

Parents' Opinions towards Distance Learning in Private Primary Schools during COVID-19

Dr. Fatimah AbdulSamad Dashti

Department of curriculum and instruction
College of Education- Kuwait University
fatmah.dashti@ku.edu.kw

Parents' Opinions towards Distance Learning in Private Primary Schools during COVID-19

Dr. Fatimah AbdulSamad Dashti

Department of curriculum and instruction
College of Education- Kuwait University

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate private primary schools' parents' opinions towards utilizing the distance learning to educate their children during Covid 19 pandemic. An online survey, which comprises 37 questions divided over two sections: a demographic section and a statement section was utilized. Also, the questionnaire ended with an open-ended question where each participant may add optional comments on her/his experience towards distance learning. 304 participants (parents), of children attending private schools in Kuwait participated in the study. The questionnaire investigated the following variables: the learners' grade level, times spending online, and the learners' gender. Results revealed that the parents had different opinions towards distance learning were required to carry out many tasks with their children during the distance learning process. Similarly, they expressed contrasting opinions on the appropriateness of using distance learning with primary school learners. The findings also showed that the grade level, time spending online for distance learning, and gender were statistically insignificant.

Keywords: distance learning, parents' opinions, primary school, grades level 1-6, COVID-19 pandemic.

آراء أولياء أمور طلبة المرحلة الابتدائية في المدارس الخاصة نحو التعلم عن بعد خلال جائحة كوفيد ١٩

د. فاطمة عبد الصمد دشتي

قسم المناهج وطرق التدريس

كلية التربية - جامعة الكويت

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استطلاع آراء أولياء أمور طلبة المدارس الخاصة في المرحلة الابتدائية نحو التعلم عن بعد خلال جائحة كوفيد ١٩. تم تصميم استبانة وتوزيعها إلكترونياً على أولياء أمور الطلبة وقد تضمّنت ٢٧ بنداً موزعة على جزئين: البيانات الشخصية وبنود الأسئلة، بالإضافة إلى سؤال غير محدد النهاية ليبدلي من يشاء من أولياء الأمور بأية أفكار تتعلق بالتعليم عن بعد من واقع تجربتهم. اشتملت العينة على عدد ٣٠٤ مشاركاً من أولياء أمور طلبة المرحلة الابتدائية. ولقد ركزت أسئلة الاستبانة على المتغيرات التالية: صفوف المرحلة الابتدائية، والوقت الذي يقضيه المتعلم للتعلم عن بعد مع المدرسة بالإضافة إلى متغير النوع (الجنس). أشارت النتائج إلى أن لأولياء الأمور آراء مختلفة فيما يخص التعلم عن بعد، وأن المتغيرات مثل المرحلة الدراسية والوقت الذي يستغرقه الطالب أثناء التعلم عن بعد وجنس الطالب (النوع) ليس لها دلالة إحصائية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلم عن بعد، آراء أولياء الأمور، المرحلة الابتدائية، الصف الأول - الصف السادس.

Parents' Opinions towards Distance Learning in Private Primary Schools during COVID-19

Dr. Fatimah AbdulSamad Dashti

Department of curriculum and instruction
College of Education- Kuwait University

Introduction

Circumstances may force learners to engage in distant learning rather than face-to-face education. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, students in private schools in Kuwait were driven to continue their education online via distance learning until further notice. It is inevitable, however, that students and parents adapt themselves to this new experience. The situation with young Kuwaiti children is very challenging as they and their parents should get ready to undergo distance learning experience for the first time within a very short notice. Hence, purpose of this paper is to investigate the parents' opinions towards using distance learning to educate their primary school (grade levels 1-6) children during COVID-19 pandemic period.

Different terms are used in literature to refer to distance learning such as distance education (Harting & Erthal, 2005), remote learning (Turoff & Hiltz, 1986), e-learning (Clark & Myer, 2016), online learning (Encyclopedia Britannica; Fenton & Watkins 2010; Singh & Thurman, 2019; Stern, 2016), online internet distance learning (Dakin, 2015), online distance education (Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoç, & Cagiltay, 2019). e-instruction, web-based-instruction (Fenton & Watkins, 2010), digital learning, virtual learning (Traxler, 2018). This paper will use the term distance learning all throughout.

Theoretical framework & Literature review

The term Distance learning (DL) refers to the learning process that occurs when the learners and the teachers are physically separated when using technology (Akhmatova, 2014; Encyclopedia Britannica; Guri-

Rosenblit, 2005; Rahman, 2015; Ahmed, Hussain, & Farid, 2018); or when the student is self-educated (Akhmetova, 2014); or when DL occurs in different time periods “asynchronous DL (Fenton & Watkins 2010; Ahmed, et al., 2018), or when it occurs at the same time “synchronous” (Akpan, et al., 2016).

To establish a successful learning experience using D.L, it is necessary to consider some factors, namely, the learner, the teacher, the learning content, the technology used by the school in DL scenarios (Akhmetova, 2014; Saba, 2012) and the supporting staff that assist in solving technical problems that may face the teacher and/or the learner (Rahman, Karim, & Byramjee, , 2015). Uddin Ahmed, et al., (2018) pinpointed a few factors regarding the online content that influences the learner’s education when using the DL such as thelessen of dependency on the teacher, a user-friendly interface, and students’ abilities with the languages used in the DL. When we use DL, it is important to specify the following: learner’s responsivities, teacher’s roles, learner-teacher ratio, type of pedagogy and assessment that will be used, type of communication synchrony, and providing feedback to the learners (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020). To get ready for DL, teachers and learners will have to use digital devices such as mobile devices (phone and tablets), laptops, and computers.

The learner

Since the learner is separated physically from the teacher, he/she mainly depends on himself/herself to learn. The learner’s responsibilities increase (Rahman et al., 2015) and, hence, he/she faces a challenge in developing particular skills to ensure good achievement in DL learning.

Researchers specified different skills and classified them under different titles. The self-regulated skills, for example, is a significant factor in DL’s teaching/learning process (Albelbisi & Yusop, 2019; Al Fadda, 2019; Dakin, 2015; Ejubović & Puška, 2019; Saba, 2012). Some researchers confine it to the learning process in general, and they name it “self- regulated learning (SRL)” (Boekaerts, 1999; Ejubović & Puška, 2019). Self-regulated skills comprise motivation, experience with Internet technology, time management skills, study environment management

skills, and help-seeking skills (Al Fadda , 2019; Kara et al., 2019). Ejubović & Puška, (2019) touches upon other skills, for example, goal setting, environment structuring, computer self-efficacy, social dimension, and time management. Saba, (2012) identified motivation as the heart of self-regulated learning. Students who can plan and schedule their learning and adjust to the studying environment are more satisfied with the DL courses and achieve better (Puzziferro, 2008). Learners who can arrange their learning schedule and choose the learning materials and activities will have better learning outcomes (Lai, 2011). Learners who can work independently, communicate, organize the educational materials, speed thinking, and motivated, will better learn via DL (Akhmetova, 2014). Therefore, Lai (2011) recommends that learners should get enough training on time management skills, and similarly, Dignath, Buettner, & Langfeldt, (2008) believe that training primary learners on self-regulated learning would improve the learning outcomes, strategy use, and motivation. Learners using e-learning at home are considered independent learners and they need to be trained how to use e-learning materials and acquire the independent learning skills (Boulton, 2008).

Learner's perceptions for online learning affect their DL skills (Wei & Chou, 2020). Arthur-Nyarko & Kariuki, (2019) investigating graduate and undergraduate students found out that more than half of the participants preferred the blended mode of e-Learning delivery in DL. Learners like to have traditional instructional materials available for them in DL, for example: tests, assignments, redo tests, video discussion, timely feedback from instructors, PowerPoint slides, course textbook, and discussion boards that enable the interaction between the instructor and students (Viola, Hendricker, & Saeki, 2020). Educators should consider providing the course content that supports the learners' need in the online learning environment (Lai, 2011). Students' satisfaction with DL was affected by face-to-face contact with the instructor and students, amount of workload, access to resources, (Bolliger & Martindale, 2001). The sudden changes from traditional teaching / learning to DL may not be acceptable by all learners. Learners may not be able to attend all synchronous activities; therefore, asynchronous activities are more acceptable in this case and be

more flexible with the deadline for assignments (Hodges, et al., 2020). When studying from home, learners are able to work when it is convenient for them and repeat any lessons as needed; yet, they may become bored, lose motivation and miss out the opportunities to collaborate with others (Boulton, 2008).

Gender is a salient factor in DL scenarios significant influence in DL circumstances, according to the literature. Female learners achieve better scores in the e-learning courses than male learners; they are more involved in planning, participate more frequently, solve practical cases, and contribute to the tutor (González-Gómez, Guardiola, Martín Rodríguez, Ángel, & Alonso, 2012). Horvat, Dobrota, Krsmanovic, & Cudanov, (2013) in their study about student's perceptions of learning management system (LMS), found out that females find many LMS (Moodle) characteristics, more important for them than male students do. The characteristics involve feedback (quality and response waiting times), materials presented on LMS (completeness, clarity, quantity), website user-friendliness, and cooperation diversity. However, Boulton, (2008) found out little differences between male and female learners in enjoying e-learning at home.

The parent

Parents shoulder a huge responsibility and must get more involved when the learners are young children, such as those in grades 1-6. Parents, for example, must buy educational programs for their children such as workbooks, educational TV shows, flash cards, games on mobile devices, and read aloud to their children (Osimo, 2020). Similarly, Kong, (2017) claims that parents whose children are involved in online e-learning at home need to provide their children with digital devices, Internet, some applications (e.g. filters to screen out inappropriate websites for their children), technical support, and learning environment. Furthermore, they need to establish some policies for using digital devices (e.g. time and proper posture). Moreover, in DL, Parents find themselves in charge of repairing and upgrading any software or programs at home; yet not all parents possess the skills to solve such technical problems (Boulton, 2008). With

COVID-19's curfew and lockdown, fixing the devices used by learners for DL became a barrier. Therefore, any delay in repairing or upgrading can cause interruption in the learning process (Boulton, 2008). Different social economics, culture, level of education, and technology use in the household, affect parents' involvement in DL (Hollingworth, Mansaray, Allen, & Rose, 2011). Consequently, some parents show unwillingness to be involved in the process of learning and in participating in the activities and assignments that their children are asked to carry out at home. (Kong & Li, 2009; Boulton 2008). Some parents claim that their children lack proper skills, such as time management and privacy protection (Kong & Li, 2009). Hence, Borup, Chambers, & Srimson, (2019) believe that parents have vital responsibilities toward their children. Parents need to understand online learning in order be able to motivate, monitor, facilitate, instruct when appropriate, prepare learning environment at home, and organize students schedule and learning activities.

The teacher

In DL scenarios where face-to-face instruction is not possible, the teacher's support to the learners stands up as an important facet (Albelbisi & Yusop, 2019; Bolliger & Martindale, 2001; Boulton, 2008). Such a support manifests itself by guiding, stimulating, and assisting the learners (Saba, 2012), and by providing them with the latest topics (Horvat, et al., 2013). Hence, teachers are compelled to develop new skills, for example, dealing with live video conference (LVC) or virtual classroom (VC) and audio/visual aids, delivering instructions via videos, presenting slides, and displaying relevant texts. Teachers should also obtain digital competency, expertise in e-pedagogy, rapid broadcast of information online (Akhmetova, 2014).

Another important aspect in this regard is the time allowed to teachers to respond to learners' enquiries, deliver instructional materials, and provide feedbacks which will eventually improve DL (Akhmetova, 2014; Albelbisi & Yusop, 2019).

Content / Instructional materials

In DL scenarios, it is significant that the content is efficiently designed (Akhmetova, 2014; Albelbisi & Yusop, 2019). The content should include the amount of information (Albelbisi & Yusop, 2019; Horvat, et al., 2013; Saba, 2012), resources the learners might need (Bolliger & Martindale, 2001), and the workload (Albelbisi & Yusop, 2019). The content should be appropriate to the learner and learning objectives, easy to understand (Albelbisi & Yusop, 2019), and should constantly be improved and updated (Akhmetova, 2014). Again, designing a good-quality content for online DL courses requires more time, where rushing in getting content online for urgent situation is a challenge and should be accepted as a temporary solution (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020).

The tools, on the other hand, necessary to deliver content comprise printed materials, television, radio, CD / DVD, (Rahman, 2015), and memory stick. In conjunction with Internet revolution, the email emerged as a method to send and receive materials. Web.2, as well, provides users an opportunity to interact online. Currently, educators frequently use many programs (applications) to send materials to the learners, receive material from the learners and communicate with them. They also use a school platform (LMS), social media, and emails.

It is worth mentioning that the learners would prefer to have the instructional materials which are available in the classroom to be available for them in DL, such as textbooks, PowerPoint slides, tests, and assignments, in addition to interaction with the teachers and other learners and well-timed feedback from teachers, (Horvat, et al., 2013; Viola et al., 2020).

Technology

The quality of DL depends on the quality of technologies used (Akhmetova, 2014; Horvat, et al., 2013). Digital devices such as computers, tablets, and mobiles used in DL require appropriate software programs. Schools, on the other hand, need LMS to monitor the teaching and learning processes, and a support staff to coach teachers and students on how to use online learning (Hodges, et al., 2020). Educational institutes

should upgrade their systems to become faster and more reliable, with ease accessibility, and smooth learning (Saba, 2012); moreover, LMS should become user friendly (Horvat, et al., 2013).

When studying online, learners with digital skills (digital self-efficacy) would feel more confident using DL technologies (Wei, & Chou, 2020). Therefore, training learners on the DL technologies will provide learners with the essential skills they need to learn confidently (Albelbisi & Yusop, 2019).

Distance Learning in Kuwaiti Private Schools

Before Covid-19 pandemic, there was no actual DL in private schools per se. However, the students were accustomed to doing some internet research and using some educational applications. The actual DL was implemented in March 2020 as a result of Covid-19 attack. Because of the sudden urge to shift from face-to-face learning to DL, each school decided to have its own beginning and end of their school day, to choose any platform it finds suitable for its students, and to adopt virtual classrooms for teaching.

Rational and Problem Statement

Finding itself shouldering the responsibility of facing Covid-19 challenge, the Ministry of Education urged all schools in Kuwait (both government and private schools) to shift from traditional face-to-face learning to virtual online learning. Bearing in mind that both parents and students will face a new learning experience, investigating the parents' attitudes towards distance learning deems necessary, especially when we believe that parents always try to be an assist to their children during their primary school.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate parents' attitudes towards DL during COVID-19 pandemic in Kuwait. The results may give a framework that would help educators design an effective online content and online learning process for DL or blended learning that uses online e-learning.

Research Questions:

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

Do parents believe that their children show positive attitudes towards distance learning?

What tasks did the parents carry out in helping their primary children as their children studied via DL?

How did the parents facilitate the learning environment at home?

Do parents feel that DL is appropriate for primary school students? Would they recommend using DL with primary school learners in the future?

Did schools/teachers present enough instructional materials (videos, VC, homework, etc.) to support DL process?

Is there any statistical difference in parents' attitudes towards DL regarding the following variables: gender of the learner, time spent online, grade level, and the number of the learner at the household that are doing DL?

Methodology**Research method**

This paper adopted the descriptive research method using a survey to collect data. The results were analysed quantitatively. Descriptive analysis (number, percentage, mean, and Standard Deviation), an independent -samples t-test, and a one -way ANOVA were used to analyse the results of the research questions.

Sample population

The study has targeted parents who have children in the primary stage in private schools in Kuwait. A questionnaire was designed and electronically sent via social media devices (Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, E-mail) asking parents who do have children in the primary stage in private schools to kindly answer the questionnaire. A total of 326 responses were received of which 304 were valid and hence formed the sample of the study. 22 questionnaires were disregarded due to the fact the parents have not fully answered the questionnaire items, and some of them indicated that their children were in secondary schools. The reason why the questionnaire was only sent to parents of private schools' children was simply because at that

time, government schools have not yet started online teaching. It is also worth mentioning that the number of those parents who have received the questionnaire is unpredictable due to social media mechanisms. In fact, in Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and E-mail applications, one may send the questionnaire to his/her followers, and consequently, their followers forward it to their own followers; so, the number of receivers might mount up without the researcher knowing the exact number of those who received it. Moreover, learners' age as a parameter is not a salient parameter in this research paper.

Instrument

For the purpose of this study, a questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire consists of a demographic section (9 items), a statement section (28 items), and an open-ended question for any comments, parents would like to express. Two versions of the questionnaire were designed, one in Arabic and one in English as some parents were non-Arabic speakers. The questionnaire was distributed in digital format and it used 4 Likert scales, agree, disagree, neutral, and NA (not applicable). Percentages of neutral refer to those respondents who have not decided on the questionnaire item. NA refers to the responses that the parents felt that specific item did not apply to them. Hence, the NA percentages will only be displayed when necessary.

Validity & Reliability

To test the validity of the questionnaire, copies were sent to academics in Kuwait University and the College of Basic Education, PAAET. Their reviews praised both Content and Construct validity of the questionnaire. They believed that the questionnaire fully covers all necessary content regarding the variables under study. They also believed that it is possible to draw test scores about the topic under discussion.

As to the reliability, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was applied, and the score was 0.921.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 below summarizes the parents' responses to question one "Do parents believe that their children showed positive attitudes towards distance learning?"

Table (1)
Parents' response to the behaviors that shows the learner positive attitudes towards DL

Learner behavior	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Learner enjoyed DL	112	36.8	103	33.9	74	24.3
Learner benefited from DL	109	35.9	90	29.6	94	30.9
Learner did not get bored during VC	94	30.9	73	24	116	38.2
Learner was motivated during DL	119	39.1	88	28.9	83	27.3
Learner was able to manage time	138	45.4	78	25.7	76	25.0
Learner was able to handle school programs	130	42.8	93	30.5	70	23.0
Learner able to know when to ask for assistance	213	70.1	39	12.8	36	11.8
The learner realizes that the help was useful	165	54.3	71	23.4	57	18.8

Table 1 shows that the percentage of the parents who agreed that their children were enjoying DL and those who were neutral outnumbered those who disagreed. It also indicates that the percentages of the parents who believed that their children had benefited from DL, that the learner got bored during the visual classroom, and that their children were motivated during DL slightly outnumbered those who did not. Many of the parents, though, indicated that it would be better for young children to learn in the classroom, since they cannot focus for a long-time. Borup et al. (2019) believes that parents may motivate their children if they understand online learning. Also, the instructional materials used by teachers have a role in motivating the learners, as will be discussed in due course. The slight difference, though, indicates that the parents need more exposure to DL to conceive a sounder opinion. In addition, the percentages of parents who believed that their children were able to manage their time, to ask for help

when needed, and to judge the help given to him / her as useful outnumbered those who didn't. The high percentage of those who agreed is probably due to the help the children got from their parents while carrying out their tasks, as will be shown in the analysis of question two. Parents believed that their availability at home during COVID-19 leave allowed them to monitor their children. Therefore, they were able to direct, motivate, and help their children during DL.

Moreover, the results showed that 42.8% of parents claimed that their children were able to handle school programs while 23% did not. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to find out if there was a relationship between "handling school programs» and "the training the learners get from the school". The results showed that there was a significant difference between means and standard deviation analysis for those who valued training was ($M=2.50$, $SD =0.74$) and those who did not was ($M =1.92$, $SD =0.90$); $t(298) = -5.61$, $p = 0.00$. Some parents commented that the programs used in DL in the beginning were not easy for the learners to understand since they were not trained to use them. Therefore, it is highly recommended that schools consider training primary school children in using technology when learning at home. Finally, some parents indicated that the programs "ZOOM" and "Google classroom" were the most common programs used by schools.

Table 2 below summarizes the results for question two «What tasks did the parents carry out in helping their primary children as their children studied via DL?

Table (2)
The tasks parents carried out during DL.

Parents' tasks	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	N	%	n	%	n	%
Help doing homework and exercise	225	74.0	39	12.8	34	11.2
Explain lessons	215	70.7	39	12.2	38	12.8
Update home network	159	52.3	55	18.1	68	22.4
Add more internet points at home	149	49.0	33	10.9	92	30.3
Prepare a space for DL.	214	70.4	35	11.5	40	13.2

The results indicate that the parents did carry out some tasks to help

their children. More than 70% of the parents claimed that they helped their children while doing their homework, while solving exercises and helped in explaining the lessons for them. These results are consistent with Osmo's (2020) survey's results and those of Kong & Li (2009) and Boulton's (2008). 55% of the respondents claimed that they had to explain different subjects to their children all the time for different reasons. Some parents claimed that many teachers were not able to properly convey the content of the lessons through DL and explain the lessons well when using VC, did not use any visual aids and depended merely on verbal explanations, and were unable to control the students in the beginning because they were not familiar with the virtual teaching programs, therefore, the learners could not stay focused for a long time and some of them got bored as mentioned earlier. One of the parents stated that she was lucky she is fluent in English as most of her children's subjects were taught in English, and she felt sorry for parents who are not competent in the English language.

As for question three "How did parents facilitate learning environment at home?", 52.3% claimed that they have updated home network to facilitate DL at home and 49% claimed that they had to add extra network access points. Such views well match Saba's (2012) emphasis on the importance of the Internet's speed to make DL run smoothly. The speed of the Internet is important since the schools will use VC with the learners and ask the learners to view videos online. 70.4% claimed that they had to prepare a space at home for each child when learning online; such a necessity conforms with Kong's (2017) claim that parents should provide proper learning environments for their children who would do online learning at home.

Analysis of question four "Do parents feel that DL is appropriate for primary school students? Would they recommend using DL with primary school learners in the future? shows that the parents were neutral toward the appropriateness of the DL for primary students as the total mean was ($M = 2.2$, $SD = 0.627$). Table 3 below shows the appropriateness of the DL for primary students.

Table (3)
Statemen regarding the appropriateness of DL.

Statement	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
School program was easy to use	186	61.2	83	27.3	24	7.9
The VC is suitable for the learner age	147	48.3	67	22.0	72	23.7
Time allotted for the VC was suitable for learner's age	161	52.96	54	17.8	76	25.0
A short break was given to the learner between VC	146	48.0	41	13.5	59	19.4
The homework was appropriate.	168	55.3	52	17.1	79	26.0
The methods for submitting homework was clear.	198	65.1	50	16.4	50	16.4
Learner's evaluation corresponds with the DL requirements	136	44.7	85	28.0	64	21.05
The learner's inquiries were answered within a reasonable time	193	63.5	54	17.8	50	16.4
The parent's inquiries answered in reasonable time by the teacher.	189	62.2	57	18.8	48	15.8
Technical support was available for technical problems	131	43.1	68	22.4	72	23.7
Technical problems were resolved on the spot	111	36.5	86	28.3	77	25.3
The parent's inquiries answered in reasonable time by the technical support	128	42.1	73	24.0	67	22.0

The parents who claimed that DL is appropriate for their children stated that the school has trained their children on the school programs and, hence, they were accustomed to do their homework, exercises, and extra activities online either in school or out of school. More than half of the respondents claimed that the amount of homework given to the learners was appropriate, and that the learners' inquiries were answered within reasonable time.

Parents who claimed that DL is inappropriate for primary school children indicated that these young children need to physically socialize with teachers and other children, as this will help them shape their personality and improve their social skills. As mentioned, in table 1, some

parents stated that children got bored. Young children need a teacher that can follow them and grab their attention by keeping them active in the classroom, and this is what the parents were trying to do with their children during VC sessions and when doing homework at home. 64.8% attributed the inappropriateness to the lack of parents' and children's' training. Some believed that some teachers were unfamiliar with teachers' digital competency. Akhmetova, (2014) strongly believes that teachers' digital competency affects DL. Some parents stated that the learners may not deserve the grades they obtained because parents helped the children with carrying out tasks such as looking for resources, doing and submitting their homework. Two of the parents declared that DL was not appropriate for their special needs' children.

As for the technical support, most parents felt no need for any technical support. They believed that the programs were easy to use. As to recommending DL with primary school's learners, those who did not recommend using DL with primary school learners for the same above reasons outnumbered those who recommended it and those who were neutral.

As to question five, "Did schools/teachers present enough instructional materials (videos, VC, homework, etc.) to support the DL process?" Table 4 presents the results of the instructional materials that the teachers used during DL. Findings showed that more than half of the respondents believed that schools supplied VC and presented videos of their own school teachers to explain the lessons; the teachers used visual instructional materials while explaining the lessons in VC, the instructional materials in general provided by the teachers were sufficient and that the school provided necessary worksheets. On the other hand, less than half of the respondents claimed that the school solved exercises with the learners; presented videos used by teachers from other schools and that the school presented videos from the Internet (e.g. YouTube). The results also showed that many teachers used varieties of instructional materials to keep the children motivated, especially when using VC. The results agree with those of Viola et al., (2020) and Horvat, et al., (2013). Although the schools started DL at short notice, teachers used different instructional

materials to explain the lessons.

Table (4)
Instructional material the teachers have provided.

Instructional materials	n	%
Live broadcast lessons	195	64.1
Solving exercises with the learner live	136	44.7
Answering the learner's queries live	148	48.7
Videos of him/her explaining the lessons	154	50.7
videos for other school's teachers explaining the lessons	64	21.1
Videos from the Internet	142	46.7
Providing worksheets	180	59.2

To answer question six, "Is there any statistical difference in parents' attitudes towards DL regarding the following variables: gender of the learner, time spent online, grade level, and the number of the learner at the household studying via DL?", an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare parents' opinions regarding learner's gender. The results revealed no significant differences in the scores for males ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 0.54$) and females ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 0.46$), conditions; $t(30) = -1.01$, $p = 0.21$ see the appendix (table 5), suggesting that the learner's gender has no effect on parents' opinions towards DL. This finding is compatible with that of Boulton (2008), yet it is not with that of González-Gómez et al. (2012) who found that females scored higher than males in DL. Likewise, the results differ from those of Horvat, et al., (2013) who found that females believed that LMS characteristics are more important than what males believed.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to see if "the time the learner spent online "affects parents' opinion. The results showed that there was no statistically significant difference, $p < 0.05$ level [$F(2, 298) = 0.36$, $p = 0.696$] see appendix (table 6). The parents believed that due to the city lockdown, time was not a significant factor.

Regarding the learner's "grade level's" effects on parents' opinion, a one-way ANOVA showed that there were no statistically significant differences between group means [$F(5,291) = 1.71$, $p = 0.132$] see appendix (table 7).

As some parents have one learner (53.3%), some have two learners (25%), and a few have three learners or more (18.7%), an ANOVA was conducted to see if there was any statistical difference in parents' opinion towards DL regarding the number of the learners at a given household. Result showed that there were no statistically significant differences between group means [$F(3,291) = 1.89, p = 0.544$]. See appendix (table 8). Some respondents claimed that having one child in primary school made follow up easy, while those having more than one child claimed that it was difficult. This second group preferred to focus more on their first and second grade learners.

Conclusion

This paper aimed at investigating the parents' opinions towards utilizing the distance learning platform to educate their children, particularly in primary school (grade levels 1-6) during COVID-19 pandemic period. Based on our literature review, the discussion above demonstrated that all factors mentioned, namely, the learner, the parent, the teacher, the content, and the technology are extremely relevant when investigating parents' attitudes towards DL. As Uddin Ahmed (2018) has suggested, our findings indicated that the online content influenced the learners in this study. They depended on themselves rather than on their teachers. The learners did adopt the self-regulated skills (Albelbisi & Yusop, 2019; Al Fadda, 2019; Dakin, 2015; Ejubović & Puška, 2019; Saba, 2012), such as motivation, experience with Internet technology, time management skills, environment management skills, and help-seeking skills (Al Fadda, 2019; Kara et al., 2019). The discussion also revealed that asynchronous activities are more acceptable in our learners' case and are more flexible with assignment deadlines (Hodges, et al., 2020).

The study has also focused on the involvement of parents in DL scenarios. As the findings and discussions above demonstrate, the study fully investigated their attitudes towards DL. In addition to the findings shown in the discussion above, most parents claimed that they require more exposure to DL to formulate a thorough opinion. The parents reported that they had to carry numerous tasks to assist their children get along with

distance learning. However, the majority of parents stated that the schools presented plenty of useful instructional materials. Moreover, the parents expressed opposing opinions regarding the appropriateness of DL to young children as some expressed positive opinions and others expressed negative ones. Teachers' support as an important factor as suggested in the literature review has also been investigated. Finally, no significant differences in parents' attitudes towards DL regarding the gender of the learner, the time the learner spends online, the learner's grade level, or the numbers of learners were found.

To sum up, it is trustworthy to say that the questionnaire items addressed all points raised in the literature review.

Recommendations.

The findings above clearly show that the learner, the parent, the teacher, and technology are salient pillars in distant learning scenarios. Hence, teachers, preservice teachers, parents, and primary school learners should receive adequate training on different LMS and programs used for online learning, as well as cooperative means that make DL successful and enjoyable. Teachers, for example, should become acquainted with blended learning, synchronized DL, and asynchronized DL. Schools need to teach primary school learners the self-regulated skills as how to be motivated for learning, environment and time management skills, how to seek help from others or digital resources, and train them as well on out of classroom online programs. This can be accomplished through implementing blended learning in primary schools and instigating pedagogies that encourage learners to be independent such as "flipped classroom" and "project-based learning".

References

- Ahmed, M., Hussain, S., & Farid, S. (2018). Factors Influencing the Adoption of e-Learning in an Open and DL Institution of Pakistan. *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 16(2), 148-158. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1206215.pdf>
- Akhmetova, D. (2014). Inclusive Approach to the Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance of Distance Learning. *International Education Studies*, 7(11), 126-146. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1071019.pdf>
- Albelbisi, N., & Yusop, F. (2019). Factors Influencing Learners' Self-Regulated Learning Skills in a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Environment. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 20(3). Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1221477.pdf>
- Al Fadda, H. (2019). The Relationship Between Self-Regulations and Online Learning in an ESL Blended Learning Context. *English Language Teaching*; 12(6), 87-93. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1215828.pdf>
- Akpan, S., Etim, P., & Udom, S. (2016). Virtual Classroom Instruction and Academic Performance of Educational Technology Students in Distance Education, Enugu State. *World Journal of Education*, 6(6), 83-88. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1157667.pdf>
- Arthur-Nyarko, E., & Kariuki, M. (2019). Learner Access to Resources for eLearning and Preference for Elearning Delivery Mode in Distance Education Programs in Ghana. *International Journal of Educational Technology*, 6(2), 1-8. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1228278.pdf>
- Boekaerts, M. (1999). *Self-regulated learning: where we are today*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-0355\(99\)00014-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-0355(99)00014-2). Retrieved from: [https://sci-hub.tw/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-0355\(99\)00014-2](https://sci-hub.tw/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-0355(99)00014-2)
- Bolliger, D., & Martindale, T. (2001). Student Satisfaction in an Online Master's Degree Program in Instructional Technology. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED470070.pdf>
- Borup, J., Chambers, C., & Srimson, R. (2019). Online Teacher and On-Site Facilitator Perceptions of Parental Engagement at a Supplemental Virtual High School. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 20(2) p79-95. Retrieve from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1214394.pdf>
-

- Boulton, H. (2008). Managing e-Learning: What Are the Real Implications for Schools? *Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, v6 n1 p11-18. retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1098713.pdf>
- Clark, R., & Mayer, R. (2016). *E-learning and the science of instruction: Proven guidelines for consumers and designers of multimedia learning*. Hoboken: Wiley. P. 8.
- Dignath, C., Buettner, G., & Langfeldt, H. (2008). How can primary school students learn self-regulated learning strategies most effectively? *Educational Research Review*, 3(2), 101–129. doi:10.1016/j.edurev.2008.02.003.
- Encyclopedia Britannica: retrieved form : <https://www.britannica.com/topic/distance-learning#ref304095>
- Ejubović, A., & Puška, A. (2019.) Impact of self-regulated learning on academic performance and satisfaction of students in the online environment. *Knowledge Management & E-Learning*. 11(3). 345–363. 10.34105/j.kmel.2019.11.018 Retrieved from: <https://www.kmel-journal.org/ojs/index.php/online-publication/article/view/418/412>
- Harting, K., & Erthal, M. (2005). History of Distance Learning. *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal*. 23(1). 35-44. Retrieved from: <https://search.proquest.com/openview/811993d652287eddf9b9ad2d4d4c5472/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=9497>
- Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T., & Bond, A. (2020). The difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning. Retrieved from: <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-andonline-learning>
- <https://medicine.hofstra.edu/pdf/faculty/facdev/facdev-article.pdf>
- Hollingworth, S., Mansaray, A., Allen, K., & Rose, A. (2011). Parents' perspectives on technology and children's learning in the home: social classroom and the role of the habitus. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 27(4), 347–360. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2729.2011.00431.x
- Horvat, A., Dobrota, M., Krsmanovic, M., & Cudanov, M. (2013). Student perception of Moodle learning management system: a satisfaction and significance analysis. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 23(4), 515- 527. doi: 10.1080/10494820.2013.788033
- González-Gómez, F., Guardiola, J., Martín Rodríguez, Ó., Ángel, M., & Alonso, M. (2012) Gender differences in e-learning satisfaction. *Computers & Education*, 58(1), 283-290. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2011.08.017>.

- Guri-Rosenblit, S. (2005). "Distance education" and "e-learning": Not the same thing. *Higher Education*, 49(4), 467–493. doi:10.1007/s10734-004-0040-0
- Kara, M., Erdogdu, F., Kokoç, M., & Cagiltay, K. (2019). Challenges Faced by Adult Learners in Online Distance Education: A Literature Review. *Open Praxis*, 11 (1), pp. 5–22. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5944/openpraxis.11.1.929>
- Kong, S., & Li, K. (2009). Collaboration between School and Parents to Foster Information Literacy: Learning in the Information Society. *Computers & Education*, 52(2), p275-282. doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2008.08.004
- Kong, S. (2017). Parents' perceptions of e-learning in school education: implications for the partnership between schools and parents. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 27(1), 15–31. doi.org/10.1080/1475939X.2017.1317659
- Lai, H. (2011). The Influence of Adult Learners' Self-Directed Learning Readiness and Network Literacy on Online Learning Effectiveness: A Study of Civil Servants in Taiwan. *Educational Technology & Society*. 14 (2), 98–106. Retrieved from: https://www.jstor.org/stable/jeductechsoci.14.2.98?seq=4#metadata_info_tab_contents
- Osmo. (2020). Tangible Play Inc. Retrieved from: https://www.playosmo.com/blog/new-research-from-osmo-on-parent-views-on-at-home-education-during-covid-19/?utm_source=existing-row&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=osmo-parent-research-existing-row&utm_content=hero-banner-para-cta. And <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7VREKpzimM>
- Puzziferro, M. (2008). Online Technologies Self-Efficacy and Self-Regulated Learning as Predictors of Final Grade and Satisfaction in College-Level Online Courses. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 22(2), 72–89. doi:10.1080/08923640802039024
- Rahman, M, Karim, R., & Byramjee, F. (2015). Prospect of Distance Learning. *Journal of International Education Research*. 11(3). 173-178. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1070788.pdf>
- Saba, T. (2012). Implications of E-learning systems and self-efficiency on students outcomes: a model approach. *Human-Centric Computing and Information Sciences*, 2 (1), doi:10.1186/2192-1962-2-6 . retrieved from: <https://sci-hub.tw/10.1186/2192-1962-2-6>
- Stern, J. (2016). *Introduction to Online Teaching and Learning*. Retrieved from: <http://www.wlac.edu/online/documents/otl.pdf>.

- Turoff, M. & Hiltz, S. (1986). Remote Learning: Technologies & Opportunities. ED332656. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED332656.pdf>
- Viola, Sh., Hendricker, E., & Saeki, E. (2020). Instructional Technology in Graduate Psychology Distance Education: Trends and Student Preferences. *Journal of Educators Online*. 17 (1). Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1241547.pdf>
- Wei, H. & Chou, C. (2020). Online Learning Performance and Satisfaction: Do Perceptions and Readiness Matter? *Distance Education*, 41(1), 48-69.
-