



Perceptions of physical education teachers in four GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic

Faisal H. Al-Mulla⁽¹⁾

Abstract

Objectives: The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of physical education (PE) teachers in four countries from the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] (Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates) towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic as well as to examine how it's affected by the variables of the study sample. **Method:** A mixed research design was conducted using quantitative and qualitative data. Study data were collected using an electronic questionnaire with close-ended questions, semi-structured interview using Microsoft Teams platform. The participants (n=360) were physical education teachers in four GCC countries, and they were chosen randomly. **Results:** The study showed that PE teachers in the four GCC countries had positive perceptions towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic. There was a significant difference in the perceptions of PE teachers towards distance learning due to country. There was no significant difference in the perceptions of PE teachers towards distance learning due to school level. There was a significant difference in the perceptions of PE teachers towards distance learning due to teaching experience. Distance learning in PE setting has advantages and disadvantages. **Conclusion:** The results of the study indicated that the perceptions of physical education teachers in the four GCC Countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic were mostly positive.

Keywords: perceptions, physical education teachers, distance learning, COVID-19 pandemic

(1) Professor, Department of Physical Education, University of Bahrain, Kingdom of Bahrain.
E-mail: dr.faisalalmulla@gmail.com

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وجهات نظر معلمي التربية البدنية في أربع دول من دول مجلس التعاون نحو التعليم عن بعد خلال جائحة كوفيد-19

فيصل حميد الملا⁽¹⁾

ملخص

الأهداف: هدفت هذه الدراسة تعرّف وجهات نظر معلمي التربية البدنية في أربع دول من دول مجلس التعاون (مملكة البحرين، المملكة العربية السعودية، دولة الكويت، الإمارات العربية المتحدة) نحو التعليم عن بعد، خلال جائحة كوفيد-19، وتبيان علاقتها بمتغيرات الدراسة. **المنهج:** استخدم التصميم البحثي المختلط وفق البيانات الكمية والنوعية، ولجمع البيانات استخدمت استبانة إلكترونية تضم أسئلة مغلقة ومقابلة منظمة من خلال منصة المايكروسوفت تيمز. بلغ عدد المشاركين (ن=360) من معلمي التربية البدنية في أربع دول من دول مجلس التعاون، اختيروا بالطريقة العشوائية. **النتائج:** أظهرت النتائج أن اتجاهات معلمي التربية البدنية في أربع دول من دول مجلس التعاون نحو التعليم عن بعد خلال جائحة كوفيد-19، كانت إيجابية. كما أظهرت النتائج وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في اتجاهات معلمي التربية البدنية نحو التعليم عن بعد تعزى إلى متغير الدولة، إضافة إلى عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في اتجاهات معلمي التربية البدنية نحو التعليم عن بعد تعزى إلى متغير المرحلة التعليمية. وكشفت النتائج عن وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في اتجاهات معلمي التربية البدنية نحو التعليم عن بعد تعزى إلى متغير سنوات الخبرة، إضافة إلى وجود إيجابيات وسلبيات للتعليم عن بعد في التربية البدنية. **الخاتمة:** أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن اتجاهات معلمي التربية البدنية في دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي الأربع تجاه التعليم عن بعد في أثناء جائحة كوفيد-19 كانت إيجابية، في الغالب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إدراك، معلمو التربية البدنية، التعليم عن بعد،

جائحة كوفيد-19

(1) أستاذ، قسم التربية الرياضية، جامعة البحرين، مملكة البحرين. الإيميل: dr.faisalalmulla@gmail.com

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on various aspects of peoples' lives, namely in the economic, socio-cultural, and educational aspects. It has caused disruption to the education sector, since the start of this pandemic. The pandemic has forced schools to close and lessons that were carried out face-to-face have shifted to the online world. This measure has impacted approximately 94% or 1.6 billion students all around the world (UNESCO, 2020; World Health Organization [WHO], 2020).

All educators were asked to make a transition, due to the closure of school buildings. There was no other choice but to apply distance learning [DL]; even though many felt unprepared during this transitional period, students must adjust themselves while trying to build meaning amid various challenges related to the pandemic. Even though learning was carried out online, it was hoped that learning outcomes will remain maximal (Goad et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 has caused many transformations in all educational subjects, especially in subjects, like physical education [PE], which has been traditionally considered a practical subject, where proximity and physical contact is common (Varea & González-Calvo, 2021). Besides previous concerns regarding the use of digital technologies in PE (Hill & Valdez-Garcia, 2020), PE teachers had to seek to manage an important tension between the experiential nature of PE as a subject, and the institutional and external constraints towards online and blended approaches. Within this new framework, the huge changes in the delivery of PE have brought significant consequences for PE teachers, who have been tasked with making adaptations to their traditional teaching practices to deliver quality educational experiences dealing with unique challenges such as the teaching and

learning of motor and sport skills, dance or fitness. Furthermore, new responsibilities for PE teachers arise, considering the role that PE could have in responding to the immediate physical and mental health effects of the current health pandemic (UNESCO, 2021).

Physical education is a natural place to address public health concerns (Roe et al., 2021) including decreases in physical activity resulting from the pandemic -especially in light of the current goal of physical education to assist students in acquiring the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity. The pandemic-initiated shift to online instruction provided numerous challenges to PE teachers. In physical education, a traditionally marginalized subject, teachers, with little to no training, lacked expertise in remote PE instruction and resorted to “trial-and-error” methods (Varea & González-Calvo, 2021).

The educational systems in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries were also greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, all lessons, including Physical Education [PE], have been conducted online. The PE teachers at schools were no different from other subject area school teachers, as many were struggling to not only figure out how they were going to disseminate information in an online format, but also to determine what segments of their current curriculum could “transfer” to an online environment (Marshall et al., 2020).

During the first wave of the pandemic, the GCC countries’ governments supported the educational system in different ways. Educational programs were broadcasted on national television or national education information networks. These programs were mostly focused on secondary education students first and were later expanded to intermediate and elementary education. Education

also depended on the enthusiasm and creativity of the teachers. Teachers used various ways to communicate with students, such as social media groups, instant messaging mobile applications, and educational platforms. Similarly, PE lessons were provided by sharing video recordings, live broadcasting exercise instructions, and similar resources. PE teachers were personally responsible for creating content and designing online PE lessons. The support from schools, educational boards, and governments was mainly evident in the provision of a platform where PE teachers could communicate and share their best practices and resources, while in some of the countries, PE teachers had a chance to participate in online seminars and workshops (Al-Mulla, 2020).

Challenges that have been raised in the previous studies about distance learning include variation in the quality of educational instructions, students' unequal access to the essential technologies for distance learning, and technology readiness of students (Varea & González-Calvo, 2021). For example, one study found that 20% of students reported having issues in accessing essential technology for distance learning such as laptops and high-speed internet (Yu & Jee, 2021). Also, it has been found that students who were already suffering academically in face-to-face instruction are more likely to obtain lower grade points in distance learning (Hermanto, 2020).

The perceptions of students and teachers towards distance education during COVID-19 pandemic have been identified. Nevertheless, research in the physical education area has been limited, and issues with teacher training, student accountability, and the lack of a comprehensive focus have been presented (Varea & González-Calvo, 2021). Therefore, it is important that we understand the perceptions of PE teachers towards distance education during COVID-19 pandemic, and although it is situation-specific, we need to

document it and use this information to inform the future of distance learning physical education.

Problem of the Study

Teachers in GCC countries, including physical education [PE], directed educational activities remotely via DL or homeschooling resources in this process for most of the 2021–2022 school year in GCC countries due to the coronavirus virus (COVID-19) epidemic. Although the pandemic presents a unique situation, understanding the initial perceptions of school PE teachers in moving to a remote learning environment and identifying the challenges and facilitators to successful remote instruction are needed to help PE teachers design effective learning experiences in the future.

Consequently, the problem of this study was to investigate the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards online education during COVID-19 pandemic as well as to examine how it was affected by the variables of study sample. To the best of our knowledge, no studies have analyzed the perceptions of PE teachers towards the implementing distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in GCC countries. The Understanding of PE teachers' experience during the pandemic might help online learning be carried out better in the future.

Related Studies

In the literature, many studies have been suggested to investigate students and teachers' perceptions towards online learning during COVID-19 pandemic. In one of recent study, Çamlıbel-Acara and Eveyik-Aydınb (2022) conducted a study to investigate the perceptions of EFL teacher trainers on continued mandatory distance education during the pandemic. Data was collected through questionnaires

which were distributed to 123 university students enrolled in the English Language Teaching [ELT] and 15 teacher trainers in the same department. The results indicated that prospective teachers and teacher trainers in the ELT department continued their studies and seemed to appreciate online education during the pandemic. However, analyses of their experiences showed that only some of them were actually content. Half of pre-service teachers [PSTs] had negative feelings about distance education [DE] and preferred face-to-face instruction, few even conveying feelings of inadequacy as future teachers.

Hollister et al. (2022) surveyed the perceptions toward online learning experience of undergraduate students (n= 187) at a large, public research institution in course structure, interpersonal interaction, and academic resources. Students reported decreases in live lecture engagement and attendance, with 72 percent reporting that low engagement during lectures hurt their online learning experience. A majority of students reported that they struggled with staying connected to their peers and instructors and managing the pace of coursework. Majorities of students felt more comfortable asking and answering questions in online classes, suggesting that there might be features of learning online to which students are receptive.

Razkane et al. (2022) examined the teachers' perceptions towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic in Morocco. 156 Chouaib Doukkali University teachers, (males=85 and females=71) were administered an online questionnaire via their professional email addresses. For triangulation purposes, 20 teachers were interviewed about their experience with distance education. Findings showed that although the vast majority of the respondents used online teaching, many faced both technical and logistical

barriers, which were reported to impede the good delivery of lessons. In addition, the majority of the participants showed a negative perception towards the COVID-19 online teaching experience.

Afroz et al. (2021), conducted a study to investigate the students' and teachers' perceptions towards online learning during the COVID-19 situation in Bangladeshi Government Colleges. The qualitative and quantitative research method were adopted, with semi-structured interviews conducted with 10 College teachers and 100 college students. The findings revealed that cost and time-effectiveness, safety, convenience, and improved participation were the most frequently cited positive aspects of the online learning experience. While distraction and reduced focus, heavy workload, problems with technology and the internet, lack of ICT knowledge, and poor network infrastructure, limited availability of educational resources, low attendance of learners, and insufficient support from instructors and colleagues were the most recurrent negative aspects.

Al-Mawee et al. (2021) investigated students' perceptions and preferences on distance learning due to the dramatic. The participants in this study were 420 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in different distance learning education courses at Western Michigan University. Participants completed an online survey that investigated two measures: distance learning and instructional methods with a set of scales associated with each. Students reported negative experiences of distance learning such as lack of social interaction and positive experiences such as time and location flexibility.

The early COVID-19 publications on physical education were also concerned with DL implementations. Friskawati et al. (2021) study elementary school physical education teachers' perceptions toward the use of mobile learning during COVID-19 pandemic. A

survey was conducted on 71 PE teachers across West Java, Indonesia. The Physical Education Teachers' Subjective Theories Questionnaire [PETSTQ] was distributed online. The results showed that the attitudes of elementary physical education teachers varied based on gender, age, and teaching experience. The findings of this study can inform policy makers to formulate a more applicable online physical education system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Şavkın et al. (2021) conducted a study to determine the perceptions of Pamukkale University Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation undergraduate students towards distance learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. A total of 381 students participated. Results indicated that students had partly positive attitudes towards DL but were undecided about individual awareness, usefulness, and effective participation. The sense of community among students was moderate in the DL environment. Distance learning attitude, and the sense of community levels, were highest in fourth-year students, followed by first-, third-, and then second year students. The DL and sense of community scores of first- and fourth-year students were significantly higher than those of second- and third year students.

López-Fernández et al. (2021) conducted a study to explore high school PE teachers' perceptions of the potential, advantages, and disadvantages of the blended learning model of instruction. An online survey was used to register the views of 174 Spanish high school PE teachers. The main findings revealed that PE teachers considered that blended learning, compared with full face-to-face learning, implied a work overload, worsened social relationships, and did not help to increase students' motivation. Likewise, most teachers considered the physical activity performed by students during the blended learning period as being lower than usual.

Kaya (2021) carried out a study to examine the perceptions of PE teachers about the remote (online) education of schools due to the COVID-19 epidemic, and the remote teaching of PE lessons in this process. The study was designed using a qualitative research method. The results showed that the majority of participants define distance education as virtual education. Results revealed that the majority of participants expressed that it was important and necessary to teach physical education lessons in distance education. The biggest advantage in the process of teaching the lessons is the lack of time and space limit, and the disadvantage was that distance education could not provide the same equality of opportunity for every student.

D'Agostino et al. (2021) conducted a study to examine US P-12 physical education teachers' perceived significance of different design features for an online teaching tool to promote PA equity during school closures. Participants included 60 current P-12 PE teachers. Results revealed that between-group differences were found in teacher ratings of design features related to the usability, accessibility, equitability, and formal assessment capabilities of an online physical education tool. Differences were based on teacher gender, school level, and geographic location.

It must be noted that while the above related studies investigated the perceptions of students and teachers towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic, few studies have examined the online teaching experience in physical education during the COVID- 19 pandemic. The current study aimed at exploring the perceptions of physical education teachers in GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic, as well as how it is affected by the variables of study sample. It also attempted to provide some practical recommendations for post-pandemic distance learning practices.

Purposes of the Study

The study intended to achieve the following purposes:

- 1 - To investigate the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2 - To determine the difference in the perceptions of PE teachers towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to country.
- 3 - To determine the difference in the perceptions of PE teachers towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to school-year level.
- 4 - To determine the difference in the perceptions of PE teachers towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to years of teaching experience.
- 5 - To determine the perceptions of PE teachers towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic on the advantages and disadvantages of distance education.

Questions of the Study

The study pursued to address the following explicit research questions:

- 1 - What are the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic?
- 2 - Is there statistically significant difference at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to country?
- 3 - Is there statistically significant difference at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to school-year level?
- 4 - Is there statistically significant difference at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries

towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to years of teaching experience?

- 5 - What are the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic on the advantages and disadvantages of distance education?

Significance of the Study

It is anticipated that the results of this study would:

- 1 - Offer clarifications for the Ministries of Education [MEs] in four GCC countries to facilitate changes more effectively on distance learning for the benefit of PE teachers and students.
- 2 - Inform education officials, policy makers, service providers, and PE teachers themselves in MEs about PE teachers' perceptions on distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3 - Help the MEs to develop PE teachers' perceptions program and in-service training programs to strengthen and sustain teachers' level of use in distance learning.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms had been defined:

- Distance Learning: It is a planned learning activity done by individuals in different places, who communicate and interact with each other by using technological tools (Moore & Kearsley, 2012).
- COVID-19: A highly contagious respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. SARS-CoV-2 is thought to spread from person to person through droplets released when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks (WHO, 2020).
- Perceptions: The way that the person perceives it, especially when this shows in the way he behaves (Çamlıbel-Acara & Eveyik-Aydinb, 2022).

- **Physical Education Teacher:** A physical education [PE] teacher instructs students about sports, physical development, health, and proper nutrition (Al-Mulla, 2016).

Method

Research Design

The present study adopted a mixed-approach design. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection were utilized to evaluate the perceptions of PE teachers in GCC countries towards online education during COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants

The participants were physical education teachers (n= 360) working at government schools in the four GCC countries. An online questionnaire was distributed using Google forms during the second semester of the scholastic year 2021-2022. As Table 1 shows, 33.3% of the participants were from Bahrain, 25.0% from Saudi Arabia, 25.0% from Kuwait, and 16.7% from the United Arab Emirates.

Table 1

Distribution of Participants Based on Country, School Level, and Experience

Variables		<i>f</i>	%
Country	Bahrain	120	33.3
	Saudi	90	25.0
	Kuwait	90	25.0
	Emirate	60	16.7
School Level	Elementary	140	38.9
	Intermediate	100	27.8
	Secondary	120	33.3

Cont. Table 1

Distribution of Participants Based on Country, School Level, and Experience

Variables		<i>f</i>	%
Work Experience	< 10	122	33.9
	10-20	148	41.1
	> 20	90	25.0

For the qualitative part of the study, Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 60 PE teachers who were chosen randomly, of which 20 (33.3%) were Bahrainis' teachers, 15 (25.0%) Saudis' teachers, 15 (25.0%) Kuwaitis' teachers, and 10 (16.7%) Emiratis' teachers.

Instruments

Questionnaire

The PE Distance Learning Perception Questionnaire, which was developed by the author, was used to determine the PE teachers' perceptions towards distance learning of school students. The questionnaire consisted of 33 items distributed among six domains: Proficiency of the Teacher (6 items), Effectiveness of the Teaching (7 items), Computer Literacy (6 items), Classroom Management and Organization (5 items), Social Interaction (5 items), Quality of DL Support (4 items). Responses were based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly agree), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree).

Based on that review, the questionnaire was designed in its final form, which included information about the study, assurance of privacy, a consent letter, and two parts. Part I comprised of questions on demographic information, such as country, school level, and work

experience. Part II included the items which were mostly in the form of close-ended questions.

Interview

Semi-structured interviews were also utilized to elicit data on the attitudes of PE teachers in the GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic on the advantages and disadvantages of distance education. The purpose of these ethnographic interviews was to obtain in-depth data from the participants by rendering them reflect on their experience with distance learning during the COVID-19 lockdown to get deeper insights into the obstacles they faced and to learn how to overcome future challenges. Interviewees were asked about their opinion of the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning, and challenges they faced during their online teaching.

Validity of the questionnaire

To measure the validity of the study questionnaire, the initial version of it (40 items), was presented to a group of 8 faculty members at University of Bahrain who were experts in the distance learning in order to ensure the appropriateness of the items and domains. They asked for formulation, deletion, modification of the items or add some items as they see fit. Then the questionnaire was reformulated in its final form, which included 33 questionnaire items distributed on six domains. Then the questionnaire was presented in its final form to the same arbitrators, and the average percentage of agreement among them was 93%, which indicates that it displayed a high degree of face validity. Table 2 illustrates this.

Table 2

The Average Percentage of Arbitrators' Agreement for Each Part of the Instrument and the Overall Score for the Instrument

Domain	Number of items	%
Proficiency of the Teacher.	6	92
Effectiveness of the Teaching.	7	94
Computer Literacy.	6	96
Classroom Management and Organization.	5	91
Social Interaction.	5	92
Quality of DL Support.	4	93

Reliability of the questionnaire

The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated by means of a test-retest, where the questionnaire was administered to 10 PE teachers from outside the study sample during the first week of January 2022. Then the questionnaire was re-administered to the same group after 10 days and the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was measured between the first and second applications, where the overall stability coefficient of the resolution was 0.84, which is a good correlation coefficient indicating high stability of the resolution. Table 3 illustrates this analysis.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Domains of the Questionnaire

Domain	Item	<i>r</i>
Proficiency of the Teacher.	6	0.84
Effectiveness of the Teaching.	7	0.88
Computer Literacy.	6	0.84
Classroom Management and Organization.	5	0.82
Social Interaction.	5	0.84
Quality of DL Support.	4	0.83

To ensure the validity of the study questionnaire, two different encoders were used for coding the data in the study. As a result of the coding operation that the two researchers did independently of each other, it was concluded that the “encoder reliability” was sufficient, based on the compliance rate of 0.82, which was found by dividing the codes confirmed with consensus by the total of the codes confirmed and not confirmed with consensus (Al Mulla, 2021, p. 277). Lastly, in order to ensure “category clarity”, the process was conducted with due diligence to ensure that the classification made by the researcher is clear, obvious, and consistent with the literature.

Procedures

A link of a survey composed of the online questionnaires via Google Forms and a section of demographic data (country, school level, and teaching experience) was e-mailed to the participants after the validity and reliability were determined. The questionnaires were e-mailed to sample during the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2022. The first page of the survey contained a consent form requesting the agreement of participants before responding to the questionnaire.

With regard to the interview procedures, interviews were conducted with the participants by establishing an online connection. In order to ensure “plausibility” in the study. The texts written by the researcher was checked by the participants and consequently the participant’s confirmation was obtained.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science (IBM SPSS version 26.0) was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics using means, frequencies and percentages were used. Where applicable, ANOVA, followed by post-hoc testing using Scheffé tests, were administered

to examine group difference. Statistical significance was defined at the 5% ($p \leq 0.05$) level.

In order to interpret the results, the Likert scale criterion score that expresses the following arithmetic mean value was adopted: (4.20-5.00) strongly agree (highly positive HP), (3.40-4.19) agree (positive P), (2.60-3.39) slightly agree (moderate positive MP), (1.80-2.59) disagree (negative N), and (1.00-1.79) strongly disagree (highly negative HN).

In the qualitative part of the study, content analysis was used, in which voluminous qualitative material is taken. In this framework, the data were converted into codes and categories, and then are presented and interpreted in tables. The study was detailed by adding examples from PE teachers' opinions, in order to ensure the reliability of the data.

Results

The results of the study are divided into two section and is presented according to the order of the study questions. The first section presents the quantitative results, while the second section presents the qualitative results.

Quantitative Results

This section contains the quantitative results of the study, and it presents the study's first four questions.

Results of 1st Question

This question stated as: What are the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards online education during COVID-19 pandemic? To answer this question, frequencies and percentages were calculated for each sub-question of this question. In order to facilitate the presentation of the results of this question, the results for each

subscale or domain of the questionnaire were reviewed separately, and the results were recorded in Tables 4 to 9 respectively.

Proficiency of the Teacher. This subscale includes 6 items, and to analyze its results, mean, percentage and ranks were calculated for each of its items. The items were arranged in descending order, and Table 4 illustrates this analysis.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of the PE Teachers' Scores for their Perceptions of Proficiency of the Teacher

No.	Items	M	SD	%	Rating
1	PE teachers are technically and educationally ready for DL in PE teaching.	3.64	1.75	72.8	P
2	The proficiency of the PE teacher about the DL teaching is sufficient.	3.50	1.84	70.0	P
3	The PE teacher gives sufficient answers to the student questions along with the subject expression in DL.	3.48	1.21	69.6	P
4	The PE teacher respond to the student's messages immediately in DL.	3.40	2.10	68.0	P
5	Using DL increases my reputation with the students.	3.32	1.82	66.4	MP
6	The DL usage skills of the PE teacher are sufficient.	3.30	1.59	66.0	MP
Overall		3.44	1.68	68.8	Positive

The results of Table 4 indicated that the PE teachers have positive perceptions towards the proficiency of the teacher in DL compared to the criterion score adopted in this study ($M=3.44$; $SD=1.68$; $\%=68.8$; $R=$ positive). The item related to "PE teachers are technically and educationally ready for DL in PE teaching" ranked first in terms of the degree of perceptions ($M=3.64$; $SD=1.75$; $\%=72.8$; $R=$ positive), while the statement related to "The DL usage skills of the PE teacher are sufficient" came in the last rank ($M=3.30$; $SD=1.59$; $\%=66.0$; $R=$ moderate positive).

Effectiveness of the Teaching. This subscale includes 7 items, and to analyze its results, the arithmetic mean, percentage and ranks were calculated for each of its items. The items were arranged in descending order, and Table 5 illustrates this analysis.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations of the PE Teachers' Scores for their Perceptions of Effectiveness of the Teaching

No.	Items	M	SD	%	Rating
1	DL software facilitate a fast analyzing of assessment data in PE (e.g. test results).	3.58	2.01	71.6	P
2	DL platform as (blackboard, Microsoft team, Zoom, etc.) are more suitable in PE.	3.50	1.98	70.0	P
3	My teaching in PE is successful without integrating any DL.	3.42	2.12	68.4	P
4	Internet searches (e.g. ball games, videos) are well suited as homework in DL.	3.40	2.00	68	P
5	DL is the building block of the development of new teaching methods in PE.	3.35	1.96	67.0	MP
6	DL integration does not lead to better content Knowledge in PE.	3.35	1.89	67.0	MP
7	Using DL education, PE content knowledge can be learned playfully.	3.30	1.99	66.0	MP
Overall		3.41	1.98	68.2	Positive

The results of Table 5 indicated that the PE teachers have positive perceptions towards the effectiveness of the teaching in DL compared to the criterion score adopted in this study ($M= 3.41$; $SD= 1.98$; $\%= 68.2$; $R=$ positive). The item related to “DL software facilitates a fast analyzing of assessment data in PE (e.g. test results)” ranked first in terms of the degree of perceptions ($M= 3.58$; $SD= 2.01$; $\%= 71.6$; $R=$ positive), while the statement related to “using DL

education, PE content knowledge can be learned playfully” came in the last rank ($M= 3.30$; $SD= 1.99$; $\%= 66.0$; $R=$ moderate positive).

Computer Literacy. This subscale includes 6 items, and to analyze its results, the arithmetic mean, percentage and ranks were calculated for each of its items. The items were arranged in descending order, and Table 6 illustrates this analysis.

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations Values of the PE Teachers' Scores for their Perceptions of Computer Literacy

No.	Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	%	Rating
1	I do not have sufficient experience to integrate DL in PE.	3.42	1.90	68.4	P
2	If my computer literacy were better, I would use DL in PE more often.	3.40	1.93	68.0	P
3	There are many webpages containing ideas of DL for diversified PE lessons.	3.40	1.85	68.0	P
4	Younger PE teacher colleagues are more engaged into DL integration.	3.35	1.87	67.0	MP
5	I use DL frequently to prove my DL skills.	3.25	1.89	65.0	MP
6	I am not interested in continuing education events in the area of DL and PE.	3.20	1.93	64.0	MP
Overall		3.34	1.91	66.8	MP

The results of Table 6 indicated that the PE teachers have moderate positive perceptions towards the computer literacy in DL compared to the criterion score adopted in this study ($M = 3.34$; $SD= 1.91$; $\%= 66.8$; $R=$ moderate positive). The item related to “I do not have sufficient experience to integrate DL in PE” ranked first in terms of the degree of perceptions (mean= 3.42; $SD= 1.90$; percentage= 68.4; rating= positive), while the statement related to “I am not interested in continuing education events in the area of DL

and PE” came in the last rank ($M = 3.20$; $SD= 1.93$; $\%= 64.0$; $R=$ moderate positive).

Classroom Management and Organization. This subscale includes 5 items, and to analyze its results, the arithmetic mean, percentage and ranks were calculated for each of its items. The items were arranged in descending order, and Table 7 illustrates this analysis.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations Values of the PE Teachers’ Scores for their Perceptions of Classroom Management and Organization

No.	Items	M	SD	%	Rating
1	DL is good for preparing PE lessons.	3.41	1.96	68.2	P
2	If I had smaller class sizes, I could imagine using DL in PE.	3.40	1.94	68.0	P
3	I can’t integrate DL in PE because I am under time pressure to include its.	3.35	1.93	67.0	MP
4	The use of DL decreases PE movement time.	3.30	1.98	66.0	MP
5	A complex PE equipment make it difficult to planned using DL.	3.30	1.98	66.0	MP
Overall		3.35	1.95	67.0	MP

The results of Table 7 indicated that the PE teachers have moderate positive perceptions towards the classroom management and organization in DL compared to the criterion score adopted in this study ($M = 3.35$; $SD= 1.95$; $\%= 67.0$; $R=$ moderate positive). The item related to “DL is good for preparing PE lessons” ranked first in terms of the degree of perceptions ($M = 3.41$; $SD= 1.96$; $\%= 68.2$; $R=$ positive), while the statement related to “A complex PE equipment makes it difficult to planned using DL” came in the last rank ($M = 3.30$; $SD= 1.98$; $\%= 66.0$; $R=$ moderate positive).

Social Interaction. This subscale includes 5 items, and to analyze its results, the arithmetic mean, percentage, and ranks were calculated for each of its items. The items were arranged in descending order, and Table 8 illustrates this analysis.

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations Values of the PE Teachers' Scores for their Perceptions of Social Interaction

No.	Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	%	Rating
1	DL integration fosters social and communicative learning in PE.	3.67	1.75	73.4	P
2	Letting students work with a DL in PE fosters their ability to work in a team (collaboration).	3.65	1.71	73.0	P
3	Using DL in PE facilitates collaboration among teacher colleagues.	3.60	1.82	72.0	P
4	Using DL in PE frequently makes the personal teacher-student relationship suffer.	3.40	1.65	68.0	P
5	Teaching PE in natural setting increase enjoyment and facilitate communication better than DL.	3.30	1.69	66.0	MP
Overall		3.52	1.75	70.4	Positive

The results of Table 8 indicated that the PE teachers have positive perceptions towards the social interaction in DL ($M = 3.52$; $SD = 1.75$; $\% = 70.4$; $R =$ positive). The item related to “DL integration fosters social and communicative learning in PE” ranked first in terms of the degree of perceptions ($M = 3.67$; $SD = 1.75$; $\% = 73.4$; $R =$ positive), while the statement related to “Teaching PE in natural setting increase enjoyment and facilitate communication better than DL” came in the last rank ($M = 3.30$; $SD = 1.69$; $\% = 66.0$; $R =$ moderate positive).

Quality of DL Support. This subscale includes 4 items, and to analyze its results, the arithmetic mean, percentage and ranks were calculated for each of its items. The items were arranged in descending order, and Table 9 illustrates this analysis.

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations Values of the PE Teachers' Scores for their Perceptions of Quality of DL Support

No	Items	M	SD	%	Rating
1	The technical support unit provides sufficient support in DL in PE.	3.40	1.91	68.0	P
2	The student counseling unit provides adequate support.	3.35	1.90	67.0	MP
3	The answer given by stuff to the emails of the students are solution oriented.	3.35	1.90	67.0	MP
4	All updates in the DL system are notified to students on time.	3.30	1.92	66.0	MP
Overall		3.35	1.91	67.0	MP

The results of Table 9 indicated that the PE teachers have moderate positive perceptions towards the quality of DL support ($M = 3.35$; $SD = 1.91$; $\% = 67.0$; $R =$ moderate positive). The item related to “The technical support unit provides sufficient support in DL in PE” ranked first in terms of the degree of perceptions ($M = 3.40$; $SD = 1.91$; $\% = 68.0$; $R =$ positive), while the statement related to “All updates in the DL system are notified to students on time” came in the last rank ($M = 3.30$; $SD = 1.92$; $\% = 66.0$; $R =$ moderate positive).

According to the results obtained through the quantitative dimension of the study which is presented in those tables, it can be said that the perceptions of PE teachers in the GCC towards DL during COVID-19 pandemic are positive.

Results of 2nd Question

This question is stated as: Is there statistically significant difference at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to country? To analyze the results of this question, a one-way ANOVA, and the value of “P” were calculated. Table 10 shows that.

Table 10

One-Way ANOVA of PE Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Distance Learning, based on Country Variability

Variable	Sources	SS	df	MS	F	p
Country	Between Group	8.225	4	2.795	3.102	0.035
	Within Group	149.115	355	0.874		
	Total	157.340	359			

According to Table 10, statistically significant difference was found as a result of one-way variance analysis ($F=3.102, p=0.035$). These results show that there was difference in the perceptions of PE teachers towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to country.

In order to recognize the source of the differences, the Scheffé-Test was performed to identify the source of this difference, and Table 11 shows these results.

Table 11

Scheffé-Test of PE Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Distance Learning, based on Country Variability

Variable	Year	BH	KSA	KWT	UAE
Country	BH	-	*0.714	*0.451	*0.684
	KSA	-	-	0.410	0.358
	KWT	-	-	-	0.486
	UAE	-	-	-	-

Note. * Significant at level (0.05).

The results of the Scheffé test presented in Table 11 show that there were statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the perceptions of PE teachers towards distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the country variable, in favor of Bahraini teachers. As for the rest of the countries, it is clear from the results that there were no statistically significant differences.

Results of 3rd Question

This question stated as: Is there statistically significant difference at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to school-year level? To analyze the results of this question, a one-way ANOVA and the value of “*P*” were calculated. Table 12 shows that.

Table 12
One-Way ANOVA of PE Teachers’ Perceptions Regarding Distance Learning, based on School Year Level Variability

Variable	Sources	SS	df	MS	F	p
School year Level	Between Group	9.854	3	2.985	3.141	0.118
	Within Group	122.235	356	0.567		
	Total	132.089	359			

According to Table 12, no statistically significant difference was found as a result of one-way variance analysis ($F=3.141$, $p=0.118$). These results show that there was no difference in the perceptions of PE teachers in GCC towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to school-year level.

Results of 4th Question

This question stated as: Is there statistically significant difference at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to years of teaching experiences? To analyze the results of this question, a one-way ANOVA and the value of “P” were calculated. Table 13 shows that.

Table 13

One-Way ANOVA of PE Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Distance Learning, based on Teaching Experiences Variability

Variable	Sources	SS	df	MS	F	p
Teaching	Between Group	7.542	3	2.854	3.212	0.028
Experience	Within Group	155.201	356	0.748		
	Total	162.743	359			

According to Table 13, statistically significant difference was found as a result of one-way variance analysis ($F=3.212$, $p=0.028$). These results show that there was difference in the perceptions of PE teachers in GCC towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to years of teaching experiences.

In order to recognize the source of the differences, the Scheffe-Test was performed to identify the source of this difference, and Table 14 shows these results.

Table 14

Scheffé-Test of PE Teachers' Attitudes Regarding Distance Learning, based on Teaching Experiences Variability

Variable	Year	< 10	10-20	> 20
Experience	< 10	-	*0.746	*0.852
	10-20	-	-	0.315
	> 20	-	-	-

Note. * Significant at level (0.05).

The results of the Scheffé test presented in Table 14 show that there were statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the perceptions of PE teachers towards distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the experience variable, in favor of teachers with less than 10 years of experiences. As for the rest of the experiences categories, it is clear from the results that there were no statistically significant differences.

Qualitative Results

This section contains the qualitative results of the study, and it presents the study fifth questions.

Results of 5th Question

This question stated as: What are the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards DL during COVID-19 pandemic on the advantages and disadvantages of distance education? Content analysis was used, in which voluminous qualitative materials were taken, and were converted into codes and categories. The results were detailed by adding examples from teachers' opinions.

The PE teachers' perceptions on DL were categorized. When the first category was analyzed, the PE teachers were found to express their perceptions mostly saying that: '*One of the advantages*

of distance education is that everyone wants to learn at the time he chooses, and at the pace that suits him' (PeT1). This is followed by 'One of the advantages of distance education is that he wants to learn at the time he chooses, and at the pace that suits him' (PeT 14), 'Requires having the necessary equipment' (PeT 17), and 'Among the advantages of distance education is that the learner can learn at the time that he forgets and specify the start times for studying.

Conferring to the PE teachers, DL provides them with these advantages to improve their ability to take responsibility. One of the PE teachers' views is as follows:

Distance learning contributed to self-learning. Individuals differ in terms of their absorptive capabilities, and one of the advantages of distance education is that it is done on the basis of others, so that it gives learners the opportunity to experiment and error in some privacy without any vacancy at the exit, and to learn according to the rates that suit you as a learner (PeT12).

Another opinion of the participants on the advantages of distance education is related to its instructional advantages. According to the PE perceptions, one of the most important advantages of DL is that it enables everyone to receive education and benefit from it equally (Savkın et al., 2021). This code is followed by the eight opinions as: *'Distance learning saves the time and effort of the student and the teacher alike, as distance learning removed the student's and teacher's anxiety about the need to attend the specified lecture time, and effort', and 'Corresponding to official education'* and as some of the PE teacher's views are as follows:

There is similarity of chance in distance education. Because it acquires and enhances the completion of skills among learners, in addition to the fact that distance education methods are characterized by being suitable with students' tendencies, developing learners' self-

skills, and containing suspense and arouse the interests of learners (PeTs 23, 28, 38, 43)

Some of the opinions received from the participants were about the advantages related to the technical dimension of DL. It is seen that these advantages are presented as 'Allows for the use of technology' (PET 39), 'Enables fast and easy access to information' (PeT 4), and 'Requires having the necessary equipment' (PeT 2). One of the student's views is as follows:

Distance education facilities can provide an interactive learning environment between both the students and the teacher on the one hand, and between the learners and their peers on the other hand. DL is also distinguished by providing the advantage of suspense and attraction in learning by presenting it in more than one way using more than one means, which breaks the rigidity of the educational situation and encourages students to better interact and engage in the educational process (PeT 24).

Based on the opinions received from the PE teachers, it is seen that another advantage of DL is intended for providing economic conveniences. Some of participants stated that '*the importance of distance education on financial advantages is very clear, as it provides an opportunity for students and teachers to obtain knowledge and information at any time and from anywhere without the need for personal presence*'. Other participants said that:

One of the most important features of distance learning is flexibility at the right time and place, where the student can learn according to his abilities and circumstances at the right time for him and from anywhere, as if around the world.

When looking at the disadvantages related to distance education, one of the PE teacher's views is as follows:

The lack of direct interaction between students during distance learning, and between the student and the teacher, led to the difficulty of forming social relationships, and the lack of personal skills necessary to form these relationships, so that some students began to feel isolated as a result of completing their daily study work alone without anyone participating in it, and without engaging in teamwork (PeT 18).

With regard the disadvantages of DL in PE setting, the majority of PE teachers indicated that DL has disadvantages due to some causes such as ‘Problems with feedback-correction’ (PeT14), ‘Low measurement reliability’ (PeT 36), and ‘Distance learning is not a natural environment’ (PeT 19). One of the PE teacher’s views is as follows:

There are many disadvantages of distance learning, the most important of which are: the feeling of loneliness and isolation as a result of the lack of social interaction, the low level of personal skills among students, in addition to the possibility of the employer questioning the credibility of the certificate resulting from distance learning, but work must be done to overcome these negatives and try to solve them in order to continue Educational process (Pet 9).

Some problems of DL in PE are caused by technical factors as well such as Internet, phone, tablet, computer, and electricity; and that any possible failure in one of these affects the lessons. According to PE teachers, the problems we encounter in this category are ‘distance education’s dependence on technology’ (PeT 25), and ‘Lack of infrastructure/hardware’ such as Internet, and electricity (PeT 5). One of the PE teacher’s views is as follows: ‘With the current conditions, it seems unlikely for distance education to replace face-to-face education due to infrastructure deficiencies’ (Pet 24).

The regular learning process provides an opportunity for students to get to know each other, and also brings together students

from different places and enables them to interact and exchange personal experiences. As for the distance learning process, it is limited only to electronic teaching aids, which allows students to interact with each other through electronic discussion boards, or rooms. Chatting, e-mail, or video clips, but all of these means do not replace the usual personal communication process, which led to a lack of social interaction skills among students.

The lack of healthy communication in DL is another disadvantage. Accordingly, the problems encountered include 'poor interaction' (PeT 5), 'Students are not given the opportunity to improve their oral communication skills' (PeT 33) and 'weak reinforcement of social aspects' (PeT 10). According to PE teachers, who think communication has an important place in the learning-teaching process. One of the student's views is as follows:

The tendency of students to engage in the distance learning process is less compared to their integration into traditional education, and this may be due to the fact that interactions and stimulation between students and teachers are less due to the distance between them, which makes them face difficulty in face-to-face communication and the difficulty of constantly engaging in communication (P16).

Another disadvantage that we come across when the opinions on distance education are analyzed is that distance education leads to affective problems. Accordingly, PE teachers think that distance education has disadvantages such as 'lowering student motivation' (PeT 22), 'lack of seriousness' (PeT 14), and 'not being interesting' (PeT 40).

Discussion and Implications

The first question of the study was to identify the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards distance learning during

COVID-19 pandemic. The results indicated that the perceptions of GCC PE teachers have positive attitudes towards distance learning during the pandemic. Accordingly, it can be said that PE teachers do consider distance learning positively. This finding is consistent with recent studies (Çamlıbel-Acara et al., 2022; Kaya, 2021), which shows that the majority of participants define DL in PE as virtual education. Results reveal that the majority of participants express that it is important and necessary to teach PE lessons in distance education.

The results of the study indicated that, despite issues such as being unprepared and the need for technical infrastructure improvements, DL showed promise as an effective means for meeting the needs and potentially enhancing the skills and knowledge of PE teachers. For most PE teachers, the proficiency of the academician was reported as high in distance learning and the lesson content was sufficient. For successful learning, written materials were as important as visual materials (DL videos). Moreover, the application of the live lesson system was understandable, and the quality of the Technical Support and Student Counseling Unit was sufficient; all of these can have a positive effect on PE student achievement. These results are consistent with Şavkın et al. (2021) study in which they found positive perceptions towards distance learning. PE teachers' perceptions towards distance learning, acceptance, and sense of community were highest in the fourth year.

Within the scope of the second study question, the results indicated that there was statistically significant difference in the PE teachers' perceptions toward distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic due GCC country. The results based on all indicators show Bahraini PE teachers are more positive than other GCC PE

teachers in the use of distance learning in physical education during the pandemic. The use of technology in learning through distance learning is more frequently used in the form of giving assignments via social media carried out by Bahraini PE teachers compared to other GCC PE teachers (Hill et al., 2020). Bahraini PE teachers are also more confident in operating technology and are able to learn independently to implement it into learning than other GCC PE teachers. This study shows that country differences in addressing the use of distance learning in Physical Education learning still exist even though their daily lives cannot be separated from gadgets. Therefore, this study suggests creating a special intervention program for GCC PE teachers according to their needs in making Physical Education learning through DL.

The results of this study are aligned with past findings of similar studies, which revealed country differences in PE teachers' perceptions towards distance learning (Eyles et al., 2020). Differences in the area of computer literacy suggest that London PE teachers felt more confident and competent in using ICT tools as compared to other UK PE teachers. This could stem from country stereotypes that usage of technological tools is commonly perceived as country dominant (Tou et al., 2020).

Regarding the third study question, the results specified that there was no statistically significant difference in perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to school-year level. This finding shows that the perceptions of GCC PE teachers, who are teaching in different school-year levels towards distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, are similar. This finding is consistent with recent studies, where Alana et al., (2020) found that there was no

difference in the preservice teachers' perceptions regarding distance education, depending on their school year levels. In addition, Harefa, and Sihombing (2022) conducted a study to determine the perceived significance value between school grade levels. They did not found significance value of school PE teachers' perceptions, meaning that their perceptions about distance learning are not significantly different. These results are also in contrast with previous findings that suggested school levels did not influence PE teachers' perceptions towards integrating DL into their teaching practices (Tou et al., 2020).

As for the fourth study question, the results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic due to years of teaching experiences. PE teachers who were less experienced seemed to have strong positive attitudes towards DL compared to PE teachers with more teaching experience, particularly in areas related to classroom management and equipment. These results do not go in the same direction as findings from past research, which suggested that teachers with more experience were more likely to accept use of DL in PE (Friskawati et al., 2021, Tou et al., 2020). It is not surprising to see such results similar to those found in age differences in favor of the younger teachers, since teachers with greater teaching experience are not likely to be proficient in DL. This could be attributed to the study sample GCC countries having particular technology-related experiences.

Thus, readers should be mindful of the cultural and environmental differences when comparing the results of different studies. Less positive perceptions among teachers with more experience could also be due to the lack of DL training among post-service teachers (Alana et al., 2020). Furthermore, PE teachers who have joined the

profession for many years may possibly be overwhelmed with other priorities and responsibilities in their jobs, thus perceiving little to no time to explore new tools such as DL to incorporate into their teaching practices. Such results suggest that more attention could be directed towards PE teachers with more teaching experience (Harefa, & Sihombing, 2022). For example, school leaders could consider allocating time for these teachers to learn strategies on school-based DL enabled lessons from their experienced colleagues, without increasing the overall teaching hours.

With regard the fifth question, the results specified that DL has advantages such as developing independent learning skills, requiring taking responsibility, and keeping interest alive. On the other hand, the fact that PE teachers' planning and self-study skills are not developed prevents the desired efficiency in distance learning. In addition, making students get used to easy ways is considered to be another disadvantage. This finding is consistent with recent studies, where López-Fernández et al. (2021), and Harefa & Sihombing (2022) found that DL provides the teachers with some advantages to improve their ability to take responsibility.

The fact that DL is conducted with tools such as internet, electricity, computers and phones lead to some advantages and disadvantages in terms of technical aspects, as well. In this study, DL was found to be advantageous for reasons such as fast and easy access to information. On the other hand, its dependence on technology and infrastructure deficiencies is considered to be the disadvantages of DL. The researcher believes that this is normal, in light of the recent application of the distance education system in Bahrain, as everything new has many positives and negatives. In the study conducted by Razkane et al. (2022), PE teachers expressed that the schools were not

prepared for distance education in the COVID-19 process, and that they did not find their digital content/teaching materials satisfactory. In the study conducted by Sayeh, and Razkane, (2021), teachers had negative opinions due to technical problems such as freezing of the image and reverberation of sound.

Conclusions

The present study investigated the perceptions of PE teachers in four GCC countries towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic as well as to examine how it's affected by the variables of study sample. Their attitudes were outlined, and their recommendations for future distance learning processes were presented.

Providing PE teachers with online communication, continuing education, encouragement, and support can help them get through the challenging COVID-19 pandemic restrictions with minimal impact. However, the pandemic has forced schools PE to make radical changes in a short time. Although updating teaching physical education lessons materials and making them available for DL is seen as a benefit in this process, the output of this education model should be evaluated very carefully in later ongoing studies.

Despite some problems regarding the management of the process, the perceptions of four GCC PE teachers towards DL were mostly positive. This process has presented the necessity for being prepared physically and mentally for such situations. For this reason, after technological infrastructure is established, it is recommended that MEs create a PE model that includes written texts, online PE skills videos, video or illustrated case examples, online exams, and PE skills evaluation methods. In addition, discussion forums and online PE participation should be encouraged to ensure high student involvement.

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Prof. Faisal H. Al Mulla, Professor of research methods and curriculum & instruction, College of Health and Sports Sciences, University of Bahrain, Kingdom of Bahrain. Ph.D. in curriculum & instruction from the University of New Mexico, USA, 1998. Research interests: Research methodology, sport management, measurement and evaluation.

E-mail: dr.faisalalmulla@gmail.com

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