

LEARNING STORIES OF ONLINE EDUCATION AMONG COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDENTS AT KALINGA STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT: This study explored the learning experiences, challenges, and recommended solutions of Bachelor of Education students at Kalinga State University during the shift to online learning. Using a qualitative approach, researchers interviewed forty participants from across all program levels. Findings revealed that online learning significantly enhanced students' digital and research skills. Participants reported becoming more proficient with technology, discovering new educational websites, and developing critical analysis abilities to evaluate online information and avoid fake news. However, the mode also presented considerable challenges. These included difficulties in understanding lessons without face-to-face interaction, a tendency to procrastinate and submit work late due to flexible submission settings, and the temptation to rely on the internet for answers instead of deep review. An overwhelming workload from back-to-back academic activities was also cited as a major factor hindering learning. Recommended solutions emphasized shared responsibility. Students suggested exercising greater self-discipline, managing their time effectively, and conducting independent research beyond provided materials. For teachers, participants recommended focusing on clearer lesson explanations, providing constructive feedback, and allowing adequate intervals between assignments. To institutionalize improvements, the study further recommends strengthening teacher-student relationships, providing student seminars on time management for the transition back to face-to-face classes, and conducting continuous training for faculty on innovative teaching strategies to maintain high-quality education.

Keywords: Online-learning mode; pandemic; stories of experiences; learning

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic brought many changes to the lives of each person. A lot of people lost their jobs and their houses while some were not able to teach in schools temporarily. The most painful were experienced by those who lost lives of loved ones. Because of this, people were covered with fear and anxiety, and many questions do not have specific answers.

Covid spread its infections starting 2019 until present which damage in the whole archipelago of the Philippines and to the world. In the latest update, the active cases in the country were 6.7% (165,092), 91.8% (2,267,678) were healed, and 1.51% (37,405) were the casualties reported (Republic of The Philippines, Department of Health). This pandemic also led the country to quarantine, which the people were contained in their homes to protect themselves being infected. Most of the businesses and other local facilities were closed, even the schools were get affected.

However, the pandemic was not able to halt the education system for every student. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (UNESCO) it is vital to give importance on education for it will help to ease the effects of pandemic. As stated by Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director for Education, 24 million youth in the world will be dropped out in schools due to pandemic. (Arra Perez, ABS-CBN News). With this, different government sectors specifically Department of Education found its ways to continue education. According to Secretary Leonor Briones, educational system must continue its operation amidst pandemic, *"Education must continue even in times of crisis, whether it may be a calamity, disaster, emergency, quarantine, or even war."* (Manila Bulletin). Face-to-face classes were not operational during pandemic but DepEd launched distance learning, through modules and the conduct of online classes.

Online class is the primary means of the students and the teachers to continue education when the pandemic hits the country. It is a platform in the educational system in which classes are to be done using cellphones or any electronic gadgets like laptop, personal computer, tablets, etc. Students are not obliged to go outside

their homes to go in school and meet their teachers and classmates (AkoayPilipino,2020). It is the chosen way of the government to remain its educational system functioning amidst the crisis (Jimdo).

However, the conduct of online has not been easy and faced a lot of reactions. The opinions of the people regarding it were divided in which some are in favor because of its accessibility. It is so fascinating to think of having classes at the comfort of everyone's home. Students need not to take a bath or prepare for school since it is quick to set up a cellphone or laptop to attend an online class (Clopified, 2021). But, according to some students, the new platform opens up to problems like in the case of Alyzza Guevarra, a student of Linguistic of Liceo in Roma, online class is helpful but it also gave them a lot of homework given by their teachers. Also, according to Grace Ramos, a former teacher in the Philippines, stated that online class will not be so effective since the Internet connection always fluctuates (Dittz Centeno-DeJesus, 2020). It only indicates that there is division in the social status, place, and the mindset of the students which presents the strengths and weaknesses of the said platform.

According to the results of the study regarding the online class in different institutions, the researcher aims to study online class of Department of Education, Department of Social Welfare and Development, to know the challenges and advantages of students, in order to change strategies in teaching and align it to the new normal and enumerate their need in educational issues.

As a researcher and teacher under Department of Education, it is vital to know the experiences of students using the new platform and its impact on their development. In this way, teachers will have information on the what the students have gone through to further improve their teaching, to understand the status of each of the students, and to enhance communication and quality of education.

Kalinga State University – Main Campus is found in the National Road, P6 Bulanao, Tabuk City Kalinga. It has 12 colleges and this study focused on the students from first year to fourth year of the College of Education in 2021 at Kalinga State University.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature and studies conducted by various researches and concepts from experts are explained in this section to present its relevance to the current study. An online class is a learning platform done through the Internet, hence, students do not have to go in-person to their classes with their teacher and classmates. When lockdown was implemented in the areas affected by the pandemic, students from elementary to high school were still able to continue their education through the use of computers, laptops, and other gadgets (akoaypilipino.eu, 2021).

Though online classes are available, the setup of a real classroom setting is still different. The learning of the students is still incomparable to those face-to-face interaction with the teacher and their classmates. It is necessary to include activities that will make online learning fun and effective. Beam and Micks (2001) discussed the advantages of having online classes compared to traditional ones. Through this method, barriers of time and space are being removed. This was supported by Vercide's article (2020) that highlights the effectiveness of the new methods of learning, including the advantages and disadvantages, or the strengths and weaknesses of such. First advantage emphasizes how online education can help students embrace modern technology. Through this, they are able to spend time discovering new ways of learning. This is also beneficial as many are able to adapt to the new ways of learning and teaching youth in the country. The second advantage is that it offers a faster process and system.

The concepts of Beam and Micks (2001) and Vercide (2020) are relevant to the current study because they both discuss the strengths of online classes by determining the positive and negative experiences. However, this study is different from the current study as they focus on the strengths only and do not explain the weaknesses of such. They also talked about the advantages of online classes in various aspects whereas this study only focuses on the aspect of learning.

In Marjie Junio's article (2021), it elaborated the problems experienced by students and teachers doing online classes. First, each person needs a good internet connection because if teachers do not have one, they will not be able to teach the students. The same happens to students who need to buy cellphone load to be able to join online classes. There are also times when the signal weakens and it affects the way they follow the lessons. Second, since the teachers are not physically with the students, they cannot roam around and monitor what the students are doing while they are teaching. In online classes, some students are not really listening and have been doing other things since it is only their faces that are seen on the screen. The tendency to cheat during activities is a possibility. This also affects the physical and mental health of the students because it is difficult to avoid being in front of the laptop that they use during online classes. Marjie Junio's article is relevant to the study because they both researched on problems or weaknesses of online classes for students. However, that article also involves problems experienced by the teachers including its effects to other aspects

like health. Meanwhile, this current study only focuses on stories of student experiences during online classes and only those relevant to the learning aspect. In an article written by Fabregas concerning a critical analysis of the effects of online class on the holistic learning of students, a lot of weaknesses are discussed. The number of enrollees decreased because of the problems experienced during the pandemic since not all students are living in the city. Those living in far-flung areas find it difficult to find a good internet connection. The psychological effects are also included in the article. It included the argument of believers of online classes so that the learning of the students are not hampered. On the other hand, Fabregas suggested how to solve the problem while adding that temporary suspension of education is better because online classes bring more issues than solutions.

This is relevant to the current study because they both focus on the effects of online class and the strengths and weaknesses of this option. However, Fabregas covers the effects of online class on the different aspects while this study only focuses on the learning of the students. In a study conducted by Mohammad Alawamleh, Lona Mohammad Al-twait and Gharam Raafat Al-Saht entitled "The effect of online learning on communication between instructors and students during COVID-19 pandemic, the negative effects of online learning in the connection between teachers and students. It involves how it impacted creativity and provided solutions to make the said communication process more effective.

This is relevant to the study as it deals with the negative consequences or the weaknesses of having online classes and some positive ways to address such. The difference is that this article focuses more on communication between teachers and students while the current study is highly concentrated on learning. Meanwhile, Kofoed and co-authors discovered that due to online learning, the grades of the students of the Military Academy and West Point decreased and survey results show that students taking online classes cannot concentrate in the activities and that there is a lack of interaction between the students and the teacher.

According to Bird et al, shifting to online learning caused the decline in the number of graduates from Virginia's community college system. It was also found out that due to online learning, many students withdrew from their studies while those who continued see a negative effect in their grades. In a research conducted by Armstrong et al entitled COVID-19 and Distance Learning: Effects on Georgia State University School of Public Health Students, they discussed the positive and negative effects of shifting to this new mode of learning. Like the previous articles mentioned, it is relevant to this research because it includes strengths and weaknesses. However, this current study will also offer possible solutions that are not included in the study of Armstrong, Ramsey, Yankey, and Self. This is also connected to the article of Shivram Choudhary that talks about the weaknesses of the online learning mode although the latter focused on the mental health of the students. This connection is still evident to the current study since affecting the mental health of the students would mean that their learning is also affected.

In an article entitled "How Virtual Learning can Affect Academic Performance" in 2020 (ingresqr.com), seven strengths of an online class was mentioned. It is connected to the current study since it talks about the strengths of the online class but this article did not mention the weaknesses and the possible ways to solve them. Daniel Yu's (2021) "How to provide dynamic engagement in distance learning" discusses the possible solutions to make learning more effective despite the weaknesses posed by online class or distance learning. This is the same as the current study aims to pursue ways on making online classes more effective. However, this article no longer discussed the weaknesses but focused on the rooms for improvement instead.

In a research on "Students' online learning challenges during the pandemic and how they cope with them: The Case of the Philippines" by Barrot, Llenares, & del Rosario (2021), the challenges experienced by the students during the online class, including their coping mechanisms to address such were discussed. This is connected with the current study that talks about the weaknesses and possible solutions regarding such. Online classes are not beneficial for the mental health since students are not learning well. Meanwhile, some expressed opinion about online classes being better than academic freeze. "They have nothing to do at home, that's why it's okay to have distance learning. But we hope that they can improve the implementation and provide support to parents, teachers, and students" Dolar said in an article of Magsambol entitled "Distance learning in the Philippines: A year of hits and misses".

In a study written by Allan Ortiz (2017) based on the framework of 21st Century Learning, people in the 21st century are used to the life that is technology- and media-driven. With this, the youth are able to get information with ease. However, they should be able to use this with their gadgets or at home, hence, online learning may be effective to 21st century citizens and workers. The essential skills of learning and training and the critical thinking skills in relation to information, media, and technology must be enhanced.

Meanwhile, in a study of Enrique Picardal, Jr., he discussed the effects of online learning in the performance of the students due to COVID-19. This is related to the current study because they both aim to determine the effects of online learning to students, and to find ways to address the negative impact or weaknesses of the

said setup. The difference is that Picardal's study focuses on the performance of the students or their attitude while the current study is about the learning of the students.

METHOD

Research Design

The study employed Husserlian Descriptive Phenomenology at Colaizzi's Seven Steps of Data Analysis to describe and explore the stories of experiences of the participants of online learning mode during the pandemic. Edmund Husserl led in the advancement of descriptive phenomenology that aims to discover, explore, and describe the meaning of a phenomenon experienced by analyzing data using the said method (Augusto, 2019). Gaddi (2016) explained that the process involved in Colaizzi's Seven Steps of Data Analysis prompts researchers to be in the complicated process of interpretation of data to determine the emerging themes from such.

Participants and Procedures

Ten students from each level in the college education served as participants of the study. Purposive sampling was utilized in selecting qualified participants based on the following criteria: 1) student from the College of Education; 2) student who experienced online learning mode.

To ensure the success of the study, an effective research instrument to gather data or information is necessary. As mentioned above, the answers gathered by the researcher from the facilitators of lessons served as the primary instrument of the study. In addition, the researcher also used interview guide to ensure that questioning is meaningful and will not cause confusion. This is in preparation so that the researcher will not be confused or will not experience complication in gathering information. This served as the primary instrument in gathering information for the study that is focused on the questions about the experiences of the participants on online learning mode, factors that affected their learning, and suggestions and solutions in response to their experiences. According to Sevilla (2000), as cited in Zafra's research entitled "Analysis of the Informal Education of the Agta Natives in General Nakar, Quezon, in relation to the use of SWOT Analysis, an interview guide refers to the list of questions relevant to the study. Moreover, open-ended questions are used in this study to deepen the data gathering. According to Kerlingers (1973, cited in Sevilla, 2000), there is no restriction in terms of content and as to how they will answer open-ended questions (83-85).

Meanwhile, to record the conversations about the topic, the researcher used an electronic tool like the tape recorder to document everything during the interview. This method is practical to not forget any information given by the participants. In addition, the research also used non-electronic tools like pen and paper for note-taking. This served as a secondary tool in gathering information. This preparation is proven effective in the study as the researcher was able to review each answer of the participants. The interview was conducted online in accordance with the health protocols, during their availability, and lasted for only an hour while other participants who were not interviewed were given a week to answer the questions.

RESULTS

Stories of Learning Experiences of Students in Online Learning Mode

Cluster Theme 1: Skills in Technology Use

The participants' use of online learning mode of brought about different learning results based on their stories of experiences including their skill In the use of technology. The students were able to fully learn the use of technology when online learning mode was implemented as a new platform. This became their basis to continue studies and go along with the lessons in class. Though they are using this in other things, they are able to do better during online class. In fact, according to the participants:

(Before, I am just using Facebook when I use technology, I am even afraid to press anything, but now I am so used to it.)

(There is no other way to go along with what the teacher is saying but to get used to the use of technology.)

It is noticeable based on the statements of the participants that because of technology, they were able to discover the use of zoom, google class, and google meet. It extended our skill in the development of instructional materials, powerpoint presentations and videos which participants used during their teaching demonstration. The participants are amazed with the world of technology since what they are learning is essential to be effective teachers in the future.

Cluster Theme 2: Critical research on additional information towards understanding a deeper understanding of the lesson

The use of online class in teaching lessons is a great challenge for the participants because there are times some lessons are not explained properly and one hour a week is not even enough to teach using google meet.

Because of this, the participants became creative to understand the lessons, searching for information from articles and scholarly readings from the internet including research outputs from Google scholar that helps in understanding topics. According to the participants, this method is effective because aside from it helped in comprehension, they also became aware of the issues of the society. In addition, they become critical in acknowledging factual and non-factual information read from the Internet making them more sensitive and careful with the information they read online.

(Before, I am contented with what the teacher is saying that I am no longer reading but the teacher's lesson is enough for me. However, when online class started, I learned to do research to understand what is being taught to us because if I don't do it, it will be difficult for me.)

(I now know how to assess right information because of continuous reading of different articles and I am happy with it.)

(Before, I do not know the information in the Internet but since online learning started, I learned how to gather such since I need to read.)

Based on the stories experienced by the participants, they learned to be critical in analysis, and do not just side with an argument as they read and understand what they read. Instead, they are able to form opinions and share their point view in every reading.

Cluster Theme 3: Increased confidence in own competence

Having confidence in one's competence is needed to develop wisdom and be acknowledge in a chosen discipline. Online learning mode is implemented when the pandemic was experienced in the Philippines. This became a foundation for schools to continue delivering education to the students.

Its implementation eventually affected the students. Like the participants of this study, they become more confident due to online classes because they learned how to do the activities without depending on their relatives or friends and their homework based on their own abilities. This increase their confidence and trust in their own capacity. It is a beneficial thing for the participants because before, they just rely on their intelligent classmates in terms of answering activities for they fear that their answers are wrong.

In the same way, the participants got the opportunity to have self-confidence during the pandemic because they have no one to rely on but themselves. According to them, they have no one else to copy their answers from since they are not able to meet physically during discussions. It is also difficult to ask for an answer from a classmate because they are all busy with their own activities.

(I learned to trust in my own abilities without depending on my classmates.)

(I learned how to answer my modules alone without asking answers from my classmates.)

(Even though I know that my answers are wrong, I still do it so I do not depend on others and atleast the answers come from my own mind.)

Because of this, it can be said that the students become more mature in facing challenges based on their own abilities and their own ways to learn during the pandemic. They were able to prove that they can compete with other students in terms of answering their academic activities.

Cluster Theme 4: Enhanced communication with teachers and classmates

In the field of communication, it can be noticed that participants were able to enhance their communication with other students since they were able to have someone to talk to or to ask help from especially when it comes to academic topics. This is a way to show camaraderie and companionship. Even with communicating with their teachers, they were able to enhance such because it is a way to fully understand the topics being discussed and to have a better relation with teachers.

(I always talk to my classmates to ease the fear and stress in learning.)

(It helps a lot that I talk to my teachers. I am able to ensure if what I do is right or wrong, and because of this, I am able to be closer to my teacher and my fears are gone.)

According to the participants, even though some teachers are on seen mode whenever they talk thru Messenger, they still do not stop communicating and asking about things relevant to their academics believing that they will still be able to answer soon. They also learned not be afraid or shy in asking questions because it is more important to learn and be helped with their lessons.

It is true that even during a calamity, a pandemic, or a challenge in life, maintaining communication with other people is very important, because in this way, people can find a companion or a comrade. People feel they are not alone in facing life's challenges.

Cluster Theme 5: Learned how to balance time in doing activities and house duties

The online mode of learning has become advantageous for students, as it allows them to remain in their respective homes, provided there is a strong internet connection. However, this has led to a misinterpretation among some parents. According to the participants, their parents or employers believe that they can simultaneously perform household chores—such as laundry, cooking, selling goods, caring for younger

siblings, or going to the farm—on any given day or time, since the students are merely at home. The participants further stated that:

*(That is only online. You can wash clothes while listening to the teachers. That is what is being said to us.)
(I lose my concentration in my studies because it coincides with my duties at home. My parents thought that it is okay to do online classes and house activities simultaneously because they thought we are just listening.)*

(There was a time I just signed in an online class then I left because I was asked to buy something outside.)
Because of these experiences of the participants, they learned to balance their time in doing activities at home and at school. It helped that the students do scheduling of activities, they are able to use their time well that no time is wasted while they are also trying to explain this to their parents. For others, they do house duties during Saturday and Sunday and during the days they do not have online classes. Indeed, online class can help students learn deeper about many things. This became an avenue for them to continue pursuing life no matter how difficult the challenges are.

Cluster Theme 6: Delay/postponement in doing tasks/activities

If during face-to-face classes, students are eager to finish their activities to submit them on time, the opposite happened for online classes because they learned to delay the completion of activities given by teachers. Sense of urgency is lost since oftentimes, no due date is specified. According to the participants, it is not a challenge to submit activities because even late submissions are not given point deduction and are still accepted by teachers online. Answering them is no longer competitive and for some it led to being lazy.

*(Online is good because even late submissions are accepted.)
(I learned to relax and delay answering activities which for me is not good. Before, I used to do tasks right away but now, I feel lazy since I can submit it late. Though it is good that it can still be accepted, I learned how to be lazy.)*

It can be said that it is a negative experience for the participants because they learned to be complacent in doing activities which should not be a habit for future educators. Oftentimes, giving consideration should be balanced and have limitation with or without pandemic since it results to both positive and negative effects for the students.

Cluster Theme 7: Experienced not reviewing whenever there are exams because they are “for compliance only” due to lack of challenge

In the traditional face-to-face teaching, each student is eager to prepare and review the lessons whenever they will have short or long examinations to ensure better scores. However, the opposite happens in the new normal in the online class mode because according to the participants, they learned not to review for exams because they can freely copy answers from the internet.

In addition, participants said that they are confident with not reviewing during exams because teachers cannot monitor them online and they can copy their answers from the modules in google classroom. This means that there is a need to check the contents of the exam to avoid copying answers from the module. Questions included must be critical that answers should be derived from their own understanding or knowledge. According to the participants, they also learned how to copy answers from the internet since the questions can be read from such. In addition:

*(All answers can be found on the Internet. Why will I make so much effort to think about it?)
(Though we do not understand the lesson, it matters more that we are able to answer the activities, since we just copy the answers from the Internet.)*

It is reflected that this results to a negative effect on the level of thinking or learning of the students because they are no longer critically thinking about their activities and they are too dependent on the information they see from the internet. With this, the participants emphasized that all activities are all for compliance only and that they are no longer challenging their mental capacity.

Cluster Theme 8: Had slept while there is an ongoing Google meeting

Google meet is a platform used in online classes and through such, they were able to continue teaching and coordination with teachers and students and there is a free exchange of ideas from teachers and students. This became a big help for teachers in explaining and sharing information as they collaborate with students during discussion.

However, for the participants, the use of online class resulted to different experiences in their lives like sleeping during an ongoing google meet since the camera is turned off. Because of this, they were able to do freely do what they want not minding if they are learning from the lessons or not.

*(I experienced sleeping during Google Meet since they do not see me and the teachers do not call me either.)
(I am free to do what I want on google meet since the camera was off and it's just the voice that is needed so sometimes, I get to sleep too.)*

This result is supported by a study of Picardal Jr. concerning effects of online education in the performance of students during the pandemic. One of the effects discussed in the article is the loss of motivation of students in doing activities since they are only doing what they want.

Factors that Affect Online Learning

Cluster Theme 1: Consecutive activities given by teachers

According to the participants, it is not only or two activities per subject. Because of this, they find it difficult to answer all the activities especially when they give it consecutively. That is why some of them just make guesses on their answers as long as they are able to submit their requirements.

The participants added that there are times when the teacher has just given an activity and they will give some more even without returning yet the result of the first one and without any discussion of the wrong or correct answers. The participants want to see the results of the activities so they can monitor their points so that they can correct the mistakes and they will not be repeated. Here are the same statements:

(It is really a struggle for us to have consecutive activities because we do not know what to do first.)

(Sometimes, because there are too many activities, I just answer, be it right or wrong.)

(The most difficult is that we do not know what we get from the activity, what we are missing, so we just answer and answer)

In addition, according to the participants, most of the activities given by the teachers are often not discussed in google meet, instead, the teachers only give modules to read. This is the reason why students do not know or cannot answer correctly since they are not sure of what to say and since the information is incomplete. The series of activities given by the teacher results to increased anxiety due to the worry that it might affect their grades.

Cluster Theme 2: Difficulty in understanding the topic being discussed by the teacher

Anything that is incomprehensible results to confusion and loss of motivation to learn. According to the participants, one factor that affects their learning is the difficulty in understanding the topic discussed by the teachers because they talk fast. Teachers should not hasten the discussion and always consider the differences in the students' level of understanding. It is also better to ask students if they are able to follow the discussion or if they are discussing too fast. The second difficulty they encountered is the insufficient explanation or examples being given.

According to the participants, there are concepts and theories that are difficult to understand because these are new to them or they do not have prior information or background knowledge about it. With this, the giving of examples is a way to understand the topic. With examples, concepts can be described or to emphasize direction of the discussion, the argument being discussed, or what is retained in their minds.

On the other hand, the lack of time in explaining the lesson is the cause of not understanding the well. The participants complain that there is only an hour allotted for the google meet session between the students and teachers in a week. This might be the reason why teachers have to rush their explanation which then leads to a shallow understanding of the topic.

Each student has a different learning style to fully understand the topic. This is in addition to the choppy or incomprehensible voice of the teacher through google meet. Meanwhile, this type of problem is relevant to the poor internet connection in the country. However, this still becomes a factor in understanding the lesson since this is the only means for teachers to share information aside from the use of module. The participants stated:

(I really like to understand what the teacher is saying but I find it difficult to do so because the teacher speaks and explains fast, hence, I get confused.)

(For, the reason why I find it difficult to understand is because I do not have a background of the topic, the examples given are not enough because it is easier if there are examples.)

(The teacher's voice is choppy and inaudible on google meet)

(We feel like the time for discussion is not enough, hence, the more we do not understand.)

Cluster Theme 3: Difficulty in answering the activities

Conducting an assessment or giving an evaluation to every grade or result of an exam taken by a student is an essential tool in having an effective teaching and in having good students. Evaluations help in measuring their weaknesses and abilities of a student especially in addressing and giving remedies to help students. However, if the evaluation is not understandable by the student, it loses its essence of assessing the students. Similar to the participants, they experienced difficulty in understanding the evaluation as they find the instructions hard to comprehend.

(My problem is that I get confused with the instructions that is why I gave wrong answers and my understanding was shallow.)

(The instructions are not direct and are confusing.)

(There are questions in our activity that were not discussed so I find it difficult to answer and even if I search, I still do not understand.)

(The quiz is difficult is there is no understanding of the topic so I hope there is an explanation before an activity or quiz is given.)

Some of the participants also said that they find it difficult not in answering but that there are too many activities to answer and that time is never enough to answer various activities in many subjects. At this point, it is clear that each lesson given by the teacher needs to be explained properly, to avoid problems in answering evaluation or assessment of activities.

Cluster Theme 4: Noises in the surroundings

The classroom situation is a consideration in teaching because it may affect the students' attitudes and their learning. Students need an organized, motivating, and comfortable environment for learning to be effective. Setting this up includes a practical and physical organization, provision of materials, and encouraging students to have a sense of ownership. It is truly important that they have an organized and quiet environment towards effective learning. With this, it is noticeable that their learning is affected by the noises around them like when the rooster is crowing, the dog is barking, the people are shouting, the vehicles are making noises, babies are crying, etc. According to the participants, a noisy environment is the reason why they lose concentration and focus in studying which stresses them out.

(The environment is too noisy that it really adds to the stress! I am already finding it difficult and the noise does not help either!)

(The noise is too much for me that is why I leave google meet and look for a quiet place where I can concentrate better.)

Cluster Theme 5: Poor internet connection

Students living in remote places, like the participants, often experience problems in poor internet connection. This is a hindrance to their concentration and learning since it is not stable when they are having a google meet. They still need to go to elevated places like the roof of their houses, or in trees, or mountains, just to get a good reception of signal.

(There are times that the internet connection is really poor and it has been a hindrance.)

(Though I have unlimited internet load, there are times when the connection is poor and I cannot understand the lesson.)

Cluster Theme 6: Lack of money to buy internet load

There are a lot of challenges brought by online learning mode including lack of money to have internet load. Majority of the participants only depend on the allowance given by their parents to be able to access internet and participate in their online classes. Once this runs out, they can no longer join the meeting. Most of the students are also working and they only rely on the daily or weekly allowance given by their employers while some come from those given by their parents.

(It is difficult with a limited allowance because this includes internet load and it is often insufficient so I tend to miss some classes.)

(Load is a problem since it is gone quickly and I do not have much money for such.)

(My allowance is never enough to buy internet load.)

(It is really a hindrance because I do not have unlimited internet subscription so I usually run out of it. It is difficult if I only get to share Internet from others.)

Suggested Solutions to Address Negative Experiences and the Factors Affecting Online Learning Mode

Cluster Theme 1: Conduct a research on information that will widen knowledge of the topics.

It is undeniable that the participants experienced a lot of problems due to online class but these are not enough reasons to not continue life and their studies. The participants believed that if they will persist to learn despite the problems, these will be solved and the challenges brought by this new platform of education will be won over. In addition, it is necessary to find ways to help them in their studies. With this, the participants gave suggestions as to how to address the problems experienced during the online class. The number one thing to be focused on is about self-discipline.

(Focus and having a comprehensive research on the topics that are being studied and being independent that not all the time, students need to rely on teachers or classmates if lessons are not understood well.)

(It would be better if we will have time management to avoid late submission of the activities and let us have self-confidence that we can answer the questions. If additional information is needed, search from the Internet but do not copy it; instead, use it only as a basis.)

(Balance time and learn to strive on your own.)

Cluster Theme 2: Have good time management

Students should learn how to balance time so they can do and finish their activities. This is an effective way so that all activities can be done on time, no matter how complicated a thing is, and that is through time management.

According to the participants, they realized a lot when online class started. One is that they have to be aware of proper management of time. With all that needs to be done in every subject, the participants believe that they should be able to utilize time wisely so that they do not rush in submitting requirements and it will not cause anxiety, but just have self-discipline.

Cluster Theme 3: Trust in your own abilities.

According to the participants, a person who has no one to rely on can be confident about his or her own abilities. Back when face-to-face classes are implemented, students got used to depending on their friends and classmates to help them in academic activities, hence it is not easy for everyone to do such alone. When the online platform of learning was used through online class, a new way of doing things is observed. It became a big challenge for them to be alone since they cannot ask anyone for help or for the answers to the activities since their classmates are not physically with them. Because of this, they have to learn to be independent and not rely on others especially with the activities given by the teachers. They learned to trust their own abilities. They were able to prove that they have their own capacities and that like their classmates, they can also understand the lessons.

Cluster Theme 4: Teachers should focus more on the explanation

In the process of learning, it is not only the students who are important but even the teachers because of their obligation to assist them with their weaknesses. With this, the participants gave suggestions relevant to their teachers:

(I suggest that teachers focus on their teaching because I observed that there are some teachers who are not active in explaining their lessons. In this way, the students will learn more and they will be more determined to study even during online class.)

Cluster Theme 5: Teachers should give feedbacks on the activities.

According to the participants, it is different for them to answer activities which they do not have prior information about but it is more difficult if they do not know the results of their activities because they want to know if they are wrong or correct. In giving feedback, the participants are better encouraged to persist and show their abilities because they are able to know their level of knowledge. They are challenged to be aware of their mistakes or lapses, especially in the beginning, so they can strive hard to improve it and this will help them become a better teacher in the future.

(The teachers should give feedback on all activities and should reconsider giving more time to students so that they will not do the activities for compliance sake only. Not all teachers give enough time for students. Also, not all teachers give feedbacks to their students, hence, they do not know where they made a mistake or if all their answers are correct.)

(The students and teachers should help each other. Oftentimes, the teachers just submit through google classroom without explaining expecting that students will understand. However, we were taught that there is a variety of students and so doing a student's part is also important rather than just blaming teachers. It would be better to collaborate to improve the online class.)

Cluster Theme 6: Teachers should give more time in answering activities.

Based on the stories of experiences of the participants in an online class, one of their experiences is the lack of sufficient time in answering activities given by the teacher, hence, it is recommended that students be given more time for their activities since they cannot answer such for a short period of time especially that they are too many and they are given all at once. For them, teachers should understand that they have eight or more subjects, and each of those requires them to answer a lot.

Giving sufficient time in answering the activities is a big help for participants to maintain the quality of their answers. Through this, they will be able to focus on each subject because they do not have to rush them.

Cluster Theme 7: Parents' support matters.

The life of the students is a combination of suffering and joy. Suffering because it is filled with challenges and sorrow. Joy, because despite all this, they can still succeed as they fight until the end and this is with the support of their parents. But what if their parents are not supportive, compassionate, and understanding? Similar to the participants of this study, it is emphasized that they should be understood by their parents that though they are staying in their houses, this does not mean that they do not have classes and activities in school. They should not be giving a lot of instructions during the online class and they have to understand that they cannot do online classes and house duties simultaneously.

Based on the stories of experiences of the participants, it is very important that the parents are supportive of their children, because no one else will be able to understand and guide them in

Cluster Theme 8: Face-to-face classes should be resumed.

Having self-discipline and collaboration between parents and children are really helpful in the learning process. However, having difficulties cannot be avoided. Due to individual differences, there are different learning styles per student, hence, the participants suggested resumption of face-to-face classes.

(My suggestion is for face-to-face classes to resume.)

It cannot be denied that students learn better in face-to-face classes. There are difficulties in the learning process but in an article related to the resumption of limited face-to-face classes, Marcos stated that distance learning like online class is not a long-term solution in education during the pandemic because the students may lose their interest in their studies and ambitions.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study present a complex and multifaceted portrait of the online learning experiences of students, characterized by a dialectical relationship between empowerment and impediment. The results corroborate and extend the existing literature by demonstrating that the shift to online education is not a monolithic experience but rather one that produces a spectrum of both significant benefits and profound challenges, primarily contingent on pedagogical execution, resource availability, and student self-regulation.

The positive outcomes identified—enhanced technological proficiency, improved independent research skills, increased self-confidence, and stronger communication—align with the advantages postulated by Beam and Micks (2001) and Vercide (2020), who argued that online learning removes barriers of time and space and fosters adaptation to modern technology. This study provides empirical depth to these claims; participants evolved from being hesitant technology users to becoming proficient with various digital platforms and tools, a skill deemed essential for 21st-century learners as highlighted by Ortiz (2017). Furthermore, the necessity of independent learning led students to become more critical consumers of online information, actively seeking out scholarly resources to compensate for insufficient lesson explanations. This development of autonomy and critical research skills signifies a positive shift towards the self-directed learning models often advocated in digital pedagogy.

However, these gains are sharply contrasted by a series of negative experiences that severely impacted the quality of learning. The prevalence of academic dishonesty, loss of motivation, complacency, and distractions like sleeping during lectures strongly supports the findings of Kofoed et al. and Bird et al., who documented declines in concentration, interaction, and academic performance in online settings. The participants' rationalization that activities were "for compliance only" and their reliance on internet-sourced answers directly reflect the challenges in assessment design and monitoring that Junio (2021) identified, where the physical absence of an instructor facilitates cheating and diminishes academic rigor. This suggests that without proper safeguards, online learning can inadvertently promote superficial engagement rather than deep, meaningful learning.

The factors affecting learning further illuminate the systemic issues at play. The challenges of poor internet connectivity, financial constraints limiting internet load, and disruptive home environments are consistent themes across the literature, particularly in the Philippine context as detailed by Barrot, Llenares, & del Rosario (2021) and Fabregas. These factors create an inequitable learning landscape where a student's academic success is heavily influenced by their socioeconomic status and geographic location, not just their intellectual ability. Moreover, pedagogical factors—such as consecutive, undiscussed activities; insufficient explanation; fast-paced lectures; and a lack of feedback—emerged as critical barriers. This finding necessitates a critical examination of instructional design in the online realm. Simply transferring traditional teaching methods to a digital platform, as participants experienced, is ineffective. The results echo the suggestions of Daniel Yu (2021) and the participants themselves: effective online learning requires dynamic engagement, clear communication, and constructive feedback to bridge the physical gap between teacher and student.

Finally, the suggested solutions offered by the participants provide a crucial, ground-level perspective on improving online education. Their calls for better time management, self-discipline, and trust in their own abilities indicate a recognition of their role in the learning process. However, their recommendations for instructors—to provide clearer explanations, timely feedback, and more realistic timelines—place significant responsibility on educational institutions and faculty. This aligns with the conclusion in Magsambol's (2021) article that while online learning may be preferable to an academic freeze, its implementation requires substantial improvement and support. The most poignant suggestion, the resumption of face-to-face classes, underscores a fundamental limitation of the modality for these students. It resonates with Fabregas's critical

analysis and Marcos's contention that distance learning may not be a sustainable long-term solution, highlighting a collective yearning for the irreplaceable social interaction, structured environment, and direct mentorship inherent in traditional classrooms. In conclusion, while online learning unlocked certain avenues for skill development, its overall effectiveness was significantly undermined by contextual and pedagogical shortcomings, reinforcing the need for a more supported, equitable, and thoughtfully designed approach to digital education.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of participant narratives reveals that the online learning mode during the pandemic served as a crucible for personal and academic development, fostering increased self-reliance, technological proficiency, and resilience in the face of adversity. Students emerged with enhanced problem-solving capabilities and a greater sense of agency over their educational journey. Nonetheless, these individual triumphs were frequently tempered by significant systemic and interpersonal challenges. A perceived lack of structured pedagogical support from educators—manifesting as insufficient feedback and overwhelming academic demands—coupled with a misunderstanding from parents regarding the temporal and cognitive requirements of online study, often undermined student motivation and concentration. Consequently, this study underscores that the efficacy of online learning is not solely dependent on student adaptability but is profoundly contingent upon a collaborative ecosystem of support. For future implementations to be truly effective, they must be characterized by deliberate instructional design from teachers and a deeper, more empathetic engagement from parents to create a conducive and motivating learning environment.

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