



## Perceptions About The Effect Of Virtual Education During Covid 19 On Learner Engagement And Motivation In Iraq

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### Abstract

This study aims to explore the Perceptions about the Effect of Virtual Education during Covid 19 on Learner Engagement and Motivation in Iraq. In order to investigate how virtual education affects learners' motivation and engagement, a qualitative research approach was selected for this study. Given that online education is a complicated phenomena that negatively impacts students' performance (Hanifa, 2018), a qualitative study approach is appropriate to highlight its intricacy. In qualitative research, the researcher interviews EFL Iraqi Students to investigate the effects of virtual education on learner's engagement and motivation. The researcher presented interview questions to 20 participants. the virtual education during Covid 19 on learner engagement is negative as students explained that they are not fully understanding the lectures and instructors do not use activities during the online class which makes the lecture boring and not interesting. According to second research question, students' perceptions about the effect of virtual education during Covid 19 on motivation is negative. Students are not motivated during the lecture as the online lectures lack many factors such as the attendance of students, participation during the lecture, and preparation.

**Keywords:** Virtual education, Learner engagement, Motivation, and Higher Education

### Introduction

Higher education is a place where students can learn about themselves and the world around them in a structured way. Students have traditionally relied on a variety of methods to help them learn and develop their morals and values, including research, assignments, movies, storytelling, and group discussions (Altun, 2017). It's possible for an individual to learn everything on their own or with minimal assistance, or they can attend lessons, either online or in person. Primary children in Iraq, who haven't yet mastered the ability of self-study and need a lot of help learning new topics, are more encouraged to attend lessons. Virtual learning, on the other hand, has become increasingly popular in universities and colleges, especially among people



who work and study at the same time. To a large extent, student learning capacity and academic environment influence how they approach learning and how they choose to approach it (Pham et al., 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic threw education into disarray on all fronts, online and in the classroom. Since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Covonavirus disease (COVID-19) a pandemic in March, 2020, it has had disastrous impacts on the worldwide economy. In response to an increase in confirmed cases and deaths, the government enacted stricter laws in the region.

Since over half of families were unable to access the internet, the government implemented televised schooling in order to enable online learning (McBurnie, 2020). In order to stop the spread of the epidemic, the government shut down all elementary, secondary, and collegiate schools, which had a devastating effect on education. Alternative solutions were devised by education bodies of all kinds, both government and non-government. In order to avoid disrupting the teaching-learning process in all schools, the government decided to implement distance learning, which allowed students to access education from their homes via a computer or the internet. For this shift to go smoothly for kids and teachers alike, it required the involvement of many different parties. The fact that over 54% of families lacked internet connection posed a barrier for some schools, but others were able to adapt (McBurnie, 2020).

Because not all Iraqi students have internet access, the country's education administration was concerned that this would lead to inequities in the teaching and learning process. Many families and communities in Iraq lack the means to use computers, the internet, or smart phones at home or at work. As a cultural aside, female students were previously denied internet access for educational purposes. This did not deter government efforts to find innovative ways of keeping kids engaged in their education. In order to help students learn more effectively, the crisis compelled previously resistant organizations to embrace new technologies. Education sectors had a difficult difficulty achieving their goals during this challenging time. Education in fields such as medicine was among the most adversely affected, but the effects varied by school, region, and course. This study aims to answer the following research questions;



1. What are students' perceptions about the effect of virtual education during Covid 19 on learner engagement ?
2. What are students' perceptions about the effect of virtual education during Covid 19 on motivation?

### Literature Review

#### Online Learning Education

The term "online learning" refers to the process of instruction and learning that takes place between educators and students using different digital platforms including "WhatsApp," "Zoom," and "Google Classroom." Furthermore, online learning encompasses more than just direct instruction. Online learning includes any assignments or activities that the instructor provides (Basar, 2021). Online education, according to Dhawan (2020), is the capacity to learn using any means, at any pace, from any location, and at any time. According to Singh & Thurman (2019), it is described as "learning experiences that take place via various devices (such as laptops, mobile phones, and so on) that have internet connectivity." In these settings, students can learn and interact with teachers and other students almost anywhere (independently). According to Rapantar et al. (2020), online learning is defined as internet-enabled learning that involves expert and content creator collaboration, a networked community of learners, the management of learning experiences, and the delivery of content. The dissemination of course materials via electronic media, including CDs, television, video/audio cassettes, satellite transmission, extranets, intranets, and the internet, is referred to as online learning, according to Kundu (2018). It can be summed up as follows: learners receive course materials online through internet-enabled gadgets like computers and smartphones.

Globalization and the rapid growth of the internet have boosted online learning, leading several universities to begin specializing in it. According to Mart (2017), educational institutions worldwide have been attempting to reallocate their budgets to the development of infrastructure in order to establish remote learning as the most effective substitute for conventional classroom instruction. All parties involved in online education—students, teachers, administrators, parents, and education ministries—must approve of it for it to be implemented successfully, or at least most of them. Curriculum designers and policy makers should be aware of the students' diverse viewpoints, according to Shearer et al. (2020), who examined students' attitudes about and motivations for online learning.



## Learner Engagement

According to Gallup (2013), the word "student engagement" refers to a person's desire and excitement for learning, which has an effect on both their conduct and academic achievement. Understanding student participation is made more challenging by the fact that it is a complex phrase. The psychological experience of identifying with school and feeling that one is cared for, respected, and a part of the school environment, as well as positive student behaviors like attendance, paying attention, and participation in class, are all components of student engagement (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, & Lehr, 2004, p.97). This description makes clear how diverse and multidimensional the idea of student involvement is, and how students' levels of engagement change as they go through the educational system. Students can also alter within particular engagement domains (Archambault et al., 2009). For instance, a student might read with great enthusiasm while showing low levels of attention in science and math studies. Different levels of participation are visible in each student as well as in groups of students.

According to the Great Schools Partnership, student involvement According to a 2013 survey, 55% of American students are actively involved in their education, compared to 28% who are disengaged and 17% who are actively disengaged (Gallup, 2013). More than 40–60% of urban, minority, and low-income adolescents are chronically disengaged from school, according to Austin and Benard's 2007 assessment. Students describe a process of disengaging from school-related activities and expectations prior to dropping out (Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, & Pagani, 2009). Schools can actively endeavor to promote student engagement and, consequently, their success in the classroom by recognizing and fostering student engagement. In order for students to excel in post-secondary education and their future employment, they must be actively engaged in their studies (Wang & Eccles, 2012a, 2012b). For schools to support positive youth development, they must have a solid understanding of student participation (Li & Lerner, 2011). Student Engagement: What Is It? A person's desire and excitement for learning, which affects both their conduct and academic achievement, is referred to as student engagement (Gallup, 2013). The term "student engagement" is complicated, which makes it more challenging to comprehend. April 2015 Student "enStrategy Brief" The University of Nebraska at Lincoln's Amber Olson and Reece L. Peterson give a detailed explanation of student engagement: "Student engagement in education refers

to the level of focus, curiosity, enthusiasm, optimism, and passion that students exhibit during instruction, as well as the degree of motivation they have to learn and advance in their studies. In general, the idea of "student engagement" is based on the idea that learning gets better when there is Tier 1, 2, or 3 intervention. Student Engagement: When students are curious, enthused, or inspired, their learning usually suffers, and when they are bored, apathetic, disillusioned, or in some other way "disengaged," they are not as engaged. Teachers often state that their teaching objectives are to increase or strengthen student involvement. (The Engaging Student, 2014)

### **Motivation**

According to the PMBOK definition, motivation is "Powering people to achieve high levels of performance and overcoming barriers in order to change." Psychologists have provided different definitions according to attitude to the motivation phenomenon which are briefly mentioned below (Tohidi, 2011).

Motivation was inspired of the Latin term "Move" For the first time, means movement and it is an English word. Motivation is a force which cause people to behavior particularly and according to management point of view, the aim of creating motivation in employees is to have a behavior in which brings the highest benefits for the organization .Although motivation researchers study this issue based on how behavior strengthens and how it leads to specific goals, consequently study of motivation is a research for "Event condition" which gives power and direction to behavior. Whenever, if we consider an event condition, for powerful and guided behavior, wet enter to the territory of motivation. Motivation is the force that causes movement in human. In fact, any agent that causes(internal or external) activity in living creature is considered as a kind of motivation (Tohidi , 2006).

"The reasons underlying behavior" are referred to as motivation (Guay et al., 2010, p. 712). In general, motivation is defined as "the attribute that moves us to do or not do something," paraphrasing Gredler, Broussard, and Garrison (2004) (p. 106). Motivation fueled by a person's own interests, pleasures, or delight is known as intrinsic motivation. "Intrinsic motivation energizes and sustains activities through the spontaneous satisfactions inherent in effective volitional action," Deci et al. (1999) note. It appears in activities that people frequently engage in for outside benefits, like play, exploration, and challenge seeking (p. 658). Extrinsic motivation, or motivation driven by reinforcement contingencies, is frequently contrasted by





researchers with intrinsic motivation. According to Deci et al. (1999), educators have traditionally believed that intrinsic motivation is preferable and produces better learning results than extrinsic incentive.

A constellation of closely related ideas, perceptions, values, interests, and behaviors make up motivation. Therefore, different motivation theories may concentrate on non-cognitive elements like perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes, cognitive activities like monitoring and plan application, or both. As to Gottfried's (1990) definition, academic motivation is defined as the delight in learning in school, which is marked by a mastery orientation, curiosity, tenacity, task-endogeny, and the acquisition of challenging, difficult, and unique tasks (p. 525). Turner (1995), on the other hand, views cognitive engagement—which he defines as "voluntary uses of high-level self-regulated learning strategies, such as paying attention, connection, planning, and monitoring" as being synonymous with motivation (p. 413).

### **Motivation concepts**

#### **Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation**

The term "intrinsic motivation" describes motivation that comes from within an individual and is not dependent on outside pressure. It is motivated by an interest in or enjoyment of the work itself. Social and educational psychologists have been researching intrinsic motivation since the early 1970s. According to student assessment theory, research has indicated that it is typically linked to high levels of academic accomplishment and satisfaction. Pupils are more likely to be intrinsically motivated if they: Assign personal responsibility for their academic performance (e.g., effort), Feel that individuals can be effective agents in achieving desired goals (i.e., that results are not random) and that mastering a subject is more important to them than rote learning for grades. Extrinsic motivation originates from sources external to the person. Rewards such as money and grades, compulsion, and the prospect of punishment are examples of common extrinsic incentives. In general, competition is extrinsic since it motivates the competitor to succeed and surpass their opponents rather than to take pleasure in the activity's inherent benefits. Trophies and an enthusiastic audience for the individual are examples of extrinsic motivation (Tohid, 2011).

Extrinsic rewards have been shown in social psychology study to cause overjustification, which lowers intrinsic drive. In a study that illustrated this effect, kids who anticipated—and got—a ribbon and a gold star for drawing pictures played with the drawing supplies less in later observations than kids

who were put in an unexpected reward condition or kids who got no extrinsic reward at all. According to the self-determination theory, an individual may internalize extrinsic motivation if the work aligns with their values and beliefs and satisfies their basic psychological needs (Tohid, 2011).

### Self-control

Emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as a subset of self-control of motivation; a someone may possess high intelligence by a more traditional definition (as determined by numerous IQ tests), but lack the drive to apply this intelligence to particular tasks. The "expectancy theory" of Yale School of Management Professor Victor Vroom explains when people will choose to exercise self-control in order to achieve a specific objective. Desires and drives are defined as a need or a deficiency that triggers conduct directed toward an objective or reward. These are believed to come from within the person and may not need to be prompted by outside factors. More subtle drives may be the need for praise and approval, which drives a person to behave in a way that pleases others. Basic drives, on the other hand, could be caused by deficits like hunger, which leads a person to seek food. In contrast, training animals by rewarding them with food when they perfectly execute a trick illustrates the importance of extrinsic rewards and cues. Even after the treat is taken out of the procedure, the reward encourages the animals to continuously do the trick (Tohid, 2011).

### Methodology

In order to investigate how virtual education affects learners' motivation and engagement, a qualitative research approach was selected for this study. Given that online education is a complicated phenomena that negatively impacts students' performance (Hanifa, 2018), a qualitative study approach is appropriate to highlight its intricacy.

Because the researcher wanted to provide a thorough understanding of virtual education, how this issue affected the participants' performance in class, and the strategies that the participants used to lessen the effects of virtual education, a qualitative research methodology was appropriate for this study and the research questions. Moreover, a quantitative study is appropriate when the researcher want to investigate a phenomenon that is not well understood, analyze human subjects, or gain a detailed understanding of a major issue.

In qualitative research, the researcher interviews EFL Iraqi Students to investigate the effects of virtual education on learner's engagement and motivation. The researcher presented interview questions to 20 participants that are divided into the following; 10 male and 10 female. The learners who are taking courses online. However, the study focuses on these three people who play a vital role in the success of virtual education and really show learner's engagement and motivation in the classroom.

### Findings and Discussions

The findings show that, according to the first research question, 12 students (7 male and 5 female) stated the virtual education during Covid 19 on learner engagement is negative as students explained that they are not fully understanding the lectures and instructors do not use activities during the online class which makes the lecture boring and not interesting. According to second research question, students' perceptions about the effect of virtual education during Covid 19 on motivation is negative. Students are not motivated during the lecture as the online lectures lack many factors such as the attendance of students, participation during the lecture, and preparation.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate how learners' perceptions of the impact of virtual education during COVID-19 on their motivation and engagement are held in Iraq. To find out how learners' motivation and engagement are impacted by virtual education, a qualitative research approach was chosen for this study. In order to emphasize the complexity of online education, which is a complex phenomenon that has a detrimental impact on students' performance (Hanifa, 2018), a qualitative study approach is necessary. In order to better understand how virtual education affects learners' motivation and engagement, the researcher conducted qualitative research by interviewing EFL Iraqi students. Twenty individuals were given interview questions by the researcher. There is a negative impact of virtual education during COVID-19 on learner engagement, as students have expressed that they are not completely understanding the lectures and that the lack of activities by the instructors throughout the online class makes the lectures dull and uninteresting. The second study question states that students believe that virtual education during COVID 19 has a negative impact on motivation. Because online lectures lack numerous components, including student attendance, engagement during the lecture, and preparation.



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