

## The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Hebron University EFL Learners' Anxiety

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v4i3.786>

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### ABSTRACT

*Due to pandemic the COVID-19 pandemic, the learning situation has moved from traditional to online learning to hold back the further spread of the pandemic. This transformation largely impacted the condition of psychology, specifically anxiety issues. This study examines the impact of COVID-19 on Hebron University (EFL) learners' anxiety in Palestine. The researchers examined the various levels of anxiety triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic among university learners. Additionally, the researchers examined some causes that surge anxiety among learners amidst COVID-19, and the recommendations used by students to lessen the undesirable effects of anxiety on learners amidst COVID-19. The researchers employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data. The researchers collected the data for the study from 70 EFL students at Hebron University. This research demonstrated that COVID-19 triggers high anxiety among the EFL students at Hebron University, Palestine. The researchers concluded with some recommendations.*

### KEYWORDS

*COVID-19; learners; anxiety; Hebron University*

### INTRODUCTION

Learning a foreign language is for sure an unparalleled experience for any learner. Throughout the process of learning a foreign language, there are several challenges that students face and anxiety is one of the most important obstacles that face them. Mastery of foreign languages is important in this modern day of globalization (Beeh and Baun, 2022). When it comes to speaking and interacting with others in second language students try to avoid such situations due to several reasons such as fear of getting negative comments or making mistakes. Learners are subject to the impact of different levels of anxiety while learning a second language. Anxiety is defined as an emotive feature affecting learning a second language and researchers describe it as an idiosyncratic feeling of pressure, apprehension, distress, and unclear panic. Numerous researchers have observed an adverse relationship between anxiety and academic performance in learning a second language (Chen & Chang, 2004). Many researchers stated that anxiety is a normal feeling for any learner, and it can be vanquished in so many ways. For example, practicing in front of an unfamiliar audience, or joining an active public speaking class would also benefit the students. As a result of COVID-19, many universities were closed worldwide (Farrah & Al-Bakri, 2020). COVID-19, however, has turned everything upside down; it has triggered a massive disruptive shift in the teaching/learning process from the physical to the virtual. Mai and Ghaneshwary (2018) define the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) as an online configuration for supplying educational resources to learners. These configurations include testing and assessment, learner tracking, and “collaboration and communication tools” (p. 156). COVID-19 has forced the whole educational establishment in many countries across

the world to adopt this system or mode of online delivery, creating educational disruption (Huang et al., 2020). According to UNESCO (2020 as cited in Bao, 2020) the spread of COVID-19 worldwide led to “school and university closures” (p. 113).

Many educational institutions in Palestine decided to shift to online learning due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Therefore, this led to a notable increase in the use of different virtual platforms in the teaching/learning process (Li & Lalani, 2020, Abu Safiyeh & Farrah, 2020). However, many — whether learners or teachers and whole educational institutions, especially those who are unprepared for it or those who lack a robust or reliable technological infrastructure and suitable digital learning resources for this new paradigm, have found this unprecedented crisis very disconcerting and very challenging. COVID19 has far-fetched consequences on EFL learners’ anxiety due to using online learning applications.

Some students tend to become uncomfortable in the classroom or when they are required to do academic tasks; usually, they are anxious about committing gaffes, and they fear disapproval or getting an insult evaluation, as a result, they show less self-confidence and tend to be more anxious. The pressure is much more noteworthy during learning a second language as learners are supposed to have oral interaction with other students in different languages they aren’t used to, and after COVID-19 students’ anxiety increased due to various factors. Teachers in such situations can’t deal with or help students overcome this because not every student can express how they feel or what they think. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate Palestinian EFL learners’ attitudes towards online learning and how the COVID-19 plague affected learners’ anxiety. Precisely, this paper pursues to identify the level of students who suffer from Language Learning Anxiety during COVID-19. Moreover, it tries to illustrate some of the internal and external factors of COVID-19 and their effects on EFL learners’ anxiety at Hebron University. Finally, it is hoped that the researcher will provide some suggestions that can help students overcome anxiety during COVID-19. This study is significant as it may benefit the researchers in the academic field, the teachers, and the administration of education. Furthermore, this study has the potential to provide valuable information for future researchers. This study aims to examine the specific levels that learners face anxiety at and whether students encounter anxiety during the initial stages of language learning, as well as the reasons behind their anxiety and overcoming them. In addition, educators amidst the COVID-19 pandemic tried to find ways to make students feel less anxious about speaking and participating in online classes. During COVID-19, educators also found it difficult to encourage students to contribute actively in the online classes. Therefore, this study is not just going to help students, but it may give educators an idea about how students feel and help them overcome this problem.

From the early beginning of 2020 till this time, most Palestinian universities experienced an enormous conversion from traditional (face-to-face) learning to online delivery owing to the widespread of Coronavirus in Palestine and worldwide. Several researchers conducted studies to examine the influence of COVID-19 on university students. This section presents some studies pertinent to the influence of COVID-19 on anxiety among Hebron University EFL learners. Moreover, some of these studies provided implications and suggestions to reduce students’ anxiety during COVID-19.

The changes and effects triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in some consequences on learners’ ways of learning as well as apprehension when having online learning. Likewise, a few learners demonstrated facing great experiences during online learning, while other learners expressed their negative attitudes towards their online experiences (Killian, 2020; Mohammed & Mudhsh, 2021).

Moreover, numerous researchers reported that learners experienced varied levels of anxiety and confusion during the COVID-19 pandemic. Wang, Pan, Wan, Tan, Xu, Ho & Ho (2020) conducted a study to investigate the emotional impact throughout the initial phases of the COVID-19 outburst in China. Using an online questionnaire, they examined the attitude of 1210 respondents from 194 different cities in China. Their study revealed that the psychological impact was considered by most respondents as moderate-to-severe. Likewise, most of the respondents opined that anxiety has high levels of influence due to COVID-19 outbursts. The researchers suggested that health authorities and governments ought to make certain that there are arrangements to deliver adequate resources of personal hygiene products (such as masks, soaps, etc.) during the COVID-19 epidemic. Similar results of these studies also noted that college learners have experienced diverse stages of anxiety, emotional tension, and despair (Qiu, Shen, Zhao, Wang, Xie & Xu, 2020; Li, Wang, Xue, Zhao & Zhu, 2020; Pahargyan 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic stimulated anxiety about virus infection, dying, weakness and shame (Alkhamees & Alrashed & Alzunaydi & Almohimeed & Aljohani, 2020; Daud & Farrah, 2013; Erdogan & Kardes & Kurcer, 2021).

Acob, Arifin and Dewi (2021) reported that family history of illness, marital status, gender, age and are remarkably unlike with respondents who are 20 and below. Families with no illness history, females and singles showed increasing levels of anxiety. Moreover, they reported a statistical connotation related to apprehension and regular salary and family history of illness. According to their results, higher monthly income and no history of illness contributed to a further apprehensive person.

Many studies explained the initial effects of COVID-19 as well as experiencing sadness, worry and apprehension. Home restrictions and health concerns contributed to high levels of anxiety among learners (Wang and Zhao 2020). The pandemic affected people on personal levels as relationships among people and social communication became less as they were afraid of becoming infected. Some people did not visit others and did not welcome visits and that springs from their fear on their loved ones. Educations organizations including schools and universities were affected badly (Wang, Pan, Wan, Tan, Xu, Ho & Ho, 2020; Erdogan & Kardes & Kurcer, 2021; Sorkpor & Srimpong & Schack & Hagan & Quansah, & Kofi Anin & Kwadwo Abieraba & Frimpong & Srem-Sai, et al. 2022; Farrah & Al-Bakry, 2020; Itmeizeh & Farrah, 2021; Zboun & Farrah, 2021; Wang and Zhao, 2020).

Al Shlowiy (2021) examined the impact of the shift to online learning on EFL high school students in Saudi Arabia. He opined that the home environment prevents students from having effective and efficient learning as the traditional atmosphere does. This shows that students experienced several challenges during COVID-19 and they complained about slow internet connection, personal device issues, personal issues and privacy issues which prevented learners from learning English naturally amidst COVID-19.

In the Palestinian context, Radwan et al. (2021) pinpointed some emotional anguish among learners during COVID-19 Pandemic among school students in Gaza. According to the researchers, moderate to severe levels of apprehension and despair were experienced by the learners. Correspondingly, the researchers reported concerns among students due to the influence of COVID-19 on education, daily life and the economy. Finally, few students reported that the conditions increased their levels of despair, apprehension and tension.

Similar to the Palestinian context, Moawad (2020) examined the impact of COVID-19 on students in Saudi Arabia universities. The findings showed that students were stressed due to the lockdown period and the unexpected move from traditional learning to online

delivery. The participants experienced high levels of apprehension owing to the unpredicted size of homework, exams, internet issues, etc...

Likewise, Mahyoob (2020) examined the problems that faced students the University of Taibah during the COVID-19 period. The researcher reported that the students encountered problems in joining the online sessions and the educational platforms. Moreover, the EFL students experienced technical glitches and consequently expressed their malcontent with online learning. As a result, they did not support it.

Several researchers carried out studies to investigate means to help learners overcome learning anxiety (Keramida & Tsiplakides, 2009; He, 2017).

Before COVID-19, a number of studies were carried out about helping and providing students with solutions to overcome their problems in learning and suggesting ways to overcome anxiety in learning (Arnold, 2018; Rage, 2017; Keramida & Tsiplakides 2009, Ansari, 2015; AlNatour, 2018; Widhayanti, 2018). With the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of studies were conducted on speaking anxiety due to the pandemic. The aim was to produce an encouraging and convenient learning environment contributing to achieving the goals set by the educational authority (Hagan, Quansah & Anin & Sorkpor, Abieraba, Frimpong, Srem-Sai & Schack, 2022; Wang, Pan, Wan, Tan, Xu, Ho & Ho, 2020; Biber, Melton & Czech 2020)

There was a consensus among those researchers that most of the students' experience English language learning and anxiety when it comes to the speaking skill as some learners were afraid of unfair assessment, the perception of low ability concerning their peers (Acob, Arifin & Dewi, 2021).

Farrah & Jabari (2020) conducted a study during COVID-19 not just to help students but also to help teachers and provide them with practical ideas and suggestions to deal with their students and to be more engaged in lectures and increase their participation. The suggestions were to ask students random questions related to the course subject during the class, give extra marks and grades, using raise hand technique, using PowerPoint in presentations, etc.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

In this section, the researchers aim to discuss the study design, the participants' demographic data, the instrument, and the data collection process.

### ***Research design***

The researchers employed one method framework using a quantitative approach. As stated by Creswell (2014), quantitative data enable researchers to achieve an overall comprehension of an issue. Moreover, McLeod (2018) considered that the questionnaire to be a good data collection tool. Thus, the researchers employed a questionnaire to gather information from the participants COVID-19 and anxiety. The items of the questionnaire were adopted from a study by Mohammed & Mudhsh (2021) after getting approval from one of the authors (Mudhsh). The researchers posted the questionnaire on Google form in April 2022. They targeted EFL undergraduate learners of the English Department at Hebron University. After collecting the data, the researchers used SPSS program (version 24) for analysis.

### ***Data Collection***

#### ***Study tool***

To accomplish the objectives of the study, the researchers used an online questionnaire to collect students' perceptions and attitudes toward the effects of COVID-19 on learners'

anxiety. The three researchers used closed-ended questions in the questionnaire presented with five points Likert scale. The questionnaire had three sections; the first section was about the demographic data to indicate the gender, age, and academic level. The second section of the questionnaire consists of 9 items, each on a 5-point scale.

### *Study population*

The researchers conducted the current study during the second semester of the academic year 2022\2023. Seventy students from the English department at Hebron University aged between 18 years and 23 years filled out an online questionnaire. There were fourteen males and sixty-five female students. All the participants are Palestinian citizens. The respondents nearly share the same educational background.

### *Instruments of the study*

#### *Validity of the Questionnaire*

##### 1. Validate the study tool

The researchers examined the validity of the questionnaire by giving it to three expert referees from Hebron University. The referees suggested some modifications. The researchers considered the modification and incorporated them into their study.

##### 2. Reliability of the Questionnaire

An 18-item questionnaire with two open-ended questions was distributed electronically to 70 students of different levels of English Major Students. After examining the instrument's reliability, the researchers calculated Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient and found it to be as high (0.87). This means that the tool has a high degree of consistency and it is proper for achieving the objectives of the study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This part presents the results of the first, second, and third sections of the questionnaire. The first part presents the demographic data as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Students' demographic data

	Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Gender	Male	14	20.0	20.0
	Female	56	80.0	80.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0
Age	19	18	25.7	25.7
	20	13	18.6	18.6
	21	27	38.6	38.6
	22	12	17.1	17.1
	Total	70	100.0	100.0
Academic level	Freshmen	8	11.4	11.4
	Sophomore	12	17.1	17.1
	Junior	14	20.0	20.0
	Senior	36	51.4	51.4
	Total	70	100.0	100.0

Table 1 shows the results for the demographic: gender, age, and academic level. According to gender, this table shows that out of the 70 participants there were 56 female students and 14 male students. This is in accordance to the population numbers in the English Department and Hebron University (Farrah, 2014).



According to the academic year, this table shows that 8 of the participants are in their first year (freshman), 12 of the participants were in their second year (sophomore), 14 of the students were in their third year (junior), and 36 of the participants were in their fourth year (senior). This shows that the majority of the students were seniors.

Regarding age, (25.7%) of the students' age was 19, (18.6%) of the students age was 20, (38.6%) of the students age was 21 and (17.1%) of the students age was 22. This shows that the majority of the students their age was 21.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of responses on learning anxiety related to the preference and attitudes towards the effect of COVID-19 on EFL learners' anxiety.

No	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
4	I am worried about my learning activities during COVID-19.	70	3.86	1.081
1	I anxiously think about English learning during COVID-19.	70	3.86	1.081
2	I feel uncomfortable with English learning during COVID-19.	70	3.79	1.153
8	More social distancing during COVID19 increases my anxiety about learning English.	70	3.77	1.038
5	I believe that COVID-19 anxiety decreases my ability to learn English.	70	3.74	1.099
7	I feel nervous when I think that COVID-19 will hinder me from fulfilling my objectives of learning English.	70	3.71	1.065
9	Social media news about COVID-19 increases my fear about my learning of English.	70	3.64	1.130
6	Thinking about COVID-19 makes me careless about learning English.	70	3.54	1.151
3	I worry that COVID-19 may prevent me from learning English.	70	3.53	1.213

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviation of items related to the attitudes towards the effect of COVID-19 on learners' anxiety. The researchers ordered the means from the highest mean to the lowest ones. It was found that the mean for all statements related to anxiety during COVID-19 was above (3.5). This means that students at Hebron University in the English department experience moderate to high levels of English learning anxiety.

The highest mean is item number 4 and 1 (m=3.86) which means that most students clearly agree and strongly agree that they are anxious and afraid about their English learning activities during COVID-19. Item number 2 (m=3.79) also emphasizes the previous point about students feeling uncomfortable during COVID-19. This is similar to (Son et al. 2020), as they indicated in their study that out of 195 students, 138 (71%) increased their anxiety and stress due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Another item that most of the students tended to agree with is items number 8 (m=3.77) "More social distancing during COVID-19 increases my anxiety about learning English", this finding is compatible with Erdogan, Kardes and Kurcer (2021) and Wang and Zhao (2020) results that "Interpersonal relationships are getting negatively affected not only by the strict measures

taken by governments but also by loneliness, the fear of becoming infected, and the fear of their loved ones.”

Item number 5 (m=3.749) which got a high rating illustrates that students believe that COVID-19 anxiety decreases their ability to learn English and this is in contrast to what Mohammed and Mudhsh (2021) found who found that anxiety does not decrease students’ ability in learning during COVID-19 (m=2.33). This shows that students at Hebron University suffer from a high level of anxiety. Item number 9 illustrates that social media news about COVID-19 increases students’ fear of learning English (m=3.64). Since students spend so much time on social media their learning activities are affected negatively. As a way to reduce fear about learning English, students should focus more on their studying and ignore such news. This is in line with item number 17 in Table 3 “I try to ignore social media news about COVID-19 to care about my English learning.”

Another item that got moderate agreement is item 6 (m=3.54) “Thinking about COVID-19 makes me careless about learning English” shows that students are not interested in learning English during COVID-19.

Item number 3 indicates that students are worried that COVID-19 may prevent them from learning English (m=3.53). This shows that students experienced several challenges during COVID-19 and they complained about the internet connection, device availability and parent experience which prevented them from learning English during COVID-19. Al Shlowiy (2021) confirmed that the home environment prevents students from having effective and efficient learning as the classroom environment does.

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics of ways that students cope with anxiety during COVID-19.

No	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
10	I do some preparation for my online presentation	70	4.19	.786
11	I do some pleasant activities to make me calm and less worried.	70	4.06	.657
12	I set my mind to think positively.	70	4.00	.851
16	I enthuse myself to learn English actively during COVID-19.	70	3.93	.922
18	I follow the strict preventive measures which make me feel safe of COVID19 to keep learning English actively.	70	3.86	.967
13	I look for a suitable learning partner to talk or to share.	70	3.84	1.044
17	I try to ignore social media news about COVID-19 to care about my English learning.	70	3.81	1.054
15	I think the government will apply the procedures that will help me overcome the negative effects of COVID-19 on learning English.	70	3.51	1.412
14	I do nothing to lessen my anxiety, i.e.: giving up, stopping making any effort.	70	2.73	1.141

Table 3 shows the means and standard deviation of items related to ways that students cope with anxiety during COVID-19. The means are ordered from the highest mean to the lowest ones. The highest mean score is item number 10 (m=4.19) states that students do some online preparations for their online classes and that’s to decrease their level of anxiety. Pahargyan (2021) showed a similar result in her study. Also, students during

covid-19 used to participate depending on reading what they have prepared and without preparation they feel anxious, so they do not participate.

Item number (11), (12), (16), got high ratings from students. ‘I do some pleasant activities to make me calm and less worried’ (m=4.06), ‘I set my mind to think positively’ (m=4.00), ‘I enthuse myself to learn English actively during COVID-19’ (m=3.93). These three items refer to the efforts which students tried to cope with anxiety during COVID-19. Students alleviate anxiety not just by depending on teachers, but also they try to set their minds to think positively and enthuse themselves to cope with online learning and this helps them to feel a sense of control.

Item number 18 ‘I follow the strict preventive measures which make me feel safe of COVID19 to keep learning English actively’ (m=3.86). In order to reduce the spread of the virus that causes the COVID-19, the government put measures in schools and universities for students to follow. Students applied these measures in order to feel secure and to keep the learning process.

Item number 13 ‘I look for a suitable learning partner to talk or to share’ (m=3.48). Communication plays an important role especially for the EFL learners in order to have the opportunity to exchange knowledge with each other. This item shows that students are highly motivated to look for a learning partner during COVID-19 to foster a better understanding of the university online system programs.

Item number 17 ‘I try to ignore social media news about COVID-19 to care about my English learning’ (m=3.81) shows that students dismiss social media news about COVID-19 to pay more attention to the process of learning English.

The item that got the lowest mean is item number 14. It says ‘I do nothing to lessen my anxiety, i.e.: giving up, stopping making any effort’ (m=2.73). This shows that students strongly disagree with this statement because in connection to the previous items, students have already done many activities to help themselves to lessen their anxiety during COVID-19. This result is in line with Pahargyan (2021) study, who said that students disagreed about this way of coping.

### **Open-ended questions:**

The second section of the questionnaire contained two open-ended questions, some students answered them and there was a consensus among students on some points.

A. The first question is about students' opinion on how COVID-19 has affected them psychologically, and it was mainly answered with these points: increased fear, anxiety and confusion, boredom, isolation, depression and laziness, decreased educational attainment, lack of serious study.

The point that got the highest agreement among students was that COVID-19 has affected students negatively by making them more anxious and afraid. This point can be considered as an internal factor that affected students. Some of the students mentioned this negative effect on them and that was obvious because of the sudden shift from normal classes ‘face-to-face’ to online classes so they didn’t know how to deal with such a situation.

It made me feel anxious

It makes sense of fear

I always thought it was going to last for a longer period, so I was worried I won't be that skillful in English.

Covid-19 made me feel in a constant fear

Yes, there were psychological effects



Another point that is repeated frequently among students was that COVID-19 made students feel bad and bored because there was no physical interaction between students themselves and with their teachers, so they only interacted through chats and opening the microphone. Life became boring for them because they are in the same space with the same people. Also, they do not feel the pressure to participate and be more active.

I feel bad and bored

Bored all the time

I don't enjoy learning like I use to be

Another point that got agreement among students was that COVID-19 made students more isolated from social life. Quarantine measures that were used to control virus outbreaks lead to extended social isolation and this isolation affected students negatively. During COVID-19 students didn't get the chance to socialize with any of their classmates and that resulted in increasing their loneliness.

*"Simply it made me more isolated person and less social with others".*

*"Being isolated from the social life greatly affects students negatively. The educational process is not only restricted to assignments and exams; however, it includes the social aspect. Therefore, being away from friends and peers affects students negatively".*

Some students agreed on the point that COVID-19 made them more depressed, sad, and lazy. Since students were shifted to remote learning, they faced internal challenges in the learning system and the exam procedures. This decreased the opportunity for them to socialize with their peers and teachers. Laziness came from the fact that students stayed at their homes without doing any physical activity.

*It made me lazier*

*It made me more depressed*

*I became lazy*

*I get depressed each day and my mental health is suffering.*

*Fear of being injured (sic) by COVID-19*

*Depression, sadness, anxiety*

*Also how education transformed to online education without a contingency plan B*

*During the quarantine period I had depression*

Another point which is COVID-19 made students more confused. This is one of the external factors that affect students negatively. Because students didn't know how to deal with electronic devices, they felt a kind of confusion and they were confused about whether the situation will stay as it is or they will come back to their normal life.

"I became confused about how to study and what to study like I'm no longer used to books".

"It just made me confused because I'm not trained to use the computer in my study and that made me feel anxious".

"Make me think a lot that I want to make everything in my head before something bad happens to me".

Also, they encountered a lower educational attainment due to their confusion of the sudden shift in learning, and they didn't know how to retain their educational level.

The effect of the Corona virus on my psyche negatively also affected my educational attainment

Moreover, students agreed that COVID-19 affected their studying so that they didn't take it seriously which lead to a lack of educational attainment as was shown in the previous paragraph.

"I didn't study seriously".

"I find it difficult to study because there is no motif during online learning".

B. The second question was about students' solutions to reduce anxiety during COVID-19. After talking about how COVID-19 harmed students psychologically, they provided the following solutions to reduce these effects, such as joining motivational online groups, stopping overthinking, ignoring social media news, teachers' understanding of the current situation, students' internal motivation and investment in time.

The solution that got the highest agreement among students is talking to people online and having motivational groups that help me reduce their anxiety. As students mentioned in the previous question that COVID-19 made them feel more isolated, bored and depressed, they think that online motivational groups are the solution that will encourage them to feel that online learning is more accessible and acceptable.

"Talking to people online can help".

"Join motivational groups".

"By motivational speech. For example, be positive and everything will pass".

"Making online chats with native people to improve your English".

"To change and improve the teaching circular for the students by marking extra motivational courses".

"Join an intensive course so that I'll have more confidence in myself".

"To join online motivational courses".

"Talk to students like to do that I will feel more relaxed that there are others like me".

Another solution by students was to take it easy and stop overthinking. During the pandemic, students were in constant fear and they felt nervous due COVID-19 situation. They think that when they try to stop overthinking and take it easy, this will affect their educational attainment

"stop thinking of it".

"Stop over thinking and live the moment whatever it is".

"Don't think about this virus".

Also, their nervousness came from exaggerated social media news, so they suggested they ignore such news, to stop thinking about it, and to focus positively on the educational process.

"To stay away from the negative energy".

"You can ignore social media".

"Stay away from negative news".

"To stay away from the news".

"Don't watch the TV.".

"To ignore negative social media news".

Moreover, students provided a notable solution which is teachers should understand what they are as students going through and provide them extra marks on additional assignments. This idea illustrates that teachers should listen to students' concerns about online learning as well as show empathy by reminding them of the safety protocol and that they are all in the same situation.

"The teachers also should help us and they have to understand what we are going through".

"The doctors should encourage us more by giving us extra marks on additional assignments".

“The teachers also should understand that students feel anxious about the sudden shift of learning methods, they can ensure that their situation is applied to all students all over the world so no need to worry, and they can encourage the students by giving them extra marks”.

“Doctors have to comfort students and to be more humane”.

Additional solutions were suggested by students such as depending on their personal efforts rather than professors' explanation, they should have internal motivation to cope with COVID-19 situation and be hopeful.

“Depending on our personal efforts rather than the professor's explanation”.

“Be positive and hopeful”.

“Self-reliance in all aspects”.

“Trying to make positive and entertaining activities at home”.

“Depending on our personal effort for studying”.

Also, students agreed the most on the idea that they should invest their time wisely by doing beneficial activities such as scheduling their daytime activities, reading books and watching educational videos.

“Use your time wisely to learn things rather than complaining about Covid19 and quarantine”.

“The most important things to be done are filling one's time in beneficial activities to avoid anxiety and negative feelings, reducing the time spent on social media and strengthening the relationship with the family and close friends”.

## **CONCLUSION**

The researcher believe that anxiety has undesirable impacts on learning English as foreign language. Anxiety has the potential to inhibit learners from learning a language. Without a doubt, COVID-19 caused learning anxiety among learners in Palestine and worldwide. It is evident that Palestinian learners were anxious due to COVID-19 pandemic. It is found that Palestinian EFL learners have encountered a lot of difficulties and this is reflected in experiencing severe anxiety during the COVID19. The researchers concluded that Palestinian EFL learners exhibited high levels of anxiety amidst COVID-19. Moreover, the researcher found some causes that increase anxiety and affect EFL learners during COVID-19. Educators should take all the procedures that may create conducive learning environment to reduce anxiety.

## **Recommendation**

The researchers recommended some solutions to reduce the impacts of COVID-19 on learners' anxiety, such as joining motivational online groups, stopping overthinking, ignoring social media news, teachers' understanding of the current situation, students' internal motivation and investment in time. The researchers agree with all the solutions stated by students, if students employ these suggestions this will reduce the learning anxiety during COVID-19. Also, teachers should take into consideration the students' suggestions because these suggestions came from the source of the problem.

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**Appendix: Questionnaire**

Gender: Male, Female

Age: .....

Academic level: .....

	items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I anxiously think about English learning during COVID-19.					
2	I feel uncomfortable with English learning during COVID-19.					
3	I worry that COVID-19 may prevent me from learning English.					
4	I am worried about my learning activities during COVID-19.					

5	I believe that COVID-19 anxiety decreases my ability to learn English.					
6	Thinking about COVID-19 makes me careless about learning English.					
7	I feel nervous when I think that COVID-19 will hinder me from fulfilling my objectives of learning English.					
8	More social distancing during COVID19 increases my anxiety about learning English.					
9	Social media news about COVID-19 increases my fear about my learning of English.					
10	I do some preparation for my online presentation					
11	I do some pleasant activities to make me calm and less worried.					
12	I set my mind to think positively.					
13	I look for a suitable learning partner to talk or to share.					
14	I do nothing to lessen my anxiety, i.e.: giving up, stopping making any effort.					
15	I think the government will apply the procedures that will help me overcome the negative effects of COVID-19 on learning English.					
16	I enthuse myself to learn English actively during COVID-19.					
17	I try to ignore social media news about COVID-19 to care about my English learning.					
18	I follow the strict preventive measures which make me feel safe of COVID19 to keep learning English actively.					