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The Perspectives of the Academic Staff and Students of the American University of Madaba (AUM) on Cyber-Truancy during Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Solutions

Hanan Madanat [1] *, ***Majid Tarawneh*** [2]

[1] American University of Madaba, Department of Translation, Faculty of Languages and Communication, Madaba- Jordan.

[2] American University of Madaba, Dean of the Faculty of Languages and communication, Madaba- Jordan.

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* *Corresponding author:*
majid.tarawneh@aum.edu.jo

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Abstract

Objectives: This paper examines the perspectives of academic staff and students at the American University of Madaba (AUM) on cyber-truancy during the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing challenges and proposing solutions to enhance student engagement in online learning.

Methods: Case-study methodology requires detailed investigation of a situation. To attain the required information, two methods of data collection were utilized, namely, a structured (Likert scale) questionnaire and an interview distributed to a representative sample of AUM's academic staff and students. The data was analyzed by using SPSS.

Results: The study found the following results. First, all respondents show a high level of awareness of the cyber-truancy. Second, technological and behavioral factors contribute to increasing truancy rates among students. Third, the novelty of the experience as well as enforcing strict policies are crucial challenges that hinder online learning.

Conclusions: The paper concludes with suggested solutions, which include enforcing strict policies to curb cyber-truancy, enhancing parental control, and spreading awareness among students regarding the detrimental effects of cyber-truancy.

Keywords: Cyber-truancy, online learning, traditional classrooms.

آراء الهيئة الأكاديمية وطلاب الجامعة الأميركية في مادبا حول ظاهرة التهرب خلال جائحة كورونا 2019: التحديات والحلول

حنان المدانات [1]*، ***ماجد الطراونة*** [2]

[1] عميد كلية اللغات الأجنبية والاتصال، الجامعة الأمريكية في مادبا، مادبا - الأردن.

[2] قسم الترجمة، الجامعة الأمريكية في مادبا، مادبا- الأردن.

ملخّص

الأهداف: على الرغم من أن الحضور المنتظم هو القاعدة المتبعة في جميع المؤسسات التعليمية التقليدية ، إلا أن مراقبة ومتابعة الالتزام بالحضور باستخدام شبكة الانترنت أصبح مشكلة بالنسبة للفصول الدراسية التي تدار تقليديا. واستنادا إلى هذا الواقع الناشئ ونتائج البحوث السابقة حول هذه المسألة، يعبر أعضاء الهيئة التدريسية في الجامعات بقوة عن مخاوفهم بشأن الحاجة الماسة إلى إشراك الطلاب بشكل أكبر في عملية التعلم والالتزام "بحضور" فصولهم الدراسية بانتظام والتي تعطى عبر الانترنت.استقصاء آراء ووجهات نظر طلاب وأعضاء هيئة التدريس في الجامعة الأمريكية في مادبا حول ظاهرة التهرب خلال جائحة كورونا 2019 والتحديات والحلول.

المنهجية: استندت المنهجية على توزيع استبانة واجراء مقابلات لعينة تمثيلية من طلاب وأعضاء الهيئة التدريسية في الجامعة الأمريكية في مادبا.

النتائج: أولا، يظهر جميع المجيبين مستوى عالي من الوعي بموضوع التغيب عن التعلم الالكتروني أو السيبراني. ثانيا، تساهم العوامل التكنولوجية والسلوكية في زيادة معدلات التغيب عن التعلم الالكتروني أو السيبراني. ثالثا، إن حداثة التجربة، فضلا عن تطبيق سياسات صارمة يعتبران من التحديات المهمة والتي تعيق عملية التعلم عبر الإنترنت.

التوصيات: تقدم الورقة حلولا مقترحة، تشمل إنفاذ سياسات صارمة للحد من التغيب عن التعلم الإلكتروني، وتعزيز الرقابة الأبوية، ونشر الوعي بين الطلاب بشأن الآثار الضارة للتغيب عن التعلم الإلكتروني.

الكلمات الدالة: التغيب عن التعلم الالكتروني، التعليم عن بعد، التعليم التقليدي، التدريس، اللغة..

1. Introduction

Jordan is a developing country that has taken wide strides in the pursuit of providing quality education at all levels. At the current time, and mainly because of the adverse impact of Covid-19, introducing the practice of online learning has become an integral and an alternative solution for combating the effects of the pandemic on online learning. The idea of adopting online courses started at the higher education, especially at universities and colleges. Almarshad (2018) notes that online learning in the higher education model (i.e., university) has been used to: (1) increase the visibility of universities; (2) expand educational recommendations; and (3) learn "virtualization" (55). The novelty of the idea for all stakeholders, including the educational institutions, academic staff, and students imposed several challenges and required collective efforts in order to maintain the continuity of the educational programs.

In light of the breakout of the Covid-19 across the world, traditional face-to-face education suddenly became unfit and impractical. Therefore, online learning has become the crucial and a viable alternative in the face of such challenge. In this regard, Jordan is no exception. The Ministry of Higher Education recognized this challenge very early and called for implementing contingency plans exemplified by resorting to giving online learning at the national level. In March 2020, governmental and private universities alike immediately implemented their online learning plans. Nowadays, the Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education is praising this experience and describes it as a successful one because it has been validated as workable educational alternative, which was implemented in a very short period of time.

As we progress into the 21st century, and despite the perceived success achieved in implementing online learning across all academic institutions in Jordan, some noticeable repercussions have appeared to surface. One of these of alarming ramifications of adopting online courses is the ability of students to skip whole classes or part of them. This tendency of students to skip these online classes has fallen under the general behavioral term Cyber-Truancy, which has become a disconcerting issue for Jordanian academic institutions in general and universities, in particular. Chronically absent students are regarded as “truants” if their absence does fit into the excused categories stipulated by the bylaws of the academic institution, which are in turn proscribed by the Jordanian government through the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE). With the growing number of students attending online learning programs, the concept of truancy needs to be revisited and redefined in order to determine how to enforce online attendance within the online setting. Whereas attendance and truancy are not difficult to determine in the face-to-face classroom, defining truancy at an online learning is challenging to establish and enforce (Carolyn, et. al., 2015).

Cyber-Truancy, or absence without legitimate reason, is a significant issue that continues to pose a challenge to educational institutions in Jordan; and the American University of Madaba (AUM) is no exception in this regard. The administration of the university has recognized the need to address this issue via understanding the reasons behind this phenomenon, the factors contributing to the increase or the decrease of its rates, the challenges that face educators as well as students, and the viable solution.

1.2. Background

The reasons behind students’ inclination to be chronically truants are varied and intertwined. Some of these reasons are student-related and some are not. Research conducted in this field has basically laid the blame on the students in the first place, stating that such inclination stems from a psychological drive (Rothman, 2001; Galloway, 2001; Gabb, 1997; Oerlemans & Jenkins, 1998). Despite these findings, Omoegun (1995) found that students’ inclination towards truancy are influenced by their peers. He added that these students would rather prefer to spend most of their time in the midst of their peers where they would be happier and more relaxed (Owodunni, 1996), rather than submit to their teachers and educational authority. Similar views are held by Rohrman (2001), Osarenren (1996), Adebisi, (1996), who also identify negative peer influence as a strong factor that causes truancy and absenteeism.

Parental lack of control has been shown a powerful determinant factor in increasing the rates of truancy among students. Adedipe (1998) indicated that students who are not sufficiently observed by their parents may demonstrate a myriad number of chronic indications of truancy. However, Adebisi (1996) associated lack of parents’ monitoring of their truant children to the internal problems at their homes. These issues affect attendance include poor economic conditions, family

discouraging attitudes toward education, parental situations, and neglect (Teasley, 2004). Eisenbory (1998) views truancy as the fear of being away from parents. Similar findings appear in the results propounded by Erickson and Curl (1996) who revealed that some parents show little or no interest in the academic progress and development of their children. Moreover, Harrison (1994) discussed further stages of deterioration based on parents' reckless lack of interest in their children. Such stages include abusing alcohol, drugs and tobacco, and getting themselves engaged in acts of criminality, let alone receiving poor grades, and academic failure.

As for academic institutions, Sheldon (2007) attributed occurrence of Cyber-Truancy to a myriad number of technological and pedagogical factors. These include: poor internet-connectedness, inability to handle cutting-edge technology, lack of commitment of faculty members, inexperienced administrators, high staff turnover, and ill-advised policies. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) identify three major reasons for students missing school: (a) students who cannot attend online classes due to illness, family responsibility, homelessness, having to work, or dealing with the juvenile justice system; (b) students who will not attend school due to bullying, safety concerns, harassment, etc.; and (c) students who do not attend due to a lack of value either on their part or the part of their parents, or nothing prevents them from not attending. Currently, millions of students are missing extensive amounts of schooling, with compounding negative effects (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012).

The starting point to curb the compounding effects of this phenomenon at universities is to propose and investigate proper solutions and practices Flannery, et. al. (2012). These solutions must address the causes of this alarming issue. Accordingly, proper solutions must be entrenched in collaborative efforts from all sides in order to stop Cyber-Truancy to occur. Such proper solutions need to address students' stand in the first place. This includes and is not limited to students' psychological motives which must be addressed and treated. Second, parents must play a vital role in monitoring their children whether at school or at the university. Additionally, they should maintain a productive relationship with the academic institutions. Third, universities should enforce certain regulations involving both the instructors and the students in which these regulations enable instructors to play a viable role in curbing the rates of the Cyber-Truancy. For example, instructors must regularly monitor students in general, and chronically truant students, in particular. Additionally, instructors should report immediately any recurrent case of truancy to the administration of the academic institution. At the governmental level, certain Truancy-related laws must be enacted and immediately enforced. Moreover, the government should spread awareness of the issue and require some educational lectures and seminars to be broadcast on the state's national media outlets.

Following the discussion on the nature, the reasons, and the challenges that cyber-truancy imposes on academic institutions, parents, and students, and because of the rise of various concerns regarding the applicability of online education, it has become necessary to tackle these concerns with care and vigilance. Attendance and cyber truancy, have not yet been examined thoroughly in the literature in online setting. Based on this premise, the paper attempts to explore possible approaches and implications which aim at establishing an appropriate method for tracking students' cyber-truancy in the online environment. Accordingly, the issues of attendance and truancy in online environment, or cyber-truancy per se, needs to be brought to the fore.

1.3. Study Significance

To the best of the knowledge of the researchers and despite the extensive discussion and research of the issue of truancy at the national and international levels, the issue of cyber-truancy has been rarely addressed in the Arab world as whole and in Jordan, in particular. To add, because the main focus was placed on truancy at schools, lack of research and the dire need to address this disconcerting issue bring to the fore the importance of addressing this issue at the university level. Accordingly, the significance of this study stems from the need to offer an examination of Cyber-Truancy among AUM students and the role AUM administration and faculty members play in handling this disconcerting phenomenon during the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. It explores the concept of "Cyber-Truancy" through an analysis of the perspectives of AUM students and faculty members.

In a similar vein, and because of the novelty of the idea of online learning in Jordan, it appeared necessary to investigate

the awareness of AUM's academic staff and students, the factors influencing the increasing rates of Cyber-Truancy, the challenges facing students and staff, and the suggested solutions. Therefore, these perspectives on these issue regarding online-courses are considered to be the cornerstone in the search for having a better understanding of this phenomenon.

1.4. Study Questions

The study at hand is attempting to answer the following questions:

1. What is the degree of the academic staff and students' awareness of the problem of Cyber-Truancy at AUM?
2. What are the factors that contribute to the recurrence of Cyber-Truancy among AUM students?
3. What are the challenges that the instructors encounter when dealing with Cyber-Truancy?
4. What are the possible solutions and strategies adopted by AUM academic staff and administration in order to curb and combat this phenomenon?

2. REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

Marvul, (2012) assessed the viability of a five-month intervention program on reducing truancy rates among 40 randomly-selected students. The assessment tools included attendance monitoring, sports participation, and a moral character class. The students were assessed before and after the applying the intervention program. The results indicated students who joined the intervention program showed lower rates and inclinations towards truancy. Additionally, the program increased educational expectations, and leveraged attitudes toward education and engagement.

Flannery, et. al. (2012) explores the effectiveness of schools' disciplinary response towards chronic truancy among high schools in the United States. The results of the analysis of the data of concern revealed that of all the controlling factors including out-of-school suspension was found to significantly decrease the probability of future truancy. Nevertheless, longitudinal growth models indicated that reoccurrence and of such disciplinary procedure accelerates the rates of truancy among ninth grade students.

Vaughn, et. al. (2013) investigates the prevalence of truancy and examines individual, school engagement, parental and behavioral correlates of truancy. The results of the study indicated skipping school was robustly associated with an increased probability of reporting externalizing behaviors, less parental involvement, and engagement and lower grades in school.

Aagaard, (2015) provided a rather different understanding of cyber-truancy. The motive behind conducting this study was the prevailing assumption among educators that such digital devices play a prominent role in catalyzing students' motivation, learning and achievement (Aagaard, 2015). Accordingly, students' recurrent use of digital devices such as tablets and laptops for distractive, and off-task purposes in the classroom was investigated. The findings of the study indicated that the inclination of students to use their digital devices is not always a conscious choice. Instead, students believe that such inclination has become a detrimental habit and an addiction towards visiting certain websites (e.g., Facebook).

Carolyn, et. al. (2015) discussed the challenges for policy-makers, financial analysts, and educators who endeavored to provide crucial solutions to curbing cyber-truancy. In particular, two challenges were investigated, namely, lack of uniformity and lack of consistency in providing a definite operational definition of this alarming phenomenon. The results of their investigation reported the need to come up with a unified definition to cyber-truancy which enables decision makers and policy achievers to put forward crucial solutions to this phenomenon.

Maynard, et. al. (2017) examined the rates of truancy among racial/ethnic groups in the USA. In particular, the researchers investigated the impact of sociodemographic, behavioral and psychosocial factors on rates of truancy among a large sample of adolescents. The findings of the study showed that despite intervention measures applied in order to curb this phenomenon, rates of truancy remained almost unchanged between the years 2002 and 2014. Additionally, as for age, gender and ethnicity factors, rates of truancy appeared highest among older youth, females and Hispanic youth. The main drive behind chronic truancy was found to be related to alcohol and marijuana abuse, fighting, the propensity to take risks.

Flanigan and Kiewra (2018) conducted a study that aim to dispel and reject the myth that today's college students would

utilize technological aids available to them in order to leverage their academic achievement. The study provides evidence that students frequently use such technology for non-learning (off-task) purposes while attending classroom lectures. Moreover, the study provides some pedagogical implications and proposed strategies for educators who are dealing with cyber-slacking inside and outside the classroom. The proposed strategies for curbing cyber-slacking involved certain recommendations for teachers and students. As for students, the research finds that there is a need to first raise the awareness among students about the adverse effects of these tools; second, there is a need as well to motivate students to relinquish their devices and minimize their dependence on them. As for educators, the recommendations involved: first, rejecting the digital native myth; second, adopting and enforcing technology policies; third, incorporating active learning in the classroom; forth, using mobile technology as a teaching tool; fifth, teaching students to be self-regulated learners; sixth, motivating students to delay gratification from their mobile devices.

The purpose of this review is to relate the results of the studies regarding the perspectives of students and educators towards cyber-truancy and see how such views have changed and are still changing. Despite the aforementioned theoretical inferences, no stud to date, to the best of the knowledge of the researchers, has provided substantiated approach that tackles the challenges and the proper solutions for curbing this alarming phenomenon. In addition, these reviewed studies examining truancy have primarily adopted quantitative methods and as such lacked an explicit qualitative focus on understanding the perspectives of students and educators and their lived experiences. To be more precise, these studies have not shown the perspectives of students and educators concerning the interrelated factors that contribute to students' decisions to skip class, students' reaction to enacting laws, or how truancy patterns changed over time. Based on this line of reasoning, it is believed that the current study serves as a further attempt to tackle modern trends i.e. cyber-truancy, in providing crucial and viable solutions to cyber-truancy so as to be for the benefit of all stakeholders, i.e. governments, educators, students, parents and society at large.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Setting

This study took place at the American University of Madaba (AUM). This is private university in Jordan which serves approximately 1,500 students from Jordan and abroad. Because of the impact of Covid-19 across the globe, the Jordanian government enforced subsequent defense orders stipulating changing to online or distance learning instead of traditional, face-to-face learning. AUM is no exception in this regard. As such, AUM applied online learning for four semesters, starting from the academic year 2019/2020. This study was conducted during the first full academic year of online instruction. This study used case-study methods (Yin, 2004). Case study methodology requires detailed investigation of a situation. In this study, it allowed the researchers to examine cyber-truancy in Jordan, specifically at AUM. This case study, as in all case studies, helps to illuminate the intricacies of a given situation using an appropriate data source. The current study used a representative sample of students of the AUM from various colleges to investigate how the perspectives of the students and the academic staff regarding Cyber-truancy, reasons, challenges, and possible solutions.

3.2. Sampling

The following table shows the sample of the study and the calculation of the representative sample based on online Z-Score formula.

Table 1: Representative sample size calculation

	Students	**Faculty members**	**Total**
Sample size	1524	100	1624
Ideal sample size	307	80	387
Confidence level	95%	95%	95%
Margin of error	5%	5%	5%

3.3. Data Collection Method

This study used case-study methods (Yin, 2004). Case-study methodology requires detailed investigation of a situation. To attain the required information, two methods of data collection were utilized, namely, a structured (Likert scale) questionnaire and an interview. A questionnaire was distributed to the representative sample (N=1625) in which students comprised (n=1524) and faculty members were (n=100). The questionnaire included (30) items which addressed the previously-mentioned domains. Because of the limitations that mandate social distancing, the questionnaires were sent online via utilizing (monkey survey) website. The respondents were given three days so as to inform about their perspectives. Based on the responses of the informants, the data were grouped into three themes that cover informants' perspectives, the challenges the faced, and the suggested solutions. In order to strengthen and support the methodology of data elicitation, interviews were conducted on a selected sample from both types of informants viz, AUM students, and academic staff. The number of interviewees were (25 students) and (5 instructors). This number was adopted based on the percentage of representation of the informants in the sample of the study. Again, because of the limitations imposed by Covid-19, the interviews were conducted online via (Google Meet) application. The interview included 16-opened-ended questions developed based on the study research questions. The audio-transcribed responses of the informants were collected and analyzed qualitatively.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

This study employs two approaches of data analysis: quantitative and qualitative. The closed questions of the questionnaires will be analyzed statistically through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, which is known as SPSS. In particular, the following statistical analyses will

be conducted:

1. Means and Standard Deviations to measure the degree of the academic staff and students' awareness of Cyber-Truancy, the challenges, and the possible solutions they feel possible at AUM during Covid-19 Pandemic period.
2. Multivariate test in the four domains of the subjects for their perspectives regarding Cyber-Truancy during Covid-19 pandemic that can be attributed to the informants.
3. MANOVA test of the mean scores in the domains of the subjects for their perspectives regarding Cyber-Truancy during Covid-19 pandemic that can be attributed to the informants.

On the other hand, the qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the perspectives of the academic staff and students at AUM towards cyber-truancy. The qualitative study examined the responses of the participants, in the questionnaire and the interviews, to determine their perspectives. Additionally, the qualitative approach served to question the connection established in the quantitative approach.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Questionnaire based results

4.1.1. Results related to the first question: What is the degree of the academic staff and students' awareness of Cyber-Truancy at AUM during Covid-19 Pandemic Period?

To answer this question, means, standard deviations and degree of the academic staff and students' awareness of Cyber-Truancy at AUM during Covid-19 Pandemic period were measured. The findings based on the analysis are shown in the following table.

Table 2: Means and Std. Deviation and degree of the academic staff and students' awareness of Cyber-Truancy at AUM during Covid-19 Pandemic period.

No	Rank	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degree
1	**1**	Cyber-Truancy is an alarming issue in today's world of education	4.57	.796	High
3	**2**	Truancy is a popular practice among AUM students	4.53	.763	High
4	**3**	Male students practice Cyber-Truancy more than female students	4.50	.792	High
2	4	Truancy is a psychological issue in essence	4.47	.759	High
5	5	Truant students are unaware of the importance of learning	4.42	.823	High
6	6	Students at AUM are aware of the negative consequences of Cyber-Truancy on their academic success	4.41	.944	High
7	7	Instructors believe that parents should be aware of the Cyber-Truancy	4.40	.842	High
		Mean score of students and academic staffs' awareness of Cyber-Truancy at AUM during Covid-19 Pandemic period	**4.25**	**.527**	**High**

Based on the analysis of the results, it appears that the average mean for the degree of the students and academic staffs' awareness of the issue of Cyber-Truancy at AUM during Covid-19 pandemic was (4.25). The average means for all the items was (High) and basically ranged between (3.88) and (4.57). The statement "Cyber-Truancy is an alarming issue in today's world of education" ranked first if compared to other items with an average mean of (4.57). The statement "Instructors believe that parents should be aware of the Cyber-Truancy" came last in ranking, with the least average mean of (4.40) and was also ranked as (High). Based on this analysis, the responses of the academic staff and the students reflected their awareness of Cyber-Truancy, on one hand. On the other hand, the responses showed varying (High) degrees of awareness regarding the related and investigated issues to Cyber-Truancy such as the important role of parent, the variation in terms of who is indulged more (male vs. female) students, the psychological dimension, the negative consequences of Cyber-Truancy on learning and that truant students are unaware of the importance of learning.

4.1.2 ***Results related to the second question: What are the factors that contribute to the recurrence of Cyber-Truancy among AUM students?***

To answer this question, means, standard deviations, and degree of factors that contribute to the recurrence of Cyber-Truancy among AUM students were measured. The results are included in the following table.

Table 3: Means and Std. deviation and degree of the factors that contribute to the recurrence of Cyber-Truancy among AUM students?

NO	Rank	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degree
8	**1**	Students' hatred of some classes contributes to exacerbating Cyber-Truancy rates	4.66	.680	High
9	**2**	Students' inability to turn in homework on time contributes to Truancy	4.59	.811	High
10	**3**	Early morning and late classes increase rates of Cyber-Truancy	4.45	.847	High

NO	Rank	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degree
11	4	Poor health of the students increases the rate of Truancy	4.43	.884	High
12	5	Peer pressure is a major factor contributing to the increase in Truancy rates	4.38	.938	High
13	6	Internet connectedness is important factor for limiting rates of Truancy	4.35	.931	High
14	7	Inability to understand technological aids is a major cause for Cyber-Truancy	4.34	.830	High
15	8	Working students tend to practice Truancy more than unemployed ones	4.30	.960	High
		Mean score of the factors that contribute to the recurrence of Cyber-Truancy among AUM students	**4.43**	**.555**	**High**

Based on the analysis of the data, Table 3 indicates that the average mean for the degree of the factors that contribute to the recurrence of Cyber-Truancy among AUM students was (High): (4.29). The average means for all items ranged between (4.30) and (4.66), and with (High) degree. The statement "Students' hatred of some classes contributes to exacerbating Cyber-Truancy rates" came in the first rank with a High average mean of (4.66). The statement "Working students tend to practice truancy more than unemployed ones" came last, with the least average mean of (4.30).

In addition to the abovementioned, the analysis reveals that technological issues such as Wifi connectedness and the inability of students to connect to class's influence their attendance rate. Some social issues such as peer pressure, poverty of the student and employment appeared also determinant factors which seem to influence students' commitment towards attending their online classes. Finally, students as well as instructors showed that the timing of the class seems to be a decisive factor for students' attendance. In particular, early and late classes seem to discourage students from attending their online learning regularly.

4.1.3 **Results related to the third question**: **What are the challenges that encounter the instructors when dealing with Cyber-Truancy?**

To answer this question, means, standard deviations, and degree of difficulties that encounter students when using the story to learn the language were calculated. The results are shown in the following table.

Table 4: Means and Std. deviation and degree of the challenges that encounter the instructors when dealing with Cyber-Truancy?

NO	Rank	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degree
16	**1**	Monitoring students during online classes is difficult	4.23	1.062	High
17	**2**	Maintain stable Wi-Fi connection is difficult	4.07	1.084	High
18	**3**	Instructors find it difficult to handle technological platforms and applications	3.69	1.328	High
19	4	Instructors find it difficult to monitor students' attendance in online learning	3.64	1.334	Moderate
20	5	Instructors find it difficult to investigate feeble excuses students make up	3.63	1.233	Moderate
21	6	The novelty of online-learning makes it hard for some instructors to accept teaching online	3.45	1.294	Moderate
2		**Mean score of difficulties**	**3.21**	**.685**	Moderate

Table 4 shows the average mean for the degree of the challenges that encounter the instructors when dealing with Cyber-Truancy during Covid-19 pandemic. The average was Moderate: (3.21). The average means for items ranged between (3.45) and (4.23), and with moderate and high ranks. The statement "Monitoring students during online classes is difficult" came in the first order with an average mean of (4.32) and was also ranked as a High. The statement "The novelty of online-learning makes it hard for some instructors to accept teaching online." came last, with the least average mean of (3.45) and was ranked Moderate.

The three most important challenges facing instructors appeared to be related to their inability to handle technological matters. Items (3, 4, and 6) address this issue clearly. On behavioral aspects, instructors reported that they are unable to fully control students' attendance and showed similar inclination towards their inability to investigate students' feeble excuses for not attending their classes. These three challenges ranked high in the instructors' as well as students' responses. The rest of the challenges ranked moderate and varied in nature. For example, some students reflected that they cannot afford having a permanent internet connection because it is expensive, others reported that such important reality is totally ignored by their instructor in that it has always been deemed unnecessary.

4.14. Results related to the fourth question: **What are the possible solutions and strategies adopted by AUM academic staff and administration in order to curb and combat this phenomenon?**

To answer this question, means, standard deviations, and degree of the possible solutions and strategies adopted by AUM academic staff and administration in order to curb and combat this phenomenon were calculated. The results are shown in the following table.

Table 5: Means and Std. deviation and degree of the possible solutions and strategies adopted by AUM academic staff and administration in order to curb and combat this phenomenon?

No.	Rank	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degree
22	**1**	Interactive classes decrease truancy rates	4.23	1.062	High
23	**2**	Participation of students is highly encouraged in order to limit truancy rates	4.12	1.084	High
24	**3**	Giving students pop-up quizzes help in curbing truancy	4.01	1.328	High
25	4	Enacting strict regulations by university administration combat truancy	3.98	1.350	High
26	5	Strictness of the instructor prohibit students from practicing truancy	3.87	1.444	High
27	6	Opening cameras during the online class help in lowering rates of truancy	3.76	1.320	High
28	7	Friendly relationship and positive perception of the instructor lowers truancy frequency among students.	3.65	1.312	Moderate
29	8	Recorded lectures increase truancy rates	3.64	1.334	Moderate
30	9	Cooperation between parents and the university is an important factor for minimizing rates of truancy	3.63	1.233	Moderate
31	10	Deducting marks for unauthorized absence limits truancy rates	3.45	1.294	Moderate
		Mean score of the possible solutions and strategies adopted by AUM academic staff and administration in order to curb and combat this phenomenon	**3.83**	**.685**	Moderate

Table 5 shows the average mean for the degree of the conceivable solutions and strategies adopted by AUM academic staff and administration in order to curb and combat this phenomenon. The average response to all of the statement of all instructors was Moderate: (3.83). The average means for items ranged between (3.45) and (4.23). The statement "Interactive classes decrease Truancy rates." came first in ranking with an average mean of (4.32) and was also ranked as a High. The statement "Deducting marks for unauthorized absence limits Truancy rates" came last, with the least average mean of (3.45) and was ranked Moderate.

The analysis of the responses shows that instructors are shouldering a big burden and responsibility for the sake of decreasing Cyber-Truancy rates among AUM students. Following this line of thinking, it appears that instructors firmly believe that students' participation and interaction are the corner stones of the learning process, items (22, 23). In a similar vein, they believe that giving students pop-up quizzes, and opening cameras during the online class help in lowering rates of Cyber-Truancy exponentially, items (24, 27). Furthermore, the analysis shows that strictness of the instructors (item 26) and imposing some punishment measures such as deducting some points for not attending classes (item 31) are considered to be viable solutions to the problem. However, it is believed as well that maintaining friendly relationship with the students lowers Truancy frequency among chronically truant students (item, 28). Finally, instructors seemed to agree on enacting stricter regulations by university administration in order to combat all types of truancy (item, 25).

4.1.5. AUM Academic Staff and Students' Awareness Level Variation

In order to investigate the salient differences in the AUM's students and academic staff, the mean scores of the four domains of the subjects for their perspectives regarding Cyber-Truancy during Covid-19 pandemic that can be attributed to the informants were calculated.

Table 6: The Mean Scores of the Subjects regarding their perspectives on Cyber-Truancy during Covid-19 Pandemic. The four domains that can be attributed to the informants:

Grade	Domains	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation
Academic Staff	The degree of the academic staff and students' awareness of the problem of Cyber-Truancy at AUM	30	4.34	0.480
	The factors that contribute to the recurrence of Cyber-Truancy among AUM students	30	4.39	0.487
	The challenges that encounter the instructors when dealing with Cyber-Truancy	30	3.37	0.709
	The possible solutions and strategies adopted by AUM academic staff and administration in order to curb and combat this phenomenon	30	3.36	0.678
AUM Students	The degree of the academic staff and students' awareness of the problem of Cyber-Truancy at AUM	100	4.28	0.521
	The factors that contribute to the recurrence of Cyber-Truancy among AUM students	100	4.41	0.557
	The challenges that encounter the instructors when dealing with Cyber-Truancy	100	3.51	0.649
	The possible solutions and strategies adopted by AUM academic staff and administration in order to curb and combat this phenomenon	100	3.46	0.652

Table 5 reveals that there are differences in the AUM's students and academic staff mean scores in the four domains of the subjects for their perspectives regarding Cyber-Truancy during Covid-19 pandemic that can be attributed to the informants. To test whether these differences were statistically significant or not, multivariate test was applied. Table 5 shows these results. Based on these results, it appears that type of informant (student or instructor) is influencing the overall perspective about Cyber-Truancy. For example, the analysis revealed that students seemed the least aware of the issue

whereas the instructors appeared the more aware of the problem. The same results regarding the development of the conceivable solutions as well as the challenges which seem to echo students' awareness with the same ranking.

Table 7: Multivariate test in the four domains of the subjects for their perspectives regarding Cyber-Truancy during Covid-19 pandemic that can be attributed to the informants.

Variables	Wilks' Lambda **Value**	**F**	**Sig**
(Students, instructors)	.946	3.864	.001*

Table 7 reveals that there are statistically significant differences in the four domains of the subjects for their perspectives regarding Cyber-Truancy during Covid-19 pandemic that can be attributed to the informants. In order to test whether these differences were statistically significant or not, Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) test was applied. The results are presented in Table 7:

Table 8: MANOVA results of the mean scores in the domains of the subjects for their perspectives regarding Cyber-Truancy during Covid-19 pandemic that can be attributed to the informants.

Source	**Domains**	**Type III Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Informants	The degree of the academic staff and students' awareness of the problem of Cyber-Truancy at AUM	3.937	2	1.969	7.287	.001*
	The factors that contribute to the recurrence of Cyber-Truancy among AUM students	3.702	2	1.851	6.152	002*
	The challenges that encounter the instructors when dealing with Cyber-Truancy	1.651	2	.825	1.759	. 173
	The possible solutions and strategies adopted by AUM academic staff and administration in order to curb and combat this phenomenon	1.542		1.347	6.345	.187
Error	The degree of the academic staff and students' awareness of the problem of Cyber-Truancy at AUM	1.572	13	1 .270	6.334	.176
	The factors that contribute to the recurrence of Cyber-Truancy among AUM students	124.247	13	.301		
	The challenges that encounter the instructors when dealing with Cyber-Truancy	193.735	13	.469		
	The possible solutions and strategies adopted by AUM academic staff and administration in order to curb and combat this phenomenon	123.345	13	.303		
Total	The degree of the academic staff and students' awareness of the problem of Cyber-Truancy at AUM	115.510	15			
	The factors that contribute to the recurrence of Cyber-Truancy among AUM students	127.948	15			
	The challenges that encounter the instructors when dealing with Cyber-Truancy	195.386	15			
	The possible solutions and strategies adopted by AUM academic staff and administration in order to curb and combat this phenomenon					

***** Statistically significance at ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Table 8 shows that there are statistically significant differences in the instructors' and students' mean scores in the two domains (Awareness of the issue of Cyber-Truancy and the conceivable solutions concerning Cyber-Truancy). The (F) value for Awareness of Cyber-Truancy domain reached (7.287), and for the solutions that will be developed mostly by instructors and academic staff domain (6.152), which is statistically significant at ($\alpha = 0.05$). Therefore, there were statistically significant differences between scores of the AUM's instructors and students in the two Domains (awareness of the issue of Cyber-Truancy and the conceivable solutions concerning Cyber-Truancy) of the subjects for the importance of using the story that can be attributed to the informants (instructors or students).

Table 8 shows that there aren't statistically significant differences in the students' mean scores in Domain Three (challenges that encounter students and instructors) of the subjects that can be attributed to the informants (instructors or students). The (F) value for challenges that encounter AUM's students and instructors reached (1.759), which isn't statistically significant at ($\alpha = 0.05$).

4.2. Interview based results

As was stated earlier, the questions of the interviews aimed to bridge the gaps that could arise because of the nature of open-ended questions utilized in the questionnaire. The 16 questions were centered around three major themes, namely, the awareness of students and faculty members of cyber-truancy, the challenges the face because of this novel experience, and the possible suggested solutions.

As for the first theme, the interviewed students and faculty members reflected high levels of awareness of the problem. Most interviewees expressed their dissatisfaction and voiced their concern about the cyber-truancy on academic achievement. On the challenges, students and faculty members reiterated the need to equip the university with modern infrastructure that can echo the speedy developments of online learning. Additionally, faculty members showed major concerns about lack of knowledge in utilizing such complicated technological aids. Same concerns were raised by students, but to a lesser degree. Another major challenge was reported by the instructors who stressed on the need to enforce laws which can address this alarming issue. Around 6 students indicated that such laws or rules are not applicable in such environment. As for the last theme, educators and students reflected that cyber-truancy can be curbed if there is a true cooperation can be in place among all stake holders, namely, academic institutions, faculty members, parents and students.

4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this section is to interpret and describe the significance of the findings in light of what was already reported in the literature about cyber truancy in online environment. It also shows the implications and the limitations of the study.

The findings of the study are summarized as follows: first, there is a high-level of awareness among AUM's academic staff and students about cyber-truancy. Second, technological and behavioral factors appeared to be decisive influencers that seemed to contribute to increasing truancy rates among AUM students. Third, the novelty of the experience as well as enforcing strict laws appeared to be some of the crucial challenges that hinder online learning.

These findings can be interpreted as follows, first, in line with the expectations, AUM's students and academic staff appeared aware of the issue of cyber-truancy. The justification behind such finding stems from the fact that the participants themselves are the ones who are truly involved in the learning process. The high level of awareness appeared based on recurrent complaints of the academic staff reported to the university administration, not to mention that the researchers themselves are educators at AUM who attended several meetings and reported similar practices several times about truant students. As for students, their responses to the questionnaire and the interviews showed clearly that they themselves tend to skip some online classes or appear careless of the lecture being presented. Students found it as an opportunity to release the daily stress of the (Face-to-Face) classes and a chance to uncuff themselves from the strict usual class norms. This finding agrees with other reported findings in the literature such as Vaughn, et. al. (2013), Aagaard, (2015), and Taha, and ALshmmari (2019). One of the major implications of this finding was reported in Flanigan and Kiewra (2018) who called for increasing the awareness among students regarding the detrimental effects of cyber-truancy on students' academic

achievement. Additionally, dedicating short periods of time during the lecture in which educators can address the detrimental effects of cyber-truancy on their academic achievement can be a fruitful step towards increasing students' awareness of cyber-truancy. Another implication is the need to negotiate the problem with parents so as to increase their awareness in a way that they can monitor students at home. At the national level, governments can increase awareness of truancy via TV stations and social networks.

Second, technological factors appeared to be decisive influences that seemed to contribute to increasing cyber-truancy rates among AUM students. This view seems to be adopted and widely accepted in the literature and goes in harmony with findings of Griffiths 2000, 2012; Roberts et al. 2014, and Aagard, 2015) who reported that such technological tools hinder regular attendance and encourage non learning (off-task) purposes.

However, Flanigan and Kiewra (2018) appeared to have an opposing stand in which they called such findings as a myth and showed their vehement rejection to the whole idea. They justified their viewpoint by the findings of their study which indicated that such technological aids would be utilized to leverage the academic achievement of the students. Some pedagogical implications and proposed strategies for educators who are dealing with cyber-truancy inside and outside the classroom include, the need to monitor usage of these tools, encourage online engagement via utilizing interactive online applications, and the need for educators to attend workshops and lectures that enable them to deal with cyber-truant students and utilize using technology in online environment.

Third, as was reported in the findings, the novelty of the experience as well as enforcing strict laws appeared to be some of the crucial challenges that hinder online learning. The interpretation of this finding is as follows; first, the outbreak of the pandemic occurred all of sudden. Based on this reality, governments, educational institutions, and educators appeared unprepared for encountering its ramifications. This understanding appears in line with the findings of Almahases and Jaccomard,2020, Beteille et al., 2020, Shraim and Khlaif, 2020 who reported that most governments and educational institutions appeared unready to address the upcoming repercussions of the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. Second, governments via ministries of education and ministries of technology started to think of coming up with viable alternatives such as resorting to online educational platforms so as to compensate for the inability of attending (Face-to-Face) classes Ibid. Following this understanding, it can be implied that educators should pay close attention to their students and be vigilant in online environments and develop innovative mechanisms that enable them to monitor their students. Third, educators, as well, reflected that such online learning is a novel experience which needs lots of understanding, training, and preparation. Accordingly, what can be implied within this status quo is that students and educators alike should accept online learning as a reality in today's world of education, as such, they should be prepared and work hard in order to achieve its goals. This particular point is a step forward that aims at coping with the challenges and at the right direction towards combating cyber-truancy.

As for the second aspect of the challenge, it appears that in such online environment, educators believe that nothing can curb chronic cyber-truancy better than enacting and enforcing strict laws, rules, and regulations. Students cannot regularly attend online classes without knowing that their absence will be faced with harsh penalties, Archambault, et.al. (2013). Such penalties vary from dismissing the course to deducting some grades. Again, this view appeared to be supported by Eastman, G., et.al. (2007). Archambault, et.al. (2013), Gleich-Bope, D. (2014), Carolyn, et. al., 2015. What can be implied from such experience is that governments in general, and educational institutions, in particular should put rigorous plans and strategies and become proactive in acting faster to such challenges. Additionally, law makers should understand the need for enacting laws that encourage online learning and curb cyber-truancy. This can be done at any level, namely, governmental, or at the university level.

As for the limitations of this study, it focused solely on the perspectives of AUM's Academic staff and students. Because truancy is seen as a universal phenomenon, caution should be taken when generalizing the findings to Academic staff and students not only in AUM or Jordan but worldwide. The sample was also small in size, as it included only 130 participants of Academic staff and students. This particular limitation is due to the humble number of Academic staff and students who work and study at AUM. Another challenge that faced the researchers was the reluctance of students to participate in this study.

In the light of scarcity of empirical data in this topical area, the results of the students and the academic staff of AUM's perspectives reported in this paper offer the strongest evidence for the need of conducting further research at the national level as a step forward towards investigating the issue at an international level.

5. CONCLUSION

Cyber-Truancy is an alarming problem linked with a variety of negative consequences. The current study investigated the perspectives of the academic staff and students of the AUM regarding the adverse impact of Cyber-Truancy on learning. In addition, the study sheds light on the factors, challenges and conceivable solutions to the problem. The results demonstrate that there is a high-level of awareness among academic staff and students of the Cyber-Truancy. Technological and behavioral factors appeared to be decisive influencers that seemed to contribute to increasing truancy rates among AUM students. In particular, the novelty of the experience as well as enforcing strict laws appeared to be some of the crucial challenges that hinder online learning. In order to meet all these challenges, suggested solutions recommended enforcing strict laws by the AUM administration, enhancing and encouraging parental control, and spreading awareness among students regarding the detrimental effects of Cyber-Truancy for their learning and future.

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