OPEN ACCESS
Journal of Advances in Education and Philosophy
Abbreviated Key Title: J Adv Educ Philos
ISSN 2523-2665 (Print) |ISSN 2523-2223 (Online)
Scholars Middle East Publishers, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Journal homepage: https://saudijournals.com

Original Research Article

Students' Perception of Online Learning Experience First Semester SY 2020-2021: A Multinational Perspective

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DOI: 10.36348/jaep.2022.v06i03.005 | **Received:** 15.02.2022 | **Accepted:** 18.03.2022 | **Published:** 22.03.2022

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Abstract

The study sought to acquire a multinational perspective of online learning using data gathered from college students in the Philippines, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Sultanate of Oman. Using a survey questionnaire of closed and open-ended questions, the respondents were asked about convenience, academic pressure and integrity, and the benefits and drawbacks of attending online classes. The results, after undergoing statistical processing, show that students from the three countries generally perceive online classes as effective, convenient, practical and, on the whole, better than face-to-face instruction. The main problem cited centred on the quality of connection. The study recommends that institutions come up with strategies based on the identified advantages of remote learning while taking steps to improve connection issues.

Keywords: Online classes, remote learning, multinational students.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has spurred a massive and unprecedented shift to online learning. Digital education used to be the province of mainly working students and busy professionals eager to improve their credentials or increase their chances for employment. With the spread of the deadly virus, it has all but replaced the traditional classroom. Technavio, a leading global technology research and advisory company, projects the global e-learning market size to grow by USD 93.64 billion during 2020-2024 (Businesswire, September 30, 2020).

Broadly speaking, online learning means the pedagogical (as opposed to self-selected) acquisition of knowledge through the internet. The instruction is done through assigned lessons and assessments given online, while others are administered in the form of remote lectures in which students interact with their instructor and classmates using their laptops. Working students and professionals may choose an *asynchronous* arrangement which allows them to access pre-recorded lectures at their own time (Friedman, 2019).

Attendant to this burgeoning scale of usage is a host of problems and questions. Among them are queries on the effectivity of its modalities, platforms, and software applications. Another key area of concern is the students' reception and perception of the strategies that make up this technological approach to learning. This study will focus specifically on the latter concern.

Assessing perception involves identifying the processes through which individuals acquire, interpret, organize, or make sense of the of their environment. Specifically, it collects data on the effectiveness of such matters as effectiveness of programs, health status, or the composition of the respondents' community (ESRM, 2008). Proposed changes and modifications, and if necessary, total cancellation, should be based on verifiable data, clear analysis, conclusions, and realistic recommendations. These are the ideals that this study has tried to abide by in this research.

Numerous studies have been done on how students evaluate their online education experience. This study attempts a slightly different trajectory by

using data collected from a multinational group of student respondents. The paper will not only analyse the problem confronted by a racially homogenous group, but also scrutinize it by dissecting data from respondents from three countries. By so doing, the researchers hope to add an interesting facet to the study which could be the subject of further study.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will be helpful in making revisions and modifications to current online teaching approaches in the early college levels. The data from a multinational group of respondents can provide useful insights on the pervasiveness and universality of the online learning experience especially at the time of the pandemic.

Statement of the Problem

How do multi-national students perceive their online learning experience in terms of effectivity, convenience, and practicality?

In view of the stated problem, the following null hypotheses are offered:

1. Students generally perceive their online experience as effective.
2. Students generally perceive their online experience as convenient.
3. Students generally perceive their online experience as practical.
4. Students generally perceive online education as better than face-to-face teaching.
5. Students from the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, and Oman have generally similar evaluations of online learning in terms of convenience, practicality, and effectivity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have already been many studies of online learning in the past decade, but the onslaught of COVID-19 has prompted an upswell of research on the nature and effects of remote teaching and its various modalities. Student perception is one of the more studied aspects of technological approach.

Phillips (2015) conducted a study of online learning in a pharmacy college in the midwestern United States with an annual enrolment of 200 students. The results showed generally favourable comments about the use of software and scheduling of lessons. In addition, the students rated online lecture as on par with face-to-face lessons. Notwithstanding these positive perceptions, the findings also suggest that students still prefer a blended set-up in which online learning technology complements traditional instruction.

In a research involving medical students (Dost, Hossain, Shehab, Abdelwahed, & Al Nusair, 2020), the respondents rated online instruction lower than face-to-face teaching. This may be due to the suddenness of the shift to remote teaching. This was exacerbated by such factors as weak internet connection, problems with scheduling, and domestic distractions. While online strategies such as video tutorials received high marks, the students still expressed preference for live tutorials because of its synchronicity which allowed for more productive discussions and interactions.

A related study on medical students (Verma, Verma, Garg, & Godara, 2020) showed that the respondents consider online sessions as relevant and custom-designed to their needs. Moreover, the participants expressed a clear preference for remote instruction over traditional methods citing it as safe, comfortable, and enjoyable. While recognizing problems such as technical issues and lack of tech-savvy teachers, the majority still would want online classes to remain part of the curriculum even after the pandemic.

Babinčáková and Bernard's (2020) paper cited students' complaints about slow internet connection, difficulty in understanding online material and the quick pacing of lesson by teachers. In addition, they expressed preference for teaching using the traditional blackboard which they said was easier to understand. The respondents particularly enjoyed virtual chemistry experiments which employed video clips.

Sellnow-Richmond, Strawser, & Sellnow (2019) evaluated students of both fully online and hybrid modalities in their study. Those enrolled in hybrid modalities expressed concerns about the loose course structure and limited teacher-student interaction. Similarly, those registered in fully online courses reported lack of preparation, and efficacy to demonstrate in both written and oral exams. On a positive note, the respondents liked the flexibility and autonomy of both modalities. The balance, however, is tilted slightly towards online courses which the students felt allowed them to complete coursework at their own pace and around family, work, and other school obligations.

A paper submitted by Hamid, Waycott, Kurnia, and Chang (2015) examined Malaysian students' perceptions of social networking applications as used in online teaching. The researchers discovered that students were better engaged with the course content and showed a higher level of understanding and mastery of the topics. The respondents also shared knowledge and interacted with each other in a constructive manner, implying a collaborative and meaningful way of learning. Furthermore, the students were able to track their learning progress, interact and get feedback from their lecturers, and experienced a fun and enjoyable interactive learning environment.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a mixed method approach. The questions in the survey instruments are qualitative in nature since they were structured to collect individual impressions about the effectiveness of online teaching. The quantitative part is in tabulating the data gathered from the different multinational sources to come up with a clear comparative picture.

Data Analysis

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the research data in response to the problems posed in this study. Part 1is a brief analysis of the demographic profile of the respondents' age, sex, and educational degree. Part 2, followed by the brief interpretation of the gathered data, contains the perception of online learning experiences also in specific categories. Part 3 follows with a comparison of the perception of online learning experiences of Middle East and Philippines' respondents.

Profile of the Respondents

The profile of respondents is presented using age, gender, course, and year level. It is essential in the study, primarily because it gives information regarding the respondents' personal circumstances which may affect their individual perceptions of the effectiveness of online classes. This section shows the age brackets to which the respondents belong along with the frequency and percentage of their distribution.

Table 1: Age Profiles of the Respondents

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
18-22	114	75
23-27	6	3.9
28-32	15	9.9
33-37	13	8.6
38 and above	4	2.6
TOTAL	**152**	**100**

Table 1 above shows that the age group with the highest percentage (75%) is made up by members of age group 18-22 years old, followed by the age group of 28-32 with 9.9%. Next is the age group of 33-37 with 8.6%. The lowest are those from 23-27 age group with 3.9%, and those from the 38 above age group with 2.6%.

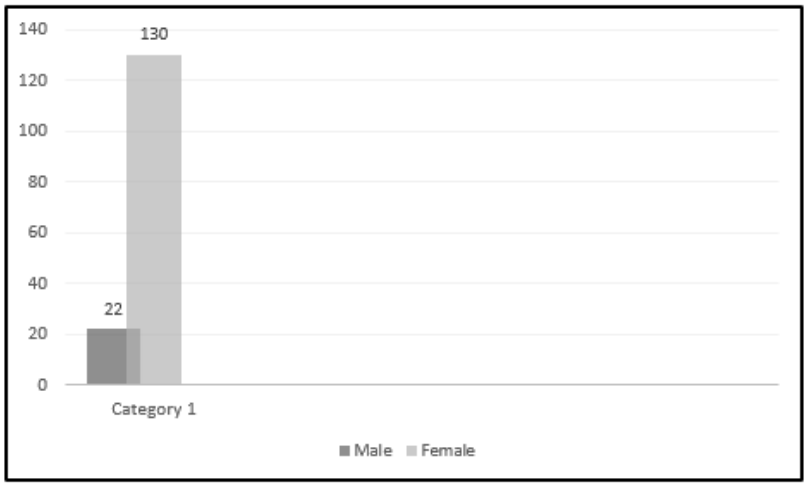

Figure 1: Sex Profile of the Respondents

The figure above above shows the sex profile of the respondents. Out of 155 students, the majority of the respondents were female, with 130 students (85.5%). Male students are 22 in number, making up only 14.5%. It is clear from the table that the female respondents outnumber the males ones by a large margin. All the respondents are studying for a bachelor's degree (undergraduates). Not a single respondent is enrolled in a higher or post-graduate course.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Middle East Students' Perception of Online Classes

Presented in Table 2 below are the different perceptions on the effectiveness of online class to by Middle East respondents from Saudi and Oman. The highest weighted mean is 3.64, showing that teachers tend to give more classwork. This is followed by the perception that students behave better during online classes. Next are the perception of feeling more

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academic pressure (3.53), and that some respondents learn more from online classes (3.29). They are followed by the perception of respondents that grading in online classs was done more fairly (3.09). Next is the perception that some enjoyed online classes more than face to face (3.18), followed by the perception that online education is better than face-to-face education (3.15). The perception that students to sleep or do other things while on online class by 2.95 percent of respondents. The lowest weighted mean is held by the perception that students cheat more during online class with (2.64). The overall mean for Middle East students' perception of the effectiveness of online classes is (3.22).

Table 2: Middle East Students' Perception of the Effectiveness of Online Classes

EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE CLASS	MIDDLE EAST		
	SAUDI	OMAN	TOTAL
Q1. Learn more from online class	2.89	3.69	3.29
Q2. Feel more academic pressure	3.13	3.93	3.53
Q3. Behave better on online class	3.38	3.76	3.57
Q4. Cheat more during online class	2.70	2.57	2.64
Q5. Tend to sleep or do other things while on online class	2.76	3.13	2.95
Q6. Believe grading in online class is more fairly	3.26	2.92	3.09
Q7. Enjoy online classes more than face-to-face classes	2.58	3.77	3.18
Q8. Teachers tend to give more classwork	3.68	3.60	3.64
Q9. Online education is better than face-to-face education	2.50	3.79	3.15
TOTAL			**3.22**

Philippine Students' Perception of Online Classes

This section deals with the results of the survey on Philippine students perception of online classes. As seen in Table 3, the highest weighted mean of 4.03 was for the perception of that teachers tend to give more classwork during online classes. This was followed by the perception that students tend to sleep or do other things while attending an on online class (3.79). The perception that students feel more academic pressure during online classes receive a score of 3.64. The perception that cheating occurs more more during online class gathered a rating of 3.57. The perception that grading in online class is done more fairly achieved a score of 2.95, while the perception that students learn more from online class with got a score of 2.72. The observation that students enjoy online classes more than face-to-face class got only a rating of 1.97. The lowest gathered mean is 1.93 which was for the opinion that online education is better than face-to-face instruction. The overall mean for Philippine students' perception of the effectiveness of online classes is 3.05.

Table 3: Philippine Students' Perception of the Effectiveness of Online Classes

EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE CLASS	PHILIPPINES
Q1. Learn more from online class	2.72
Q2. Feel more academic pressure	3.64
Q3. Behave better on online class	2.84
Q4. Cheat more during online class	3.57
Q5. Tend to sleep or do other things while on online class	3.79
Q6. Believe grading in online class is more fairly	2.95
Q7. Enjoy online classes more than face-to-face classes	1.97
Q8. Teachers tend to give more classwork	4.03
Q9. Online education is better than face-to-face education	1.93
TOTAL	**3.05**

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Relationship between Middle East and Philippines Perception to Effectiveness of Online Class

This section deals with the relationship between the perception of Middle East students and the observation of Philippine students on the effectiveness of online classes. The results are illustrated in the scatter diagram below and in the results of the Pearson's r test.

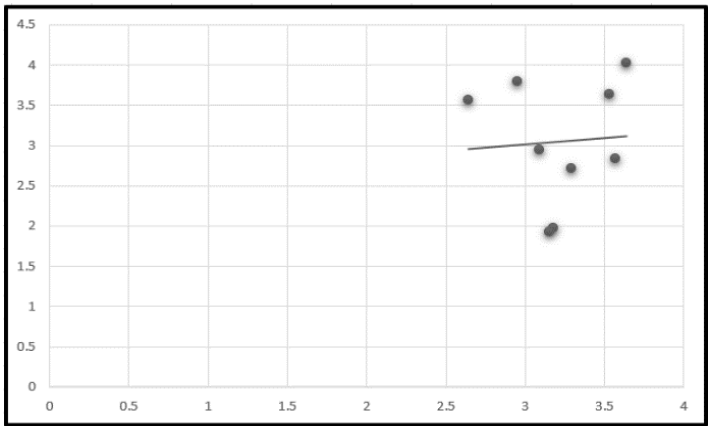

Figure 2: Relationship between ME and PH Students' Perception of the Effectiveness of Online Classes

As can be clearly seen in the scatter diagram, the points were distributed randomly. This shows that there is no correlation between the variables. Using the Pearson's r to test the relationship, the results show r=0.07 signifying weak to no correlation between the variables.

Questions 10 and 11 are open-ended questions about what the students like and hate most about online classes:

Question No. 10: The thing that I like most about online classes are…

Question No. 11. The thing that I hate most about online classes are…

There were some variations in the answers to Question no. 10. Most students (6) focused on the ease of attending online classes but were not specific as to the reason why. Presumably they were referring to the convenience of not having to dress up and travel to school to attend class. Three (3) pointed to the benefits of having an audio-visual record of the lecture which the students could go back to and review. A cultural component was evident in the answer of one Middle Eastern student who said she feels more confident speaking with a male teacher during online classes.

The responses to Question 11 were predominantly about weak internet connection (11). Three (3) students pointed to the inconvenient time of the online classes. Two (2) singled out the undue amount of work they have to accomplished as compared to the time of face-to-face classes. The table below show the respondents answers to Questions 10 and 11:

Table 4: Responses to Questions 10 and 11

	Q10	Q11
1	It protects me and my family from infection with a virus.	At a wrong time in the evening.
2	Attend the class easily.	Problem contact with network.
3	More comfortable and easy to attend classes.	Internet problems and malfunction of Blackboard sometimes.
4	No answer	No answer
5	No answer	No answer
6	Nothing	More assignments and uncomfortable
7	I can benefit from the recorded lectures.	Cannot focus
8	More confident in talking with the male doctor; can go back anytime with the recorded lectures.	Time of classes at night time is not good; problems in internet; No time for ourselves between classes.
9	Can do any work or even homework between classes freely; good grading in online.	Internet connection not always good; more academic work given to students.
10	Attend the class easily.	Network problems
11	No hassle and fatigue in going to the college	Weak internet sometimes
12	More information on classes	Nothing
13	Attend the class easily.	Weak internet sometimes
14	Saving time in going to college	When internet is weak , I miss the class.
15	No answer	No answer
16	I have more time to study.	Weak network
17	I can listen again and again to recorded lecture	If the voice of the doctor is not clear .
18	Attending classes is easy.	Internet problems and malfunction of Internet problems
19	Lectures are recorded	Time of classes; problem in internet
20	No answer	No answer

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the results, the null hypotheses offered at the beginning of this study were revisited and the following conclusions were made:

1. Students generally perceive their online experience as effective.
2. Students generally perceive their online experience as convenient.
3. Students generally perceive their online experience as practical.
4. Students generally perceive online education as better than face-to-face teaching.
5. Students from the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, and Oman have generally similar evaluations of online learning in terms of convenience, practicality, and effectivity.

Problems with the quality of internet connection was the paramount issued raised by all three nationalities but does not affect the overall positive rating that they gave to online classes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the conclusions above, the following suggestions are given:

1. Institutions should invest more in better internet connections and equipment to address the concern of many students about weak connection.
2. Administrators should monitor the number of assignments given to students in individual subjects so as not to overburden the students.
3. Administrators should build on the strengths of online classes by making sure that its inherent convenience is maintained, recordings of class sessions are consistently made, and more open communication is encouraged especially in Middle Eastern countries where female students are generally shy of consulting with male teachers.

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APPENDICES

Table 1: Educational Attainment of Respondents

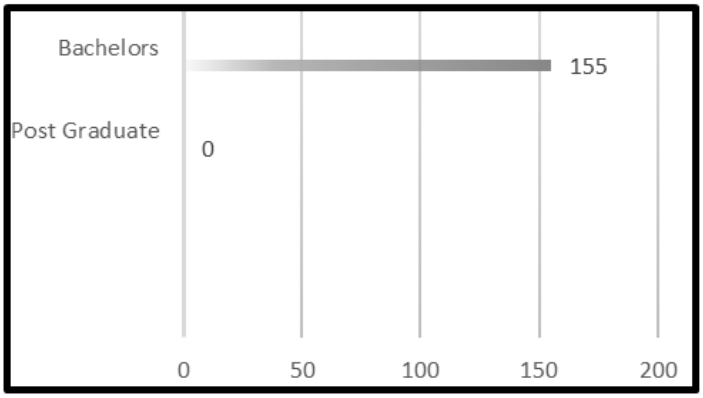

Table 2: Distribution of Saudi Students

	AGE	SEX	EL	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9
1	18-22	F	B	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	18-22	F	B	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
3	18-22	F	B	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	1
4	18-22	F	B	2	2	3	2	1	2	1	3	1
5	18-22	F	B	2	2	3	2	1	2	1	3	1
6	18-22	F	B	2	2	3	2	2	3	1	3	1
7	18-22	F	B	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	2
8	18-22	F	B	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	4	2
9	23-27	F	B	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	4	3
10	23-28	F	B	3	4	4	2	3	3	2	4	3
11	23-29	F	B	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	3
12	23-30	F	B	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3
13	23-31	F	B	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3
14	23-32	F	B	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3
15	23-33	F	B	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	5	3
16	23-34	F	B	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	3
17	23-35	F	B	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	3
18	23-36	F	B	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5
19	18-22	F	**B**	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
20	18-22	F	B	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5

MeanQ1	2.6875	STDevQ1	0.704154
MeanQ2	2.875	STDevQ2	1.087811
MeanQ3	3.125	STDevQ3	1.024695
MeanQ4	2.3125	STDevQ4	0.7932
MeanQ5	2.4375	STDevQ5	1.093542
MeanQ6	2.9375	STDevQ6	1.12361
MeanQ7	2.125	STDevQ7	1.087811
MeanQ8	3.4375	STDevQ8	1.093542
MeanQ9	2.125	STDevQ9	0.957427

Table 3: Distribution of Omani Students

	AGE	SEX	EL	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9
1	18-22	F	B	5	5	3	4	2	4	4	4	4
2	18-22	M	B	4	3	4	1	1	3	3	3	4
3	18-22	M	B	4	4	5	3	1	4	5	4	5
4	18-22	M	B	4	4	4	2	2	4	4	5	4
5	18-22	M	B	4	4	5	1	2	4	4	5	5
6	18-22	M	B	3	4	5	1	4	1	5	5	5
7	18-22	F	B	3	3	5	3	3	3	4	4	3
8	18-22	F	B	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	3	3
9	18-22	F	B	4	3	3	2	4	3	2	4	2
10	18-22	F	B	4	3	5	5	5	3	4	4	5
11	18-22	F	B	5	5	5	5	1	5	5	5	5
12	18-22	F	B	4	5	2	2	4	3	5	3	4
13	18-22	M	B	3	4	2	3	3	1	3	2	5
14	18-22	F	B	4	5	2	1	4	2	2	3	1
15	18-22	M	B	2	3	2	1	3	2	4	2	2
16	18-22	F	B	2	4	4	2	5	1	3	2	4
26												
27			Mean	#NAME?								

Mean Q1	3.6875	STDevQ1	0.873212
MeanQ2	3.9375	STDevQ2	0.771902
MeanQ3	3.8125	STDevQ3	1.276388
MeanQ4	2.5	STDevQ4	1.414214
MeanQ5	3.0625	STDevQ5	1.436141
MeanQ6	2.9375	STCevQ6	1.236595
MeanQ7	3.8125	STDevQ7	0.981071
MeanQ8	3.625	STDevQ8	1.087811
MeanQ9	3.8125	STDevQ9	1.276388

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