

## Investigating Libyan Students' Perceptions and Challenges of Writing Graduation Research Projects

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### ملخص الدراسة

تبحث هذه الدراسة في آراء الطلاب الليبيين وتحديات كتابة مشاريع التخرج في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في ثلاث جامعات ليبية مختلفة (جامعة الزيتونة، جامعة مصراتة، وجامعة طرابلس). تهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد العوامل التي تؤثر على كتابة الطلاب لمشاريع التخرج والتحديات التي يواجهونها خلال العملية. كان عدد المشاركين في هذه الدراسة 51 طالباً وطالبة وقد جمعت البيانات من خلال استبيان مقتبس من مقال Obateru المنشور في عام 2022. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة إلى أن الطلاب الليبيين يواجهون العديد من التحديات عند كتابة مشاريع التخرج، بما في ذلك الصعوبات اللغوية ونقص التوجيه والقيود الزمنية. كما أظهرت النتائج أن الطلبة يستخدمون استراتيجيات مختلفة منها الاستعانة بملاحظات الزملاء والاساتذة واستخدام التطبيقات الالكترونية المختلفة والمتوفرة على شبكة المعلومات الدولية. وفي ختام الدراسة قام الباحث بطرح بعض التوصيات للمعلمين لدعم الطلاب الليبيين في كتابة مشاريع التخرج بشكل فعال.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الطلاب الليبيون، الآراء، التحديات، كتابة المشاريع البحثية، اللغة الإنجليزية، التعليم العالي، الاستراتيجيات.

**Abstract**

This study investigates Libyan students' perceptions and challenges of writing research projects in English language department at three different Libyan universities (University of Al-Zytuna, University of Misurata, and University of Tripoli). The study aims to identify the factors that influence students' perceptions of writing research projects and the challenges they face throughout the process. Data were collected from 51 male and female students through a questionnaire adapted from Obateru's article, published in 2022. The study's findings suggest that Libyan students face several challenges when writing research projects, including language barriers, lack of guidance, and time constraints. However, they use various strategies to overcome these challenges, such as seeking feedback from peers and instructors and utilizing online resources. The study concludes with recommendations for educators to support Libyan students in writing research projects effectively.

**Keywords:** *Libyan students, Perceptions, Challenges, Writing research projects, English language, Higher education, strategies.*

**Introduction**

Writing research projects is an essential component of higher education, particularly at the undergraduate and graduate levels. It is a crucial means of evaluating students' research skills, critical thinking, and ability to communicate ideas effectively. However, writing research projects can be a challenging task for many students, and understanding their perceptions and challenges can help educators provide more effective support.

**Background of the study**

Numerous studies such as (Odunze, 2019) examined the challenges that

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students face when writing research projects. Libya is a North African country that has undergone significant political and social changes in recent years, which have affected its education system. Al-Mokhtar (2022) examined challenges faced by Libyan EFL university students in writing graduation projects, along with insights from their supervising teachers. Using a mixed-methods approach, they gathered data through a structured questionnaire (60 respondents) and semi-structured interviews (6 supervisors with at least three years of experience). Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data underwent Thematic Analysis. The study found students struggled with various aspects of project writing, including introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis, and conclusion. Academic writing, referencing, and limited resources were identified as major obstacles. The findings underscore the need for a Learning Support Centre to enhance students' research skills and academic performance. Also, Elmabruk and Bishti (2020) employed exploratory mixed-methods case study research to investigate attitudes and challenges regarding Research Graduation Projects (RGP). The study aimed to address negative attitudes and barriers in preparation for successful RGPs. Data were collected through a questionnaire (n=52), focus group discussion with seventh-semester students (10), and semi-structured interviews with staff (13). About 54% of students supported RGP, while the rest cited concerns including resource limitations and time constraints. Staff members exhibited mixed reactions, with some highlighting students' lack of research skills and inadequate resources, while others saw RGP as a valuable experience. Challenges like research skill gaps, supervision quality, and plagiarism were identified. New staff sought additional training in data analysis and supervision. Therefore, it is important to investigate the perceptions and challenges of writing research projects among Libyan students.

**Research problem**

The problem that this study aims to address is the lack of information on Libyan students' perceptions and challenges of writing research projects. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the factors that influence students' perceptions of writing research projects and the challenges they face throughout the process.

**Research questions**

The research questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. What are Libyan students' perceptions of writing research projects?
2. What are the challenges that Libyan students face when writing research projects?
3. How do Libyan students overcome the challenges of writing research projects?
4. What strategies can educators implement to support Libyan students in writing research projects?

**Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate Libyan students' perceptions of writing research projects.
2. To identify the challenges that Libyan students face when writing research projects.
3. To explore the strategies that Libyan students use to overcome the challenges of writing research projects.
4. To provide recommendations for educators to support Libyan students in writing research projects.

**Significance of the study**

This study's significance lies in its potential to provide insights into the perceptions and challenges that Libyan students face when writing research projects. The findings of this study can inform the development of strategies and interventions to support students in writing research projects effectively. Additionally, this study can contribute to the literature on research writing in higher education and provide a basis for future research in this area.

### **Scope of the study**

According to Elmabruk and Bishti's (2020) research, a diverse range of attitudes and challenges related to RGPs. Approximately 54% of the student respondents expressed support for RGPs, while the remaining participants raised various concerns. Some of these concerns were related to practical challenges such as limited resources and time constraints. Staff members' perspectives were equally varied. Some expressed reservations due to perceived limitations in students' research skills and available resources. On the other hand, some staff members viewed RGPs as a valuable opportunity for students to gain practical research experience, especially in preparation for postgraduate studies. Key challenges identified through the study included gaps in students' research skills, the quality of supervision provided, and concerns about plagiarism. The study also highlighted the need for further training for new staff members, particularly in areas such as data analysis and supervision practices. In essence, Elmabruk and Bishti's (2020) research shed light on the complex landscape of attitudes and challenges surrounding RGPs. By employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the study provided a holistic view of the perceptions and issues faced by both

students and staff, contributing valuable insights for improving the RGP experience and outcomes.

So, this study focuses on Libyan students' perceptions and challenges of writing research projects in English language department at three different Libyan universities to explore more challenges and perceptions. The study conducted during Spring semester, 2022- 2023 and included 51 male and female students. The data collected through a questionnaire adapted from Obateru's article, which was published in 2022. The study's findings limited to the sample of students in this study and may not be generalizable to other contexts.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Definition of Research Projects**

Research projects are academic assignments that involve investigating a particular topic or issue using a systematic and rigorous approach. For example, (Bashford et al., 2018) who tried to understand and elevate the clinical care of individuals afflicted with traumatic brain injury in settings characterized by limited resources, a systems-oriented methodology presents itself as a valuable instrument. The purpose of research projects is to contribute new knowledge to a particular field of study, and they typically involve conducting literature reviews, collecting and analyzing data, and presenting findings in a written report. Research projects are a common requirement in higher education, particularly at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and they are used to evaluate students' research skills, critical thinking, and ability to communicate ideas effectively. (Akinoglu & Yigit, 2018).

#### **Importance of Research Projects**

Research projects are essential for developing students' research skills and preparing them for future careers in academia or industry. Research projects

provide students with an opportunity to engage in independent research, apply theoretical concepts to real-world problems, and develop critical thinking skills.

They also provide students with an opportunity to develop writing and presentation skills, which are essential for academic and professional success (Marefat & Hedayati, 2018).

Research projects also play an important role in advancing knowledge in a particular field of study. They contribute new insights and perspectives to existing literature, and they can lead to the development of new theories, concepts, or applications. Research projects are also important for informing policy and decision-making in various fields, including healthcare, education, and business (Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2019).

### **Challenges of Writing Research Projects**

Writing research projects can be a challenging task for many students, particularly those who are new to research or have limited experience with academic writing. Some of the common challenges that students face when writing research projects include:

Time management: research projects typically require a significant amount of time to complete, including conducting research, analyzing data, and writing the final report. Many students struggle with time management, which can lead to rushed or incomplete projects.

1. Choosing a topic: choosing a topic for a research project can be challenging, particularly if students are unfamiliar with the field or have limited experience with research. Students may struggle to identify a research question that is both manageable and interesting.

2. Conducting research: conducting research can be a time-consuming and complex process, particularly if students are unfamiliar with research methodologies or data analysis techniques.
3. Writing the report: writing the final report can be a daunting task, particularly if students have limited experience with academic writing or are not confident in their writing skills (Alharbi & Kabilan, 2017).

Mahammuda (2016) conducted a study at the University of Bahir Dar in Ethiopia to explore the challenges faced by undergraduate students and their supervisors during the research supervision process. The study identified four key factors that influenced the quality of research: educational, psychological, social/personal, and institutional. Academic challenges encompassed students' deficiencies in analytical skills, critical thinking, language proficiency, and a lack of motivation to complete their research. Psychological difficulties included students' lack of confidence and motivation, which affected their overall psychological well-being. Social and personal factors encompassed ineffective time management, limited interaction with supervisors, and difficulties in obtaining cooperation from research participants for implementing research instruments. Institutional issues, such as a scarcity of up-to-date textbooks and limited library resources, also contributed to the overall quality of research.

In a separate study, Dwihandini, Marhaeni, and Suarnajaya (2013) examined the factors influencing students' research projects at Mahasarakswati University in Indonesia. Three primary factors were found to significantly impact the research process: psychological, socio-



cultural, and linguistic factors. The research findings indicated challenges related to sentence cohesion and coherence, vocabulary selection, and structural organization, all of which were associated with socio-cultural influences. Linguistic factors included difficulties in achieving sound research writing with minimal grammar errors. Psychological factors encompassed students' feelings of inadequacy, uncertainty in choosing a project topic, and a lack of confidence in their knowledge and writing skills when crafting a thesis.

Kuo and Chiu (2009) conducted a study to explore the factors influencing the academic performance of Taiwanese undergraduate students when writing research projects. The researchers aimed to investigate students' perceptions, experiences, challenges, and strategies related to research writing. The study also aimed to identify the types of support students required during the writing process. The research findings revealed a mix of positive and negative perceptions among students. Some students viewed research work as complex and demanding due to their limited academic backgrounds and deficiencies in critical thinking skills. While a portion of students characterized the process of writing a research project as laborious, fatiguing, and time-consuming, others found it engaging, thought-provoking, and beneficial. Overall, both studies underscore the multifaceted challenges that students encounter during the research process, including academic, psychological, social, and institutional factors. These factors collectively influence the quality of research and the overall success of undergraduate students' research projects.

**Related Studies on Students' Perceptions and Challenges of Writing Research Projects**

Several studies have examined students' perceptions and challenges of writing research projects in various contexts. For example, Khojasteh and Shokrpour (2018) conducted a study aiming to delve into four key research inquiries pertaining to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' viewpoints: (1) their perceptions of their own classroom participation; (2) the factors that either hinder or encourage their active involvement; (3) the merits and demerits of assigning grades for class participation; and (4) the positive and negative outcomes associated with graded participation. Employing a qualitative descriptive research approach through a case study, this investigation collected data from 120 medical students using a combination of closed and open-ended questions. Subsequently, interviews were conducted with 10 students. The findings illuminated that a majority of the students (85%) do not categorize themselves as actively engaged participants in their English classes. Factors such as psychological, physical, and teacher-related influences were identified as driving forces behind their class participation, whereas cultural norms, course materials, and teacher-related aspects were found to impede students' engagement. Additionally, approximately half of the participants expressed ambivalence towards the grading of class participation, citing a lack of intrinsic motivation to study English as a core reason.

Similarly, Alharbi and Kabilan (2017) conducted a study on Saudi Arabian students' perceptions of writing research projects and found that students perceived research projects as challenging but valuable for developing critical thinking and research skills. The study also identified challenges related to time management, choosing a topic, and conducting research

Alharbi & Kabilan, (2017).

In the Libyan context, few studies have explored students' perceptions and challenges of writing research projects. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring Libyan students' perceptions and challenges of writing research projects, identifying the factors that influence their perceptions, and exploring strategies that students use to overcome the challenges of writing research projects. (Alzahrani, 2018).

### **Methodology**

#### **Research**

##### **Design**

This study used a questionnaire as a quantitative data collection tool to collect information on students' perceptions and experiences of research projects writing (Azizifar& Kiany (2019).

##### **Participants**

The participants in this study were undergraduate students in the English language department at three different Libyan universities, (University of Al-Zytuna, University of Misurata, and University of Tripoli). The sample consists of 51 male and female Libyan students who are currently enrolled in research writing course during the seventh and eighth spring semester of 2022-2023. The participants selected using a convenience sampling method (Berberoglu& Sariçoban, 2019).

##### **Data Collection Instrument**

The data collection instrument for this study was a questionnaire adapted from Obateru's article, which was published in 2022. The questionnaire consists of both closed-ended and open-ended questions measured on a four point Likert scale: (Very Simple, Fairly Simple, Somewhat Difficult, and

Extremely Difficult), and covered the following areas:

1. Demographic information
2. Perceptions of writing research projects
3. Challenges faced when writing research projects
4. Strategies used to overcome challenges
5. Recommendations for educators to support students in writing research projects.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection for this study takes place during spring semester of 2022-2023. The participants informed about the study and invited to participate via email. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants have the option to withdraw from the study at any time. The questionnaire administered online using Google Forms, and participants were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies. The data transcribed and analyzed by two independent coders, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion and consensus. The findings from the quantitative analyses were used to provide a comprehensive understanding of Libyan students' perceptions and challenges of research projects writing.

### **Results**

#### **Participants' Demographic Information**

The participants in this study were 51 undergraduate students in the English language department at three different Libyan universities. The sample

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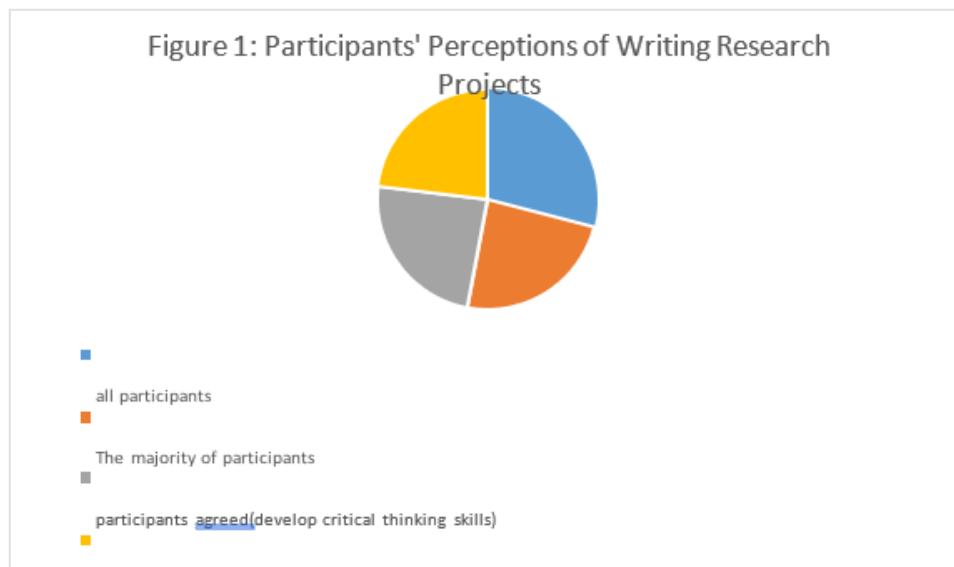
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consisted of 27 female students and 24 male students. Majority of the participants' (86.3%) age ranged between 20 and 25, while the remaining participants' age was between 26 and 30. All participants were enrolled in the course.

### **Participants' Perceptions of Writing Research Projects**

The participants in this study generally had positive perceptions of writing research projects. Nearly all participants (96.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that

writing research projects is an important part of their education. The majority of participants (79.2%) also agreed or strongly agreed that writing research projects helped them develop critical thinking skills, and 76.5% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that writing research projects helped them develop research skills.



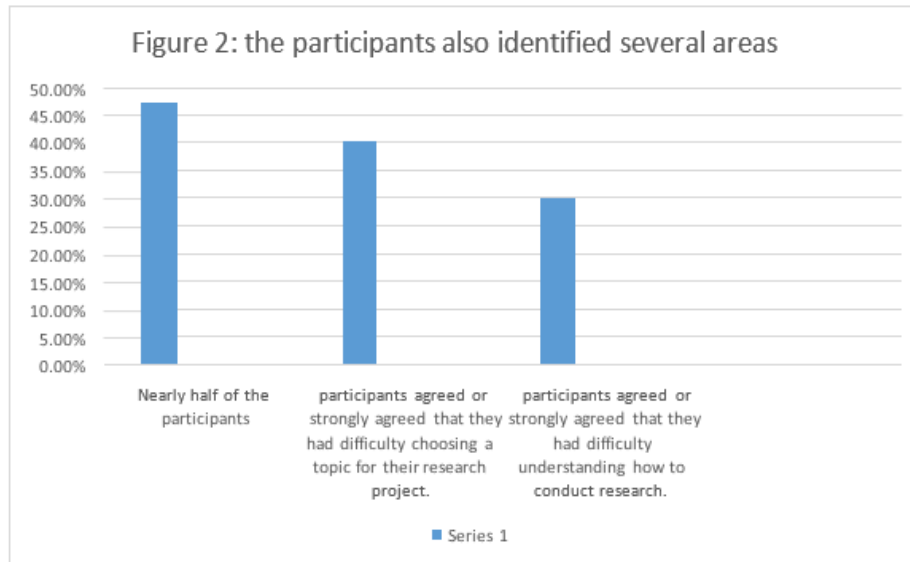
However, the participants also identified several areas of concern. Nearly half of the participants (47.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that writing

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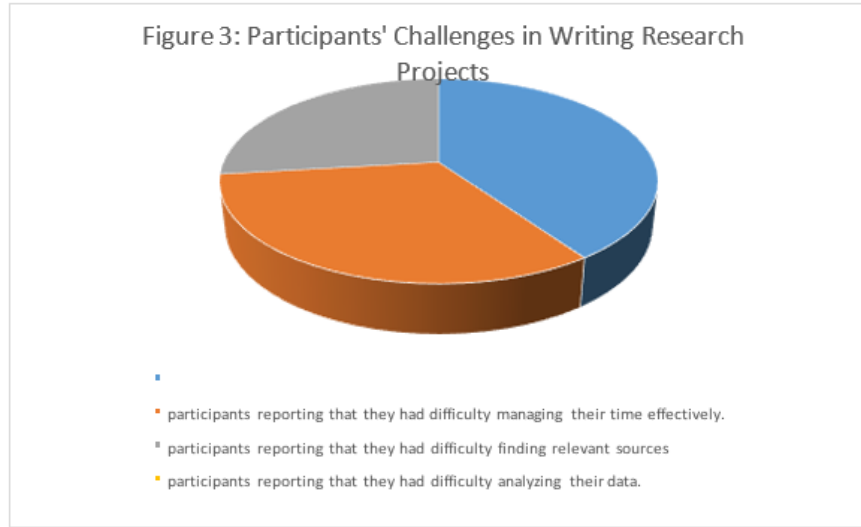
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research projects was stressful, and 41.2% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had difficulty choosing a topic for their research project. Additionally, 29.4% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had difficulty understanding how to conduct research.

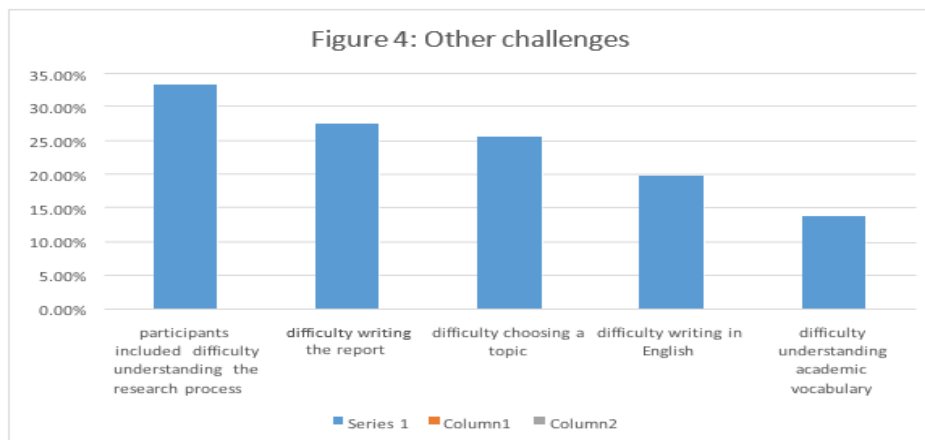


### **Participants' Challenges in Writing Research Projects**

The participants in this study faced several challenges when writing research projects. The most commonly reported challenge was time management, with 52.9% of participants reporting that they had difficulty managing their time effectively. The second most commonly reported challenge was conducting research, with 43.1% of participants reporting that they had difficulty finding relevant sources and 35.3% of participants reporting that they had difficulty analyzing their data.



Other challenges reported by participants included difficulty understanding the research process (33.3%), difficulty writing the report (27.5%), and difficulty choosing a topic (25.5%). Some participants also reported challenges related to language proficiency, including difficulty writing in English (19.6%) and difficulty understanding academic vocabulary (13.7%).

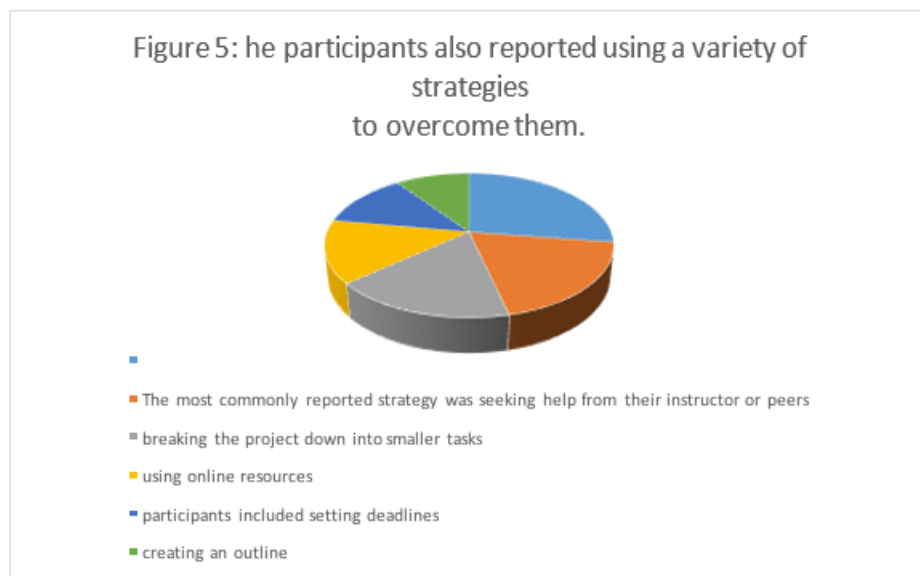


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Despite these challenges, the participants also reported using a variety of strategies to overcome them. The most commonly reported strategy was seeking help from their instructor or peers (64.7%), followed by breaking the project down into smaller tasks (45.1%) and using online resources (41.2%). Other strategies reported by participants included setting deadlines (33.3%), creating an outline (29.4%), and using a citation management tool (23.5%).



## **Discussion**

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings of this study provide insights into Libyan students' perceptions and challenges of writing research projects. The participants generally had positive perceptions of writing research projects, but also identified several challenges, including time management, conducting research, and difficulty choosing a topic. The participants used a variety of strategies to overcome



these challenges, including seeking help from instructors and peers, breaking the project down into smaller tasks, and using online resources (Liu& Wang, 2019).

### **Comparison with Previous Studies**

The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies on students' perceptions and challenges of writing research projects in other contexts. For example, Khojasteh and Shokrpour's (2018) study on Iranian medical students' perceptions of writing research projects found that students faced challenges related to time management, conducting research, and writing the final report. Alharbi and Kabilan's (2017) study on Saudi Arabian students' perceptions of writing research projects also identified challenges related to time management and conducting research. (Alharbi & Kabilan's, 2017)

### **Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study have several implications for educators and policymakers. First, the study highlights the importance of providing support

and resources for students to overcome the challenges of writing research projects. This could include providing workshops on time management, research methodology, and academic writing, as well as offering individualized support and feedback from instructors. (Berberoglu & Sariçoban, 2019).

Second, the study underscores the importance of addressing language proficiency issues among students. This could include providing language support services, such as English language courses, tutoring, and resources to help students improve their academic vocabulary and writing skills.

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Finally, the study highlights the need for further research on students' perceptions and challenges of writing research projects in other contexts. This could include exploring the experiences of students in different academic disciplines or in different parts of the world, as well as investigating the effectiveness of different strategies and interventions to support students in writing research projects. (Elsherif & Alshammari, 2020).

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research in this area could include investigating the experiences of students in different academic disciplines or in different parts of the world. Additionally, research could explore the effectiveness of different strategies and interventions to support students in writing research projects, such as providing language support services or offering individualized support and feedback from instructors.

Further research could also investigate the impact of technology on students' perceptions and challenges of writing research projects. For example, research could explore the use of online resources, citation management tools, and other digital tools to support students in conducting research and writing the final report.

Overall, the findings of this study provide a basis for future research in this area and underscore the importance of providing support and resources for students to overcome the challenges of writing research projects.

**Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore Libyan students' perceptions and challenges of writing research projects. The study used research design methods, which involved administering a questionnaire to collect quantitative data. The findings of the study indicated that the participants generally had positive

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perceptions of writing research projects but faced challenges related to time management, conducting research, and difficulty choosing a topic. The participants used a variety of strategies to overcome these challenges, including seeking help from instructors and peers, breaking the project down into smaller tasks, and using online resources.

**Contributions of the Study**

This study contributes to the literature on students' perceptions and challenges of writing research projects by providing insights into the experiences of Libyan students. The study highlights the importance of providing support and resources for students to overcome the challenges of writing research projects and underscores the need for further research in this area. (Khaled& Alshammari. (2021).

**Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this study is the small sample size, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study was limited to undergraduate students in the English language department at three Libyan universities, which may not be representative of all Libyan students or students in other academic disciplines

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research in this area could include investigating the experiences of students in different academic disciplines or in different parts of the world. Additionally, research could explore the effectiveness of different strategies and interventions to support students in writing research projects, such as providing language support services or offering individualized support and feedback from instructors. (Le, 2020).

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**Appendix**  
**Students Questionnaire**  
**Students' Difficulty in Writing Research Projects**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\* VS=Very Simple, FS=Fairly Simple, SD=Somewhat Difficult,  
ED=Extremely Difficult.**

S/N	Items	Difficulty L e v e l			
	CHAPTER ONE	VS	FS	SD	ED
1	Conceiving an idea and formulating it into a researchable topic				
2	Relating a research topic to my area of specialization				
3	Deciding on the research variables to study				
4	Writing the background to the study				
5	Establishing the statement of the problem of the study				
6	Deciding the main aims of the study				
7	Deciding the specific objectives of the study				
8	Framing the research questions/hypothesis				
9	Deciding the delimitation/geographical scope of the study				

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CHAPTER TWO					
1 0	Able to get current body of literature for the study				
1 1	Able to state the conceptual/theoretical framework				
1 2	Able to review related empirical studies				
1 3	Able to link previous studies with the current.				
1 4	Stating the gap in literature				
1 5	Summarizing the literature review				
CHAPTER THREE: Methodology					
1 6	Deciding and justifying the appropriate Research Design to employ				
1 7	Choosing and justifying the choice of the population/sample for the study				
1 8	Deciding and justifying the sampling technique(s) to adopt for the study				
1 9	Describing and justifying the sample size adopted				
2 0	Deciding and justifying the choice of instrument(s) to adopt				
2 1	Able to adopt or adapt a pre-existing instrument				
2 2	Determining the validity and reliability of the instrument				
2 3	Able to administer and collect data				
2 4	Deciding and justifying the choice of statistical tool(s) for data analysis				
2 5	Able to effectively use the chosen method of data analysis				
2 6	Able to use the SPSS or other analysis software for data analysis				
CHAPTER FOUR: Result Presentation and Discussion					



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2 7	Able to present results in tables and graphs				
2 8	Able to interpret results				
2 9	Able to discuss the findings of the study				
3 0	Able to Link the discussions to previous studies				
3 1	Able to summarize major findings from the study				
CHAPTER FIVE : Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation					
3 2	Able to summarise and conclude the study				
3 3	Able to make appropriate recommendation(s) from the study				
REFERENCES					
3 4	Able to consistently reference in line with the APA, MLA etc. format				