

Lived Experiences of Higher Education Institution Students in Online Learning Classes in the New Normal

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Abstract

The challenges brought about by the academic migration to online platform due to COVID-19 pandemic outbreak has long been established. The author of this paper explicitly investigated the attitude of learners towards online classes. This study highlights the issues being encountered by learners enrolled in virtual learning environment along with the importance of having a concrete strategic plan as to how to cope with the current issues being encountered by students to readily adapt to online classes. The results revealed that there were several recurring themes that emerged when asked about their experiences in online classes. Under the key topic (A) effects of online class – (1) difficulty in learning process and (2) affordability and accessibility of time and place. Under the key topic (B) issues and problems experienced in online classes, there were three themes that emerged– (1) issues in internet connectivity, (2) lack of proper resources such as gadgets, and (3) lower productivity rate. In third key topic, (C) the coping mechanisms of students under online learning classes in which there are two themes that emerged – (1) finding alternatives and (2) practice of time management. And in the last key topic, (D) what the participants could recommend improving their learning process under online learning classes. There were two themes that emerged in the focus group discussion – (1) It was concluded in the study that the issues being encountered by students in online classes have an impact not only on their academic performance but also to their psychological well-being.

Keywords: lived experience, online classes, new normal, coping mechanisms, computer-mediated communication

1. Introduction

The reopening of classes despite the pandemic has sparked an unceasing debate between those who support that the innovative idea of remote learning could be the panacea in this time of crisis and those who would be willing to wait for the pandemic to abate in order that no students will be left behind. Nonetheless, the classes resumed despite the education sector being unprepared and lacking in many aspects.

The pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2 created numerous disturbances in many aspects of the society, and the education sector is no exception. The effect of the widespread of the corona virus has dramatically changed the educational landscape. The UNESCO (2020) disclosed that 87 per cent and higher or simply 1.5 billion students around the globe suffered the artificial closure of learning sites. There was a shocking scenario of the simultaneous closure of all educational institutions around the world after World War II bearing the similar reasons (D’Orville, 2020). However, this pandemic compelled universities and colleges to be more innovative in delivering quality instruction by utilizing state-of-the-art technologies and modalities like Zoom, Schoology, Google Classroom, and other means to reach out students (Muthuprasad *et al.*, 2021).

This situation prohibited youngsters to go out for their health safety. When pandemic began, most of the schools decided to temporarily close all schools and utilized online learning modalities. Not only did the students but also the teachers experienced huge adjustments. Students these days are dealing with academic pressure in adjusting and studying using the modular and online platforms.

Garg (2021) stated that virtual learning environment has changed the education landscape by making use of technologies and utilizing spaces like homes as classrooms of learners. Students were exposed to online presentations in which became advantageous on their considering that they can playback after their virtual classes. In short, students can learn at their own pace and teachers can monitor their attendance by way of electronic means.

However, virtual classroom environment became the new normal in emergent nations (Iqbal & Ahmad, 2010).

Numerous challenges emerged in the advent of virtual classes in emergent nations (Folorunso *et al.*, 2006; Siritongthaworn *et al.*, 2006). These countries faced many problems such as slow connectivity, lack of teachers' training on online learning, poor computer literacy of students, inadequate equipment and facilities of schools and students, poor information technology infrastructure in the whole country and lack of readiness of all stakeholders in embracing the new normal of education (Sanchez-Gordon & Luján-Mora, 2014; Randy, 2011 & Selvanathan *et al.*, 2020).

Engagement of students to one another is necessary in online learning and cohesiveness of students towards achieving a common goal. There is a need to adopt a new environment on computer mediated communication. The pandemic compelled academic institutions to adopt online learning but some learning institutions in underdeveloped countries have inadequacies in handling classes requiring the use of technology. In addition, there is a disparity on the teachers' training in all levels on the use of technology around the globe. This is aggravated by the inadequacy of IT support and infrastructure among poor learners thus, the need to investigate the advantages, disadvantages and challenges experienced by the learners during this pandemic (Almahasees *et al.*, 2021).

While the educational community has done a lot of efforts sustain learning continuity during this trying time, learners must patiently use whatever means to catch up with the new normal. Students and teachers alike must be very creative in finding ways to make education possible during the pandemic. They must be resourceful and embrace paradigm shift in pedagogical concepts and ways to deliver instruction even if they were not trained to such modalities. It is lamentable to note that poor learners who do not have the means are bound to fail or left behind (Schleicher, 2020).

With the drastic changes that are continuously occurring in the educational system, it is not surprising that its impact to teacher and students teaching and learning strategies are also in the verge of radical modifications and adjustments to adapt to the current situation the society and academe is facing. In the past school year wherein online learning was piloted, students experienced a lot of stress in online learning. It has been found in the study of Fawaz and Samaha (2020) concluded that the abrupt shift to online teaching caused depression and anxiety among learners.

Through the related literature of this study, it has been reported that the following are some of the major challenges in the new normal like connectivity issues, passive engagement in the virtual classroom, and numerous impediments in carrying out online classes. However, according to Almendingen *et al.* (2021), it has been found in their study that the new educational environment of students became so challenging but there was a positive opportunity for them to quickly embrace the situation.

The challenges brought about by the academic migration to online platform has long been established. Anent to this, the researcher explicitly aimed to analyze the attitude of learners towards online classes. There was a clamor among learners for their teachers to guide and support them during this time of pandemic to keep them abreast of the fast-changing educational environment.

2. Statement of the Problem

The paper explored the lived experiences of higher education institution students with this mode of online learning in the new normal. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the effects of online learning platform to their current learning experience?
2. In the perspective of the participants, what are the advantages and disadvantages of online learning platform?
3. What issues or problems are they experiencing being in online learning platform?
4. How do participants handle the academic pressure under online learning classes?
5. What do the participants recommend improving their learning process?

3. Methodology

This chapter describes the method on how the research was undertaken. It includes the research design, research environment, the instrument, data gathering procedure and pre-testing questionnaire.

This study aimed to explicate the challenges of virtual classroom learning to help students adapt to the new normal in the educational system. Furthermore, to help the educators develop a course of action in order that the teaching-learning process be as meaningful and relevant despite the drastic change the system is facing.

4. Research Design

Qualitative research reinforces the understanding of the researcher on fresh information and experiences of

participants in the research.

Given the objective of this paper which is to uncover some situations and analysis on the lived experience of students in online classes, this study utilized the qualitative phenomenological design (Van Manen, 1990).

The phenomenological theory was used in this paper because it allowed the researcher to elicit the personal experiences of the participants on certain phenomenon that is relevant to the aim of this paper. It is only through their experiences that gave the clear picture of the realities in online learning in the new normal (Fendt *et al.*, 2014).

Research Locale and Participants of the Study

The participants of this study who came from higher education institution in Northern Luzon were chosen using non-probability sampling, most specifically, purposive-convenient sampling method wherein the participants were chosen according to their availability and their acceptance to be involved. Non-probability sampling techniques are utilized in exploratory and qualitative research. These kinds of research do not aim at testing hypothesis (McCombes, 2019).

Research Instrument

In this paper, sets of questions were utilized to get the needed information. The instrument that was used to analyze the gathered data is documentary analysis.

The interview was conducted in a semi-structured way. In addition to this, there were also open-ended interview questions constructed based on the research questions. For the questions to have a logical sequence, the questions were asked from general questions to more specific or focused questions.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through focus group discussions among the participants via Zoom meeting Platform. Multiple data sources in a case study provide opportunities to understand the situation from various angles (Merriam, 1998; Stake 2000).

Analysis began during the data collection period. Each day the newly collected data were reviewed, synthesized, and documented to keep careful and detailed notes. This is particularly important given the short time frame for data collection. Themes that emerged from focus group discussions were noted and analyzed comprehensively.

The data analysis plan used in this research study was Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological method. Colaizzi's distinctive seven step process of rigorous analysis provides a concise and thorough description of the phenomenon under study as confirmed by the participants who lived it. This method depends upon rich first-person accounts of experience. In this study, these accounts came from Focus Group Discussions through the Zoom Meeting Platform.

Coding of Data

Transcripts of the FGDs were coded using thematic content analysis as the main technique. Transcripts were analyzed following an incident-to-incident coding strategy, instead of a word-by-word or line-by-line coding strategy, to make sense of the participants' utterances. Further, the key-word-in-context (KWIC) method was utilized to come up with the different themes of the focus group discussion. This method entails locating all occurrences of particular words or phrases in the text and identifying the context in which the word appears. Typically, one can do this by predetermining how many words before and after the key word to include in the analysis. To ensure the correctness of the transcription, textual data generated from the focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim from the audio recordings and to a lesser degree, participant observation were also used.

4. Results Analysis and Discussion

In this section, the participants expressed their experiences as students in online classes. They revealed the issues that they encounter in their day-to-day struggle in online classes. However, they also shared how they cope with these issues, what strategies they use and what help they think students like them need in this time of crisis.

The results of the focus group discussion reveal some recurring themes in the lived experiences of the student-participants who were currently enrolled in online learning classes.

After the analysis, two significant themes emerged under the first key topic (A) –the effects of online class: (1) difficulty in the learning process and (2) affordability and accessibility of time and place.

Under the second key topic (B) – issues and problems experienced in online classes, there were three themes that emerged: (1) issues in internet connectivity; (2) lack of proper resources such as gadgets; and (3) lower productivity

rate.

However, the said issues above were resolved due to the coping mechanisms of the student-participants. Hence, in the third key topic (C) – the coping mechanisms of students under online learning classes in which there are two themes that emerged: (1) finding alternatives and (2) practice of time management.

To provide a research-based strategic recommendation, the researcher elicited the student-participants' responses on the strategies that they use to achieve their academic goals efficiently and effectively. Thus, the last key topic (D) – what the participants could recommend improving their learning process under online learning classes surfaced. There were two themes that emerged in the focus group discussion for this topic: (1) ask for academic guidance and (2) teacher-initiated support.

These themes that emerged were analyzed and interpreted to fully understand the experiences of the students in online classes. The issues and concerns stated by the students supported the claims in the second chapter of this study.

The succeeding discussion centered on the themes that transpired in the study. These were subdivided into the four key questions – the effects of online learning platform to the student-participants' current learning experience, the advantages and disadvantages of online learning platform, the issues or problem that learners are experiencing in virtual classroom environment platform, how the students handle the academic pressure under online learning classes, what the participants recommend or imply to improve their learning process.

On the Effects of Online Class (Advantages and Disadvantages)

(1) Difficulty in the Learning Process

Due to lack of engagement, the student-participants shared that it is indeed difficult for them to grasp what is being taught in class given that (1) they are not that familiar in the teaching-learning set-up and (2) they find the learning process boring.

One of the participants said, *“Uhm, para po sa’kin may dalawa pong effect parang yung isa po is di natin masyadong natutunan yung tinuturo tapos ang boring po talaga.”* (Uhm, for me, there are two effects *of online classes to students*. One is that it is difficult for them to understand the lessons and it is boring.)

Another participant even stated that it is demotivating to attend classes as compared to when they were in face-to-face classes. *“Ma’am nakakatamad po pag online class.”* *“Kasi di ko nae-experience yung ano yung totoong pag-aaral kesa sa online class mas maganda pag face-to-face.”* (Ma’am online classes are really demotivating.) (Because we don't get to have the same learning experience and face-to-face class is better.)

This claim of the students is in consonance with the study conducted by Gustiani, (2020) wherein he found out that the student's drive to go online learning was primarily due to their aspiration to gain knowledge and venture on new experiences. Other factors that affected their desire to learn come from the home and school environment especially the lack of learning management system support.

(2) Affordability and Accessibility of Time and Place

Despite the challenges experienced by the students, they have also shared that there are advantages of online learning, one of which would be affordability. Since there is no need for students to go out during the pandemic, this only means that tight budget on school allowance would never be a problem. Instead of spending money for transportation, meals, and other bills that they need to pay, they would only be spending it on an internet plan.

One of the participants said, *“Ma’am para po sa akin ay yung advantage po ay hindi ka na po magcocommute dito ka na lang sa bahay.”* (Ma’am, for me, the advantage is that you don't need to commute anymore. You just must stay home.) The accessibility of time and place did an essential part in the acquisition of knowledge in the class during the pandemic. This is because they would not only be bounded by the resources that they can get from the teacher. Not only are they saving money by staying at the comfort of their own home, but since they are online, it would be easier for them to connect to a wider network.

Another participant also stated, *“Advantage at disadvantage, siguro yung accessibility nung time and place kasi po nasa bahay na lang din po tsaka hindi na gagastos ng pamasaha tapos ano po improves students' attendance kasi po nasa bahay na lang po pwede naman pong mag-aral ng ano kahit natutulog pa din.”* (Perhaps the advantage and disadvantage would be the accessibility of time and place because you just must stay home. You don't need to spend money for transportation. Another one is it improves the students' attendance because they are just staying in their home. They may attend classes even if they still feel sleepy.)

This finding is strengthened by the claim of Gautam (2020) in her article *Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Learning* wherein she stated that the main advantages of online learning are affordability and the accessibility and flexibility of time and location. In the article, she claimed that virtual classroom environment motivates learners to become independent, attend classes from any location based on their choice. Lectures can also be recorded, archived, and store for future reference. This gives the students the chance to access the instructional materials at a time of their comfort.

One of the students also claimed, “*Meron po tayong flexible schedule and environment, by studying online po you decide home learning environment suited to your needs, sa kwarto man o sa study room sa cafe o sa kahit saan ka man comfortable.*” (*We came up with schedule suited to us and comfortable space in our home. By engaging in online classes, we chose our learning environment that can really work for our need, be it in your own room, study room or even at a café, it could be anywhere if you’re comfortable.*)

Another advantage of online learning is the reduction of expenses. It is more economical compared to in class learning considering the reduction of expenses in transportation, meals, and time management. Moreover, it provides all learning materials online and it is environment-friendly because of the non-consumption of papers and other physical documents (Gautam, 2020).

On the Issues and Problems Experienced in Online Classes

(1) Issues in Internet Connectivity

The unstable connectivity tops the predicament of teachers, learners, and parents in virtual classroom environment. Topping the list of major problems that the participants claimed to have encountered in their online classes is the unstable internet connection. Most of the participants revealed that their major concern along with other students like them is the internet connection problem. There were also moments when there are unprecedented situations such as down system on connection and even power interruption.

One of the participants stated, “*Ma’am bigla-biglaang nawawalan ng kuryente.*” (*Ma’am, there are sudden power interruptions.*)

This result of the study is supported by the survey done by iOptions Ventures Corporation which is an independent research firm that disclosed that more than half or 67% of stakeholders, 84% of mentors and 71% of learners indicated "poor connectivity" in the list of challenges encountered in distance learning.

Another study showing how slow internet connectivity affects the learning process of the students is the one conducted by Asio *et al.* (2021), wherein they claimed that connectivity will be a big problem among learners for their virtual class. This challenge is also applicable to the school, academic managers, teaching force and non-teaching personnel.

In the same study by Asio *et al.* (2021), they also claimed that limited internet connectivity has an impact to the mental state of the psychological well-being of students, particularly their level of being anxious in the class. It is also being revealed in the study that those learners exposed to mobile have developed higher risk of anxiety than those who are using Wi-Fi connectivity at home. In addition, the study revealed that the inaccessibility of students to connectivity increases their tendency to develop diseases related to Corona Virus.

(2) Lack of Proper Technological Resources

Aside from internet connectivity issues, one of the major issues that students revealed they are facing is the lack of proper resources. It is with the knowledge of everyone that due to the unprecedented situations brought about by this pandemic, people were not ready in many aspects and the education sector is no exemption. Despite the efforts of the education sector, there are still students and teachers especially in marginalized areas who find it hard to not only connect to the internet because they are far from network providers’ area of tower but also because of limited access to proper resources such as appropriate gadgets for online classes.

One student-participant stated, “*Wala po silang magamit na gadget, nakikihiram lang po ganun po.*” (*They really don’t have any gadget to use. They just borrow.*)

This claim was supported by another student who said, “*Yung wala po silang magamit kahit isang gadget or network pang-online class Ma’am.*” (*They don’t have any gadget to use, nor internet connection for online class, Ma’am.*)

This issue on the impact of the lack of technological resources to the teaching-learning process is supported by Cabrera (2020) in an article entitled *DepEd Distributes E-learning Gadgets to Remote Schools in North Luzon* revealed that students still experience IT related problems despite the full support of the Department of Education in

providing quality instruction through virtual classroom environment.

Based on the research, there were cases of dropouts, frequent absences in classes and passive participation of students during this pandemic. One obvious reason is inability of students to acquire needed IT gadgets to be used in their classes and connectivity issues. "Our students are having a hard time adjusting to distance learning. I am having a hard time. The main concerns here are internet connectivity, gadgets, and stress for students," this was disclosed by a Manila-based IT teacher.

Another student answered when asked what is the major problem that they have encountered, "*Siguro yung minimal resources po. Kasi yung nabibigay lang po samin kung ano lang yung binigay ni teacher. Depende nalang po samin kung magreresearch pa po kami. Wala pong library tulad sa school.*" (Perhaps it's the minimal resources. Because we only rely on the resources given by our teacher; however, we have the option to do our own research. But we don't have a library unlike in school.)

This experience of the participant is supported by the study of Mbiydzennyuy and Silungwe (2020) wherein they concluded that the shift from traditional classroom setting to virtual classroom environment entails IT infrastructure supportive to online learning created a wider gap between the well-to-do students and marginalized students. It then strengthened inequities among students in terms of accessibility to quality education.

The above-cited result is further supported by the study of Asio *et al.* (2021) wherein they claimed that the availability of mobile phones helped students and institutions adapt to the changes. But is lamentable to note that these gadgets are not readily available to learners. Now this poses a great challenge. The marginalized sector of students is heavily affected by the fact that they do not have the means to purchase even laptops. This scenario would compel academic managers to investigate the problem and offer solutions to help the students who are incapable to acquire the needed gadgets (Cleofas & Rocha, 2021).

It is not only the learning process of the students that is being affected by lack of proper technological resources. Even their mental health is also at risk. This is strengthened by the study of Cleofas and Rocha (2021) wherein they found that in terms of gadget profile, learners who are deprived of needed gadgets like laptops, desktops and other learning equipment experienced serious anxiety attributed to Corona Virus. The correlation really exists because access of information during the pandemic especially about the disease can be accessed via electronic gadgets (Ansari & Anjali, 2020). Moreover, a study has suggested that compared to mobile devices, laptop and desktop searches provide better information regarding health (Boyd & Wilson, 2018).

(3) Lower Productivity Rate

Given the fact that the education sector, especially the students, is still trying to adapt to the new normal because of the shift from in-person classes to virtual classroom environment created a big blow on the academic achievement of students during this trying times of pandemic.

One of the participants stated, "*Kwan po Ma'am, mas mababa po yung productivity rate kasi mas konti lang po yung natutunan namin. Unlike pag face-to-face na ini-spoon-feed to sa'min yung lessons.*" (Ma'am, the productivity rate is lower because we only learn a few things as compared during face-to-face classes where they spoon-feed the lessons to us.)

This finding is supported by the study of Cellini (2021) wherein she found that online learning contributed to decrease in class performance by merely 0.2 standard deviations. This resulted in lower confidence among learners and created a negative impact in their academic performance.

In addition to this, she also claimed that the performance of students during virtual classroom environment was very low compared to face-to-face classes. Male students were also observed to have lower academic performance compared to females. This result is congruent to the findings of this paper.

On the Coping Mechanisms of Students under Online Learning Classes

(1) Finding Alternatives

Since one of the major problems encountered by students is internet connectivity, the students who often have connection issues try to find alternatives such as prepaid load for data or even going to their classmates' house to connect.

Most of the participants had the same insight and experience regarding the issue of internet connectivity and on such situations when there are unannounced power interruptions.

One student-participant shared, "*Ma'am karamihan po sa mga walang magamit na gadget is pumupunta po sa*

pinakamalapit na kaklase nila tas nakikionline class nalang po.” (Ma’am, majority of the learners who have lesser access to IT equipment usually seek the help of their nearest classmates to connect to their online class.)

Another student also said, *“Ma’am nakikigamit po ako ng gadget at nakikiconnect po sa iba para lang po makapasok.” (Ma’am, they borrow gadgets and connect to others’ internet just to attend classes.)*

In an article by Flores (2021), she disclosed the seriousness of the problem on inaccessibility of learners to IT gadgets being used in online classes. Further, SWS survey revealed that 58 per cent of students enrolled have access to IT gadgets.

Hence, this online learning issue is being solved by borrowing gadgets, seeking for assistance from households that have internet connection, and resorting to buying prepaid load for internet data.

(2) Practice Time Management

The practice of time management was constantly reiterated by most of the students-participants. When asked as to what is the best practice or best strategy that they use and they recommend to students in online classes, time management is also their most common answer.

One of the student-participants stated, *“Mapractice po ng time management para po hindi nagcram bago mag-exam o pag pasahan na po. Tsaka hindi po masyadong nagfe-facebook para naka-focus lang po sa pag-aaral, sa online class.” (Practice time management so that they don’t need to cram when the deadline arrives. They may also lessen their screen time to be able to focus on their online classes.)*

This was further supported by another student-participant who said, *“Time management po talaga kasi kung hindi ka po magma-manage ng time mo nang maayos wala ka po talagang matatapos. Tsaka finding the right motivation din po kasi kung meron ka naman ding time management pero wala ka namang motivation gumawa ng mga bagay, parang wala rin po.” (Time management is really our coping mechanism because if one fails to utilize time systematically, one will never accomplish quality result. Also, try to find the right motivation because even if you know how to manage your time if you are not motivated to do anything, it is useless.)*

Another student-participant also said, *“Ma’am ano po, learn to be flexible po. I can improve my learning process by having time management and by disciplining myself to do my homework and not rushing to pass my outputs as rush outputs are ugly.” (Ma’am, learn to be flexible. I can improve my learning process by having time management and by disciplining myself to do my homework and not rushing to pass my outputs as rush outputs are ugly.)*

In an article published by Rinkema and Williams (2021), they highlighted the importance of practicing good time management. Through efficient utilization of time, one will be able to be productive. Students usually excel in class especially if they make use of their time efficiently and effectively.

Effective management of time indicates self-discipline. And self-discipline is one of the skills that students need to possess to achieve their academic goals, especially in this time of drastic changes in the educational system.

In a study stated in the review of related literature section of this paper, it was stated that online learning-initiated learners' role in utilizing needed technologies prompted them to become independent learners (Roach & Lemasters, 2006). The findings of Suyatno *et. al* (2021) supported this study by emphasizing the role of teachers in encouraging students to do well in their classes. Students look up to their teachers as models and paragon of virtues. The genuine support of teachers to their students contribute to the healthy disposition of students (Klem & Connell, 2004).

The adverse effect brought about by the changes in the educational system has not only resulted in negative factors but also positive ones. The resilience of the students developed a lifelong skill that they might in the future to combat more difficult tasks and issues.

On What the participants could recommend improving their learning process

(1) Asking for Academic Guidance

The help that the teachers can provide during online classes is being limited only to those that they can give online due to geographical boundaries. However, it is still relevant and worthwhile if learners elicit help when needed.

One of the student-participants shared, *“Ano po Ma’am, I think, the help that my teachers could provide is for them to guide me. Like for example po, I didn’t understand the topic. I will reach out by messaging them and they will help me to better understand the lesson.” (I think the help that my teachers could provide is for them to guide me. For instance, I didn’t understand the topic. I will reach out by messaging them and they will help me to better understand the lesson.)*

This experience of the student-participants is supported by the study of Yi-Wu (2021) wherein he concluded that engaging the learners in online discussion is more productive than purely teacher talk. It is revealed in the study that teachers engage their students in purely synchronous sessions. There is then the recommendation that teachers should revisit their style in presenting their lessons and innovate the way online classes are being conducted to motivate students to participate actively.

Teacher-Initiated Support

School is not only a place for educating the learners but more importantly the development of social skills. It is also a venue for teachers to foster needed virtues that learners can apply in real life situations. They can create collaboration through online mode allowing both learners and teachers to interact with each other and make their environment a conducive place to venture more on life lessons.

A student participant said, “*Yung available pa rin po sila kahit after classes na para pag may hindi po naintindihan pwede pa rin pong mapagtanungan.*” “*Pwede rin pong magbigay ng one-on-one sessions.*” (Their availability even after classes **is one of the teacher-support that we need* especially when there are lessons that we can't understand, we may ask them when needed.*) (They may also give one-on-one sessions.)

In an article published on OECD in 2020, it was claimed that teachers can be a role model in the classroom among learners by manifesting enthusiasm in teaching and reinforce students' zeal in participating actively in online classes. They can do this by way of providing exercises that are related to real life situations which students can readily relate and see the connection on what they are practicing in their respective homes and communities (Keller *et al.*, 2014).

The findings gathered in this study were used to develop a research-based recommendation as to how students and teachers may approach the difficulties that arise along their journey on online classes.

5. Conclusion

In the light of the foregoing findings, several conclusions were drawn by the researcher. It was concluded that the issues being encountered by students in online classes have an impact not only on their academic performance but also to their psychological well-being. The issue of internet connectivity, lack of proper technological resources, inappropriateness, and ineffectiveness of home as a place to have classes, and the education sector being unprepared in transitioning to online classes during the new normal were issues being experienced by the students both from public and private schools. However, despite the education sector lacking in many aspects, the students, teachers, and educational institutions try to find ways to manage the challenges and educational landscape in this time of transition.

Therefore, in connection with these issues, there also several strategies shared by the student-participants that could truly be helpful to their fellow students, one of which would be learning how to practice time management. Since they are not being physically monitored by their teachers, the only tool that they can use to combat their tendency to procrastinate is self-discipline. And one aspect that shows self-discipline is the ability to manage one's time despite being unmonitored. In addition, the student-participants also shared how their teachers may be of help to lessen their concerns in online classes.

Furthermore, one of the strategies the student-participants think their teachers could implement is one-on-one session. Bearing in mind that the research is conducted in a private school wherein there are fewer students as compared to public schools, the idea of a teacher's one-on-one sessions with the students is highly plausible. Moreover, the parents also play one of the most vital roles in their children's academic performance. Given the fact that they are the ones who could readily monitor their children, it is important for them and the teachers to have a proper and steady communication in order that the students may achieve the academic goals that they have shared.

The skill set that the students must combat the existing issues in online classes in the new normal is still underdeveloped, hence the need for their guardians or parents along with their teachers, school administration and community to guide and support them.

6. Recommendations

From the above findings and conclusions, here are some recommendations that would help the affected individuals in the education sector in adapting to the changes in the transition to online classes:

For Students. The results of this study may be used to enhance their skills and attitude towards the achievement of their priorities in education.

1. *Time management* is one of these strategies that the researcher highly suggests for the students to use. Having

self-discipline to avoid accumulating backlogs is highly recommended.

1. Along with time management is *asking for academic guidance from teachers*. The importance of asking questions and seeking for help when needed to achieve a student's academic goal has long been established. And due to the transition to the new normal, the escalation of a student's need to seek for academic guidance is very much logical and understandable.

2. In addition to these strategies is *finding alternative solutions* to issues of internet connectivity, lack of technological resources (gadgets) and finding a better place that is more conducive to learning are also recommended. Another one would be borrowing gadgets or asking for the LGU's assistance if necessary. The students have the option to use prepaid data for internet connectivity or connect to the municipal library or even a café that offers free use of Wi-Fi connection if they find the area comfortable.

For Teachers. The teachers are encouraged to realign their teaching strategies to the new normal. Although they are expected to give the same quality of teaching, they must be reminded that students have a different learning environment now. The teaching-learning process has been made more challenging, but they may implement innovative strategies and technological advances to adapt to the changes.

1. *Providing a platform to collaborate and socialize* is one strategy that a teacher may implement in online classes. Teachers may conduct group sessions in smaller number to entice students to engage in open discussion and create a harmonious learning environment.

2. Another one is *considering new learning methods*. Teachers may consider evaluating their lesson plans and come up with strategies, techniques suitable to online teaching during the transition period. They may opt to consider flipped classroom style. This method engages learners to watch video after schoolwork. This will facilitate more understanding of the lessons in the class.

3. It is also important to practice flexibility in handling online classes and bear in mind differentiated instruction.

For School Administration and the Community. The school administration and community are encouraged to collaborate in creating a facilitative environment for students.

1. One recommendation would be the provision of pocket Wi-Fi with ample data connection for students especially in far-flung areas.

2. They may also communicate with their local government units to provide additional IT equipment for students to use especially the marginalized members.

3. In addition, they may improve the IT infrastructure of the locality to create accessibility of internet connection.

For Future Researchers. It is recommended to include large samples to see the clearer picture of the scenario in online classes in higher education institution in the country.

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