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Exploring Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Online Learning in Higher Education

Mila Indriyani
Universitas Islam Kalimantan MAB Banjarmasin
mila.indriyani@gmail.com
Supiani Supiani
Universitas Islam Kalimantan MAB Banjarmasin
supiani.uniska@gmail.com
Hengki Hengki
Universitas Islam Kalimantan MAB Banjarmasin
hengkisakkai@yahoo.com
Corresponding author: supiani.uniska@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explored pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of online learning in the context of higher education. Specifically, it examined (1) their perceptions of online learning, (2) the challenges they encountered, and (3) the strategies they employed to cope with learning difficulties. A qualitative interview design was adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with four undergraduate pre-service EFL teachers enrolled at a private university in Indonesia and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that participants generally held negative perceptions of online learning, describing it as less effective, less engaging, and less motivating than face-to-face instruction. They also reported feelings of boredom, reduced concentration, and decreased motivation to learn. In addition, participants experienced several challenges, including unstable internet connectivity, distracting home environments, limited interaction and communication with lecturers and peers, and difficulties maintaining focus during online classes. To cope with these challenges, they adopted various strategies, such as seeking locations with more reliable internet access, managing their study schedules, minimizing environmental distractions, reviewing learning materials independently, and communicating with lecturers and classmates through online platforms. The findings provide insights into pre-service EFL teachers' online learning experiences and suggest the need for pedagogical and technological support to enhance the quality and effectiveness of online learning in higher education.

Keywords: *EFL pre-service teachers; higher education; online learning; students' perceptions*

A. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the landscape of teaching and learning across the globe. Over the past decade, higher education institutions have increasingly incorporated learning management systems, video conferencing applications, and other digital platforms to facilitate flexible and technology-enhanced learning. This transformation accelerated dramatically when educational institutions worldwide were required to suspend face-to-face instruction and adopt emergency remote

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learning to ensure educational continuity. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020), school and university closures affected millions of learners globally, prompting governments and educational institutions to implement online learning as an alternative mode of instruction. Although this transition was essential to safeguard public health, it also introduced unprecedented challenges for students and educators.

In Indonesia, the government responded to it by requiring universities to replace conventional classroom instruction with online learning. This policy aimed to facilitate and ease university students' learning wherever, without any space and time constraints (Cao et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2020). Consequently, lecturers and students had to adapt quickly to digital learning environments, often with limited preparation, technological resources, and prior experience. Unlike carefully designed online education, emergency remote learning was implemented rapidly as a temporary response to a crisis, leaving many higher education institutions unprepared to provide effective online instruction. As a result, students experienced substantial academic, technological, and psychological adjustments during this period.

The sudden transition to online learning significantly influenced students' learning experiences. Although digital technologies offer flexibility, accessibility, and opportunities for independent learning, many university students encountered difficulties in adapting to virtual classrooms. These challenges included unfamiliarity with online learning platforms, limited interaction with lecturers and peers, inadequate technological skills, and reduced opportunities for collaborative learning. Such conditions often contributed to feelings of confusion, anxiety, stress, isolation, and decreased learning motivation. Previous studies have reported that students' psychological well-being plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of online learning, as stress and anxiety may negatively affect engagement, academic performance, and overall learning satisfaction (Gillis & Krull, 2020; Markova et al., 2017). Therefore, selecting appropriate digital learning platforms and providing sufficient instructional support are essential for creating meaningful online learning experiences.

Another critical challenge concerns unequal access to technological infrastructure. Reliable internet connectivity remains a significant barrier for many students, particularly those living in rural or remote areas. Slow or unstable internet connections frequently interrupt synchronous learning activities, restrict participation in online discussions, and hinder access to learning resources. These technological constraints may increase students'

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cognitive burden and emotional stress while reducing their ability to participate effectively in online courses (Gillis & Krull, 2020; Morris, 2011; Roy et al., 2020). In addition, students often face distractions in their home learning environments, making it difficult to maintain concentration and self-regulate their learning. Consequently, the effectiveness of emergency remote learning depends not only on the availability of digital platforms but also on students' technological readiness, learning environments, and emotional resilience.

Despite these challenges, students' perceptions of online learning are not universally negative. Research has shown that learners with positive attitudes toward technology and higher levels of digital competence tend to adapt more successfully to online learning environments. For example, Wei and Chou (2020) found that students who perceived online learning positively demonstrated greater confidence, technological self-efficacy, and readiness to participate in virtual learning activities. These students were more likely to take advantage of diverse digital resources, communicate effectively through online platforms, and regulate their own learning. Such findings suggest that students' perceptions influence not only their engagement with online learning but also the strategies they employ to overcome learning difficulties.

Within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education, understanding students' experiences of online learning is particularly important. Pre-service EFL teachers are expected to develop not only English language proficiency but also pedagogical knowledge and digital competencies required for future teaching. Their experiences as online learners may shape their beliefs about technology integration and influence their future classroom practices. Although numerous studies have investigated students' satisfaction and academic performance during online learning (Chetioui et al., 2024; Ejubovic & Puška, 2019; Ferguson & DeFelice, 2011), relatively few have explored pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions from an in-depth qualitative perspective. Moreover, limited research has simultaneously examined their perceptions, the challenges they encountered, and the coping strategies they employed during online learning. Addressing these dimensions can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how future English teachers navigate technology-mediated learning environments.

Therefore, this study aims to explore pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of online learning in the context of higher education. Specifically, it seeks to investigate (1) how pre-service EFL teachers perceive online learning, (2) the challenges they encounter while participating in online learning, and (3) the strategies they employ to cope with learning

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difficulties. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on online language education by providing insights into pre-service teachers' lived experiences. Furthermore, the study offers practical implications for university lecturers, teacher educators, and policymakers in designing more effective, inclusive, and supportive online learning environments that enhance students' academic engagement, well-being, and digital readiness.

B. Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative interview design to explore pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of online learning in higher education. A qualitative interview approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of online learning. Interview studies allow participants to express their experiences in their own words while providing researchers with rich and detailed insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Kvale, 2008; Marton & Booth, 1997; Patton, 2015). In the present study, participants experienced a sudden transition from traditional face-to-face instruction to online learning, and this change provided a valuable context for examining their perceptions, the challenges they encountered, and the strategies they employed to cope with online learning.

Participants and Setting of the Research

The study involved four undergraduate pre-service EFL teachers from a private university in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. To ensure confidentiality and protect participants' identities, pseudonyms—Wendy, Arin, Ayu, and Lia—were used throughout the study in accordance with research ethics (Widodo, 2014). All participants were female students enrolled in the eighth semester of the English Language Education Study Program and ranged in age from 21 to 24 years. Two participants resided outside Banjarmasin, while the remaining two lived in the city.

During the implementation of online learning, the participants attended various online courses using digital platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and WhatsApp. Based on their academic records, all participants demonstrated intermediate to upper-intermediate English proficiency and achieved satisfactory academic performance, particularly in English-language courses. The participants were selected through voluntary purposive sampling for two

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reasons. First, the researcher had established a close academic relationship with the participants throughout their undergraduate study, facilitating trust and open communication during the interview process. Second, all participants expressed willingness to participate and were committed to sharing their experiences to support the study's completion.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews to investigate participants' perceptions of online learning, the challenges they encountered, and the strategies they employed to address them. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explore predetermined topics while providing participants with sufficient flexibility to elaborate on their personal experiences (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Before conducting the interviews, the researcher contacted each participant individually through WhatsApp to invite them to participate in the study. After obtaining their consent, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and arranged mutually convenient interview schedules and locations. Most interviews were conducted virtually via WhatsApp calls, whereas face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants who preferred on-site meetings. Each participant was interviewed individually to ensure privacy and encourage open discussion.

To help participants prepare for the interviews, the interview protocol was distributed in advance. The interview questions focused on three main areas: (1) participants' perceptions of online learning, (2) the challenges they encountered during online learning, and (3) the strategies they employed to overcome learning difficulties. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded. Interviews conducted via WhatsApp were recorded using the application's built-in recording feature, whereas face-to-face interviews were recorded on a smartphone. Participants were free to communicate in Indonesian, Banjarese, or a combination of both languages to ensure that they could express their experiences comfortably and naturally. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes.

After the interviews had been completed, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. Because the interviews were conducted in Indonesian and Banjarese, the transcripts were translated into English before analysis. The researcher repeatedly listened to the recordings and carefully reviewed the transcripts to ensure transcription accuracy and to become familiar with the data. The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). This analytical approach enabled the researcher to identify, organize, and interpret recurring patterns across the dataset. Data reduction and

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coding were conducted systematically to generate themes that addressed the three research questions concerning participants' perceptions of online learning, the challenges they experienced, and their coping strategies.

Data Analysis

The analysis followed four stages adapted from Widodo (2014). First, the researcher repeatedly listened to the interview recordings and read the transcripts to identify meaningful patterns and significant statements relevant to the research questions. Second, the interview data were transcribed, translated, reduced, and coded to facilitate systematic analysis. Third, the coded data were interpreted and organized into themes and subthemes representing participants' experiences and perspectives. Finally, member checking was conducted by asking the participants to review the interview transcripts and the researcher's interpretations. Participants were invited to verify the accuracy of the transcriptions, clarify ambiguous statements, and provide additional comments when necessary. Their feedback enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. After the member-checking process was completed, the researcher finalized the themes, drew conclusions, and reported the study's findings.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Online Learning

The interview findings revealed that most pre-service EFL teachers held negative perceptions of online learning. They reported feeling unprepared for the sudden transition from face-to-face to online instruction and perceived online learning as less effective in supporting their understanding of course materials. Participants explained that limited interaction through online platforms reduced opportunities to ask questions, engage in discussions, and receive immediate feedback from lecturers and peers. In addition, unstable internet connectivity frequently disrupted their participation in online classes, making it difficult to follow lessons consistently. These experiences led participants to perceive emergency remote learning as challenging and less effective than conventional classroom instruction. As stated by them in the interview results:

> *I thought online learning was ineffective because I often could not understand the lecturer's explanations due to various disruptions, especially unclear audio. As a result, I had some difficulty following the explanations. (Wendy, Direct Interview)*

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> *I did not like online learning because I thought it was very ineffective. I also did not feel ready because I lived in a village, where I faced many challenges. One of the biggest challenges was the unstable internet connection, which often prevented me from joining online classes. (Ayu, Direct Interview).*

> *In my opinion, online learning was neither effective nor efficient because everything was limited. Sometimes I could not understand the lecturer's explanations, and I often needed more time to understand the lessons (Lia, Direct Interview).*

> *Online learning was not effective because everything felt limited. The lessons were not delivered properly. Sometimes the lecturer only uploaded the materials through Google Classroom or WhatsApp and then gave us assignments. As a result, I often did not understand the lessons (Arin, WhatsApp Interview).*

Based on the interview findings, it was evident that the participants held predominantly negative perceptions of online learning. They perceived online instruction as less effective than traditional face-to-face learning because they encountered numerous obstacles that hindered their learning process. Consequently, the participants frequently reported feeling bored, unmotivated, and reluctant to participate in online classes throughout the learning process.

2. Challenges Encountered During Online Learning

The interview findings revealed that the participants encountered several challenges during online learning, which negatively affected their learning experiences and academic engagement. The most frequently reported challenge was unstable internet connectivity, followed by limited time for completing assignments, distractions from the surrounding environment, and difficulties communicating with lecturers. These challenges often prevented participants from participating effectively in online classes and understanding the learning materials.

The participants emphasized that reliable technological resources, including smartphones, laptops, and stable internet access, were essential for successful online learning. However, participants who lived in rural areas experienced frequent internet disruptions, making it difficult to attend synchronous classes conducted through Zoom or other online platforms. Poor connectivity often caused participants to lose access to virtual classrooms, miss important explanations, and experience interruptions during presentations.

Lia explained that unstable internet connectivity frequently prevented her from participating in online classes.

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> *When I was in my village, the internet signal was often unstable or disappeared completely. As a result, I was repeatedly disconnected from the Zoom meeting, the audio was unclear, and sometimes I could not join the class at all. On those occasions, I had to ask the lecturer for permission because I was unable to attend the lesson." (Lia, Direct Interview*)

Similarly, Ayu reported that poor internet access in her village affected both her class participation and academic performance.

> *The internet signal in my area was poor because I lived in a village. It was very difficult to join online classes, and whenever I had to give a presentation, the unstable connection disrupted my presentation and affected my performance. (Ayu, Direct Interview*)

These findings indicated that participants living in rural areas experienced greater technological barriers than those residing in urban areas. Limited internet access reduced their opportunities to participate actively in online learning and frequently interrupted their engagement during synchronous lessons.

Besides internet connectivity, participants also experienced challenges related to limited assignment deadlines and distractions from their learning environments. Arin explained that unstable internet access, short submission deadlines, and environmental noise collectively reduced her ability to concentrate and complete academic tasks on time.

> *The internet connection was often unstable, although I could still join the online classes even when the audio was unclear. Another challenge was the limited time given to submit assignments. When the internet connection was poor, I found it difficult to submit my work on time. In addition, my home environment was often noisy because of motorbikes and other activities, which made it difficult for me to concentrate. (Arin, WhatsApp Interview*)

In contrast, Wendy rarely experienced internet connectivity problems because she used a Wi-Fi connection. Nevertheless, she reported that noise in her boarding house frequently distracted her during online learning.

> *I rarely experienced internet problems unless there was a power outage because I used Wi-Fi. However, I was more disturbed by my surroundings. Since I lived in a boarding house with many other residents, it often became noisy when they invited their friends over, and that affected my concentration during online classes." (Wendy, Direct Interview*)

Another major challenge identified by all participants was limited communication with lecturers, particularly during final project supervision. As final-year students, they depended heavily on timely communication with their supervisors. However, they reported that lecturers often took a long time to respond to messages sent via WhatsApp, delaying the supervision process and creating uncertainty. Lia described the communication process as slow and ineffective.

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> *Communication was a problem. It was difficult to conduct online supervision because my messages often took several days to receive a reply. Moreover, I never knew whether my lecturer was busy, so the supervision process became very slow." (Lia, Direct Interview*)

Ayu expressed similar concerns and compared online supervision with face-to-face consultation.

> *Communication was also a challenge for me. Since I was working on my final project, I had to contact my supervisor through WhatsApp. My messages often went unanswered, perhaps because my lecturer was busy. Before the pandemic, I could simply visit the lecturer's office and ask for guidance directly. Communicating only through chat was much more difficult. (Ayu, Direct Interview*)

Likewise, Arin explained that delayed responses often made her hesitant to send follow-up messages.

> *Communication was limited. My lecturer usually took a long time to reply when I asked for an appointment for thesis supervision. Sometimes I had to send another message, but I was worried that my messages would be buried under other incoming chats. (Arin, WhatsApp Interview*)

Wendy also acknowledged that communication with her supervisor had been slower than usual during online learning.

> *Yes, communication was a challenge. My lecturer usually responded slowly to my messages, although the replies eventually came." (Wendy, Direct Interview*)

Thus, the findings demonstrated that unstable internet connectivity, limited assignment deadlines, environmental distractions, and delayed communication with lecturers constituted the major challenges experienced by the participants during online learning. These interconnected challenges hindered their participation in virtual classes, reduced their concentration, delayed academic progress, and made the online learning experience considerably less effective than traditional face-to-face instruction.

3. The Ways Pre-service EFL Teachers Coped with Their Learning Problems During Online Learning

The interview findings revealed that the participants employed various strategies to cope with the challenges they experienced during online learning. The most common challenge was unstable internet connectivity, particularly for those living in rural areas where

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internet access was limited. To avoid falling behind in their studies, the participants attempted to adapt to these technological constraints by finding locations with stronger internet signals, using alternative internet sources, seeking assistance from classmates, and minimizing environmental distractions. Lia explained that whenever the internet signal became unstable, she tried to find a place with a better connection. However, because most of her classes were conducted in the evening, she was sometimes reluctant to leave home. When she was unable to attend a class, she asked her classmates to share the learning materials.

> *Whenever I had internet signal problems, I usually tried to find a place with a better signal. However, because my classes were at night, I was reluctant to leave the house. If I could not join the class, I asked my friends to share the learning materials that the lecturer had explained. (Lia, Direct Interview*)

Similarly, Ayu reported that she left her house to search for a stronger internet signal whenever her connection became unstable.

> *Whenever my internet connection became unstable, I went outside to find a place with a better signal. It usually took extra time, but if I stayed at home, I could not join the class and would miss the lesson. (Ayu, Direct Interview*)

Arin adopted several strategies to overcome different learning problems. She continued attending classes despite poor internet quality, informed lecturers honestly when internet problems caused late assignment submissions, asked family members to reduce noise, and used earphones to hear the lecturers' explanations more clearly. In contrast, Wendy relied on Wi-Fi or mobile data and used earphones to reduce distractions. If neither internet connection was available, she occasionally chose not to attend class.

The participants also developed different strategies to cope with communication difficulties during their final project supervision. Lia and Wendy preferred to wait patiently for their supervisors' responses because they did not want to disturb them, whereas Ayu and Arin resent follow-up messages when they did not receive timely replies.

> *I usually waited because I was worried that my lecturer was busy. Eventually, I always received a reply, although it was often slow. (Lia, Direct Interview*)

> *I usually sent another message because my previous message sometimes went unanswered for a long time. I was afraid it had been buried under other chats. (Ayu, Direct Interview*)

Overall, the findings indicated that although the participants encountered technological, environmental, and communication-related challenges, they actively employed

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various coping strategies to remain engaged in online learning and successfully complete their academic responsibilities.

2. Discussion

This study explored pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of online learning, the challenges they encountered, and the strategies they employed to cope with learning difficulties during emergency remote learning. Overall, the findings revealed that the participants held predominantly negative perceptions of online learning due to numerous technological, pedagogical, and communication-related challenges. These findings suggest that students' perceptions of online learning were strongly shaped by their learning experiences rather than by the technology itself. When online learning failed to provide meaningful interaction, reliable technological support, and effective instructional practices, participants perceived it as less effective than conventional face-to-face learning (Ananga & Biney, 2017).

These findings support Elfaki et al. (2019), who argued that students' perceptions significantly influence their learning experiences and academic performance. Positive perceptions generally encourage greater engagement and persistence, whereas negative perceptions may reduce students' motivation and participation. Likewise, Boland et al. (2008) suggested that students' negative attitudes toward a learning environment may decrease their satisfaction and learning outcomes. In the present study, participants' negative perceptions stemmed from online learning not adequately meeting their academic and psychological needs. Rather than viewing technology as a facilitator of learning, they associated it with limited communication, reduced engagement, and barriers to understanding course content.

The findings also corroborate those of Muthuprasad et al. (2021), who reported that the effectiveness of online learning depends on the quality of the learning environment, instructional design, technological readiness, and students' ability to interact with learning resources. Although online learning offers flexibility in time and location, its effectiveness is diminished when technological infrastructure and instructional support are inadequate. Similarly, Fidalgo et al. (2020) found that university students perceived online learning negatively because it required reliable technological resources, stable internet connectivity, and greater learner autonomy while offering fewer opportunities for interaction with lecturers. The participants in the present study expressed similar concerns, emphasizing that online learning often consisted of one-way instruction in which lecturers explained the material or

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uploaded learning resources without encouraging active discussion. Consequently, participants experienced boredom, reduced motivation, and limited engagement throughout the learning process.

The second finding highlighted several challenges experienced by the participants during online learning. Among these, unstable internet connectivity emerged as the most significant obstacle, particularly for participants living in rural areas. Poor internet access frequently interrupted synchronous classes, prevented students from joining Zoom meetings, disrupted presentations, and limited access to learning materials. These findings reinforce previous studies showing that technological inequality remains one of the greatest barriers to effective online education. Loh et al. (2016) reported that students' inability to access online learning resources constitutes a major challenge in technology-mediated education. Likewise, Clark and Gorski (2002) and Hargittai (2003) argued that unequal access to digital technology and internet infrastructure creates disparities in educational opportunities, particularly for students living in geographically remote areas. The present study supports these findings, as participants residing outside urban areas consistently experienced greater difficulties obtaining stable internet connections than those living in the city. These technological limitations affected not only their attendance in online classes but also their confidence, participation, and academic performance.

In addition to technological challenges, participants identified environmental distractions as another important barrier to effective online learning. Many participants explained that they lacked a quiet learning environment because of family activities, neighborhood noise, or the absence of a dedicated study space. Such distractions reduced their concentration during online classes and made it difficult to understand lecturers' explanations. These findings are consistent with Fidalgo et al. (2020), who reported that university students required not only reliable internet access but also suitable learning environments to support successful online learning. Similarly, Coman et al. (2020) found that environmental noise and inadequate study spaces negatively influenced students' concentration, motivation, and learning performance. The present findings therefore suggest that effective online learning depends not only on technological readiness but also on supportive physical learning environments that enable students to engage fully in instructional activities.

Another important finding concerned communication between lecturers and students. The participants, particularly those completing their final projects, reported that delayed

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responses from lecturers created uncertainty and slowed their academic progress. Because communication occurred primarily through WhatsApp, students often waited several days before receiving replies to their messages. Consequently, participants perceived online supervision as less effective than face-to-face consultation, where immediate clarification and feedback were readily available.

This finding supports Gómez-Rey et al. (2016), who emphasized that timely communication and constructive feedback are fundamental components of successful online learning. Responsive interaction between lecturers and students promotes engagement, reduces uncertainty, and strengthens students' confidence in their learning process. Likewise, Muilenburg and Berge (2005) identified insufficient interaction as one of the major barriers to effective online education. Without regular communication, students may feel isolated, unsupported, and less motivated to participate in learning activities. The present findings also align with Fidalgo et al. (2020), who reported that many university students preferred face-to-face instruction because it enabled direct communication with lecturers and immediate feedback. Therefore, the effectiveness of online learning depends not only on digital platforms but also on lecturers' ability to establish responsive and meaningful communication with students

The third finding demonstrated that despite experiencing numerous challenges, the participants actively developed strategies to cope with their learning difficulties. Rather than withdrawing from online learning, they attempted to adapt to the constraints they encountered. Students living in rural areas searched for locations with stronger internet signals, used mobile data when Wi-Fi was unavailable, borrowed learning materials from classmates, and continued participating in online classes whenever possible (Ferri et al., 2020). Participants also minimized environmental distractions by using earphones or asking family members to reduce noise during online lessons. These findings indicate that students exercised considerable resilience and self-regulation despite limited technological resources.

The findings are consistent with Matswetu et al. (2020), who found that students without reliable internet access actively sought alternative ways to participate in online learning, including travelling to locations with better connectivity and sharing learning resources with peers. Such adaptive strategies illustrate students' commitment to maintaining academic engagement despite external constraints. In addition, participants in the present study demonstrated problem-solving behaviors by communicating honestly with lecturers regarding delayed assignment submissions caused by internet disruptions. These actions

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reflected their willingness to take responsibility for their learning while negotiating unavoidable technological limitations.

The participants also adopted different strategies to manage communication challenges with their lecturers. Some preferred to wait patiently for responses because they understood that lecturers might be busy, whereas others resent follow-up messages to ensure that their requests for supervision or academic guidance were noticed. These different responses reflected individual communication preferences and levels of confidence in interacting with lecturers (Ragusa, 2025). Nevertheless, both strategies demonstrated students' efforts to maintain communication and continue progressing with their academic work despite the limitations of online supervision.

Taken together, the findings suggest that students' perceptions of online learning were closely related to the quality of technological infrastructure, instructional practices, communication, and learning environments. It did not fully provide the interactive, engaging, and supportive learning experiences expected by the participants (Boling et al., 2012; Sit et al., 2005). At the same time, the participants demonstrated adaptability by developing practical strategies to overcome technological and communication-related barriers. These findings underscore the importance of designing online learning environments that combine reliable technological support, interactive pedagogical approaches, responsive lecturer–student communication, and institutional assistance for students with limited digital access. Such improvements are essential not only for enhancing students' learning experiences but also for preparing future teachers to integrate technology effectively into their own professional practice.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

This study explored pre-service EFL teachers’ perceptions of online learning, the challenges they encountered, and the strategies they employed to cope with learning difficulties during emergency remote learning. The findings demonstrated that the participants generally held negative perceptions of online learning because they perceived it as less effective than traditional face-to-face instruction. Their perceptions were shaped by several interconnected challenges, including unstable internet connectivity, limited interaction with lecturers and peers, monotonous teaching practices, environmental distractions, and delayed communication with lecturers. These factors reduced their engagement, motivation, and understanding of course materials throughout the online learning process.

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Despite these challenges, the participants demonstrated resilience by adopting various coping strategies to sustain their learning. They searched for locations with stronger internet signals, used alternative internet sources, obtained learning materials from classmates, minimized environmental distractions by using earphones or requesting quieter surroundings, and maintained communication with lecturers by patiently waiting for responses or sending follow-up messages. These findings indicate that pre-service EFL teachers actively adapted to the constraints of emergency remote learning in order to continue their academic activities successfully.

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on online learning by providing an in-depth understanding of pre-service EFL teachers' lived experiences during online learning. It highlights that the success of online learning depends not only on technological infrastructure but also on effective instructional design, meaningful lecturer–student interaction, responsive academic communication, and supportive learning environments. These findings also emphasize the importance of strengthening digital readiness among both lecturers and students to improve the quality of online education in higher education.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed. First, universities should improve internet infrastructure and provide greater technological support for students, particularly those living in rural or underserved areas. Second, lecturers should design more interactive and student-centered online learning activities that promote communication, collaboration, and timely feedback. Third, institutions should establish clear communication protocols to facilitate faster responses during online consultation and academic supervision. Finally, future research should involve a larger and more diverse sample of participants from different universities and disciplines. Researchers may also employ mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to examine how students' perceptions and coping strategies evolve across different online and blended learning contexts.

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