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The Advantages and Challenges of e-Learning During COVID-19 Pandemic in Omani Schools from Parents' Perspectives of Cycle Two Schools (5-9)

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Abstract

This paper aimed to investigate parents' perspectives regarding the advantages and challenges of e-leaning faced them during follow-up their children's learning through the e-learning platforms of the Ministry of Education in Sultanate of Oman. Target: students' parents in Al Batinah South Governmental schools. Data were collected from 346 parents through online questionnaire taking random samples of parents. The questionnaire measured the parent's perspectives about e-leaning advantages and challenges. The study revealed that the students' parents were interested in using e-learning for their children, for example, the e-learning helps their children to use modern educational programs and the constant access to the recorded videos of the daily lessons effortlessly. Yet, it explored some obstacles faced them during following their children in e- learning, such as the technical challenges faced them related to limitations of network and logistical challenges related to the difficulty of time management. The collected data were analysed, and accordingly the recommendations were forwarded to be applied for future strategies and policies of e-learning in Omani schools.

Keywords:
E-learning
Advantages & challenges of e learning
COVID-19.

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1. Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most educational institutions were stuck between two options: closing their doors, or choosing to teach online (Murphy, 2020) as many studies (such as (Brooks et al., 2020; Mukhtar & Javed, 2020)) proved that students are a strong source of virus transmission and thus school closures will lead to a lower infection rate (Shen et al., 2020).

Hence the wise decision made by educational institutions was to shift to online learning. In other words, they would provide appropriate e-learning for students as an alternative to face-to-face learning inside the school. Therefore, educational institutions in the Sultanate of Oman were among those, that closed, resulting in an unplanned shift from traditional learning to digital learning (Abuhammad, 2020). This closure accelerated the development of online learning environments, so all the stakeholders involved are making considerable efforts to optimally utilize the available technology for continuing the process of education and minimizing the gaps of the current circumstances (Garbe, 2020).

The flourishing innovative technologies and learning management systems made good headway in providing utilizable solutions for educators and giving policymakers an opportunity to implement the use of information technology, not just during the COVID-19 but maybe in the future too (Garbe, 2020).

2. Statement of the Problem

With the increase in the use of online modalities during COVID-19, it is necessary to assess their effectiveness with regard to teaching and learning from the viewpoints of various stakeholders (Osman, 2020; Schwartz et al., 2020). As parents of stakeholders play an essential role in supporting the learning process of their children and helping them to develop positive attitudes towards e-learning, it is important to know their perceptions regarding the advantages and challenges of e-leaning they have faced while their children have been using the e-learning platforms of the Ministry of Education in Sultanate of Oman.

3. Significance of the Study

This study provided an explicit analysis of parents' opinions of e-learning implemented by the Ministry of Education in Sultanate of Oman during schools' closure in order to inform policymakers and the designers of e-learning platform at the Ministry of Education about the advantages of e-learning as well as the challenges that parents faced during this period. Therefore, the parents' perspectives will yield useful data in identifying the trends in the development of introducing the school subjects and teaching programs on the learning platforms. This data will also inform policymakers of the needs of parents in supporting their children's' learning.

4. Aims of the Research.

The objectives of this paper are:

1-To know the advantages of online learning from the perspectives of parents of students at Cycle Two basic schools (5-9).

2-To discover the challenges of online learning from the perspectives of parents of students at Cycle Two basic schools (5-9).

5. Questions of the Research

1-What are the advantages of online learning from the' perspectives of parents of students at Cycle Two basic schools (5-9)?

2-What are the challenges of online learning from the perspectives of parents of students at Cycle Two basic schools (5-9)?

3-Are there any statistically significant differences between the responses of the parents due to the qualifications and gender?

6. Literature Review

The closing of schools has a positive impact on mortality by reducing the incidence of a disease among the students and other school faculty (Anderson, Heesterbeek, Klinkenberg, & Hollingsworth, 2020; Wenham, Smith, & Morgan, 2020). However, it can also have a negative impact on e- learning if it is not well-prepared. Furthermore, the rapid worldwide shift to e-learning calls for examining parents' perceptions of the e-learning environment and the challenges it brings (Garbe, 2020; Osman, 2020). Parents are a stakeholders of their children's academic achievement and have demonstrated significant contributions to the success of their children in e-learning (Borup, West, Graham, & Davies, 2014; Feng & Cavanaugh, 2011; Lee & Figueroa, 2012; Makrooni, 2019; Woofter, 2019). Thus, they should be involved in the research into investigating the benefits and challenges of e-learning because this will enable the education decision-makers to create solutions to the challenges that prevent some parents from supporting their children in their attempt to attain a good education (Boca, Oggero, Profeta, & Rossi, 2020; Farré & González, 2020; Sevilla & Smith, 2020).

Abuhammad categories the challenges faced by parents into four themes: personal barriers, technical, logistical, and financial challenges (Abuhammad, 2020). Also, they can be attributed to the difference in educational levels of parents in terms of e-learning (Bol, 2020). Consequently, parents faced several challenges while supporting their children in e-leaning; these challenges can hamper or completely prevent effective e-learning (Farré & González, 2020). For example, parents must take on new and unfamiliar roles and responsibilities as their children participate in e-learning while experiencing increasing instructional responsibility for their child's learning (Liu, 2011). As a result, parents often struggle with understanding the role they should play in their children's online learning (Boulton, 2008).

According to Selwyn and others, the feelings of parents towards e- learning are mixed: some parents feel more connected to their child's learning, while others see this as an additional burden (Selwyn, Banaji, Hadjithoma-Garstka, & Clark, 2011). In the same manner, some studies prove that parents have an essential role to play during home schooling, such as supporting their children emotionally, sustaining their motivation to reach ambitious goals and helping them to follow the curriculum. Also, students display more positive attitudes and dispositions towards learning when they benefit from more parental emotional support, So, parents not only need good parenting skills, but they also need a good level of education (Farré & González, 2020) to satisfy their children's educational needs as effectively as possible.

Furthermore, Hohlfeld and others, highlighted some challenges that may impact parental involvement in e-learning, such as a lack of interest in using technology, a lack of internet access and low digital self-efficacy

(Beckman, Bennett, & Lockyer, 2019; Povey et al., 2016; Sevilla & Smith, 2020). In addition, parents sometimes do not have enough guidance to acquire the digital skills required for using technology effectively. (Goodall, 2016).

It is therefore crucial to motivate parents to play an active role in supporting their children's learning through giving them access to e- learning materials. In addition, helping lower income families to get devices and better broadband and providing them with guidance about e-learning platforms, are essential, rather than merely offering them access to the platform and materials.

6.1. Are the Educational Institutions in the Sultanate of Oman ready for E-learning?

Omani educational institutions are interested in reviewing their educational policies to provide e-learning (Al Musawi, 2010). Therefore, the Omani strategy 2040 aims at establishing quality education systems that guarantee high-quality education aligned with international standards and market demand (Osman, 2020) (Slimi,2020)

Recently, most of the Omani educational institutions at all levels have adopted the concept of e-learning, in which the learning materials are presented to the students at a distance over different types of platforms (Osman, 2020) According to the General Manager of Sales at Omantel, G Suite is the practical choice for teachers and students alike to perform their duties, share educational content and take exams. In addition, broadband coverage of 95% in the Sultanate is covered by educational technologies (Slimi,2020). Additionally, Omantel enables both students and staff to use online conferences via many apps, such as Zoom, GoToMeeting, Teams, WhatsApp, and other platforms (Telecom Review, 2020). In fact, the G Suite for Education will be provided to more than 450,000 students across the Sultanate (Telecom Review, 2020).

6.2. Hybrid Education in the Ministry of Education

His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to make School Year 2020/2021 the year of hybrid learning, and the Ministry of Education has endeavoured to make learning safe and maintain its continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic, by working to create sustainable hybrid learning. This is in line with the priorities of vision Oman 2040 (Osman, 2020).

Schools have been put in three categories, depending on the school density as follows: Low density schools that operate with not more than 16 students per class in a day at a rate of 3 hours per 'school day'; medium density schools that operate at a rate of 4 hours a day at half capacity (number of students) during the first week and the other half during the second week and high-density schools which operate at a rate of 5 hours a day at one-third capacity every week. Students must be put in three sets (to attend in three weeks), except 12th Class students, who will be put in two sets, with the first group attending in the first week and the second in the week that follows. The Ministry is concerned to conduct fair assessments, so students will only be tested on the information that they acquire in the classroom (Osman, 2020).

6.3. Types of Hybrid Education Platforms in the Ministry of Education

The Ministry provides students with several learning platforms which offer many interactive activities and visual presentations. The Ministry also provides a platform for an integrated e-library and another platform for class preparation, and it seeks, through telecoms in Oman, to strengthen the network in schools and provides the necessary support for insolvent families in cooperation with other government entities (Osman, 2020). The following are examples of Omani educational platforms.

A. Microsoft Team

This is a virtual platform developed by Google for schools that combines the possibility of making video and audio meetings with the ability to create different teams to share different types of files and joint work on their implementation, in addition to exchange experiences, ideas and various topics (Oman Educational Portal, 2021). Microsoft Team allows teachers to invite students for virtual classes, set their homework, and monitor students' progress easily, as well as provide them with immediate feedback. Also, various documents can be attached, and materials and files can also be saved for reference. their offers an academic calendar showing the timetable of lessons and exam dates. The platform works on smartphones, tablets, and personal computers (Oman Educational Portal, 2021).

B. Mandhara

Mandhara is an educational platform developed by the Ministry of Education, and its name was inspired by the Omani national identity. The platform is designed for grades (1-4) and is the portal through which the students attend classes, have activities, and take tests in virtual classrooms. It enables teachers and students to communicate, interact and chat. It helps teachers to follow up students' assignments and enter their grades, as well as attach documents and schedule the timetable of daily lessons (Oman Educational Portal, 2021).

C. Mawred

Mawred is a new educational channel inaugurated by the Ministry of Education on YouTube with the contribution of private sector institutions to support the education process. It enriches the school curriculum by providing educational resources and materials, through video clips that include different knowledge, skills and experiences relating the school curriculum. It also aims to develop modern teaching methods by providing teachers with training programs in order to raise the level of school achievement. In addition, the channel publishes a wide range of educational lessons conducted by expert teachers from various governorates of the Sultanate (Oman Educational Portal, 2021).

7. Methodology

7.1. Variables

The study included the following variables: First, the independent variable:

- E-learning.

Second, dependent variables:

- Genders (male / female).
- Parents' qualifications.

7.2. Population and Sample

Population: All the parents of students in grades (5-9) studying in Al Batinah South Governmental schools in Sultanate of Oman were included in this study. According to school's report from the Ministry of Education, the number of parents reached 3000.

Sample: The selection of the study sample for completing the questionnaire was dependent on the general population of students' parents in Al Batinah South Governmental schools. This sample was deemed to be a representative reflection of the wider parents' population (Punch, 2014). Therefore, it consisted in its final form of 346 parents of both genders. The researchers relied on the simple random method in identifying the sample, to achieve equality of probabilities for each member of the original community.

7.3. Instruments

To test the questions of the study, an online questionnaire was designed as a method of data collection containing two parts: the first part was to obtain demographic data, while the second part had two sections, the first asking questions related to the parents ' view of the advantages of e-learning, while the second measured the challenges they faced with e-learning. The online questionnaire was designed using the 5-point scale of a Likert Scale (from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) as shown in Table 1.

Table-1. The values of items weight according to the five-point Likert scale.

values weight	50-4.20	4.19-3.40	3.39-2.60	2.59-1.80	1.79-1.00
Opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Absolutely Disagree

Source: Joshi, Kale, Chandel, and Pal (2015)

7.4. Access and Acceptance

At the beginning of this study, ethical approval was obtained from the technical office responsible for giving permission for researchers in the Ministry of Education (approval no. 2820294835). Then, a survey was developed, reviewed by experts and scholars, and piloted prior to implementation with a sample of the target audience. The survey measured the advantages and challenges of e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Omani schools from the perspectives of parents in Cycle two Schools (5-9).

The survey was conducted in the academic year 2020/20201 and was available for one week on the internet. This led to 176 surveys being completed. The data were collected from the Google drive and analysed statistically using the statistical analysis program (SPSS).

7.5. Reliability and Validity

According to Punch (2014) an instrument is valid if it can measure what it was prepared for. Therefore, several steps were taken to assess the validity of the online questionnaire content; for instance, research papers dealing with the problem were reviewed. Then, the collected data from the pilot study were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha to examine the reliability of the questionnaire (Punch, 2014) this being one of the most widely used measures of reliability in social and organizational sciences. The value of reliability was high for both benefits and challenges namely 0.905 and 0.813 respectively, indicating a high level of stability and reliability in field application (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012).

8. Findings

8.1. The Advantages of e-Learning in Omani Schools:

Regarding to the first question ("What are the advantages of online learning from the perspectives of parents of students at Cycle Two basic schools (5-9)?)" a descriptive statistic was applied, and the items were ranked according to their means as shown in Table 2.

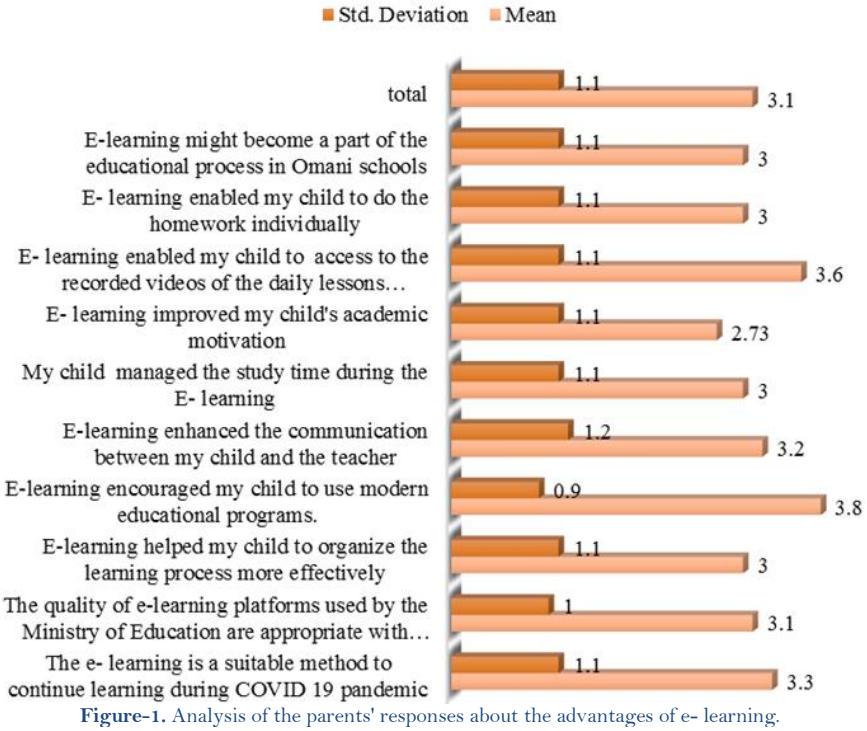

Figure-1. Analysis of the parents' responses about the advantages of e- learning.

As shown in Figure 1, the general responses reached (3.1), which indicated a medium level and with a standard deviation equal to (1.1), this showed a high degree of consistency in the responses of the study sample. The data also showed that the range for responses was from 3.8 to 2.73, so the average range between agree and neutral and standard deviation ranged between (0.90) and (1.14) which revealed a high degree of consistency in the responses of the study sample.

In addition, as shown in Figure 2 that item "E-learning helped my child to use modern educational programs" took the first place with an average of (3.8), meaning a high average and with a standard deviation of (0.9). As shown in Figure 2 64.74% of participants agreed that e-learning helped their children to use modern educational programs. Also, the item "e- learning enabled my child to access the recorded videos of the daily lessons effortlessly" came in the second place with a high mean of (3.5) and a standard deviation (1.08), which illustrated a high degree of consistency in the responses of the study sample in this item.

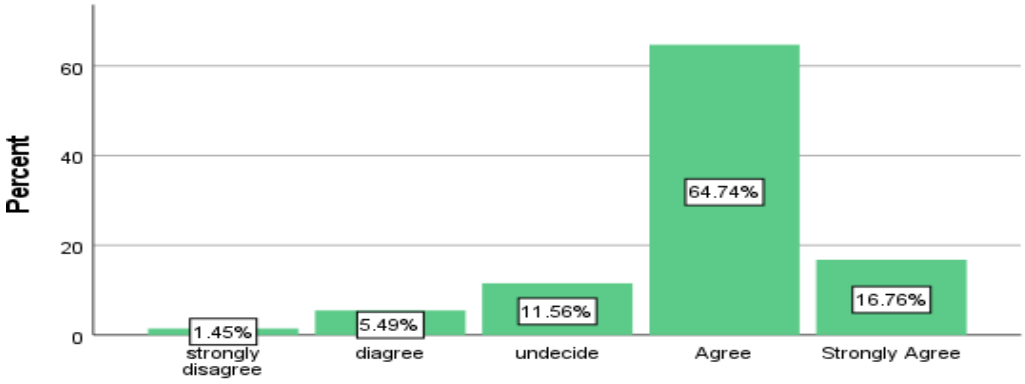

Figure-2. Parents' perspectives on whether e-learning helped their children to use modern educational programs.

Conversely, it was found from Figure 3 that the item "e- learning improved my child's academic motivation" scored lowest, with a medium mean of about (2.7); also, as shown in in Figure 3 around 40% of participants disagreed and 20% of them were undecided about that.

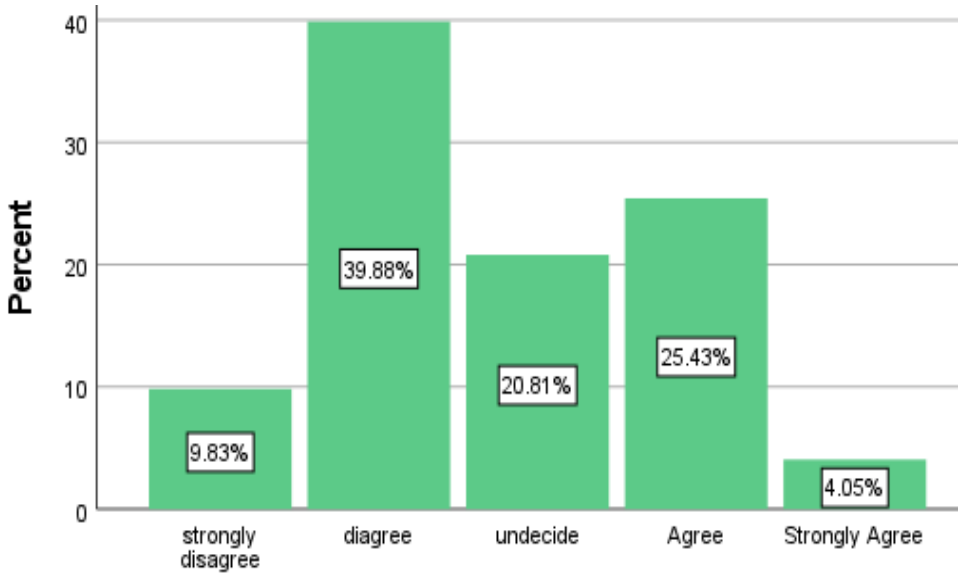

Figure-3. Parents' perspectives about whether e- learning improved their child academic motivation.

The findings revealed that overall, the parents' response was positive therefore, this generally showed that e- learning during the COVID-19 had a positive effect from the perspectives of these parents of students. On the other hand, as shown in Figure 4, there was some hesitation from the participants about whether e learning might become a part of the educational process in the Sultanate of Oman in the future.

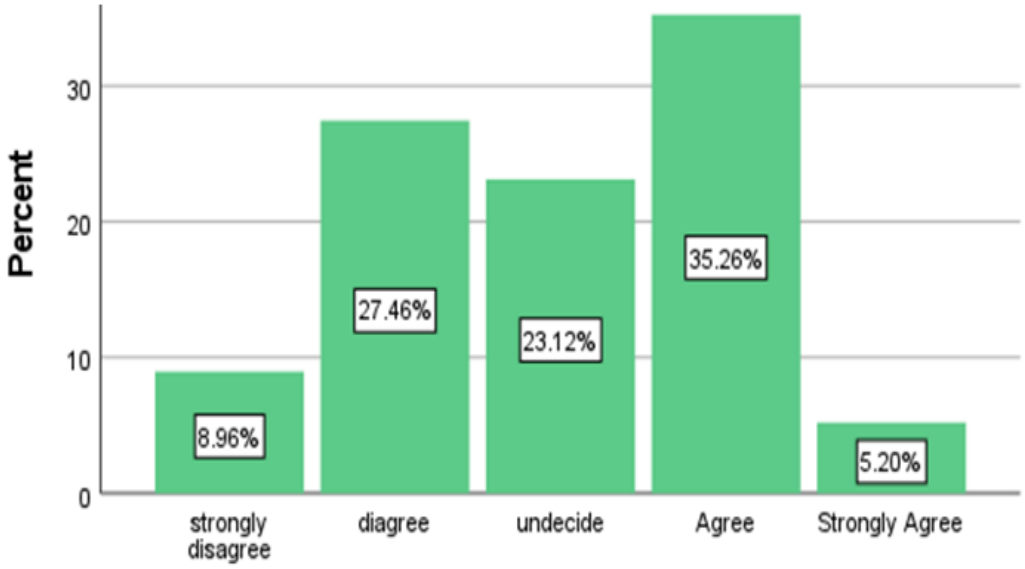

Figure-4. Parents' perspectives about the future of e-learning in the Sultanate of Oman.

8.2. The Challenges of e-Learning in Omani Schools

Regarding the second question that investigated the challenges faced by parents while supporting their children, a descriptive statistic also was applied, and the challenges were ranked according to their means, Table 2 shows the mean score of participants' responses.

Table-2. Analysis of parents' perspectives about the challenges of e-learning.

Level of challenges	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	order
Personal	346	3.5	1.08	4
Technical	346	4.1	0.95	1
Financial	346	4	1.0	2
Logistical	346	3.43	1.0	3
total	346	3.73	1.0	

The data revealed that the technical challenges were the most crucial as expressed by the participants, with an average means of 4.1. Financial challenges came second, then logistical challenges with a similarly high mean of around 4 and 3.4 respectively. Finally, personal challenges were given fourth place.

A. Technical Challenges

Table-3. Parents' perspectives about the technical challenges.

Technical Challenges	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Insufficient investment and service	346	4.02	.929
limitations of network	346	4.4	.909
Inability to access e-learning platforms easily	346	3.7	1.01
Total	346	4.1	0.95

As shown in Table 3 the general responses of participants were about (4.1), which indicated that the level was extremely high and with a standard deviation equal to (.95), which showed a high degree of consistency with the responses of the study sample. Furthermore, the data illustrated that the range of responses was from 3.7 to 4.4, so the average range from agree to strongly agree and standard deviation for all was around 1, which represented a high degree of consistency with the responses of the study sample.

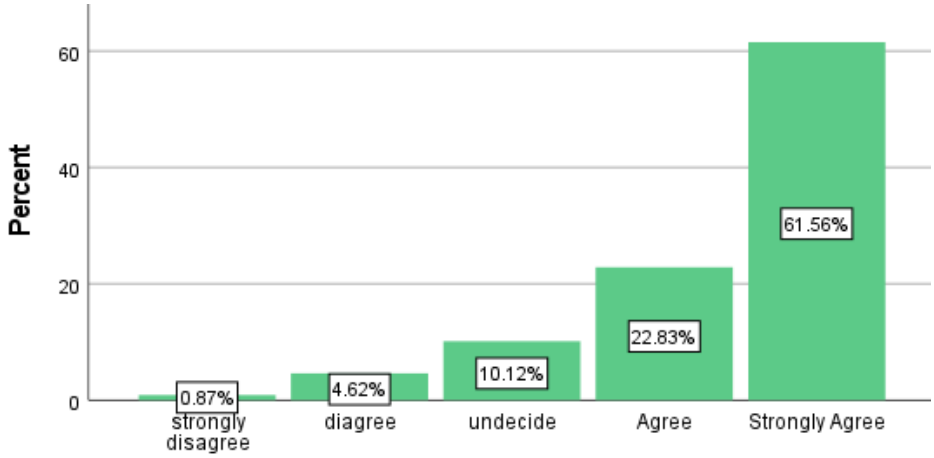

Figure-5. Parents' perspectives about the limitations of networks.

The findings revealed that the most crucial technical challenge was limitations of networks which had an extremely high mean with about 4.1 and with a standard deviation equal to (0.99), which represented a high degree of consistency with the responses of the study sample. Also, as can be seen from Figure 5, 61.5% participants strongly agreed and around 23% of them agreed that internet inefficiency was one of the main challenges, which has hindered e-learning in Omani schools. The second was" insufficient investment and service", with also had a high mean, and the third technological challenge was "inability to access e-learning platforms easily".

B. Financial Challenges

As shown in Table 4 the general mean responses were about 4, which illustrated that the level was extremely high and with a standard deviation equal to (1.0), which indicated a high degree of consistency with the responses of the study sample.

Table-4. Parents' perspectives about the financial challenges.

Financial challenges	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Inability to buy hardware and software (computer and technical tools)	346	4.07	.993
Inability to pay for internet services	346	3.8	1.10
total	346	4	1.0

Also, as can be seen from Figure 6, around 42 % and 32 % participants strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the inability to buy the technology required (computer and technical tools) was one of the main challenges related to financial challenges. The second challenge in this section was "inability to pay for internet services", with also represented a high mean.

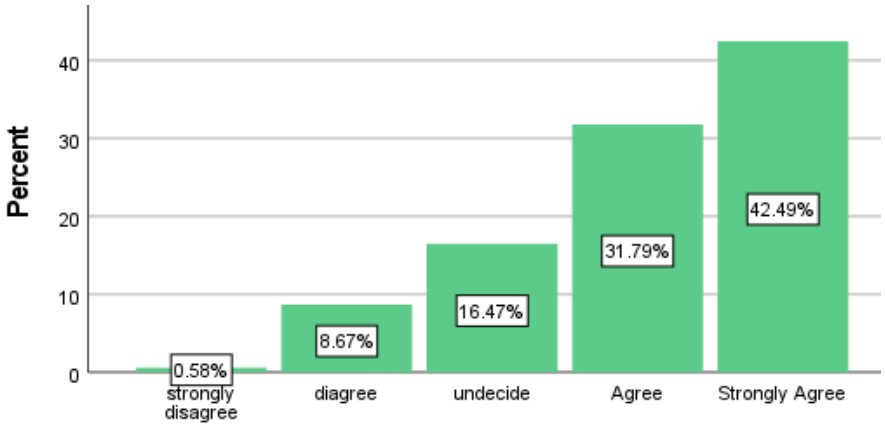

Figure-6. Parents' perspectives about their inability to pay for internet services.

C. Logistical Challenges

Table-5. Parents' perspectives about the logistical challenges.

Logistical challenges	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The lack of readiness of my son for e-learning as the main method of education	346	3.64	1.06
Lack of support from the schools	346	3.18	0.887
Lack of support from the teachers	346	2.82	0.954
The complexity of the educational material in e- learning	346	3.40	1.09
Lack of cooperation between students	346	3.60	1.07
Difficulty with time-management	346	3.97	0.950
total	346	3.43	1.00

The data revealed in Table 5 show that overall participants' responses reached (3.4), which showed that the level was medium and with a standard deviation equal to (1.0), which indicated a high degree of consistency with the responses of the study sample. Furthermore, the findings presented that the range of responses was from 3.9 to 2.8, so the mean was high and standard deviation ranged between (0.90) and (1.1) which illustrated a high degree of consistency in the responses of the study sample.

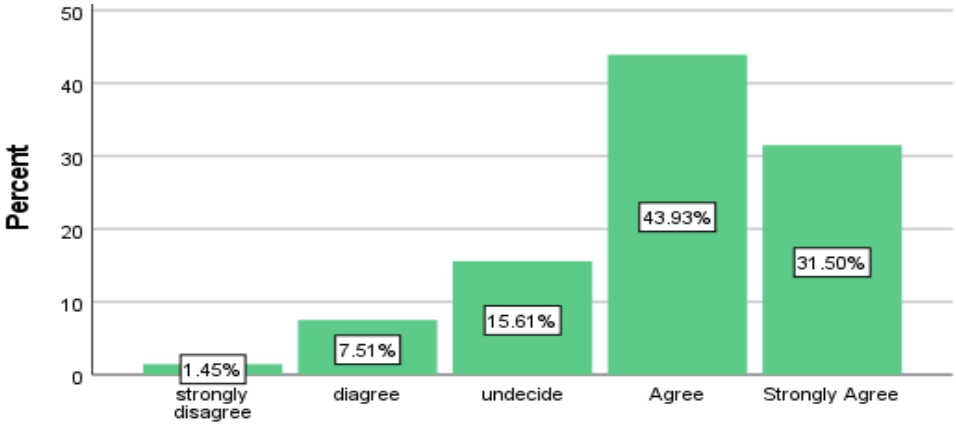

Figure-7. Parents' perspectives about difficulty with time-management.

Also, as can be seen from Figure 7, around 44% and 32% of participants strongly agreed and agreed respectively that difficulty with time-management is one of the main logistical challenges hindering e-learning in Omani schools.

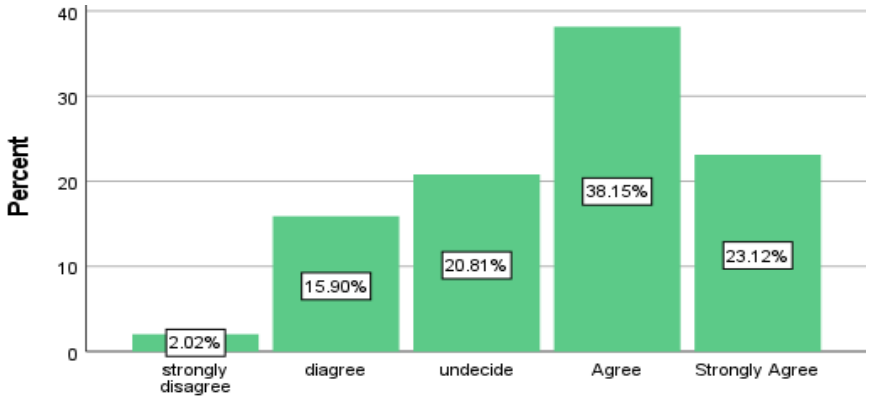

Figure-8. Parents' perspectives about their children's lack of readiness for e-learning.

Moreover, as can be seen from Figure 8, 38.15% and 23.12% of participants strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the lack of readiness of their children for e-learning as the main method of education was the second highest logistical challenge to e-learning in Omani schools.

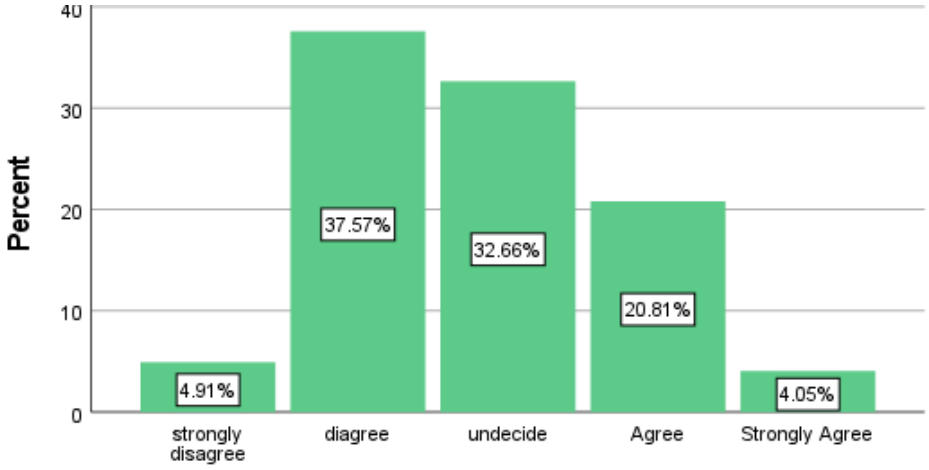

Figure-9. Parents' perspectives about the lack of support from teachers.

Conversely, as shown in Table 6 the item "Lack of support from teachers occupied the last place, with a medium mean of about (2.8) and Figure 9 shows that 37.5% of participants disagreed, with about 32% of them being undecided on this point.

D. Personal Challenges

Table-6. Parents' perspectives about the personal challenges.

Personal challenges	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lack of qualifications of parents in Informational Technology	346	3.35	1.11
Lack of skills of parents in Informational Technology	346	3.33	1.12
Lack of training from the Ministry of Education	346	3.87	1.02
total	346	3.51	1.08

As shown in Table 6 the mean of the responses in general reached (3.5), indicating that the level was high and with a standard deviation equal to (1.1), which illustrated a high degree of consistency with the responses of the study sample. Moreover, the data showed that the range of responses was from 3.36 to 3.8, so the mean was supportive and standard deviation for all was 1.1, which indicated a high degree of consistency with the responses of the study sample.

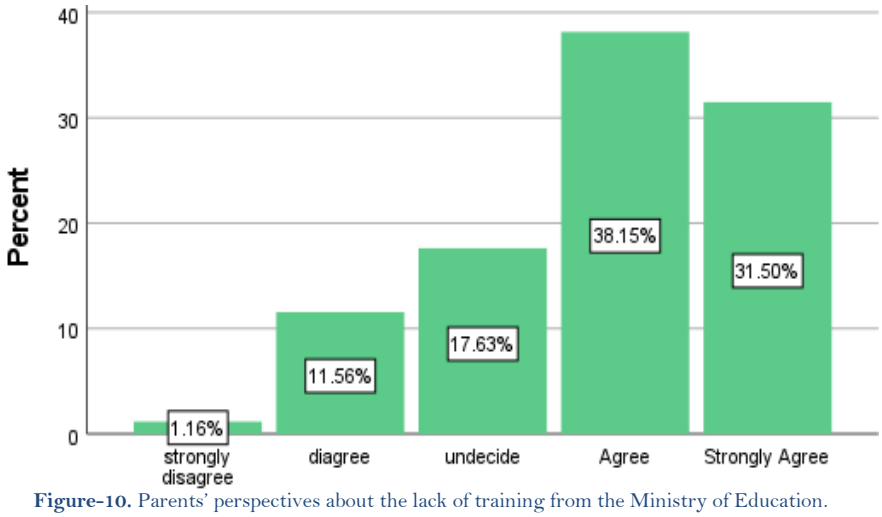

Figure-10. Parents' perspectives about the lack of training from the Ministry of Education.

Also as shown in the Table 3 the item "Lack of training from the Ministry of Education" took the first place with an average of (3.85), meaning a high average and with a standard deviation of (0.99). As shown in Figure 10, 38.2% participants agreed and 31.5% strongly agreed that the lack of training from the Ministry of Education was the main challenge that prevented students' parents from following up their children's learning through the Ministry's e-learning platforms.

8.3. The Significant Differences Between the Parent's Perceptions

Regarding the third question that investigate the statistically significant differences between the responses of the parents, based on qualifications and gender. Figure 11 shows the distribution of the study sample according to the gender variable; of greatest interest here are the percentage of females who responded (about 87.28%), which was approximately 75% more than the number of male respondents.

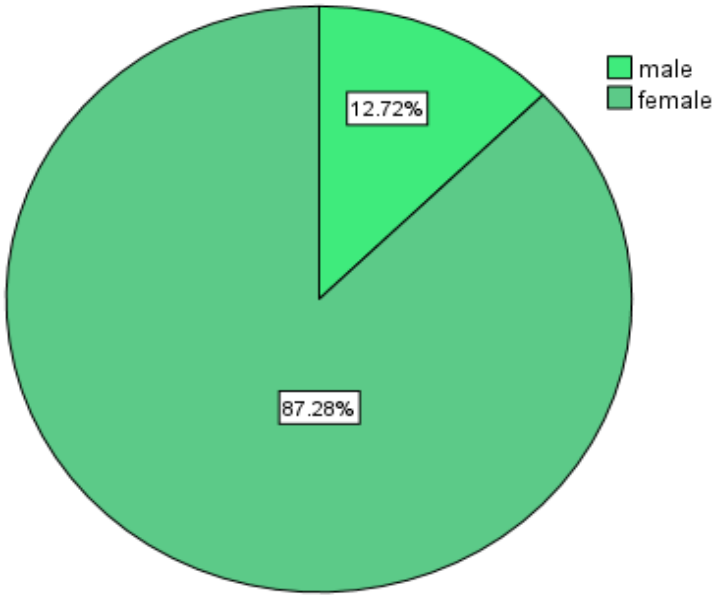

Figure-11. The distribution of the study sample according to gender variable.

The results shown in Figure 11 indicated that females had more significantly differences in their responses than males. However, this would-be a premature judgment before determining whether this was a real difference (statistically significant) or if it could be attributed to random probability. To do this, the researchers applied an independent sample T-test. However, from the result shown in Table 7, the values of both advantages and challenges were (0.919) and (.123) respectively greater than 0.05, so the gender variable had no significant difference due to gender (male and female).

Table-7. Independent Sample T-test (Gender).

Field	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sign
Advantages	Male	44	3.1839	.79070	.010	.919
Advantages	Female	302	3.1656	.79895		
Challenges	Male	44	3.8669	.44636	2.396	.123
Challenges	Female	302	3.6398	.61946		

In terms of qualifications variable, a 'One Way ANOVA' test was used to examine the differences between the responses of parents according to the variable of qualifications.

Table-8. The means and standard deviations of the sample study according to their qualification.

	Secondary		Diploma		Bachelor		Master		PhD	
Field	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Advantages	3.2	.89	3.0	.77	3.17	.81	2.4	.19	2.9	1.2
Challenges	3.6	.69	3.7	.58	3.7	.58	4.0	.56	4.2	.101

Table 8 shows that the average means of responses in the study sample from parents about the advantages of e-learning in the Omani schools ranged from between (2.4) as the lowest mean in favour of Master's qualification, while parents with a secondary qualification recorded the highest mean of (3.2).In addition, the previous table indicated that the averages of the responses regarding the challenges of e- learning ranged between (3.7) as the lowest mean in favour of parents with a Diploma and Bachelor's degree, while it recorded (4.2) parents with a Ph.D. as the highest mean.

One Way ANOVA was used to reveal the presence of statistically significant differences attributable of the qualifications to the questionnaire tool as a whole, and to each part of the advantages and challenges of e-learning as per Table 9.

Table-9. The results of the 'One Way ANOVA'.

Fields		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Advantages	Between Groups	1.365	4	.341	.933	.445
	Within Groups	124.685	341	.366		
	Total	126.050	345			
Challenges	Between Groups	3.968	4	.992	1.573	.181
	Within Groups	215.064	341	.631		
	Total	219.032	345			

We can see that the significance sig values were .445 and .181 for both advantages and challenges respectively, which were more than 0.05. and, therefore, no significant difference was found at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) among the means of the participants' responses about the advantages and challenges in Omani schools in the Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman from the parents' point of view due to the parents' qualifications variable.

Generally, the results in Tables 8 and 9 above indicated that there are no statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 or less between the responses of the study sample based on the qualifications and gender variables.

9. Discussion

9.1. The Advantages of e- Learning in Omani Schools

Regarding the advantages of e-learning in Oman during the period of quarantine, the results revealed that parents were satisfied with this experience. For instance, around 54% of them agreed that e- learning enabled children to access the recorded videos of the daily lessons easily and 66 % of them believed that e-learning encouraged their children to use modern educational programs. Furthermore, many parents were not opposed to the idea that e- learning was a suitable method to continue learning during the COVID 19 pandemic. Moreover, e-learning has been strengthened by using different types of learning platforms in the Ministry of Education in the recent process of learning, so e-learning is now wide-ranging, effective and a valuable form of learning in Omani schools (Slimi, 2020).

That finding showed that participants agreed that the quality of the e-learning platforms used by the Ministry of Education were appropriate to today's learning requirements, In addition, these finding showed that e- learning enabled children to access the recorded videos of the daily lessons effectively, which means that students and parents in Omani schools could easily access, in accord with the study by Adewale (2014).

Yet, many parents did not agree on some of the advantages mentioned in the questionnaire, around 40% of participants disagreed and 20% of them were undecided about the role of e- learning in improving their

children's academic motivation and 35% of them also did not agree that children could manage their study time.

Furthermore, there was some hesitation in the responses of participants about integrating e-learning into the educational process in Omani schools in the future.

9.2. The Challenges Facing e- Learning in Omani Schools

This study found technical challenges to be the greatest ones experienced by parents, which differed from the study by which found that personal challenges were the most difficult regarding e-learning. These challenges in our study included in order of priority: Limitations of network, insufficient investment and service, and an inability to access e-learning platforms easily.

Financial challenges from the parents' viewpoint were the second most difficult aspect of e-learning. Buying the hardware and software required was the most difficult challenge for parents, followed by their inability to pay for internet services.

From the parent's point of view, logistical challenges were in third place and time-management was the most difficult in this regard. The lack of readiness of their child for e-learning as the main method of education was the second challenge. On the other hand, it was felt that the lack of teachers' support was the least important challenge.

Personal challenges were the lowest level of challenges with the lack of training from the Ministry of Education as the main challenge, followed by their lack of skills in Informational Technology, and lack of parents' qualifications.

This study agreed with that the inability to buy computers and software was the biggest Technical challenge for the participants. In addition, this study also aligned with past studies such as Astri (2017) and who found that an inability to maintain the new technology by the school provider prevented students from benefiting from e- learning efficiently. However, the findings of this study were not aligned with study, which found that dissatisfaction with the e-learning modality was the main challenge in terms of logistical challenges.

Lastly, this study agreed with Slimi (2020) that not funding e-learning is another challenge parents may face because buying technology for e-lessons and the cost of the internet can lead to financial problems. Also, the findings of this study agreed with those of Mbukusa (2017) and Slimi (2020) in defining the lack of training as one of the biggest challenges in e-learning. Also, parents should understand technology (Bukhkalo, Ageicheva, & Komarova, 2018) however, their understanding of technology is not enough to support their children if they are unable to participate in their e-learning lessons (Slimi, 2020).

10. Conclusions

The study investigated parents ' opinions of the advantages and challenges of e-learning in Omani schools. The data showed that the implementation of e- learning during the COVID 19 pandemic was a good method for students of grade 5-9, as it had many advantages in developing technical communication skills, as IT skills and flexibility in teaching. Furthermore, the e- learning helped students to develop other skills, such as autonomy, confidence, problem-solving skills, teamwork, time-management, academic integrity, ethical values, and empathy as well as leadership skills. There is also a great similarity between this conclusion and a study conducted by Slimi (2020) in an Omani context. Moreover, the data showed that e-learning organized the learning process more effectively, enhanced communication between students and their teachers, and encouraged students to use modern educational programs. However, this study showed that participants faced many challenges: personal, technical, financial, and logistical. Consequently, even though the data showed participants were interested in using e-learning for their children, the associated challenges prevented them from favouring it as a method of learning in the future.

11. Recommendations

The policymakers and stakeholders should consider some points to ensure the effective use of e learning in Omani schools when adopting online learning as part of the educational system in future. They should update the technological infrastructure of educational institutions to adopt the most recent technologies in teaching and learning.

Some challenges can be overcome if the Ministry of Education assigns more technical support to parents by training them how to use the platforms or providing them with guidance and helping them to buy the necessary technology in the event of their financial need to ensure the access of all students to e-learning.

The study also recommends using blended learning after COVID-19 instead of total e-learning by reducing the number of days and hours spent in the school environment. Since this type of learning is supported by constructivist theory that focuses on learning contexts, it might provide more opportunities for students to interact with resources, instructors, and other students, and so gain a deeper understanding of technology and improved digital skills.

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