

## Gender Differences Among Arab Students E-Learning During COVID-19 In Malaysia: Does the Zoom Platform Make a Difference?

Saleh Ali Nuri Abdalla <sup>1\*</sup>, Jamila Ali Wenis <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> English Language Department, Faculty of Arts, Azzytuna University, Tarhana, Libya

<sup>2</sup> English Language Department, Faculty of education, Azzytuna University, Tarhana, Libya

الفرق بين الجنسين للطلاب العرب في استخدام التعلم الإلكتروني خلال جائحة كوفيد-19 في ماليزيا: هل تحدث منصة زووم فرقاً؟

صالح على النوري عبدالله<sup>1\*</sup>، جميلة على ونيس<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup> اللغة الانجليزية، كلية الاداب، جامعه الزيتونه، ترهونه، ليبيا  
<sup>2</sup> اللغة الانجليزية، كلية التربية، جامعه الزيتونه، ترهونه، ليبيا

\*Corresponding author: [Salehالنوري@gmail.com](mailto:Salehالنوري@gmail.com)

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### Abstract:

Online learning has drawn more attention because of the epidemic's global spread. For learners to succeed academically, motivation towards eLearning is crucial. In the overseas context, this study examined the gender differences among Arab learners who were studying in Malaysia. In total, 31 universities' students (16 males and 15 females) participated in the study to identify whether there were gender differences in respondent's motivation and intention to use zoom platform. Independent sample t-test and correlation were run. The results exhibited that there were not significant gender differences among respondents' motivation and intention to use zoom platform. ( $t=1.461, p = 0.155 > 0.05$ ;  $t=.312, p = 0.757 > 0.05$ ) respectively, but there was a significant correlated association between respondents' motivation and their intention to use zoom platform ( $r=0.545, p<0.01$ ). Generally, students were motivated and intended to use Zoom platform, but it did not make any difference between male and female students in e-learning context.

**Keywords:** eLearning Motivation, Zoom Platform, Arab Students, Study Abroad Context.

### المخلص

لقد اجتذب التعلم عبر الإنترنت المزيد من الاهتمام بسبب انتشار الوباء عالمياً. لتحقيق النجاح فالدافع للتعلم الإلكتروني أمر بالغ الأهمية. هدفت هذه الدراسة لمعرفة الاختلافات في استخدام البوابه الإلكترونيه (Zoom) بين الجنسين للطلاب العرب الذين كانوا يدرسون في ماليزيا. شارك 31 طالباً جامعياً (16 ذكراً و15 أنثى) في الدراسة لتحديد ما إذا كانت هناك اختلافات بين الجنسين في دوافع المستجيبين ونيتهم لاستخدام منصة Zoom. تم إجراء اختبار  $t$  للعينة المستقلة والارتباط. أظهرت النتائج أنه لا توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الجنسين بين دوافع المستجيبين ونيتهم لاستخدام منصة Zoom. ( $t=1.461, p = 0.155 > 0.05$ ;  $t=.312, p = 0.757 > 0.05$ ) على التوالي، ولكن كان هناك ارتباط وثيق بين دوافع المستجيبين ونيتهم لاستخدام المنصة. ( $r = 0.545, p < 0.01$ ). الخلاصة ان كل الطلاب

كانو متحمسين وراغبين في استخدام منصة Zoom، ولاتوجد فرق بين الطلاب والطالبات في تلقى التعليم عبر المنصات الإلكترونية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الدافع للتعليم الإلكتروني، منصة زوم، الطلاب العرب، الدراسة بالخارج.

## 1. Introduction

The year of 2020, a year of novel coronavirus (COVID-19), has changed all the world lifestyle in work, business and most importantly the way of teaching and learning in postgraduate higher education. Many changes in the learning process was performed in all universities and colleges around the world because all students were restricted from attending classes physically. Therefore, e-learning has been employed in several nations to boost general satisfaction with education and to distance people from one another socially [1] Online learning and teaching are used by many postgraduate higher education [2],[3]. Meanwhile, The Malaysian government has ordered all schools and universities to break students attending classes physically as an emergency stage to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic [4].

The pandemic has caused institutions to quickly shift to virtual education, and universities have had to hastily put up a set of tools to support it. Therefore, all Lectures and tutorials were held online using Zoom platform as Virtual Classroom. Zoom has aided universities and lecturers all over the world in making the transition to remote virtual learning as rapidly as possible. Virtual Classrooms allow learners to share their screen or certain apps (such as a presentation) from their own computers, as well as to see other learners' displays, poll learners, and to write on a virtual whiteboard. Virtual Classrooms can also be used as online meeting rooms where students can collaborate on group projects [5]. Malaysian educational institutions have moved their classes online to ensure consistency in the teaching and learning process and to lower the risk of disease transmission [6]. To curb the spread, all public and private universities have been given authority in conducting a virtual classroom through Zoom platform. All lecturers and institutions were faced with the task of reducing the negative influence on learners. When learning is done remotely, the major concern is to ensure that all students receive education of the same quality as traditional learning sessions [7]. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine Arab students' gender differences towards e-learning motivation in their virtual classroom during the period of Covid restriction (2019-2020).

## 2. Gender differences in online learning English context

Digital learning was immediately required due to the COVID-19 epidemic, which presented difficulties for all students, but especially for underprivileged groups in a virtual setting. Concerns about fairness in online learning have been emphasized since girls appear to have impediments and challenges while using lab tops and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) [8]. According to research, there are ongoing variations in how boys and girls use technology and other associated abilities. However, Gender differences in learning foreign languages using technology platforms can vary based on individual preferences, motivations, and experiences. It has been suggested that males may benefit more than females in the online classroom, because of their higher perceived comfort, aptitude, and engagement levels. However, the consequences of research concerned to sex differences in this setting are varied. In terms of boys' and girls' motivation in ICT skills, they clearly differ from one another [9],[10],[11].

Harandi [12] conducted a study of a sample of students' motivation in connection to e-learning and found that e-learning had a significant influence on students' motivation in general. Alfadda & Mahdi [1] conducted a study among 275 students measuring their attitude towards using Zoom web in language learning based on variables of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Their study's findings showed that students' attitude and behavioral intentions to use Zoom are strongly positively correlated with their actual use of Zoom. Furthermore, a positive link has been seen between computer self-efficacy and additional factors, such as Perceived Usefulness (PU), actual use, attitude, Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), and behavioral intention. Additionally, experience has been found to have a positive association with TAM factors, even though the data analysis revealed no correlation at all between gender and any of the model's variables.

In overseas context in Malaysia, learning English language courses using zoom platform technology might not show a significant gender differences in terms of the learning process itself. Both male and female learners can benefit equally from the online platform and its features. But it's worth considering potential crucial factors that could influence their experience in using it. Motivation towards using the Zoom platform for second language, learning media, can be a crucial factor to language learners.

Gnanadass and Sanders [13] found that research on gender differences in online learning indicates that female students' interactions and communication styles are probably going to vary somewhat from those of male students. They also concluded that gender differences should be considered when creating and delivering successful courses that meet the needs of all students and promote their success. They found that communication styles between men and women generally differ, which may contribute to significant differences in their communication activities in online learning and, consequently, in learning experiences in general [14]. In terms of motivation and engagement in online and in-person discussions, female students did not significantly differ from male students [30]. All earlier research on gender differences in digital learning was carried out before the epidemic before students were inevitably exposed to it on a regular basis. Therefore, new research efforts are required for at least one reason, even though the studies mentioned above indicated some degree of gender difference in online learning environments. Since, online learning became a popular format for delivering courses in higher education around 2000, when the majority of research on gender differences in online learning environments was conducted, it is crucial to determine whether gender differences still exist in these settings today.

### **3.The Zoom Web Conference System**

Once in-person instruction on campuses was discontinued, a tremendous number of university instructors and students started adopting Zoom as an educational medium for discussion, continuous educational communication, and the transmission and reception of information [1]. There are several benefits linked to using Zoom for online instruction. According to a study by [15], more than 60% of college students indicated that students could readily communicate using this program by speaking or writing. Furthermore, students demonstrated the ability to comprehend the lessons, work well with others, and respond to questions via the shared whiteboard [16].

Consequently, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a sharp rise in the usage of Zoom and other video conferencing services. Teachers and students can communicate synchronously with one other with Zoom software. People can converse in real time using a webcam and microphone in this online environment, simulating interactions that would take place in a typical classroom[15]. This shift to remote work and virtual meetings has also brought to light some potential gender differences in Zoom usage and fatigue. Numerous research papers have focused a great deal of attention on examining the impact of gender on the adoption and utilization of technology in different disciplines in general (e.g. [17],[18],[19], but few studies have paid the attention to particular technology platforms such as Zoon in learning English language course in particular.

Arab students in Malaysia are expected to be able to comprehend Zoom application perfectly during online sessions and are more motivated to use it in their study. They have a noble disposition, capabilities, and knowledge relating to the topics they study online. Therefore, conducting research among them in terms of their motivation and intention to use Zoom application adds valuable knowledge in second language learning in study abroad context.

### **4. Material and Methods**

This study aims to investigate the e-learning motivation and intention of Arab students to use Zoom platform in the context of study abroad. Furthermore, it is to explore the relationship between gender differences and study's variables mentioned above. The research approach is a quantitative. Through Google questionnaires form, which was adopted from previous studies [20], [21], 31 Arab students from ELS institute at University Putra Malaysia (UPM) during the Covid pandemic period provided empirical data and it was evaluated using inferential statistical analysis. Analyzing data was run using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program. For this study variables, frequencies and percentages were employed in descriptive statistics. Using Pearson's correlations between the variables, bivariate correlation analyses were carried out. T-test was conducted to investigate how gender variations affected students' motivation and intention to use the Zoon program in an online learning environment.

### **5. Results and Discussion**

The sample included 31, (16 male and 15 female), Arab students who were pursuing their study in Malaysia during the period of Covid-19. Table 1, shows a descriptive statistics average score for gender, motivation, and intention to use Zoom in e-learning (N = 31).

**Table (1):** A descriptive statistics average score for gender, motivation, and intention to use Zoom in e-learning (N = 31).

Variables	Mean	SD
Gender	1.48	.50
Motivation E learning	3.35	.87
Intention to use Zoom	3.74	.90

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the students' gender, motivation, and intention to use zoom in e-learning. The total average of gender was (M = 1.48, SD = 0.50), motivation was (M = 3.35, SD = .87), and students' intention to use Zoom was (M = 3.74, SD = 0.90). The correlation relationship in Table 2 illustrates that motivation had a moderate positive significant relationship with intention to interact through zoom in e-learning ( $r = 0.545$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). However, motivation and intention to use zoom in e-learning were not associated with the gender ( $r = -.262$ ,  $r = -.058$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ) respectively.

**Table (2):** Correlation matrix for gender, motivation, and intention to use Zoom in e-learning (N = 31).

Variables	1	2	3
Gender	1	-	-
Motivation	-.262	1	-
Intention to use Zoom	-.058	.545**	1

To explore the differences among female and male respondents toward the online learning, as seen in table 3, t-test was used. There was not a significant difference in terms of motivation and intention to use Zoom platform among males ( $P = .155 > 0.05$ ,  $t = 1.461$ ) and females ( $P = .757 > 0.05$ ,  $t = 0.312$ ). This analysis reveals that male and female respondents did not show differences regarding to their motivation and intention to use Zoom platform.

**Table (3):** T-test for gender differences in motivation, and intention to use Zoom in e-learning (N = 31).

Variables	Gender	N	M	SD	T	p
Motivation	Male	16	3.57	0.892		
	Female	15	3.12	0.820	1.461	0.155
Intention to use Zoom in e-learning	Male	16	3.79	0.842		
	Female	15	3.68	0.987	0.312	0.0757

The paper's aim is to investigate how Arab students perceived online instruction during the COVID-19 lockdown. Instructors and learners began utilizing online learning environments like Zoom. Therefore, this study set out to investigate the gender differences in Arab students' motivations and desires to use the Zoom platform while they were studying in Malaysia. And based on this study's findings, it seems that Zoom technology is a great tool for eLearning context. Arab students used Zoom platform to engage with other classmates, with their English instructor or with the group. Crick et al. [22] claim that the move to online learning that occurred during the Covid-19 outbreak portends a much more promising future. Learning second language is more effective and has greater leverage. The result showed that respondents possessed a high intention (mean: 3.74), and a more motivation (mean: 3.35) to use Zoom platform. In terms of motivation, this result is in line with Yong and Thi's [23] findings who reported that students show more motivation in e-learning context. They stated that the growth of student motivation is facilitated by the location of the learning context, and that interactions between students and instructors have a good impact on students meeting learning objectives. However, the results, which are consistent with those of research by Alfadda & Mahdi [1] and Tsai et al. [24], showed that there is no relationship between gender, motivation, and intent to utilize the Zoom application. Furthermore, in this research paper, it was found that motivation and intention to use Zoom were positively correlated. Gender differences is not an issue in this paper. T- test analysis does not show significant influence on students' motivation and their intention. All, males and females, learners show moderate motivation and desire to use Zoom software confidently.

## 6. Conclusion

Finally, to conclude, this paper revealed that the online experience of teaching and learning in Malaysia was a real interesting journey for both males and females' Arab students. Online learning offers flexibility and customization options, allowing students to adapt the learning experience to their preferences and needs, regardless of gender. Although, this is the first time that Arab students went through this

unfamiliar situation and challenges, but it was an excellent opportunity for them all to learn new skills and change their way of learning.

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