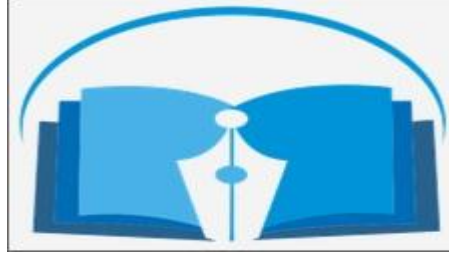




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العدد الثاني والعشرون

يناير 2023م

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## The challenges associated with distance education in Libyan universities during the COVID 19 pandemic: Empirical study

Mohammed Abuojaylah Albarki<sup>1</sup>, Salem Msaoud Adrugi<sup>2</sup>, Tareg Abdusalam Elawaj<sup>3</sup>,  
Milad Mohamed Alhwat<sup>4</sup>

Department of Computer. Faculty of Education. Elmergib University<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Department of Data Analysis & Computer. Faculty of Economic & Commerce. Elmergib  
University<sup>4</sup>

Maalburki@Elmergib.edu.ly<sup>1</sup>, Salem.Adrugi@Elmergib.edu.ly<sup>2</sup>, taalawag@elmergib.edu.ly<sup>3</sup>,  
mmalhawat@elmergib.edu.ly<sup>4</sup>

### Abstract

This study explored the challenges associated with distance education in Libyan universities during the COVID 19 pandemic from the students' perspective. To identify such challenges, a survey was designed and used. It's based on the five point Likert scale. Its validity and reliability were checked. The descriptive analytical approach was adopted. The purposive sampling method was used. Thus, 480 male and female students were chosen from four (4) universities in Libya. The survey forms were passed by email to those students. 416 forms were filled and analysed. The response rate is 86.66%. SPSS Software and descriptive statistical methods were employed for carrying out data analysis. It was found that such challenges include: faculty members' lack of knowledge about the learning needs of students, and the lack of security associated with online assessment. Such challenges also include: the faculty members' failure to use the right teaching strategies that fit with the nature of distance education. The researcher recommends conducting studies for exploring the training needs of faculty members in Libya. That shall improve the quality of distance education delivered during any future crisis

**Keywords:** *Challenges, distance education, Libya, COVID 19 pandemic, Libyan universities*

### 1. Introduction

In December, 2019, the COVID 19 virus emerged in Wuhan, China. It's suggested that this virus emerged in the Seafood Market in Wuhan. Hence, this virus is called the (China virus). It spread in all the countries later on and caused millions of deaths. Thus, it turned into a pandemic and global crisis (Shofoyeke and Shofoyeke, 2021). This virus affects the respiratory system in one's body. It can move from one to another through inhalation. In terms of its symptoms, they include: fever, fatigue, breathlessness, coughing, malaise, sore throat, and etc... They are deemed mild for the majority of people. It could threaten one's life, especially for elders who suffer from comorbidities. The fatality rate of this respiratory virus ranges between (2% - 3%) (Singhal, 2020).

Due to this pandemic, lock down measures was enforced in all countries. Thus, this pandemic affected people's income and social lives. It affected all nations in various fields. Such fields include: the healthcare, industrial, economic, and educational fields. In terms of education, public and private schools and universities in all countries shifted from providing face to face education into providing distance education during the lock down period. This measure aimed at reducing the number of deaths and preventing the virus from spreading (Shofoyeke and Shofoyeke, 2021).



Distance education is one of the web-based teaching approaches (Al-Derbashi, 2017). Such approaches include: the blended learning approach (Al-Derbashi and Abed, 2017). Distance education has many benefits. For instance, it enhances the learning outcomes and the computer skills of students (Amer, 2020). It positively affects the retention of information among students due to the use of attractive colours and multimedia. It facilitates the process of retention. It reduces the time that's needed by students for learning due to the ability of accessing illustrative videos. It allows students and instructors to share files, and documents, carry out chats online, hold video meetings and send each other messages. It allows students to learn at their own pace, and gain access to the educational material at any time. It provides learners with learning experiences that are fun and enjoyable. Through distance education, games can be used in the teaching-learning process in order to reduce the stress associated with learning (Li and Lalani, 2020). It can be adopted through with employing social network (Alderbashi and Khadragy, 2018).

Libya is one of the countries that delivered distance education to university and school students during the pandemic. Hence, the researcher suggests that it's necessary to explore the challenges associated with this experience to improve the quality of education. Hence, this study explored the challenges associated with distance education in Libyan universities during the COVID 19 pandemic from the students' perspective.

## 2. Objectives

- This study explored the extent of satisfaction of the students enrolled in Libyan universities with their experience in receiving distance education during the COVID 19 pandemic.
- This study explored the challenges associated with distance education in Libyan universities during the COVID 19 pandemic from the students' perspective

## 3. Questions

This study explored the answers of the following questions

- Q.1 what is the extent of satisfaction of the students enrolled in Libyan universities with their experience in receiving distance education during the COVID 19 pandemic?
- Q.2 what are the challenges associated with distance education in Libyan universities during the COVID 19 pandemic from the students' perspective?

## 4. Significance of the study

This study is significant due to the points below

- This study offers knowledge to the leaders working at Libyan universities. This knowledge enables those leaders to address the challenges associated with distance education
- This study provides researchers with an instrument to explore the challenges associated with distance education in various institutions

## 5. Limits

This study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2021/2022. It was conducted in four (4) universities in Libya. Those universities are: University of Tripoli, Elmergib University, University of Benghazi and Omar Al-Mukhtar University

## 6. Definitions

-The COVID 19 pandemic: (theoretical definition): It is a virus that emerged in December, 2019, the COVID 19 virus emerged in Wuhan, China. Hence, this virus is called the (China virus). Thus, it turned into a pandemic and global crisis. It caused millions of deaths (Shofoyeke and Shofoyeke, 2021). It affects the respiratory system in one's body. It can move from one to another through inhalation. In terms of its symptoms, they include: fever, fatigue, breathlessness, coughing, malaise, sore throat, and etc... They are deemed mild for



the majority of people. It could threaten one's life, especially for elders who suffer from comorbidities. The fatality rate of this respiratory virus ranges between (2% - 3%) (Singhal, 2020).

-Distance education: (theoretical definition): It may be defined as a mode of education in which the pupils and the instructors are separated spatially from each other and interact through the use of telecommunications systems. Through such systems, the pupils are usually provided with academic resources and materials (Schlosser and Simonson, 2009).

-Distance education: (operational definition): It refers to the process of teaching the students in Libyan universities online during the COVID 19 pandemic

## 7. Theoretical framework

### 7.1. Benefits of distance education

The expression (distance education) is not a modern or recent concept. In fact, it emerged for the first time during the early 1700s in Great Britain and America. During the early 1700s, academic materials, tests, assignments, notes and feedback were passed to students through the use of postal services. During the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mass communication (e.g. TV and radio channels) was used for providing students with distance education. Later on, during (1980 to 1990), pre-recorded videos in addition to cassette recordings were employed for providing students with distance education. Later one, specifically since early 1990s, the web and computer devices have been increasingly utilized for providing distance education. Such utilization has been increasing because computer and internet are deemed easy to access and cheap (Harper et al., 2004).

Distance education has many benefits. For instance, it is capable of developing students' higher order thinking skills. It promotes collaboration among students and offers collaborative learning opportunities. It enhances the learning environment of students. It enhances the student-student interaction. It promotes much respect for the ones possessing a different opinion. It enhances the students' ability to negotiate (Bradshaw and Hinton, 2004). Distance education improves students' achievement in scientific courses (Abu Oqol, 2012). It is capable of meeting the educational needs of students of various categories. To illustrate more, it is capable of meeting the educational needs of the female students whose families don't allow them to leave their house due to cultural beliefs. In addition, it is capable of meeting the educational needs of the ones incapable of reaching educational institutions due to living in remote areas. Thus, those categories of students can receive education online without having to use transportation nor pay much money for renting an apartment nearby the academic institution (Pant, 2014)

Distance education is capable of meeting the educational needs of the students who are not capable of paying much cost to travel to get enrolled in an educational institution. It is capable of meeting the educational needs of the students having a disability. For instance, some students have physical or psychological disabilities that hinder them from leaving their home. Thus, they can receive education without leaving their house. They can also take tests and receive educational material and curricula while being at home (Pant, 2014).

Distance education positively affects the quality level of the provided education. That is because students shall be capable of employing multimedia that include visual and auditory features. It allows instructors to deliver the same lesson to numerous students at the same time. It allows students to share their notes with one another. That shall increase the knowledge possessed by students. It allows students to learn from one another. Distance education allows instructors to deliver feedback to students on every homework and assessment. That shall enable instructors to detect the weaknesses of every student and



address such weaknesses. Distance education allows instructors to identify the gaps existing in the skills and knowledge of every student (Keleş and Özel, 2016).

Distance education allows students to access the material provided by the instructor while being at home or work. It spares students from spending long time in transportation to reach the education institution. It positively affects the interaction and communication between the instructor and his/her students and facilitates it. That's because this education offers numerous tools for having online communication. Such tools include: video calls, messages, and chats. This education allows instructors to analyse the behaviour of each student and follow up the progress of each student and track it with saving files about it (Keleş and Özel, 2016). It enhances students' retention in computer science (Anunobi et al., 2016). It enhances students' achievement in social studies (Kaur, 2016)

#### 7.2. Challenges associated with distance education:

There are various challenges associated with distance education. For instance, distance education doesn't contribute to developing students' language skills. That is because developing such skills requires having face-to-face interaction in classroom/ lecture hall in order for the teacher to correct the student's mistakes by the instructor (Al-Zboon, 2020). In addition, distance education may not be suitable for teaching scientific courses. Some instructors may not provide students with feedback regularly about their progress (Abu Obah, 2020). Distance education may distract students while learning. That's because students may get distracted with online advertisement and games. It's because students may get distracted with having their family members near them while taking online lessons (Al-Ja'afrah, 2020)

Other challenges include: the lack of development of the required IT infrastructure in many countries, especially in developing countries. That's because the latter countries lack the required funds needed for developing the IT infrastructure. In addition, distance education doesn't improve the social relationship between students and their colleagues. It doesn't improve students' communication skills. That is because this mode of education doesn't involve face to face interaction. However, face to face interaction is essential to develop students in social and emotional aspects. Distance education increases the burden enforced on teachers and tasks assigned to them. That is because teachers must create electronic worksheets and materials and pass them to students online (Al Qadi, 2021)

Distance education isn't suitable for teaching all types of courses. That is because some courses include practical aspects that must be taught through using face-to-face mode. In addition, distance education isn't suitable for teaching students in all stages. That's because students in the early grades don't know how to read and write. Thus, those students should be taught through using the face-to-face mode. In addition, some instructors having poor skills in teaching students online. In addition, teachers in many institutions aren't provided with adequate training about the use of technology in education. That shall hinder them from delivering effective distance education (Al-Ayed, 2021)

The challenges associated with this education include: having teachers who lack knowledge about the concepts related to technology. They include: having teachers who aren't capable of making videos. They include: having teachers who don't know how to use anti-virus programs and don't take security into consideration when using the web (Zyoud, 2021). They

### 8. Empirical studies

Linjawi et al. (2018) investigated the perceptions of the students majoring in dentistry towards online learning in Saudi universities. They aimed to explore the readiness of those students towards receiving online education. 100 questionnaire forms were given to students. However, 72 forms were retrieved and analysed. It was found that the surveyed students are





motivated to receive online education. In addition, the poor English language skills of students hindered them from receiving such education effectively. The respondents have excellent computer skills. They have prior e-learning experiences. They show much readiness towards receiving online education. The poor institutional support affects the interests of students to receive online education.

Dahadhah and Al-Hamoori (2020) explored the attitudes of students enrolled in public secondary schools towards in Jordan towards the online exams during the Coronavirus crisis. It aimed to explore the effect of such exams on the motivation of students'. A descriptive analytical approach was employed. The researchers chose a purposive sample which consists of 300 11th grade female and male students. Those chosen students were chosen from 10 public secondary schools in Amman. A questionnaire was used. The instrument forms were passed to those students online. However, 292 forms were retrieved and analysed. SPSS program along with descriptive methods were used for data analysis. Several findings were reached. For instance, respondents have positive attitudes towards this kind of exams. In addition, such exams allow teachers to track the progress of students and enhance the problem solving skills of students. They reduce the stress associated with assessment and allow the student to manage his/her time. In addition, they have a positive effect on the motivation of student to study and show the best achievement. They allow assessing students' skills and reducing the costs of assessing students. They are objective. However, online exams don't offer more security than the paper-based ones. They don't allow the educators to determine the learning needs of every student. They can't be used in all the courses.

Atieh (2020) explored the perceptions of the students enrolled in Jordanian universities towards distance education during the COVID 19 pandemic. She targeted (tests & evaluation, educational process, collaboration and social influence). She used a survey. 159 survey forms were filled. 9 forms were excluded due to missing data. Thus, the sample includes 150 university students. It was found that the attitudes of the chosen students are natural towards distance. There isn't any significant difference between attitudes which can be attributed to the place of resident or gender. In terms of the educational process, distance education allows students to improve academic performance. It plays a moderate role in increasing the extent of doing homework by students and comprehending information (Atieh, 2020).

In terms of evaluation and tests, students show neutral attitudes towards the fairness of online assessment. In terms of collaboration and social influence. They show neutral attitudes towards the interaction between students and instructors in this mode. They show neutral attitudes towards the role of this mode in facilitating the exchange of information and expertise between instructors and students. They feel socially isolated when using the distance education mode. They believe that it's difficult to create social relationship when using this mode. They also believe that there is a lack of human interaction when using this mode (Atieh, 2020).

Alqiam (2021) explored the challenges faced by students in primary schools in Jordan in terms of learning math online during the COVID 19 pandemic. He used a descriptive analytical approach. He also employed a questionnaire. This instrument targets (psychological and educational challenges, assessment-related challenges and IT-related challenges). The researcher used the purposive sampling method. The sampled involves 300 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. Those students were chosen from ten (10) primary schools located in Amman. The instrument forms were passed to the students online. 287 questionnaire forms were retrieved and analysed. It was found that 61%30 of the respondents have low satisfaction with their experience in learning math online during the pandemic. It was found



that the severity of the challenges facing the targeted students in learning math online is high. That applies to all the areas (separately and jointly) (Alqiam, 2021).

In terms of educational challenges, they include: instructors' lack of knowledge about the learning needs of students and instructors' failure to take the individual differences between students into consideration. They include: instructors' failure to use the right teaching strategies which fit with the nature of the used teaching mode (i.e. the distance education mode). In terms of assessment challenges, they include: lack of feedback and the failure of online assessment to assess some skills and identifying the learning needs accurately of every student. They include: lack of the security and the reliability associated with online assessment (Alqiam, 2021).

In terms of IT-related challenges, they include: low internet speed, internet disconnection, instructors' poor IT skills, instructors' failure to design e-material professionally, and the state's poor IT infrastructure. They include: student's poor IT skills and having students getting distracted while learning online. They include: difficulty of using the platform and facing problems of technical nature while using the platform. In terms of psychological challenge, they include: failure of online assessment and teaching to develop students in emotional areas. They include: the rise of students' stress, frustration and anxiety levels and instructors' lack of motivation. They include: absence of psychological support and counselling services during the use of the online learning mode (Alqiam, 2021).

## 9. Methodology

### 9.1. Approach

The descriptive analytical approach was used

### 9.2. Data collection methods

The following sources were used:

-Primary data source: It's represented in the survey

-Secondary data sources: They include: books and research articles.

### 9.3. Population and sample

The population involves all the students enrolled in Libyan universities and received distance education during the COVID 19 pandemic. The purposive sampling method was used. Thus, 480 male and female students were chosen from four (4) universities in Libya. The survey forms were passed by email to those students. 416 forms were filled and analysed. The response rate is 86.66%. Data about the surveyed students are displayed in table (1)

Table (1): Data about the surveyed students

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	165	39.66
	Female	259	62.25
University	University of Tripoli	97	23.31
	Al-Mergib University	109	26.20
	University of Benghazi	115	27.64
	Omar Al-Mukhtar University	95	22.83

N=416

### 9.4. Instrument

A survey was designed and used. It's based on the five point Likert scale. Its validity and reliability were checked. The survey consists from two parts. Part one collects data about students' gender and university. Part two obtains data about the challenges associated with distance education in Libyan universities during the COVID 19 pandemic. It was drafted





based on the following references: Abu Obah (2020), Dahadhah and Al-Hamoori (2020), Alqiam (2021), Al-Ayed (2021), Zyoud (2021) and Atieh (2020).

#### 9.5. Validity

To check the validity of the survey, the initial version was passed to three faculty members working in a Libyan university to assess the survey. Such assessment is based on language, clarity, relevancy to the study's question and content. All the faculty members informed the researcher that the survey is clear, relevant to the study's question and free from language-related mistakes. However, a faculty members recommended adding two sentences to the paragraph preceding part one. Those sentences were added. Another faculty member recommended adding two items to the survey. Those items are: (Some instructors didn't use a variety of online assessment strategies) and (online assessment are not reliable). Thus, changes were made.

#### 9.6. Reliability

The Cronbach alpha values are calculated for each area. They are displayed in the table shown below:

Table (2): Cronbach alpha values for each area

No.	Area	Cronbach alpha
1.	Assessment-related challenges	0.86
2.	Educational challenges	0.82
3.	Challenges related to the IT field	0.75
4.	Psychological challenges	0.70
	Overall	0.78

The overall value is 0.78. The latter value and the rest of the values in table (2) indicate that the survey is highly reliable for collecting data. That's because the displayed values are greater than 0.70 as it's claimed by Salehi &Farhang (2019) in their study.

#### 9.7. Analysis

SPSS Software and descriptive statistical methods were employed for carrying out data analysis. The table below shows the criteria adopted for classifying the means of responses

Table (3): The criteria adopted for classifying the means of responses

Range	Level	Attitude
2.33 or less	Low	Negative
2.34-3.66	Moderate	Neutral
3.67 or more	High	Positive

\*Source: (Alderbashi, 2021)

Regarding the five point Likert scale, it consists from five (5) rating categories that are shown below.

Table (4): The categories and scores of the five point Likert scale

Category	Strongly agree	Agree	Moderate	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The score it represents	5	4	3	2	1

\*Source: (Al-Derbashi and Moussa, 2022)



## 10. Results and discussion

### 10.1. First question:

Q.1 What is the extent of satisfaction of the students enrolled in Libyan universities with their experience in receiving distance education during the COVID 19 pandemic?

Percentages and frequencies are calculated to answer this question

Table (5): Percentages and frequencies about the extent of satisfaction of the students enrolled in Libyan universities with their experience in receiving distance education during the COVID 19 pandemic

Extent of satisfaction with with their experience in receiving distance education during the COVID 19 pandemic	Frequencies	Percentage
High satisfaction	40	9.61
Moderate satisfaction	317	76.20
Low satisfaction	59	14.18

N=416

76.20% of the students show moderate satisfaction with with their experience in receiving distance education during the COVID 19 pandemic. 14.18% of the students show low satisfaction with with their experience in receiving distance education during the COVID 19 pandemic. 9.61% of the students show high satisfaction with with their experience in receiving distance education during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Thus, the majority of the surveyed students have moderate level of satisfaction with their experience in receiving distance education during the COVID 19 pandemic. That means that leaders and faculty members at Libyan universities must exert more effort to improve the quality of online education. It also means that decisions must be taken and reforms must be made to raise such quality.

### 10.2. Second question:

Q.2 What are the challenges associated with distance education in Libyan universities during the COVID 19 pandemic from the students' perspective?

To identify the severity of the types of the challenges, the means and standard deviations of the study's areas are calculated and shown in table (6)

Table (6): The means and standard deviations of the study's areas

No.	Area	Mean	Std.	Level	Rank
1	Assessment-related challenges	3.73	0.49	High	3
2	Educational challenges	3.55	0.59	Moderate	4
3	Challenges related to the IT field	4.12	0.42	High	2
4	Psychological challenges	4.37	0.50	High	1
	Overall	3.94	0.50	High	

Based on those values, the severity of the challenges associated with distance education in Libyan universities during the COVID 19 pandemic from the students' perspective is high. That's because the overall mean is 3.94. The severity of the educational challenges is moderate, because the mean is 3.55. The severity of the assessment-related challenges, challenges related to the IT field and psychological challenges are high, because the means are 3.73, 4.12 and 4.37 respectively.

Based on those values, measures must be taken to address the challenges associated with distance education in Libyan universities. For instance, counselling services and



psychological support must be provided to the students learning online during any crisis. In addition, more specialists in IT must be recruited in Libyan universities to address the technical problems faced by students during crisis. A system must be created for reporting such problems to the university management. Furthermore, courses in the field of e-assessment and e-learning must be given to instructors at Libyan universities to handle any crisis in the future effectively.

The means and standard deviations of the statements in each area are shown below:

Table (7): The means and standard deviations of the statements in each area

No.	Statement	Mean	Std.	Level
First	Assessment-related challenges			
During the delivery of distance education during pandemic,				
1	I wasn't always provided with feedback by instructors to all the assignments I submitted	4.97	0.25	High
2	The online assessments weren't effective for assessing all my skills	4.92	0.63	High
3	The online assessments didn't allow instructors to identify my learning needs accurately	4.86	0.17	High
4	The online assessments didn't offer much security	0.64	0.33	Low
5	I found that some instructors have poor skills and knowledge in terms of online assessment	2.31	0.20	Low
6	Some instructors didn't use a variety of online assessment strategies	2.28	0.95	Low
7	The scores in the online assessment were not reliable	4.90	0.84	High
8	Online assessments were not suitable for all courses	4.97	0.56	High
*	Overall (Assessment-related challenges)	3.73	0.49	High
Second	Educational challenges			
During the delivery of distance education during pandemic,				
9	I wasn't provided with adequate attention by some instructors	4.96	0.98	High
10	Some instructors don't reply to students' inquires	4.91	0.57	High
11	Some instructors didn't use the right instructional strategies that fit with the nature of the distance education mode	1.56	0.84	Low



12	The individual differences between me and other students weren't taken into consideration by some instructors	1.47	0.36	Low
13	I found that some instructors lack knowledge about my learning needs while teaching	4.88	0.24	High
*	Overall (Educational challenges)	3.55	0.59	Moderate
Third	Challenges related to the IT field			
During the delivery of distance education during pandemic,				
14	My internet connection was sometimes slow	3.64	0.11	Moderate
15	I got distracted sometimes while taking the lessons	4.96	0.60	High
16	Some of my colleagues faced problems due to their poor IT skills	4.81	0.43	High
17	Some instructors show poor IT skills	1.98	0.17	Low
18	I had concerns about the security of my data while learning online	4.94	0.39	High
19	I faced technical problems while using the platforms	4.93	0.48	High
20	I suffered from internet disconnections	3.62	0.79	Moderate
*	Overall (Challenges related to the IT field)	4.12	0.42	High
Fourth	Psychological challenges			
During the delivery of distance education during pandemic,				
21	My stress and anxiety levels rose	4.81	0.37	High
22	Psychological support was needed due the fears associated with the pandemic	4.89	0.68	High
23	Some instructors lacked the motivation to teach	2.30	0.92	Low
24	I felt socially isolated sometimes	4.95	0.38	High
25	I felt frustrated sometimes	4.90	0.17	High
*	Overall (Psychological challenges)	4.37	0.50	High

In terms of the assessment challenges, it was found that instructors don't always provide students with feedback on the assignments, because the mean is 4.97. This result is consistent with the result reached by Abu Obah (2020). It's because some instructors receive numerous messages online which makes it hard to reply to all them. It was found that online assessments weren't effective for assessing all their skills because the mean is 4.92. This result is not consistent with the result reached by Dahadhah and Al-Hamoori (2020). It's because some skills requires assessment through practical assessment, such as: the decision



making, and planning skills and skills in handling emergencies. It was found that online assessments didn't allow instructors to identify students' learning needs accurately, because the mean is 4.86. It's because some assessments must be carried out face to face, such as: assessment in terms of pronunciation. The latter result is consistent with the result reached by Dahadhah and Al-Hamoori (2020).

It was found that the scores in the online assessment were not reliable because the mean is 4.90. . This result is consistent with the result reached by Alqiam (2021). It's because some students may cheat in online exams. It was found that online assessments were not suitable for all courses because the mean is 4.97. This result is consistent with the result reached by Al-Ayed (2021). It is because some courses have much practical content that requires having face to face interaction in lecture hall.

In terms of the educational challenges, it was found that students were not provided with adequate attention by some instructors. It's because some instructors have a great load that hinders them from providing much attention to every student. It was found that some instructors don't reply to students' inquires, because the mean is 4.91. It's because some instructors received many inquires online which made it hard to reply to all of them. It was found that that some instructors lack knowledge about students' learning needs while teaching, because the mean is 4.88. This result is consistent with the result reached Zyoud (2021).

In terms of the challenges related to the IT field, it was found that students' internet connection was sometimes slow, because the mean is 3.64. It was found that students got distracted sometimes while taking the lessons because the mean is 4.96. It was found that some students faced problems due to their poor IT skills because the mean is 4.81. It was found that some students had concerns about the security of my data while learning online because the mean is 4.94. It was found that some students faced technical problems while using the platforms because the mean is 4.93.

In terms of the psychological challenges, it was found that students' stress and anxiety levels rose during the delivery of such education, because the mean is 4.81. This result is consistent with the result reached by Alqiam (2021). It's because learning in isolation from the other students shall create a stressful learning environment. It was found that students felt socially isolated sometimes, because the mean is 4.95. This result is consistent with the result reached by Atieh (2020). The feelings of isolation can be attributed to the lack of direct interaction with the university staff, colleagues and instructors. It was found that students felt frustrated sometimes, because the mean is 4.90. This result is consistent with the result reached by Alqiam (2021). It is attributed to the lack of face to face activities and chats. It was found that psychological support was needed due the fears associated with the pandemic, because the mean is 4.89

## 11. Conclusion

It was found that the majority of the surveyed students have moderate level of satisfaction with their experience in receiving distance education during the COVID 19 pandemic. In addition, the severity of the challenges associated with distance education in Libyan universities during the COVID 19 pandemic from the students' perspective is high. The severity of the educational challenges is moderate. As for the severity of the assessment-related challenges, challenges related to the IT field and psychological challenges, they are high.

Thus, measures must be taken to address the challenges associated with distance education in Libyan universities. For instance, counselling services and psychological support must be





provided to the students learning online during any crisis. In addition, more specialists in IT must be recruited in Libyan universities to address the technical problems faced by students during crisis. A system must be created for reporting such problems to the university management. Furthermore, courses in the field of e-assessment and e-learning must be given to instructors at Libyan universities to handle any crisis in the future effectively.

## 12. Recommendations

The researcher recommends:

- Developing plans in Libyan universities for the delivery of psychological support and counselling services during any future crisis
- Providing instructors in Libyan universities with courses in the field of IT

## 13. Recommendations for future research:

The researcher recommends:

- Conducting studies for exploring the training needs of faculty members in Libya. That shall improve the quality of distance education delivered during any future crisis in Libya
- Conducting studies for exploring the challenges faced by students during the delivery of distance education during this pandemic in Libya

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## الفهرس

الصفحة	اسم الباحث	عنوان البحث	ر.ت
1-15	عادل رجب ابوسيف جبريل	دراسة بحثية لإنشاء وحدة معملية للطباعة الفنية النافذة والنسيج بالأقسام العلمية بجامعة درنة	1
16-26	Ali Abu Ajeila Altaher Nuri Salem Alnaass Mohamed Ali Abunnour	دراسة وصفية عن مشكلة التلوث البيئي والتغيرات المناخية ومخاطرها علي الفرد والمجتمع	2
27-44	Younis Muftah Al-zaedi Fathi Salem Hadoud	Anti-diabetic and Hypoglycemic Activities of Onion: A review	3
45-72	Fadel Beleid El-Jeadi Ali Abdusalam Benrabha Abdu Alkhalek Mohamed. M. Rubiaee	The Lack of Teacher-Student Interaction in Libyan EFL classroom	4
73-92	اسماعيل ميلاد اشميلة خديجة عيسى قحواط	وسيلة تعليمية واعدة في العملية التعليمية تقنية التصوير التجسيبي	5
93-100	Ayman Adam Hassan	"Le dédoublement des personnages dans <i>Une vie</i> ou <i>l'Humble vérité</i> de Guy de Maupassant"	6
101-106	Mabruka Hadidan Rajab Abujnah Najat Aburas	Manufacturing of Porous Metal Oxides HTiNbO5 Catalyst	7
107-117	بشير علي الطيب	الامطار وأثرها على النقل البري بالطريق الساحلي بمنطقة سوق الخميس - الخمس	8
118-130	Nora Mohammed Alkurri Khaled Ahmed Gadouh Elbashir mohamed khalil	A proposed Model for Risks Management measurement in Cloud Computing Environment (Software as a Service)	9
131-137	Mohamed M. Alshahri Ahmad M. Dabah Osama A. Sharif Saleh O. Handi	Air Pollution From The Cement Industry in AlKhums City:A Case Study in LEBDA Cement Plant	10
138-157	Ekram Gebril Khalil Hamzah Ali Zagloun	Difficulties faced by students in oral presentation in classroom interaction	11
158-163	Badria Abdusalam Salem	Analysis of Some Soft drinks Samples Available in Alkoms City	12
164-172	Suad Husen Mawal	Teachers' and Students' Attitudes towards the Impact of Class Size on Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language	13
173-178	نرجس ابراهيم شنيب نجلاء مختار المصري	تصميم نموذج عصا الكفيف الالكترونية	14
179-191	خميس ميلاد عبدالله الدزيري	دراسة تحليلية علي إدارة المخازن وتأثرها بالنظم معلومات الادارية المؤسسة الوطنية للسلع التموينية منطقة الوسطي	15



192-204	فاطمة أحمد قناو	عنوان البحث التغذية الراجعة في العملية التعليمية (مفهومها - أهميتها- أنواعها)	16
205-214	فوزي مجد رجب الحوات سكينه الهادي إبراهيم الحوات	التسول أسبابه وسبل علاجه	17
215-226	Turkiya A. Aljamaal	Some properties of Synchronization and Fractional Equations	18
227-242	عبد الرحمن بشير الصابري إبراهيم عبدالرحمن الصغير أبو بكر أحمد الصغير	منهج المدابغي واستدراكاته في حاشيته على شرح الأشموني على الألفية في أبواب النواسخ	19
243-254	بنور ميلاد عمر العماري	أهمية دور الأخصائي الاجتماعي في المؤسسات التعليمية	20
255-267	فرج محمد صالح الدريع	ليبيا وأبرز النخب السياسية والثقافية 1862م -1951م (دراسة تاريخية في تطورها)	21
268-282	ميلود مصطفى عاشور	فن المعارضات في الشعر الليبي الحديث	22
283-296	فرج محمد جمعة عماري	ما خالف فيه الأخفش سيوبه في باب الكلام وأقسامه: دراسة تحليلية	23
297-304	Ramadan Ahmed Shalbag Ahmed Abd Elrahman Donam Abdelrahim Hamid Mugaddim	A Case Study on Students' Attitude Towards Speaking and Writing Skills Among Third & Fourth Year University Students at the Faculty of Education, Elmergib University	24
305-315	بلال مسعود عبد الغفار التويهي	الوضع الاقتصادي للأسرة دور منحة الزوجة والأبناء في تحسين الليبية دراسة تقييمية للتشريعات الصادرة بخصوصها من "2013م - 2014م"	25
316-331	فرج مفتاح العجيل	تنمية الأداء المهني لمعلمي علم النفس بالمرحلة الثانوية وأثره في تحصيل طلابهم ( دراسة ميدانية لتنمية معلمي علم النفس أثناء تدريسهم لطلاب الصف الثاني للمرحلة الثانوية )	26
332-351	فتحية علي جعفر	بعض الصعوبات التي تواجه دمج المعاقين في المدارس العادية	27
352-357	Rabia O Eshkourfu Hanan Ahmed Elaswad Fatma Muftah Elmenshaz	Determination of Chemical and Physical Properties of Essential Oil Extracted from Mixture of Orange and Limon Peels Collected from Al-khoms-Libya	28
358-370	Elnori Elhaddad	A case study of excessive water production diagnosis at Gialo E-59 Oil field in Libya	29
371-383	عبد الجليل عبد الرازق الشلوي	(ثورة التقنيات الحديثة وتأثيرها على الفنان التشكيلي)	30
384-393	Abdul Hamid Alashhab	La poésie de la résistance en France Le cas de La Rose et Le Réséda de Louis Aragon et Liberté de Paul Éluard	31
394-406	إبراهيم رمضان هدية مصطفى بشير مجد رمضان	مختصر لطائف الطرائف في الاستعارات من شرح السمرقندية بشرح المُلوي (دراسة وتحقيق)	32
307-421	Ragb O. M. Saleh	Simulation and Analysis of Control Messages Effect on DSR Protocol in Mobile Ad-hoc Networks	33
422-432	أبو عائشة مجد محمود فرج الجعراي عثمان	طرق التدريس الحديثة بين النظرية والتطبيق لتدريس مادة الجغرافية دراسة تحليلية لمدارس التعليم الثانوي بمسلاته نموذجاً	34





433-445	فريال فتحي مجد الصباح	أسلوب تحليل النظم " المفاهيم والاهداف في مواجهة التقدم العلمي والتكنولوجي "	35
446-452	Afifa Milad Omeman	Antibacterial activities and phytochemical analysis of leafextracts of <i>Iphonascabraplant</i> used as traditional medicines in ALKHUMS-LIBYA	36
453-461	Hamed Ali Abrass	Rutherford backscattering spectrometry (review)	37
462-475	Mohammed Abuojaylah Albarki Salem Msaoud Adrug Tareg Abdusalam Elawaj Milad Mohamed Alhwat	The challenges associated with distance education in Libyan universities during the COVID 19 pandemic: Empirical study	38
476-488	حمزة مسعود مكارى عمر عبد الله الدرويش	التعريف بابن أبي حجلة التلمساني وكتابه مغناطيس الدر النفيس	39
489-493	هدية سليمان هويدي مرام يوسف نجى سالمة عبدالحميد هندي	معوقات استخدام التعليم الإلكتروني في ظل جائحة كورونا بالجامعة الأسمرية	40
494-503	هشام علي مرعي فرج احمد الفرطاس	المعرفة الحسية والعقلية عند ابن سينا	41
504-511	Mohammed Altahir Meelad Salem Mustafa Aldeep	Use of E-Learning Innovation in Learning Implementation	42
512-519	Abdusalam Yahya Mustafa Almahdi Algaet	Investigate the Effect of Video Conferencing Traffic on the Performance of WiMAX Technology	43
520-526	Abdelmola M. Odan Ahmad M. Dabah Saleh O. Handi Ibrahim M. Haram	Kinetic Model of Methanol to Gasoline (MTG) Reactions over H-Beta,H-ZSM5 and CuO/H-BetaCatalysts	44
527-537	Munayr Mohammed Amir Melad Al-Daeef	Performance Evaluation of Blacklist and Heuristic Methods in Phishing Emails Detection	45
538-555	فرج محمد طيب علي محمود خير الله شحاته إسماعيل الشريف	الأمر بالأوجه لإقامة الدعوى الجنائية (الطبيعة القانونية للأمر بالأوجه، السلطات المختصة بإصداره)	46
556-567	أسامة عبد الواحد البكوري ريم فرج بوغرارة	توظيف القوالب الجبسية في الأعمال الخزفية	47
568-578	سعد الشيباني اجدير	علم الفيزياء (نقطة تحول في مسار العلم في فلسفة القرن العشرين)	48
579-603	حسن السنوسي محمد الشريف حسين الهادي محمد الشريف	تربوت وأخواته	49
604-619	محمد سالم مفتاح كعبار	حول مشروع الترسانة البحرية وعلاقته بتوظيف الموارد البشرية وخلق فرص عمل (المقترح وآليات التنفيذ)	50
620	الفهرس		