
Hardware, Hard Time: Academic Challenges and Coping Mechanism of Marginalized Senior High School Students during Distance Learning



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ABSTRACT: This study determined the academic challenges and coping mechanisms of marginalized senior high school students in distance learning, during the second semester of School Year 2021-2022. It was conducted at Porais National High School in the Division of San Jose City. The respondents were six marginalized senior high school students. An interview was conducted in gathering data. The gathered data were presented, and these were scrutinized based on the research questions. The respondents identified lack of internet connectivity and lack of immediate guidance of teachers as their main challenge in distance learning. To seek help and ask for neighbors to be connected to the internet (if there's any) were the identified coping mechanisms of students.

KEYWORDS: Distance learning, Marginalized, Senior High School, Academic Challenges, Coping Mechanism.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought challenges in economic, social and political aspect of a country across the globe. Education, among others is one of the most affected sectors. According to UNESCO Learning Portal (2020), a total of 1.52 billion students were absent from school or other relevant educational institutions, representing 87 percent of the global student population. COVID-19's suddenness, ambiguity, and volatility forced the educational system to react quickly to the new learning landscape. During the initial COVID-19 boom in March 2020, just weeks before the end of the academic year, the Philippines has discontinued in-person instruction for its entire cohort of 24.9 million public school students, according to UNESCO. "No vaccine, no classrooms", was an order issued by President Rodrigo Duterte, delaying the beginning of the new school year until October. The Department of Education (DepEd), through its secretary, Leonor M. Briones, said that the education must continue. Education undersecretary Diosdado San Antonio continued, "[Education secretary Leonor Briones] always reminds us that schooling continued even through military sieges, volcano eruptions, earthquakes, typhoons, and floods." In line with this statement, the Department of Education crafted DepEd Order no. 18, series of 2020 entitled Policy Guidelines for the Provision of Learning Resources in the Implementation of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan. This DepEd Order, has been used as the basis for the continuation of the program amidst the pandemic. DepEd formulated different learning modalities suitable for the students. Online, modular, digital learning were some of the learning modalities introduced by the Department of Education.

Indeed, education continued, but this continuation also paved way on many challenges to the students. This study aimed to know the academic challenges and coping mechanism of marginalized senior high school students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to know the experience of marginalized senior high school students during distance learning. This research specifically addressed the following issues:

1. How do marginalized senior high school students described their academic difficulties during the transition period?
2. What mechanism do they employ to cope up with the academic challenges during the transition period?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used the phenomenological approach to explore experience of marginalized senior high school students. Phenomenology examines the organization of a variety of experiences, including language activity as well as bodily awareness, embodied action, and social interaction. These experiences include perception, thinking, memory, imagination, emotion, desire,

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and volition (Smith, 2016). So, it is concerned with how people understand, perceive and make use of different phenomena. The focus is also more on the individual and how he or she experiences it, with limited interest to the social environment (Pilerot & Hedman, 2009)

The researcher created interview questions to aid him in gathering all of the participants' experiences and viewpoints on the topic. Their categories were used to split the questionnaire.

The researcher interviewed six (6) marginalized senior high school students enrolled in Porais National High School. Narrative approach was applied. The interview was conducted at the participants' most convenient time.

All of the interviews were taped on a digital voice recorder and then transferred to the researcher's computer. The information is kept on a password-protected computer in a secured home office.

Data analysis entailed reading verbatim detailed transcripts. The analysis was supported by quotes from the conversations. The subsequent sections of this chapter present the findings of raw data analysis.

Moustakas's (1994) psychological or transcendental phenomenology was used minimally on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants. Moustakas concentrated on one of Husserl's ideas, epoch (or 26 bracketing), in which researchers try to put their past experiences aside to approach the phenomenon they are studying from a new perspective. The steps, as demonstrated by Moustakas, involved selecting a phenomenon to examine, bracketing out one's experiences, and gathering information from several people who had encountered the event. The data was then broken down into key quotes or assertions by the researcher, who subsequently organized the quotes into themes. After that, the study created a textual description of the participants' experiences (what they went through), a structural description of their experiences (how they went through it in terms of the circumstances, situations, or context), and a combination of the textual and structural descriptions to convey the experience's overall feeling.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Academic Challenges of Marginalized Students

All the participants identified challenges that hinder them in achieving their full potential as students in distance learning especially, online classes. The respondents identified different challenges that hinder them from learning through online modality. First challenge encountered by the respondents, especially those who belong to marginalized sector is lack of internet connectivity, this also include the lack of cellular load. Since most of the respondents are living in rural area, internet connectivity is their main concern because internet line was not available and due to geographic location of their houses, cellular signal is not strong. This study is confirmed by Cabual & Cabual (2022) which explained that noise/environmental distractions, technical issues, and slow internet connections were the topmost challenges encountered by the students. This is also similar to the study of Klawitter (2022) saying that distractions everywhere, staying motivated, technical issues, some students being left behind and diminished social aspects are the top five challenges faced by students in online learning. However, the result was negated by the study conducted Barrot, Llenares & del Rosario (2021) which they explained that it was the related learning environment at home and not the technical issue, which the greatest problem in online learning. This only means that students' online learning problems differed in form and magnitude.

Moreover, last identified challenge by the respondents in online learning is lack of the guidance of teachers. Some respondents said that absence of their teacher made it harder for them to learn. Although teachers are present in online classes, it was the technical issues that made harder for the students. Due to their geographical location, signals are not that strong. During online classes, students are being disconnected which lead to being absent in online class, having said that, the intervention is for them to answer activities in module. Without the guidance of the teacher, it is hard for them to learn. This claim is supported by the study of Challenges of Distance Learning for Students (2021), they emphasized that one of the challenges for the students in distance learning is lack of instant communication. Communication is very important in a teaching-learning process as it is the way for the students to interact with their teachers and also important for teachers to ask if the students have questions or not. This communication is hinder because of technical issues. Similarly, the study of Klawitter (2021) emphasizes that one of the top five challenges in online learning is technical issues.

Coping Mechanism of Marginalized Students

Majority of the respondents displayed a tremendous amount of positivity despite the challenges they identified. They employed different coping mechanism to overcome these challenges and they are successful in overcoming it. On their identified challenge, lack of guidance of teachers due to technical issues, their coping mechanism employed was to seek help. Majority of the respondents said that they are asking for help to their parents or friends. This shows positivity to the respondents because they

Hardware, Hard Time: Academic Challenges and Coping Mechanism of Marginalized Senior High School Students during Distance Learning

recognize their challenges and they are not shy to ask help with other people. On the second identified challenge, which is the lack of internet connectivity. One of the respondent coping mechanisms in this identified challenge is that she asked her neighbor to connect her to the internet which shows tremendous positivity. This shows that the respondent is resourceful enough to find a way in addressing her problems and it shows that the respondent will do everything to achieve the respondent's dream.

These claims or results is agreed by the study conducted by Nyatsanza & Mtezo (2013). The study explained that seeking social support is one of the top eight coping mechanisms employed by the students when dealing with their problems. This is also similar to the study conducted by Kar, Kar, & Kar (2021), which explained that expressing to other people by telling their problems is one of their coping mechanisms.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The conclusions that were reached considering the findings were as follows:

1. Online classes are stressful and not everyone's cup of tea. Online classes give challenges to the students in learning as well as in achieving their dreams. This study identified all the challenges of respondents in online learning that can be addressed by the authority.

2. All of the respondents employed coping mechanism that helped them overcome the identified challenges especially in their academic life amidst the pandemic

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Hardware, Hard Time: Academic Challenges and Coping Mechanism of Marginalized Senior High School Students during Distance Learning

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