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### Exploring E-Learning Challenges Encountered By Primary School Educators In The Taif Region: An Investigation Into Contributing Factors And Potential Solutions

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**Abstract:**

This research project aims to explore the negative impact of COVID-19 on the educational environment in Saudi Arabia. Given the global effects of the pandemic on the education sector, particularly at the primary level, this study investigates the challenges primary school English teachers encountered with online/virtual classes. To meet the study's objectives and answer the research questions, the researcher gathered teachers' perceptions about the obstacles they faced while teaching through virtual means—the only e-learning option during social distancing measures. A quantitative method was employed, using adapted teacher questionnaires that assessed various factors including attitudes towards e-learning, readiness, challenges, and infrastructure. The findings indicated that e-learning tools were more effective for female teachers. Additionally, years of experience did not significantly influence the use of e-learning materials among teachers. The study also showed that the age of teachers did not affect the utilization of e-learning tools. Furthermore, younger teachers were more adept at using digital materials compared to their traditional counterparts. These findings are valuable for redefining e-learning and revising curricula to integrate blended learning strategies. Teacher development activities will be tailored to address these needs. Further research at the doctoral level with a larger sample size is recommended to reinforce these findings. Additionally, a tool should be created to examine online learning and related factors, particularly in the Taif region.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, e-learning strategies, teacher perception, curriculum, blended learning, teacher development.

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**Introduction:**

The education sector has undergone significant transformations, with technology playing an increasingly vital role. In today's digital society, technology and learning are inseparable, permeating every sector, including industry, business, and education. Psycholinguists suggest that integrating technology into education enhances motivation among students at all educational levels. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of technology in classrooms worldwide, making it a necessity in both urban and

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rural areas. While many advanced universities, colleges, institutes, and schools have long utilized e-learning (Khan, 2020), the pandemic has pushed educators and educationists to adopt virtual learning as a substitute for traditional face-to-face instruction.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

In Saudi Arabia, teaching practices vary by city and school. Taif, a less developed region compared to Jeddah, Riyadh, or Dammam, strives to implement similar educational technologies, especially for primary students through virtual learning. All leading Saudi government universities employ Blackboard software for teaching and assessments, with some using blended learning techniques even before COVID-19. However, the pandemic exposed schools' lack of preparedness for such challenges.

Despite the administration providing infrastructure for e-learning, numerous challenges remain. The under-preparation of teachers and a lack of motivation to adopt sophisticated technologies are major obstacles. Effective use of electronic resources is hindered by these factors. Consequently, ongoing professional development for teachers is essential to keep them updated. This study aims to address these issues.

### **Objectives:**

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the importance of e-learning in primary schools in the Taif region.
2. To identify challenges faced by primary-level teachers in the Taif region.
3. To determine factors contributing to e-learning challenges.
4. To design professional development sessions for teachers.

### **Research Questions:**

Based on the study's objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

1. How important is e-learning in today's educational context?
2. What are the perceived challenges of e-learning?
3. Which variables contribute the most to the challenges of e-learning?
4. Why is professional development crucial for teachers?
5. How can e-teacher training enhance the effectiveness of e-learning?

### **Literature Review:**

This paper examines the significance of e-learning in the current educational landscape. While e-learning greatly influences learning outcomes, it also presents various challenges, primarily due to teachers' lack of preparation. Consequently, systematic professional development is essential for primary school teachers in the Taif region.

Khan (2016) defines e-learning as the use of electronic media to achieve educational goals. Virtual learning has become an alternative to traditional education, especially post-COVID-19. It is crucial to investigate the specific challenges faced by primary school teachers in the Taif region.

Numerous studies have highlighted the benefits and challenges of e-learning, particularly during COVID-19. For instance, Chandra and Lloyd (2008) found that e-learning enhances motivation and engagement. Studies comparing traditional and online/blended learning modes (McCutcheon et al., 2015) have noted shifting research trends towards e-learning.

Khan (2016, 2017, 2020) has extensively researched the importance, challenges, and effectiveness of e-learning, particularly for English teachers. While many researchers advocate for e-learning, some argue that skill development might be compromised if solely reliant on distance learning (McCutcheon et al., 2015). Martinez et al. (2019) examined the use of mobile devices to enhance learning outcomes and professional development.

Recent studies, such as Allo (2020), explored the effectiveness of online learning during the pandemic, finding it supportive for teaching and learning. Conversely, Donnelly and McAvinia (2012) noted that many educators lack training and experience in using technology as an educational tool. Taurus, David, and Alex (2015) identified challenges in implementing e-learning in Kenyan universities. Feeney (2001) highlighted the growing focus on e-learning research.

Kim (2008) emphasized that technological issues hinder virtual learning applications. Several studies have identified factors affecting the learning process, including technology integration, teacher-student interaction, instructor effectiveness, and learning quality (Baylor & Ritchie, 2002; Selim, 2007; Volery & Lord, 2000). Khan et al. (2012) stressed the importance of a positive attitude towards technology, which requires professional development. Jones (2018) and Cidral et al. (2018) investigated the advantages and success determinants of e-learning.

Gamble (2018) explored the acceptance of e-learning among EFL university students using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Garrison (2011) studied the relevance of e-learning in the 21st century, while Hassanzadeh et al. (2012) developed a model to measure e-learning system success. Institutional and administrative decisions are crucial for successful e-learning implementation (Berhanu, 2010). Al-Harbi (2011) noted various factors influencing e-learning acceptability, with student attitudes being paramount. Al-Mubireek (2019) compared two e-learning platforms for teaching English to preparatory year students. Nedeva and Dimova (2010) identified advantages of e-learning in English language training.

Students' decisions to use e-learning are influenced by various factors, including access to technology, which affects their attitudes and behavior. Primary school students' perceptions are often observed by their teachers. Studies by Al-Dosari (2011), Abbasi et al. (2020), and Vitoria et al. (2018) found that both faculty and students view e-learning positively, considering it superior to conventional classrooms. Aggarwal et al. (2020) discussed ongoing online learning and skills development during the COVID-19 crisis. Mansour and Al-Shorman (2011) showed that blended learning strategies outperform traditional methods. Dwiyoogo and Radjah (2020) evaluated the effectiveness and appeal of blended learning models. Bali and Liu (2018) assessed students' perceptions of online and face-to-face courses. Salmon (2004) noted that training on technological features is just the first step, with pedagogical changes being the real challenge. Blinco et al. (2004) emphasized the need for sufficient knowledge and skills in using online tools for successful e-learning.

Zake (2009) pointed out that in developing countries like Africa, lack of infrastructure and poverty hinder e-learning implementation. As a result, many Kenyan institutions adopted blended learning as a preliminary step towards full e-learning implementation. Rhema and Miliszewska (2010) listed challenges affecting both students' and teachers' attitudes towards e-learning, including weak infrastructure, high costs, low experience, and poor management systems.

Summarizing the reviewed literature, increased acceptance of e-learning is noted, especially among faculty members (Ong et al., 2004; Roca et al., 2006). However, many challenges remain in higher education e-learning implementation, which must be addressed strategically. Sekakubo et al. (2011) reported that many e-learning initiatives in developing countries have failed due to various reasons. Al-Ghaith et al. (2010) highlighted that high-speed internet availability in Saudi Arabia facilitates e-learning adoption. Sahu (2020) explored the psychological impacts of COVID-19 on both teachers and students due to school closures.

Given the related studies, particularly in Saudi Arabia, further research is needed to address the challenges of online teaching in the Taif region. This research will explore additional factors affecting the effectiveness of online learning. Curriculum design, textbook/material selection, and teacher development are crucial areas of focus.

Despite numerous studies, there is a lack of literature on e-learning practices at the primary education level in Saudi Arabia, especially in Taif. Virtual learning was not widely practiced at this level before COVID-19, which necessitated its implementation across all education levels. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the training needs of primary school teachers in Taif. This study aims to fill this gap in the existing literature.

### **Methods and Design of the Study:**

This chapter provides a brief overview of the participants and data collection tools used in this project. It describes the research design, especially since this study is quantitative, relying on data from teacher-filled questionnaires. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) was adapted to gather information on various aspects of e-learning, such as attitudes, preparedness, facilities, challenges, and feedback. This chapter also addresses technical aspects like validity, reliability, permissions, consent, and ethical considerations.

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a global shift to online/virtual learning to comply with social distancing norms. In Saudi Arabia, many studies were conducted to examine e-learning. However, there was a need for research specific to the Taif region to understand the associated factors better. This prompted the researcher to undertake the current study. A quantitative approach was used, with data collected through an adapted questionnaire (Bahanshal and Khan, 2021) using a five-point scale.

The study sample consisted of 250 EFL primary school teachers (125 females and 125 males) in Taif, Saudi Arabia. Due to time constraints, convenient sampling was employed. The Google questionnaire was distributed to supervisors at all Taif secondary schools, who then shared it with EFL teachers. The researcher also sent a voice recording explaining the purpose and aims of the questionnaire, ensuring confidentiality. Teachers who responded expressed their interest and willingness to participate. Data collection occurred between March 8, 2022, and March 24, 2022. Since the questionnaire was previously used in the Saudi context, re-testing its validity was unnecessary.

### Analysis of Data and Interpretation of Results:

Research Question 1: How is e-learning important in today's educational context?

Figure 1 illustrates the significance of e-learning.

3-E-learning can enable learners to study, irrespective of where they are located in the world

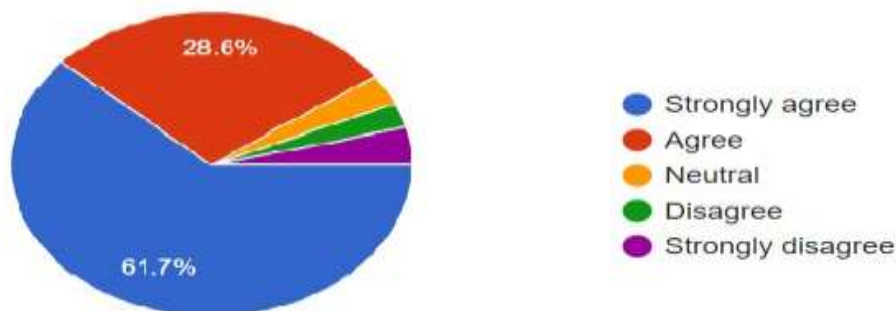


Figure1(item3 adapted from Bahanshal& Khan (2021))

The data for item 3 indicates that 61.7% of participants strongly agree, while 28.6% agree, demonstrating strong consensus on the importance of e-learning.

Figure 2: shows the significance of e-learning.

8-Studying through e-learning mode can increase students' learning effectively, as they will have easy access to learning materials (e.g. reading documents and recorded videos)

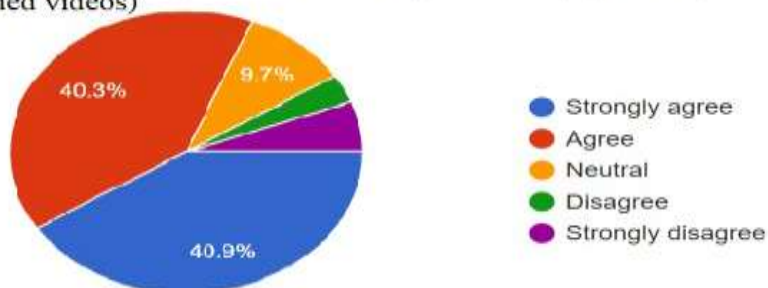


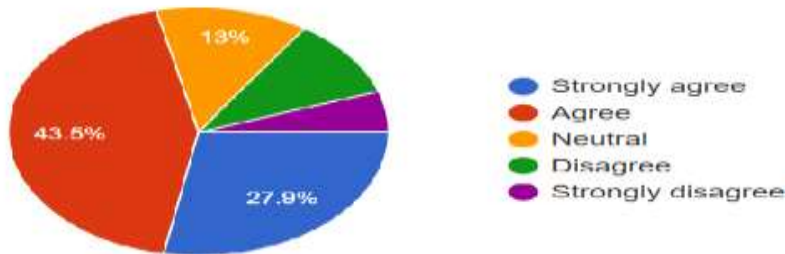
Figure2(item8 adapted from Bahanshal& Khan (2021))

According to the percentage calculation for item 8, nearly 50% of participants affirmed that e-learning is highly important for various reasons.

Research Question 2: What are the perceived challenges of e-learning?

Figure 3: illustrates the challenges of e-learning.

**10- I believe elearning platforms are user friendly**

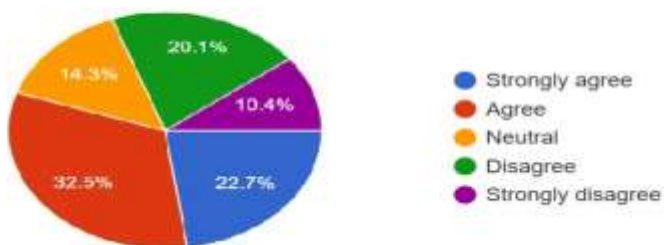


Item 10 suggests no significant challenges in using e-learning. Items 1 to 13 of category A highlight the usefulness of e-learning, although some items indicate difficulties that couldn't be precisely determined. Consequently, some teachers displayed a moderate level of interest in e-learning, reflecting a less positive attitude.

Research Question 3: Which variable contributes the most to the challenges of learning?

Figure 4: identifies the most challenging variable.

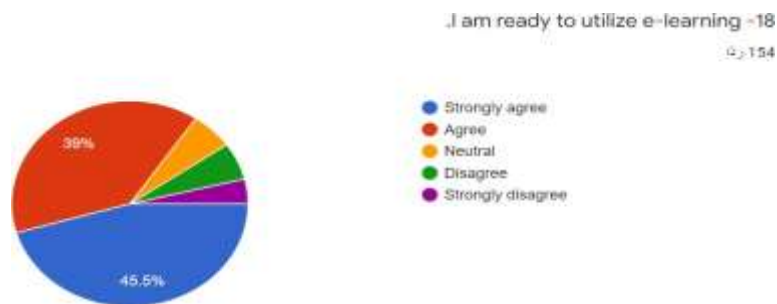
**16- I don't believe e-learning is suitable for courses that need practical demonstrations**



E-learning users perceive that e-learning is not well-suited for subjects requiring practical demonstrations, where teacher intervention is essential.

Research Question 4: Why is professional development crucial for teachers?

Figure 5: shows teachers' professional readiness.



Professional development is crucial as it can improve a teacher's attitude and help them overcome challenges. The graph indicates that most teachers feel prepared and do not require further training.

Research Question 5: How can e-teacher training contribute to effective e-learning?

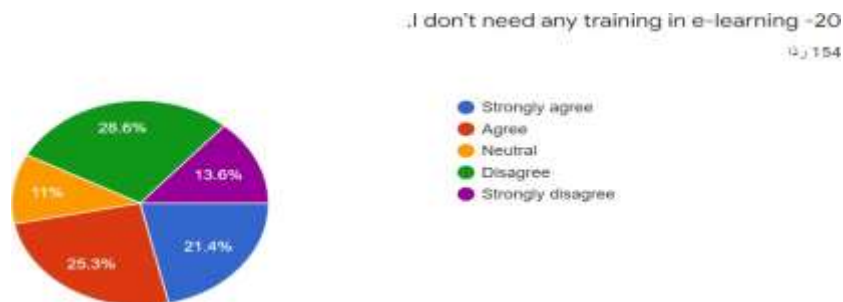


Figure 6: highlights the impact of e-teacher training.

Effective teacher training, whether pre-service or in-service, can transform ineffective teachers into effective ones. The graph suggests that most teachers believe they do not need additional training.

### Comparison of the Two Groups

Based on the data presented in Appendix B and quantitative research techniques, the following analyses explore demographic aspects and their relationship with e-learning:

**Table 1:** Test of Significance Difference between Perception Scores of E-learning for Female and Male Teachers

Variable	Female			Male			't' - value
	N1	M1	SD1	N2	M2	SD2	
Use of e-learning	104	90.67	14.039	51	85.29	19.386	1.969

The table shows a significant difference between the mean scores of female and male teachers. The 't' value (1.969) exceeds the critical value at a 0.05 significance level, indicating that female teachers find e-learning tools more effective than male teachers.

Table 2: One-way ANOVA for E-learning Resource Use Based on Years of Experience

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Significance
Between Groups	51.614	2	25.807	.097	.907
Within Groups	40005.736	151	264.939		
Total	40057.351	153			

The ANOVA result,  $F(2,151) = .097$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicates no significant difference between male and female teachers in using e-learning materials based on years of experience.

\*Table 3\*: One-way ANOVA for E-learning Resource Use Based on Age

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Significance
Between Groups	399.038	2	199.519	.760	.470
Within Groups	39658.313	151	262.638		
Total	40057.351	153			

The ANOVA result,  $F(2,151) = .760$ ,  $p < .001$ , shows no significant difference between male and female teachers in using e-learning materials based on age.

\*Table 4\*: One-way ANOVA for E-learning Resource Use Based on Qualifications

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Significance
Between Groups	71.551	2	35.775	.135	.874
Within Groups	39985.800	151	264.807		
Total	40057.351	153			

The ANOVA result,  $F(2,151) = .135$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicates no significant difference between male and female teachers in using e-learning materials based on qualifications.

\*Table 5\*: One-way ANOVA for E-learning Resource Use Based on Years of Usage

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Significance
Between Groups	478.149	2	239.075	.912	.404



Within Groups	39579.202	151	262.114		
Total	40057.351	153			

The ANOVA result,  $F(2,151) = .912, p < .001$ , shows no significant difference between male and female teachers in using e-learning materials based on years of usage.

### Discussions:

The analysis reveals a significant difference between the mean scores of female and male teachers, with e-learning tools proving more effective for female teachers. This may be attributed to their interest and active participation in technology integration training. Table 2 shows that years of experience did not significantly impact the use of e-learning materials for both groups.

Table 3 indicates that the age of male and female teachers does not influence their use of e-learning materials, suggesting that expertise can be developed through training rather than age. Additionally, younger teachers are more adept at using digital materials compared to their traditional counterparts.

Table 4 shows no significant difference between male and female teachers in using e-learning materials based on qualifications. Similarly, Table 5 reveals no significant difference concerning years of usage. These findings challenge the general assumption that greater access to technology improves its use, as this study does not support such a hypothesis.

### Conclusions

The data analysis and interpretation indicate that primary teachers in the Taif region face numerous challenges with online teaching, particularly during the COVID-19 phase. Key factors include teachers' attitudes towards e-learning, students' technology-related orientations, lack of parental support, and insufficient administrative and infrastructural support. Inadequate or absent teacher training also contributes to these challenges.

E-learning has proven essential during the COVID-19 pandemic when schools had to either close, suspend teaching, or switch to online classes. Although many challenges arose, teacher development remains crucial. Effective teaching requires well-equipped teachers, despite the availability of digital resources (Torremoro and Colocado, 2022; Cleaver et al., 2020).

No research is without limitations. This study's limitations include sample size and selection. Additionally, young learners cannot be administered certain tools to gather the desired data, and the validity of the tool may also be a limitation. Teachers should maintain a positive attitude towards e-learning and be well-versed in e-learning techniques. Management should provide the necessary infrastructure to support teachers. Future research should address unanswered questions from this study. Given the importance of e-learning, there is a need for an experimental study on a larger sample and across a broader area. Further research should also examine other sub-factors and demographics in detail.

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