students in different universities so they need more devices this is a big problem. Also, we don't take training sessions before about this transition. The internet distraction is another problem especially during exams. I live in Nablus and sometimes the electricity exposed to shut down from time to time this is another problem.

6. What can be done to overcome some of the challenges?

Student 01: To have more cooperation from the university and other supporters in providing most of the students with internet connection.

Student 02: We need to have more time to interact and participate with our instructors. To choose an appropriate time for each class according to well-organized schedule.

Student 03: The only solution is to return back to face to face learning.

Student 04: We should have blending between face to face and online learning.

Student 05: We need to solve the electricity outage problems.

Student 06: We need to attend face to face classes from time to time.

Student 07: Every instructor should have one lecture all the week and not more.

Student 08: To provide us with strong and fast internet webs.

Student 09: The best solution is to return back to face to face learning.

Student 10: To provide us with appropriate and strong networks. Also, we need the cooperation from university staff by responding quickly on our inquiries.

Student 11: To provide us with the appropriate networks, and to have technical solutions as downloading the recording lessons when the internet is off so students could open them without internet.

Student 12: In order to overcome some of challenges of E-learning, I think that internet access should be stronger, and more powerful in our country. Also, we should have some ways or even apps that guarantee having an honest and real learning process which forbid cheating attempts. In addition the academic institutions should give technical support for both instructors and students.

Student 13: Internet companies should modify their networks, reduce payments, and should always have back up plans for technical problems. Universities should conduct an intensive training for teachers (especially old teachers) to teach them how to use applications properly and in detail. Universities should establish a great support system to meet teacher's and students' needs whether in an exam, daily class and so forth. Universities should not depend on online method of learning as a lasting system because the day will come and we'll get back to traditional method of learning. Universities, internet companies, and electricity companies should cooperate with each other.

Student 14: The university should provide students with an open bunch of internet.

Student 15: To choose the appropriate time for all students because some of them have other duties and jobs.

Student 16: To make it blended learning so we can integrate online learning with face to face learning.

Student 17: Teachers need to be more cooperative with their students. Internet companies need to fix their problems as well. Students should organize themselves and take it serious.

Student 18: We need more cooperation from our instructors especially taking into their consideration students' situations.

Student 19: I'm with returning back to face to face learning this is the only solution.

Student 20: The only solution is to go back to face to face learning.

Student 21: Training sessions about how to use online applications should be held on for both students and instructors. Provide students with especial devices. To have other ways in evaluating students rather than quizzes.

Appendix D: Instructors' Interviews

1. In relating to University Support, what type of support University presented to you? Describe the training you got?

Instructor 01: (Arab American Un.) The university gave all the students and the staff training courses and creates many instructions and videos, as also the university created a hotline with the e-learning team for any kind of help. Interactive online training with guidelines and instructions are also given.

Instructor 02: (Bethlehem Un.) In terms of the type of support we receive , the university has a complete plan to implement during the online teaching . They have given us a number of training sessions and introduced every possible way to facilitate the process of learning especially during the Pandemic period.

Instructor 03: (Hebron Un.)The university support during the pandemic has been proper and sufficient. The university offered many training programs and workshops to this regard, and did this more than once. The university made sure that all professors participate in these workshops to assure quality and efficiency. I myself participated in those workshops and benefited a lot.

Instructor 04: (Al-Najah National Un.). The university provided us with the necessary training for this kind of learning and how to use apps for online education.

Instructor 05: (Al-Azhar Un.) .From the beginning the university put teaching the staff and the students on how to use different software as a priority. They started with the staff by conducting intensive workshops lead by expertise people in the field of E-Learning. After that, they sent us videos on our emails to follow up in the process of learning how to use technology in teaching. Also, the young members of staff helped the old ones who are not familiar with technology. We established Whatsapp groups

for each department to help each other in any technical difficulties we face during the process. Regarding the students, they are smart in using technology, therefore, they did not face any difficulties in dealing with the social media platforms where we used to upload the lectures. In addition, the use of the Moodle is not that difficult.

Instructor 06: (Berzeit Un.). As for support, the university has succeeded and managed to provide us as teachers with all possible facilities that enable us to communicate with our students at ease and smoothly. We use the ICT "Instructional computer technology " and we have access to Zoom application in a well-constructed and timed procedure .

Instructor 07: (IUG). The Islamic University has launched intensive training sessions to all the academics from day one of the crisis. Part of the training was face to face, and the other part was through webinars. I attended both sessions and I learned how to post material and make exams using the Moodle.

Instructor 08: (QOU). Providing the students as well as the instructors with support is very critical to the success of the e-learning environment, especially at the technical level. As for Al-Quds Open University, training for the faculty and the staff is an ongoing process to cope with the challenges especially the one we have been experiencing these days.

Instructor 09: (Alaqsa Un.) In fact, our university gave us some useful training pertinent to how to use Moodle, in particular, on how to format questions on Moodle, and we were given a two-hour training on how to conduct virtual classes on Google Meet and how to send the link to all students.

Instructor 10: (Gaza Un.) There is not much support offered by the university. The only training was about 1 hour how to deal with Google classroom.

Instructor 11: (Palestine Ahliya Un.). Yes, I did have extensive and intensive training. There were some technicians who we had in close contact with all the time. They gave us recommendations and advices and were ready to fix any problem that might arise.

2. How can you describe Evaluation and Assessment process / examinations? Do you have any concerns?

Instructor 01: The evaluations build based on many dimensions aims to keep the student in the same line with the instructors to achieve the goals of the course and keep the learning level the same, as the university keep trying to develop the evaluation process.

Instructor 02: I can say that the assessment plan is good . Students are given a number of online quizzes and tests . However, the problem is related to the culture of the students' learning via online. Students tend to seek help from colleagues and this cannot 100 % be controlled . On the other hand, the students always try all possible techniques to help them proceed in the academic process. We also have a number of online evaluation tools that help teachers evaluate their students objectively.

Instructor 03: As regards evaluation and assessment during the pandemic had to be modified to suit online work. Exams were less, more assignments were given. More online-oriented test types were used including presentations, projects, online discussions and interactions, and research. During the pandemic I had and still have great concerns about the integrity and reliability of tests for one simple important reason which is students' cheating and credibility. Online learning opened the door for plagiarism and cheating which we as educations can't stop and deal with.

Instructor 04: The evaluation system here has many types. Worksheets, assignments, the in-class involvement ,in addition to the typical exams. It is sometimes exhausting for teachers, but this way you may have a fair evaluation.

Instructor 05: Regarding evaluation, students were very satisfied because most of them scored above 85 due to the nature of the exams and tasks. They were offered at least 2 weeks to submit any task and the exams were open for 14 hours as home-take exam. The staff were annoyed by these steps because they were not able to know the individual differences between students and they believe that students were cheating.

Instructor 06: As you know, evaluation does not only making tests or quizzes. Mostly I apply the formative technique and give proper chance to every student to participate and express himself. This enables me to actually assess the listening and speaking skills. The reading skill is also tested in this way, adding to homework tasks mostly (the after reading stage) . The writing skill is tested through assigning students tasks similar to those they read about. However, the evaluation via internet is sub to cheating. Students in our country or all over the world tend to cheat without realizing that it is a harmful behavior.

Instructor 07: I guess it is not easy to move from traditional, I mean face to face type of learning, to online teaching without passing through blended learning. In fact, preparing exams and assessing students online have been a new experience to both teachers and learners. We post these exams and activities on the Moodle. These exams and activities are timed, but teachers are obliged to extend the period. Sadly, cheating in online assessment is becoming a universal dilemma. Although we are trying our best to detect cheaters, still (those who are caught often lament “It’s so unfair. Why have I been caught when pretty much everyone is doing it?”).

Instructor 08: I think the evaluation system that QOU has adopted is relevant and convenient during the corona pandemic, as it is flexible and friendly in use and application. Evaluation techniques are basically online midterm and final examinations in addition to papers and presentations. The evaluation process is challenging as they are based on multiple choice questions... Faculty members have to develop their own multiple - choice questions and to feed the system with them... The process of feeding the system with large number of questions is very long and demanding.

Instructor 09: For the evaluation and assessment process, it is done according to benchmarks or standards; teachers have some flexibility. I would say that there are three exams, two mid-terms and a final. Sometimes that depends on the number of students. If the number is limited, the teacher can give a written assignment. Most of the exams are objective since there is chance for students to write. The formats range from T and F, MCQs, Matching, Dragging, Comparing, fill in the space with the right word and very concise short essays. Teachers have to write question bank up to 400 for each course, and this depends greatly on the number of ss.

Instructor 10: There was no online exams. Only evaluation. Is the student participating or not and result pass/fail. No marks were assigned.

Instructor 11: Assessment is catastrophic as online learning multiplies the chance of cheating especially in the exams and this can by turn endangers the whole process and the credibility of exams.

3. What about Faculty Support? Describe the support and training that you got from your Faculty staff?

Instructor 01: Absolutely, all of the staff faced the pandemic as one hand together, we learned from each other. We create a "what's app" group kept us in touch.

Instructor 02: Of course the teaching process is 100% cooperative. We usually cooperate with each other using the online resources. In many cases teachers meet online and discuss some academic issues that they face and the possible solutions. Teachers take advantage of each other. They share experiences. I think that support is given to all faculty members who are willing to work hard especially in this difficult time.

Instructor 03: There is no support whatsoever unfortunately. Seems nobody loves to give a hand and reflect with his/her colleagues in his teaching problems. In pandemic time, only university is offering guidance and support.

Instructor 04: As for faculty support, it is part of the university support, not separate. They complement each other. The faculty facilitates communication with students by establishing websites and groups that students make use of for any instructions or further communication with their teachers. Sometimes we need to have face-to-face meetings with students. The faculty makes all the facilities available for such meetings, and takes all the hygienic conditions in consideration. Peers were cooperative at times of need. Faculties don't have their own strategies in support. They only provide technical advice for instructors who usually consult either the head of the dept. or the dean when needed.

Instructor 05: Regarding the support, it was our first experience and the students are in large numbers and they do not stop asking the teachers by using social media platforms. The pressure on the teachers was great and unbearable which affected their abilities to answer all the queries of the students. In fact, the students were very demanding and they were as about the finest details which the staff and faculty sometimes cannot answer.

Instructor 06: We always communicate with each other and cooperate to solve any expected difficulty or problem. However, due to travel constraints and the protocols of Covid 19 instructions there was a little chance for faculty members to meet and exchange ideas face to face. We have to confess that a machine cannot replace a teacher. Online learning comes only as an alternative, but it is not the best choice.

Instructor 07: Yes, one of my peers organized a workshop for the English department about the use of the Moodle, especially for quizzes and final exams. But mostly training is carried out by IT training staff.

Instructor 08: As faculty members we help each other if we face technical problems.

Instructor 09: Principally, the situation differs from faculty to another, but focus is always to help students as much as we can. Importantly, it is the academic affairs to assess and evaluate teachers' work.

Instructor 10: During the pandemic period lots of support and help were offered from staff who has experience to other staff who knows nothing. As the dean of the faculty, I used to set with those whose knowledge is limited and give him/her with what he/she needs.

Instructor 11: I did cooperate with my faculty staff. I asked some for help and gave me directions. We also had some training sessions and practice.

4. What are the advantages of online learning?

Instructor 01: Developed computer skills for both students and teachers. Gives the students their courses without leaving their homes.

Instructor 02: There are many. Online learning is comfortable for both teachers and students. There is no time consuming when moving from house to school. It enables teachers to use the online resources efficiently and effectively. Technology has paved

the way to a new approach in teaching that helps in making university study more revealing and enjoyable.

Instructor 03: It is good in enhancing technology in the educational process. Online learning offered me the opportunity to deliver my classes and follow up with my students in all courses. It has been important that we continue teaching courses during the pandemic. Otherwise, the whole learning/teaching process will be lost. Online learning has been the only solution to salvage the education process. However, not facing students has lowered the efficiency of interaction and presentation of materials.

Instructor 04: Online learning has some advantages for both learners and instructors. For learners, it saves them time and effort they spend in transport and other aspects. They may need the time they save in work or other useful jobs. It also saves them money, in addition to holding responsibility by being punctual in attending classes. Learners do not feel embarrassed to take part in lectures. As for instructors, it is nearly the same, but there is another advantage. Time can sometimes be flexible ,that is, if the instructor is unable to lecture for any reason, he or she can move the class time for another date of the day, whether in the morning, evening or even at night.

Instructor 05: Regardless of being a new experience for both teachers and students, they enjoyed being away from the restrictions of the classroom and its regulations. Even they got rid of the time limits which were imposed by timetables of lectures; they have the freedom to work whenever they want.

Instructor 06: One big advantage is that students depend heavily on themselves, cooperate with each other through groups so as to solve any problem. In addition, they know how much they should organize the time. Other big advantage is that motivation is a basic element. If not activated, online education becomes mere chaos. Also, online learning is more flexible in relating to time and place.

Instructor 07: Online learning is a current alternative to traditional universities, especially for students who cannot go to universities because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It helps to study many fields and boost the level of students' self-motivation and self-independence. Online learning seems to be effective because students can have access to all online resources such as videos, digital references, recorded lectures, and study them at their base.

Instructor 08: Self-paced learning and flexibility.

Instructor 09: In reality, I cannot give a true advantage of online learning since the overwhelming majority of both teachers and students are not at ease with this kind of learning due to some reasons out of their hands: frequent outages and internet in paired with electricity. That is a big problem for all of us. Another reason is that very many lectures are not good at technology. (I am sorry, students and teachers have not stooped complaining).

Instructor 10: Online learning is something new in our community, off course you can teach or learn at any time of the day, but unfortunately the infrastructure in Gaza Strip is too poor and it is a big obstacle, but the best advantages to instructors are free-lance and no fix schedule and saves a lot of time. Also, you can handle courses more easily than face to face and can fix your suitable time for lectures.

Instructor 11: As for the advantages, first online learning is more convenient and easier. It can save time and effort on the part of teachers.

5.What are the challenges and obstacles that face you during online learning?

Instructor 01: Create an effective evaluation system. Any new things need more practice and time to use to it. Keep the positive atmosphere with the students

Instructor 02: Our country is not fully prepared in terms of the internet infrastructure and many families cannot get the right internet service due to many reasons. Also,

schools in particular do not have the minimum level of the technology facilities. This is a great challenge. Students may also be exposed to false information. Equipment and technology facilities are important issues that should be present in any online teaching.

Instructor 03: Interaction is very bad. Students don't hold real responsibility for their own learning. Cheating is all over the place. Constant technical failure: no internet, electricity, no communication tools offered by university.

Instructor 04: The challenges and obstacles were so many. First, how to involve the students in the discussion sessions and help them take part in the lectures. Then how to make sure that they are really attending the lectures. They appear to be online but sometimes away from the lecture. Recently, there have been other technical problems as the internet and electric interruptions which prevented me as an instructor or the students to continue the lecture as desired.

Instructor 05: We witness power cut for more than 16 hours in some days. The internet service in Gaza seems to be the worst in the world because the network is not updated due to the sanction imposed on Gaza. Also, the internet providers are not doing any active steps to develop the network.

Instructor 07: The problem is Mostly related to technology (technology phobia).

Internet interruption is a recurrent problem which leads to a great loss.

Instructor 07: Instructors face many formidable challenges. For example, Zoom and other online applications cannot accommodate hundreds of students during live sessions. Therefore, many students have been deprived of participating in online class discussions. The Internet connection and interruptions are nagging obstacles. Teachers have to find a quiet place at home to give a live class or record class, and this requires family members to help in creating such atmosphere. Making online

exams and evaluating students take a lot of time. Responding to students inquiries, questions, and complaints is a very hard job, especially they use different technology applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, messenger, and email to contact their professors.

Instructor 08: Stress , time management, huge numbers of students on one section. Also, internet interruption is another big challenge for both students and instructors because they are customers for these national services and they do not have dominance and control over them

Instructor 09: The problem lies in having a big problem with electricity which means very bad or stoppage of internet. Another problem resides in the background noise at homes and in the streets, and for the virtual classes to be scheduled is another big trouble. Not all students have the same electricity distribution of power. Finally, you cannot expect all students to own smart phones or new laptops.

Instructor 10: There are lots of challenges most of all electricity supply, the network infrastructure is too weak in Gaza Strip, and poverty is also a big challenge many students do not have internet at their homes.

Instructor 11: As for the challenges, they're countless, such as unstable connection. Also, the whole burden is on the teacher himself/herself. No direct interaction occurs.

6. What can be done to overcome some of the challenges?

Instructor 01: Held more workshops for both students and teachers. Study the feedback from both students and teachers and work on it.

Instructor 02: Providing both faculty and students with the necessary online tools and equipment is very crucial in this technological world. Technology needs to be constantly updated.

Instructor 03: Nothing much. I hate it. It is not working. Just come back to traditional encounters in the classroom.

Instructor 04: To overcome the challenges , first, we should have serious students who appreciate the value of learning in general and have their expected role in the class. Then we should have face-to-face meetings from time to time especially for final exams to give them more credibility.

Instructor 05: Raising the awareness towards the benefits of E-Learning. Giving more workshops on using new technologies. Use of satellite channels to broadcast lectures which needs less internet. Helping poor students to be able to reach to the technological items.

Instructor 06: Ensuring that students have their all smartphones or tablets and internet high quality service.

Instructor 07: Teachers should get more training in order to be able to use more advanced online applications. Universities should pay to some excellent online teaching applications such as ZOOM, as many teachers use the free version, which has a very limited time and number of students. The session lasts only 40 minutes. Instructors should be provided with high-speed internet connections and more technical support from universities. There should be fewer students in each section as some sections have more than 80 students, and it is not easy to deal with such huge number of students online.

Instructor 08: To be flexible.

Instructor 09: The maximum load for students should not exceed 12 credit-hours and for teacher, they must not teach more than two courses. Students must have free access to the university internet services.

Instructor 10: In Gaza Strip not much can be done, the whole infrastructure needs to be redone and what can we do for the poor people? And the weakness of the network and the high fees of the internet.

Instructor 11: Testing shouldn't be carried out virtually. Exams should be given face to face.