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Louie Giray[1]; Daxjhed Gumalin[2]; Jomarie Jacob[3]; Karl Villacorta[4]
[1,2,3,4]*College of Education, Polytechnic University of the Philipines, Taguig City, Philippines*

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EXPLORING THE ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE OF FILIPINO COLLEGE STUDENTS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Louie Giray[1]; Daxjhed Gumalin[2]; Jomarie Jacob[3]; Karl Villacorta[4]
[1,2,3,4]*College of Education, Polytechnic University of the Philipines, Taguig City, Philippines*
[1]*Contributor Email: lggiray@pup.edu.ph*

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Abstract

This study was endeavored to understand the online learning experience of Filipino college students enrolled in the academic year 2020-2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data were obtained through an open-ended qualitative survey. The responses were analyzed and interpreted using thematic analysis. A total of 71 Filipino college students from state and local universities in the Philippines participated in this study. Four themes were classified from the collected data: (1) negative views toward online schooling, (2) positive views toward online schooling, (3) difficulties encountered in online schooling, and (4) motivation to continue studying. The results showed that although many Filipino college students find online learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic to be a positive experience such as it provides various conveniences, eliminates the necessity of public transportation amid the COVID-19 pandemic, among others, a more significant number of respondents believe otherwise. The majority of the respondents shared a general difficulty adjusting toward the new online learning setup because of problems related to technology and Internet connectivity, mental health, finances, and time and space management. A large portion of students also got their motivation to continue studying despite the pandemic from fear of being left behind, parental persuasion, and aspiration to help the family.

Keywords: *Filipino College Students; COVID-19 Pandemic; Universities; Online Learning.*

A. Introduction

With the rampant pandemic spreading worldwide, people everywhere have been vigilant in avoiding the infectivity's advancement. Millions of people now stay indoors working and schooling as COVID-19 has highlighted the considerable impact our housing has on our lives and well-being. Efforts to decelerate the spread of corona virus 2019 (COVID-19) through non-pharmaceutical interventions and preventive measures such as social distancing and self-isolation, frequent sanitizing, and the wearing of face masks and shields have prompted widespread closure of schools on an international scale. As such, many governments utilized quarantine precautions and temporarily shut down schools. Consequently, over a billion students worldwide have been affected. The Philippine government's quarantine policies have to be taken up on over 28 million Philippine students (UNESCO, 2020). As of November 24, 2020, almost 59.5 million have been infected, and over 1.4 million have died. In the Philippines, this translates to nearly 424,000 infected and 8,100 deaths.

For the academic year 2019-2020, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) continues to release funding for the education subsidy for grant holders at state and local universities and colleges. These funds can be used in the next academic year while the effects of COVID-19 pervade the nation. (CHED, 2020). Before the pandemic disrupted the world, some private and state universities and colleges already had online learning systems as part of their educational system. This option is also offered to students enrolled in open universities. The creation of the first Open University in 1969 in the United Kingdom was described as the greatest achievement by the Labor Prime Minister Harold Wilson himself (Mandelson, 2009). Moreover, on February 23, 1995, the University of the Philippines-Open University started a similar venture and continues to lead open and distance learning in the Philippines (Villamejor-Mendoza, 2013). This system was designed to help students in need who wanted access to quality higher education despite their circumstances.

However, this poses challenges for many colleges, especially state universities in the Philippines, due to online learning being a stark contrast to

traditional learning environments; and its abrupt rising demand, which many find difficult to account for. Based on the statement released by the Department of Education (DepEd), they initially decided to continue the resumption of classes in the Philippines in August 2020. However, due to the rapid increase of corona virus cases in the country, they decided to move it to October 5, 2020. In contrast, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) granted the university heads the prerogative to determine when to resume the Academic Year 2020-2021 since they are not under the Republic Act 11480 (Ghaz, 2020). Despite numerous student demonstrations to postpone the resumption of classes amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the DepEd and CHED still heeded their decision to recommence the academic year. They decided to have two learning modalities, namely, synchronous and asynchronous, in which the students will choose the most suitable model that they prefer.

According to Teras et al. (2020), most university teachers choose video conferencing or synchronous methods that utilize applications like Zoom to conduct their classes. This option resembles traditional teaching wherein they can teach their students "face to face but geographically separated." Nevertheless, this makes access to the Internet and essential technology an absolute necessity and also leads to some challenges and difficulties for teachers and students, especially those in the Philippines. This research endeavors to understand the online learning experience amid the COVID-19 pandemic among Filipino college students in state and local universities. It also attempts to provide vital information and relevant insights regarding college students' actual experiences during this critical time.

B. Review of Related Literature and Studies

COVID-19 Pandemic. COVID-19 also referred to as 2019 novel coronavirus, is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. This virus is in the same family of viruses as a severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) that disrupted the world in 2003 (Astuti, 2020). Its symptoms are like influenza or common colds like fever, cough, and shortness of breath and if there is an infection, it may lead to pneumonia. The virus can be

transmitted through direct contact and if an individual touches a surface that is being infected or contaminated and then touches their face (Bender, 2020). Due to the rapid increase of infected cases of novel corona virus 2019 (COVID-19), 50,000 public schools in the Philippines opened their classes last October 5, 2020, where the students will stay at their houses due to distance learning as one of the precautionary measures prepared by the government against the spread of the virus (Mendoza, 2020).

Due to this pandemic, the closure of various schools affecting more than 1.6 billion students in more than 190 countries has led to the crisis. In this way, the current educational inequalities are exacerbated. This may lead to some children and youth dropping out or not having access to school due to the pandemic's economic impact alone. Moreover, it may also threaten young women's educational access. In addition, it will continue to have significant consequences outside school, such as undermining basic services for children and societies such as providing food with nutrients, impacting the willingness of a parent to work, and increasing the risk of abuse against women and children. However, this has also led to education innovation like providing education support through the means of radio and televisions and distance learning solutions (United Nations, 2020).

Online Learning. The abrupt school closures in the mid-semester prompted by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a sudden shift to online distance education among higher education institutions worldwide. In the Philippines, this also has led to the rise of video conferencing through online conference platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, MS Teams, and more, as a substitute for conventional classroom instruction. However, this "live" teaching online poses many problems for both learners and teachers alike. This includes problems like lack of access to reliable bandwidth, lack of pedagogical innovation, and the proclivity to replicate traditional, teacher-led lecture formats, limiting independent learning among students. Critical reflection on how to teach in these trying times is therefore imperative for academic faculty (Teräs, et al., 2020). Moreover, according to the study of Baticulon, et al. (2020), medical students in the country faced different

barriers as they are adapting to online learning. These barriers fall into five categories which are technological, individual, domestic, institutional, and community. Moreover, it was stated in the study, the important roles of the medical schools and educators to address the problems and challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on the study conducted by Bao (2020) at Peking University, there are five high-impact principles for online education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The following are (1) strong coordination between online pedagogical design and student learning, (2) efficient distribution of instructional information, (3) enough guidance provided by instructors and teaching assistants to students, (4) excellent quality engagement to enhance student learning width and scope, and (5) contingency strategy to deal with unforeseen events in online education platforms. According to a study conducted by Resurreccion (2018) in a Philippine state university, a positive attitude toward online learning significantly affects blended learning readiness. The research findings suggest that students who have favorable attitudes towards online learning tend to be receptive to instruction's blended learning model. Thus, it is recommended that higher education institutions consider investing in information technology resources to enhance students' learning experience.

Similar studies can be traced back to 2003, when the severe acute respiratory syndrome or SARS spread rapidly through international air travel from China to many cities globally, resulting in over 8000 cases of infections and 700 deaths. In Hong Kong, to help the public guard against the virus, the government implemented security measures, one of which was to shut down all schools and universities. As 1,000,000 kids remained at home, 1,302 schools were closed, and 50,600 teachers were faced with the task of using new media to deliver education that will hit Hong Kong students' homes and computers outside the school walls. Teachers had to rethink their teaching methods and provide fresh and varied ways for their students to work within the program's criteria. In respects that had not been expected or planned for SARS offered a stimulus for extensive ICT use (Fox, 2004).

At the time, little is known about how online learning may be used to disseminate health information and education rapidly and widely to large

university populations if there is an infectious disease outbreak. A six-lesson e-learning curriculum on SARS was constructed for a large university population of 32,000 students during the SARS outbreak in Singapore. Twelve research staff from the fields of medicine, economics, basic sciences, health promotion, microbiology, epidemiology, and public health, with two IT specialists and two support personnel, created the module within two months. Both students were expected to complete the module within nine months of its launch to ensure representation of the entire student body to meet the graduation criteria. Within the first month, about 5,000 (16 percent) students read the module and virtually all (96 percent) within nine months of its introduction. (Wong, et al., 2005).

C. Methods

Research Method. The goal of this study is to explore the views of college students concerning online learning experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the Philippines. In this study, we utilized a qualitative research design which is known for capturing the vivid narratives and thick descriptions of a certain phenomenon. Such design is suitable in this scholarly endeavor for our goal is majorly in the arena of the exploration of lived experiences. Qualitative research entails an iterative process that seeks to advance the understanding of the scientific community (Aspers & Corte, 2019). In this study, we desire that the gathered information based in the Philippine context may shed further illumination on the currently emerging subject. We also hope that our research may be utilized as a thinking tool in the formulation of policies or strategies concerning higher education.

Participants. We gathered data from 71 college students of various state and local universities around Metro Manila, Philippines. Participants were taken using the convenience sampling technique, meaning this sample was taken from the populace of those who were, from the term itself, convenient to reach. The participants gave their consent and agreed to participate in the study. Names were changed to pseudonyms to protect their identities and to maintain anonymity. Among those surveyed and interviewed, 39 were male (55%), 28 were female (39%), and 4

mentioned others (6%). All of them were college students in state universities in Metropolitan Manila, Philippines. The location of their universities ranged from, but was not limited to, the cities of Muntinlupa, Paranaque, Taguig, and Manila. 58% of the participants were aged 18-20, and 18% of them were 21-22. The majority of them were single (99%); only one person was married (1%). 39 students were taking courses related to Physical and Applied Sciences (55%). 11 students were in Humanities and Social Sciences (15%), 16 from Management, Administration, and Business (23%), and 5 cited others (7%).

Data Collection. Qualitative data were acquired online through open-ended qualitative surveys (Google Forms). These data-gathering techniques allowed us to explore the online learning experiences of college students studying in Philippine state universities under the critical situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was made possible through the cooperation of our colleagues, teachers, and networks. Their responses were gathered during January 2021 and were used as the foundation of this study.

Data Analysis. We used thematic analysis in making sense of the data collated. It is an approach for classifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns, otherwise known as, themes (Clarke & Braun, 2016). Thematic analysis (TA) is common and prevalent in the realm of qualitative research because of its flexibility. In the same logic that we found it fits in this study. Researchers (e.g., Akhtar & Boniwell, 2010; Holmqvist & Frisén, 2012; Selvam & Collicutt 2013) likewise utilized this approach and made established contributions in their respective fields. We followed the six steps of thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, we (1) acquainted and familiarized ourselves with the data. Then, we (2) generated codes, and (3) looked into possible themes. Afterward, we (4) reviewed them, (5) named and defined them. Lastly, (6) we discussed the findings.

D. Result and Discussion

This part of the study focuses on discussing the results of the survey from the participants. After collecting and analyzing the responses, the

researchers used thematic analysis to interpret and analyze the data. They came up with four themes namely: (1) negative views toward online schooling; (2) positive views toward online schooling; (3) difficulties encountered in online schooling; and (4) motivation to continue studying.

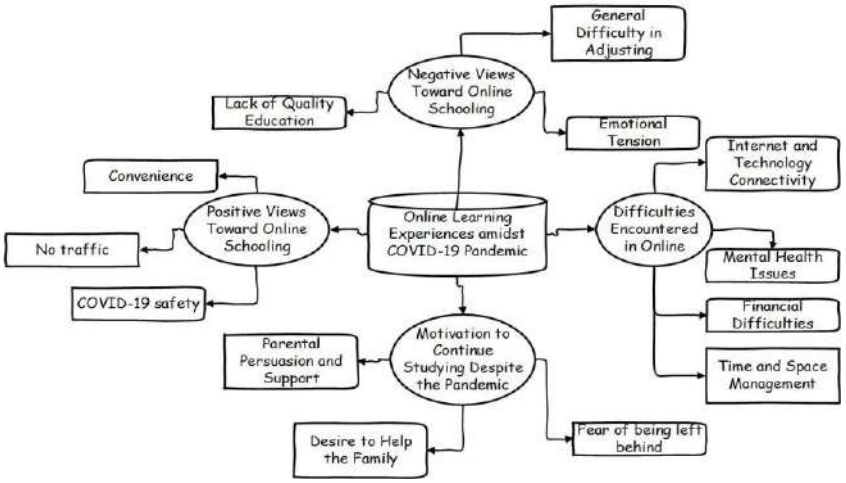

Figure 1. Concept Map of Online Learning Experiences amidst COVID-19 Pandemic

Theme 1: Negative Views toward Online Schooling. This theme revolves around the consensus of select state college students regarding their negative views toward online schooling amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The results show that more than eighty-five percent (85%) of the participants report the emotional tension (e.g., immense stress) that they have accumulated throughout their online education is the primary contributor to their negative perceptions. These students expressed an increased inclination to feel stressed because of the current approaches used and applied in online schooling, and they also expressed about its adversely overwhelming nature. Chriselda, aged 20, stated, "Studying amidst the pandemic has doubled the stress that I feel throughout the semester."

Janelle, aged 19, gave a sentiment that resonated with many participants, "Having an online class is so stressful, and I hate it because I don't learn anything. [And I feel like] it's more on compliance than learning." Yzke, 19, also expounded on how stressful and a hassle online schooling is by sharing how "most of the lessons [involve] self-study."

The participants firmly believed that online schooling has the propensity to compel students toward the independent study. Hence, it becomes a limitation and hindrance as it inhibits them from certain essential student-teacher interactions (e.g., engaging and interactive in-person classroom discussions). Unlike in the traditional face-to-face setup, many students enrolled in online schooling find it difficult to further comprehend their learning materials and resources without the convenience of having a mentor nearby for answering queries. Limitations like this stunt the cognitive and academic development of numerous students in various ways and had many students perceive that online schooling leads to a decrease in quality education.

> "Every session that you have missed, you are a force to study alone since you are not able to ask your professor what he/she discussed when your WIFI connection is lost." (Ronnel, 20).

Similarly, numerous participants also reported experiencing difficulty adjusting to new and different circumstances currently presented and adapted to online schooling in Philippine state universities. Furthermore, many of the participants claimed to generally feel drained due to being overwhelmed with various academic requirements for their online classes. These students shared immense feelings of dissatisfaction toward the existing modes and approaches in online schooling.

> "I feel drained. The amount of workload that my university gives us is ridiculous to do in this setting" (Danna, 20).

The responses were also consistent with the data from an earlier survey conducted by the Veritas Truth Survey in November 2020, which features that 34 percent (34%) of Filipino students claim to feel exhausted with their online classes. Students are frustrated and disturbed primarily by the significant increase in academic workload and unreliable Internet access that impede their participation in online classes (Adnan & Anwar, 2020).

> "I feel demotivated and anxious because I am used to situations where I have companions as we all face challenges in college life, but now I mostly get through trials all alone." (Mendy, 21).

Another reason for the participants' negative perception toward online schooling is the physical toll and financial strain that comes with this form of setup. Financial difficulties amid the COVID-19 pandemic increased the number of students who were unable to continue their studies. In 2020, "data from the Department of Education (DepEd) showed that only 25 million students were enrolled for the school year 2020-2021, leaving nearly 3 million out of school." (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2020). Additionally, such financial difficulties resulted in a lack of resources (e.g., updated software, mobile phones, personal computers, instructional materials, audio equipment, etc.) integral for online schooling.

"[A] disadvantage of online class [includes the increased] demand for gadgets and Internet connection, which not all students can provide, [and which makes studying more difficult]." declared Brielle, 20, who later shared her frustrations toward the lack of preparation of the Philippine government. "The lack of preparedness of the government also makes it harder for some students that are not privileged in life, and resulted to many teachers to give up their jobs."

Moreover, data suggest that online schooling drastically reduced students' ability to focus on their school works and shortened their class attention span. The evident reason for this universal problem includes internal (e.g., mental health issues) and external (e.g., unconducive learning environment) factors.

> "I lost my focus in studying since some professors don't teach; I still prefer [the] traditional learning setup" (Mel, 21)

Yet another issue with online schooling involves the increased rate of cheating in the classroom. In 2020, the Department of Education (DepEd) even admitted that "distance cheating was already anticipated even before the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to transition to blended learning." (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2020).

> "Traditional school setup is way better because the teachers can focus and see what the students do and how they excel in class. On virtual, everything is falsified." (Lei, 20)

Theme 2: Positive Views toward Online Schooling. This theme discusses the positive views of online schooling of selected state college and state university students amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the survey conducted, while most of the participants posited solely to the negative effects of online schooling in their holistic learning development amidst the pandemic, 97% of them were also able to state some of the common positive effects of online schooling as well as the convenience it brings at the comfort of their own homes from their own experiences.

The first most common positive view that the participants stated is the convenience and flexibility of online learning. In this broad sense, the participants said of the variety of convenience online learning has brought upon them, having the most common view attributed to their own pace and time in learning at 27%. Josh, aged 18, said that one of the advantages of online learning is "Self-paced, more lenient deadlines and submissions." Kyle, aged 19, also said "When it comes to advantages, you can hold your time..."

Gino, aged 20, also shared the same sentiment as he said "...Lectures are recorded, and learning is not limited to sync class." This shows that participants adapt to their current roles and obligations and interact with digital information and learning material with convenience. In this learning setting, they can move faster through areas of the course they feel comfortable with. Nards, aged 21, cemented this and said "The advantage of online learning is that students are handling their time. This helps students to have a little bit of break when it comes to doing classwork and for the working students."

Some of the participants also stated that their levels of activity and interaction with their families have increased because they have more time to enjoy themselves with them. For instance, Yuan, aged 19, posited that "the advantage of online learning at home is that there is more family bonding." The second most common positive view that our participants stated is the no-cost of transport and the no-traffic delay in learning. Because online learning does not require the students to go to their respective institutions, there is no cost of transport and no delay in traffic to

even think or worry about in their day-to-day basis in learning; they do not have to travel to their universities to study and they can avoid being late in their classes.

Dom, aged 20, noted this when he said, "The advantage of it is that you do not need to go to school and spend money for the transportation and exhaust yourself through the traffic." Angel, aged 20, also said the same advantage, "You can save money if you have Wi-Fi in your house because you don't need to pay for your transpo." Hades, aged 19, also stated that "The only good thing about an online class is you get to class in bed." These positive views essentially state that our participants can simply log in to their virtual classes on their preferred devices from the comfort of their own home in their beds, office, or in any place or setting they prefer.

The third most common positive view that the participants stated is that online learning is a safer way of schooling this pandemic. Jefferson, aged 21, pointed out that "The advantage is that it prevents us from coming in and out of our house since there is a virus... Though we have more time to spend at home with our family, the new normal is very different and it keeps us to just stay at home." Ailysh, aged 19, also said that "One of the pros of online learning is that you're less likely to obtain COVID-19." Phoebe, aged 20, reiterated that "Online learning is the safest choice in this situation." Since schools and learning institutions around the country are closed during these times of crisis, the implementation of online learning ensures that the students not just continue their studies amidst the situation of this pandemic but keep them safe from each other by avoiding risking themselves catching the contagious virus through physical distancing.

Another common positive view is that our participants noticed inflation to their school fees, and most especially to their miscellaneous fees, and an increase in their budgets. For both students and college institutions, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis has created a massive disruption in the financial "norm" of higher education in general. Yel, aged 20, stated that one of her advantages during this pandemic is that there is "A reduction in our tuition fees".

Danna, aged 20, also stated that "An obvious advantage would be, that an online set-up would minimize costs for transportation, materials, food needed in a traditional set-up." With schools closing, switching solely to online platforms such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, MS Teams, and Zoom, restructuring of classes, cutting costs and so much more, in this setting, a few of the more common ideas about university life are already cast out. This is because they do not need to utilize school facilities, equipment, and laboratories which, in a normal setting, would be required for their undertaking in their institutions. They can just learn at the comfort of their own devices through the learning modules that have been provided by their college instructors.

Some of the other positive views mentioned by our participants include constant access to information leading to an increase in online class meeting participations such as recitations, indispensable Internet assistance in doing tasks, extended task deadlines, and time considerations due to technical problems (Internet connectivity problems), availability of food consumption anytime they want during class hours, limited institutional events and, unlimited online interactions with their peers and classmates (via Messenger, Zoom or Google Meet). These views were remotely stated by our participants' individual experiences all of which, still, contribute greatly to their individual holistic learning development amid the rampant pandemic.

Theme 3: Difficulties Encountered in Online Schooling. This theme focuses on the various difficulties experienced by the students during their online schooling. These difficulties fall under four categories; difficulties in technology and Internet connectivity, mental health issues, financial difficulties, and lastly, time and space management issues. These difficulties were based on the results of the survey being conducted by the researchers.

One of the difficulties that students were facing is the problem with their Internet connectivity and technical problems. Not all students have stable Internet connections in their own homes and not all students have the technology to use in their online schooling. K, a 19-year-old student stated,

"However, [the] Internet signal is poor. It is not so effective." She also added that the Internet signal in the Philippines should level up. Also, Ervin, aged 19, an IT student mentioned that he felt fear because "COVID-19 affects the studies and affects even more to the poor people, they can't have any gadgets, they study for them to have a better life…". This statement shows that even though he did not experience the technological problem, he was worried for others who might experience and currently experiencing this dilemma.

> "Online learning is not that efficient in the Philippines to be adopted since not every household has Internet access and also technology to be used in online learning. Might as well become a hardship for students especially with the application-based subject, for example, the field study of us Education students is being lifted." (Nards, 21).
>
> "A big impact mostly to students who are experiencing limitations in resources for online learning like gadgets, Internet and such. I struggled mentally because of the big adjustment we have to face as students." (Nikki, 20).

Another difficulty that the students were facing during online schooling is the different mental issues that students were experiencing during their classes. Most of the students were experiencing stress, anxiety, frustration, and depression in their current situations either during the sessions or the activities given by their professors. Pretty, a 21-year-old student taking Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Mathematics stated that she felt "stressed due to the activities given to them in just a short period of time." Moreover, many students felt anxious and stressed about their online classes due to the activities and assignments given by their professors.

> "Honestly, at first it was horrible and I am easily stressed with all of the setup and stuff. But I managed to adjust and tried different ways and strategies to still learn amidst the pandemic because I do not want to waste a year learning nothing…" (Jaydee, 20)

Although it was mentioned in the previous theme that online schooling provides students certain conveniences (e.g., flexible pace in learning) and

that students can spend much more time at home for their leisure, many students still miss the companionship and physical presence of their friends and peers. With the current situation, they cannot achieve it; it makes them long for it and feels homesick as well.

Another difficulty that several students were facing is a financial struggle. Even though students have lessened their expenses for their transportation or food allowance—which are common expenses during face-to-face classes—they instead need to reallocate it to have Internet access. And unlike other students who have a stable Internet connection at home, some students need to purchase mobile data for them to access the Internet. For instance, they usually purchase mobile data whenever they have synchronous sessions in school or if they need to conduct their research on the Internet for school-related matters.

> "… it's expensive as I need an Internet connection, some electronic accessories like earphones and microphone and it's harder to understand the topics being discussed" (Juls, 19)

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the current job situations of the parents wherein many of them lost their jobs. This struggle came to reality where they spend money not just for the equipment, gadgets, and Internet connectivity of their child who is studying online, but also for various daily expenses. Lastly is the issue regarding time management and lack of space. For example, numerous students find it difficult to use their homes as effective environments for learning. The interruptions and distractions from their homes make it difficult for them to focus on their online schooling. Their duties at home and online school frequently conflict with one another. Gine, a 20-year-old student mentioned "time scheduling, like when you have brothers or sisters that are having an online class too same with your time."

"In my own experience, it is hard to focus. I got distracted easily since we only have one room in our house that serves as our learning space, and sometimes, I became uninterested in other activities." (Rafael, 19). The statements above show that even though the home is considered a comfortable space for

some students, many students still believe otherwise. This situation makes it hard for many students to focus as they cannot balance and manage their time and space during their online schooling.

Theme 4: Motivation to Continue Studying Despite the Pandemic. This theme pertains to the motivation of college students to continue studying, despite the pandemic situation. Their motivation was either intrinsic, extrinsic, or synergy of both. The majority of the participants primarily answered that they did not want to be left behind by their colleagues in schooling and graduation. Danna, aged 20, stated, "I don't want to be held back a year; my course already requires me to take it for 5 years. I also don't want to be left behind by my peers." Meanwhile, Chriselda, 20, declared, "A year will be wasted if I didn't continue studying."

Evident in the answers of many participants was the perceived fear of not graduating in their expected year. That fear became an impetus for them to enroll and continue studying amidst the COVID-19 circumstances and the new academic setup. Participants even viewed non-attendance to university as a wastage of time.

> "It is my decision to continue studying because I don't want to be left behind. I want to graduate together with my classmate[s]. The K-12 curriculum already wasted my time and I don't want to waste another year of my education [because of this COVID-19 pandemic]." (Christine, 19).

Such statements were prevalent among the participants. The root of their motivation was due to the external factor—fear of being left behind. This is a type of social anxiety and otherwise known as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). These participants felt that if they would not enroll, they might miss an opportunity or it might be an incorrect choice. Moreover, several participants expressed that they did not want to prolong their years in the university. They wanted to graduate as soon as possible. They placed high emphasis on attaining a degree because it is a prerequisite to securing a job. Hence, they manifested an intrinsic drive to continue studying.

> "My subjects are seasonal and taking a break would only prolong my 5-year course. I don't want that. Graduating in the fastest way possible is

my priority. I want to become an architect [at my earliest convenience]." (Phoebe, 20).

A large portion of participants, on the other hand, reported that their parents were involved in the decision of studying in the midst of this new normal. Bearing in mind that the voice of parents in the Filipino culture is so valued and cogent, parental counsel, not surprisingly, was also the reason why the participants enrolled in universities. Hannah, aged 19, followed the advice of her mother: "My mother highly encouraged me to continue studying. I followed her." JB, aged 21, was also propelled by his parents: "My parents forced me to continue studying, even though I did not want to, just to graduate and get my diploma." Similar to the previous comments are the following statements:

> "I was persuaded by my parents. They said that I should not waste this time. I didn't want to enroll [in the first place]." (Mike, 19).

Filipinos are family-oriented—a distinct trait that is deeply ingrained in the Filipino culture. They place prominent regard on the value of family which was manifested in the answers of the participants. Essentially, one of the sources of motivation to continue to study during the pandemic was the desire to help parents. "My parents are already old and I'm expected to be the first one to graduate from college. I want to help them," narrated Mendy, aged 21. Other participants conveyed similar responses:

> "I want to finish my studies on time, and especially at a difficult time like this, I need to hurry up and finish studying so that I can help my parents because their jobs now are not so stable anymore. They can be fired at any moment because of the pandemic" (Ervin, 19).

Manifested in the above quotes is the motive to help the family. Many participants viewed education and attainment of a college degree as a tool to support the family. Holding on to their optimistic desires for the family, the participants wanted to study even during this intricate pandemic state. They wanted to persevere and accomplish the school year because it is a stepping stone to their determined ambition of helping the family.

E. Conclusion

Negative Views toward Online Schooling. College students convey negative views toward online schooling amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The results show that overwhelming stress is an evident stimulus that causes students to develop such views. Research suggests that if the stress level goes above a predefined, threshold, which is individually different, this can result in cognitive impairment, especially in memory and appraisal (Sandi, 2013). Moreover, it is proven in this study that students feel limited and exhausted from the existing setup for distance learning. Many students even believe that the quality of education decreased because they study by themselves, without much help from their professors, most of the time. This causes numerous students to learn little if at all, especially since not every student can learn effectively and efficiently alone and without much guidance and support from mentors. The students are also dissatisfied with the apparency of online schooling as a means of scholastic compliance rather than an avenue for education. For instance, students are inclined to study by themselves and submit considerable school work for the sake of compliance, and not their education. Additionally, the fact that socio-economic circumstances play a massive role in the success of online schooling amid the pandemic led to the disappointment of many because it demerits those without the financial means (e.g. Internet access; access to gadgets) to do so.

***Positive Views toward Online Schooling*.** Many positive views are still evident about online schooling amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Distance learning is a fast-growing environment that encourages users to operate flexibly outside of time and location restrictions (Chaney, 2001). In this study, it is proven that online schooling provides convenience and flexibility in that students can study at home without the need to travel to school, especially amid the dangers brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The students' safety and peace of mind are also evident in that students need not be exposed unnecessarily just to manage their scholastic affairs. Similarly, students are given the liberty to study at their rate. For example, students can choose to peruse their professors' video lectures, instructional materials, among others

at their own pace. This is different from when in-person learning was the norm wherein students' scholastic compliance was strictly uniform.

Difficulties Encountered in Online Schooling. Different difficulties are experienced by college students during online schooling. These difficulties are technology and Internet connectivity, mental health issues, financial problems, and time and space management. According to Adnan and Anwar (2020), some difficulties of students during online classes are adaptability struggle, technological problems, time issues, and self-motivation which are close to the results of this study. With that said, the problems and difficulties experienced before are still happening today. Also, these difficulties can be connected such as mental health can be caused by technology and Internet problems. With that, students can experience two or more difficulties at the same time. As the difficulties can be connected, it shows more struggle and problems to the college students.

Motivation to Continue Studying Despite the Pandemic. Many college students decide to continue studying amidst the pandemic situation. There is an array of reasons behind such a choice. One is the fear of being left behind by their colleagues in completing studies and in graduation. They abhor such thoughts and do not want to miss an opportunity. Meanwhile, others see non-attendance to the university as a waste of time and a huge loss. Such finding is coherent with the loss aversion concept in the behavioral science realm. To elucidate, loss aversion is a human tendency to avoid losses and desire to get the equivalent gains (Yechiam, 2019). College students manifest that in this situation and their reasoning. Furthermore, understanding that Filipinos are very family-oriented and rely heavily on their decisions of opinion and consensus of the family, it is not surprising then that parental factor is an explanation on why college students continue to study. Because of the persuasion and/ or mandate of the parents, college students continue to study. College students also root on their desires to finish college immediately and so they could help the family through their professional work and provision of sustenance.

F. Recommendations

Negative Views toward Online Schooling. Many students remain to have negative views toward online schooling. If left unchecked, this can cause a massive decrease in scholastic motivation to continue online schooling among a large majority of the relevant population among others. First, it is important to note the pertinent issues and flaws surrounding the existing approaches used in online schooling. Afterward, the government and the state universities should work together towards achieving the same goal, which is to improve the state of online learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines. Proactive actions and initiatives are highly encouraged. Listening to critical feedback regarding the existing problems of online learning and actively working toward the resolution of such concerns should be the main priority. For instance, local government units (LGUs) can conduct their research about students' perceptions of online schooling and then begin addressing the problems to be provided by the participants, beginning of course with the highest aggregated answer.

Positive Views toward Online Schooling. Numerous students have positive views toward online schooling. It is imperative to maintain the existing positive morale of such students, especially those currently enrolled and engaged in online schooling. Further research aimed toward understanding how to address students' concerns (e.g., on motivation to continue studying via online schooling) is also essential to keep, and eventually, increase the number of students who would develop positive views toward online schooling. Providing students with their scholastic and educational needs is also important, especially since student-teacher interactions are at a decline. Scholastic consistency is advised.

Difficulties Encountered in Online Schooling. With the difficulties experienced by the college students during their online schooling, the researchers came up with the following recommendations. Students need to learn how to manage their time as it is needed to overcome one of their problems. They should also be adaptable to their surroundings and situations they are in to lessen the stress and anxiety. Teachers also need to be considerate of the activities and tasks of their students. Furthermore, the government

should take action to increase the speed of the Internet in the country or to help students who are not capable enough to enter online schooling.

Motivation to Continue Studying Despite the Pandemic. Generally, college students get the motivation to continue their studies externally. This is not inherently negative. Social forces from one's surroundings can become a positive tool that can push college students to keep moving and not to drift. College students are recommended to ponder about their thinking concerning motivation, studying, and schooling. Careful reflection is needed. Meanwhile, understanding that parental involvement plays a vital part in the success of the education of students (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017), it is appropriate for parents to explain properly, not by force, but by intelligent counsel, the reasoning behind the urge of making a college student study amidst a pandemic situation. However, if they become resistant, parents have the moral responsibility to listen and attend to their thoughts and concerns, because if they do not undertake that or handle the situation improperly, it may spill over to serious problems and issues. It is not recommended that parents force students. They might enroll but they may feel aversion inside. They might end up not submitting tasks and being distracted in classes. On the other hand, teachers can also aid in motivating the students to continue to study through discussion of how they are and the usage of innovative pedagogies and assessments.

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