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Faculty Perceptions and Preferences Toward Online Language Assessments: A Post-COVID Evaluation of Blackboard-Based Testing in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated faculty perceptions and preferences about online assessments supported by Blackboard in higher education with a focus on the effectiveness of post-pandemic assessments. Thus, this research had four objectives: (a) to measure faculty attitudes toward fairness, safety, and feasibility of online assessments; (b) to compare those attitudes based on demographic variables (such as age, gender, rank, and familiarity with Blackboard); (c) to measure faculty preferences for specific objective versus subjective types of assessment; and (d) to compare such preferences based on demographic characteristics. This study specifically explores online assessment in the context of language learning, examining how faculty perceive and prefer Blackboard-based formats for evaluating linguistic performance and communication skills. Using purposive sampling, a total of 40 faculty members of varying ranks and disciplines participated in a quantitative, cross-sectional survey. A semi-structured Likert-type questionnaire with ranking items was administered for data collection. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS. Results showed that although faculty did appreciate the benefits of Linguistics Blackboard assessments, especially the automatic grading and administrative convenience, significant issues remained regarding academic integrity, cheating, and exam security. The findings provide important considerations for the existing literature on digital language assessment practices in higher education and offer practical implications for sustained assessment innovation beyond the pandemic period. This study

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adopts an exploratory design, providing preliminary insights specific to English Language faculty using the Blackboard LMS, rather than aiming for broad generalizations.

Keywords: Perception; Blackboard Assessments; Post-Pandemic Assessments; Online Exams Integrity; Faculty Preferences; English-Language Assessments

1. Introduction

Digital assessment has gained momentum in higher education over the past 10 years, with the growing reliance on LMS, such as Blackboard. These systems provide several functions that enable instructors to distribute tests, quizzes, and assignments for online English language assessment[1]. With the maturing of education systems following the COVID-19 pandemic, an increasing number of institutions are interested in developing sustainable digital approaches to maintain quality, fairness, and access during assessment[2]. In the aftermath of COVID, faculty use of digital assessment platforms is no longer a stopgap but a permanent feature of pedagogical practice. Thus, assessing faculty experiences and preferences provides a basis for modifying LMS tools such as Blackboard as institutions adopt them. Applied linguistics, which often relies on nuanced evaluations of learner performance, presents a unique context where faculty insight is essential for maintaining effective and valid assessment methods[3].

Subjectivity, context, and measurement of performance are key factors in language assessment. Language testing has less to do with identifying the correct answer than with formal grading of open-response answers, oral engagement, and critical commentary, requiring more faculty engagement. It provides insights into how linguistic faculty assess digital testing tools for those purposes, providing a touchstone for balancing automation with pedagogical subtlety.

At the same time, the work contributes to the growing body of literature highlighting the need for context-aware and culturally sensitive evaluation frameworks. Online assessment tools are sometimes perceived differently in non-Western educational contexts within applied linguistics because of limitations of technology, institutional policies, and teacher readiness. This study fills that gap with a post-pandemic snapshot, not only providing insight for LMS developers but also informing policymakers and applied linguists invested in online assessments that they are equitable, efficient, and linguistically sound.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Problem Statement

Although students' experiences with online assessments have been widely studied, faculty perceptions have remained understudied, particularly their preferences for question formats and how those align with their demographic background and academic roles[4]. In applied linguistics programs, where linguistic judgment, subjective interpretation, and rubric-driven grading often intersect, the type of assessment used (objective or subjective) can significantly affect outcomes.

Moreover, limited research exists that considers how post-pandemic realities have reshaped faculty attitudes toward digital English language assessment. As universities transition to hybrid or fully digital learning environments, understanding how instructors evaluate the fairness, reliability, and practicality of Blackboard assessments has become increasingly essential[5]. These insights can inform faculty training, LMS platform development, and broader educational policy reform.

The aim of this study is to address the need for more longitudinal, instructor-focused inquiries that examine the legacy of pandemic-driven transitions and provide guidance for future-ready academic assessment models, particularly in linguistically rich fields. As digital assessments continue to grow in higher education, there remains a need to understand how instructors perceive and respond to such technologies in their daily teaching practice. This study adopts an exploratory design, focusing on a specific learning management system (Blackboard) within a defined academic context. Exploratory studies are particularly valuable when investigating emerging or under-researched topics, where the goal is to identify patterns and raise questions for future investigation rather than to draw generalized con-

clusions[6,7]. Within this framework, the use of a smaller, focused sample is both methodologically acceptable and analytically appropriate.

2.2. Research Objectives

In this study, I focus on four key objectives:

1. To evaluate faculty perceptions regarding the linguistic fairness, security, and practicality of Blackboard-based online language assessments.
2. To assess the influence of demographic variables (age, gender, academic rank, and Blackboard experience) on faculty perceptions of language-focused online assessment.
3. To explore faculty preferences for different assessment formats (objective vs. subjective) and specific question types (e.g., multiple-choice questions [MCQs], essays, short answers) in relation to language testing.
4. To determine whether preferences for language assessment formats vary significantly based on demographic characteristics.

2.3. Research Questions

1. What are faculty perceptions regarding the linguistic fairness, security, and practicality of Blackboard-based online assessments?
2. How do demographic variables such as age, gender, academic rank, and Blackboard experience influence faculty perceptions of online language assessment?
3. What are faculty preferences for different assessment formats (e.g., objective vs. subjective) and specific question types (e.g., multiple-choice questions, essays, short answers) when it comes to language testing?
4. Do faculty preferences for language assessment formats significantly vary according to demographic characteristics?

2.4. Significance of the Study

This research provides practical implications for faculty development, instructional design, and the ongoing enhancement of Blackboard functionalities. It also contributes to the growing body of literature on sustainable digital pedagogy, particularly in regions where face-to-face instruction remains less consistent. From the perspective of applied linguistics, these findings are especially valuable because the field often straddles the line between automated assessment and subjective, rubric-driven evaluation[8].

The study highlights lessons learned from the post-COVID emergency; institutional adaptations responding to the pandemic are ongoing and not just temporary emergency measures. Mohamed et al. also observed that the evaluation of digital assessment in the post-pandemic context is more tangible and actionable regarding which aspects of digital assessment warrant continued use, some degree of refinement, or replacement[9]. In linguistically diverse fields such as English language education, optimizing the online assessment experience could benefit from the input of faculty members involved in this evolution.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Faculty Perceptions of Online Assessments in Higher Education

The immediate switch to online assessment has affected how faculty perceive post-COVID assessments. A study by Cabrera found that although faculty members acknowledged the need for online assessments during a pandemic, ongoing issues persisted regarding academic integrity and assessment effectiveness[5]. In the same vein, Ahmed et al. also demonstrated that students appreciated the flexibility of online assessments, but teachers faced challenges with student participation and concerns regarding academic integrity[10]. Compounding these perceptions are unequal tiers of institutional provision and technology systems that enable or obviate efficient online assessments[11]. Insensitivity to these perceptions constitutes a vital role of the cognitive faculty that transcends abstract theorems to explain how to overcome knowledge gaps for improved online assessment in the higher education context.

3.2. Influence of Demographic Variables on Faculty Perceptions

Faculty perceptions of online English-Language assessments are greatly influenced by their demographic characteristics (such as age, gender, academic rank, and years

of experience). Sattayaraksa et al. found that, on the one hand, faculty members were highly heterogeneous in their perceptions of the success of online learning depending on their position and years of experience, with more experienced faculty being more confident in online assessment methods[4]. Gender, on the other hand, did not significantly affect perceptions in this study and did not play a critical role in faculty perception of online teaching roles and competencies[12]. These results revealed that although faculty demographic factors do matter, their influence depends on context and the particular study. Tracking these differences is key to ensuring that professional development and support programs can cater to the distinct needs of various faculty groups.

3.3. Impact of Demographic Variables on Faculty Perceptions

Online assessments have become a controversial and prevalent subject in higher education, but faculty perceptions of this issue are not homogeneous and vary in relation to demographics, including academic field, age, gender, academic rank, and exposure to learning management systems (e.g., Blackboard). For instance, Zeib and Tariq reported that older faculty members did not feel as confident or competent in setting online assessments as their younger counterparts did[13]. The new members were more innovative and explorative in assessment design, often adapting quickly to the latest technologies. Likewise, it is possible that gender differences influenced assessment attitudes, but the results were inconclusive[14].

Chan et al. found that, when it came to perspectives on fairness and practicality, men and women were generally aligned; however, female faculty members expressed greater concerns regarding students' equal access to technology[14]. Academic rank is more specifically correlated to experience and institutional expectations[15]. Based on previous studies, junior faculty tend to be more enthusiastic about using Digital assessment systems but also report more anxiety about exam integrity than their senior faculty counterparts[16]. Such variety implies that institutional strategies guiding the development of online assessment systems need to fit diverse faculty needs better to result in effective and widespread adoption.

3.4. Faculty Preferences for Assessment Formats

Differences in perceived pedagogical effectiveness, student engagement, and disciplinary norms have been correlated with faculty preferences for various assessment formats. On the one hand, faculty prefer objective formats such as MCQs for large cohorts because of simple marking and standardization. On the other hand, fields such as applied linguistics often require deeper cognitive engagement and language proficiency to achieve learning outcomes, which is why subjective assessments, such as essays and short-answer questions, are a preferred form[17].

An initial study by Viberg et al. indicated that educators in the humanities are more inclined toward authentic assessments that encourage critical thinking and contextual comprehension[17]. Subjective formats more accurately reflect discourse, grammar, and pragmatic use (all of which include aspects of communication) in applied linguistics, which is much more communicative in orientation[18]. However, a mixed method provides a more efficient alternative to in-depth evaluation.

3.5. Challenges and Opportunities in Online Assessments

The shift to online assessments in higher education has brought both significant challenges and new opportunities. One of the foremost concerns is academic integrity. In remote environments, maintaining honesty becomes more difficult due to the absence of direct supervision. Holden et al. emphasized that online assessments are more vulnerable to cheating, prompting institutions to implement advanced monitoring tools and redesign assessments to minimize dishonesty[18]. Technical issues are also prevalent; students and instructors alike face unreliable internet connections, software malfunctions, and device incompatibility, all of which affect the fairness and reliability of assessment outcomes[19].

However, these very challenges have encouraged pedagogical innovation. Institutions are increasingly adopting authentic assessment models that emphasize real-world tasks, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. The models encourage deeper learner participation and lessen the risk of the learner cheating[20]. Finally, the evolution of learning analytics on online platforms enables instructors to provide

immediate personalized feedback, making assessment more formative and responsive to different learner needs. These developments are indicative of a field that continues to grapple with innovative approaches to assessment, suggesting that online assessments with their distinct challenges may offer novel opportunities to enhance educational practice in the post-COVID era.

3.6. Implications for Applied Linguistics

This issue also provides a rich context for research on the challenges and opportunities of online assessments in language education relevant to researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in applied linguistics. A significant issue is the validity and reliability of online language assessments, especially regarding the problem of dishonesty and the authenticity of student answers. According to Sharma and Holbah, there are issues regarding the security and fairness of online assessments, including the need to develop viable and reliable tools to accurately assess language ability remotely [21]. On the contrary, opportunities exist to improve language assessment practices by using technological advancements. According to Bui, the possibility of self-assessment versus online assessments could encourage learner autonomy, and providing instant feedback is more effective than in-person assessments for language acquisition [22]. Moreover, the implementation of automated assessment tools such as AI-driven essay-scoring systems can support effective assessment of language skills [23]. However, these automated methods need to be balanced with a human element to incorporate the more complex components, ensuring that applied linguistics assessments capture proficiency comprehensively and fairly.

The literature outlined above indicates a growing academic interest in online assessment systems, with a particular focus on higher education and applied linguistics. The major themes are equity, technical mechanisms, educator beliefs, and the trade-off between automation and nuanced assessment. Although digital tools and their impact on learning outcomes post-COVID have been widely researched, studies on how these insights can develop into years-long trajectories or be used in other educational fields, including language education, are comparatively scarce. The lack of longitudinal and subject-specific research creates an opportunity to explore faculty attitudes and preferences toward Blackboard-based assessments and how these should inform the development of future assessments.

4. Research Design

I used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey to assess faculty perceptions and preferences regarding online assessment in higher education, based entirely on the capabilities of the Blackboard system. To assess measurable attitudes and behaviors, I employed a quantitative approach, which allowed the data to be subjected to statistical tests and findings, and generalized them to a broader population [24]. The survey was cross-sectional, allowing for data collection at a single point in time, which helped capture a snapshot of faculty experiences and attitudes related to changes in education that may have occurred post-COVID.

4.1. Research Design and Sampling Strategy

This study followed an exploratory design, which is commonly used when the research goal is to gain preliminary understanding of a specific issue in a defined context. In such designs, large samples are not always necessary, particularly when the intent is not to generalize but to identify patterns or raise questions for further investigation. As noted by Creswell and Dörnyei, exploratory studies may rely on smaller sample sizes when aiming to explore underexamined issues or trial instruments [6,7]. This approach was suitable given the focus on faculty perceptions within one institutional setting.

A total of 40 faculty members participated in the study, selected through purposive sampling. The participants were from the English Language department and all had prior experience using the Blackboard platform. The sample size, while modest, was suitable for the study's exploratory nature. The goal was to obtain in-depth responses from a focused group rather than achieve statistical representativeness. Although the sample included individuals across academic ranks, no stratification by rank or gender was applied, which is acknowledged as a limitation.

Participants

The target group comprised faculty members from English Linguistics departments of higher education institutions. The participants in the study were 40 faculty members who differed in terms of age, gender, academic rank (N = assistant professors, lecturers, and professors), and days of experience

with Blackboard. This diversity ensured that the findings were generalizable and allowed for subgroup-based analysis by demographic factors. However, previous studies have indicated that if digital assessments are to be introduced, faculty should at least consider a segmented approach based on demographic characteristics [25,26].

4.2. Instrument Development

The data were collected through a structured questionnaire, which included Likert-scale items and one ranking question. The questionnaire focused on four areas: (a) faculty perceptions of online assessments (fairness, cheating, and ease of use), (b) preference for objective versus subjective formats, (c) experience with Blackboard, and (d) satisfaction and confidence levels. The term "faculty perceptions" was examined through several interrelated components. These included ease of use, fairness of the platform, concerns about academic integrity (e.g., cheating), system reliability, trust in digital security, and overall satisfaction. These sub-categories were used to structure the questionnaire and allow for more focused analysis of attitudes toward Blackboard-based assessment. The responses for the Likert items were on a 5-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), whereas the ranking item asked respondents to rank six question types (e.g., essay, MCQ, short answer). I adapted and validated the items in accordance with previous instruments used in e-learning and assessment research [27]. To ensure content and face validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in language education and educational technology. Their feedback was used to revise item phrasing and layout for clarity and relevance. Pilot testing with five faculty members helped confirm that the items aligned with the intended constructs. Consistency in survey administration was maintained by providing the same instructions and format to all participants, supporting procedural reliability. While statistical reliability such as Cronbach's alpha was not emphasized due to sample constraints, the overall design focused on instrument clarity, contextual fit, and expert validation.

4.3. Data Collection Procedure

I administered the questionnaire using Google Forms, and the results were collected within a three-week timeframe during the Spring 2025 academic semester. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The university's research committee gave ethical clearance, and all participants were informed of the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and provided with consent forms prior to participation. The choice of an online questionnaire was consistent with post-COVID best practices in educational research to ensure ease of access and reduced health risks [28].

4.4. Data Analysis Techniques

I analyzed the dataset using SPSS (Version 27) and computed descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) for each perception item to assess general trends. Nonparametric inferential tests were employed due to the ordinal nature of Likert-scale responses and the small sample size. Specifically, I applied the Mann–Whitney U test to examine differences in perceptions across gender and nationality groups. I used the Kruskal–Wallis test to analyze group differences by academic rank and extent of Blackboard experience. Spearman's rank correlation was used to assess the relationship between Blackboard experience and confidence-related variables. Secondly, I performed Friedman's test to compare ranking preferences for each assessment type. Such methods are consistent with good practice in the analysis of ordinal survey data in educational technology research [29,30].

4.5. Ethical Considerations

The Institutional Review Board for Ethics in the relevant designated capture area approved the study. I informed all participants that their answers would remain confidential and anonymous following that data was gathered and saved for further proceedings and analysis. I followed principles of health-care research standards and respected the rights of human participants.

5. Data Analysis

In this section, I present the methodology for data analysis and the data collected through a structured questionnaire to ascertain the perceptions of faculty members regarding online assessments. I obtained and analyzed 40 valid responses using IBM SPSS Statistics. The analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistics, aligning with the

study's four research objectives. This section begins with a demographic description of the participants and then moves to analysis of each objective.

5.1. Descriptive Statistics

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the 40 participating faculty members. The distribution reflects a balanced sample in terms of gender, experience, and academic diversity. **Table 1** presents the demographic distribution of the participants. Regarding gender, 55% of the participants were female (n = 22), and 45% were male (n = 18). In terms of academic rank, the majority were assistant professors (50%), followed by lecturers (32.5%), teaching assistants (10%), associate professors (5%), and professors (2.5%). This suggests that most participants were in the early- to mid-career stages of academia.

Regarding nationality, 60% of the participants were Saudi nationals (n = 24), and 40% were non-Saudi (n = 16), suggesting a diverse academic population. The age distribution showed that the largest age group was 31–40 years (42.5%), followed closely by the 41–50 group (40%). Participants aged 20–30 and 51–60 each represented 7.5%, and only one respondent (2.5%) was aged 60 or above. Concerning Blackboard-based language assessment experience, the majority of respondents (65%) reported having less than one year of experience. A further 27.5% had 1–3 years, 5% had 6–10 years, and only 2.5% had over a decade of experience with Blackboard. These findings reflect a relatively recent shift to digital platforms, which is consistent with post-pandemic adaptations in higher education.

Table 1. Participant demographics (n = 40).

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	18	45.0%
	Female	22	55.0%
Academic Rank	Professor	1	2.5%
	Associate Professor	2	5.0%
	Assistant Professor	20	50.0%
	Lecturer	13	32.5%
	Teaching Assistant	4	10.0%
Nationality	Saudi	24	60.0%
	Non-Saudi	16	40.0%
Age Group	20–30	3	7.5%
	31–40	17	42.5%
	41–50	16	40.0%
	51–60	3	7.5%
	60+	1	2.5%
Blackboard Experience	Less than 1 year	26	65.0%
	1–3 years	11	27.5%
	6–10 years	2	5.0%
	10+ years	1	2.5%

5.2. Objective 1: Faculty Perceptions of Online Assessments

This section analyzed faculty perceptions of online assessments using descriptive statistics for Likert-scale items (Q15–Q30) and ranking preferences (Q31). The aim was to understand how instructors perceive fairness, practicality, accuracy, and security in the online assessment environment, particularly Blackboard.

5.2.1. Descriptive Statistics

The analysis revealed, on the one hand, that faculty members generally agreed that invigilating Blackboard exams is impractical (Mean = 3.90) and that it is easier to cheat on online exams than paper-based ones (Mean = 4.30), raising major concerns about exam security and integrity. On the other hand, items related to accessibility and technological reliability scored lower means, indicating faculty members were skeptical regarding online assessments being more accessible or secure, as shown in **Table 2**.

The results in **Table 2** reflect mixed attitudes. Although some practical benefits are clear, such as the ease and efficiency of automatic grading and the versatility provided by varied question types on Blackboard, many faculty members expressed notable concerns about cheating and fairness, doubts about the security and reliability of online English-Language assessments, and practical difficulties in monitoring

online exams. Collectively, these findings underline a cautious acceptance of digital assessments, contingent on improvements in security measures and technical support. Moreover, these results should be viewed within the context of a limited sample size and should not be generalized without further large-scale investigation. Perceptions about assessment security, fairness, and confidence in digital tools were considered separately, as they represent distinct aspects of faculty experience with Blackboard. **Figure 1** provides a visual summary of faculty perceptions on various aspects of online assessments. The highest concern was reflected in the item "It is easier to cheat on online exams than paper-based ones," with a mean score exceeding 4.0. Faculty members also expressed strong agreement with statements highlighting challenges in invigilation, technical disruptions, and perceived fairness. In contrast, lower mean scores were noted for statements regarding system reliability and the security of online platforms. Overall, the distribution of scores demonstrates a clear tension between the convenience of online assessments and the persistent concerns around cheating and digital integrity.

Table 2. Faculty perceptions of online assessments.

Statement	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
MCQs do not accurately reflect knowledge levels	40	3.18	1.06
Blackboard question variety makes exams practical	40	3.75	0.93
Technical problems make online exams impractical	40	3.53	1.06
Invigilating Blackboard exams is impractical	40	3.90	1.03
Off-campus online exams are a practical solution	40	2.95	1.20
Online exams are more accessible than paper-based exams	40	2.80	1.14
Automatic grading is more accurate than human grading	40	3.78	1.07
Technology used in online assessments is unreliable	40	2.53	0.91
Online assessments benefit some students more than others	40	2.85	1.21
Paper-based exams are fairer than online exams	40	3.65	1.17
Randomized questions can result in inconsistent difficulty	40	3.08	1.07
Online assessments are as secure as paper-based ones	40	2.45	1.06
I am confident my online grading is secure	40	3.30	1.04
It is easier to cheat on online exams than paper-based ones	40	4.30	0.99
Online exams are vulnerable to hacking	40	3.43	1.03
I am confident Blackboard exams are secure	40	3.13	0.94

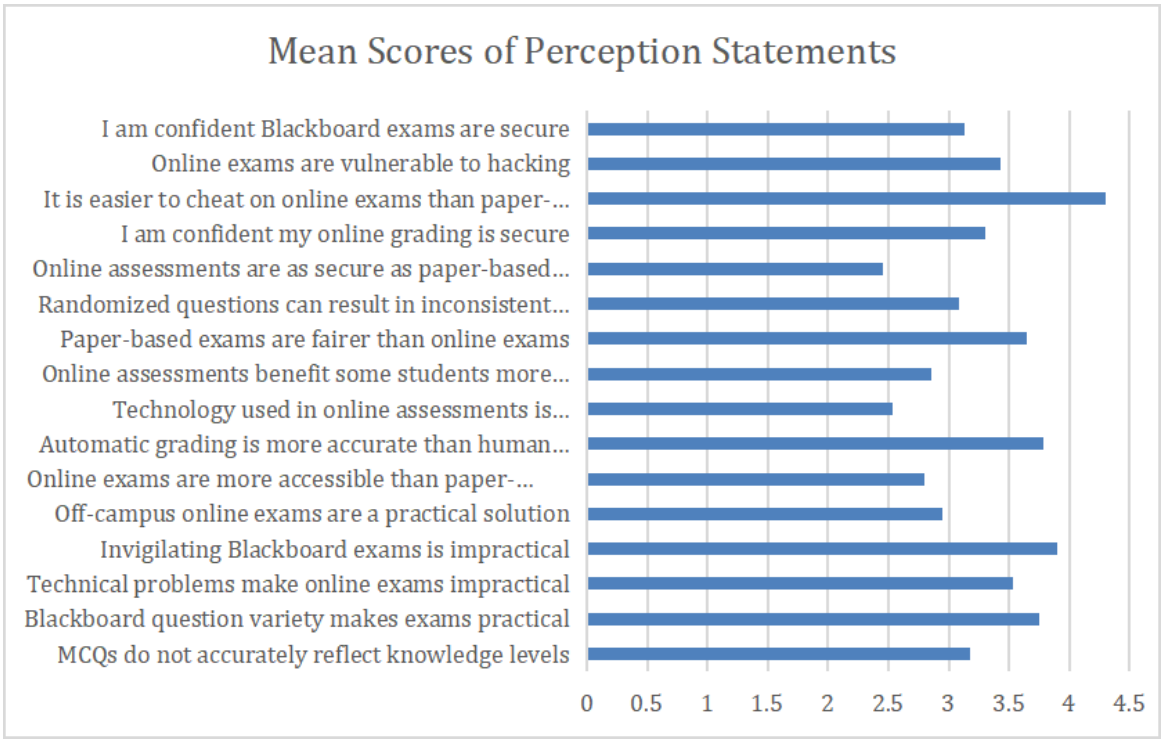

Figure 1. Mean scores of perception statements.

5.2.2. Ranking Analysis

Respondents ranked their preferences among six types of questions commonly utilized in online English-Language assessments. I calculated mean ranks for each assessment type and subsequently conducted a Friedman test to determine whether the differences observed in these preferences were statistically significant, as shown in **Tables 3** and **4**.

As shown in **Table 4**, the Friedman test indicated that the observed differences in rankings are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Among these, MCQs were most preferred, whereas matching-type questions were least favored. This insight suggests a practical inclination among faculty for assessment types that are more structured and objective. **Figure 2** illustrates the distribution of mean ranks across different question types used in online English-language assessments. Multiple-choice questions (MCQs) received the lowest mean rank, indicating the highest preference among faculty members. Essay-type and short-answer questions were also moderately preferred, while matching items were rated the least favorable, with the highest mean rank. This trend reflects a preference for structured, objective formats that are easier to administer and evaluate, particularly in technology-mediated assessment environments.

Table 3. Faculty preferences for assessment question types.

Question Type	*N*	Mean Score	Mean Rank
MCQ	40	2.65	2.65
Essay	40	3.73	3.73
Short Answer	40	3.45	3.45
True/False	40	3.38	3.38
Blanks	40	3.18	3.18
Matching	40	4.63	4.63

Table 4. Friedman Test Result.

Test Statistic	Value
Chi-Square	24.714
df	5
p-value	0.000

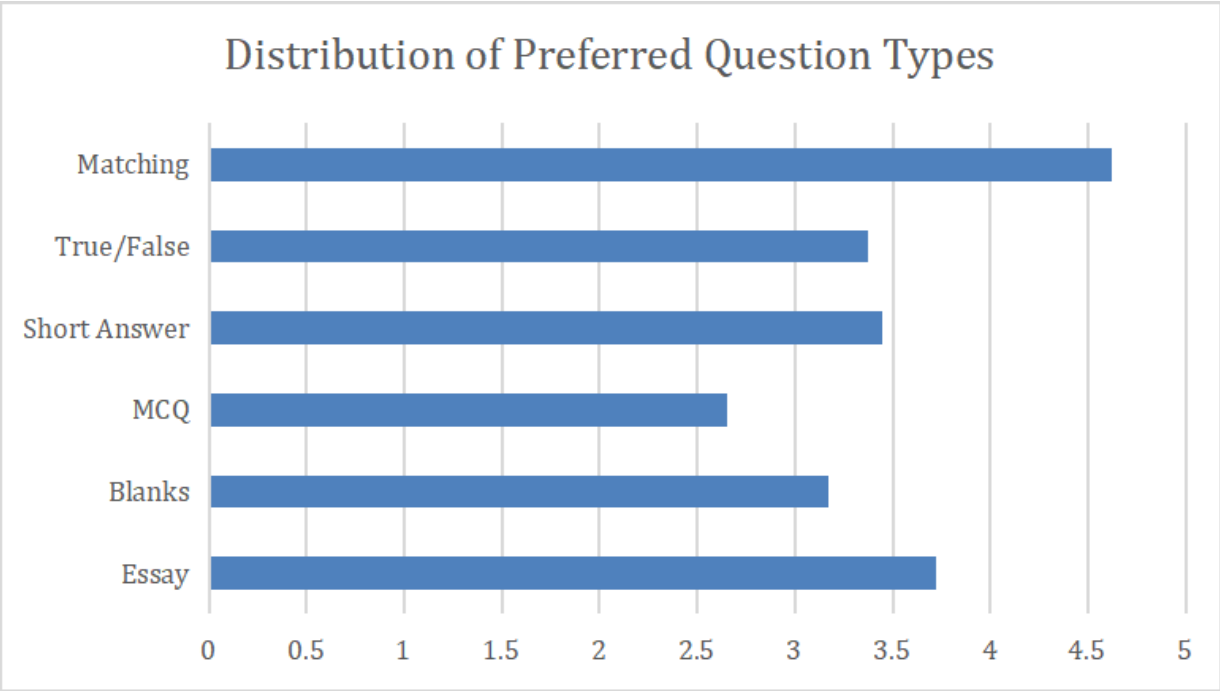

Figure 2. Mean ranks of faculty preferences for online assessment question types.

5.3. Objective 2: Influence of Demographic Variables on Faculty Perceptions

This section investigated whether faculty perceptions of online English-Language assessments differ across demographic factors using nonparametric statistical tests. Demographic categories included gender, academic rank, Blackboard experience, and nationality. I analyzed each group with specific Likert-scale statements relevant to their context.

5.3.1. Gender and Faculty Perceptions

Gender may influence how faculty perceive the linguistic fairness, integrity, and reliability of online assessments. To examine this, I selected perception items that reflect comfort, fairness, cheating concerns, and exam security and analyzed the following statements:

- "I feel more comfortable with paper-based assessments than online assessments."
- "Paper-based exams are fairer than online exams."
- "It is easier to cheat on online exams than paper-based ones."
- "I am confident Blackboard exams are secure."

According to the statistical results presented in **Table 5**, the differences between male and female faculty members were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). These results suggest that gender may not strongly influence faculty views on fairness, cheating, or online exam security in this sample. The bar chart visually compares gender-based differences in faculty perceptions of online assessments. **Figure 3** illustrates the mean ranks of male and female faculty members on four perception-related statements about online assessments. Female faculty reported slightly higher agreement across all items: they felt more confident in Blackboard exam security, perceived a higher risk of cheating in online exams, believed paper-based exams were fairer, and felt more comfortable with paper-based assessments. Although the differences were subtle, the trend suggests that female faculty members may be slightly more critical or cautious in their perceptions of online English-Language assessment environments than their male counterparts are. While not statistically significant, the small differences in mean ranks suggest a possible directional pattern that could be examined further in a larger and more balanced sample.

Table 5. Gender-based differences in perceptions of online assessments.

Statement	Male Mean Rank	Female Mean Rank	Sig. (2-tailed)
Comfort with paper-based exams	19.31	21.48	0.544
Paper-based exams are fairer	20.22	20.73	0.888
Easier to cheat in online exams	19.69	21.16	0.662
Confidence in Blackboard exam security	19.92	20.98	0.761

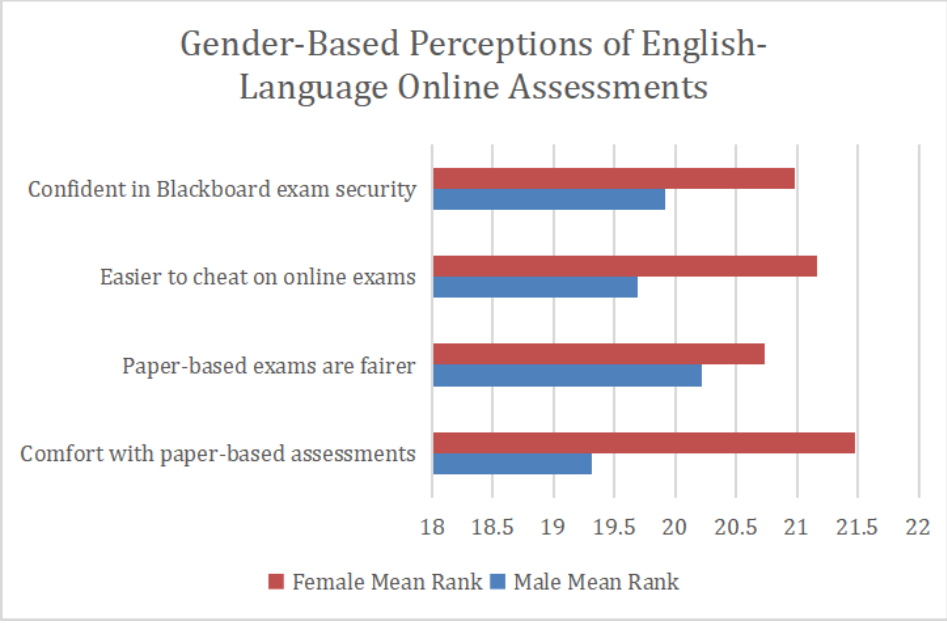

Figure 3. Gender-based perceptions of online English-Language assessments.

5.3.2. Academic Rank and Faculty Perceptions

Academic rank is associated with different teaching responsibilities and technological exposure. Senior academics may approach online English-Language assessment differently than lecturers or teaching assistants do. Thus, I selected statements that explore exam appropriateness, complexity, practicality, and grading confidence. I analyzed the following statements:

- "Online assessment is appropriate for the subject I teach."
- "My subject area is too complex to be assessed using online multiple-choice questions."
- "The variety of question types makes Blackboard exams practical."
- "Technical problems make online exams impractical."
- "I am confident my online grading is secure."

The results showed that none of the differences in perception across academic ranks were statistically significant (all $p > 0.05$). Although none of the differences reached statistical significance, two items—subject complexity ($p = 0.099$) and practicality of varied question types ($p = 0.080$)—showed a degree of variation worth noting. However, such results should be interpreted with caution given the sample size. Professors and teaching assistants appeared to have more distinct views on these areas, indicating that experience level and teaching role may influence how online linguistic assessment methods are perceived, as depicted in **Table 6**. These findings suggest a possible trend worth exploring in future research.

Table 6. Kruskal–Wallis test results: Effect of rank on online assessment design and functionality perception.

Statement	Chi-Square	Sig.
Appropriateness for subject	7.541	0.110
Complexity of subject	7.815	0.099
Practicality of variety of question types	8.328	0.080
Technical problems	1.401	0.844
Confidence in online grading	2.892	0.576

5.3.3. Blackboard Experience and Faculty Perceptions

Experience with Blackboard likely affects faculty confidence and perceptions of security, reliability, and grading. More experienced users may perceive fewer issues. I analyzed the following statements:

- "Online exams play an important role in modern higher education."
- "Automatic grading is more accurate than human grading."
- "Technology used in online assessments is unreliable."
- "Online exams are vulnerable to hacking."
- "I am confident Blackboard exams are secure."

The results shown in **Table 7** exhibited that none of the differences based on faculty experience were statistically significant (all $p > 0.05$). However, two statements regarding technology reliability ($p = 0.146$) and vulnerability to online exam hacking ($p = 0.141$) indicated some variation in perception across experience levels. The non-significant differences ($p > 0.05$) indicate slight perceptual variation, though not strong enough to draw firm conclusions. This may reflect underlying differences in digital confidence, but further evidence is needed.

Table 7. Kruskal–Wallis test results: impact of Blackboard experience on assessment reliability and security perception.

Statement	Chi-Square	Sig.
Role in modern education	3.267	0.352
Accuracy of automatic grading	3.550	0.314
Tech reliability	5.375	0.146
Online exam hacking	5.461	0.141
Confidence in Blackboard security	3.441	0.328

5.3.4. Nationality and Faculty Perceptions

Cultural and institutional contexts can shape how faculty from different nationalities perceive digital assessments, particularly regarding suitability and trust in technology. I analyzed the following statements:

- "Online assessment is appropriate for the subject I teach."
- "Online exams play an important role in modern higher education."
- "I am confident Blackboard exams are secure."

5.3.5. Key Results

A statistically significant difference was observed for the statement regarding subject-specific appropriateness (p = 0.048), with Saudi faculty indicating greater support. While this result meets the significance threshold, it should still be interpreted vigilantly due to the limited sample size. Although the other two statements regarding online exams in modern education and confidence in Blackboard exam security did not reach statistical significance (p = 0.117 and p = 0.222, respectively), the trend suggests that Saudi faculty generally held slightly more favorable views than their non-Saudi counterparts did, per the results shown in **Table 8**. These findings highlight the potential influence of cultural or institutional familiarity on acceptance of online assessment tools.

Figure 4 illustrates nationality-based differences in perceptions of online assessment appropriateness, showing that Saudi faculty consistently reported higher mean ranks across all three statements, particularly regarding the appropriateness of online exams for their subject areas. The chart visually emphasizes the contrast in attitudes between Saudi and non-Saudi respondents and highlights that only the first item showed a statistically significant difference. This pattern highlights the potential role of cultural familiarity in shaping faculty acceptance of digital assessments, though broader studies are needed to explore this further.

Table 8. Comparison of Saudi and non-Saudi faculty perceptions toward online assessment appropriateness.

Statement	Saudi Mean Rank	Non-Saudi Mean Rank	Sig.
Appropriateness for subject	23.38	16.19	0.048
Online exams in modern education	22.65	17.28	0.117
Confidence in Blackboard exam security	22.23	17.91	0.222

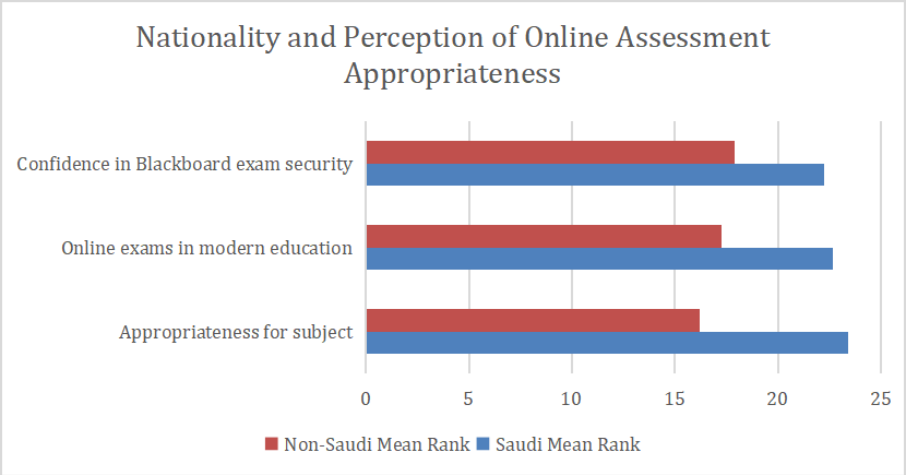

Figure 4. Mean ranks of Saudi and non-Saudi faculty on perceptions of online Linguistic assessment appropriateness.

5.4. Objective 3: Influence of Blackboard Training and Experience on Faculty Confidence

This section explores whether faculty training and years of experience using Blackboard relate to their confidence in administering and grading online assessments. The analysis uses nonparametric methods suitable for ordinal data and small sample sizes, with the intent of identifying possible trends rather than drawing generalized conclusions.

The item "I am confident Blackboard exams are secure" directly assesses faculty trust in online platform se-

curity, which is critical because security concerns often hinder the adoption of technology. I tested this against the Blackboard-based language assessment experience, categorized in years.

Table 9 presents the correlation analysis examining the relationship between faculty members' experience with Blackboard-based assessment and their confidence in the platform's security. The results showed that no significant relationship exists between Blackboard experience and confidence in the exam platform's security, suggesting that merely having experience does not increase trust in system security. Even experienced users may retain concerns about security vulnerabilities. To analyze differences between first-time users and experienced users, I conducted a Mann–Whitney U Test. The statement "I am well trained to administer assessments on Blackboard" reflects perceived preparedness, whereas "It is the first time I assess my students using Blackboard" captures user familiarity. This test assessed whether first-time users feel less confident in their training.

According to the statistical results and **Table 10**, there was a slight difference in mean ranks between first-time and experienced users regarding their confidence in administering assessments via Blackboard. However, the difference was minimal and not practically meaningful.

Table 9. Spearman's correlation between blackboard experience and confidence in blackboard exam security.

Variable Pair	Correlation Coefficient (ρ)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Blackboard experience ↔ Confidence in BB security	0.090	0.579

Table 10. Comparison of perceived Blackboard training confidence between first-time and experienced users.

Group	N	Mean Rank
First-time users	29	20.38
Not first-time users	11	20.82

No significant difference was found between first-time users and experienced users in terms of feeling trained, as shown in **Table 11**. This indicated that training satisfaction was not strongly dependent on prior usage, possibly because of effective onboarding programs or other influencing factors, such as self-learning. Given the limited number of participants in each group, especially the smaller experienced-user group, these results should be interpreted in context of small sample size and not generalized beyond the immediate context. **Figure 5** visually compares faculty perceptions of their readiness to use Blackboard for assessments based on whether they were first-time users or had prior experience. The nearly equal mean ranks (20.38 for first-time users versus 20.82 for non-first-time users) suggested a minimal difference in perceived training levels. The Mann–Whitney U test confirmed that this difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.911$), indicating that prior experience with Blackboard did not significantly affect how well-trained faculty felt.

Table 11. Mann–Whitney U test results for Blackboard training confidence based on usage experience.

Test Value	Score
U	156.000
Z	−0.112
p-value	0.911

Blackboard Experience Versus Confidence in Online Grading

I conducted a Kruskal–Wallis H test to compare confidence in the system and Blackboard experience level. "I am confident my online grading is secure" evaluated trust in the grading system, a key issue in assessment credibility, compared across four levels of Blackboard experience to understand whether experience enhances confidence in digital grading accuracy.

According to the results shown in **Table 12**, faculty with more years of Blackboard experience reported higher mean ranks for confidence in online grading. Those with 10+ years of experience had the highest rank, suggesting stronger confidence. However, these values must be interpreted cautiously because of small group sizes in the upper experience ranges.

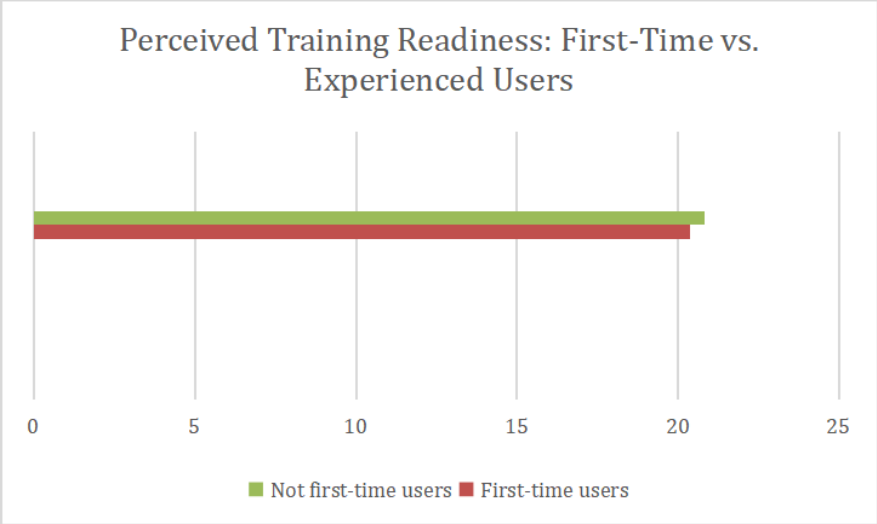

Figure 5. Perceived training readiness among first-time and experienced Blackboard users.

Table 12. Distribution of faculty confidence in online grading based on years of Blackboard experience.

Blackboard Experience	N	Mean Rank
Less than 1 year	26	19.23
1–3 years	11	20.68
6–10 years	2	26.75
10+ years	1	39.00

I found no statistically significant differences as shown in **Table 13**. While the mean ranks suggest that faculty with more Blackboard experience may feel more confident in their online grading, these results did not reach statistical significance ($p = 0.285$) and must be interpreted cautiously, especially given the very small number of participants in the higher experience brackets.

Figure 6 presents the mean rank scores reflecting faculty members' confidence in online grading, categorized by their years of experience with Blackboard. The visual trend indicates that confidence levels were highest among those with more than 10 years of experience, followed by faculty with 6–10 years, while those with less than one year reported the lowest confidence. Although this upward trend appears to align with increased familiarity and exposure to the platform, the differences observed across groups were not statistically significant ($p = 0.285$). Given the small number of participants in the more experienced categories, these patterns should be interpreted as preliminary rather than conclusive. Nonetheless, the distribution suggests that longer-term engagement with Blackboard may be associated with stronger perceptions of grading reliability.

Table 13. Kruskal–Wallis test results assessing statistical differences in grading confidence across Blackboard experience levels.

Test	df	Chi-Square (H)	*p*-value
Kruskal–Wallis Test	3	3.786	0.285

5.5. Objective 4: Explore Relationships Between Faculty Satisfaction and Perceptions of Online Assessments

This objective explored whether faculty members' satisfaction is linked to their perceptions of online English-Language assessment practices. Question 7 ("I am excited about using Blackboard to assess my students this term") was used as an indicator of faculty satisfaction. This item captures emotional engagement, enthusiasm, and openness toward the online assessment process, which collectively reflect a general sense of satisfaction. I tested this correlation against three key perception items:

- Q11: "Online assessment is appropriate for the subject I teach" (relevance of online tools)
- Q18: "Online exams play an important role in modern

higher education" (perceived value)

- Q30: "I am confident Blackboard exams are secure" (trust in system security)

I selected these items to represent usefulness, value, and confidence, three important aspects potentially influencing satisfaction.

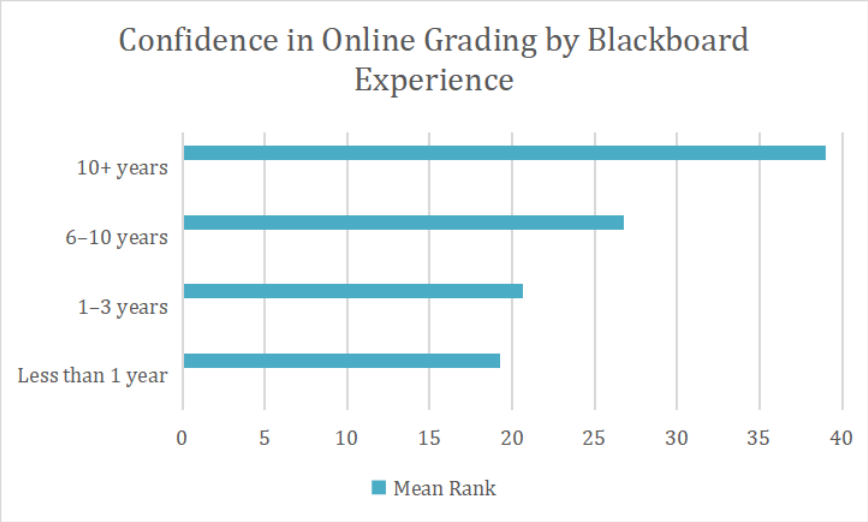

Figure 6. Confidence in online grading based on faculty Blackboard experience levels.

The strongest relationship observed is between satisfaction and the belief that online exams are important in modern education ($\rho = 0.420$, $p < 0.01$), as shown in **Table 14**. The correlation between satisfaction and perceived importance of online exams ($\rho = 0.420$, $p = 0.007$) suggests that faculty who see value in digital assessments may also express greater satisfaction. However, this association, while statistically significant in this sample, should be interpreted in the context of the study's exploratory design and sample limitations. A moderate but not statistically significant relationship existed between satisfaction and confidence in Blackboard security ($\rho = 0.307$, $p = 0.054$), suggesting a possible link might be more evident in a larger sample size. However, this result should be considered preliminary and interpreted with care due to the limited sample size. The weakest correlation was found between satisfaction and the perceived appropriateness of online assessment for specific subject areas ($\rho = 0.128$, $p = 0.432$), suggesting no meaningful relationship in this sample.

Table 14. Spearman's correlation analysis.

Variables	Spearman's ρ	Sig. (2-tailed)
Satisfaction ↔ Online assessment is appropriate (Q11)	0.128	0.432
Satisfaction ↔ Online exams play a role in higher education (Q18)	**0.420**	**0.007**
Satisfaction ↔ Confidence in Blackboard exam security (Q30)	0.307	0.054

5.6. Summary of Findings

This section presented a detailed statistical analysis of the responses provided by 40 faculty members regarding their perceptions, preferences, and confidence in Blackboard-based online assessments, using SPSS for data processing. I organized the findings according to the study's four research objectives to offer valuable insight into faculty attitudes in the post-COVID educational landscape.

Under **Objective 1**, the study assessed general faculty perceptions of online assessment practices. The results indicated a mixed response. Faculty members showed positive attitudes toward the practicality of Blackboard's features, such as the variety of question type ($M = 3.75$) and automatic grading ($M = 3.77$). However, serious concerns were apparent regarding academic integrity and system security, with cheating perceived as a widespread issue ($M = 4.30$) and lower confidence expressed in the security of online exams ($M = 2.45$). In terms of preferred question formats, the Friedman test revealed statistically significant variation among responses ($\chi^2 = 24.714$, $p < 0.001$), with matching and essay questions ranked as least preferred.

For **Objective 2**, the analysis explored whether demographic variables, such as gender, academic rank, Blackboard experience, and nationality, influenced faculty perceptions. Overall, I found no statistically significant differences across most groups ($p > 0.05$). However, a noteworthy finding was that Saudi faculty members were more likely than non-Saudi colleagues to view online linguistic assessments as appropriate for their subject areas, and this difference reached statistical significance ($p = 0.048$).

Objective 3 aimed to determine whether faculty training and experience affected their confidence and preparedness. The results showed no significant associations between Blackboard experience and faculty confidence in grading or exam security. Similarly, the level of training reported by first-time users did not differ significantly from more experienced users ($p = 0.911$), suggesting that training alone may not be a sufficient predictor of perceived readiness.

Finally, **Objective 4** examined whether faculty satisfaction with Blackboard assessments was related to their broader perceptions of its utility and security. I observed statistically significant moderate correlation between faculty satisfaction and their belief that online exams play an important role in modern higher education ($\rho = 0.420$, $p = 0.007$). I also noted a marginally significant relationship between satisfaction and perceived exam security ($p = 0.054$), indicating that confidence in the system may contribute to overall satisfaction levels.

In summary, our findings illustrated a cautiously positive stance among faculty toward Blackboard-based assessments, with acknowledgment of its practical benefits alongside lingering concerns about cheating, fairness, and system reliability.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to compare online English-Language assessment perceptions among faculty members using Blackboard within the constructs of fairness, practicality, and security, as well as to examine how selected demographic variables influenced these perceptions. Results showed that faculty opinions on online linguistic assessments are mixed and displayed an ambivalent overlap of perceived advantages and disadvantages, similar to recent findings [5,10].

In addition to being useful for promoting student engagement and learning, regular faculty cited practical advantages to conducting assessments using Blackboard, especially how automatic grading made the process easier and more efficient. These benefits complement the findings of prior research, especially the convenience and the time-saving features of online assessments [31]. However, serious apprehensions arose toward academic integrity, mainly regarding the ease of cheating on online exams. That apprehension resembled the results from prior work, which suggested that faculty view online assessments as more prone to dishonest behaviors than traditional assessments [32]. The move to online formats during the COVID-19 pandemic created the perfect storm, amplifying the challenges of online assessments as institutions strove to ensure academic honesty during a dramatic and unplanned shift to remote teaching [33].

Demographic factors such as rank and experience with Blackboard also affected faculty perceptions of online assessments. More experienced faculty members perceived greater positivity toward their online English assessments, indicating that increased familiarity with the platform led to higher confidence and acceptance. Moreover, this finding correlates with studies pointing out that previous experience with the online teaching tools in some way influences faculty to view digital assessments favorably [4]. Moreover, a gender-based difference was clear: female respondents were somewhat more concerned than their male counterparts were with both the course and test-related fairness and security, which is consistent with research showing that demographic factors may affect perceptions of learning environments [13].

In terms of assessment formats, the faculty preferred objective assessments, such as multiple-choice questions, which they said are easier and less time-consuming to administer. Recent research has shown that standard MCQs often emphasize lower-order cognitive skills, such as recall and understanding, and typically fail to assess more complex thinking unless they are deliberately structured to do so [34]. At the same time, there is a limit on objectives when it comes to measuring higher-order thinking skills; thus, essays and short-answer tests are more suitable forms that more effectively measure these skills. However, when MCQs are crafted using explicit, higher-order item-writing guidance, such as embedding problem-based scenarios, key studies have confirmed that such MCQs can validly assess deeper learning, even though they often require application and anal-

ysis rather than simple factual recall [35]. This juxtaposition in preference indicates the necessity for a balanced approach in assessment design that complements the efficacy of objective formats with the depth of subjective assessments. Studies suggest that subjective assessments better promote critical thinking and deeper learning, further validating the use of both kinds of assessment [36].

Demographics also influenced the favored type of assessment format. More experienced Blackboard users among faculty seemed more likely to use different types of assessments, implying that greater comfort with the platform seems to lead to a greater variety of strategic assessment types and highlighting the need for professional development and training to enhance quality and diversity [36]. Age and academic rank explained some variance in format preferences, pointing to the need for institutional training.

In short, although faculty value online assessments delivered through Blackboard for their utilitarian features, they remain concerned about their potential impact on academic integrity. Demographic factors (both age and experience in using the platform) significantly influence opinions and preferences. These insights showcase the need for targeted support and training to mitigate identified concerns and improve online assessments. These dynamics warrant continued research to guide assessment practices that help build strong and equitable assessment strategies in the rapidly changing landscape of digital learning.

Figure 7 visually summarizes the four main research objectives and their key findings, illustrating how faculty perceptions, demographic factors, and experience influenced attitudes and preferences toward Blackboard-based online assessments.

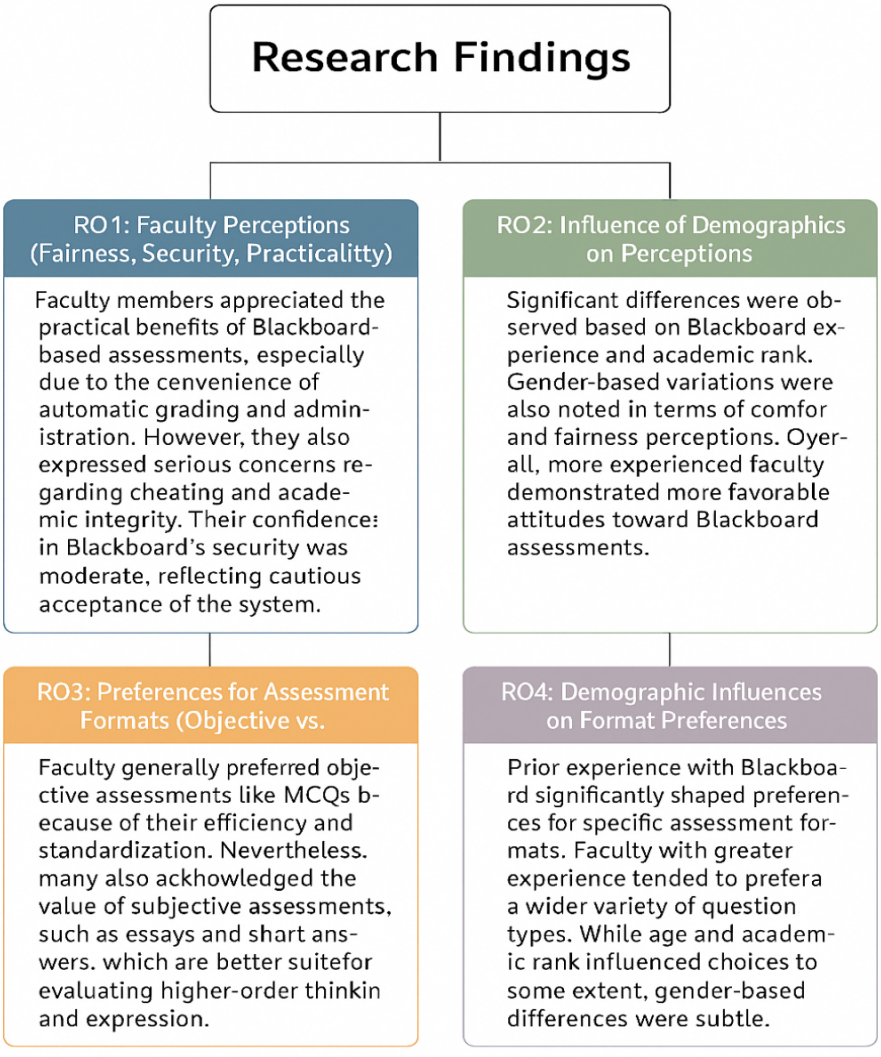

Figure 7. Pictorial presentation of key findings.

7. Conclusions

In this paper, I explored faculty perceptions and preferences regarding the use of online language assessments in higher education, especially in relation to issues of fairness, security, practicality, and faculty preference for objective versus subjective types of questions in a Blackboard-based online assessment context. I also considered in this study whether and how demographic variables (age, gender, academic rank, and experience with Blackboard) affected perceptions and preferences.

In general, our results pointed to a complex mix of positive as well as negative impressions among faculty members. Although the longstanding value of formative assessments for student learning has been well understood and faculty observed the practical advantages of online assessments (ease of administration, flexibility, efficiency, and automated grading), these benefits were offset by lingering concerns related to academic integrity, including the opportunity for cheating and security risks inherent in online environments. Another significant category derived from faculty perceptions of the data was technical challenges, which included issues related to platform reliability, internet connectivity, and general technological concerns.

In terms of assessment format, faculty members expressed a strong preference for objective formats (especially multiple-choice questions) because they are relatively objective, straightforward, and timesaving. However, faculty agreed that subjective formats (e.g., essays and short-answer questions) were necessary to adequately assess important higher-order cognitive skills and language ability. The data revealed a significant impact of demographic variables on individual perceptions, illustrating how our population experienced education differently because of different backgrounds and digital fluency levels.

More generally, faculty perspectives echoed the policy dilemmas confronting institutions striving to offer sufficiently near-optimal digital assessment solutions. With these implicit stances made explicit, institutions can straddle atomization and human evaluative practice to realize assessments that are both pedagogically sound and performant, a particularly important differentiation for assessment in domains that will soon require more challenging forms of evaluation such as language teaching and learning. This study thus contributes to our understanding of the role of the faculty perception and preferences towards the use of online assessment in Blackboard and its impact on the assessment of language performance and language use in higher education institutions. Overall, this study offers initial insight into how faculty members perceive Blackboard-based online assessments in higher education. By adopting an exploratory approach, it identifies key areas of concern and satisfaction that can guide future inquiry and institutional policy. Although the findings are not generalizable due to the study's scope, they serve as a valuable starting point for deeper research into technology-enhanced teaching and assessment practices.

7.1. Contribution to the Field of English Language Teaching and Learning

This study has implications for English language teaching and learning, as its findings shed light on the intricate nature of digital assessment of language proficiency. It highlights the need to mix automated and human-based evaluation approaches for complete and valid assessments. Thus, our findings provide language educators with a framework to better incorporate Blackboard-based assessments and complement the scalability of objective formats with the precision of evaluative feedback from subjective assessments. This kind of integration can foster pedagogically sound assessments, resulting in higher-quality language learning outcomes and effective digital literacy for faculty and students.

7.2. Recommendations for Further Research

Future researchers should implement longitudinal approaches to help understand how faculty perceptions may change as institutional practices and digital technologies evolve. Future research could expand this work by incorporating a more diverse and larger sample across multiple departments and platforms. Including qualitative data—such as open-ended responses or interviews—may help uncover the underlying reasons behind faculty concerns related to academic integrity, fairness, and digital trust. Comparative studies across different LMS platforms or institutional types may also offer a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and benefits associated with online assessments. Research examining training interventions and their effects on faculty preparedness and perception may produce useful recommendations. Furthermore, including student percep-

tions in addition to faculty perspectives would yield deeper insight into online assessments. Comparative studies over different LMS and different educational settings may guide best practices and identify cross-forward strategies.

7.3. Limitations of the Current Study

There were several limitations to the study. First, the use of a relatively small sample size (n = 40) and cross-sectional design limits the generalizability of results and prohibits making any conclusive causal inferences. Reliability could be strengthened with a larger, more diverse sample. Second, there may be a bias in the results due to the use of only self-reported survey data, particularly social desirability bias. Conducting qualitative interviews or focus groups might offer valuable insights. Finally, this investigation emphasized a specific LMS (Blackboard), which may limit the generalizability of some findings to other digital platforms. The study does have some limitations but is still a significant step toward understanding the challenges faced by online assessments in higher education, especially in the English language. Filling these gaps and broadening future research horizons is crucial for meeting emerging educational needs so that socio-technological systems can adapt by recognizing the role of digital assessment tools and their widespread and equitable use. In a nutshell, study was conducted with a limited number of participants drawn from a specific faculty group using a single learning management system. While this narrow scope allowed for a focused examination of faculty perceptions within a particular institutional context, it also restricts the broader applicability of the findings. Additionally, the sample was not evenly distributed across demographic variables such as gender and academic rank, which may have influenced subgroup patterns. These constraints should be considered when interpreting the results.

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Informed Consent Statement

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Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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