

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUALITATIVE **OPEN ACCESS**

# Nurse Educators and Faculty Members Challenges Towards Online Teaching During COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis: A Qualitative Descriptive Study

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim:** The effects of COVID-19 have brought numerous changes in society in the past several months. Lifestyles, business sectors, educational facilities and healthcare services have been greatly affected, causing individuals to be alarmed about future repercussions. This study investigated the various challenges of nursing faculties in conducting online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

**Design:** Qualitative description.

**Method:** Individual interviews were conducted among 20 nurse educators and faculty members, including professors, lecturers and demonstrators utilising a semistructured interview guide. This study utilised qualitative content analysis. COREQ criteria list was used in the qualitative data reporting.

**Result:** Three major themes were generated from the experiences of the participants namely: (1) 'lack of teacher–student interaction' (2) 'digital literacy and technical issues' and (3) 'curriculum structure and programme quality'. The study's benefits will enable the nurse faculties to realise and conceptualise ways and means to mitigate the challenges in conducting online teaching since the effects of COVID-19 continue to increase. Nurse faculties must prepare various strategies approach to deliver education without compromising their quality.

**Patient or Public Contribution:** Experts from various fields were consulted in the planning of the data gathering procedures, analysis of data and reviewing of the manuscript.

## 1 | Introduction

Beginning in 2019, the SARS-CoV-2 virus generated an outbreak of a new infectious disease known as coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) (Agu et al. 2021). Many people who have the virus will have a mild to severe case of respiratory illness and will get better without any treatment. However, some of them will become quite unwell and require emergency medical care. The likelihood of contracting a life-threatening illness increases with age and the presence of prior medical conditions like

cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes mellitus and respiratory ailments (chronic). Anyone of any age with a COVID-19 infection is at risk for severe illness and perhaps death. Its effects may be seen even now, and nations all over the world are always striving to either return to their former ways of life or to improve upon them (Algaissi et al. 2020).

There have been 815,229 confirmed cases and 9335 deaths in Saudi Arabia as of 03 September 2022 (World Health Organization 2022). The Saudi government has stated its

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intention to follow the World Health Organization's (WHO) COVID-19 response recommendations. All these suggestions are grounded on the nine pillars of public health preparedness and response. To make judgements and evaluate policies, the Saudi government uses these concepts. In response to the threat posed by COVID-19, the government and commercial sector in Saudi Arabia took preventative measures. Saudi Arabia's government has set up a governance framework made up of responsible committees to keep tabs on developments in the country and around the world, record information about people who may have been exposed, screen the public, spread awareness and take any necessary actions to stop the blowout of the virus. As soon as Saudi Arabia reported its' first instance of the sickness, educational facilities, mass gatherings, sporting events and local/international getaways were all put on hold. This encompassed both domestic and international excursions within the realm. In anticipation of the first 100 confirmed cases of COVID-19, several restrictions have been placed on societal movements, religious meetings, travel and businesses. The purpose of these restrictions is to stop the disease from spreading (Khan et al. 2021). The country maintained its comprehensive health care system and vaccination programme, and it approved all drug and vaccine proposals targeting the COVID-19 virus. A total of 67,701,901 doses of vaccination were given to both natives and foreigners per year. The country is making strides to increase its production capacity to domestically manufacture these items.

The term 'online education' refers to the dissemination of course materials and communication between students and teachers that takes place over the World Wide Web. With the development of technology-aided learning in the past, nurse educators have begun utilising online learning platforms to encourage students to engage in self-directed learning and evaluation. One of the most consequential sectors to feel the effects of COVID-19 was the training of nurses particularly in nursing education. Nursing programmes around the world have responded to the pandemic by implementing national and international guidelines established in the wake of the outbreak and those established by the WHO. This also applies to nursing colleges in developing nations (Agu et al. 2021). Classes previously held in a classroom setting and training in a clinical skills' laboratory have been converted to online formats. The potential of online education was exploited to its fullest extent across the kingdom, yet many students remain dissatisfied due to the difficulties they encountered while taking nursing classes from a distance (Alqahtani, Innab, and Bahari 2021).

This qualitative descriptive study was conducted to learn more about the challenges that nursing schools encounter in implementing distance learning programmes amid the current COVID-19 pandemic. This research could help nurse educators and faculty members gain insights into what makes students satisfied with their e-learning experiences.

There are few published articles in Saudi Arabia or even in the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) like Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar investigating this phenomenon. Most of the published articles explored the experiences of nursing students towards online education, which makes this article one of a kind in the region and in the neighbouring countries, since this qualitative descriptive

study will be exploring the challenges faced by nurse educators and faculty members. Thus, the researcher asked the selected participants to answer the grand tour question, 'What are the challenges of nurse educators and faculty members working in a government university in the Eastern Region of Saudi Arabia towards online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?'

## 2 | Methods

### 2.1 | Design

The research utilised qualitative descriptive design. Descriptive studies in qualitative research, such as those pertaining to nursing and health care, fall under this design (Kim, Sefcik, and Bradway 2017). According to Polit and Beck (2014), qualitative data analysis is a well-known research method that is suitable for studying phenomena that are not well understood and for answering inquiries about who, what and where an event or experience occurred. This inductive method is appropriate for this qualitative investigation since the researcher do not have a lot of background information, thus, it solely focused with the 'participant's' perspectives towards the challenges of online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Moreover, the findings of qualitative descriptive studies could give light on vital issues and offer practical suggestions for improving service (Bradford and Maude 2014).

### 2.2 | Participants and Setting

Twenty participants, eight men and 12 women, were recruited for this study using a purposeful selection strategy based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) be a university faculty teaching staff in the kingdom (e.g., demonstrators, lecturers and professors); (2) Have at least 3 years of experience working in either an academic or clinical setting; (3) be enthusiastic to share experiences and (4) speak English. All the requirements must be met by the prospective participants. The research involved nursing faculty members because of their knowledge and experience in areas such as education, leadership and management and informatics. Participants were selected in part because of their extensive academic and professional knowledge of nursing. This method of sampling allows demonstrating the uniqueness and diversity of the data by constructing shared dimensions from multiple vantage points (Salvador et al. 2022). Before taking part in the study, all participants voluntarily agreed to do so, and no subjects were coerced into engaging in the interviews. No one withdrawn from the study. The demographic information of the participants is shown in Table 1.

In terms of the study's setting, the researcher had chosen this research locale due to its excellent standing in terms nursing education in the Eastern Region and in the whole kingdom of Saudi Arabia by obtaining full accreditation status from various national and international certifying bodies. Throughout the first 4 years of the nursing curriculum, as well as the 1-year internship programme that counts as the fifth year, the college served thousands of male and female Saudi nursing students. The nurse educators and faculty members have diverse nationalities from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Philippines, India, Sudan,

**TABLE 1** | Participants of the study ( $n = 20$ ).

No.	Pseudonym	Gender	Educational background	Academic rank	Years in nursing education	Civil status
1	Rose	F	Doctorate	Professor	23	Married
2	Lily	F	Master	Lecturer	12	Married
3	Lotus	M	Master	Lecturer	10	Married
4	Marygold	F	Undergraduate	Demonstrator	4	Married
5	Hibiscus	M	Doctorate	Professor	18	Married
6	Tulip	M	Master	Lecturer	10	Single
7	Jasmine	F	Doctorate	Professor	26	Married
8	Daisy	F	Doctorate	Professor	28	Married
9	Lavender	M	Undergraduate	Demonstrator	3	Married
10	Dahlia	F	Doctorate	Professor	21	Married
11	Bluebell	M	Undergraduate	Demonstrator	3	Single
12	Water Lily	F	Doctorate	Professor	27	Married
13	Orchid	F	Doctorate	Professor	22	Married
14	Iris	F	Undergraduate	Demonstrator	3	Married
15	Calendula	M	Doctoral	Professor	17	Married
16	Sunflower	F	Master	Lecturer	9	Married
17	Daffodil	F	Master	Lecturer	13	Married
18	Snowdrop	M	Master	Lecturer	10	Married
19	Poppy	M	Doctoral	Professor	9	Single
20	Geranium	F	Master	Lecturer	8	Married

**TABLE 2** | Semistructured interview guide.

Interview questions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you please tell me something about yourself?</li> <li>• How would you describe yourself as a nurse educator and as a professional?</li> <li>• Can you please tell me about your situation as a nurse educator during the pandemic crisis?</li> <li>• Can you please tell me some instances that you experience challenge in conducting online classes?</li> <li>• How do you think your students handled the situation?</li> <li>• How do you handle questions from the students during online education?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you handle clinical or skills laboratory simulations?</li> <li>• What interventions did you think can be done regarding the limitations of online education? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you handle the challenges of online education?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How does this experience change your personal and professional life/endeavour?</li> <li>• What are your plans and expectations about the future of online education in Saudi Arabia? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your final thoughts regarding online education?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

United Kingdom and Egypt. Faculty members were categorised as demonstrators (bachelor's degree), lecturers (master's degree) and professors (assistant, associate and full) (doctorate degree). The number of faculty members is sufficient to the total number of students in the whole programme. During the plight of the COVID-19, the nursing college utilised Blackboard as the learning management system, it allowed the college to create a more welcoming classroom for all students and enhance their education by giving them more say over their coursework in terms of its quality, accessibility and usability. Likewise, the college also used Zoom, which is a web-based platform that facilitates

online meetings, webinars and live chats; it is accessible by desktop computer or mobile app.

### 2.3 | Data Collection

This data was gathered between February 2021 and June 2021 through in-depth semistructured interviews. In addition, three nurse educators outside of the study group helped create and assess the effectiveness of the semistructured interview guide, as shown in Table 2 (Salvador et al. 2021). The researcher took

multiple workshops to perfect the interview techniques and guarantee they fit the requirements of the qualitative approach. The researcher created a strategy for conducting interviews after first obtaining the necessary approvals, permits and informed consent from the participants. In the interest of openness and honesty, all participants were briefed on the study's background, objectives, methods, and findings. Participants' off-duty hours, immediately before and after their shifts, were chosen for the interviews to maximise their availability and minimise inconvenience. One-on-one interviews with each participant lasted 30–45 min and took place in a variety of locations (such as coffee shops, restaurants, etc.) where the respondents felt most at ease opening about their experiences and thoughts (Salvador 2022). No more than three sessions were needed for the follow-up interview, although this number varied based on the quality of the initial interview and some extra explanations provided by the researcher. An audiorecording device was used by the researcher to maintain track of their interviews. Field notes were also employed as a qualitative instrument during the session.

## 2.4 | Data Analysis

Content analysis was employed by the researcher to examine the qualitative investigation's data. This method is useful for extracting themes, patterns and associations from datasets (Creswell and Creswell 2023). Data identification and collecting were the initial steps in the data analysis process. When conducting the analysis, the researchers made sure to record any relevant terms, phrases, paragraphs, ideas, objects and semantics. In addition, the researcher divided the entire content into several categories in which the text is reduced into categories containing specific words and patterns that are related to the phenomenon under investigation or may answer the research question. Coding the content is the next step process applied by the researcher. Thus, it is a system of rules that describes how to look at text (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz 2017). The researcher made sure to capture the four essential characteristics such as frequency (number of times), direction (content appearance), intensity (strength of direction) and space (message size).

To ensure the scientific rigour of the qualitative data, the researcher made certain that the qualitative procedure was subjected to scrutiny (Johnson, Adkins, and Chauvin 2020). Throughout the entirety of the process, the fundamental principles of authenticity, confirmability, dependability, credibility and transferability, were consistently applied. The transcribed documents and the published verbatim used to illustrate the substance of the phenomena were made available for participants to verify. To cap it all off, Tong, Sainsbury, and Craig's (2007) COREQ standards for reporting qualitative research.

## 2.5 | Ethical Considerations

After the application was filed, some weeks after the initial submission, the Institutional Review Board certificate from a government university, 'REDACTED', was granted. Before any data were collected from them, the participants signed a form indicating their approval to publish their experiential accounts without identifying

their true identity. This was done before the data collection. This was done to keep the identities of the participants confidential. In addition, each participant was given a code and a pseudonym to protect their anonymity during the study (for instance, participant 1 was Rose, while the other participants were other flowers). In a similar vein, participants were allowed to openly communicate their experiences, viewpoints, personal thoughts and other concerns about the topic matter that was the focus of the inquiry (e.g., emotions and morals). No interviews were done to the individuals who were known to be vulnerable to the consequences of their actions (e.g., due to emotional or personal issues). At the end of the interview, people who had mistakenly felt vulnerable because of the interview had the chance to talk to a trained professional who was skilled at counselling and debriefing.

## 3 | Results

As the narratives were analysed, three emergent themes and nine categories were developed, all of which reflected the perspectives of the nurse educators on the challenges of providing online instruction during the pandemic. The following are the emergent themes: (1) 'lack of teacher–student interaction'; (2) 'digital literacy and technical issues' and (3) 'curriculum structure and programme quality'. Each emergent theme is summarised in Table 3, along with its related categories, keywords and descriptions.

1. *Lack of teacher–student interaction* pertains to the educators' problems in knowing their students by having no personal contact and communication with the students. Three categories were formed from this preceding theme, including: (1) *the absence of face-to-face interaction*, (2) *students' low motivational level* and (3) *the dearth of familiarity of educators with students*.
  - a. *The absence of a face-to-face interaction* pertains to the decision of higher education not to hold traditional types of lectures inside the classroom.

‘Several weeks after the start of this pandemic crisis, the government ordered for lockdown. All colleges and universities in the kingdom were advised to conduct online teaching until further notice.’  
(P7)

‘A couple of weeks when COVID-19 was broadcasted. The Saudi government issued an order to have a state lockdown. I was already expecting that all educational facilities will be done remotely, which needs a lot of efforts in planning virtual learning education. There will no direct contact.’  
(P9)

‘Online teaching is harder than conducting face-to-face lectures and discussions with my students. No direct communication at all and even lacking tutorial sessions. Nonetheless, we have no choice

**TABLE 3** | Emergent themes, description, categories and keywords.

Keywords	Categories	Emergent themes	Description
No direct communication No direct contact Lacking tutorials	Absence of a face-to-face interaction	Lack of teacher-student interaction	<i>It pertains to the educators' problems in knowing their students by having no personal contact and communication with the students</i>
Lack of self-discipline Too many assignments Poor time management skills Too many students in the online environment Too long online lectures Too many distractions Lack of accountability	Students' low motivational level		
No cameras No pictures Teacher-student interaction	Dearth of familiarity of educators to students		
Lack of knowledge Incompetency Troubleshooting Learning management system	Lack of educational technology	Digital literacy and technical issues	
No computer at home No laptops and gadgets Financial problems Malfunctioning computer hardware	Shortage of computer equipment		
Poor signal Unstable Internet connections Poor connections	Unstable Internet connectivity		
Online platforms E-learning strategies	Scarcity in online education strategies	Curriculum structure and programme quality	
Course plan Course syllabus Contingency planning Lack of course preparations and contingency plans Variations in teaching and learning Not formatted to online education	Outdated course curriculum and structure		
Cheating during online examination Too much learning activities Unending checking of requirements	Problems encountered in evaluating the course		

but to follow the government's order to have it online.'

(P15)

b. *Students' low motivational level* denotes the decreased stimulus of the students to participate during class interaction.

'My students are not interactive during online lectures and discussion. Some were not really engaged during recitations. Some were absent. Some were not opening their cameras. I just feel that they do not really like conducting lectures virtually or online.'

(P5)

'During one of my online classes, I feel that my students are not truly engaged with me. I sense that they are lacking self-discipline and too many distractions by what is happening. I feel sorry for them for experiencing such a low motivational level.'

(P12)

'Several students have communicated that they really preferred face-to-face interaction rather than using online platform like zoom. Students were lacking accountability and poor time management skills.'

(P16)

c. *A dearth of familiarity of educators to students* shows the lack of acquaintance with all students attending class.

‘Honestly, I am not so familiar with all my students due to this online teaching unlike before with face-to-face, I have time to get to know them better. Most of the time students are not opening their cameras or if not, they have poor internet connections.’

(P3)

‘Having a class of more than forty students, I can say that I am not so familiar with my students especially those who are not really engaging with the discussions unlike conducting it face-to-face. I often call the attention of my students who are not participating to make sure that they really understand the lecture being discussed.’

(P10)

‘As an expatriate, most of my students have the same first names like Mohammed, Ali, and Ahmed. So, during online classes, some of my students would not turn on their cameras due to technical issues like poor internet connections. No pictures as well. As a result, I do not personally know which of my students are participating during discussions since I cannot see their faces.’

(P19)

2. *Digital literacy and technical issue* concern the difficulties faced by educators in terms of digital literacy and issues faced in conducting online teaching. Three categories emerged, including (1) *lack of educational technology*, (2) *lack of computer equipment and internet connections* and (3) *unstable internet connectivity*.

a. *The lack of educational technology* pertains to the insufficiency of the users to use the learning management system platform of the institution.

‘I am not a techy person. I still need a lot of training to be familiarized with all the functions of our virtual learning management platform. We called it Blackboard. It is one major factor that affected me in implementing online teaching. It is a must to know it.’

(P9)

‘I am personally struggling using the online platform we are using. As senior faculty in the college, I am not really used in conducting online learning platforms. It would take time for me to familiarize. I am lacking the knowledge, which makes me incompetent to troubleshoot any technical issues.’

(P12)

‘We use the Blackboard as our learning management system during the pandemic. I believe it is one of the best in the market. However, no one perceived that COVID-19 will occur so to be honest we did not fully explore this platform. More workshops and trainings should be conducted to fully maximize it.’

(P13)

b. *The shortage of computer equipment* covers the lack of online teaching equipment and gadgets in upholding online teaching to the students.

‘I have two computers at home. One desktop, one laptop, and three children in college and high school. SO, my issue here was sharing the computers. We must strategize the timing when we will use the computers, which would not affect my online lectures and the virtual classes of my children.’

(P1)

‘My desktop at home is malfunctioning. I need to buy another device to perform my online teaching. It costs a lot.’

(P14)

‘A lot of preparation is needed in conducting online teaching, first you need a good computer with advanced features to successfully conduct an online teaching. Since, it was sudden when the order came out to do lectures and discussion online, I am not really prepared with my equipment, which caused me to panic.’

(P15)

c. *Unstable Internet connectivity* illustrates the challenges in conducting online teaching due to the Internet capacity during the pandemic crisis.

‘I find it difficult to teach online during the pandemic due to internet situation problems. I heard that my area has poor coverage. Most of the time, I got my connection lost with my students.’

(P2)

‘I am using only pocket Wi-Fi with poor signal. Most of the time, the signal from my internet provider is unstable unlike using a modem or fiber. I have no choice because no one from the providers will come to install new modem.’

(P11)

‘It was a really a disaster if you are not prepared at all especially during crisis like the COVID-19. I am using only my cellphone data. I connect my laptop using my phone’s “personal hotspot”. A lot of times,

I am disconnected from my online classes and re-connecting would take several minutes, so, I must inform my students in WhatsApp that I am having bad connections.'

(P20)

3. *Curriculum structure and programme quality* relate to the overall struggles of educators in implementing and evaluating the course methods of instruction especially in carrying out the learning activities. Three categories were generated including (1) *scarcity in online education strategies*; (2) *outdated course curriculum and structure* and (3) *problems encountered in evaluating the course*.

a. *Scarcity in online education strategies* illustrates the lack of online educational platforms due to COVID-19.

'I have few e-learning strategies that I used during online platforms like Kahoot, Slido, and Socrative. I feel that my students are kind of bored since I keep repeating the same strategies during the entire time classes are online. There should be assortment of strategies that we should know for the future.'

(P7)

'To be honest, I am not really acquainted with a lot of online teaching strategies, as an old professor, I am used with the traditional ways of conducting lectures, I always seek my children's advice on what should I used during my lectures. Most of the time, they are beside me helping if there are some technical issues.'

(P12)

'I have some issues using our virtual learning management system. It always crashes. I hope that there would be another platform that we can use besides what we currently have for back-ups.'

(P20)

b. *Outdated course curriculum and structure* pertain to the course instructions that cannot sustain teaching and learning processes during the pandemic crisis.

'Our course specification is perfectly planned, however, there are some variations from the original plan that we are having difficulty with that we have not prepared. A contingency plan is a pre-requisite nowadays.'

(P1)

'Our department conducted online meetings to change course plans and course syllabus to fit with the online instructions to teach our students. Everyone recommended to modify the specifications that would also cater to any pandemic crisis in the future.'

(P8)

'The current curriculum did not foresee the sudden effects of the pandemic situation. It is not formatted to online education. Course proceedings were all changed conforming to the most appropriate learning methods and strategies.'

(P13)

c. *Problems encountered in evaluating the course* refer to the struggles in assessing, monitoring and measuring the performances of each course in the programme.

'Assessing and evaluating the students' learning activities are hard to do compared to face-to-face. We are faced with unending checking of requirements. In the university, I conduct several tutorial sessions and personal student consultations during vacant hours, however, it is difficult to manage this online.'

(P8)

'Monitoring the student's course learning outcomes are too difficult to measure since most of the assessment and evaluation methods were changed due to the sudden shifting of course proceeding to online mode resulting also to too much learning activities. Our department took several meetings to come up with a good assessment plan based on the changed curriculum and to prevent cheating during online examination.'

(P12)

'During this pandemic crisis, we find it difficult to conduct performance appraisal during clinical assessments and even conducting continuous and summative examinations.'

(P18)

#### 4 | Discussion

During the coronavirus pandemic many nurse educators and faculty members (professors, lecturers and clinical instructors) were forced to provide classes online so that their students could continue receiving an education. Reflecting on the first days of March 2020. The educational system was shaken considerably by the enormous destruction caused by the coronavirus outbreak. Almost all schools have closed or moved their operations online, requiring educators and students to adapt their methods of instruction accordingly. That is why a growing number of educators are introducing students to the benefits of using the web and other technologies for learning for the first time. Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of online learning is important. When teaching students online, educators and teachers often discover they need to adjust their methods of instruction. The results of this qualitative descriptive study revealed that three emergent themes mirrored the challenges and difficulties of nurse educators and faculty members face when providing online nursing education: (1) 'lack of familiarisation and interaction', (2) 'digital literacy

and technical issues' and (3) 'curriculum structure and programme quality'.

A *lack of teacher–student interaction* appeared as the first emergent theme from faculty members' experiences with on-line instruction. The participants' views on the importance of teacher–student contact in developing students' nursing core competencies were echoed by the participants themselves. According to Salehian et al. (2016), 'caring' as a teaching and learning strategy in nursing schools is based on constructive interactions between teachers and students and lasting human values. The resulting categories reflect how the cancellation of in-person classes in Saudi Arabia has demoralised students and left most teachers unfamiliar with their pupils because the only way to get to know them is by using a camera—a practice that cannot be imposed on a region with such rigidly adhered-to social and cultural norms and traditions. Thereby, many of the things that used to motivate both students and teachers have diminished or disappeared altogether. In a study conducted by Ahmed (2022), nursing students' satisfaction with online learning experiences during COVID-19 pandemic at Albaha University in Saudi Arabia was moderate (23.68%) to high (64.47%) in terms of the following aspects: (1) preferences and acceptance of online learning, (2) technical issues related to online learning and (3) interaction and collaboration. However, without participating in any extracurricular activities that might keep them motivated, including sports, theatre, clubs or student organisations many students this year lacked the motivation to perform their studies or turn on their webcams for remote lessons. The issue of students' mental health has been on the rise as they enter the world of higher education. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this vulnerable group has received fresh attention (Son et al. 2020). On the other hand, the nurse educators and faculty members feel they are slipping behind in their professional development and are under constant pressure to come up with fresh ways to engage their students. By adjusting to the 'new normal' and drawing on their knowledge to better equip future nurses and nursing students to address global health issues, nurse educators and faculty members may play a significant role in transforming uncertainty into a creative opportunity (Nashwan, Waghmare, and Ladd 2020).

Public health, healthcare services, education, communication, commerce and risk communication are just some areas where digital technology has been used in Saudi Arabia during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (Hassounah, Raheel, and Alhefzi 2020). Because most classes and assignments have shifted online while schools around the kingdom have been closed, academic specialists, social advocates and the Saudi government are concerned about the academic progress of students who are not as proficient in using technology as their peers. In 2017, the Saudi Vision 2030 Blueprint was unveiled, which paved the way for the country's digital transformation. As a result of COVID-19, it was feasible to test and further develop this evolution. Positive tendencies towards more widespread adoption of e-learning infrastructure have been maintained in today's pedagogical practices (Shun 2021).

To effectively deliver online education during pandemic crises, *digital literacy and technical issues* must be addressed. This

has been the second overarching issue to emerge from the interviews, as it provides the basis for the participants' belief that these problems are among the many challenges and difficulties they faced some years ago, during the height of COVID-19. Finding, evaluating and effectively communicating knowledge via typing and other media on a variety of digital platforms is what digital literacy means, *the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills* (American Library Association 2017). Grammar, composition, typing speed and the ability to create text, images, sounds and designs digitally are all factors. On the other hand, technical issues are common concerns about how teaching and learning strategies can be delivered to students effectively. Some of the biggest problems with online education include the following: the digital divide, students' and schools' lack of digital literacy, the expense of technology and the uneven distribution of IT infrastructure (Dhawan 2020). Common problems verbalised by the selected participants are shortage of computer equipment and unstable Internet connectivity. As more and more people rely on the Internet, discussions have resurfaced about how the digital gap, the differences between those who have and do not have access to technology, can make it difficult for some people to do even the most basic of things, like getting through the day or doing their homework. Most educators and faculty members worry that their students will not have the technology resources to fully participate in online classes. In preparation for the next pandemic catastrophe, the government and the education sector should devise the most efficient means of bringing education into people's homes without disrupting their daily lives too much.

The last emergent theme that was generated from the experiences of the participants pertains to the curriculum structure and programme quality. A study has revealed that educators have shown signs and symptoms of anxiety, depression and stress due to the concern over the unprecedented teaching situation brought about by the abrupt deployment of online education and the reopening of schools during COVID-19 (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. 2021). Although many universities and colleges have online education as a long-term objective, few nurse educators and faculty members possess the necessary expertise in online teaching. Institutions are having a hard time retaining students and improving their distance education programmes, and students are not getting a top-notch education (Castro et al. 2022). As a result of the abrupt implementation of online teaching in Saudi Arabia, a variety of blended learning strategies, such as asynchronous and synchronal online classes, virtual simulation sessions, formative examinations and self-directed learning activities, have been used in nursing courses to facilitate this process. Learning through these alternative means may not be experienced in the same way as learning through more traditional means. In preparation for future pandemic crises like COVID-19, educators and faculty members must make sure that contingency plans are included in their course specifications to ensure that teaching and learning processes will still be implemented for students on and off campus. Both educators and students have had to modify their practices to accommodate the unique demands of online instruction, which place a premium on student engagement and the use of technology. Students learning and their ability to apply what they have learned in a clinical setting may be affected by



their involvement with a curriculum that has been shifted from in-person to online delivery. Future teaching and learning practice can benefit greatly from insights into the effects of these activities on student interest, performance and conduct (Dewart et al. 2020).

For educational institutions to deliver trustworthy education, especially around clinical teaching, most nurse educators and faculty members have concluded that up-to-date learning management systems are essential. In their cross-sectional study of 922 students from the Western region of Saudi Arabia, Sammanodi et al. (2022) discovered that while 352 students (38.5% of the total) were satisfied with online clinical teaching and its impact on their academic achievements, 555 students (60.2% of the total) were convinced that the lack of actual clinical exposure was a major drawback of online teaching and could compromise their academic and clinical performance when they returned to hospital practice. There should be constant revisions to the course specifications and outlines to account for changes and alterations that may crop up during instruction. Moreover, 668 out of 922 (72.5%) students recommended that universities and colleges consider adopting the hybrid technique, which combines traditional classroom instruction with an online learning management system (Sammanodi et al. 2022). However, 518 students (56.2% of the total) said they had no interest in relying only on online courses in the future. Other challenges mentioned by the participants included the variations between theory and practice (online training); discrepancies among the theoretical objectives and outcomes of the clinical training; faults in identifying the patient's types due to no clinical exposure and lack of familiarisation of patients within the context of the profession. Lastly, theoretically and pragmatically, a study suggested that social networks provide new avenues for learning about nursing, making them essential training and education resources. Thus, these tools have the potential to enhance the educational training of nurses, which will help promote the health of the Arab people, thanks to the strong penetration of social networks in Saudi Arabia (AL-Dossary et al. 2022).

## 5 | Limitations

The following are some of the problems with this research: One, it has a small sample size; two, it only involved nurses from one institution, so the results may not be generalisable; and three, it only explored the narratives of the nurse educators and faculty members for a better understanding of the various challenges they faced in conducting online teaching during the pandemic.

## 6 | Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic is a calamity that is still playing out; it offers a significant opportunity for reform and a real-time illustration of equality, leadership and management, social justice, bioethics and patient care. The panorama of educational options will be irrevocably changed by this pandemic; in fact, it already has. Even though the pandemic caused major setbacks in nursing education, it also prompted improvements that will better prepare graduates for unforeseen circumstances and assist schools in avoiding similar setbacks in the future. Some of

these modifications, including virtual reality and virtual clinical simulations, are likely to be incorporated into the curriculum because they are useful substitutes for, or supplements, in-person group gatherings. Significant obstacles, such as a lack of familiarisation and interaction, digital literacy and technical concerns, curriculum structure and programme quality, have been faced by nurse educators and faculty members. It establishes new requirements that came up because of the new educational platforms that have been put into place by the Ministry of Education. The lives of nursing students were impacted because of these developments. Therefore, enhancing the abilities of nurse educators and faculty members in a pandemic crisis is essential if one wants to have a proper understanding of the issues that students experience while entering the area of nursing.

## 7 | Relevance to Nursing Education

Grounded on the outcomes of this qualitative descriptive study, the succeeding actions can shed light on how to resolve the challenges of the nursing education faculty members: (1) understand the new technology; (2) inspect content sources and software frequently; (3) be adaptable and ready for the unexpected; (4) construct and sustain a formidable presence; (5) maintain a healthy equilibrium between taking the lead and sitting back and observing; (6) create a welcoming environment and foster a sense of camaraderie among students by outlining specific goals for the duration of the course; (7) having productive asynchronous conversations can help promote reflection and communication and (8) make sure to get feedback frequently and watch out for misunderstandings.

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### Ethics Statement

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University (IAU-2020-04-414).

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

### Data Availability Statement

Data available on request due to privacy/ethical restrictions.

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