

Saudi Faculty Members' Perceptions and Use of Blackboard: The Impact of Individual Characteristics

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Abstract—This study investigates the perceptions and use of Blackboard among English as a foreign language (EFL) faculty members. Moreover, it explores the effect of age, years of experience using Blackboard, and academic rank on the perception and use of Blackboard. The sample comprised 149 EFL faculty members from different Saudi universities. This quantitative study utilized an online self-reported questionnaire for data collection. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, and Kruskal-Wallis test. The analysis yielded noteworthy findings. Firstly, faculty members held moderately positive views towards Blackboard. Furthermore, they reported moderate usage of Blackboard, primarily for announcements, course descriptions, and course content. Interestingly, age and academic rank did not significantly influence faculty members' perceptions and use of Blackboard. However, the length of Blackboard years of experience had a notable impact, as more excellent experience correlated with more frequent usage and positive perceptions of the platform. The study's findings have several pedagogical implications that can inform instructional practices and the integration of Blackboards in EFL classrooms in higher education in Saudi Arabia.

Index Terms—Blackboard, faculty members, perceptions, usage

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning management systems (LMSs) have become a critical and indispensable aspect of modern education, driven by the need to incorporate technology into classroom instruction effectively. LMSs, such as Moodle, Blackboard, and WebCT, have gained significant traction and are widely used in higher education institutions. An LMS is a web-based application that provides a comprehensive platform, facilitating students' learning across different teaching approaches, including distance, traditional face-to-face, and blended learning environments (McGill & Klobas, 2009).

While adopting LMSs in higher education institutions was initially slow in some countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of these systems, compelling educational institutions worldwide to rapidly transition to online learning modalities. This sudden shift to remote learning highlighted the importance of LMS in facilitating the transition and enabling the continuation of learning experiences in distance and blended learning. In the post-pandemic era, LMSs are expected to remain integral to educational settings as institutions embrace blended learning approaches (Singh et al., 2021).

Several studies have recognized the benefits and functionalities of LMS platforms as practical instructional tools in different educational settings, including blended and distance learning (Abbaspour, 2024; Bonk & Graham, 2006; Chang, 2022; Emelyanova & Voronina, 2014; Erben et al., 2009; Terzioglu & Kurt, 2019). One of the significant advantages of LMS platforms is their flexibility and convenience, allowing learners to access course material, resources, and assessments at any time and from anywhere with an internet connection (Bonk & Graham, 2006). This accessibility eliminates the constraints of time and place, allowing learners to engage in learning activities at their own pace and schedule, ultimately enhancing their learning experience. LMS also offers real-time synchronous and asynchronous communication tools (Emelyanova & Voronina, 2014), enabling effective interaction and collaboration among learners and instructors. These tools include discussion boards, chat rooms, and collaborative projects that foster engagement, knowledge sharing, and meaningful interactions (Terzioglu & Kurt, 2019). Another notable advantage of LMS platforms is their ability to provide personalized learning experiences that meet learners' needs and preferences and enhance learners' motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes (Chang, 2022). LMS platforms also facilitate efficient evaluation and monitoring of learners' performance (Erben et al., 2009). Instructors can create and administer assessments, monitor learners' progress, and provide timely feedback within the LMS platforms (Erben et al., 2009). Additionally, LMS platforms offer centralized learning where all learning materials, resources, assessments, and communication tools are available in one place (Abbaspour, 2024; Emelyanova & Voronina, 2014). This centralized approach simplifies access to course materials and promotes organization, efficiency, and use for learners and instructors (Emelyanova & Voronina, 2014).

However, despite the supportive features offered by LMSs, there is a persistent underutilization among faculty members (Jaschik & Lederman, 2014). Studies investigating faculty members' use of Blackboard revealed a tendency towards limited utilization of its functions. Instead of fully harnessing the potential of LMSs, faculty members often rely on them as supplementary tools to their traditional lectures, failing to take advantage of the synchronous functionalities provided (Hustad & Arntzen, 2013). Moreover, they often restrict their utilization of LMSs to basic features, such as posting course syllabi, recording grades, communicating with students, and recording lecture content (Jaschik & Lederman, 2014).

Understanding instructors' perceptions and usage of LMS is essential in addressing the underutilization of these platforms. Instructors' perceptions form the basis for the teaching methodology and are directly linked to their teaching style in that particular scenario (Kagan, 1992). However, the existing literature has primarily focused on learners' attitudes toward Blackboards, with few examining faculty members' perceptions and usage. In the context of higher education in Saudi Arabia, where LMS adoption is prevalent, there has been limited research examining instructors' use and perceptions of Blackboard, a commonly used LMS platform (Alsaied, 2016; Ibrahim et al., 2019; Mohsen & Shafeeq, 2014; Tawalbeh, 2018). These studies consistently found positive attitudes among Saudi faculty members toward Blackboard. However, these studies have yet to explore the effect of individual factors on their usage and perceptions of Blackboard.

Despite the importance of understanding individual factors that influence instructors' perceptions and usage of LMSs, more research is needed. Few studies examined the impact of age, experience, academic rank, and gender on instructors' perceptions and usage of LMS. Omotunde (2015) investigated the effect of age on pre-service teachers' perceptions of LMS and found a significant impact. Similarly, Al-Naibi et al. (2015) investigated the effect of age, experience, academic rank, and gender on Omani faculty members' use of Blackboard. They found that age and experience significantly influenced usage, while academic rank and gender did not.

Therefore, this study aims to address these gaps in the literature by examining Saudi faculty members' perceptions and use of Blackboard. Additionally, it investigates the effect of age, years of experience using Blackboard, and academic rank on their perceptions and usage. The study seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What are EFL faculty members' perceptions of Blackboard?
2. How often do EFL faculty members utilize Blackboard in their language teaching?
3. What are the primary purposes for EFL faculty members using Blackboard?
4. How do age, academic rank, and years of experience using Blackboard influence faculty members' perceptions and use of Blackboard?

Based on the fourth question, the study proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Age significantly influences faculty members' perceptions and use of Blackboard.

Hypothesis 2: Academic rank significantly influences faculty members' perceptions and use of Blackboard.

Hypothesis 3: Years of Blackboard experience significantly influence faculty members' perceptions and use.

By investigating these hypotheses, the study aims to contribute to understanding the individual factors that shape faculty members' perceptions and use of LMS platforms, explicitly focusing on Blackboard. The findings of this study inform educational institutions on how to provide targeted support and training programs to enhance faculty members' engagement with LMS platforms and to prompt effective utilization of the features and functionalities provided by these platforms.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

This study involved 149 EFL faculty members from different Saudi universities who were selected through a purposive sampling. All respondents had prior experience in using Blackboard. Table 1 presents the participants' demographic information, encompassing their academic rank, age group, and years of experience using Blackboard. By including faculty members from different academic ranks, age groups, and years of experience, the study aimed to capture diverse perspectives on using Blackboard and the impact of individual variables on perceptions and usage of this platform.

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Variable	Category	N	%
Academic rank	Professor	3	2.01
	Associate professor	17	11.4
	Assistant professor	83	55.70
	Lecturer	40	26.84
	Teacher Assistant	6	4.02
Age group	31-40	93	62.41
	41-50	45	30.20
	51-60	9	6.04
	above 60	2	1.34
Years of experience using blackboard	Less than three years	13	8.72
	3-5 years	39	26.17
	More than five years	97	65.10

B. Data Instruments

In this study, data were collected using an online self-reported questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to address the study's objectives and was divided into three parts, each targeting a specific purpose.

The first part of the questionnaire elicited demographic information from the respondents, including their age, gender, years of experience, and academic rank. This section provided a comprehensive overview of the participant's background and characteristics, enabling a better understanding of the sample composition and potential variations in perceptions and usage based on these demographic factors.

The second part of the questionnaire aimed to elicit participants' perceptions of Blackboard, focusing on three key constructs: perceived ease of use (4 items), perceived usefulness (4 items), and attitude towards the use of Blackboard (4 items). The study adapted items from a previous study by Venkatesh and Davis (2000) to elicit participants' perceptions of Blackboard. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with these items on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to disagree strongly.

The third part of the questionnaire assessed participants' actual usage patterns and purposes for using Blackboard. It includes items that measure the frequency of use in three different time frames (3 items). These items were adapted from Malhotra and Galletta (1999). Respondents were asked to indicate their usage frequency using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from never to every time. Also, the questionnaire explored the various purposes for which the participants utilized Blackboard in their teaching practices.

C. Validity and Reliability

The study ensured the validity and reliability of the collected data by utilizing established scales that have been widely used in previous research. Additionally, reliability analyses were conducted to assess the consistency of the data. The items used to evaluate perceptions were adapted from Venkatesh and Davis (2000), who reported satisfactory internal consistency values for the scale, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.934 to 0.963. Moreover, the items used to assess the use of Blackboard have been previously validated with a reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.875 (Malhotra & Galletta, 1999). This study's reliability analysis of the perception and usage scales yielded good Cronbach's alpha values (see Table 2). By ensuring the validity and reliability of the instruments used, the study enhanced the confidence in the accuracy and consistency of the data obtained.

TABLE 2
THE RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY INSTRUMENTS

Instruments	N	Cronbach's alpha
Perception	13	0.983
Actual use	3	0.940

C. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Initially, a normality test was conducted to assess the data distribution obtained from the questionnaire. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that participants' responses were not normally distributed in both scales. Therefore, a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine any significant difference between the different groups of different age levels, years of experience using Blackboard, and academic rank. In addition, descriptive analysis was also performed to examine the means and standard deviation of the collected data.

III. RESULTS

A. Faculty Members' Perceptions of Blackboard

The results of the faculty members' perceptions of Blackboard revealed that they held moderately positive views of this platform, with a mean score of 5.28 (SD=1.53) (see Table 3). This finding suggests that faculty members had a favorable perception of Blackboard overall. The participants' perceptions were assessed using three attitudinal constructs: perceived ease of use, usefulness, and attitudes toward using Blackboard.

Regarding the perceived ease of use, faculty members rated the platform moderately, with a mean score of 5.11 (SD=1.60). This finding revealed that the faculty members found Blackboard easy to use. While some faculty members may find the platform easy to navigate, others may require additional support or training to leverage its functionalities fully. Item 1: "My interaction with Blackboard is clear and understandable" received a mean score of 5.32 (SD=1.657), suggesting that faculty members generally found their interaction with Blackboard clear and understandable. Item 2: "Interacting with Blackboard does not require a lot of my mental effort" obtained a mean score of 4.95 (SD=1.726), revealing that faculty members perceived using Blackboard as requiring some mental effort. However, the score is still relatively moderate. Item 3: "I find Blackboard to be easy to use" received a mean score of 5.15 (SD=1.795), suggesting that faculty members found it easy to use, although some perceptions may vary. Item 4: "I find it easy to get Blackboard to do what I want it to do," obtained a mean score of 5.05 (SD=1.674), indicating that faculty members found it relatively easy to achieve their actions and goals on Blackboard.

The perceived usefulness of Blackboard received a slightly higher mean score of 5.31 (SD=1.58). This finding indicates that faculty members generally recognize the value and benefits of using Blackboard in teaching English courses. They perceived it as a valuable tool for improving performance, increasing productivity, and enhancing teaching effectiveness. Item 5: "Using Blackboard improves my performance as a faculty member" received a mean score of 5.29 (SD=1.698), suggesting that faculty members perceived Blackboard as a tool to enhance their performance as instructors. Item 6: "Using Blackboard in my job increases my productivity" obtained a mean score of 5.25 (SD=1.644), indicating that faculty members recognized Blackboard's potential to increase their productivity in teaching-related tasks. Item 7: "Using Blackboard enhances my effectiveness in my job" received a mean score of 5.27 (SD=1.609), suggesting that faculty members perceived Blackboard to improve their effectiveness in carrying out their job responsibilities. Item 8: "I find Blackboard useful in my job" obtained a mean score of 5.46 (SD=1.650), indicating that faculty members generally found Blackboard helpful in their job roles.

Regarding attitudes toward using Blackboard, the faculty members expressed moderately positive attitudes, as evidenced by a mean score of 5.41 (SD=1.60). This finding suggests they favor the platform and recognize its potential to enhance teaching and learning experiences. Item 9: "I think it is worthwhile to use Blackboard" received a mean score of 5.54 (SD=1.596), suggesting that faculty members strongly believed in using Blackboard in their academic activities. Item 10: "I like using Blackboard" obtained a mean score of 5.31 (SD=1.763), indicating that faculty members generally had a positive inclination towards using Blackboard. Item 11: "In my opinion, it is very desirable to use Blackboard for academic and related purposes" received a mean score of 5.47 (SD=1.634), indicating that faculty members perceived the use of Blackboard as highly desirable for academic and related purposes. Item 12: "I have a generally favorable attitude toward using Blackboard" obtained a mean score of 5.35 (SD=1.688), revealing a positive attitude towards using Blackboard.

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF FACULTY MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKBOARD

Construct	Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Perceived ease of use	1- My interaction with Blackboard is clear and understandable	149	1	7	5.32	1.657
	2- Interacting with Blackboard does not require a lot of my mental effort	149	1	7	4.95	1.726
	3- I find Blackboard to be easy to use	149	1	7	5.15	1.795
	4- I find it easy to get Blackboard to do what I want it to do	149	1	7	5.05	1.674
	Total	149	1	7	5.11	1.60
Perceived usefulness	5- Using Blackboard improves my performance as a faculty member	149	1	7	5.29	1.698
	6- Using Blackboard in my job increases my productivity	149	1	7	5.25	1.644
	7- Using Blackboard enhances my effectiveness in my job	149	1	7	5.27	1.609
	8- I find Blackboard to be useful in my job	149	1	7	5.46	1.650
	Total	149	1	7	5.31	1.58
Attitude toward the use	9- I think it is worthwhile to use Blackboard	149	1	7	5.54	1.596
	10- I like using Blackboard	149	1	7	5.31	1.763
	11- In my opinion, it is very desirable to use Blackboard for academic and related purposes	149	1	7	5.47	1.634
	12- I have a generally favorable attitude toward using Blackboard	149	1	7	5.35	1.688
	Total	149	1	7	5.41	1.60
Overall attitude		149	1	7	5.28	1.53

D. Faculty Members' Usage of Blackboard

The analysis of faculty members' Blackboard usage indicated they were moderate platform users, with a mean score of 5.11. The frequency of usage was assessed over different timeframes (see Table 4).

TABLE 4
FACULTY MEMBERS' FREQUENCY OF USE OF BLACKBOARD

Items	N	Mean	SD
1- Overall, to what extent do you use Blackboard?	149	5.32	1.573
2- To what extent did you use Blackboard last month?	149	5.12	1.793
3- To what extent did you use Blackboard last week?	149	4.90	1.962
Total	149	5.11	1.684

Table 5 provides information on the purposes for which faculty members used Blackboard and the corresponding frequencies and rankings. Data showed that the most common purpose for using Blackboard was course description, reported by 106 faculty members, representing 10.28% of the total purposes. The second most frequent purpose was announcements, reported by 105 faculty members, accounting for 10.17% of the total purposes. Other purposes include course content (9.60% of the total responses), communication with students (6% of the total responses), and grading (5% of the total responses). The least used functions were the discussion forum, student feedback, and chatrooms. These functions were reported by a smaller number of faculty members, indicating a lower frequency of usage.

TABLE 5
FACULTY MEMBERS' PURPOSES FOR USING BLACKBOARD

Purpose	N	%	Rank
Announcements	105	10.17	2
Assignments	98	9.49	4
Chatrooms	11	1.06	16
Communication with students	81	7.84	6
Course content	99	9.59	3
Course description	106	10.27	1
Discussion forums	27	2.61	14
Email	59	5.71	10
Exams	67	6.49	8
Feedback from students	26	2.51	15
Grading	87	8.43	5
Group work	28	2.71	13
Learning resources	62	6.00	9
Links to websites	41	3.97	12
Recording lectures	51	4.94	11
Virtual classrooms	72	6.97	7
Total	1032	100%	

C. The Role of Age, Years of Blackboard Experience, and Academic Ranks on Faculty Members' Perceptions and Usage

This study examined the role of age, years of experience using Blackboard, and academic rank in faculty members' perceptions and use of Blackboard. Tables 6 and 7 present the results on the influence of these variables on faculty members' perceptions and use of Blackboard.

Hypothesis 1 stated that age would significantly influence faculty members' perceptions and use of Blackboard. However, the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test did not support this hypothesis. The test did not find a significant effect of age on faculty members' perceptions and use of Blackboard. The insignificant p-value (above 0.05) indicates that the perceptions and use of the Blackboard were similar across different age groups. In other words, faculty members' age did not significantly influence their perceptions and use of the Blackboard.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that years of Blackboard experience would significantly influence faculty members' perceptions and platform use. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test supported this hypothesis. The analysis revealed a significant effect of Blackboard years of experience on faculty members' perceptions (p-value= 0.001) and use (p-value= 0.003) of Blackboard. Specifically, years of experience using Blackboard impacted perceived ease of use, usefulness, attitudes toward use, and overall perceptions. This finding suggests that faculty members with different experience levels hold varying perceptions of Blackboard. Moreover, faculty members with long experience using Blackboard tend to use this platform more frequently than those with years of experience less than five years.

Hypothesis 3 stated that academic rank would significantly influence faculty members' perceptions and use of blackboard. However, the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test did not support this hypothesis. The test did not find a significant effect of faculty members' academic rank on their perceptions and overall use of Blackboard. This finding revealed that faculty members with varying academic ranks had similar views and usage patterns of Blackboard.

In summary, the study indicated that years of experience significantly influenced faculty perceptions of Blackboard, while age and academic rank did not considerably impact them. These results provide valuable insights into the factors influencing faculty members' use and perceptions of Blackboard, allowing institutions to tailor their support and training strategy accordingly.

TABLE 6
KRUSKAL-WALLIS TEST ON THE EFFECT OF AGE, EXPERIENCE, AND ACADEMIC RANK ON FACULTY MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKBOARD

Perception subscale	Age			Experience			Academic rank		
	N	Kruskal-Wallis test	Sig	N	Kruskal-Wallis test	Sig	N	Kruskal-Wallis test	Sig
Perceived ease of use of Blackboard	149	2.76	.429	149	14.99	.001	149	1.44	.836
Perceived usefulness of Blackboard	149	1.89	.595	149	7.088	.029	149	5.25	.262
Attitudes toward Blackboard	149	1.26	.739	149	10.71	.005	149	5.35	.253
Total	149	1.95	.583	149	10.61	.005	149	3.59	.465

TABLE 7
KRUSKAL-WALLIS TEST ON THE EFFECT OF AGE, EXPERIENCE, AND ACADEMIC RANK ON FACULTY MEMBERS' USE OF BLACKBOARD

	Age			Experience			Academic rank		
	N	Kruskal-Wallis test	Sig.	N	Kruskal-Wallis test	Sig.	N	Kruskal-Wallis test	Sig.
Actual use	149	1.516	.679	149	11.972	.003	149	3.565	.468

IV. DISCUSSIONS

The study yielded several significant findings that enhanced our understanding of how Saudi faculty members perceive and utilize Blackboard and the impact of individual factors on their perception and usage. Overall, faculty members held moderately positive views towards Blackboard, perceiving it as easy to use and valuable and maintaining a favorable attitude towards its use. These findings align with previous studies on Saudi instructors' perceptions of Blackboard in higher education (Alsaied, 2016; Mohsen & Shafeeq, 2014; Tawalbeh, 2018; Ibrahim et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the study revealed that faculty members reported moderate usage and engagement with Blackboard, primarily utilizing it for essential functions such as posting announcements, course descriptions, and course content. However, their usage did not extend to exploring Blackboard's full range of functionalities. In other words, their usage is limited to essential tasks.

Interestingly, age and academic rank did not significantly influence faculty members' perceptions and use of Blackboard. This suggests that regardless of age or academic rank, faculty members generally held similar views and engaged in comparable levels of blackboard usage. These findings align with those of Al-Naibi et al. (2015), who found no significant impact of academic rank on Blackboard usage. However, they contrast with Omotunde (2015) and Al-Naibi et al. (2015) regarding the significance of age in influencing perceptions and use. These discrepancies might be attributed to contextual factors or differences in the study samples.

On the other hand, the length of Blackboard experience emerged as a significant factor influencing faculty members' perceptions and use. Faculty members with more extensive experience using the platform tended to utilize it more frequently and held more positive perceptions of its capabilities. This finding highlighted the importance of providing ongoing training and support to enhance faculty members' familiarity with Blackboard. Institutions can offer workshops, online resources, and peer support to improve instructors' effective use of Blackboard.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study provides valuable insights into the perceptions and use of Blackboards among Saudi EFL faculty members. It emphasizes the significant role of the length of experience using Blackboard in shaping faculty members' perceptions and engagement with the platform. The results have several pedagogical implications for higher education institutions. Firstly, the findings highlighted the importance of providing continuous training and support to faculty members using Blackboard to enhance their familiarity and proficiency with this platform. Secondly, faculty members should be aware of the diverse functionalities offered by Blackboard. Lastly, by recognizing the influence of years of experience using Blackboard on faculty members' perceptions and use, institutions can design targeted support and training programs based on their experience levels. Educational institutions can foster positive and productive use of LMS by providing ongoing support, promoting exploration of functionalities, and acknowledging the impact of years of experience using Blackboard, which can empower faculty members to make the most of Blackboard and enhance the overall educational experiences for students.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the data. Firstly, the data collection relied on a self-reported questionnaire subject to potential biases. Secondly, the study focused on the influence of age, years of experience using Blackboard, and academic rank on instructors' perceptions and use of Blackboard. Furthermore, this study was conducted with a specific context- Saudi EFL faculty members. The findings need to be more generalizable to other disciplines or cultural contexts. By addressing these limitations and pursuing future research in these areas, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing faculty members' perceptions and usage of Blackboard and inform the design of effective interventions and support strategies to promote its successful integration into teaching EFL courses.

Several recommendations can be made for future research based on the limitations identified in this study. Firstly, the study recommends that future research consider employing mixed-methods approaches that combine self-report measures with qualitative methods such as interviews to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Blackboard's perceptions and use among faculty members. Secondly, future research could consider additional contextual factors influencing faculty members' perceptions and use of Blackboard. For example, system quality and facilitating conditions could be examined to gain a more holistic understanding. Lastly, the study recommends conducting comparative studies across different disciplines and cultural contexts, contributing to a broader understanding of the factors influencing faculty members' perceptions and usage of Blackboard.

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